

Tampa's Lafayette Street Bridge:

Building a New South City

by

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	ii
Abstract	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Tampa as a New South City	4
Early Tampa, the Hillsborough River, and the Search for Capital	9
Chapter Two: The First Lafayette Street Bridge	20
Chapter Three: The Second Lafayette Street Bridge	32
Progressive Reforms	56
Chapter Four: The Third Lafayette Street Bridge	63
The Bridge Today	102
References Cited	109

List of Figures

Figure 1.	Detail from a late-nineteenth-century stereoview card of a ferry crossing the Hillsborough River in Tampa.	11
Figure 2.	1890s photograph of the first Lafayette Street Bridge over the Hillsborough River with the Tampa Bay Hotel in the background.	26
Figure 3.	Postcard image of the second Lafayette Street Bridge, facing south, or downstream.	42
Figure 4.	View of the Hillsborough River and downtown Tampa from the Tampa Bay Hotel, with the second Lafayette Street Bridge to the right in the photograph, circa 1900.	42
Figure 5.	Tampa, 1900-1910.	46
Figure 6.	Postcard showing trolley crossing the second Lafayette Street Bridge.	47
Figure 7.	Photograph taken in 1906 from the chimney of the Tampa Electric Company's plant on the Hillsborough River, facing north.	50
Figure 8.	A circa 1905 photograph of the Hillsborough River waterfront, taken facing south from the Lafayette Street Bridge.	55
Figure 9.	Photograph of the second Lafayette Street Bridge taken in 1905, showing the narrow width and heavy usage of the bridge.	72
Figure 10.	Detail from a February 1913 photograph of the temporary bridge crossing the Hillsborough River at Jackson Street.	86
Figure 11.	Detail from an October 1913 photograph taken facing west from the Mugge Building in downtown Tampa.	86

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ABSTRACT

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a time of dynamic social and political change for Tampa, a growing city on Florida's west coast. These changes led Tampa's commercial-civic elite to look beyond the law, the militia, and the church for ways to maintain their sense of order. This thesis illustrates non-violent enforcement of the status quo via public works, specifically bridge construction over the Hillsborough River. Over a period of three decades, three different bridges were built at the same place, at Lafayette Street. Each time the bridge was built or replaced, it was ostensibly for a different reason. However, each time the financing, construction, and form of the bridge was the result of Tampa's social, political, and economic systems. Development and maintenance of public works involves questions of private rights, property ownership, acquisition of capital, fiscal policy, and labor relations. Thus, in Tampa, the history of a bridge over the Hillsborough River becomes a study of class and power within a growing southern city.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

...every bridge, small or large, is also an aesthetic and environmental statement. Its lines are important beyond its span; every bridge must not only bear its burden, whether cows or coal trains, but must also be able to withstand the burden of proof that, in the final analysis, society is better served, tangibly and intangibly, by the bridge's being there at all.

-- Henry Petroski in *Engineers of Dreams: Great Bridge Builders and the Spanning of America*

[The bridge] is strong, it is beautiful, it will always be adequate for the service for which it is designed and I trust our people may never have occasion to regret its erection.

-- Mayor D.B. McKay, at the dedication of the Lafayette Street Bridge, February 23, 1914

Shortly before Thanksgiving Day 1913, more than one hundred of Tampa's leading businessmen met to plan a celebration. Ideas bubbled forth with enthusiasm: children marching along downtown streets forming the letters "WELCOME," releasing five thousand carrier pigeons spreading word of Tampa all over the country, lighting the banks of the Hillsborough River with fireworks and multicolored torches! A parade of "illuminated automobiles," costumed revelers, noisemakers, dragons, and Indians

heralding the opening of the new Lafayette Street Bridge and the city's coming of age.¹ The parade and the festival, and even the bridge, were the means by which the businessmen could show the world what a progressive, modern city Tampa was. The parade and the festival, and even the bridge, were also how the businessmen could show Tampa that they controlled the city.

For Tampa, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had been a time of dynamic change, at times chaotic. The city's population grew astronomically every decade, with huge influxes of minority and immigrant labor. The city's leaders felt forced to look for means beyond the law, the militia, or the church to maintain a comfortable sense of social order. Schools, charitable works, and an improved urban environment were all seen as means to the end goal of social hegemony. Even violence, in the form of vigilantism, was used to assert power.² Given that public works were also a means of preserving the status quo, the history of just one bridge, the Lafayette Street Bridge, a single project in the history of a municipality, illuminates the social and economic forces that formed Tampa.³

¹ "Many Novel Features in Gasparilla Event," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 22 November 1913.

² Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882-1936* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1988).

³ As David Perry wrote ("Building the Public City: An Introduction," in *Building the Public City: The Politics, Governance, and Finance of Public Infrastructure*, Urban Affairs Annual Review 43 [Thousand Oaks, Calif., SAGE Publications, 1995], 8),

The politics of public infrastructure are at once about the impacts of technological change, the goals of economic and social development, the changing demand of governmental relations, and the recurring crisis of public debt. In this sense building public infrastructure represents some of the most profound and conflicted goals and political issues of American policy formation.

"Public works" may be defined as "the physical structures and facilities developed or acquired by public agencies to house governmental functions and provide water, waste disposal, power, transportation, and

Florida was one of the least populated southern states in 1880, having not emerged from its frontier days before it was engulfed by the Civil War. On Florida's west coast, Tampa was a small town of just 720. A lack of capital and a lack of means with which to get capital summarized Florida's economy, so when Henry B. Plant proposed extending his railroad to Tampa, the town's leaders were glad to accommodate his wishes. When Plant asked for a bridge over the Hillsborough River, Tampa built it, and the Lafayette Street Bridge opened in 1889.

By the turn of the century, nearly 16,000 people called Tampa home, and the Lafayette Street Bridge did not meet the needs of such a rapidly growing city. Despite troubled finances, the bridge was replaced, with construction paid for by a municipal bond issue. The bridge carried streetcar tracks over the river, opening up new suburban developments and contributing to a thriving central business district in downtown Tampa. Within just a few years, the second bridge also succumbed to heavy use and rapid urban growth, however, and was replaced in 1913. This bridge still stands today as the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge in downtown Tampa.

similar services to facilitate the achievement of common social and economic objectives" (Ellis L. Armstrong, ed., *History of Public Works in the United States, 1776-1976* [Chicago: American Public Works Association, 1976], 1). "Infrastructure" is roughly equivalent to "public works" or "internal improvements, with the terminology changing over time. "Infrastructure" became preferred over "public works" in the late twentieth century, signaling that structures had become seen as part of a system rather than projects completed in isolation (Perry, "Building the Public City," 7).

TAMPA AS A NEW SOUTH CITY

Across the entire United States, from the Civil War onward was a time of incredible growth, particularly in the cities. While the country's population tripled between 1860 and 1920, the population of the country's cities increased nine times over. In 1860, only about twenty percent of all Americans lived in a city, but by 1920, fifty percent of Americans were urbanites. As the number of urban dwellers increased, so did the number of places that could be considered urban (Tampa, for example). This incredible urban growth was the result of human migration, both American rural migration to the cities and European immigration to the United States.⁴ While cities and towns grew in both the North and the South, northern cities grew more, fueled by industrialization and vast waves of immigrants. Southern cities tended to attract people who already lived in the South, and had economies geared more for trade than manufacturing. These cities depended on railroads to ship commodities in and out, and businesses and services served the needs of the merchants and the farmers who brought goods in from the surrounding hinterlands. In the late nineteenth century, the key industries of the South's coastal plains were lumber and sawmills, naval stores, phosphate mining.⁵ Tampa certainly participated in and benefited greatly from these industries, but set itself apart with its success in the

⁴ Raymond A. Mohl, *The New City: Urban America in the Industrial Age, 1860-1920*, (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1985), 9-19.

⁵ Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

cigar industry. Tampa was a southern city, although it was not quite typical. As Durward Long wrote,

. . . it was not the pattern of commercial development, complemented by a nationally-important extractive industry, which made Tampa unique among the new South's cities. Nor was the city unique in the spirited promotionalism of its entrepreneurs, organized in a formidable block to achieve their aims in city politics and the development of local commerce. The factor which distinguished Tampa among southern urban communities was the presence of large numbers of immigrants during the development of the city.⁶

Tampa was also different from other emerging southern cities in that cigar manufacture did not rely on an agricultural product from the hinterland, since the tobacco was shipped in from elsewhere.⁷ Tampa did not have much of a hinterland to draw upon anyhow, a reflection of Florida's sparse population during the nineteenth century.

After the Civil War, Reconstruction created the "New South," generally considered to begin with the end of Reconstruction in the late 1870s. The idea that a "new" South was emerging was readily promoted: "Southern boosters of the early 1880s told everyone who would listen that their region had entered upon the initial stages of a profound and beneficial transformation."⁸ Railroads were the key to economic growth in the New South. More railroads were built in the South from the end of Reconstruction to the end of the nineteenth century than in the rest of the country as a whole during that same time.

⁶ Durward Long, "The Making of Modern Tampa: A City of the New South, 1885-1911" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (1971): 340.

⁷ David R. Goldfield, "Pursing the American Urban Dream: Cities in the Old South," in *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*, ed. Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1977), 56-57.

⁸ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 20.

The railroad's local economic effects were considerable, from use of local construction materials to the creation of markets for local products. Just having a railroad, however, was not enough to ensure the success of a town. Every town needed a broad economic base to do anything more than just survive from one year to the next.⁹

In the mid 1880s, Cuban cigar manufacturers started to show interest in Tampa as a possible location for factories, away from political unrest in Cuba and labor turmoil in Key West. Tampa offered a suitable climate, established shipping lines, and a brand new railroad. Thousands of Cubans and Italians and other peoples were drawn to Tampa by the cigar factories, and in the process created an unusual southern city with a large percentage of immigrant labor.¹⁰ In 1880, the ten percent of Tampanians from outside the South were as likely to be from another country as from a northern state.¹¹ By 1900, with the rise of the cigar industry, twenty-eight percent of Tampa's population was composed of foreign-born whites, with another twenty-eight percent African American. Of the remaining forty-three percent, the native born whites, most were Southerners. The men who owned land and managed businesses were the same men who controlled the city.¹² Tampa's relative youth and size coming out of the Civil War and Reconstruction, coupled with a booming economy, created vast opportunities for young men from elsewhere, young men who were not from old Tampa families and often were of humble origins.

What they had in common was a drive to succeed and the recognition that they would at

⁹ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 7-9, 58-61.

¹⁰ Gary R. Mormino and Anthony P. Pizzo, *Tampa: The Treasure City* (Tulsa, Okla.: Continental Heritage Press, 1983).

¹¹ Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 15

¹² Robert Kerstein, *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 21-22.

least have a chance in a new city like Tampa. These men held political offices, and were the men who led the construction of the Lafayette Street Bridge.

Political scientist Robert Kerstein in *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa* uses the term “commercial-civic elite” to refer to the native-born white businessmen and professionals, typically southerners, who controlled the city politically and economically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tampa was not unique in this respect, as the phenomenon can be noted in cities across the South and the rest of the country.¹³ The elites in New South cities tended to be young men who migrated to an urban area to work their way up in society, men who started their careers when they moved to the city.¹⁴ For some southern men, politics was a means of furthering their own interests, a way to get ahead both socially and economically. Ayers puts this rather bluntly: “. . . no matter the current political climate, most of a politician’s work involved getting and keeping jobs for oneself and one’s ‘friends’.”¹⁵ In Tampa, it was not just the mayor and the city council running the city, but also informal groups of well-connected men with similar goals and ideologies, who had *de facto* control over private investment and the city’s institutions. Kerstein’s study of political leadership suggests that Tampa’s commercial-civic elite was not uniformly dominant a century ago. Conflicts within the elite arose from ideological differences or differing business interests.¹⁶

¹³ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*; Blaine A. Brownell, “The Commercial-Civic Elite and City Planning in Atlanta, Memphis, and New Orleans in the 1920s,” *Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 3 (1975): 339-368.

¹⁴ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 167, 469-470 (note 27).

¹⁵ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 35.

¹⁶ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 11.

Construction of Lafayette Street Bridge and subsequent replacement projects had support from some members of Tampa's commercial-civic elite and opposition from others, depending what they stood to gain or lose as individuals. However, the men instrumental in the bridge's construction, each of the three times a bridge was built at Lafayette Street, were part of the commercial-civic elite, as may be expected if Tampa is viewed as a New South city.¹⁷

Kerstein outlines three patterns in Tampa's politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At first, the commercial-civil elite governed unequivocally. Successful candidates for city offices typically belonged to the Tampa Board of Trade, which was organized in May 1885 primarily because the railroad was coming to town. Board of Trade members tended to be business owners or lawyers who saw government's proper role as supporting business. These men were pro-growth, and while they knew that that they would personally benefit, they rationalized their actions with a belief that the city as a whole would benefit as well. By the late 1890s, the professional and business communities in Tampa became more fragmented, opening the door for men other than the commercial-civic elite to be elected mayor or to the city council. The third pattern emerged in 1910, when D. B. McKay took control of city government. A member of the commercial-civic elite himself, McKay was able to get support from both the elite and from labor depending on the issue.¹⁸

¹⁷ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*. As Long noted, "Whatever else the term 'New South' includes, it suggests the use of the commercial entrepreneur as the dominant economic force" (Long, "Making of Modern Tampa," 334).

¹⁸ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*.

EARLY TAMPA, THE HILLSBOROUGH RIVER, AND THE SEARCH FOR CAPITAL

Cities rarely develop equally on both sides of a river at the same time, with many towns staying entirely on one riverbank. Pragmatic reasons typically determine which is to be the favored bank.¹⁹ In 1824, U.S. Army officers built Fort Brooke on the east side of the Hillsborough River, choosing the site of an existing homestead, and the town of Tampa grew informally around this Seminole War outpost. The first plat map produced for the town named streets in honor of Revolutionary War heroes (such as Lafayette), American presidents (such as Jackson), and other prominent men (such as Secretary of War Lewis Cass). Tampa was first incorporated in 1849, and the town grew gradually until the Civil War.²⁰ While the river had been a factor in the Army's choice of location, river traffic and trade were not as important to the settlement's continued growth as was coastal traffic in the Gulf of Mexico. Tampa's location at the top of the bay was actually detrimental to trade, since large ships had difficulty sailing in the bay's shallow waters. Therefore, Tampa's continued existence probably had more to do with a lack of competition than it did to the small town's location at the mouth of the Hillsborough River.

¹⁹ Spiro Kostof, *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form through History* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1992), 39.

²⁰ Mormino and Pizzo, *Tampa*

Tampa's total population decreased in the 1870s during Reconstruction, although some new settlers did arrive. These newcomers were interested in growing citrus, and looked for plots of land big enough for a grove. Therefore, even as the population went down, the city grew to cover a larger area. Plenty of land was open for homesteading, and the town expanded northward for the most part, with less development across the river.²¹

There was little need for a bridge over the Hillsborough River. Before the railroad, transportation into and out of Tampa was by water, out into the bay and on then to the Gulf of Mexico. The few people who did need to cross the river used a ferry at the foot of Jackson Street, connecting with the Tampa to Brooksville Road, which was little more than a path through the woods. People crossed here if they wished to go overland to Safety Harbor or Clearwater. A woman who as a child lived on the river's west bank later recalled how the ferry worked:

The ferry consisted of a rowboat for foot passengers and a big flat barge for the accommodation of teams, cattle and horses. It was operated by a heavy cable which lay on the bottom of the river when not in use. When a team was to cross a hinged platform was let down so that the end rested in the mud, and the horses had to drag their load up the steep incline onto the barge, the cable was laboriously pulled up and hand-over-hand the hard-worked ferryman pulled at it, the barge sometimes swinging out into the stream in spite of the efforts of the ferryman. When the other shore was gained the hinged platform was let down on the other side and with much protest on the part of the horses and much urging from the driver the plunge would be made down the incline into the mud if the tide was low but onto hard sand if the tide was high.²²

²¹ Canter Brown, Jr., *Tampa in Civil War and Reconstruction*, Tampa Bay History Center Reference Library Series No. 10 (Tampa, Fla.: University of Tampa Press, 2000); John C. Rupertus, "History of the Commercial Development of Franklin Street" (master's thesis, University of South Florida, Tampa, 1980), 20-21.

²² "The Village of Tampa," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 24 July 1955.



Figure 1. Detail from a late-nineteenth-century stereoview card of a ferry crossing the Hillsborough River in Tampa (Courtesy the Robert N. Dennis Collection of Stereoscopic Views, Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints & Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

A few Spanish and Cuban fishermen lived near Spanishtown Creek (today's Hyde Park), and an eccentric Frenchman lived further down along the shore of Hillsborough Bay.²³ Jesse Carter lived on the west side of river across from Lafayette Street, and Robert and Nancy Jackson lived to the south of Carter. W. T. Haskins had a forty-acre homestead on the west side of the river adjoining Robert Jackson's homestead. Jackson was a retired Army surgeon who served as a Hillsborough County probate judge before his death in 1865. The Haydens came to Tampa in 1866, bought some land from General Carter, and

²³ Brown, *Tampa in Civil War*, 10-11.

filed a homestead claim for the adjoining 60 acres. Jesse and Susan's daughter Mattie married Donald S. MacKay, son of sea captain James McKay, Sr., and later uncle of Tampa mayor D.B. McKay. The Jacksons and the Haydens were among the prominent families of Old Tampa, and along with the Haskins, owned most of what would later become Hyde Park. The Haskins family, however, sold their land before Hyde Park was developed because of the inconvenience of crossing the river with children.²⁴

The Hillsborough River was an asset for the lumber industry, providing both access to the interior and a means of transporting the logs to ships. Sawmills along the river brought some jobs and revenue to Tampa; however, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 cut off shipping to Europe. Demand for lumber declined as did other commodity prices. Tampa's financial woes worsened as interior towns drained away the cattle business. However, the worst blow was the Vose Injunction.²⁵

The Florida Railroad Company's charter in the 1850s aimed to build a road from Fernandina on the east coast and Tampa on the west coast, with a branch line to Cedar Key. The branch line, however, was built first, and completed just before the Civil War, leaving Tampa without a railroad. After the war, the railroad was damaged and heavily in debt. The state's Internal Improvement Board approved the sale of the company to essentially the same owners as it had before; however, this action allowed the Florida Railroad to pay only a percentage of what it owed to creditors. Francis Vose, an iron

²⁴ Pauline Brown-Hazen, *The Blue Book and History of Pioneers, Tampa, Florida* (Tampa, Fla.: Tribune Publishing Company, 1914), 6, 9, 21.

²⁵ Brown, *Tampa in Civil War*, 13-14, 117-118, 140.

manufacturer still owed a substantial amount of money by the Florida Railroad Company, claimed that state lands were the surety given to him for the debt. In 1871, Vose obtained an injunction barring the Internal Improvement Board from dispersing lands until Vose was paid in full, plus interest, an amount of about \$105,000. State lands could only be sold for cash, and that cash had to be credited towards Vose's account. For the next decade, Florida was unable to use state lands to lure investors and developers to the state. Finally, in 1881, on the brink of financial ruin, Florida sold four million acres to Hamilton Disston for a total of \$1,000,000, and was able to pay Vose's heirs, thus ending the injunction and opening the door to new railroads and fresh capital.²⁶

In the 1870s and 1880s, debt was a big problem for southern states, both debt accumulated before the war and debt from postwar rebuilding loans. Businessmen feared that repudiation of these debts would negatively affect credit availability and decrease the interest paid on state-supported bonds. However, taxpayer pressure led Democrats to repudiate debts whenever possible and to lower taxes. Federal banking policy and absentee ownership were two of the external pressures keeping the southern economy from thriving.²⁷

A visitor said of Tampa in 1879, "This place looks discouraged from sheer weariness in trying to be a town."²⁸ Three years later, a visiting journalist reported that Tampa was "a

²⁶ Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1974), 110, 115-116, 251-252.

²⁷ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 58-59, 104.

²⁸ Silvia Sunshine, *Petals Plucked from Sunny Climes* (1880; reprint, with an introduction and index by Richard A. Martin, Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976), 288.

sleepy, shabby Southern town,” yet one of its greatest assets was an “implicit confidence in its own prosperous future.”²⁹ This spark of optimism arose from the rumored arrival of a railroad. Northerners coming to Tampa to plant citrus groves brought small amounts of capital, and gradually increasing land values, but the light at the end of the tunnel was truly a train.

A native of Connecticut, Henry Plant never actually became a Florida resident, and despite close business relationships with Southerners, Plant remained a Northerner. As the Civil War drew near, it became impossible for Northern companies to do business in the South. Plant bought his northern employer’s southern freight division and founded the Southern Express Company. Plant’s political loyalties were based on Plant’s finances. Even though the South’s transportation system was in shambles, Plant managed to make money during the war by shipping military payrolls and government documents, and by investing his money in something other than Confederate currency. After the war, Henry B. Plant was both “an ex-Yankee and an ex-Confederate,” an excellent match for Florida.³⁰

After the Civil War, Plant bought and rebuilt old and failing railroad companies in the South. After creating other lines in Florida, Plant’s railroad system came into Florida at

²⁹ Kirk Munroe, “A Gulf Coast City,” in *The Florida Adventures of Kirk Munroe*, ed. Irving A. Leonard (Chulota, Fla.: Mickler House Publishers, 1975), 62-63.

