

McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin: A Brief Introduction

Construction Information

- Exact date of construction remains unknown, though it was built no later than 1852. Most family sources place 1852 as the year of construction, though other sources mention earlier years. It was possibly the second (or later) structure occupied by the McMullens, who had certainly established some sort of shelter shortly after the time of their arrival on the peninsula.
- Captain Jim's family—along with some slaves from the area—cleared the land and constructed the house.
- This double-pen log house has pine logs originally joined by pegs rather than nails.
- Large open porches, a broad stairway, and excellent ventilation (including openings between some of the pine logs) made it easy for James P. McMullen to overcome bouts with consumption (tuberculosis). He wanted cracks “large enough to throw a cat through” to get sufficient fresh air.
- The upper story had its own breezeway. Much of the original furniture was made from nearby materials (including the Spanish moss mattresses).

History of Occupants

- Captain James P. McMullen and wife Elizabeth were first owners of the cabin. Throughout the late 1800s, the cabin became an important gathering place for many members of the McMullen clan. James homesteaded on a 240-acre land grant. He spent a great amount of time in and around upper Tampa Bay.
- Captain Jim McMullen operated the first formal school on the Pinellas peninsula.
- Elizabeth was a midwife for many women in the area. She worked on the fields during the Civil War. When marauders threatened them during the war years, Elizabeth and her children spent some time at a fort in the Keystone area, where—according to a family history—she patrolled the fort with musket in hand.
- Along with his brother Daniel, James McMullen engaged in the cattle business in addition to cultivating crops on his homestead.
- Captain Jim founded the Bay View community in an area he probably first visited when he came to the region in 1842. By some accounts, James McMullen and Dick Booth weathered the notorious 1848 hurricane at an Indian mound that partially blew away. The force of the winds may have convinced him to build this cabin away from the waterfront.
- The Coachman family purchased the cabin and surrounding lands in 1901. Members of the Coachman family came to the area from Georgia, though some came to Polk County by the 1880s before moving to the Pinellas peninsula. The Coachmans lived in the cabin through the 1920s (sometimes using it as a summer camp or storage area), and constructed other buildings on the property. A fresh water well was located adjacent to the cabin. Other structures near the intersection of NE Coachman and Old Coachman Road included: H. M. Coachman's home, the Coachman depot along the railroad lines, packing houses (one burned down in 1951), the sweet shop (located at the intersection of these roads and the railroad

tracks), a barn, gardens, and animal pens. By 1937, the Coachmans operated the Kumquat Shop on this tract of land.

- By the time the Coachmans acquired the structure, it needed some maintenance. Windows had shutters, but no glass. The Coachman family filled the cracks between the logs. They added a kitchen and dining room, as well as a large back porch. With the assistance of McMullens, they located some of the original furniture and in February 1936 the Clearwater chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated the cabin as an historic structure. A bronze plaque was placed on the front wall at that time.
- The Coachman family allowed members of the public to visit the cabin by the mid-1930s. A “congenial hostess” often greeted each visitor by giving them a glass of orange juice and describing—much like a docent—life along the Pinellas peninsula during the early years. After World War II, the structure was closed to the public. For awhile, members of the Coachman staff used the space for their work duties. By the late 1960s, the Coachmans used the cabin as storage space.

Moving of the House to Heritage Village

- Long before the establishment of Heritage Village, the Pinellas County Historical Commission held discussions about preserving the log cabin. In June 1961, they discussed the possibility of securing the cabin from the Coachman family and developing a county park at or around the structure. Historian Ralph Reed reported to commission members that the Coachman family did not have any interest to selling or donating the cabin at that time. Since the cabin was generally not used by the mid-1960s, a Commission member decided to contact the Coachman family again in the spring of 1966 about preserving the structure. Commission members even discussed the possibility of having the State of Florida intervene in the interest of preserving the cabin.
- By the spring of 1968, Mack Coachman informed the Commission that the family did not want the structure to deteriorate, but had no plans to have the building or site become a memorial.
- After the arsonist had damaged the cabin, Mack Coachman gave permission for the movement of the log cabin to Heritage Village. During the month of November 1976, the structure suffered from eight fires of “mysterious origin.” After the last blaze, Assistant Fire Chief Dave King considered the structure “a total loss.” A sixteen year-old boy confessed to setting the fires, and was arrested.
- By June 1978, the cabin was placed on its foundation, and an outside firm sandblasted and washed away charred and damaged areas of the logs.
- Restoration of the cabin continued over the next couple of years, with much of the labor performed by workers in the federal CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973) program beginning in early 1979.

