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## **“The Complete Register, Clear Water Circuit, Tampa District, Florida Conference, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South” : A Collection Guide**

Nelson Poynter Memorial Library. Special Collections and University Archives.

James Anthony Schnur

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**“The Complete Register, Clear Water Circuit,  
Tampa District, Florida Conference, for the  
Methodist Episcopal Church, South”**

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## **Introduction to the Collection**

On 6 March 2006, the Poynter Library acquired by purchase *The Complete Register, Clear Water Circuit, Tampa District, Florida Conference, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*. This single bound volume contains directories of many congregations served by the circuit riding Methodist ministers who traveled along the Pinellas Peninsula from the late 1870s through the 1890s. This volume is one of the earliest written records from the lower Pinellas Peninsula.

The book includes records of members, baptisms, and other information about pioneer families since 1873, a time when the sparsely populated Pinellas Peninsula fell under the administration of Hillsborough County. A handful of isolated farming communities and small settlements dotted the rural peninsula often known as “Western Hillsborough.” Found within this book are membership lists from small Methodist and Methodist Episcopal churches at Clear Water Harbor (present-day Clearwater), Indian Pass (Anona and Largo areas), Sylvan Abbey (near present-day Safety Harbor and Clearwater), and Bay View (an early settlement near the northern end of the Bayside Bridge). These congregations, served by itinerant ministers who “rode the circuit” to serve the spiritual needs of those along the peninsula, flourished at a time when only a few residents lived in southern Pinellas and the city of St. Petersburg did not even exist. Indeed, most of the Pinellas Peninsula remained isolated until the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway in 1888.

Notable pioneer families attended these small frontier churches, including members of the Belcher, Blanton, Booth, Campbell, Garrison, Kilgore, Lowe, McMullen, Meares, Rousseau, Stevenson, Taylor, Turner, and Whitehurst families. At the time, census records often omitted the given names of women and children; this source will assist historians, genealogists, and researchers hoping to reconstruct families and family life during the years between Reconstruction and the accelerated development after the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway.

## **Preservation Note**

This volume includes a worn binding and some pages with brittle paper. While preservation measures may slow the physical deterioration of such items, these steps cannot prevent damage from occurring. To prevent further damage, avoid this item to light for an extended period of time. Please report any tears or other damage so that library staff may take appropriate preservation or conservation measures. Protective gloves should be worn when handling all photographs. While no restrictions limit access to this collection, library staff will evaluate photocopying or digitization requests on an individual basis to ensure the long-term preservation of this unique collection.

## **Provenance of the Clear Water Circuit Register**

This item falls under the Local and Regional History provenance of the Special Collections and Archives department, Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg.

## **Scope and Contents**

This single bound volume contains written names of church members, baptisms, and similar information and occupies one small document box (0.21 linear feet).

## Other Information Resources

For additional information about pioneer families along the Pinellas Peninsula, please consult the various publications of the Pinellas Genealogical Society (PGS), and the pioneer archives and clipping files in the Largo Library. Heritage Village also has a substantial number of collections that document notable families, including the McMullens. In addition, the Archives and Library at Heritage Village serves as the repository for the former First United Methodist Church of Safety Harbor, an institution that opened in 1905 as the Green Springs Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the successor to earlier churches in Bay View and Sylvan Abbey. The 1905 church was moved to Heritage Village in the late 1970s.

See also:

James Anthony Schnur, *Heritage Villagers: A Social History of the Pinellas Peninsula as Revealed through the Structures at Heritage Village*. Largo: Heritage Village/Pinellas County Historical Museum, 2004.

William L. Straub, *History of Pinellas County, Florida: Narrative and Biographical*. St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1929.