³⁰ Kelly Reynolds, *Henry Plant: Pioneer Empire Builder* (Cocoa, Fla.: The Florida Historical Society Press, 2003), 108.

three different points. In 1882, the Plant Investment Company (PICO) was chartered.³¹ Plant wanted to be part of the West Indies steamship trade, and sought a Gulf Coast harbor in Florida where his trains could connect to ships to Key West and Havana. After failing to make Cedar Key his port, Plant considered Bradenton, Port Charlotte, and Tampa. Although Plant's decision to build a port on Tampa Bay was a crucial turning point in Tampa's history, he did not have a particular or sentimental attachment to the town. Tampa was not his first choice. Plant never even visited Tampa until December 1, 1883, having already completed most of the necessary negotiations through business representatives.³²

In 1882, the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railroad started building a line between Sanford and Tampa, but it was doubtful that the work would be finished before the deadline established by the state. Plant bought the railroad's charter in May 1883, giving him seven months to build seventy-four miles of track. Men worked furiously from both ends of the track. In July 1883, the Tampa City Council leased the western ends of Polk, Zack, and Twiggs streets, along with riparian rights on the Hillsborough River, to PICO for thirty dollars a year. Plant built a wharf at Polk Street, along with passenger and freight stations. The depot on the river was crucial for Plant's construction work because the materials for the western end of the track came on schooners from Gulf ports such as New Orleans, Mobile, Pensacola, and Cedar Key. Plant's massive construction effort

³¹ James W. Covington, *Plant's Palace: Henry B. Plant and the Tampa Bay Hotel* (Louisville: Harmony House, 1991).

³² Reynolds, *Henry Plant*.

brought new business and new workers to Tampa, making it a boomtown. With sixty-three hours to spare, the track was finished on January 22, 1884.³³

The train, however, was not wholly responsible for Tampa's growth in the 1880s. The hinterlands of Hillsborough and Polk counties grew, as more farmers produced more crops. New and larger farm communities meant new and larger markets for Tampa's merchants. In 1883, about the same time that Plant's railroad arrived in Tampa, the Army opened the Fort Brooke military reservation for development, making more land available for speculators and settlers.³⁴ In 1887, the United States government declared Tampa a port of entry. While an economic base was coalescing, the city's utilities and services improved. Tampa's first local street railway opened in 1885, the electric company formed in 1887, and in 1889 the water works began supplying its customers with fresh water. Tampa had two telegraph lines by 1887, and a telephone company in 1890. In 1890, the Florida Central and Peninsular Railway extended to Tampa, providing competition for Henry Plant.

Before the 1890s, economic competition was limited in Tampa, but as the city grew, so did rivalries between railways, newspapers, and electric companies. The key to success was to be a local company with ties to outside sources of capital. As the city grew, the business community changed. Tampa's Board of Trade was entwined with the city's development. Durward Long identifies the Board of Trade as a primary force in Tampa's

³³ Covington, *Plant's Palace*; Reynolds, *Henry Plant*.

³⁴ Long, "The Making of Modern Tampa."

growth after 1885, noting that Tampa's increased urbanization and entrepreneurship changed the composition of the Board:

The initial group was dominated by general or specialty retail store owners . . . and lawyers and other professions. In 1892 real estate dealers numbered more than any other single group and were tied with managers and superintendents of companies; builders and building suppliers constituted the next largest group, followed by general retailers, and their lawyers. Manufacturers and managers grew in number and prominence among board members, and by 1911, together with lawyers, they seemed to exert the greatest influence on board action.³⁵

When Plant first built his railroad to Tampa, he did not want to extend the railroad over the Hillsborough River. Every mile of track built was just that much money out of his pocket. However, the port at Tampa was shallow and inconvenient. When Plant heard that the Corps of Engineers was recommending dredging a ship channel in Old Tampa Bay rather than Hillsborough Bay, he quickly arranged to extend his railroad to Black Point where he built a wharf out to deep water. Black Point became Port Tampa. To get the railroad tracks across the Hillsborough River, Captain John McKay built a drawbridge at Cass Street for Plant.³⁶

Plant's transportation system included both trains and steamships for passenger transport. Hotels were a logical extension of this system. When Plant extended his railroad tracks to Port Tampa, he also built an inn at the wharf for passengers since there were no previously existing hotels nearby. All of the hotels operating in Tampa by the late 1880s

³⁵ Long, "The Making of Modern Tampa," 338.

³⁶ McKay had a personal interest in the bridge since he captained Plant's steamships between Tampa and Havana (Covington, *Plant's Palace*).

were rather ordinary. Apparently inspired by fellow transportation magnate Henry Flagler's Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine, Henry Plant decided to build a lavish resort near the Tampa terminus of his railroad. Plant bought fifteen acres on the west side of the Hillsborough River from the Hayden family and in July 1888, the Tampa Bay Hotel's cornerstone was laid. John A. Wood, a talented architect who also acted as Plant's business agent in Tampa, directed construction. Wood was in his early fifties, and had established himself in New York City as a noted hotel architect. Two years later, illness forced Wood to leave Tampa. W.T. Cotter of Sanford took over as construction supervisor, and the hotel opened in February 1891.³⁷ With the construction of the Tampa Bay Hotel and its Moorish spires, the until-recently backwater town of Tampa entered the Gilded Age. Plant's hotel and railroad system brought tourists flowing into and through the fledgling city from the Northeast and the Midwest. Local products such as citrus, lumber, and phosphate flowed out of Tampa on the same system of rails and steamers.

Plant's selection of the Tampa Bay Hotel site was quite deliberate. The hotel was to be a resort, an exotic tropical wonderland. The sophisticated elite would not want to travel thousands of miles only to mix with the working classes. He chose a large piece of land near his railroad depot, yet separate from the town. Tourists came to be seen, not to see Tampa, and the river provided separation from the city's hurly-burly. Luxury winter resorts such as Plant's did not rely on existing infrastructure. The necessary rail access or utilities were built at the developer's expense, or at the expense of the host city at the

³⁷ Susan R. Braden, *The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); Reynolds, *Henry Plant*.

request of the developer.³⁸ In the case of Tampa, the hotel was such a boon that the council readily agreed to several concessions, including low, fixed-rate taxes and a promise that the city would build a bridge over the Hillsborough River at Lafayette Street.³⁹

³⁸ Braden, *Architecture of Leisure*.

³⁹ Tampa Council Minutes, April 23, 1888; Braden, *Architecture of Leisure*, 259.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FIRST LAFAYETTE STREET BRIDGE

With its railroad and the port and highways to other towns, Tampa became a terminal city where several lines of transportation converged. But solving problems of transportation between cities does not necessarily address questions of transportation within a city. The railroad or an ocean steamer transported Tampans to Havana or New Yorkers to Tampa, but how were they to get from their homes and hotels to the depot or the dock? From the earliest days of America, infrastructure has been linked with development and growth. Although infrastructure was considered the responsibility of local governments, the private sector strongly influenced the decision to start a public works project. In the early twentieth century, the idea that public works were too important to left up to the private sector gained popularity. As the actual structure on which an economy functioned, at first infrastructure was just about commerce. In the mid-nineteenth century, people began to associate public works with health, safety, and morality, theorizing that a clean city created a better citizenry. More pragmatically, better health meant fewer trade-hindering quarantines.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Claire L. Felbinger, “Conditions of Confusion and Conflict: Rethinking the Infrastructure – Economic Development Linkage,” in *Building the Public City: The Politics, Governance, and Finance of Public Infrastructure*, ed. by David C. Perry, Urban Affairs Annual Review 43 (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1995), 116.

In March 1885, the Tampa town council chartered Hayden's ferry crossing on river at Jackson Street, stipulating that he keep one good flat boat and two good skiffs to carry people, stock animals, and goods across the Hillsborough.⁴¹ Hayden had the right to operate a ferry, but Tampa reserved the right to build a bridge across the river, free or otherwise. The town was growing.⁴² As was discussed earlier, until the train came, Tampa residents had little use for a bridge over the Hillsborough River, but soon after the railroad arrived, public and private interest in a bridge increased. Several conflicting proposals were made. In February 1887, John Ingraham proposed that the South Florida Rail Road Company and the Town of Tampa together build a bridge over the river, preferably near the railroad's property.⁴³ A month later, Ingraham's request complicated the Hillsboro Cooperative Ferry Company's lease renewal; the lease was renewed, but

⁴¹ Charges for his services were

4 horse team 60 cents
3 horse team 50 cents
2 horse team 40 cents
1 horse team 40 cents
horse and rider 20 cents
foot passenger 5 cents
sacks and barrels 5 cents
packages of 50 pounds 5 cents
loose stock 10 cents

Crossing at night cost double (Tampa Council Minutes, March 4, 1885). A story told by D.B. McKay is that one evening Hamilton Disston came up to the ferry landing on the west side of the river. When the ferryman told him the fare was double after dark, Disston exclaimed, "I am putting up \$1,000,000 to save this state from disaster and I refuse to be exploited in this manner!" Disston walked a quarter of a mile to get a note from Jesse Hayden, the ferry's owner, allowing him to cross at the daytime rate and thereby saving eighty cents ("Long Time Tampa Residents Recall Old Days of Ferry to Hyde Park," *Tampa Tribune*, 14 September 1947). There may have been a ferry operating here as early as 1846 (Covington, *Plant's Palace*, 59).

⁴² Ybor City and North Tampa were annexed in 1887, and the city was divided into four wards. Ward 1 was the original town of Tampa, Ward 2 was north Tampa, Ward 3 was western Tampa (which later included Hyde Park), and Ward 4 was Ybor City (Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 28, 296 [note 54]). Goldfield ("Pursuing the American Urban Dream," 67) notes that for southern cities even before the Civil War, "dividing the city into wards was a major distinction of urban status." These divisions "had little to do with population. It was rather, the city fathers' conception of how their city should be partitioned to provide more efficient government."

⁴³ Tampa Council Minutes, February 2, 1887.

with the provision that if the contemplated bridge across the river was actually built by the city and South Florida Railroad Co., the lease would expire.⁴⁴ In July 1887, F.A. Salomonson – who had earlier represented the Hillsboro Cooperative Ferry – presented the Town Council with a petition from a group of citizens asking for permission to build and operate a drawbridge at the foot of Whiting Street⁴⁵ The petition was referred to the Council’s Committee on Wharves, Bridges, and Ferries, which was favorable to Salomonson’s petition to build a toll bridge.⁴⁶ But the City Attorney declared that such an ordinance authorizing the bridge would be *ultra vires* (beyond the legal authority of the council), since the power was not expressly granted in the city’s charter.⁴⁷ So in August 1887, the Committee on Wharves, Bridges, and Ferries recommended a revised ordinance with regards to Salomonson’s proposed bridge. City council minutes note “the Committee also called attention to the fact that steps had already been taken to have a free bridge established and they were of the opinion that if a charter for a toll bridge was granted now it might have a detrimental effect on the project of a free bridge.”⁴⁸ In early September 1887, Councilman Biglow asked the Council to begin efforts to build a free foot and wagon bridge over the river at Lafayette Street, a suggestion that had the support of the Wharves, Bridges, and Ferries Committee.⁴⁹ On October 4, 1887, the City

⁴⁴ Tampa Council Minutes, March 2, 1887.

⁴⁵ Tampa Council Minutes, July 26, 1887.

⁴⁶ Goldfield (“Pursuing the American Urban Dream,” 68) finds that “Standing committees were another feature of expanding urban government [in nineteenth-century southern cities]. City officials could no longer afford to deal with problems on an ad hoc basis. A permanent bureaucracy was necessary to grapple with the troublesome aspects of early urban life.”

⁴⁷ Tampa Council Minutes, July 26 and 29, 1887.

⁴⁸ Tampa Council Minutes, August 2 and 16, 1887.

⁴⁹ Tampa Council Minutes, September 1887.

Engineer submitted a report of his survey of the Hillsborough River, whereupon the Council decided to advertise for bridge plans and bids.⁵⁰

While a yellow fever epidemic that fall wreaked havoc in the town council's normal operations, by December, plans for the bridge were back in the works. In January, the town council appointed a committee of three councilmen to meet with the Board of County Commissioners regarding ways that the two groups might work together to build such a bridge.⁵¹ Other issues facing the council at this time were getting streetlights and building a water works system.⁵²

On April 23, 1888, the Town Council received a letter from Mr. J.A. Wood and associates (i.e., Henry Plant), of New York City, asking to purchase a plot of land on which to build a hotel.⁵³ A month almost to the day after Wood's letter to the council, the Committee on Wharves, Bridges and Ferries reported that they had received three proposals for the bridge over the Hillsborough River, and accepted that of the King Iron Bridge Company. Two weeks later, the County Commissioners agreed to pay one third of the cost of the new bridge.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Tampa Council Minutes, October 4, 1887.

⁵¹ Tampa Council Minutes, January 24, 1888.

⁵² Tampa Council Minutes, February 3, 1888.

⁵³ Tampa Council Minutes, April 23, 1888

⁵⁴ Tampa Council Minutes, May 22, 1888 and June 5, 1888. The three bids were:

Louis McLean, bid for wood and iron draw	\$12,500
King Iron Bridge Co., bid for iron draw	\$13,800
Smith Iron Bridge Co., bid for iron draw	\$16,752

The King Iron Bridge and Manufacturing Company, of Cleveland, Ohio, was a prominent American bridge company in the late nineteenth century. With rapidly growing railroad lines all across the nation, iron bridge manufacturing was a competitive business. In response to new technology and ardent competition, bridge companies patented their own designs and innovations. Zenas King, founder of the King Iron Bridge Company, had a manufacturing plant in Cleveland where stock parts and designs were made, ensuring rapid fulfillment of customers' orders. The company shipped bridge parts by rail to the construction site for assembly. While King's bridge works used well-engineered designs and the manufacturing process was efficient, what truly put his company ahead of others was his sales force. He created a large web of agents and representatives who placed bids for the company all over the country, wherever a new bridge contract was advertised. The company's 1888 catalog claimed parentage of 10,000 bridges, with 350 new orders each year.⁵⁵ In 1883, King and other bridge company owners created a general pool fund. A percentage of each highway bridge contract was deposited into the fund, and member companies received a share of the proceeds proportionate to the size of the company. This type of fund, or cartel, was illegal following the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act and 1897 and 1898 Supreme Court rulings. The Tampa bridge contract would have been part of this pool.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ David A. Simmons, "Bridge Building on a National Scale: The King Iron Bridge and Manufacturing Company," *IA: The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archaeology* 15, no. 2 (1989): 23-31; Allan King Sloan, "The King Bridge Company through the Decades" (paper presented at the 7th Historic Bridges Conference, Cleveland, Ohio, September 2001), 66.

⁵⁶ Simmons, "Bridge Building," 31-33.

The King Iron Bridge Company began construction soon after the contract was awarded. In June, the Wharves, Bridges, and Ferries committee appointed an inspector of woodwork and piling for the new bridge; in August, the City Engineer was authorized to buy wood and iron braces for the bridge.⁵⁷ Also in August, pestilence struck the city again. The King Iron Bridge Company asked the city for a time extension on their contract, citing the “prevalence of yellow fever,” but the request was denied.⁵⁸ In October, the King Iron Bridge Company informed the mayor that since pile locations were being changed by order of the City Engineer, the city should bear the cost of the alterations. The City Engineer’s reply was that no mistake had been made since he was following King’s plan.⁵⁹ In December 1888, Captain W. M. Black, Captain of Engineers for the U.S. Army, wrote to the mayor about the navigational obstruction being created by the bridge across the river. Black requested that drawings and plans be submitted to the Secretary of War. An agent of the War Department arrived in Tampa to investigate the situation; the council quickly assembled a committee to confer with the government.⁶⁰

Work on the bridge progressed rapidly, and by February 1889, the approaches were ready to be filled with shell. Signal lanterns were purchased, and the city advertised for a bridge keeper.⁶¹ The bridge tender would be needed soon, since the King Bridge Company notified the City Council in late February that construction was finished, and

⁵⁷ Tampa Council Minutes, June 20, 1888 and August 8, 1888.

⁵⁸ Tampa Council Minutes, September 5, 1888.

⁵⁹ Tampa Council Minutes, October 3, 1888.

⁶⁰ Tampa Council Minutes, December 19, 1888.

⁶¹ Each applicant was to state the amount of compensation requested, and the successful bidder would be required to post a \$500 bond and to be present at the bridge at all hours. Thirteen bids were received, with requested compensation ranging from \$74.90 a month to \$30.00 per month. The contract was awarded to Fred Heinkel, the low bidder. Tampa Council Minutes, February 6, 20, and 27, 1889.

the bridge was ready for inspection. The council voted to form a Committee of the Whole (that is, a committee comprised of all of the members of the council) to inspect the bridge. The county commission, the city engineer, and Mr. T.L. Martin of the South Florida Rail Road Company were invited to come along. The Committee's inspection was completed in early March, and the bridge was accepted and opened to the public.⁶² Covington, in *Plant's Palace* writes “. . . Mrs. Jesse Leonardi had her husband drive to the bridge and after riding across in a horse drawn buggy claimed to be the first woman to cross the bridge while riding in a vehicle.”



Figure 2. 1890s photograph of the first Lafayette Street Bridge over the Hillsborough River with the Tampa Bay Hotel in the background (Courtesy the State Archives of Florida).

⁶² Tampa Council Minutes, February 27 and March 4, 1889; Covington, *Plant's Palace*, 59.

That Tampa needed to build the bridge and satisfy Henry Plant was undeniable, as Tampa was a young city desperate for investors. Money for the bridge and other civic improvements came from a municipal bond issue.⁶³ In April 1890, an old dispute over the use of bond money for the bridge re-erupted. Some time previously, I. H. Skinner and other residents of west Hillsborough County had brought a suit to the state supreme court to prohibit the county commission from appropriating money for construction of the Lafayette Street Bridge. Skinner et al.'s contention was that 1) the bridge was in the city, and therefore not a county matter, and 2) not a project that benefited the citizens of unincorporated Hillsborough County. At issue was whether the county could legally build within city limits. The court's finding was the county statute giving the city authority to build bridges within municipal limits did not revoke the county's authority to also build a bridge within city limits. Similarly, since the county had the right to complete such a project on its own, it retained the right to aid the city with bridge construction. The caveat, however, was that the construction project must be to the benefit of the county, and not solely to benefit the city.⁶⁴

For the United States, building public works was a monumental task. Not only did the relatively new country have to create what had not been there before, but also try to keep up with competition from other countries. The United States did not have a large pool of old-money potential investors, as did England or the other European nations.

⁶³ On June 17, 1889, \$95,000 was deposited in the city's coffers, the proceeds of the sale of \$100,000 of bonds, minus the broker's commission. Every penny was immediately earmarked: \$35,000 for payment of outstanding debts, \$32,000 for street improvements, \$10,000 for sidewalks, \$10,000 for construction of public buildings, \$3,000 to purchase land on which to build the public buildings, and \$5,000 for a trash incinerator. "Council and Board," *Tampa Tribune*, 13 June 1890; "An Important Meeting," *Tampa Tribune*, 4 April 1890.

⁶⁴ "The Bridge Case," *Tampa Tribune*, 7 April 1890; "Judgment Reversed," *Tampa Tribune*, 7 April 1890.

Additionally, the Jacksonian view of government was that it was impossible to use federal money to help one region without harming another. Public infrastructure construction was, therefore, a state and local issue.⁶⁵ Because of a shortage of capital and a reluctance to raise taxes, state and local funding of public works was largely speculative, typically large-scale unsecured public debt. In the mid-nineteenth century, high debt and low taxes made many states financially unstable, so that in the 1850s and 1860s, many state legislatures amended or rewrote their constitutions to restrict debt, or to require a public referendum before more debt was incurred. So like the federal government before them, state governments began to limit state funding for public works, while loosening controls on local funding. Predictably, these actions led to an increase in the bonded debt of cities. Most municipal indebtedness was for public works such as railroads, canals, waterworks, parks, sewage systems, city buildings, schools, libraries, etc. Of course, this increase in debt and spending was also a reflection of the growth of cities and increasing immigration. Public infrastructure had become not just a way to stimulate growth, but to improve a city's functionality.⁶⁶

After the Lafayette Street Bridge was built, residential development on the west side of the river boomed.⁶⁷ Whereas it had once been difficult to cross the river, the only means being a ferry with no regularly scheduled service, now a modern iron bridge zipped man and beast alike from one side to the other. O. H. Platt of Hyde Park, Illinois, bought 20

⁶⁵ David C. Perry, "Building the City Through the Back Door: The Politics of Debt, Law, and Public Infrastructure," in *Building the Public City: The Politics, Governance, and Finance of Public Infrastructure*, ed. David C. Perry, Urban Affairs Annual Review 43 (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1995).

⁶⁶ Perry, "Through the Back Door"

⁶⁷ Ernest L. Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County* (St. Augustine, Fla.: The Record Company, 1928), 187.

acres of Robert Jackson's estate and subdivided it. Lots sold quickly, and a middle-class residential community formed on the west side of the river. The easy commute to the central business district attracted professionals and businessmen. The City of Tampa annexed the area between South Boulevard, Grand Central (a major east-west road on the west side of the river that connected with Lafayette Street near the Tampa Bay Hotel) and the river as Upper Hyde Park in 1899.⁶⁸ After Henry Plant's death in 1899, his assets were sold off during vicious family fights over the terms of his will. In 1902, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad bought the Plant system of railroads, and in 1905, the Tampa Bay Hotel became the property of the City of Tampa.⁶⁹

The original Lafayette Street Bridge was built at the request of Henry Plant, who wanted it because it would benefit the Tampa Bay Hotel. While it was in Plant's interest that Tampa survived as a city, construction of single family homes near his luxury resort hotel was not his intended result, nor was it particularly to his benefit. It was merely a collateral effect of the bridge's construction that it encouraged development of new residential neighborhoods across the river. Tampa would have spawned suburbs whether or not the bridge was ever built, but growth would have been more to the north and east. In time, the importance of the hotel faded, but the suburbs continued to prosper.

In the Middle Ages, a common European city form was the *ville-pont*. In the *ville-pont*, the main settlement was on a riverbank with one or more bridges crossing the river to a

⁶⁸ M. C. Leonard, "Historic Overview of the Area of Hyde Park: The Area Section" (Hillsborough Community College, Ybor Campus, Tampa, Florida, 1978), n.p.

⁶⁹ Reynolds, *Henry Plant*.

smaller, less consequential settlement. Usually, the secondary settlement was a suburb across the river from a primary city gate. The connecting bridge was critical to the city and was therefore often fortified, perhaps with a tower; the bridge was also continued at either end with main streets.⁷⁰ Tampa formed a sort of nineteenth-century version of the *ville-pont*, with bridges connecting the main city with the secondary settlements of Hyde Park and West Tampa. Lafayette Street led to city hall and the courthouse on the east side, and to the Tampa Bay Hotel on the west. The street extended past the bridge on the west bank to the Tampa Bay Hotel. Although the bridge was not fortified per se, an armory and customs house stood at each end, the west and east, respectively. The bridge tender's houses also served as symbolic fortifications.