McMullen-Coachman Log House

Overview

Captain James Parramore McMullen and members of his family built the McMullen-Coachman Log House circa 1852. The oldest residential structure in Pinellas County, this dwelling served as his family's residence for the next half century. A bad bout with tuberculosis first brought "Captain Jim" to the area in the early 1840s. After recovering from his illness, Jim told his seven brothers that the area's climate restored his good health. Each of the brothers McMullen settled in the area for a period of time. In 1844, Jim married Elizabeth Campbell of Brooksville, Florida, and in 1848, he arrived in upper Pinellas to claim his 240-acre parcel received under the Armed Occupation Act of 1842. During the Civil War, he briefly commanded a company of volunteers called the "Clear Water Guards," and later served as a member of the Confederate "Cow Cavalry" that led cattle drives to supply beef, tallow, and hides desperately needed by Confederate armies to the north. At the close of the war, McMullen returned to the Pinellas Peninsula, where he pursued his farming and cattle interests and established a settlement at Bay View. By 1875, McMullen began to cultivate citrus and soon possessed one of the largest groves in the area. Sources also give credit to Captain Jim McMullen for designing the orange crate. His spouse, Elizabeth Campbell McMullen, served as a well-known midwife, and delivered many children in the log house, a structure that may have served as the Pinellas Peninsula's earliest "hospital."

Captain McMullen, his family, and servants built the two-story Georgia-style house with heart-of-pine logs. They notched the logs to interlock with one another and used pine floor planks. With its central "dog-trot" breezeway and large cracks between the log sides, the house allowed plenty of fresh air to circulate throughout the structure. The porch contained cypress stumps and hand-rived cypress shingles covered the roof. Though possessing a chimney initially made of mud and sticks, the family soon replaced these materials with bricks fired at the site.

When Solomon Smith Coachman purchased the house in 1902, his family filled the cracks between the logs in an attempt to "modernize" the residence. Coachman, a grower and entrepreneur, left a substantial impression as one of Clearwater's early

business leaders. He also became a passionate advocate of the separation of Pinellas from Hillsborough County. Many rallies and events took place at the log house during the battle for secession. Recognizing his efforts on behalf of the creation of Pinellas County, Governor Albert Gilchrist named Coachman as an inaugural member of the Board of County Commissioners. He served as chair during their first meetings in 1912.

The Coachmans lived in the log house from about 1909 until 1921. At that time, they moved into a two-story structure along N. E. Coachman road on the family estate. The cabin sat empty or served as storage space adjacent to the Coachman Packing House until about 1926 when Jessie Coachman, Solomon's wife, led restoration efforts. By the 1930s, the area around Coachman Station included a substantial grove, family dwellings, a large packing house, and Jessie's "Kumquat Sweet Shop" near the railroad line. The Clearwater chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a plaque in front of the cabin in 1936 celebrating it as "The Oldest Existing Log House in Pinellas County." Despite attempts to create a "county shrine" or historical park on the premises—or move the log house to another site—the structure once again became a storage room by the 1960s and early 1970s. In November 1976, an arsonist set at least eight fires at the Coachman estate, with the last blaze badly damaging the McMullen-Coachman Log House and destroying most of its second floor. The Coachman family decided to donate the building to Heritage Village in 1977. Extensive restoration began in 1978, and the McMullen-Coachman Log House opened to the public in 1979 after workers restored this rustic relic to its earlier grandeur.

An Early Visitor to a Sparsely-Settled Frontier

The McMullen family, originally of Scottish descent, made the journey to Bay View across three generations. In the 1700s, a young boy named James McMullen came from his native Scotland and later became a drummer for the patriots during the American Revolution. James named his third son James, and, following that tradition, the third son of the third generation—James Parramore McMullen—entered the world on 11 June 1823 at the family's homestead in Telfair County, Georgia. With six brothers and five sisters, James P. McMullen came from a large family. By the early 1840s, he set out on a journey to west central Florida to recover from an illness and, in the process, laid the

healthy foundation for a family that claimed nearly one-thousand members in west-central Florida by the 1900s.

Poor health brought James Parramore McMullen to Florida for the first time. As an eighteen year-old man, he suffered from “consumption,” a highly communicable disease today known as tuberculosis. Fearing that other family members might contract this illness, his father decided to send him away from his home in Quitman, Georgia. According to history passed down through the family, young James gathered his bedroll, gun, horse, and dog, and left his home in southern Georgia to recuperate in the Territory of Florida. When James crossed from Georgia into Florida, he entered a war zone: Skirmishes and battles of the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) continued to rattle parts of peninsular Florida, with some efforts to remove and relocate Seminoles occurring as far north as Georgia’s Okefenokee Swamp. Whether Jim participated in any of these actions remains unclear. After a journey of approximately 250 miles, James settled along the shoreline at Rocky Point, on the Tampa side of the Courtney Campbell Causeway. He stayed there for awhile before deciding to move to a higher bluff near the current western end of the Courtney Campbell and the present-day northern end of the Bayside Bridge. Over the next few decades, this portion of west central Pinellas along Tampa Bay became known as Bay View, sometimes written as “Bayview.” In that area, southwest of Espritu Santo Springs, McMullen lived in relative isolation during 1841 and 1842. According to one family story, he selected this area because of its larger trees, profuse shrubbery, and “strip of sandy white beach, lapped by blue green deep water.” While camping at this site, he saw few humans, except for an occasional Indian who came near his place on the bluff. Abundant wildlife and seafood sustained Jim, while the region’s climate and his seclusion allowed his acute tuberculosis to go into remission.¹

