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Fiery Jose Marti remembered in Ybor City

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



FIERY JOSE MARTI REMEMBERED IN YBOR CITY

By HAMPTON DUNN

TAMPA --- Ybor City, the colorful Latin quarter of Tampa, still remembers Jose Marti, the "George Washington of Cuba." It was from this strategic spot in the United States that the Cuban patriot stirred up his countrymen to seek independence from Spain.

There is an attractive little park at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 13th Street which honors Marti. It features a handsome statue of Marti standing in a typical pose of oratory. The park is on the spot where Marti stayed at La Casa de Pedroso, the house of Pauline Pedroso, great woman patriot of Cuba.

As early as 1871, Florida had welcomed thousands of Cuban refugees who fled the Spanish rule in their homeland. The first settled in Key West, but in 1886, the cigar industry was brought to Tampa, and many Cubans flocked here. So it was Tampa and Key West were hotbeds of sympathy for the cause of Cuban independence.

Marti's impassioned oratory and writings against the Spanish domination of Cuba were carried out primarily from the U.S. He lived and preached the cause from New York City and Tampa and Key West.

Marti first arrived in Tampa on Nov. 24, 1891. He spent the night at famed El Pasaje hotel, then known as the Cherokee Club. Before retiring he proclaimed: "I feel happy amongst warriors." He collected funds for the fight. Altogether, it is said that 27 military expeditions financed and largely manned by brave Latins left Tampa to fight in Cuba.

On a visit in 1893, an attempt to poison Marti failed and this was when he found refuge at La Casa de Pedroso.