With the arrival of the railroad, Tampa grew at an astonishing rate, its population increasing an incredible 668 percent between 1880 and 1890.⁷¹ The Lafayette Street Bridge did not remain the only general traffic bridge over the Hillsborough River for long. In 1892, Hugh Macfarlane took 200 acres of land he owned on the west side of the river and marketed it as a cigar factory town. A crucial first step was to provide access to his new development called West Tampa. So in 1892, with the help of other investors, Macfarlane built an iron drawbridge at Fortune Street.⁷² One of the original members of

⁷⁰ Kostof, *City Assembled*, 40.

⁷¹ In 1880, Tampa was home to only 720 people; in 1890, there were 5,532 residents. The population nearly tripled again over the next decade, to 15,839 in 1900 (Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* [Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998], 50, Table 3).

⁷² Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida* (St. Petersburg, Fla.: St. Petersburg Print Company, 1950), 204.

the Tampa Board of Trade as well as Tampa's city attorney, Macfarlane used his connections to persuade people to build factories in West Tampa.⁷³

In September 1892, Jones & Cooper (acting for Macfarlane), along with L.B. Skinner, petitioned the city council for permission to build a bridge over the Hillsborough River, connecting Fortune Street to the east and Arch Street to the west. This bridge was to be strong enough to carry a fifteen-ton load, and be wide enough for both streetcars and vehicles. Passage over the bridge would always be free, without expense to the City of Tampa, although the right to charge street railways or omnibus lines was reserved. The petition was granted.⁷⁴ Developers immediately began advertising land for sale on the west side of the river, near the new bridge. Since a street railway would run over the bridge to West Tampa, these developers anticipated that more cigar factories would locate in West Tampa once the bridge opened.⁷⁵ The commercial-civic elite saw the bridge, paid for with private funds, as a good business strategy, and supporting the city's economy was equivalent to good citizenship.⁷⁶ Macfarlane's experience with the Fortune Street Bridge would later color his response to the city's proposed replacement of the old Lafayette Street Bridge.

⁷³ Armando Mendez, *Cuidad de Cigars: West Tampa* (Tampa: Florida Historical Society, 1994) 2-3.

⁷⁴ "The City Dads in Session," *Daily Tampa Tribune*, 24 September 1892.

⁷⁵ Advertisement for Jones & Cooper, *Daily Tampa Tribune*, 29 September 1892.

⁷⁶ "The completion of this bridge will create an immense boom in the value of property in that vicinity, and the energetic gentlemen who are backing the enterprise . . . deserve hearty praise for their business enterprise and public spirits" ("The New Bridge," *The Daily Tampa Tribune*, 8 October 1892).

CHAPTER THREE:

THE SECOND LAFAYETTE STREET BRIDGE

Bridges are designed to meet the conditions of the time when they are built. They are rarely designed for what future conditions might be. Tampa's leaders did not consider things like electricity and streetcars when the Lafayette Street Bridge was built, nor the probable extent of suburban development across the river. The Lafayette Street Bridge did not hold up well. In September 1892, city engineer J.H. Neff reported to the mayor that the west approach of the bridge was in a dangerously poor condition, and recommended that all of the pilings should be replaced. Neff regarded the bridge approach's design to be a "very inferior plan."⁷⁷ That same month the electric company's cable at the bridge burned out, causing the electric company to use a switch connection to connect wires. Every time the drawbridge opened at night, Hyde Park's lights went out until the bridge closed.⁷⁸

The city council passed an ordinance authorizing the issuance of \$350,000 in bonds to take care of the city's outstanding debt, and to pay for street paving, bridge repairs, and other infrastructure needs. However, some citizens felt that it was imprudent for Tampa to be issuing bonds at this time. Opponents of the bonds, led by F. A. Salomonson, filed an injunction, whereupon Judge Barron Phillips found that the ordinance had been drawn

⁷⁷ "The Council Proceedings," *Daily Tampa Tribune*, 10 September 1892.

⁷⁸ "The City Dads in Session," *Daily Tampa Tribune*, 24 September 1892.

illegally. The city then appealed the decision to the state supreme court. Although the city incurred an additional expense of \$2,000 in legal fees to fight the suit, Salomonson claimed that he had only acted upon his patriotic duty as a citizen.⁷⁹

Salomonson was not a city office holder at the time, but he was a mayoral candidate.⁸⁰ Therefore, the bridge and the bonds became an issue in the campaign of March 1895, a heated contest between Salomonson and M.B. Macfarlane. Matthew Biggar Macfarlane, a native of Scotland educated in the northern United States, was a lawyer and later served as Collector of Customs for the District of Tampa. M. B. and Hugh Macfarlane were brothers. M.B. Macfarlane was also quite prominent in Florida's Republican Party, and would be an unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate in 1900 and 1904.⁸¹ F.A. Salomonson was born in Holland, moved to New York in 1882, and came to Florida soon thereafter, working in real estate. He moved to Tampa in 1884, and was the manager of the Tampa Real Estate & Loan Association. In 1892, Salomonson built a home on the bay's shore at the foot of Hyde Park Avenue, and sold the surrounding lots. By 1895, he had served three terms as city councilman. Salomonson won the mayoral race by a margin of 50

⁷⁹ In late April 1895, the Florida Supreme Court modified, but did not reverse, Judge Phillips' decision concerning the municipal bonds. The Court found that the election of July 14, 1894, was legal, but if the bonds were to be issued and sold under the ordinance passed on June 8, 1894, the funds would be unlawfully diverted from their "proper and legal channel," and would be controlled and spent by people who had no legal right to do so. As to the question of whether one illegal clause in an ordinance would necessarily void the entire ordinance, the Supreme Court found that it would not. Therefore, the court modified the Phillips decree so it would apply only to prohibiting the delivery of the bonds to the Board of Trustees described in the ordinance and that the trustees would not receive or control funds from these bonds ("A Great Victory," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 24 April 1895).

⁸⁰ "Fact Vs. Fancy," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 2 March 1895.

⁸¹ Florida Historical Society, *Makers of America: An Historical and Biographical Work by an Able Corps of Writers*, Volume 4, Florida Edition (Atlanta: A.B. Caldwell, 1909), 365-367; "Mother of Two Tampa Men Dies," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 31 October 1907.

votes, and the *Tribune* editorialized: “It is a triumph of the people over the monopolists, over the wreckers, obstructionists, taxeaters, and politicians.”⁸²

Less than two weeks after his election as mayor, Salomonson spoke to the city council about the city’s financial state. The outstanding bonded indebtedness of the city was \$100,000, and the funded indebtedness was also \$100,000, for a total debt of \$200,000. Property in Tampa was assessed at approximately \$5 million, but the city’s script was selling slowly. Salomonson recanted his prior ardent stand against the sale of bonds, while acknowledging his continuing concern about faults in the city charter and inequities in how the funds would be distributed. He recommended that the city first draw up a new charter, then vote a bonds issue, then install a sewer system and build a new bridge at Lafayette Street. The council agreed, and instructed the city attorney to draw up a new charter authorizing a Board of Public Works and changing mayoral elections from annual to biennial events.⁸³

Back in late February 1895, the city council had authorized a loan of \$45,000 to build a new bridge across the Hillsborough River at Lafayette Street. Mayor Easley and the bridge committee hired the Florida Dredging Company.⁸⁴ The Florida Dredging Company, based in Jacksonville, specialized in river and harbor improvements. Milo S.

⁸² Wallace Stovall bought the *Tampa Morning Tribune* in 1893 and was not hesitant to push a political opinion. His main competition was D.B. McKay, who had controlled the *Tampa Daily Times* since 1898, serving as publisher and editor, even while mayor (Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 30). “Col. Knight’s People!,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 6 March 1895; “Mayor F.A. Salomonson,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 23 June 1895; Charles A. Brown and Mary J. Brown, *The Bayshore: Boulevard of Dreams* (San Antonio, Fla.: Rolard Printers, Inc., 1995), 9.

⁸³ “Mayor’s Message,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 16 March 1895.

⁸⁴ “City Dads; They Meet for their Last Time This Evening,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 26 February 1895.

Cartter (also of M.S. Cartter & Co., which supplied the iron work for the bridge) was President of Florida Dredging Company; James E. and Alexander R. Merrill and Arthur Stevens of the Merrill-Stevens Engineering Company were the directors. A northerner, Cartter was a former railroad bridge engineer who in the 1860s had served as general superintendent of bridges in the Department of the Ohio. After the Civil War, Cartter went into the bridge building business in St. Louis with his brother, forming M.S. Cartter & Co. In the 1890s, M.S. Cartter & Co. was building bridges all across the country, including Colorado, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Maryland. In 1887, J. Eugene Merrill, his brother Alexander, and their friend Arthur Stevens formed the Merrill-Stevens Engineering Company in Jacksonville. In the 1890s, the company had a diverse repertoire, including shipbuilding, ship repair, manufacture of ship boilers, fire engine repair, and providing the ironwork for the Duval County jail.⁸⁵ Cartter had bridge experience, and Merrill-Stevens certainly had iron works experience.

The Florida Dredging Company began building the second Lafayette Street Bridge on June 1, 1895. Although there were as many as twenty-five men at a time working on the bridge, Tampan urged the contractors to use more workers and finish the bridge more quickly. Meanwhile, construction became a public spectacle, and the builders asked rubberneckers to stay out of their way.⁸⁶ Bridge building is a complicated undertaking.

Workers cleared old bridge timbers out of the river. The Water Works Water Company

⁸⁵ S. Paul Brown, *Book of Jacksonville, A History* (Poughkeepsie, New York: A.V. Haight, 1895), 147, 173; George E. Buker, *Jacksonville: Riverport-Seaport* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 137; William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, *Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis, A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference*, Volume One (New York: The Southern History Company, 1899), 316-317.

⁸⁶ "Tampa's New Triumph," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 26 March 1895; "Don't Stop on the Foot Way of the Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 June 1895.

re-laid mains on both sides of the river at the bridge. Crews drove pilings for retaining walls, and laid timbers on the pilings. Masons covered the tops of the timbers. Divers built cofferdams around pier emplacements. More workers built a footway 100 feet upstream from the old bridge as a temporary crossing.⁸⁷

At about this time Sheriff Spencer began a campaign to have the county build a road from Tampa to Peru, a small community on the Alafia River in eastern Hillsborough County. Such a road would require a bridge over Six Mile Creek east of Tampa. Spencer suggested that the county could use the old iron span from the Lafayette Street Bridge, recalling that when the bridge was originally built, the county commissioners contributed to the cost.⁸⁸ The county commissioners agreed to ask the city to donate the draw span to the county, and eventually the ironwork from the old bridge was transferred to the county.⁸⁹ In 1900, Hillsborough County commissioners awarded a contract to the Virginia Bridge Iron Company to build a span across the Alafia River between Peru and Riverview, and the new drawbridge used the old Lafayette ironwork.⁹⁰

On May 23, 1895, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* announced that the City had awarded Captain John A. McKay a contract to fill the Lafayette Street Bridge abutments, at a cost of 45 cents per cubic yard.⁹¹ On May 28, the city council met in a special session. One

⁸⁷ "The New Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 July 1895; "City Dads," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 June 1895; "City Council," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 20 July 1895; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 23 June 1895.

⁸⁸ "A Suggestion," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 28 February 1895.

⁸⁹ "County's Solons," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 6 March 1895.

⁹⁰ Norma Goolsby Frazier, "Pioneering on the Lower Alafia and the Early Settlement of Peru," *Sunland Tribune* 18, no. 1 (1992): 84-92.

⁹¹ "City Brieflets," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 23 May 1895.

issue brought up by Mayor Salomonson was the question of how McKay had been given this abutment contract for 45 cents when a Mr. Black was doing the same type of work for only 20 cents. Secondly, the city had closed the Lafayette Street Bridge without proper public notice (the contract for city printing was awarded to one paper, but the notice appeared in the other). Thirdly, partial demolition had rendered the bridge unusable. Salomonson's opinion was that the only thing to do was finish the work as quickly as possible. Bridge issues were only part of a long litany of mayoral complaints about how the city's business was being handled: the contracts for city improvements were not on file at the city archives, the contracts had not been signed by the mayor (as required), proper public notices had not been filed for work to be done, correct public approval of paving projects as specified by state law had not been obtained, various city departments had not been filing required reports, there were no records of what lots had been sold in the city cemetery, etc.⁹² While some of these issues are minor and others more significant, together they paint the picture of a small-town government overwhelmed by growth.

In June 1895, the municipal government enacted the new city charter, and almost immediately, the city council approved an ordinance calling for the sale of \$350,000 in bonds. Construction work at the Lafayette Street Bridge halted on December 7, 1895, when the city cut off funding pending the results of the bond issue.⁹³ The election results were a resounding 451 yeas versus 10 nays, showing an electorate strongly in favor of the

⁹² "Special Meeting," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 29 May 29 1895.

⁹³ "City Council!," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 8 June 1895; "Tampa's New Triumph," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 26 March 1896.

bonds. At the January 1, 1896, city council meeting, Councilman Wall proposed the following resolution:

Whereas, the city bridge across the Hillsborough River at the foot of Lafayette street is unfinished and in its present condition is of no service to the public, and

Whereas, the appropriation for the building of said bridge has been exhausted and the city council is powerless to raise funds with which to complete same, and

Whereas, the completion of said bridge will be a public improvement in said city of Tampa.

Therefore, be it resolved that the aforesaid unfinished bridge across the Hillsborough river be turned over to the commissioners of Public Works with instructions to finish said bridge, and that an appropriation of \$15,000 be and the same is hereby made out of the \$25,000 raised by bonds for general municipal improvements, and that said commissioners be requested to finish said bridge as soon as possible out of the first money coming in to their hands from the sale of bonds.⁹⁴

Councilmen Ramirez and Pons, of the Fourth Ward, adamantly opposed Wall's resolution, Ramirez asserting that it was unfair to set a large amount aside for an improvement that would only benefit two wards (the first and the third). Pons added that he felt it unfair to take money from one ward and spend it in another, skeptically adding that there was no guarantee that the bridge would not end up costing \$100,000.

Councilmen Holmes, Dorsey, and Wall countered Ramirez and Pons, arguing that the bridge would indeed benefit the entire city; additionally, if the "ward plan" of appropriations were to be followed, no improvements would ever be made anywhere in the city.⁹⁵ Regardless of whether finishing the new Lafayette Street Bridge would benefit

⁹⁴ "More Money for the Lafayette Street Bridge is Appropriated," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 2 January 1896.

⁹⁵ Emilio Pons was a prominent Ybor City cigar manufacturer. "More Money for the Lafayette Street Bridge is Appropriated," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 2 January 1896; "E. Pons & Co.," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 10 April 1895.

the rest of the city, Hyde Park residents were certainly anxious for its completion. For them, the temporary bridge was “an eyesore and a necessary evil.” The bridge was a jinx for the towboat *Mabie*, which ran into it not once, but twice in a single week.⁹⁶

The optimism felt in City Hall and Hyde Park after the resounding approval of the bonds quickly evaporated. Tampa city councilmen had yet to hear anything from W. N. Coler & Company, the New York bankers who had agreed to sell Tampa’s bonds. As of January 30, the city had received no money and no explanation from Coler & Co.⁹⁷ The city council approached Henry B. Plant asking the Plant Investment Company to loan the \$15,000 needed to finish the bridge; Plant turned them down. Plant rarely contributed money towards utility construction or public works in cities served by his railroads or where he had hotels, and avoided political or close personal associations in those cities.⁹⁸

In mid February 1896, the city received its first installment from the bonds of \$11,000, and the bridge builders resumed work.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, Tampa’s struggles with Coler & Co. continued for some time. The *Tribune* railed against Coler for months, accusing the company of hampering Tampa’s growth: “Instead of muddy streets and gloomy countenances, the people would be buoyant with bright anticipation of great improvements.”¹⁰⁰ In December 1897, Pinnel & Co. of Chicago offered to take the entire issue, but the Board of Public Works rejected the offer because the deal would make it

⁹⁶ “Broke the Bridge,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 9 January 1896.

⁹⁷ “Still No Sign,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 9 January 1896; “No Bond Money Yet,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 30 January 1896.

⁹⁸ “Plant’s Pocket May Be Opened for Tampa’s Unfinished Bridge,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 6 February 1896; Braden, *Architecture of Leisure*, 38.

⁹⁹ “That Bridge,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 13 February 1896.

¹⁰⁰ “Curbstone Bond Brokers,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 30 July 1896.

impossible to finish the proposed sewage system before quarantine regulations against excavations were to be enforced the following spring.¹⁰¹ Finally, in early 1898, the city announced that Rudolph Kleybolte & Co., of Cincinnati, through New York bankers and brokers Pierson & McCutcheson, had purchased the remainder of the bonds.¹⁰²

At the end of February, Councilman Brengle of the bridge committee reported that the new bridge should open within a week.¹⁰³ Brengle's estimate proved to be a little optimistic, but on March 21, 1896, the second Lafayette Street Bridge did open to the public. In the middle of a Saturday morning, with little ceremony, workers cast aside the barriers at the feet of the bridge. The first carriage to cross was that of Mr. Hathaway, Manager of the Tampa Bay Hotel, who was accompanied by F. de C. Sullivan, Henry Plant's private secretary. Together Hathaway and Sullivan drove to Mayor Salomonsen's office, where City Engineer Neff and councilmen Brengle, Wall, and Beckwith joined them. These men then went to the Tampa Bay Hotel for an elegant lunch. Although few people were present at the bridge's opening, word quickly spread and that afternoon a solid stream of wagons, carriages, and pedestrians flowed across the river.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ "Curious the Course," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 16 December 1897.

¹⁰² "Cash Comes to the City," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 20 January 1898; "Cancelled the Contract," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 February 1898.

¹⁰³ "Solon's Secret Session," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 27 February 1896.

¹⁰⁴ "Tampa's New Triumph: The Third Ward at Last Re-United to the City," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 26 March 1896. William H. Beckwith, a native of Georgia, had lived in Tampa since 1878. In 1886, Beckwith went into the real estate business with Col. S.A. Jones. Later he partnered with W. B. Henderson, G.C. Warren, and W.D. Whitaker, variously (Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County*, 236). Samuel Finley Brengle, a native of Illinois, had been a stock farmer in Minnesota before moving to Orlando in 1890. Soon thereafter, he came to Tampa and ran a contracting and building moving company. He was a member of the City Council for three years (Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County*, 194-195).

A few days later, city leaders formally dedicated the bridge, with many flourishes. The Fifth Battalion Band played as eighteen mounted policemen and three carriages of dignitaries neared the bridge. Crowds of spectators filled the approaches. The hose wagon, engine, and hook and ladder truck from Station One added to the festive atmosphere, as Fire Chief Harris' daughter Leslie waved to the crowds from amidst a mass of flowers. Precisely at the center of the bridge, the parade halted, as Reverend W. W. DeHart rose in his carriage, uncovered his head, and spoke: "In the name of the commonwealth of Tampa I now declare this bridge open on this the 24th day of March, 1896, and call on you one and all to join in giving three cheers and a tiger." And so the parade continued to the grounds of the Tampa Bay Hotel where DeHart spoke from a balcony, heralding the bridge as tangible evidence of Tampa's manifest destiny.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ "The City Congratulates Itself upon the Completion of the New Bridge," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 26 March 1896. "Tiger" was nineteenth-century American slang for a growl at the end of a cheer. Rev. DeHart was minister at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Tampa ("Creating a House of Worship," *Tampa Tribune*, 17 October 2004).



Figure 3. Postcard image of the second Lafayette Street Bridge, facing south, or downstream. The building with the smokestacks near the center of the image on the river's shore is the Tampa Electric Company's plant (from the author's collection).



Figure 4. View of the Hillsborough River and downtown Tampa from the Tampa Bay Hotel, with the second Lafayette Street Bridge to the right in the photograph, circa 1900 (Courtesy the State Archives of Florida).

On March 28, 1896, the first streetcar crossed the bridge. Mrs. C. W. Chapin, owner of the Consumer's Electric Light and Street Railway Company, gathered a party in her custom-made parlor coach, which traveled from Ballast Point, to Hyde Park, then across the bridge, to Franklin Street and thence to Ybor City. By time the car turned to go back, dusk had fallen and the partygoers shot Roman candles from the trolley. On board the Chapin coach that day were Mr. and Mrs. Chapin, their two daughters, F. Ward Chapin, Mayor Salomonson, J.A. Rummell, T. C. Taliaferro, Peter O. Knight, H.C. Cooper, and G.D. Munsing.¹⁰⁶ The Consumers Electric Company's streetcar line encouraged development along the bay towards Ballast Point. Many of the new homes being built were elegant mansions for Tampa's elite, and the streetcar made it possible for them to escape the city.¹⁰⁷ The streetcar line benefited greatly from the Lafayette Street Bridge, and was of particular interest to the Chapins, who lived a mansion on the Bayshore. Consumer's had a contract with the city allowing the streetcar line to use the bridge, and

¹⁰⁶ "Chapin's Car Crosses," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 2 April 1896; "Coler & Co. Contented," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 23 January 1896. Thomas Carson Taliaferro, a native of Virginia, moved to Florida as a young man and went into banking. From clerk of Tampa's first bank in 1883, Taliaferro rose to be president of First National Bank in Tampa from 1903 to 1927 (Grismer, *Tampa*, 337-338). J.A. Rummel (or Rumril) was a Kansas City cigar broker who later opened a factory in West Tampa (Mendez, *Cuidad de Cigars*, 116).