¹ Robert C. Harris, “The Seven McMullen Brothers of Pinellas County,” *Tampa Bay History* 1 (Fall/Winter 1979), 62-63; June Hurley Young, *Florida’s Pinellas Peninsula: A Historical and Pictorial Commentary on the Growth and Development of This County on the Gulf Coast* (St. Petersburg: Byron Kennedy, 1984), 20; *Clearwater Sun*, 20 November 1949. For a thorough discussion of the Second Seminole War, see the excellent chapter found in: Joe Knetsch, *Florida’s Seminole Wars, 1817-1858* Making of America Series (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003). Newspaper articles and other publications refer to the settlement as both “Bay View” and “Bayview.” Generally—though not always—members of the McMullen family used the first spelling rather than the second. For consistency’s sake, the narrative will follow this convention, although both versions are correct. Some accounts placed James P. McMullen’s arrival in 1841, while others claimed that he arrived in 1842.

McMullen squatted south of the settlement and plantation of Odet Philippe. Though many of his travels and activities remain an enigma to this day, Philippe's early footprints on the Pinellas Peninsula make him a true pioneer of the region. Always in search of new opportunities, Philippe arrived in Tampa—then a small settlement adjacent to the Fort Brooke military outpost—by early 1839, though his travels along the Gulf of Mexico may have brought him here during the early 1830s. A handful of opportunists came to the area in search of business contracts with the military outpost during the Second Seminole War. Philippe acquired properties near and along the Hillsborough River, and maintained at least three female slaves at his residence in 1840. By the following year, he engaged in occasional trade with local Indians. During the closing months of the war, Philippe acquired land from sutlers—civilians providing provisions to Fort Brooke—as these individuals made plans to leave the area. The Armed Occupation Act of 1842, passed by Congress on August 4, allowed Philippe to acquire a substantial parcel of land and establish a plantation. On November 1, he put in a claim for 160 acres at “Worth’s Harbour” along the western shore of Old Tampa Bay. This area, around an elevated Tocobaga Indian mound at a point known as “De Soto’s Landing,” became the location of Philippe’s plantation: St. Helena. The county park department presently operates Philippe Park as a preserve on some of this original land grant.²

Philippe cultivated crops on his homestead and his family built close ties with other peninsular pioneers and maintained business interests in Hillsborough County. One document noted that by December 1842 his estate in Tampa and at St. Helena included: four houses, a billiard hall, an oyster shop, a ten-pin alley, his plantation, a wagon, slaves, cattle, hogs, and other animals. Long before the creation of Ybor City and West Tampa, Philippe brought the cigar industry to Tampa during the antebellum period. Shortly after establishing St. Helena, Philippe met an English sailor exploring the area who had discovered his settlement. This man, Richard Booth, married Philippe’s daughter Melanie (sometimes known as “Malina” or “Merlineya”) on 10 May 1847. The Booths spent some time in Key West in 1848 and 1849, where they celebrated the arrival of Ortencia

² J. Allison DeFoor II, *Odet Philippe: Peninsular Pioneer* (Safety Harbor: Safety Harbor Museum of Regional History, 1997), 35-43. In his research on Odet Philippe, Allison DeFoor has corrected and clarified many legends about “Count” Philippe. Some aspects of Philippe’s life remain topics of

“Tansy” and Richard Julius Booth. The Booths returned to St. Helena by the summer of 1853. Odet William “Keeter” Booth, a son of Richard and Melanie, became one of the first children of European descent born on the Pinellas Peninsula when he entered the world on 4 August 1853. By the time of his death in 1869, Odet Philippe and his family could claim credit for introducing the cultivation of grapefruit—then often called “pomelos”—to Florida.³

Starting a Family and Building a Home in the Wilderness

While Philippe developed his plantation at St. Helena, James P. McMullen returned to Georgia with a stop near present-day Brooksville. One family account claimed that “as soon as he had become brown and strong from Florida wind and sunshine,” he returned to Georgia. On the return trip, Jim met Elizabeth Campbell and family oral histories indicate that they corresponded for awhile before exchanging vows on 16 December 1844 at the settlement of Melendez, near present-day Brooksville. Daughter of Nancy Taylor and the late John Campbell, Elizabeth was born on 25 February 1825 in Appling County, Georgia, and came south to Benton (now Hernando) County with her family. Her father had died in 1838 while fighting in the Second Seminole War. Hernando County carried the name “Benton County” from March 1844 through December 1850 to honor Thomas Hart Benton, a United States senator from Missouri who championed Jacksonian Democracy and the distribution of public lands to frontier settlers. His sponsorship of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, a provision that opened substantial portions of peninsular Florida to settlement, became one of the most notable acts of Benton’s thirty-year tenure in the Senate. Newlyweds Jim and Elizabeth McMullen started a family at their Benton County farmstead. Elizabeth gave birth to three children while living at or near Brooksville: Bethel (born 23 December 1845), Margaret Nancy (born 1 April 1848, and died on 19 September 1849), and Sara Jane “Sally” (30 March 1850). During a visit with his family in Georgia, James told his six

speculation, however. For example, DeFoor could not determine if Philippe—one of his direct ancestors—gave the name “St. Helena” to his plantation or if others referred to the site by that name before 1842.

