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Sweet smell of tobacco permeates old Ybor factory

Hampton Dunn

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



SWEET SMELL OF TOBACCO PREMEATES OLD YBOR FACTORY

By HAMPTON DUNN

TAMPA --- It's just a tobacco warehouse now, no longer the bustling, exciting factory it once was when Ybor City was young and when the Latin citizens of the community were being aroused to throw the Spaniards out of Cuba.

The rugged structure which sprawls over an entire block between 12th and 13th Avenues and 19th and 20th Streets was built in the 1880's by the namesake of this section of Tampa --- V. Martinez Ybor, who brought the cigar industry here.

Ybor looked to this area when labor troubles, fires and other calamities doomed the tobacco trade in Key West. He worked out a deal with the fledgling Tampa Board of Trade to buy up considerable land and then he and other cigar manufacturers came to town. Sanchez & Haya was the first factory to get into production, turning out the first stogie on April 26, 1886. But shortly afterward, Ybor was open for business in the big brick building which serves today as a monument to the foresight of the Cuban leader.

For years and years, the factory hummed with the busy hands of cigarmakers producing some of the world's best cigars and earning for Tampa the monicker, "The Cigar City."

A few years after it opened, a Cuban patriot, Jose Marti --- called "Cuba's George Washington" --- came to Tampa and he stirred up the local workers to join him in his crusade to rescue Cuba from Spain. In 1893, he stood on the steps of the Ybor factory and made many fiery speeches. The factory building now is owned by Hav-A-Tampa.