¹⁰⁷ "Balmy Bay Breezes," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 13 August 1896. Tampa's first streetcar line opened in 1885 as the Tampa Street Railway Company, using wood-burning engines to pull the cars along narrow-gauge tracks. The cars ran from Franklin Street in the downtown business district to Ybor City, facilitating rapid geographical expansion of the city along the way. However, the streetcars did not cross the river at that time. In the 1880s, electric trolleys with overhead wires were developed, and privately owned electric companies across the nation went into the urban transportation business. In 1892, the Tampa Street Railway Company (TSRC) merged with the Florida Electric Company to form the Tampa Street Railway and Power Company. In that same year, several Tampa businessmen, including Peter O. Knight, formed the competing Tampa Suburban Company (TSC). When the TSRC sued to keep TSC from operating, the TSC backers organized another company, the Consumers Electric Light and Street Railway Company. Via a rate war against TSRC, Consumers became the leading trolley line in Tampa, buying out its competitor in June 1894. Consumers itself went into receivership and 1899 became what is today Tampa Electric Company (Robert Lehman, "Streetcars in Tampa and St. Petersburg: A Photographic Essay," *Tampa Bay History* 19, no. 1 [1997]: 37-51).

requiring the company to pay a portion of the cost to repair the approaches. The contract dated March 13, 1896, provided for payment of \$100 per year rental.¹⁰⁸

The bridge had not been long open before public opinion turned from “crowning achievement” to something less favorable. On April 9, 1896, the *Weekly Tribune* reported that a well-known local architect had said the approaches to the bridge were dangerous -- dangerous for the bridge. The architect’s opinion was that the loose, porous sand covering the approaches would soak up too much water in a heavy rainfall to be safe. City Engineer Neff dismissed the architect’s claim, saying that rain would actually be beneficial because it would pack the sand solid.¹⁰⁹ However, the new bridge jolted so much under Consumer’s heavy double-deck car that the streetcar company had to discontinue the car’s use. Consumer’s altered the streetcar schedule until new hardware was added to the bridge, correcting the fault.¹¹⁰ Mr. Knight, a civil engineer with South Florida Railroad, reported to the City Council a month later that the bridge was sound.¹¹¹ But evidently the sand *was* a problem, and in the summer of 1896, the Board of Public Works hired W. H. Kendrick to pave the approaches. As a local contractor, one of Kendrick’s best-known construction projects was the Hillsborough County courthouse. A third-generation Tampan, Kendrick was also involved in the city’s early streetcar companies. This was the first brick pavement laid in Tampa.¹¹² At the time, most Tampa

¹⁰⁸ “Dog Duties Discussed,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 3 November 1898.

¹⁰⁹ “About the Approaches,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 9 April 1896.

¹¹⁰ “New Schedule,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 16 April 1896.

¹¹¹ “City Fathers Convened,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 21 May 1896.

¹¹² Kendrick was to pave from Plant Avenue to the bridge on the west side, and from the bridge’s steel work eastward 185 feet towards the South Florida Railroad track. Kendrick’s subcontractor was Robert F. Bettis. The aggregate cost was estimated at \$3,100, and the work was not finished until mid-November. “City Council Cullings,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 28 May 1896; “Bridge Approaches,” *Tampa Weekly*

streets were either unpaved or covered with cypress wood blocks. The blocks were poor pavers, as they rotted and had to be removed after a few years. The Good Road Movement was beginning to take shape nationwide, and many Tampa city council meetings discussed the cost/benefit aspects of paving streets with cypress, crushed rock, clay, or brick.¹¹³

Urban transportation was a critical issue in the late nineteenth century. Before telephones and streetcars became commonplace, people relied on foot power or horsepower for daily communication and transportation. Considering that a person might reasonably walk three miles in one hour, and that relatively few city dwellers could afford to keep a horse and carriage, cities necessarily stayed compact.¹¹⁴ The introduction of streetcars, whether electrically powered or drawn by a horse, allowed people to settle further away from the city center, since they now had a viable form of daily transportation. Horse-drawn cars could travel as fast as six miles per hour, but reality did not always match this ideal. Therefore, the maximum commute for laborers had been limited functionally to a 2.5-mile radius from the workplace. Electric streetcars allowed workers to live further away

Tribune, 4 June 1896; "Approaches to be Paved," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 30 July 1896; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 12 November 1896; Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County*, 185; Grismer, *Tampa*.

¹¹³ "Street Paving," *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 13 August 1896.

¹¹⁴ Although Boston was an older and larger and more Northern city than Tampa in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, useful comparisons can still be drawn between the two. For example, like Tampa, Boston's expansion was geographically constricted by marshes, rivers, and the ocean. Suburban growth in both cities depended, to varying degrees, on filling these marshes and tidal flats and building sea walls (Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900*, Second Edition [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978], 14, 17).

from factories (or stores), and factories to be built farther away from concentrations of workers' residences.¹¹⁵

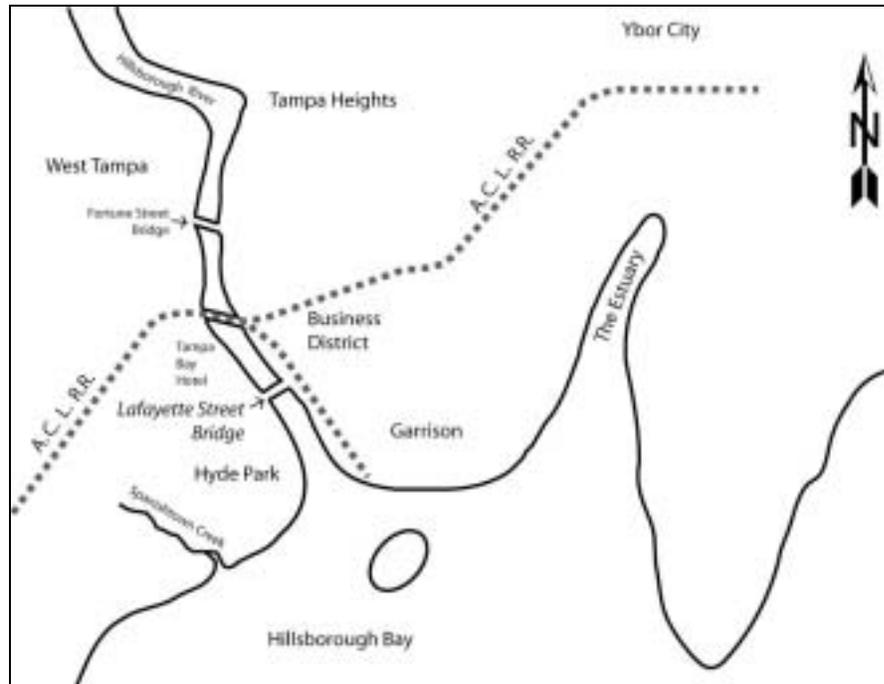


Figure 5. Tampa, 1900-1910.

Typically, streetcar company owners across the country in the 1880s and 1890s thought that profit and success lay in continually increasing ridership; therefore, they extended service areas without much attention to cost/revenue/expense ratios of creating and running more and longer lines. While streetcar company managers congratulated themselves on the fact that streetcars allowed rapid suburbanization, they did not necessarily intend to determine the direction or form in which that development occurred.

¹¹⁵ Allan R. Pred, *The Spatial Dynamics of U.S. Urban-Industrial Growth, 1800-1914: Interpretations and Theoretical Essays*, Cambridge The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 55-56.



Figure 6. Postcard showing trolley crossing the second Lafayette Street Bridge (from the author's collection).

Even with streetcars, however, people did not move that far away from the city, as they still needed to be reachable by messengers and wagon-borne deliveries.¹¹⁶

Electric streetcars quickly gained popularity and came to symbolize a city's value. Streetcars were not prohibitively expensive to build and had lower operating costs than a horsecar line, so local businessmen were willing to invest in new companies. In 1887, there were only thirty-five miles of track and sixty electric streetcars in the entire country; however, by 1890, 1,262 miles of track and 2,350 cars were in operation.¹¹⁷ The growth of street railways was most notable in smaller cities, those with populations under 50,000,

¹¹⁶ Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 26, 36.

¹¹⁷ Pred, *Spatial Dynamics*, 56; Frank Rowsome, Jr., *Trolley Car Treasury: A Century of American Streetcars – Horsecars, Cable Cars, Interurbans, and Trolleys* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1961), 19-28, 81, 95-97.

such as Tampa. In these cities, street railway mileage increased 453 percent between 1880 and 1890.¹¹⁸

Middle-class workers moved to the suburbs, believing that a country setting was best for families. Truly wealthy, upper-class families could afford to have two houses, one in the city, and one far out in the country, so it was the middle class who benefited from the streetcars the most. The middle class still needed to go to jobs in the city each day, and could only afford one house. However, if their work hours were consistent, their jobs were stable, and their routes to and from work remained unchanged each day, a streetcar line was all that was needed.¹¹⁹ Whereas new development in southern cities in the 1880s clustered in downtown areas near railroads, with streetcars, cities expanded away from central business districts in the 1890s. Streetcars were particularly desirable in rapidly growing cities with little previously existing infrastructure, cities like Tampa.¹²⁰

The history of electric companies and street railway companies in Tampa is a web of competing businessmen and corporate mergers. The original Tampa Electric Company formed in 1887, and installed the first electric lights in the city. In March 1890, the company was sold to a syndicate headed by J. Rush Ritter, a Philadelphian, and the Florida Electric Company was formed.¹²¹ In 1892, Florida Electric Company merged with the Tampa Street Railway Company, which had operated a narrow-gauge line

¹¹⁸ Charles H. Cooley, "Statistics of Street Railway Transportation," in *Report on Transportation Business of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890. Part I: Transportation by Land*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 681.

¹¹⁹ Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*.

¹²⁰ Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 72-75.

¹²¹ Tampa Electric Company (TECO), "70 Years Strong – Tampa Electric Company, 1899-1969," *TECO News* 9, no. 10 (1969), 2.

between Tampa and Ybor City since 1886. Also in 1892, Peter O. Knight, with the financial backing of New York financier Chester W. Chapin, organized the Tampa Suburban Company, intending to build an electric street railway from Ybor City to Ballast Point. Because private organizations operating public works tended to develop monopolies, public agencies frequently required companies to obtain a local franchise agreement, in this case, from the Tampa city council. The Tampa Street Railway Company was embroiled in a dispute with Tampa Suburban over franchise rights to operate a street railway in Tampa, which ultimately resulted in Tampa Suburban winning both a Supreme Court decision and the right to build lines in Tampa.¹²² In an attempt to circumvent injunctions against construction while litigation was pending, Tampa Suburban backers formed a new company, the Consumer's Electric Light & Railway Company. Tampa gave Consumer's a franchise for streetlights and transportation, and in late 1892, the company built a line from Tampa to Ybor City, and from Tampa to Ballast Point. However, no streetcar tracks crossed the river at that time.¹²³

Chester W. Chapin and his wife Emelia contributed both flair and capital to their winter home of Tampa. Emelia, who had inherited a fortune even before she married the wealthy Chester, was the majority stockholder in Consumer's. Her private streetcar, the *Fair Florida*, could be seen parked next to the Chapins' Bayshore mansion whenever she was not out shopping or at a party. Under the Chapins' direction, Consumer's Electric

¹²² The Tampa Street Railway had been founded in 1885 by Eduardo Manrara and Vincente Martinez Ybor; Manrara and Ybor were also stockholders in Consumers. Armstrong, *History of Public Works*, 15; TECO, "70 Years Strong," 2; Arsenio M. Sanchez, "Tampa's Early Lighting and Transportation," *Sunland Tribune* 17, no. 1(1991): 27-38.

¹²³ TECO, "70 Years Strong," 5.

built a pastoral amusement park at Ballast Point, with a Japanese-style pavilion for dances and rustic walks through tropical landscapes.¹²⁴ This was a common practice for streetcar companies, which built amusement parks at the terminal end of a line as a way to attract more riders, especially on what would otherwise be low usership days such as Sunday.



Figure 7. Photograph taken in 1906 from the chimney of the Tampa Electric Company's plant on the Hillsborough River, facing north (Courtesy the State Archives of Florida).

Peter Oliphant Knight, the Chapins' business partner, was not originally from Tampa. In 1885, Knight began to practice law in Fort Myers, while throwing himself into civic affairs, organizing a town band, campaigning for the town's incorporation, serving as

¹²⁴ Brown and Brown, *The Bayshore*, 3-4.

mayor, and convincing Thomas Edison to open a winter laboratory in the then-isolated south Florida city. When Lee County was created around Fort Myers, a dispute over Knight's proposed salary as the new county attorney led to the elimination of the position. Knight moved to Tampa, where he served as county solicitor and state attorney, and helped organize the Exchange National Bank and the Tampa Gas Company.¹²⁵ In short, Peter O. Knight was one of the premier business elites who guided the city's fortunes. Knight was conservative and anti-labor, and his business interests often influenced local political decisions.¹²⁶

In 1893, the Tampa Streetcar Railway switched from steam locomotives to electric trolleys. A bitter rate war between competing lines to Ybor City eventually put Tampa Streetcar Railway out of business. Consumer's bought their failed competitor. An increasing demand for electricity led Consumer's to build a hydroelectric dam across the Hillsborough River, but in December 1898, the dam was dynamited by cattlemen upset by flooded rangeland. While the dam was being repaired, many streetcars were shut down and streetlights turned out to conserve electricity. Between the rate war and the dam damage, Consumer's faced rough economic waters and was sold in October 1899. With the demise of Consumer's, the Chapins left Tampa. A new Tampa Electric Company was formed by Stone & Webster of Boston. George Baldwin of Savannah was

¹²⁵ Patricia Bartlett, "Why Did Peter O. Knight Leave?," *South Florida History Magazine* 18, no. 4 (1991): 8-10; Kyle S. Van Landingham, *In Pursuit of Justice: Law and Lawyers in Hillsborough County, 1846-1996*, (Tampa, Fla.: The Hillsborough County Bar Association, 1996), 30.

¹²⁶ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 30-31. As told by an old Tampa newspaperman, Stovall, editor of the *Tribune*, preferred the "down" style of capitalization, wherein few words were capitalized (i.e., "Lafayette street bridge" rather than "Lafayette Street Bridge"). Supposedly Stovall would shout, "The *Tribune* uses the lower case – only Jesus Christ and Peter O. Knight are capitalized!" (Nancy L. Rachels, "Peter O. Knight: Pioneer and Spokesman for Florida," *Sunland Tribune* 5, no. 1 [1979]: 2-7.).

President, Peter O. Knight was Vice President, Elliot Wadsworth was Secretary, and C.A. Stone was Treasurer. At the time there were just over twenty miles of trolley tracks allowing travelers to go anywhere in Tampa for five cents.¹²⁷

Two classmates at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1880s started the electrical engineering firm Stone & Webster. During the financial panic of 1893, small and young electrical companies across the nation lacked capital but had plenty of competition. Many of these companies relied on common stock and mortgage bonds to raise capital, and then found it difficult to pay the dividends. To pay off the loans, companies liquidated their securities, relinquishing control to investment bankers. Selling the securities required companies to reorganize, with an appraisal of the company's value. From the 1890s into the early twentieth century, Stone & Webster appraised thousands of companies across the United States and Canada. Soon, Stone & Webster began taking over failing companies and making them profitable. At the same time as they were buying Tampa Electric, Stone & Webster were acquiring companies in Terra Haute, Seattle, and Minneapolis. Soon, they owned electric companies all across the continent.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Brown and Brown, *The Bayshore*, 8; TECO, "70 Years Strong," 5-6; David Neal Keller, *Stone & Webster, 1889-1989: A Century of Integrity and Service* (New York: Stone & Webster, Inc., 1989), 21-31. George Baldwin's association with Stone & Webster began in 1898. Baldwin, also a graduate of M.I.T., was working as a fertilizer manufacturer in Savannah. He also had a growing interest in electricity. Baldwin hired Stone & Webster to evaluate an electrical plant in Savannah that was for sale. As a result of that evaluation, the plant was purchased and Baldwin with Stone & Webster formed the Savannah Electric Company.

¹²⁸ Keller, *Stone & Webster*, 21-31. For more information on the 1893 panic, see Elmus Wicker, *Banking Panics of the Gilded Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Cities in the mid to late nineteenth century grew rather randomly, without the zoning regulations taken for granted today. As long as the city was squeezed into a central core, a certain degree of social integration remained, with workers and their managers both living close to work sites. However, several things happened in the late nineteenth century to change these historical residential and commercial patterns. An increasing urban population necessitated an increase in the housing supply, leading to speculative land developments on the edges of cities, and new developments in mass transportation made these changes possible. The upper classes, the elite, were the first to move out of the city. As mass transportation improved and costs to the user decreased, these new residential areas came within the reach of the middle classes. New communities tended to attract like-minded people, and therefore became considerably more homogeneous with regards to class, wealth, and ethnic composition than the central city had been. Now that these neighborhoods, or communities, shared a common space and common interests and relied on the same local amenities, it was only natural that they should act as a group in local politics. In cities at this time, the business class especially used their influence in municipal government to sway the social, political, and spatial aspects of the city in their own favor.¹²⁹

The suburbs were the accumulation of large utilities deciding to provide service, and investors deciding to subdivide the land, and of hundreds of individuals deciding to build. Consider one person making the significant personal investment required to build a new house. Then, as now, the decision required careful consideration of several factors: the

¹²⁹ Mohl, *The New City*, 28-32.

cost of the land, proximity to work or to transportation lines, whether city services were available, who else lived in the neighborhood, the condition of the streets, and what the resale value of the property might be.¹³⁰

In Tampa, the Lafayette Street Bridge promoted suburban development on the Interbay Peninsula, south and west of the Hillsborough River. The Fortune Street Bridge, which crossed the river further to the north, served West Tampa. West Tampa was a town unto itself, complete with factories and stores and housing; its government was even separate from Tampa's. West Tampa was not a suburb of Tampa in the late nineteenth or even early twentieth centuries. On the other hand, Hyde Park, the Bayshore, and other neighborhoods accessible by the Lafayette Street Bridge were most decidedly Tampa suburbs.

West Tampa was a satellite city, a city that materialized when factory owners looked outside of the city core for less expensive land, lower taxes, and less inhibiting regulations. It was not unusual in the late nineteenth century for new cities to be planned and promoted by highly motivated individuals, usually inspired by the promise of profit.¹³¹ Hugh Macfarlane, West Tampa's founder, also served as mayor and chief booster. As a cigar-manufacturing center, West Tampa needed good transportation connections to Tampa and Ybor City. These connections were so important that in 1892 the Fortune Street Bridge was built upstream from both Plant's railroad bridge and the

¹³⁰ Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 38.

¹³¹ Mohl, *The New City*, 62-73.

Lafayette Street Bridge, and by the summer of 1893, West Tampa had streetcar service.¹³²



Figure 8. A circa 1905 photograph of the Hillsborough River waterfront, taken facing south from the Lafayette Street Bridge (Courtesy the State Archives of Florida).

¹³² Sanchez, "Tampa's Early Lighting."

PROGRESSIVE REFORMS

Like other growing cities across the nation at the beginning of the new century, Tampa threw itself into Progressive reforms, a reaction to increasing urbanization and industrial growth. In Tampa, successful reform efforts combined personal interests with the promise for greater wealth either for businesses or the community as a whole. As Frosell noted in his study of the Progressive Era in Tampa, for reforms to be successful in this city, the reforms had to “appeal to self-interest through either improved business or community wealth.”¹³³ Although the cigar industry insured that Tampa faced such issues as immigration, labor strikes, and political radicalism, Anglo businessmen were willing to help cigar factory owners if that is what it took to develop Tampa as a regional trade center. If increasing sanitation or decreasing prostitution brought new companies to town, then that is what city leaders would do. Frosell does note, however, that bureaucracy was seldom proposed as a solution. Tampanians were unwilling to raise taxes to provide improvements, including public works projects. Therefore, to be implemented, reforms had to appear likely to increase Tampa’s wealth, whether by enhancing markets or by increasing property values. Since Tampa had twice as many real estate agents per resident than other American cities, reforms that could be linked with rising property values won quick approval.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, Tampa was fiscally

¹³³ Kim Jules Frosell, “Booster Altruism: Motivations and Restraints on Progressive Reforms in Tampa, Florida, 1900-1921” (master’s thesis, University of South Florida, Tampa, 1994), 5.

¹³⁴ Frosell, “Booster Altruism,” 5-7.

conservative and a hesitation to raise taxes that was more of a desire to reduce taxes kept many projects from thriving or even happening.

Real estate investors tended to be upper middle class merchants and lawyers who needed investment options for the capital accumulated through hard work. It was not uncommon for real estate speculators to found and fuel the small street railway companies organizing nationwide, since the rails brought in potential customers. Nineteenth-century frontiers required vast sums of capital to build a modern infrastructure from nothing, and the demand for domestic capital often overwhelmed supply, leading American bankers to lend to short-term users rather than long-term. Smaller investors looked to the mortgage market, the stock exchange being too volatile for any but the extremely wealthy. Thus businessmen and urban professionals invested in the suburban development of the cities they led. These men were able to use their exert knowledge of their community to reap a fairly certain capital reward for promoting the city's growth.¹³⁵

D.B. McKay of the *Tampa Daily Times* and Wallace Stovall of the *Tampa Tribune* also supported reforms intended to create business growth in Tampa. After all, they themselves were businessmen, and growth meant more readers and more advertisers.¹³⁶ McKay was Old Tampa, the third generation of his family to live here. Stovall was a Kentuckian who moved to Tampa in 1893, representative of the southern businessmen who came to Tampa at a relatively young age and found success. McKay and Stovall's papers regularly exhorted readers to support various Progressive reforms – street paving,

¹³⁵ Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 117-118.

¹³⁶ Frosell, "Booster Altruism."

sewer systems, public hospitals, etc. – but their intent could not truly be said to have been completely altruistic.