³ *Ibid.*, 43-49, 53; William L. Straub, *History of Pinellas County, Florida: Narrative and Biographical* (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1929), 33, 205; Evelyn C. Bash, “Profiles of Early Settlers on the Pinellas Peninsula,” *Tampa Bay History* 5 (Spring/Summer 1983), 82-93. Inconsistent genealogical records make it difficult to ascertain the first white child born along the Pinellas Peninsula.

brothers about the beautiful lands and healthy climate of the peninsula, a place considered “the closest thing to heaven that he could imagine.”⁴

The McMullens returned to the Pinellas Peninsula by the late 1840s. By some accounts, they settled near Old Tampa Bay or Worth’s Harbour around 1848 in a small log house built by Jim McMullen on at least 160 acres he homesteaded under the Armed Occupation Act. Most family histories claimed that James P. McMullen never held slaves. However, a granddaughter, Nancy Meador, wrote in a November 1949 article that “Pa (James P. McMullen) found his newly-acquired land suitable for growing citrus, so with the help of slaves he cleared the land, planted a portion of it in groves, and built the log cabin which still stands.” Hostile Indians probably encouraged the McMullens and their infant children to abandon their small, remote cabin and return to Benton County by 1848 or 1849. Newspapers of the time reported on a number of “Indian Outrages” along Florida’s west coast during the summer of 1849. For example, a Tallahassee paper noted that Indians attacked the Payne, Whidden, and McCulloch families in the Peas (Peace) Creek and Alifia River areas in mid-July 1849. Seminoles killed at least two family members by gunshot before escaping into the palmettos. A military expedition to eastern Hillsborough arrived by July 25, only to find the trading house burned to the ground with human bones nearby. The correspondent considered this “preconcerted (sic) movement” evidence that Indians planned “to carry on the worst of all wars—a guerilla war.” General David Emanuel Twiggs arrived at Tampa Bay by August 24 to guard against Indian attacks. Twiggs even dispatched a captain named Casey “to see what was intended by the feathers, &c., at the door of the Spaniard, Philippee (sic).” Tensions continued into the fall, when one correspondent from Tampa claimed that “we and these Indians cannot live side by side in peace; that the property of this section of Florida, in consequence, depends upon their removal.”

It is possible, though not certain, that the horrific “Gale of 1848,” a September hurricane that inundated much of the peninsula and modified the Pinellas shoreline, may have also prompted the relocation of the McMullen family. According to one family

⁴ Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 64; Genealogical research on the McMullen family appears in building and other research files located at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Young, *Florida’s Pinellas Peninsula*, 22; *Clearwater Sun*, 20 November 1949; Donald J. Ivey, “The Life and Times of

story, Jim McMullen and Richard Booth camped along a spring in the Safety Harbor area as the storm arrived; they took cover at a nearby Indian mound, but the wild winds blew part of that mound away. Some believe that this experience convinced Jim to build his cabin inland, away from the water. By some accounts, Indians burned their simple log cabin to the ground. Other family stories claim that either Daniel or Thomas Fain McMullen—brothers of Jim—may have occupied this small building for awhile before it “simply rotted away.” Either way and even if Jim continued to visit the region, Elizabeth gave birth to Sara Jane “Sally” during the spring of 1850 in Brooksville.⁵

Newspaper accounts from the spring of 1850 described Benton County sugar lands and the Tampa Bay region at the time of Sara Jane’s birth. A correspondent from a Tallahassee newspaper traveled south from Levy County past the “Large Sulphur and Iron Springs” of the Withlacoochee River, and large hammocks along the Crystal River that offered excellent potential sites for sugar plantations. Along the Homosassa River, a waterway “wide enough for steamboats” with numerous cross rivers, the writer noted an abundance of fish and excellent lands nearby for the planting of sugar, potatoes, corn, pumpkins, turnips, and other crops. He continued his journey along the coast of present-day Pasco and upper Pinellas, examining lands that could serve as sugar and crop plantations, as well as grazing areas for livestock. Another writer traveled to Tampa Town and described areas around Old Tampa Bay. While sailing from Fort Brooke to the mouth of Tampa Bay, the writer noted that the water “presents the appearance of a vast inland sea, but . . . from the centre it appears a perfect circle surrounded on all sides by dense forests of pine.” As the party approached the western shore of Tampa Bay, somewhere along central Pinellas probably near Bay View, the correspondent encountered “a beautiful white sand beach, free from marsh, with abrupt Bluffs at intervals ten or fifteen (feet) in height, and the land in many places a few hundred yards from the shore seems to attain an elevation of eighty to one hundred feet.” They sailed by

Daniel ‘Uncle Dan’ McMullen (A.D. 1825-1908): A Chronological Biography,” undated manuscript, p. 2, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

⁵ Young, *Florida’s Pinellas Peninsula*, 22; Marjorie McMullen Keery to Robert Williams, director, Division of Archives, History, and Records Management, State of Florida, 22 July 1971; [Tallahassee] *Floridian and Journal*, 4 August 1849, 8 September 1849, 27 October 1849; *Clearwater Sun*, 20 November 1949; *St. Petersburg Times*, 19 August 1956. For a copy of an affidavit describing the July 1849 attack edited by Hillsborough historian Spessard Stone, see: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~crackerbarrel/Affidavits.html>.

the residence of Elias J. Hart, an early settler in the Bay View area who had an infant son, William, born at the family's homestead in 1849. Hart's other children married into pioneer families. Elpenice "Mittie" Hart later exchanged vows with Samuel Kilgore, a member of a family that settled near Largo; Emma Hart, born 7 July 1851, married Alexander Valentine Campbell. In 1822, Elias's father—Isaiah D. Hart—had laid out streets at a settlement then known as "Cow Ford," site of present-day Jacksonville. After passing the Hart residence, this expedition camped along Cooper's Point, a peninsula jutting northward towards Safety Harbor along the Courtney Campbell Causeway, with the campus of Clearwater Christian College presently at its southern end. The party feasted on oysters harvested from the bay and rested for the night. The following morning, they arrived at "Phillippi's (sic) Point (,) on which is situated De Soto's mound, a vast pile covering three-fourths an acre at the base, and rising to a height of seventy feet from the beach."⁶ The correspondent described the lands around Odet Philippe's St. Helena as follows:

[The mound] is undoubtedly the work of art and formed the chief work of defence in those extensive fortifications which are yet easily to be traced covering half a square mile. The view from the summit of the mound was truly grand. I had seen much of the mountain scenery, but the appearance of this beautiful bay, as the sun rose in the East, I had never seen surpassed. Worth's bay or Safety Harbour, being a small bay three miles long by two wide, forms the head of Tampa Bay . . . It is undoubtedly the safest harbour I ever saw, being securely sheltered on all sides⁷

Although James McMullen probably never read this May 1850 column, the writer described the potential of the region in a way that the McMullens could certainly appreciate. The writer claimed that a canal could connect the Anclote and interior waters along upper Pinellas to Old Tampa Bay, and that the depth of Espiritu Santo Bay to the mouth of Tampa Bay could certainly accommodate "the largest class of merchant ships."

⁶ *Floridian and Journal*, 27 April 1850, 4 May 1850; Bash, "Profiles of Early Settlers," 82-93; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 64; "Jacksonville History Timeline," a chronology created by the Jacksonville Public Library located at: <http://jpl.coj.net/DLC/FLorida/JacksonvilleHistory.html>.

⁷ *Floridian and Journal*, 4 May 1850.

As early as 1850, those familiar with the waterways and terrain along the upper Pinellas Peninsula believed that engineers should develop a canal or railroad terminus in the region to take advantage of its geographical and speculative potential. Building upon such statements, a columnist claimed that “Tampa Bay is not surpassed in the South” in its potential as “a good, safe and convenient harbour and one easy of access, with sufficient depth of water for all commercial purposes.” Among the many “perpetual springs,” the writer mentioned the famed De Soto Spring, a “fountain of perpetual youth,” located along “Point Pinalos” near present-day Safety Harbor.⁸ With a climate he considered “the finest in the world,” the writer lamented that the Tampa area lacked a hotel. In a proposition that Henry Plant would bring to fruition nearly four decades later, he proclaimed:

I would say to the man of enterprise who wishes to find a Gold mine, establish an (sic) Hotel at Tampa, and it would soon vie with the most famous in the United States, and should the terminus of the Gulf and Atlantic Railroad be on Tampa Bay, thus expediting travel from the North, . . . [other resorts] would find a rival.⁹

Despite the region’s potential, ongoing battles with local Indians and David Levy Yulee’s railroad with a terminus at Cedar Keys postponed the arrival of the iron horse in the Tampa Bay region until the 1880s.

James Parramore McMullen decided to build his Georgian-style log house near Alligator Creek on the interior of the Pinellas Peninsula. The McMullens, possibly with the help of slaves, built the structure out of round logs and pegs rather than metal nails. Cypress posts supported the structure, while hand-cut cypress shingles covered the roof. Lacking glass windows, the log house originally had only wooden shutters. A center breezeway known as a “dog-trot” provided stairway access to the second floor. Wide porches covered both ends of the structure. Gaps between the heart-of-pine logs provided excellent ventilation, as well as a convenient entryway for all varieties of small animals and insects. But Jim, remembering his earlier bout with consumption, reportedly told family members that “I wouldn’t give anything for a house that didn’t have cracks wide

⁸ Ibid.

enough to throw a cat through.” In an area near Bay View, family members described a huge eagle’s nest in a large pine tree. As they settled into the cabin, family members occasionally noticed small groups of Seminole Indians who lived in the area and roamed in the woods near the homestead. The family slept on mattresses made of corn shuck or Spanish moss. They built the “sleeping rooms” on the second floor. At a later date and as the family grew, Jim added a kitchen and dining room area as an annex to the cabin. The family also replaced the “mud and sticks” fireplace with one made from bricks. Since Elizabeth served as a midwife in the area, the log house became the first “hospital” along the Pinellas Peninsula. Nearly sixty members of the McMullen family alone were born in the cabin before 1900. Its prominence along the sparsely-settled frontier also made the cabin a de facto stagecoach station during the years before the construction of the Orange Belt Railway. Residents of upper Pinellas who traveled to Tampa on county business frequently stopped at the cabin; many even spent the night.¹⁰