The new century also brought a new awareness of urban planning in the form of the City Beautiful movement. Primarily a middle-class and upper-middle-class movement, proponents of the City Beautiful sought to create an ideal civic environment through architecture and public improvements. The hope was that an improved physical environment would create better citizens among the urban masses, which in turn would increase worker productivity.¹³⁷ In Tampa, the City Beautiful movement found expression in a street paving program, a new city hall, Union Station, the Bayshore Boulevard, a new water works, new parks and playgrounds, and the third incarnation of the Lafayette Street Bridge. However, Tampa did not adopt a formal City Beautiful program, rather hoping that piecemeal projects sponsored by the city or the elite would inspire others to follow their example. It was a large task to beautify an industrial city, where the waterfront was already filled with docks and warehouses, and where the pursuit of personal success often overruled the larger good.

City Beautiful projects typically involved formal voter approval, whether through bond elections or election of public officials. Once an electorate approved a project, the expert architects and engineers cooperated to build the project, and a committee of citizens or elected officials oversaw the work. Tampa did not indulge in the comprehensive citywide planning advocated by the City Beautiful movement; however, works such as

¹³⁷ William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1.

the bridge show that in Tampa, the movement was “an ideal comprehended if not always achieved.”¹³⁸

Political factionalism characterized the first decade of the twentieth century in Tampa. Whereas the city’s leadership had traditionally been white, protestant, southern, and male, in 1900 the reformist Citizen’s League took the upper hand. The Citizen’s League formed sometime around 1898 as a coalition of some of the elite and some of the unions. The League called for, among other things, making corporations pay their city taxes. Pro-growth businessmen and politicians had been in the habit of bestowing generous tax breaks to corporations as an incentive to come to or stay in Tampa. A side effect was a shortage of revenue for the city.¹³⁹ Francis L. Wing was the Citizen’s League’s successful mayoral candidate, campaigning to eliminate the poll tax and increase the number of lower income voters. The Citizen’s League also advocated public ownership of the water works and the electric plant, and soon found itself in opposition to the Tampa Board of Trade, which had previously had the support of the local government. In 1901, the city council asked the city attorney to take action against Tampa Electric for city ordinance violations. The city council also approved a franchise for a competing trolley company and power plant. Taking it further, the Citizen’s League suggested changing the city charter, which had been written primarily by Mayor Frank C. Bowyer, City Attorney C. C. Whitaker, and Peter O. Knight. Proposed changes included eliminating the Commission of Public Works. The Tampa Board of Trade halted these

¹³⁸ Wilson, *City Beautiful Movement*, 1-2.

¹³⁹ Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 33.

charter changes, but an exasperated Peter O. Knight accused the Citizen's League of being anarchists.¹⁴⁰

In 1902, a group of men opposed to the Citizen's League formed the Good Government League, and won the mayor's post with a strong candidate. James McKay, Jr., was a member of an old Tampa family and had served two terms in the Florida senate. The city's commercial and civic leaders were split in support of the Citizen's League and the Good Government League, but so were the city's labor leaders and unions. The Good Government League won by saying that capital and public improvements would be made possible if labor and capital would work together. The Good Government League did not act as an organized group in the 1904 elections, although mayoral-candidate Salomonsen had the support of many former members. Salomonsen was also pro-growth and pro-public investment.¹⁴¹ Shortly after Salomonson took office, he gave a speech to the City Council about the issues facing the city, including poor police and fire protection, strained relations with the light and water companies, and the need for a city purchasing department. A main section of his speech concerned the Lafayette Street Bridge. Calling for extensive repairs to the failing bridge, Salomonson was careful to say that when the bridge did not work it was more than just an inconvenience for the Third Ward. If the

¹⁴⁰ Robert Kerstein, "Two Decades of Political Conflict – 1900-1920: Tampa's Politics in a League of its Own" *Sunland Tribune* 26 (2000): 9-20. In note 79, on page 20, Kerstein observes, "A state act in 1889 authorized the creation of a Board of Public Works for the City of Tampa. A special legislative act of 1899 amended the charter of the City of Tampa and changed the name of the Board to the Commission of Public Works."

¹⁴¹ Kerstein, "Two Decades," 10-12.

bridge failed, it disrupted the streetcar lines and schedules and was an inconvenience for the whole city; therefore, the City Council should find the money to fix it.¹⁴²

In 1910, D. B. McKay formed the White Municipal Party that was to take him to the mayor's seat from 1910 to 1920, and again from 1927 to 1931. Donald Brenham (D.B.) McKay was a native of Tampa, born in 1868, the son of Captain John and Mary Jane McCarty McKay. His grandfather was the pioneering Captain James McKay, making his blood as blue as possible in Tampa. D.B. McKay started what would be a lifetime in the newspaper business at the age of 14, and when the *Tampa Times* was established in 1891, McKay was the city editor. By 1898, he owned nearly all of the *Times'* stock.¹⁴³

McKay's political goal was to garner support from both what Kerstein terms the "commercial-elite" of Tampa and the working classes. To do this, McKay advocated public ownership of utilities, municipal ownership of the docks, and public improvements intended to increase growth. McKay also fought against striking factory workers, an effort in which he was joined by Peter O. Knight, Hugh Macfarlane, and Wallace Stovall. Additionally, the White Municipal Party was a local-level Democratic party that systematically and purposefully excluded African Americans from participation in local elections.¹⁴⁴ Disenfranchisement was one means by which the White Municipal Party could control election outcomes. Many voting taxpayers were loath to support programs or projects that benefited only some (usually the commercial-elite) even though all had to pay. Depending on the issue, minority voters could sway the results in a tight vote,

¹⁴² "Mayor Salomonson's Able Message to City Council," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 June 1904.

¹⁴³ Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County*, 329-330.

¹⁴⁴ Kerstein, "Two Decades," 13-14.

unless there was a way to keep these men from voting. While poll taxes effectively disenfranchised blacks at the state and county levels, there were no poll taxes for municipal elections, leaving an opportunity for minorities to have an effect on the outcome of city elections. In Tampa, African Americans realized this and started to organize politically, but by 1909, Tampa's white politicians did not want to work with them and looked for a way to disenfranchise blacks at the local level as well. This was the stated purpose of the White Municipal Party, and D. B. McKay was the party's mayoral candidate in 1910.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Frosell, "Booster Altruism."

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE THIRD LAFAYETTE STREET BRIDGE

The second Lafayette Street Bridge failed repeatedly. At times, it froze in the open position, blocking automotive and streetcar traffic; other times it refused to open, disrupting river traffic. Either way, it was a constant nagging source of irritation.¹⁴⁶ One late summer Sunday morning in 1898, the Lafayette Street Bridge broke when a small metal piece, a yoke only four inches across, cracked just as the draw opened to let a steamboat pass. Hyde Park residents were compelled to use rowboats to cross the river, or to venture into West Tampa to cross the Fortune Street Bridge. Frank Bruen¹⁴⁷ was notified as soon as the bridge stopped in the full upright position, and set out to find City Engineer Hazelhurst. Mr. Hazelhurst was sick, but his assistant was available. Perhaps tongue in check, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* reported: “Knowing that quick work was needed he soon drafted the plans for a new steel yoke, and sent the same to the Merrill-Stevens Engineering Company, of Jacksonville, by mail Sunday night, with an order to make the same at once.” The next day Bruen pointed out to the engineers that Shea & Krause of Tampa could make the piece just as easily and much more quickly. Until the bridge was fixed, which was accomplished by the end of the week, a naval reserve cutter

¹⁴⁶ “Bridge Goes on Another Tantrum,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 25 June 1908.

¹⁴⁷ Frank Bruen was president of the city council from 1898 to 1900 during Mayor Bowyer’s administration, and later co-organized the Tampa Gas Company with Peter O. Knight, Eduardo Manrara, and A. J. Boardman. In the first decade of the twentieth century, he was part of Knight’s anti-Citizen’s League efforts (Kerstein, “Two Decades,” 16-17, note 6).

ran as a ferryboat. Unfortunately, the repair lasted only until October, when the same small piece of metal again gave way. Mayor Bowyer¹⁴⁸ came to the rescue, rushing to the Tampa Fish and Ice Company and requisitioning two boats for a free ferry service. This time, it took Shea & Krause about five days and \$500 to fix the bridge.¹⁴⁹ Shea & Krause were fated to have many struggles with the recalcitrant bridge. What had once been a front-page story became merely a mention deep into the paper, as bridge failures became commonplace.¹⁵⁰

Maintenance, or a lack thereof, is a major problem for public infrastructure. Troubled economies or complicated financial situations lead to delayed or deferred maintenance. Also, the political capital gained through maintenance is less obvious than that gained by spectacular new construction projects: “For local leaders, construction of new projects is viewed as testimony to their political success, but routine maintenance is considered just that – routine – with little political payoff.”¹⁵¹ Metal bridges require frequent maintenance, for example, painting, to stay in good operational condition. One advantage to the concrete bridges that became popular in the twentieth century was a reduction in maintenance costs.

¹⁴⁸ Frank C. Bowyer, a native of West Virginia, came to Tampa in 1890. He worked as a broker and was the Tampa Steamship Company’s South Florida manager. Bowyer served as mayor from June 1898 to June 1900, including the Spanish-American War. Like so many of Tampa’s mayors, Bowyer was challenged by the growing city’s insufficient public works and municipal budgets too small to correct the shortcomings. Bowyer later served on the Chamber of Commerce and the Tampa Board of Trade (City of Tampa City Clerk, *Tampa’s Mayors, Frank C. Bowyer – 32nd Mayor of Tampa*, http://www.tampagov.net/dept_city_clerk/previous_mayors/frank_bowyer.asp).

¹⁴⁹ “Bridge Broke Down,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 25 August 1898; “The Broken Bridge,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 25 August 1898; “The Yoke Broke,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 20 October 1898.

¹⁵⁰ “Dog Duties Discussed,” *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 3 November 1898; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 15 December 1898.

¹⁵¹ Felbinger, “Conditions of Confusion and Conflict,” 106.

When the second bridge proved inadequate and unreliable, Hyde Park and Bayshore residents and real estate agents claimed that construction of a new bridge would benefit the whole city. Yet it took years to get the new bridge. Tampa's government was strongly conservative when it came to fiscal matters, as were the voters, and bond issue after bond issue for public improvements was rejected or never even came to vote.¹⁵²

In 1907, progressive Tampans were optimistic that a bond issue would finally pass. The city and its economy were growing, so Mayor W. H. Frecker suggested a \$600,000 bond issue for new civic buildings, paving projects, and sewer installations, noting, "Tampa is in many respects the most progressive cities [of] the south, but in others has been sorely backward."¹⁵³ A new bridge over the river at Lafayette Street was to be paid for by these bonds. In November 1907 the city council passed an ordinance approving bonds (subject to voter approval) to pay for a new Lafayette Street Bridge, curbing and paving, sewers, a city hospital, a city stockade, and to pay the remaining debt from construction of the city's crematory (trash incinerator). A bond election was set for January 1908, but in December 1907, the city cancelled the election and the proposed bonds in reaction to a nationwide financial panic.¹⁵⁴ The city council was concerned that due to the crisis, the city would not be able to handle the bond issue financially and that a weak market would

¹⁵² Frosell, "Booster Altruism," 9.

¹⁵³ "Mayor Advises Bonding of City for \$500,000," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 19 October 1907; "Greatest Step Yet in Greater Tampa Plan," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 1 November 1907.

¹⁵⁴ See Wicker, *Banking Panics in the Gilded Age* for more information on the 1907 national banking crisis.

yield a low price.¹⁵⁵ Mayor Frecker played a precarious balancing act between opponents and proponents of the bonds, agreeing to postpone the election while reaffirming his support for the bonds.

On May 18, 1909, Tampa voters turned down a municipal bond issue that would have paid for a new Lafayette Street Bridge, a city hall, a city hospital, and other public improvements such as sewers and paved streets.¹⁵⁶ Some voters were against the bonds because they disliked the city administration, but the main reason the bond issue was defeated was the bridge itself. Many people thought that the \$170,000 requested for a new bridge at Lafayette Street was just too expensive. Additionally, people wanted to know how much money the streetcar companies were willing to contribute and how much of the cost would be borne by taxpayers, but the answers were not forthcoming. As late as one week before the election, city councilmen met with the Tampa Electric and the Tampa & Sulphur Springs Traction companies trying to secure a written commitment. Eventually the Tampa & Sulphur Springs Traction Company agreed to pay \$20,000 for the right to cross the bridge with its rails and cars; however, Tampa Electric declined to make an offer. On election day, turnout was light, with 319 votes for the bonds and 830 against. In no wards were more people for the bonds than against, even in the Third Ward, which included Hyde Park.¹⁵⁷ Upon post-election reflection, bond supporters

¹⁵⁵ The ordinance for the 1909 bond issue was remarkably similar to the repealed 1907 ordinance, with the deletion of the stockade and the crematory debt, which had been otherwise provided. "Bonding Ordinance without City Hall," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 March 1909.

¹⁵⁶ Frosell, "Booster Altruism," 47.

¹⁵⁷ There were actually 1,327 votes cast, but 178 ballots were incorrectly marked and therefore not counted. "Qualified Voters in Bond Election," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 10 May 1909; "Council Wants Street Car Companies Make Offers," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 12 May 1909; "The Traction Companies Should State Their Intentions," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 May 1909; "Council Prepares for Bonding Election,"

theorized that if the bond issue had been split into separate and smaller specific issues, at least some of it might have passed, although probably not the bridge issue.¹⁵⁸

In estimating the price of replacing the bridge, the city council expected the two streetcar lines that had expressed interest in using the bridge – Tampa Electric and the Tampa & Sulphur Springs Traction Company – to pay for a considerable portion of the cost, as much as a third.¹⁵⁹ With a preliminary estimate of \$165,000, even minus an estimated \$50,000 contribution from the streetcar companies, the price tag was too much for some Tampanns, including Mayor Wing. Wing called plans for the new bridge and a proposed city hall building “ridiculously exorbitant,” later clarifying that he believed these to be important projects, but just too expensive as proposed.¹⁶⁰ Continued arguments between those who wanted to replace the entire bridge, and those who thought that the bridge just needed a few repairs, led the city to solicit the opinion of New York consulting engineer J. S. Hildreth. Hildreth’s rather emphatic opinion was that the bridge should be replaced entirely, as the existing bridge was “out of date, too small, too close to the water, and totally inadequate.” Faced with this harsh reality, the council asked Hildreth to make recommendations for the type of bridge that should be erected.¹⁶¹ Hildreth’s

Tampa Morning Tribune, 15 May 1909; “City’s Progress Hangs on Even Balance Today,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 May 1909; “Apathetic Spirit Stands in Way of Tampa’s Progress,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 19 May 1909.

¹⁵⁸ “Apathetic Spirit Stands in Way of Tampa’s Progress,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 19 May 1909.

¹⁵⁹ “Estimate for \$550,000 Bond Issue for City,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 3 March 1909; “Election for Bonding City to be Held May 18; \$480,000 Issue,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 April 1909.

¹⁶⁰ “Tampa’s New Birth Set First Tuesday in the New Year,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 November 1907; “Mayor in Favor of Limited Bond Bill,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 12 March 1909.

¹⁶¹ Hildreth had inspected the bridge before, in 1906, prior to the aborted 1907 bond election. “Patching the Bridge,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 16 March 1909; “Outline of Plans for Tampa’s Advance,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 25 March 1909; “Expert at Work on Bridge Plans,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 3 April 1909; “Council Hears of Needs for Bridge,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 April 1909; “Citizens Favor New Bridge and Bonding,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 6 April 1909.

recommendations at this time seem to be the genesis for the form the third bridge ultimately took.

Tampa annexed large areas of Tampa Heights and Hyde Park in 1911, and in May 1911, the state adopted Tampa's revised city charter.¹⁶² The ward that included Hyde Park had the highest per capita wealth and the next to highest percentage of native white population (83 percent) of all of Tampa wards.¹⁶³ The Tampa city council was stirred to action by Hyde Park's wealth, social prominence, political power, and rapid growth, returning to the issue of the Lafayette Street Bridge with renewed vigor.

The Tampa Electric Company offered the city \$50,000 towards the cost of the bridge, rationalizing that the bridge would not have to be built as strongly if it were not for the streetcar tracks.¹⁶⁴ The streetcars were certainly an issue, as the cars would occasionally jump the tracks and stop all bridge traffic, a problem that led the company to impose a three-mile per hour speed limit over the bridge.¹⁶⁵ Also at issue was the question of what right the electric company, a privately owned corporation, had to use the bridge, a publicly owned convenience. Should the city charge rent? Should the electric company pay for bridge maintenance?¹⁶⁶ If the city accepted the money from the company, would

¹⁶² Kerstein, "Two Decades," 15.

¹⁶³ Frosell, "Booster Altruism," 45-46. The 1903 city charter divided Tampa into nine wards, each electing their own representatives to the council (Mormino and Pizzo, *Tampa*, 139).

¹⁶⁴ "Will Have New Bridge One Year from Today," *Tampa Daily Times*, 9 May 1912.

¹⁶⁵ "Cars Must Creep Over the Creek," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 August 1911.

¹⁶⁶ "Company Right to Use Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 8 August 1911. This article reprints a letter from Peter O. Knight to the newspaper's editor, outlining the legal issues behind Tampa Electric's right to use the bridge. In part, Knight cites the Florida Supreme Court decision of *Jacksonville v. Drew*, in which it was found that bridges in municipal limits were equivalent to streets in city limits, and that the same rights that applied to the streets, would apply to a bridge.

it be seen as a concession? The city refused to grant Tampa Electric an exclusive franchise to use streetcar tracks over the Lafayette Street Bridge, and vacillated over whether or not to accept money from the company, concerned that this would negate any ability to ask for bridge rental fees.¹⁶⁷

In the fall of 1911, the city advertised for bids for a new Lafayette Street Bridge. In early September, the Board of Public Works met to open the bids and select a builder. Four companies submitted bids, although one company, the Owego Bridge Company of New York, submitted forty-two different plans and prices.¹⁶⁸ The city councilmen, despite having known for years that the bridge would be replaced, and despite having nearly fifty different suggestions in hand as to how it might be accomplished, had yet to reach a consensus as to the most basic elements of the bridge's design. Surprisingly, Mayor McKay, although he unrelentingly promoted growth, argued for a narrower sixty-six-foot-wide bridge to save money. In a debate between McKay and Councilman Snow reported by the *Tribune*:¹⁶⁹

Mr. McKay also contended that the lesser width bridge would be all that was needed during the life time of the bridge. Mr. Snow then pictured a scene of four large trucks abreast on the driveway at the same time that cars were passing to which the Mayor responded that this was only a possibility and Mr. Snow said yet it might happen to which the former rejoined that it was also possible that one might meet a house moving across the bridge but hardly probable.

¹⁶⁷ "Electric Company Tenders \$50,000," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 October 1911; "Council Rejects Offer of \$50,000," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 11 October 1911.

¹⁶⁸ The Guarantee Construction Company was the low bidder at \$179,400. Owego's bids ranged from that point up to \$252,700. William P. Carmichael Company (St. Louis) bid \$181,854, and the Edwards Construction Company of Tampa bid \$184,120 ("Board Endorses 80-Foot Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 September 1911).

¹⁶⁹ "Board Endorses 80-Foot Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 September 1911.

On September 13, 1911, the city awarded a contract to the Owego Company, for \$205,000, to build an eighty-foot-wide bascule lift bridge over the river within one year's time.¹⁷⁰ After the announcement, the bidding bridge engineers dined at Garcia's restaurant then enjoyed musical entertainment at the Tampa Yacht and Country Club late into the night.¹⁷¹

Such collegiality was short lived, and within just a few weeks, the city received three formal protests of the contract award to Owego. Central to the complaints was the city's uncertainty as to how the bridge should be built.¹⁷² The city awarded the contract to the high bidder rather than the low bidder, as the advertisement had said it would be.

Additionally, Owego's plan was a skew plan, despite the advertisement's specifications for a bridge with piers at right angles to the shore. Confusion and concern grew to the point where Mayor McKay refused to sign the contract with the Owego Bridge Company, questioning the legality of the contract. Although McKay's awareness of the critical need for a new bridge and long-term support for the project were unquestionable, the workers

¹⁷⁰ L.B. Jones of the Owego Bridge Company was the Designing Engineer, and Daniel Luten of the National Bridge Company designed the concrete arches for the bridge approaches. Luten was in Tampa for the award ("Bridge Contract to the Owego Company," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 September 1911). Luten was the preeminent designer of reinforced concrete arch bridges in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century. Until 1905, the National Bridge Company acted as contractor for the bridges it designed, but after that date the company focused on engineering Luten designs. As of February 1914, 6,000 concrete Luten bridges had been built (National Bridge Company, *Luten Patents and Litigation* [Indianapolis: National Bridge Company, 1914], 3). The Lafayette Street Bridge was later featured in Luten's promotional catalog (Daniel B. Luten, *Reinforced Concrete Bridges of Luten Design* [Indianapolis: Daniel B. Luten, 1917]).

¹⁷¹ "Engineering Party to Northern Offices," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 September 1911.

¹⁷² "Another Protest of Bridge Award," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 October 1911; "Slight Change in Bridge Plan," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 5 October 1911; "Tell Advantages of Owego Design," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 5 October 1911.

responsible for the bridge's daily operation reinforced their position by getting the mayor out of bed at six o'clock in the morning to fix the continually malfunctioning bridge.¹⁷³

For months, the city wallowed in a contractual quagmire. The mayor, the Board of Public Works, and the prospective contractors could not agree on the legality of the contract, with the mayor refusing to sign, the bridge company wanting the courts to decide the issue, and the board members throwing up their hands claiming ignorance.¹⁷⁴

In the meantime, Tampa prepared to do without the Lafayette Street Bridge, by paving streets between Hyde Park and the Fortune Street Bridge, improvements that would be needed either during bridge construction, or in the all-too-likely event that the old bridge quit working entirely.¹⁷⁵ After several months of legal wrangling, Owego released the city from the contract with the understanding that the Board of Public Works would use Owego's previously accepted plans as the preferred design for the bridge, and new bids would be solicited only for the actual construction of the bridge, rather than design *and* construction. The Owego Bridge Company and other associated companies whose patents were used in the plan would be paid a royalty from whichever contractor was awarded the work. Tampa allowed Owego to bid on the construction contract, but the company was not to be given any special regard.¹⁷⁶ In May 1912, bridge builders from

¹⁷³ "Mayor Not to Sign Bridge Contract," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 October 1911; "Trouble in Once More with Lafayette Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 16 October 1911.