The exact age of the Coachman-McMullen Log Cabin remains a mystery. Various family interviews and printed sources place the date of construction anywhere between 1848 and 1852. In her comprehensive history of the Bay View community appearing in the *Clearwater Sun* in late 1949 and early 1950, Nancy Meador—granddaughter of Captain Jim and longtime historian of the McMullen clan—claimed that he constructed the “sturdily built double pen log cabin” in 1848. A 1 February 1940 obituary of Jim’s son, Dr. Bethel McMullen, claimed that the family first occupied this cabin in 1848. One of Bethel’s granddaughters claimed that stories passed down through the generations placed the year of construction as either 1849 or 1850. A *St. Petersburg Times* story describing the February 1936 ceremony where the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a bronze tablet at the log house claimed that Captain James erected the home in 1850. Other articles, such as an extended essay entitled “The McMullens of Pinellas” that appeared in the “Floridian” magazine of the 6 August 1967 edition of the *St. Petersburg Times*, claimed the McMullens raised the building in either 1850 or 1852. When longtime *Times* columnist Dick Bothwell visited the cabin to interview family in August 1956, he learned that the McMullens built the house in 1852. Most historians and family members

⁹ Ibid.

believe that McMullens occupied the present structure by early 1852, though W. L. Straub placed the year of construction as late as 1856. This log house may have included wood or other materials salvaged from an earlier structure. Although the exact date of construction remains a mystery, one can assume that the dwelling resembled its present form by the early 1850s, as more members of the McMullen clan came to the area.¹¹

The immediate and extended families of Jim and Elizabeth McMullen continued to grow along with his homestead. Captain Jim held about 240 acres by the early 1850s. Between 1852 and 1860, the McMullens welcomed five additional children to the brood, in nearly two-year intervals: Daniel Campbell (born 18 March 1852), Mary Katherine (born 16 March 1854), James Robert (born 20 May 1856), Lydia Elizabeth (born 14 June 1858), and William W. (born 19 June 1860). Young William lived less than four years, perishing on 27 February 1864 at Clear Water Harbor. To meet the educational needs of his growing family, Captain Jim established the first school on the peninsula, a simple log cabin built about 1853 or 1854 at a site south of Sunset Point/Main Street and east of U.S. Highway 19. During a trip to send crops out of Florida, James McMullen searched for a teacher to offer instruction to his children and other youngsters in the area. He recruited a teacher and brought her and her daughter to his cabin. Originally, students met in the attic of Jim's sugarhouse; this classroom had benches and a teacher's desk built by Jim. Known as the "McMullen Log School," members of the McMullen family also called this structure "Sylvan Abbey," the name of the first teacher's daughter. During this time, young Bethel McMullen owned and voraciously read many volumes of poetry. As more children attended classes, James McMullen and Dick Booth decided to build a larger one-room log school with a chimney and fireplace on a parcel east of his cabin. By the late 1850s, nearly thirty children came to this early schoolhouse on the frontier. Lee Harn, a member of an early family, recalled that students during the time often strung wild blueberries on wiregrass to make edible necklaces. The early school building also served as the Sylvan Abbey church, with many family members and guests gathering at one of

¹⁰ *Clearwater Sun*, 20 November 1949, 5 February 1950, 30 November 1976; *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 February 1936, 19 August 1956; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 67-68.

¹¹ *Clearwater Sun*, 1 February 1940, 5 February 1950; Marjorie McMullen Keery to Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 18 June 1971; *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 February 1936, 6 August 1967, 19 August 1956; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, insert between p. 28 and p. 29, 34.

the nearby McMullen homes for dinner before their long journey back to Clear Water or Largo.

Captain Jim's brothers also started to arrive in the area. Daniel McMullen, born in 1825, came to the area about 1851. He had married Elizabeth's younger sister, Margaret Ann Campbell, at a ceremony in the Spring Lake Methodist Church near Brooksville on 18 November 1851. They probably built a small log cabin on the original family homestead, where they started to cultivate crops and herd cattle. In addition to having sisters as their wives, James and Dan McMullen also worked closely on raising cattle along the family's lands. While staying at Jim's log cabin, Daniel and Margaret McMullen celebrated the birth John James, their first child. John Fain McMullen moved to the Pinellas Peninsula and settled near the site of present-day Wilcox Road and Indian Rocks Road. After about five to seven years at this site, he apparently sold some of his land to Captain John T. Lowe, leader of an early family that established a settlement at Anona. John Fain then returned to Madison County, Florida, by the late 1850s. A few years later, John trekked to Georgia to fight on the side of the Confederacy. After the end of the Civil War, he would return to Florida, along with the other McMullen brothers.¹²

Wars Reach the Pinellas Peninsula

The battlefield disrupted the agricultural activities of James P. McMullen's family as early as the 1850s. Battles of the Third Seminole War (1855-1858) came to Hillsborough County by early 1856. In February 1856, Captain Richard Turner organized residents into a militia that pledged to fight against Indians who encroached upon homesteaded lands. Abel Miranda served as a first lieutenant and Elias Hart acted as a second lieutenant. John A. Bethell also fought in these battles. Miranda had settled on Big Bayou in 1857; Bethell arrived on Little Bayou by 1859. Bethell's sister, Eliza, later married Abel Miranda. Other companies mustered in the Tampa area, including one led by cattle rancher William B. Hooker. Captain Jim served with Hooker during the