¹⁷⁴ "May Sign Bridge Contract Release," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 8 November 1911.

¹⁷⁵ "Plan for Traffic if Bridge Breaks," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 6 March 1912; "New Route Across River Petitioned," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 March 1912.

¹⁷⁶ The irregularities of the bid process used were outlined in a remarkable written statement by the mayor to the Board of Public Works reprinted in the *Tampa Morning Tribune* on November 29, 1911 ("Board Recedes on Bridge Question"). Mayor McKay took it upon himself to survey a dozen or more cities and corporations across the United States to learn how bridge contracts were typically bid. He used the resulting information to support his conclusion that what transpired in Tampa was contrary to standard

around the country again traveled to Tampa for a bid opening. Four bidders responded, with the local Edwards Construction Company winning the contract.¹⁷⁷

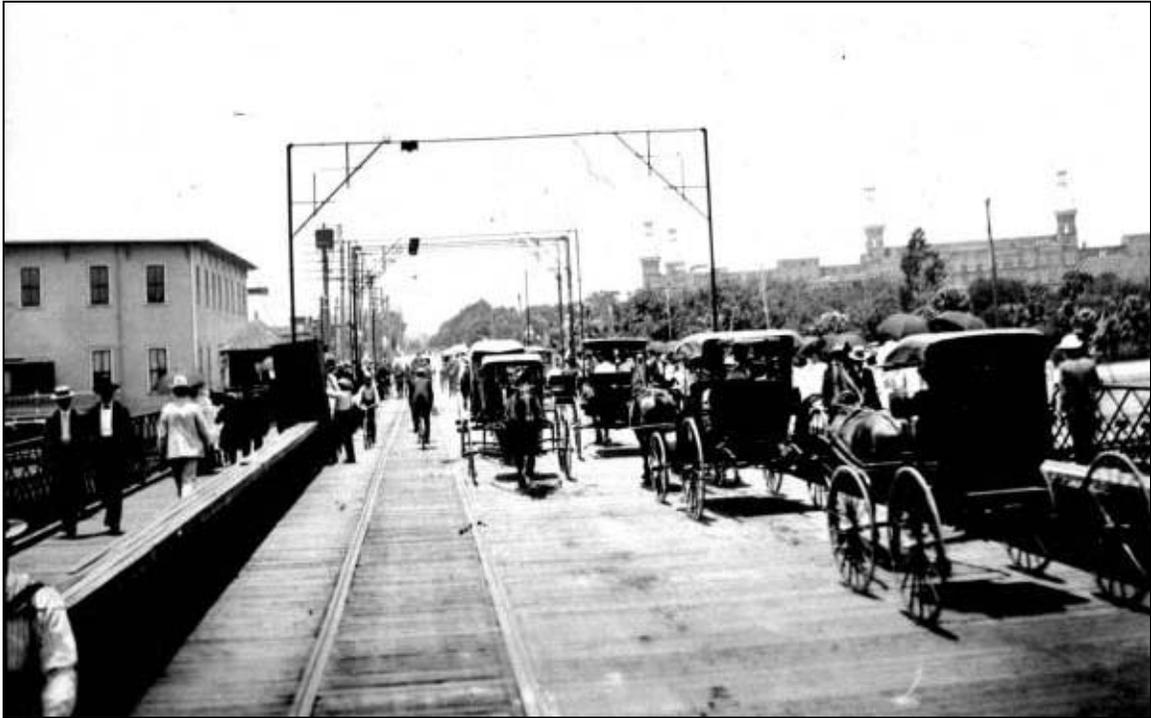


Figure 9. Photograph of the second Lafayette Street Bridge taken in 1905, showing the narrow width and heavy usage of the bridge (Courtesy the State Archives of Florida).

This time, the city delayed the contract award for the simple reason that it did not have the money to pay for the project. The anticipated bridge cost, even with the low bid, was about \$240,000, including royalties, engineers' fees, abutments, and approaches. The bond issue was for \$190,000. Simmering resentment about the Owego affair and

practice, and did not allow the city to receive either best engineering or best value. "Immediate Steps to Get a Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 24 January 1912; "Board Accepts the Bridge Proposition," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 28 January 1912; "Bridge Matter Likely to be Settled Tuesday," *Tampa Daily Times*, 3 May 1912.

¹⁷⁷ The unsuccessful bidders were the Easton Steel Company, the Midland Bridge Company, and the star-crossed Owego Bridge Company. "Many Big Bridge Builders Coming," *Tampa Daily Times*, 1 May 1912; "Local Company Offers Lowest Bid on Bridge," *Tampa Daily Times*, 7 May 1912.

lingering questions over Tampa Electric's right to use the bridge further complicated the process. Intriguingly, the electric company's rejected offer to pay \$50,000 toward the cost of construction was now precisely the difference between the bond issue and the projected cost. Tampa Electric claimed to have a perpetual right to cross any bridge the city might build at Lafayette Street, however, and while the council doubted that claim could be upheld in court, it was agreed that the question should be resolved before construction began. The contract letting was delayed to give time to resolve some of these issues; however, public sentiment demanded a new bridge and soon.¹⁷⁸

The city's contract with the Edwards Construction Company required the bridge to be built within 365 days, or the builder would forfeit \$50 per day. Time would be allowed if strikes delayed arrival of material. The bridge engineers were to get five percent of the contract price, 2.5 percent payable at contract signing, and the remainder on the estimates made. Hodge was to always have a representative on site, to inspect "every bucket of cement, every pound of steel."¹⁷⁹ The design the engineers and councilmen chose for the new bridge was a reinforced concrete arch bridge with a movable span to accommodate river traffic. Reinforced concrete bridges combine the compression strength of concrete and the tensile strength of steel. Benefits included reduced maintenance costs and use of locally available materials. Since this type of bridge construction did not require highly

¹⁷⁸ "Held Bridge Contract Until This Afternoon," *Tampa Daily Times*, 8 May 1912.

¹⁷⁹ Hodge was also to make monthly estimates of the work completed, 85 percent of which would be paid every month by the Board of Public Works. The builder was required to file a 25 percent surety bond, the thinking being that if the Board of Public Works only paid 85 percent of the monthly estimates filed, it would always have a guarantee on the work ("Will Have New Bridge One Year from Today," *Tampa Daily Times*, 9 May 1912).

skilled laborers, local workers could be employed.¹⁸⁰ A less measurable benefit was the improved aesthetics of a concrete arch compared to a steel truss; however, this was important given the bridge's location in the heart of Tampa, in plain view of the central business district and the Tampa Bay Hotel. Steamboats docked at the foot of the bridge, so the structure was many visitors' first impression of the city.

Whereas the 1896 bridge was only seven feet above the low water level, the new bridge was to be 16 feet above low water, theoretically resulting in a 66 percent reduction in the number of times the draw bridge would need to open. The center opening was to be 70 feet wide, compared to 54 feet on the old bridge. Some alignment changes were necessary for Lafayette Street on the west side of the river, near the Tampa Bay Park, and a row of trees was removed. The change in clearance required a three percent grade from the Atlantic Coastline Railroad¹⁸¹ tracks to the center of the bridge, and changes in the approaches. The L. J. Jones Building on the east side of the river was now in the line of the bridge, and had to be demolished.¹⁸²

Henry C. Edwards was general manager of the Edwards Construction Company, which he had organized five years earlier. Edwards had lived in Tampa for fourteen years before getting the bridge contract, working in the government engineer's office before

¹⁸⁰ Donald C. Jackson, *Great American Bridges and Dams* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1988), 35-38.

¹⁸¹ The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad purchased the Savannah, Florida and Western Railway Company in 1902. This 1,665-mile line connected Charleston to Tampa, and was part of the Plant System. Upon his death, Plant, the primary owner of the railroad, left it to his grandson, but the will was contested by Plant's widow and son. As a result, the railroad was sold (Howard D. Dozier, *A History of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920], 145).

¹⁸² "Three Great Arches Span River; Great Time Economies Effected," *Tampa Daily Times*, 9 May 1912; "Concrete Work has Commenced," *Tampa Daily Times*, 6 August 1912.

setting out on his own. A native of Wetumpka, Alabama, he fit in well with Tampa's strongly southern leaders.¹⁸³ The Edwards Company built many of Tampa's deep-water terminals, and practically all of the docks from the railroad bridge over the river to the mouth of the river. Among other Tampa jobs Edwards completed were Swann-Holtsinger's Suburb Beautiful seawall, the Garcia Avenue Bridge, concrete bulkheads for the city at Washington and Whiting streets, and bulkheads for Tampa Electric Company.

Delays began as soon as the bridge contract was awarded. Did the city have the right to spend more than the \$190,000 bonds approved by the state legislature? Tucker Savage lent his name to a suit (brought with the consent of city officials) intended to clear up the dispute over the money contributed by Tampa Electric, an effort to save trouble later. A native of Virginia, Savage came to Tampa in 1889. He was an accountant who held several public offices including Tampa fire chief and chief of the sanitary department and was the state's railroad commissioner during Governor Carlton's term. Savage owned real estate in Hillsborough County, and was a member of the Tampa Elks. Newspaper reporters repeatedly reminded their readers that Savage's suit was a friendly one.¹⁸⁴ On May 16, 1912, Judge Robles denied Savage's petition to keep the City of Tampa from executing the contract for bridge construction. Judge Robles' opinion was that the legislative act that allowed the \$190,000 bond issue did not prohibit the city from accepting money from Tampa Electric and that none of the plans to finance the bridge

¹⁸³ The *Tampa Daily Times* noted that Edwards was "strictly a southern product" ("Three Great Arches Span River; Great Time Economies Effected," 9 May 1912).

¹⁸⁴ "File the Briefs in Bridge Case," *Tampa Daily Times*, 8 June 1912; "City Wins the Bridge Suit," *Tampa Daily Times*, 3 July 1912; "Tucker Savage, Prominent in Politics, Dies," *Tampa Tribune*, 22 January 1937.

were illegal.¹⁸⁵ The case went to the state Supreme Court, and in early July 1912, the court confirmed Judge Robles' decree. The Supreme Court found that when the state legislature approved a \$190,000 bond issue, the limit applied to the power to issue bonds, not to the cost of the bridge. The court commented: "The contract seems to us to have been carefully drawn, without suggestion of collusion or fraud and to be within the chartered powers of the city of Tampa."¹⁸⁶ Tampa and Edwards could sign the contract, get the materials, get the bonds, and get to work.

On Friday, August 2, 1912, the city received 190 \$1,000 bonds, ready to be signed by Mayor D. B. McKay, City Auditor John Hanbrough, and City Clerk W.A. Johnson. Once signed, the bonds were ready to sell. Tampa was to buy \$75,000 of the issue, and save the five percent interest. The remaining bonds were to be sold.¹⁸⁷ The bonds would pay five percent interest per year, and the city expected that bankers would buy the bonds.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, the First National and Exchange National banks of Tampa outbid bankers from Chicago, Cincinnati, and New York for the bridge bonds, giving a premium of \$3,593.75 for the \$115,000 issue.¹⁸⁹

The bridge contract specified that the contractor would not interrupt travel across the existing bridge for three months after the contract was signed, and that foot travel could proceed across the existing bridge for an additional three months after motorized travel

¹⁸⁵ "Bridge Case Goes to Supreme Court," *Tampa Daily Times*, 17 May 1912.

¹⁸⁶ "City Wins the Bridge Suit," *Tampa Daily Times*, 3 July 1912. The full text of the Supreme Court decision in the matter of *Tucker Savage, Appellant v. City of Tampa, et al., Appeller – Hillsborough County*, was printed in its entirety in the *Tampa Daily Times*, 6 July 1912.

¹⁸⁷ "Bridge Bonds Ready for Sale," *Tampa Daily Times*, 2 August 1912.

¹⁸⁸ "Ask Bids on Bridge Bonds," *Tampa Daily Times*, 20 August 1912.

¹⁸⁹ "Tampa Banks Took Bond Issue from Big Houses," *Tampa Daily Times*, 10 September 1912.

was halted. These time and traffic constraints must have been frustrating to Edwards, as there was a surprising lack of planning about an alternate route across the river. At the request of the Tampa Retail Dealers Association and the Tampa Board of Trade, Mayor McKay asked Edwards to draw up a plan for a temporary bridge over the river at Jackson Street. Edwards also was asked to leave the Lafayette Street Bridge open until the temporary bridge was opened. City councilmen debated at length over countless suggestions for the size and configuration and operation and cost of the temporary bridge. The city called in U.S. Engineer O. N. Bie to give his opinion, as the War Department would have to approve whatever plan was finally chosen. A proposal to just route all traffic over the Fortune Street Bridge met with mostly displeasure. The most common arguments against the detour plan were hardship to downtown merchants and concerns that the Fortune Street Bridge could not handle the added traffic. The mayor worried about the expense, and the possible effect on the city's millage rate. Some commissioners worried about the safety of a temporary bridge.¹⁹⁰

Councilman Hugh Macfarlane was the most outspoken opponent of the temporary bridge at Jackson Street. Macfarlane asserted that it was unfair to make taxpayers in Tampa Heights or Ybor City pay for something that was just a convenience to a handful of businessmen: "A bridge used principally for the private convenience of a few businessmen, should be built by those men and they should not ask the city to draw money from all the tax payers for such construction."¹⁹¹ Still fresh in Macfarlane's mind

¹⁹⁰ "Jackson Street River Crossing," *Tampa Daily Times*, 16 September 1912; "Council for Bridge; Cost, Not over \$8,000," *Tampa Daily Times*, 19 September 1912.

¹⁹¹ "Council for Bridge; Cost, Not over \$8,000," *Tampa Daily Times*, 19 September 1912.

was the fact that he himself had contributed significantly to the privately funded construction of the Fortune Street Bridge, which was subsequently given to the City of Tampa free of charge. However, the Fortune Street Bridge had made the city's leaders so aware of what could happen if a bridge were to be closed for several months. In May 1901, a barge hit the Fortune Street Bridge, causing so much damage that the bridge was closed for repairs for several months. The streetcar line over the bridge was the main connection between West Tampa and Ybor City, and with the bridge closed, the streetcar could not cross at that point. People who lived on one side of the river but worked on the other had to rely on slow ferry service, adding sometimes hours to commute time. Eventually, fed up with the plodding pace of bridge repairs, over one thousand cigar factory workers marched on city hall demanding action.¹⁹² In addition to foreseeable personal inconvenience, anything that caused labor unrest was sure to make a deep and lasting impression on Tampa's businessmen and councilmen.

Macfarlane clashed openly with Hafford Jones of the Retail Dealers Association over the issue of the temporary bridge. During one heated exchange at a public meeting, Jones charged Macfarlane with opposing the temporary bridge for reasons of personal gain:

I understand you are the largest property owner across the river, and that the bulk of your property lies between Lafayette and Fortune streets. You know the value of publicity and advertising; would it not be worth thousands of dollars to you if people were forced to cross the Fortune Street bridge and go through your property to reach the Hyde Park district?

¹⁹² Mormino and Pizzo, *Tampa*; Mendez, *Cuidad de Cigars*.

Macfarlane fervently denied any potential personal gain from the proposal to use the Fortune Street Bridge, saying that he actually stood to gain more from Jones' proposal for a temporary bridge, which would help Macfarlane develop his North Hyde Park property. He further identified himself as the largest taxpayer in West Tampa, money that was paying for North Boulevard to be paved in anticipation of the increased traffic over the Fortune Street Bridge while the Lafayette Street Bridge was under construction. Henry Giddens, President of the Retail Dealers Association, apologized to the council for Jones' comments, but the incident is an intriguing example of the overlapping political and business interests of Tampa's leaders.¹⁹³

City Engineer Warren's preliminary reports were discouraging. Warren estimated that an adequate temporary bridge would cost \$12,000 to \$13,000, and take two to three months to complete.¹⁹⁴ In early October, Captain J. R. Slattery of the U.S. Corps of Engineers recommended a temporary bridge with a seventy-foot-wide opening, adding the caveat that people with navigational interests on the river must agree to the plan. The *Tampa Daily Times* estimated that a lighter, a type of flat-bottomed boat useful for carrying heavy loads in shallow water, could be rented for five dollars a day. A "high-powered launch" would be needed to operate the lighter, at an additional cost of five dollars a day.

¹⁹³ "Jones and Macfarlane Clash Over the Bridge," *Tampa Daily Times*, 3 October 1912. At the same time, the Macfarlane Investment Company was running newspaper advertisements for North Hyde Park: "It is high, dry and well graded. It is bounded on the East by Willow avenue, on the West by Howard avenue. It contains 100 acres divided into six hundred lots. Strictly restricted. It is nearest the business center than any subdivision placed on the market within ten years. It already has Brick Paved streets, City Water, Fire Protection, Cement Sidewalks, Electric Lights, Street Railway and every modern convenience. It is the place to build your home" (*Tampa Daily Times*, 9 October 1912). A few months later, another Macfarlane advertisement for North Hyde Park asked: "Why Worry About Public Improvements Yet to Be Made Out of the Present Bond Issue? Buy where they are already Made" (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, 16 February 1913).

¹⁹⁴ "Cannot Build it for \$8,000," *Tampa Daily Times*, 28 September 1912.

Four men would be needed to work full time, two during the day and two during the night.¹⁹⁵ The expenses were starting to add up. Following Captain Slattery's recommendations, the Tampa city council approved a temporary bridge connecting Jackson and Eagle streets, at an estimated cost of \$11,000. Hafford Jones volunteered to gather consent from the affected parties, as requested by Slattery. Hugh Macfarlane voted against the Jackson Street bridge, saying he did not believe it would be safe.¹⁹⁶

Edwards started work on the new Lafayette Street Bridge even while the old bridge stayed opened to all traffic. Workers poured concrete walls, moved telephone cables and electrical wires out of the way, and began driving pilings. By early August, Edwards had forty men working on the bridge, and two times that number later. At the southeast part of the bridge, the pile drivers encountered what was believed to be a Spanish vessel that had "blown up" here 40 or 50 years earlier.

The piles strike the deck or cabin, stand steady for a time under the blows of the pile driver, then suddenly bursting through whatever is holding them back, they go several feet until they again encounter some hard material, which is thought to be the bottom of the boat. After a few more blows the pile goes on, and strikes the bedrock below the ship.¹⁹⁷

Supply shortages and rail car shortages threatened to disrupt progress as well. Concrete suppliers across the country struggled to keep up with a building boom, with the local cost of cement leaping up fifteen to twenty cents a barrel. Fortunately, Edwards had

¹⁹⁵ "Slattery Agrees to Light Plan," *Tampa Daily Times*, 7 October 1912.

¹⁹⁶ "Bridge Plans are Accepted," *Tampa Daily Times*, 9 October 1912.

¹⁹⁷ "Concrete Work has Commenced," *Tampa Daily Times*, 6 August 1912; "Shut Bridge October 15," *Tampa Daily Times*, 28 September 1912.

contracts in place for the Lafayette Street Bridge's concrete, and so was not greatly affected.¹⁹⁸

At some point, however, the Lafayette Street Bridge would have to be completely closed before it could reopen. The city's original plan for traffic crossing the river was to send vehicles over the Fortune Street Bridge, and to use a cable ferry for foot traffic and bicycles at Jackson Street.¹⁹⁹ The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad announced that no pedestrians other than railroad employees would be allowed access to their bridge over the Hillsborough River. For years, the public had used a footbridge along the tracks for years as a shortcut between Tampa and West Tampa, but the railroad, anticipating higher usage, did not want to be liable if someone was injured on their property.²⁰⁰

Near the end of October, the U.S. Engineers approved the temporary bridge, and immediately the city council awarded Edwards the contract for its construction. The temporary bridge connecting Jackson and Eagle streets finally opened on December 2, 1912.²⁰¹ The lighter *Annis B.* acted as the actual moveable draw, with temporary aprons connecting the boat to the stationary parts of the bridge. Since the boat was floating, it rose and fell with the tides. In late December, a southwest wind created a higher than normal tide, and the aprons were at a thirty-degree angle, a steep grade for automobiles. Cars stalled on each side of the bridge, creating a traffic jam until bystanders pushed cars

¹⁹⁸ "Cement Prices Go Ballooning," *Tampa Daily Times*, 28 September 1912.

¹⁹⁹ "Temporary Bridge Wanted," *Tampa Daily Times*, 4 September 1912; "Hyde Parkers Must Lighter" *Tampa Daily Times*, 4 September 1912.

²⁰⁰ "Cannot Use the Coast Line Railroad Bridge," *Tampa Daily Times*, 9 September 1912.

²⁰¹ "A Temporary Bridge in 40 Days," *Tampa Daily Times*, 29 October 1912; "Temporary Bridge Won't Be Done Saturday Night," *Tampa Daily Times*, 21 November 1912; "Hope to Open Bridge Today," *Tampa Daily Times*, 2 December 1912.

out of the way, making enough room for automobiles to accelerate up and over the hump.²⁰²

The temporary bridge was undoubtedly an inconvenience to motorists and pedestrians, but it also disrupted local business.²⁰³ The Tampa Coal Company told Hyde Park homeowners: “It will be almost impossible after the bridge is closed to deliver your Coal. Give us your order NOW, that we may deliver it before you are cut off.”²⁰⁴ The streetcar company was arguably the business most inconvenienced by bridge construction, losing a major river crossing. The temporary bridge was too narrow and too slight to accommodate tracks and trolley cars. Tampa Electric, the city council, and local property owners had to agree on an alternate route for a new track. The old line to the power plant went down Parker Street, close to the river; however, the Lafayette Street approach and Parker Street tracks were blocked because Edwards was using those areas for material storage. The electric company took the position that it had the right to lay track on any city street as long as did not cause an obstruction, an opinion not necessarily shared by the city council. The council did, however, give Tampa Electric permission to build the track directly off the Lafayette Street Bridge on Parker Street. Peter O. Knight, acting as

²⁰² “Very High Tide Stalled Autos,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 24 December 1912. The *Annis B.* was leased from the Tampa Sand and Shell Company for one hundred dollars per month. Edwards also hired a boat with a crew that worked twenty-four hours a day to operate the draw, at an additional cost of \$299 per month (“Board of Works Let Contracts,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 6 November 1912). The temporary bridge was to provide a year’s worth of stories for the local newspaper. For instance, when a team of mules stopped in the middle of the bridge, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* reported “Two mouse-colored hardtails, welded to a Tampa Ice Company wagon containing two tons of that which makes ‘cool uns’ palatable, caused Captain Willis, boss of the Jackson street bridge, to open up on his vocabulary yesterday afternoon. The mules had crossed the bridge 9,823 times, according to the driver, and had always gone the route like a two-dollar bill at a county fair.” (“Balky Hardtails Block Jackson Street Bridge,” 28 September 1913).

²⁰³ “Bridge Stopped Cargo of Logs,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 7 December 1912.

²⁰⁴ Tampa Coal Company advertisement, *Tampa Daily Times*, 7 September 1912.

council for Tampa Electric, donated \$500 to the city to pay for the fill needed at the Parker Street approach. Filling and paving the Parker Street approach was then given priority, so the track could be permanent.²⁰⁵

The new bridge particularly inconvenienced property owners along Parker Street, as Parker Street's intersection with Lafayette would be cut off by the newer, larger bridge as originally designed. Several property owners banded together and threatened to sue the city, which had the potential to delay the construction project substantially, unless access to Parker Street was incorporated into the bridge. The city council acceded to their demands.²⁰⁶

The last day that the old Lafayette Street Bridge was open to vehicle traffic was the day the circus came to town. On October 14, the Ringling Brothers circus performed on the west bank of the river at the Fairgrounds, and arrangements were made to keep the bridge open to traffic past the contractually specified date so that people could see the show. On

²⁰⁵ "Lay Paving on Eagle Street," *Tampa Daily Times*, 6 December 1912; "Electric Company Retains Route," *Tampa Daily Times*, 10 December 1912; "Electric Company Retains Route," *Tampa Daily Times*, 10 December 1912.

²⁰⁶ This group was led by Mr. Black and Mr. W.T. Harrison (of Clearwater), who owned property adjacent to the bridge, including the old armory building ("Will Not Ask a Coe St. Tunnel," *Tampa Daily Times*, 18 October 1912). The Parker Street approach was considered important to all of Hyde Park, as was noted two years later in Councilman William Houlihan's obituary. Houlihan (who represented Hyde Park) was credited for "standing firm" for the Parker Street approach, and "by this effort, he made that portion of his ward considerably more valuable as well as preparing a way for an immense project that he had in view, the building of a boulevard along the Hillsborough River and around the bend to the Bayshore boulevard...." ("Houlihan Did Much for Ward," *Tampa Daily Times*, 24 March 1914). "Bridge Plans are Accepted," *Tampa Daily Times*, 9 October, 1912; "Board Decides to Open Street," *Tampa Daily Times*, 10 October 1912.

its final day of full service, the bridge carried heavy loads of cars, bicycles, motorcycles, horse teams, and pedestrians.²⁰⁷

On February 17, 1913, an expert from the Dupont Powder Mills carefully placed one hundred sticks of dynamite into holes drilled deeply into the old center pier, and literally blew the bridge to bits. The underwater explosion was so quiet that it went almost unnoticed by guests at the Tampa Bay Hotel; however, the blast devastated life in the river. Fishermen scooped boatloads of dazed and dead catfish, mullet, and sheepshead out of the water in just half an hour.²⁰⁸

When construction began on the bridge in August 1912, the contract had called for work to be completed by May 9, 1913. Without any awareness of hubris, the engineers boasted that they could finish work six to eight weeks before schedule, baring unforeseen difficulties. Indeed, as a newspaper reporter commented, “They have foreseen the difficulties, they believe, and allowed for them.”²⁰⁹ The engineers’ plans required concrete piers to be placed directly on bedrock under the river. To do this, the construction company built cofferdams to hold water away from where construction crews would pour concrete into wooden forms. Once the water was out, black men stood on the riverbed, scooping muck into dredges by the shovelful. A hundred-foot tower lifted the cement, and dropped it in “a white, slimy stream” down chutes into the foot

²⁰⁷ “Bridge Remains Open for Circus,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 5 September 1912; “Bridge Closed Against Teams,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 15 October 1912.

²⁰⁸ “Center Span of Old Bridge is Blown Out,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 17 February 1913.

²⁰⁹ “Bridge Really in Sight Now,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 17 August 1912.

frame for the pier.²¹⁰ Each of the four concrete piers required a cofferdam, and in February, workers began the second cofferdam. In April, engineers were still struggling to get rid of water seeping up through fissures in the limestone riverbed. A diver tried, unsuccessfully, to seal the bottom of the dam with concrete. Eventually, the frustrated engineers ran large pumps nonstop to remove the intrusive water.²¹¹ Finally, the *Tribune* was able to report progress:

Two weeks ago there was no sound on the new Lafayette street bridge construction but occasional cussing. The engineers were figuring out some knotty engineering problems. Yesterday the construction work growled with the noise of rotary pumps, the song of dusty negroes wheeling cement up plank tracks, and the low whistling of satisfied engineers.

The unforeseen delays of cofferdam construction slowed work considerably and cost \$10,000.²¹² Engineer Kloss remained optimistic: “I look for no further trouble.”²¹³

²¹⁰ “First Steel Cofferdam is Now in Place,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 2 January 1913; “To Fill Big Hole in the River This Week,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 27 January 1913; “Will Pour Concrete for Bridge Next Week,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 April 1913.

²¹¹ “Second Pier for New Bridge to be Started,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 24 February 1913; “Bridge Cofferdam is Filled Up Once More,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 April 1913; “Diver is Sealing the Bottom of Cofferdam,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 9 April 1913; “Pumps Stop Pumping Water for Cofferdam,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 May 1913.

²¹² “E.W. Parker is Given Storm Sewer Contract,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 February 1913; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, April 6, 1913, p. 4, “Board Allows Edwards the Sum of \$10,000 Extra”

²¹³ “Sees No More ‘Snags’ on Bridge Building,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 20 April 1913. H.M. Kloss was Boller, Hodges and Baird’s representative on site in Tampa. Kloss frequently updated New York office concerning progress on the bridge, even sending photographs. Periodically, H.C. Baird would come to Tampa to inspect Kloss’ and Edwards’ work (“Work on New Bridge Satisfies Engineer,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 1 February 1913).



Figure 10. Detail from a February 1913 photograph of the temporary bridge crossing the Hillsborough River at Jackson Street. The Lafayette Street Bridge has been demolished, and equipment barges and piles of construction materials can be seen in the center of the image where the east approach is under construction
(Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photography Division).



Figure 11. Detail from an October 1913 photograph taken facing west from the Mudge Building in downtown Tampa. The temporary Jackson Street Bridge is to the left, and the Lafayette Street Bridge is to the right. The concrete for the east approach and the east arch has been poured, and concrete work is progressing on the west side of the river
(Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photography Division [reproduction number LC-USZ62-135759]).

The issue of delays and the \$10,000 of additional expense hit the headlines again in June. Under the terms of his contract with the city, Edwards was to have the bridge ready to hand over to the city on July 15, or else pay a penalty of fifty dollars a day until the work was done. Since the engineers were now estimating that the bridge would not be done until October, Edwards stood to lose more than \$6,000. However, by agreeing to pay Edwards \$10,000 extra in April, the city had admitted that the delays were not Edwards' fault. As a result, the Board of Public Works agreed that Edwards would not have to pay the penalty. The Board extended the contract four months, to November 15, but Edwards claimed that he could finish the bridge by October 15.²¹⁴ The editors of the *Tampa Tribune* did not share Edwards' positive outlook:

The people will doubtless be very agreeably surprised if they find it possible to use the bridge in November. Some bets have been made that the bridge will not be in use on January 1. . . . It is well to reflect, however, that the bridge is worth waiting for, no matter how long it takes to get it.²¹⁵

By August, a labor force of one hundred men working twelve hour days and an average of three night shifts a week had completed most of the underwater work requiring cofferdams. The builders were now "almost certain" that the bridge would be finished by

²¹⁴ "Commissioners Take Up Bridge Situation," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 11 June 1913; "The Bridge Contract," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 19 June 1913; "Yesterday was Limit for Bridge Builders," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 July 1913; "Bridge Contractor Asks an Extension," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 17 July 1913; "Edwards to Complete Bridge by October 15," *Tampa Morning Tribune* 24 July 1913.

²¹⁵ "The Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 July 1913.

November 15, and were looking forward to the arrival of the Pennsylvania Steel Works crew, who were to install the metal lift and motors for the drawbridge.²¹⁶

That summer, Tampa buzzed with building activity. New houses, new stores, and new public buildings all reflected the city's prosperity. New electric streetlights lit the city's preeminent shopping district along Franklin Street from Jackson to Harrison.²¹⁷ These lights were the first part of the electric company's plan to give Tampa a "White Way" nearly a mile long, with the next step being to install electric lights on Lafayette Street from Florida Avenue across the bridge.²¹⁸ Tampa Electric Company had installed arc lights on the old Lafayette Street Bridge in January 1912, lighting the roadway and lighting under the draw to keep boats from hitting the bridge at night; however, these lights on the bridge were for safety and convenience rather than part of a White Way.²¹⁹

In the early years of the twentieth century, gas lamps typically lighted American streets, when they were lit at all. Gas gave a dim light, and people scheduled nighttime activities to coincide with moonlight since gas streetlamps were rarely left on all night. In 1879, Thomas Alva Edison invented the electric arc light, which was bright, but flickered unreliably. Nonetheless, electric arc lights, supplemented by gas lamps, soon lit the

²¹⁶ "Submarine Parts of Bridge Nearly Done," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 3 August 1913.

²¹⁷ Franklin Street has been called the "hub of Anglo-Saxon Tampa." (Gary R. Mormino, 1982 "Tampa and the New Urban South: The Weight Strike of 1899," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1982): 352). The first electric streetlights in Tampa were two arc lights placed in front of a Franklin Street store in 1887. In September 1887, the city council gave the Tampa Electric Company a contract for street lighting, and in 1895, the Tampa Gas Company was also given a street lighting contract. In 1914, gas street lamps were installed on each corner of Main Street from North Boulevard to North Albany (Sanchez, "Tampa Early Lighting").

²¹⁸ "Upper Franklin White Way Ready Next Month," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 6 August 1913.

²¹⁹ "Tampa Electric to Put Fine Lights on Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 23 January 1912; "Lafayette St. Bridge is Lighted Properly," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 29 January 1912.

streets of big cities. The new electric incandescent tungsten-filament lamp gave better, more efficient light. The fixtures also came in a variety of styles, making them ornamental as well as functional. Cities were quick to use tungsten light technology to illuminate central business districts at night, creating White Ways that bestowed a sense of prestige on a city.²²⁰

Boosters loved the White Way. As Mark Bouman noted in his study of Progressives and street lighting,

Boosting and boasting about one's city were part of the competitive urge that permeated the outlook of bourgeois men. Streetlights, illuminating shops stuffed with products, could advertise that a city was a good place to buy and sell and in which to invest. Bright lights, by this reasoning, suggested sober and sensible management. . . . They were elegant street ornaments, booster propaganda, backdrop to the urban social pageant, and now, an important device to increase trade.²²¹

A 1912 Board of Trade publication describes Tampa's street lighting with vivid imagery:

On the business streets the merchants vie with one another with dazzling electrical devices which turns night into day. Electric lights shoot roman candles which burst into flowers and then fall in showers of various colors; chained lightning sweeps zig-zag; silvered snakes chase each other; eagles fly, torches blaze, and scores of firms' names blink in and blink out. The scene on Franklin street is especially fascinating – and the end is not yet. It has the Great White Way of New York looking like a tallow candle.²²²

²²⁰ Kate Bolton, "The Great Awakening of the Night: Lighting America's Streets" *Landscape* 23, no. 3 (1979): 41-45.

²²¹ Mark J. Bouman, "Luxury and Control: The Urbanity of Street Lighting in Nineteenth-Century Cities" *Journal of Urban History* 14, no. 1 (1987): 4, 14.

²²² Tampa Board of Trade, *Tampa for Health, Wealth and Happiness: The Fastest Growing and Most Efficient City of the Southland in the Fastest Growing Section of the State of Florida* (Tampa, Fla.: Tampa Board of Trade, 1912), 32.

The demand for street lighting increased at the turn of the century for several reasons, but primarily, it was in response to an increased use of the night. The middle classes had more leisure hours. Factories ran at night as well as during the day. Stores were open at night. For early-twentieth-century Progressives, the electric White Way stood for cleanliness, safer streets, and better policing. The darkness of night stood for illicit activity and dirtiness. However, the increase in business revenues and increased property values along the White Ways were enough to convince businessmen in cities without strong Progressive movements that street lighting was worth the investment. The use of street lights also reflected the increasing segregation of cities by wealth and class. Areas frequented by the middle and upper classes would be lit first.²²³ Tampa was not the only city developing a White Way in 1913; other Florida cities building these systems included Gainesville, Kissimmee, and Bartow.²²⁴

In late September, the Pennsylvania Steel Works crew and eight train carloads of steel for the bridge arrived in Tampa. After African-American laborers unloaded the steel, Pennsylvania Steel began by building their own construction office and putting up company signs.²²⁵ The Tampa papers updated their readers on the bridge's progress practically daily: when the steel lift was installed, when the final portions of the balustrade were put up, what sections were paved, and when the lift mechanism was tested. As autumn progressed, the bridge came together. The electric company laid

²²³ Bolton, "Great Awakening," 41-45; Bouman, "Luxury and Control," 12-14, 28-29; John Allen Corcoran, "The City Light and Beautiful," *American City* 7, no. 1 (1912): 47.

²²⁴ "Gainesville to Have White Way Lighting," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 10 September 1913; "Bartow has Planned a White Way System," *Tampa Morning Tribune* 13 December 1913; "White Way at Kissimmee," *Tampa Daily Times*, 24 February 1914.

²²⁵ "Steel Gang Goes on the New Bridge Job," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 23 September 1913; "Begin Pouring Last Arch for Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 24 September 1913.

wires and tracks for the streetcars. The electrical lift mechanisms were connected, the gates were installed in front of the draw, and the balustrades were painted.²²⁶ A glimmer of hope crept into a *Tribune* editorial:

If one will go into Plant Park and squint out of the corner of one eye at the western approach of the new Lafayette street bridge, he will see looming white and magnificent, behind the trees and shrubbery, the west approach of the new Lafayette street bridge topped with ornamental balustrades, presenting an impression of a completed structure.²²⁷

Once the concrete work was finished, the city had the responsibility of filling and paving the approaches. Dirt from a one-mile-long sewer project along Cleveland Street in Hyde Park provided the fill for the west approach, while six teams hauled sand from Tampa Heights for the east approach.²²⁸ The city let a contract to cover the approaches with modern bitulithic paving over a concrete base.²²⁹ Hugh Macfarlane recommended using a temporary pavement of brick, giving the fill time to settle. Engineer Hodge expressed his opinion that the fill was already compact enough, based on what he saw when telephone poles were installed on the west approach. But Macfarlane was more concerned about the east approach, which was more recently filled and where lay the crumbled remains of the old bridge's brick piers. Because of Macfarlane's concerns, and despite the assurances of the engineers, the city initially used brick paving. The bricks were replaced with bitulithic paving the following spring.²³⁰

²²⁶ "Will Finish Bridge Dec. 20, Now Planned," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 28 November 1913.

²²⁷ "Finish the Concrete Work on the Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 October 1913.

²²⁸ "Big Storm Sewer in Hyde Park Finished," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 2 September 1913; "Putting Finishing Touches on the Arch," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 September 1913.

²²⁹ Bitulithic is a type of asphalt, a mix of asphalt or tar with rock aggregate. "Modern Paving Planned for Bridge Approaches," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 October 1913.

²³⁰ "New Bridge is to be Opened by December 1," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 22 October 1913; "Place Bitulithic on Lafayette St.," *Tampa Daily Times*, 4 February 1914.

Macfarlane, never one to hold back an opinion, again raised an alarm when he noticed that the south wall of the east approach was nine inches lower than the north wall. City Engineer Neff confirmed this discrepancy. Consulting engineer Kloss admitted this was true, but added that it was intentional, to leave space for L.J. Jones to build a sidewalk between the bridge and his new building. Jones' fish business had been demolished to make way for the new bridge, and he was now planning to build a three-story brick building, with steamboat docks on the river, a railroad platform on Water Street, and a row of retail stores along Lafayette Street with plate glass windows shaded by copper marquees suspended by ornamental chains. His plan was to operate his wholesale fish company out of the building's basement and a retail fish market on Lafayette Street, while renting the rest of the building to other businesses.²³¹

No one in Tampa thought about a celebration for the bridge's opening day until September of 1913, when the subject was brought up at a Tampa Merchants Association meeting.²³² The Tampa Merchants Association formed in 1904 as a coalition of capital and labor, particularly for the cigar industry. The Association did not have the support of the old commercial-civic elites such as Peter O. Knight or D.B. McKay, being more in line with the Citizen's League. The impetus for the bridge celebration came entirely from the private sector; however, the city council and the Board of Public Works did not lead the initial planning. The Tampa Merchants Association's original plans for the

²³¹ At the same time Macfarlane was accusing the engineers of this discrepancy, he spoke against the Jones Building, calling it a "shoddy structure that will be a discredit to the handsome thoroughfare across the river" ("Contract is Let for the Jones Building," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 August 1913; "\$72,700 New Building Permits are Granted," *Tampa Morning Tribune* 21 August 1913; "Bull is Made in New Bridge Construction," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 16 October 1913).

²³² "Celebrate Opening of New Lafayette Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 12 September 1913. Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 41.

celebration included speeches, fireworks, parades, and brass bands, and the Association's Booster Committee intended to make this event "one of the best ever held in Tampa."²³³ The Merchants Association began negotiations with the Pain Fire Works Display Company to provide illuminations along the river near the bridge and elaborate displays, with a pyrotechnic portrait of Mayor McKay and another of the destruction of Pompeii. Fire departments from Florida and Georgia were invited to participate in the parade, which was scheduled for December 17 and 18, coinciding with the Florida Fire Prevention Association meeting in Tampa. The planners hoped to have bands, athletic competitions, a water carnival, and an animated chess match, all intended to draw people to Tampa from other cities. The motivation of the merchants was clear and freely admitted – to attract people to Tampa who would buy things from their stores.²³⁴

A short time later, however, the boosters announced that no celebration would be held in December, due to conflicts with the holiday season. Instead, the formal bridge opening would be held in conjunction with the Gasparilla Festival to be held in February of the following year. The Merchants Association's Booster Club worked with the Tampa Board of Trade and Ye Mystic Krewe, the organization overseeing Gasparilla, to organize the bridge's opening ceremony.²³⁵ The purpose of the celebration was still to attract attention and visitors, but by shifting the formal bridge opening to Gasparilla, control was more strongly in the hands of the civic elite, rather than the city's merchants.

²³³ "Celebrate Opening of New Lafayette Bridge," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 12 September 1913.

²³⁴ "Celebration Set for December 17 and 18," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 23 October 1913; "No Celebration Will Be Held in December," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 27 October 1913.

²³⁵ Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla formed as a social organization representing the white male elite of Tampa (Kerstein, *Politics and Growth*, 1). "No Celebration Will Be Held in December," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 27 October 1913; "Rough Outlines Made for Gasparilla Show," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 5 November 1913.

In November 1913, 115 representatives of various organizations met to discuss the upcoming festival, which was to start with Mayor McKay addressing the crowds from the courthouse square. Judge Parkhill proclaimed, "In politics and religion we may be as divided as the waves, but in all that makes for the upbuilding and prosperity of Tampa, we will be as united as the sea."²³⁶ The official opening of the Lafayette Street Bridge would be celebrated on Monday with a carnival parade. It was suggested that the new bridge be decorated for Gasparilla Week, but the proposition was rejected on the grounds that it would be "folly to paint the lily."²³⁷

W. H. Hodge, of Boller, Hodge, & Baird, arrived in Tampa in mid-December to test the bridge. The engineer loaded two streetcars with 50,000 pounds each and two ten-ton steamrollers were sent across the draw at the same time. Hodge proclaimed, "She's sound as a rock," and the city opened the bridge.²³⁸ A trolley car passed over the river to Hyde Park, packed with city officials, engineers, newspapermen, and "other favored persons."²³⁹ Peter O. Knight, who twenty years earlier had been a passenger in the first streetcar over the second Lafayette Street Bridge, was among the favored. Miss Maybury of Tampa Electric insisted on paying when she boarded the streetcar, thus becoming the first paying passenger over the bridge. The bridge opening became a private affair, with the general public held back from the bridge until the elites had finished claiming all of

²³⁶ "Many Novel Features in Gasparilla Event," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 22 November 1913.

²³⁷ "Place Bitulithic on Lafayette Street," *Tampa Daily Times*, 4 February 1914; "Many Novel Features in Gasparilla Event," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 22 November 1913.

²³⁸ "Engineer Will Test New Bridge Saturday," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 17 December 1913; "Great Rejoicing When New Bridge is Opened," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 December 1913.