¹² Genealogical research on the McMullen family appears in building and other research files located at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 64-65, 73; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, pp. 3-4; Patricia Perez Constini, ed., *A Tradition of Excellence, Pinellas County Schools: 1912-1987* (Clearwater: Pinellas County School Board, 1987), 11; Pinellas County, Board of Public Instruction, *The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools, Celebrating 50 Years of*

skirmishes of 1856, enlisting on January 3 at Fort Meade in eastern Hillsborough (now Polk) County. James served until February 21, and probably returned to his homestead shortly thereafter. “Keeter” Booth recalled an uprising in about 1859 when settlers around present-day Safety Harbor area saw a number of Indians come from the Alligator Creek area, where they had lived on the fish and oysters along the creek. Local residents, probably including members of the McMullen and Booth families, “promptly hustled [them] out to join their own people down towards the Everglades.” After the war came to an end, Captain Jim returned to his cabin and resumed his cultivation of crops and livestock. According to the 8 October 1859 issue of Tampa Town’s *Florida Peninsular*, James P. McMullen won an election to serve as a commissioner in Hillsborough County. At that time, a total of eight men from “Point Pinellas” voted in the election! By the 1860 census, he worked as a farmer and claimed lands valued at \$850 and a personal estate worth \$2,150.¹³

The McMullen brothers served the Confederacy during the Civil War. Nearly one year before the firing on Fort Sumter, James Parramore McMullen received a nomination as a candidate “for Major of the 20th Regiment of Florida Militia.” Despite his involvement in the military activities, James initially expressed opposition to secession, according to some sources. In 1861, James became a captain stationed at Clear Water Harbor under the command of General J. M. Taylor. This volunteer unit trained men to drive cattle from Florida to other Confederate states. Captain Jim mustered the troops on July 20 and the men left by October 20 with the expectation that they would join other Confederate forces. After the company’s disbandment, James continued to work as a member of the Quartermaster Corps of the Confederate army throughout the war and to serve with the “home guard.” He also celebrated the arrival of Lucy Marian McMullen on 19 April 1862. Records indicate that Elizabeth gave birth to Lucy in the Keystone Park area, rather than at the family’s log cabin; the family may have abandoned the homestead during this period because of encroaching Union forces along the Pinellas Peninsula.

Educational Progress: Superintendent’s Semi- centennial Report, 1912-1962 (St. Petersburg: Modern Printing & Publishing, 1962), 10; *Clearwater Sun*, 1 February 1940, 18 December 1949.

¹³ Ernest Lauren Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County: Narrative and Biographical* (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1928), 38; Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 64; Young, *Florida’s Pinellas Peninsula*, 24; John A. Bethell, *Bethell’s History of Point Pinellas* (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors, 1962),

According to one story, the family temporarily settled near Fort Keystone during the spring of 1862 before returning to the Sylvan Abbey area. The danger was real: Military forces burned the first log house built by Richard J. Booth at Philippe Hammock; in 1866, the Booths built a new log structure. Bethel McMullen claimed that Yankees also burned his library of poetry books at the cabin during the Civil War. Some of Captain Jim's siblings had moved to other areas of Florida prior to the Civil War. Thomas Fain McMullen tied the knot with Mary Jane McCloud on 21 May 1844 and started a family while living in Georgia. This 1817 native of Georgia moved his family from their homestead in Thomas County, Georgia, to Madison County, Florida, by the late 1840s. About a decade later, his brother David McMullen also came to Madison County as a laborer who built a railroad spur between Madison and Tallahassee. While Thomas Fain returned to Georgia at the beginning of the Civil War, younger David stayed in Florida and fought in the Second Florida Cavalry. Research by Robert Harris and others indicates that two of the McMullen brothers (James and David) performed their Civil War military service in Florida, while four others (Thomas, Daniel, John, and Malcolm) returned to Georgia to fight for the Confederacy. Daniel returned to Florida by September 1863 and enlisted in a company of the Florida Infantry located in Brooksville under the command of Captain John McNeill. The oldest brother, William, remained sympathetic to the Confederacy, but apparently did not fight in the Civil War. Meanwhile, Bethel McMullen, Captain Jim's oldest son, also fought in the war when he enlisted in Captain L. G. Leslie's First Battalion Special Cavalry at Brooksville in 1863.¹⁴

James and Daniel McMullen served in the "Cow Cavalry" by 1863. This unit included many experts at raising and herding cattle who received orders to gather livestock from peninsular Florida and bring the animals to northern regions of the Confederacy for slaughter. The meat, tallow, and hides helped to feed, clothe, and sustain the struggling Confederate forces. During this period, James led cattle drives to locations

14; Census information included in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, p. 5; [Tampa] *Florida Peninsular*, 8 October 1859.