²³⁹ "Great Rejoicing When New Bridge is Opened," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 December 1913.

the “firsts.” After trying out the trolley car, the dignitaries scrambled to ride the U.S. Government’s launch *DeSoto*, the first ship to pass under the new bridge. Captain Bie of the *DeSoto* had also been one of the favored streetcar passengers, representing the War Department. Hugh Macfarlane was the first to drive an automobile over the bridge, and Everett Snow rode the first motorcycle. The Montgomery Amusement Company, which filmed weekly events in cities where the company owned theaters, recorded portions of the celebration, including the first car to cross and the raising of the bascule lifts.²⁴⁰

The temporary structure at Jackson Street was to be abandoned once all work was completed on the Lafayette Street Bridge.²⁴¹ A *Tampa Morning Tribune* editorial the day after the new bridge opened mused:

While we give vent to civic hurraing over the new bridge, let us not forget the little structure that has served us while the new one was in course of construction. The temporary bridge, while crude, unstable and far from impressive in appearance, has served its purpose excellently. It was a public utility which was indispensable – we couldn’t have done without it. And kind fortune always hovered over it, for it is regarded as miraculous that in the crush of traffic upon it and approaching it, there were not many serious accidents. It has borne a charmed life and now that we are to consign it to the junk heap, we pay it this simple tribute of esteem and affection.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ “Lafayette Street Bridge to Be Opened to All Traffic Today,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 20 December 1913; “Great Rejoicing When New Bridge is Opened,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 December 1913.

²⁴¹ “Lafayette Street Bridge to Be Opened to All Traffic Today,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 20 December 1913; “Old Bridge to be Razed,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 30 December 1913.

²⁴² “A Great Civic Achievement,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 December 1913. Eventually, the timber from the temporary bridge was used to build a dock for small private boats landing at Plant Park (*Tampa Daily Times*, February 4, 1914, p. 14, “Build Wharf for the Small Craft”).

The day the new bridge opened to general traffic was the same day that the Tampa Electric Company opened its new office building to the public. The building gave people an excuse to walk over the bridge, or to ride the streetcars that were again crossing the river after a seventeen-month interruption. Tampa Electric's new office displayed the latest wonders of electricity – cooking equipment and Christmas trees decorated with tiny colorful lights. While the masses promenaded, city officials, prominent citizens, and the bridge's contractors and engineers feasted at Garcia's restaurant. Amidst a cloud of cigar smoke, the diners gave short speeches, expressing satisfaction with the finished bridge. The engineers and other out-of-town workers were doubly happy, glad that after nearly a year and a half in Tampa, they could be home for Christmas.²⁴³

The Lafayette Street Bridge was but one public reminder of the power held by the business elite of Tampa. Tampa's Gasparilla festival, which had started a few years earlier, was another. In 1904, Mary Louise Dodge, social editor for the *Tampa Tribune*, wanted to enlarge the city's May Day Festival into a three to four day statewide event. At the suggestion of George Hardee, she secretly planned to have a "pirate krewe" take the city as part of the festival. For the first several years, Gasparilla planners deliberately scheduled the event to coincide with other civic celebrations, whether the state fair in 1905, the Panama Canal Celebration in 1910, or George Washington's Birthday in 1912. By 1913, Gasparilla was enough of its own occasion to draw a crowd, and in 1914, the

²⁴³ "Great Rejoicing When New Bridge is Opened," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 December 1913; "Thousands Attend Opening and Reception at Tampa Electric Company's New Building," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 December 1913.

festival was a celebration of Tampa's place in the Industrial Age.²⁴⁴ In addition to the bridge's dedication, the official 1914 program included a massive release of homing pigeons, a children's floral parade, a human chess game, an historic pageant depicting The Landing of DeSoto, fireworks, Sunday sermons, a major league baseball game, and a nighttime carnival on Franklin Street with its electric streetlights.²⁴⁵ The phenomenon of electricity fascinated Tampa, and the new electrically operated drawbridge spanning the Hillsborough River was a source of pride for the city's boosters. In the Gasparilla parade that year, Tampa Electric Company's float garnered the most attention from parade goers, featuring a working model of the drawbridge, praised as a model of accuracy.²⁴⁶

On February 23, 1914, the mayor led the formal dedication of the new bridge. A review stand on the west approach of the bridge provided seating for 1,800 people, including nearly 600 special box seats. At three o'clock in the afternoon, all traffic over the bridge stopped, the crowds edged closer to the grandstand, and the soldiers stood at attention. The mayor began by recalling that the old bridge had been unable to keep up with Tampa's growth and increasing business. Always the politician, McKay reminded the voters that the bridge had long been an issue in municipal elections, but that it was not until he had been elected mayor that significant progress was made: "Sufficient to say, the problem has been solved – to the satisfaction, I hope, of all the people concerned."²⁴⁷

Another speaker, Judge Parkhill, followed up on this theme, saying that although the

²⁴⁴ Nancy Turner, *The History of Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla, 1904-1979* (Tampa, Fla.: Cider Press, 1979), 14, 22, and 26.

²⁴⁵ "Official Program for the Great Gasparilla Festival," *Tampa Daily Times*, 14 January 1914.

²⁴⁶ Turner, *Ye Mystic Krewe*, 26; "Gasparilla Review Stand on Lafayette," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 February 1914; "Carnival Parade Thing of Beauty," *Tampa Daily Times*, 24 February 1914.

²⁴⁷ "Formal Dedication of the New Bridge," *Tampa Daily Times*, 23 February 1914.

project had been difficult to get started, and there had been many challenges along the way, he was sure that “the people of Tampa as a whole were thoroughly satisfied that it had been an absolute necessity and of great benefit to the people at large.”²⁴⁸ For its part, the *Times* added to the sense of consensus by reporting “Both the address of the mayor and the speech of Judge Parkhill were received with round after round of applause from both the people on the grandstand and the vast concourse that thronged the street.”²⁴⁹

Many scholars of the urban New South in Florida focus on race relations.²⁵⁰ The story of the Lafayette Street Bridge peripherally touches on that struggle in that Tampa’s many minority groups were completely disregarded by the men who caused the bridge to be built (minority laborers do appear to have done the actual physical construction of the bridge). When representatives of immigrant and minority-dense political wards complained of the expense, they were pushed aside; what is good for business is good for the whole city, they were told. The Lafayette Street Bridge was good for business, or at least for the businessmen who traveled from their homes in Hyde Park across the river to their offices each working day. It was also good for the business of the streetcars that carried shoppers and domestic workers across the river during the week and revelers to the park at Ballast Point on the weekend. The Lafayette Street Bridge really had little direct importance for Tampa’s cigar industry; the train to Port Tampa used the railroad bridge at Cass Street and the Fortune Street Bridge connected West Tampa and Ybor

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ For example, Robert Cassanello, “The Great Migration and Identity in the Making of New South Jacksonville, Florida, 1865-1920 (Ph. D. diss., Florida State University, 2000) and Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*.

City. Yet when the Lafayette Street Bridge reopened in 1913, it was described as “one of the greatest boons that the city has yet provided for its citizens.”²⁵¹

Many of the city’s leaders who had been so instrumental in building the Lafayette Street Bridge were also the leaders of the city’s premier vigilante groups, such as the Citizen’s Committee formed in October 1910 in response to labor strikes. Charter members included D.B. McKay, Hugh C. Macfarlane, Peter O. Knight, Charles C. Whitaker, and Kenneth I. McKay.²⁵² Vigilantism and the bridge were not contradictory. Both were intended to keep the city growing. D.B. McKay was voted into the mayor’s office in 1910 on the strength of the White Municipal Party, which openly sought to disenfranchise black voters. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, black citizens repeatedly petitioned city government for sidewalks, streetlights, paved street, better schools, fire protection, and other amenities automatically provided to other citizens, largely to no avail.²⁵³

Although both McKay and Parkhill acknowledged Edwards’ work in building the bridge, their speeches focused on the accomplishments of the mayor and the Board of Public Works. Hailing the bridge as “the chief accomplishment of this administration” and “a monument to the administration under which it was constructed,” McKay worked the crowd for political gain. Parkhill continued the platitudes, proclaiming that the work of

²⁵¹ “Lafayette Street Bridge to Be Opened to All Traffic Today,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 20 December 1913.

²⁵² Van Landingham, *In Pursuit of Justice*, 44.

²⁵³ Frosell, “Booster Altruism,” 31.

the mayor and the city officials “would be remembered for generations to come as the feet of the Tampans of the future trod the great cement way.”²⁵⁴

This was a time of prosperity for Tampa. As Hafford Jones of the Merchants Association put it, “There’s nothing like giving a man a clean shave and new clothes and shining his shoes. So it is in Tampa: The town feels good, and is good”²⁵⁵ Other city improvement projects started or completed at about the same time were the seawall along Bayshore Boulevard, a new city hall building, a new sewer system (completed 1915), and Tampa Union Station. Tampa’s first skyscraper, the eight-story Hillsboro Hotel, was built in 1912, followed in 1913 by a new Elks Lodge and the Knights of Pythias Building, both of which were ten stories tall. The local phone company, Peninsular Telephone, built a new four-story building in 1914 and in 1915 replaced their old “common battery” system with new, automatic telephones. In 1913, Tampa’s streetcar lines were unified under the ownership of Tampa Electric Company, for a total of forty-seven miles of tracks over which sixty-seven trolley cars rolled. In 1914, the first direct railroad connection opened between Tampa and St. Petersburg, and work started on transforming the Ybor Estuary into the Ybor Channel.²⁵⁶ And on January 1, 1914, Tampans crowded onto the Lafayette Street Bridge and along the Hillsborough River, to watch as Tony

²⁵⁴ “Official Program for the Great Gasparilla Festival,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 14 January 1914; “Formal Dedication of the New Bridge,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 23 February 1914.

²⁵⁵ “Tampa Merchants are Happy over Big Trade,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 5 December 1913.

²⁵⁶ Grismer, *Tampa*, 236.

Jannus landed his airplane, with passenger McPhail aboard, at the foot of Lee Street. The first regularly schedule airline service in the world had begun.²⁵⁷

The bridge builders of the nineteenth century could not have foreseen the scale of automotive traffic in the twentieth century. In 1913, there were 1,500 cars in Tampa, and the city's business leaders tended to be the city's automobile owners.²⁵⁸ Where once cattle plodded across the bridge regularly (although this was forbidden between 9 P.M. and 5 A.M.), now locals drove Model T's. Eyebrows rose at the sight of an ox-drawn cart crossing the bridge.²⁵⁹ Gone were the days of paying the ferry man ten cents to take your cow across the river.

²⁵⁷ Jannus landed on a special stage built for the purpose by the Edwards Construction Company ("First Voyage of the Airboat Line between St. Petersburg and Tampa was Great Success," *Tampa Daily Times*, 1 January 1914).

²⁵⁸ "Growth of Auto Trade in Tampa Remarkable – 1500 Owned Here," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 December 1913; Mormino and Pizzo, *Tampa*.

²⁵⁹ "Primitive Transportation was with the Ox," *Tampa Daily Times*, 4 February 1914; "Hillsborough Bridge Once Had 9 P.M. Cattle Curfew," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 May 1955.

THE BRIDGE TODAY

Tampa continued to grow throughout the twentieth century, and while many new bridges were built across the Hillsborough River, eventually the passage of time and thousands of vehicles each day left their mark on the Lafayette Street Bridge.²⁶⁰ TECO stopped operating streetcars in 1947, and removed the last streetcar tracks in Tampa from the Lafayette Street Bridge in 1969.²⁶¹ Lafayette Street, along with portions of Grand Central Boulevard and Memorial Highway, was renamed Kennedy Boulevard in December 1963, honoring assassinated President John F. Kennedy, who had visited Tampa just a week before his death. When City Engineer Wayne Jump was asked if the name of the bridge would change along with the street, he replied “If the bridge were named the same as the street before, it would seem it would follow suit now.”²⁶² And so the Lafayette Street Bridge became the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge.

²⁶⁰ The Platt Street and Cass Street bridges were built in 1926 using nearly identical specifications. The Platt Street Bridge was slightly longer to connect with Bayshore Boulevard. These two bridges probably did more than any of the others to relieve the traffic load over the Lafayette Street Bridge from Hyde Park. The Michigan Avenue Bridge (now known as the Columbus Avenue Bridge) also was built in 1926. The Fortune Street Bridge was replaced in 1927 and is now known as the Laurel Street Bridge. The old superstructure from the Fortune Street Bridge became the Sligh Avenue Bridge (the current Sligh Avenue Bridge was built in 1960). The John Holmes Bridge (Florida Avenue) was built in 1926/1927. The T.N. Henderson Bridge (Hillsborough Avenue) was built in 1938/1939. The Brorein Street Bridge was built in 1956 as another connection between Hyde Park and downtown Tampa. In 1959, the Holtsinger Bridge (North Boulevard) replaced the Garcia Avenue Bridge, which had been built in 1909 and served West Tampa (Roy Adlai Jackson, C. Leroy Irwin, and Joseph E. King, *The Historic Highway Bridges of Florida* [Tallahassee: Florida Department of Transportation, Environmental Management Office, 1992]; Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County*; “School, Church Influenced Community,” *Tampa Tribune*, 3 September 2000; “Shaping the Shoreline,” *Tampa Tribune*, 14 October 2001).

²⁶¹ TECO, “70 Years Strong,” 6, 9.

²⁶² “Much Tampa History Enacted on Former Lafayette Street,” *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, 15 December 1963.

In the late 1970s, overwhelming public opposition squelched a plan to replace the decorative urn-shaped balusters with modern steel rails. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) plans to widen the bridge in 1988 were scrapped when nearby business owners objected to land takings. FDOT budget cuts in 1989 delayed \$216,000 worth of repairs. By 1991, FDOT was budgeting \$2 million for 1994 to renovate the bridge, but by March 1993, the projected budget was up to \$3.5 or \$4 million, and by November 1993, the amount leapt to \$6.2 million. FDOT personnel warned that the bridge would fall down in five years if not replaced.²⁶³

After considering several designs, with the input of engineers and historic preservationists, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) put forth a proposal to renovate the bridge, retaining its original appearance.²⁶⁴ Despite taking nearly three years to finalize plans and hire contractors, the bridge closed for repairs on February 18, 1994. An estimated 26,000 cars and trucks used the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge each day, so FDOT had to reroute vehicle traffic over other downtown bridges. Nearly 2,000 people walked across the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge each day. For these pedestrians, FDOT considered running ferries, building a temporary footbridge, and even using a “cherry picker” to lift people up and over the water. These options were all rejected for reasons

²⁶³ “Drawbridge Repair Plans are Dropped,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 8 July 1989; “Kennedy Bridge to get Overhaul,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 6 March 1991; “Construction to Close Kennedy Drawbridge,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 March 1993; “Bridging Some Problems,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 November 1993.

²⁶⁴ Per an agreement reached between the Florida Department of Transportation, the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the physical structure of the bridge was recorded through photographs, archival research, and description of the current condition. This documentation included reproduction of several of the original engineering plans for the 1913 bridge (Janus Research, *An Historical Documentation Survey for State Road 60/Kennedy Drawbridge Replacement, Tampa, Florida*. St. Petersburg, Fla.: Janus Research, 1993).

of cost and/or liability, so in the end the local transit authority (HARTline) ran free shuttle buses at ten-minute intervals using other bridges. As in 1913, local store and restaurant owners worried that they would lose money while the bridge was closed. The only difference was now those stores and restaurants were located on West Kennedy Boulevard on the west side of the river, rather than in the Central Business District on the east side of the river.²⁶⁵

As should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the history of the bridge, it took three months longer than expected to reopen the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge. Mechanical problems, bad weather, and more deteriorated steel than expected all contributed to the delays. In recognition of the bridge's historic significance and aesthetic appeal, engineers reproduced the original design as much as possible with replicas of the 1913 streetlights and the decorative balustrade. The bridge tender houses were restored, using paint analysis and historic photographs to determine the original color palette and awning designs. While the historic appearance of the bridge was retained, modern safety features were incorporated, such as thicker balustrades, non-slip surfaces on the walkway, and a concrete barrier between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. New arches with much more substantial steel reinforcement replaced the old arches that took so much time and effort

²⁶⁵ "Bridge Restoration Draws Debate," *Tampa Tribune*, 6 March 1991; "Bridge Repair May be a Bumpy Road," *Tampa Tribune*, 15 September 1991; "Construction to Close Kennedy Drawbridge," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 March 1993; "Bridging Some Problems," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 November 1993; "Brace for Bridge Work Downtown," *St. Petersburg Times*, 18 February 1994.

to build eighty years earlier. It took three weeks to demolish the east arch, but the west arch fell in just one and a half hours.²⁶⁶

Before the bridge formally reopened, it was the starting line for the SNEAKer PEEK 5K and 1-Mile Fun Run/Walk, a fundraiser for the Multiple Sclerosis Society. A few weeks later, the bridge's reopening ceremony was held on March 3, 1995. As a small crowd of one hundred people looked on, a busload of dignitaries drove through a paper banner to mark the opening. A dedication ceremony took place the next day in Curtis Hixon Park, the former location of the Henry Plant's railroad depot, with Mayor Sandy Freeman calling the bridge a "door to downtown." The ceremonies coincided with the Gasparilla Festival of the Arts, which took place that weekend along the riverfront between the park, the art museum and the performing arts center. The refurbished bridge was but one of several major construction projects taking place in downtown Tampa, some of the others being a new hockey arena and the Florida Aquarium. Collectively, these projects were intended to attract people to downtown Tampa outside of business hours.²⁶⁷

The issues and attitudes surrounding the bridge replacement project of the 1990s were remarkably similar to those of a century earlier. A new (or in this case substantially renovated) bridge was desired to replace an old bridge that could not be repaired in any practical sense. A new bridge was desired to help bring more visitors and business to

²⁶⁶ "Bridge Won't Be Done on Time," *St. Petersburg Times*, 23 September 1994; "What's New with the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge," *Tampa Tribune*, 7 March 1995; Janus Research, *Historical Documentation Survey*.

²⁶⁷ "Bridge Won't Be Done on Time," *St. Petersburg Times*, 23 September 1994; "Crossing a Bridge for Charity," *St. Petersburg Times*, 10 February 1995; "Projects Revive Downtown as the Place to Be," *Tampa Tribune*, 3 March 1995; "Revamped Kennedy Bridge Opens," *Tampa Tribune*, 4 March 1995.

downtown Tampa. People worried how they would cross the river during construction, and businessmen worried that they would lose customers while the bridge was closed. The striking difference was financial, and not just the astronomical leap in cost, from the \$13,000 the original bridge cost in 1889, to the \$240,000 cost for the 1913 bridge, to the \$6.2 million cost of renovation in 1993.²⁶⁸ The fundamental difference was the approach to financing construction. Each of the previous bridge projects had been paid for in part or in all by municipal bonds, with contributions from outside agencies such as county government or private utility companies. Previously, each attempt to replace the bridge led to heated discussions over who would benefit and who would pay. In the 1990s, financing came from the state's transportation budget. Everyone in the state therefore shared the cost, not just the residents of a particular ward, or Tampa, or Hillsborough County.

The Lafayette Street Bridge brings to mind few superlatives. It is not the first, largest, oldest, most beautiful, or most unusual bridge in Tampa Bay or Florida or the United States. It is, however, a strong and surviving physical manifestation of the people, beliefs, and events that shaped the city of Tampa, and as such has lasting value and significance. The physical shape of a city is both a result and an expression of the people who live there. Some choices that formed the city, especially those made individually, were not made intentionally, but where a house, factory, or bridge was built did shape

²⁶⁸ Adjusting prices for inflation, the 1889 bridge would have cost \$202,938.33 in 1993, and the 1913 bridge would have cost \$3,488,234.09 (Inflation Calculator, <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>, December 2005).

both the city and how the city was valued. As expressed by Stanley Schultz, in his study of early urban planning,

At any moment in time, the physical landscape of the city reveals the countless decisions of bygone days about the ‘best’ uses of space – ‘best’ means those individual or collective values and judgment about the quality of life made by citizens in the past, judgments that affect the lives of those in the present – and the future. Urban forms reveal what was and was not important to their builders and residents in any given historical moment.²⁶⁹

In the 1880s and 1890s, the citizens of a rapidly developing Tampa had little experience to guide development in the face of rampant industrialization and immigration.

Nonetheless, decisions about what was or was not desirable had to be made to keep the city from spiraling out of control.

The elite controlled the city’s physical shape and public space.²⁷⁰ Even the appearance of the bridge promoted hegemony. The bridge’s arches are a Neoclassical style very popular from the late nineteenth century into the 1930s for institutional or government buildings. Imposing architecture was also popular for prominent public buildings such as railroad terminals, courthouses, or city halls. Inspired by the Renaissance, a time when wealth and power were accumulated, neoclassical design helped create a sense of legitimacy for the American elite. The popularity of neoclassical architecture also was a response to the closing of the American frontier. The country now stretched across a continent, and eyes were turning overseas. Greek and Roman forms of architecture

²⁶⁹ Stanley K. Schultz, *Constructing Urban Culture: American Cities and City Planning, 1800-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), xiii.

²⁷⁰ Robert Twombly, *Power and Style: A Critique of Twentieth-Century Architecture in the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

represented spreading Democratic ideals. In the early decades of the twentieth century, populism, socialism, and labor unions threatened the traditional ruling classes. This perceived attack on the social order led governments to turn to Roman architecture, hoping that the appearance of a great empire would lead to the fact of a great empire. “The implication was, though hardly ever publicly proclaimed, that . . . political assault on republican principles and forms of governance, would not prevail.”²⁷¹

The title of this thesis is “Tampa’s Lafayette Street Bridge: Building a New South City.” The word *building* takes on several different meanings, the most literal being the physical act of construction. The city built a bridge over the river, a physical structure. Another meaning of *building* is to increase or grow in size. The bridge expanded the city’s boundaries, prompting new neighborhoods on the west side of the river. *Building* suggests progression towards a peak or goal. The bridge was inexorably entwined with Tampa’s commercial growth and boosterism. *Building* implies order and planning. How are these decisions to be made? Who will participate in the process, and who will be the final arbiter? In the case of Tampa and the Lafayette Street Bridge, the decision makers were the city’s commercial-civic elite, although there were instances of dissent. The decision makers were required to build consensus before they could build the bridge. For Tampa, the Lafayette Street Bridge is a persistent reminder of how both the infrastructure and the political structure of the city came into being.

²⁷¹ Twombly, *Power and Style*, 24.

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