¹⁴ *Florida Peninsular*, 14 April 1860; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 64-66; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 35-36; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, pp. 7-8; *Safety Harbor Herald*, 23 June 1939, 5 October 1951; *Clearwater Sun*, 1 February 1940. Bethel McMullen's records, along with some other family members who fought in Florida, appear in the Florida Confederate Pension Application Files, Record Group 137, Series 587, State Archives of Florida. The Florida State Archives has created a searchable index on the internet located at: <http://dhis.dos.state.fl.us/barm/PensionFiles.html>.

such as Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia.¹⁵ In his research of Dan McMullen, Donald Ivey included an excerpt describing one cattle drive led by Captain Jim:

A detail of six men, under the command of Mr. James P. McMullen, was ordered to the cattle pens at Fort Meade to take charge of a herd of 365 beef cattle bound for Savannah. . . . The course was a northerly one. . . . The cattle were driven along at a 'grazing rate' of speed, usually averaging around 8½ miles per day. . . . 362 head out of the original herd of 365 had made it. Besides the two that were drowned, one was also lost somewhere between Fort Meade and Savannah. The herd was actually in far better condition than when they left their prairie home in Florida five weeks earlier.¹⁶

Daniel, James, and James's son, Bethel, may have served together in this Cow Cavalry by October 1864.¹⁷

Expanding Families and Agribusiness Activities

Family members returned to their commercial activities—and to the Pinellas Peninsula—in the years following the Civil War. James and Elizabeth rounded out their family with the youngest of their eleven children: Birten Lee (“Uncle Birt”, born 25 May 1866) and George Ward (born 1 December 1870). Captain Jim continued to grow cotton and raise livestock during the late 1860s and early 1870s, though interviews with family members indicated that he focused his efforts on the citrus trade by 1875. Jim and Dan McMullen often sent cattle to Cuba in exchange for Spanish doubloons. Rather than dumping oranges in large barrels or storage areas of boats, James McMullen hired others to construct citrus crates from boards harvested from local trees that the workers fastened with palmetto stems. He partnered with Gustave Axelson, owner of boat fleet, to ship his citrus from Bay View to other ports, such as Cedar Keys, Pensacola, and Mobile. By the summer of 1869, Jim's workers also built syrup barrels of “superior” quality that he sold to merchants and shippers in Tampa. Sugarcane grindings became regular events at many

¹⁵ Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, pp. 8-9.

¹⁶ Ibid.

McMullen farmsteads. Captain Jim also served as a self-taught dentist on the frontier, a profession his eldest son, Bethel, also practiced by the 1870s. Daniel also returned to the Largo area by 1865 and acquired a homestead near the site he occupied in 1852. He built the Dan McMullen House, currently located in Heritage Village, in 1868. David McMullen arrived by 1866 and settled in the Morse Hill area of Safety Harbor, between St. Helena and Bay View and adjacent to brother Thomas Fain's property. After a short while, David returned to Madison. He later moved to Lakeland after the Florida Southern Railroad reached that settlement in the mid-1880s. There, he built a two-story wooden structure known as the Sunnyside Hotel, a business he operated until his death in 1896. In 1868, William McMullen obtained tracts near Ridge Road in the area around 102nd Avenue North and Walsingham Road. Thomas Fain McMullen also acquired parcels in 1868; his land holdings covered properties west of Safety Harbor near McMullen-Booth Road at a site once known as the "Davey Place." At that location, he cultivated a variety of vegetables and cotton, and raised cattle. The last two brothers arrived by 1871. John Fain returned to the area and acquired a tract in the Lealman area near U.S. Highway 19 and 54th Avenue North, while Malcolm's parcel rested near the intersection of East Bay Drive and Belcher Road. John raised cattle and citrus for a few years before moving to Perry, Florida, the seat of Taylor County, by about 1878.¹⁸

Census information from 1870 offers a portrait of agricultural activities on the McMullen properties. James and Elizabeth claimed land they appraised at \$2,000, and a personal estate worth a similar amount. A thirty-two year old North Carolina native, Elicy Simers, lived at Captain Jim's house. By this period, the family held Saturday evening gatherings on the porch, attracting family members from afar for dances to guitar, fiddle, and organ music. According to the 1870 census, Thomas Fain McMullen listed real estate valued at \$3,000, and a personal estate worth \$320. His oldest sons—Rufus (then age twenty), James (then seventeen), and John (then twelve)—assisted him as laborers on the family farm, while Jane (then fifteen) and Joel (then eight) worked around the house. Two boys, James and Leander Blakely, also lived with the family.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 66-67, 70-73; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, p. 11; *Florida Peninsular*, 25 August 1869; *Clearwater Sun*, 1 February 1940; *St. Petersburg Times*, 6 August 1967.

Rufus Fain, the oldest son of Thomas Fain, exchanged vows with Georgia Ann Hammock at Captain Jim's log house on 21 February 1874. Rufus moved to the Largo area after his father passed away in 1888. Rufus sold his crop of oranges for near \$1,200 during the 1900-1901 growing season. During the early 1900s, Rufus, John J. McMullen, and A. M. O'Quinn became important grove owners in the Largo area.¹⁹

The Growth of the Bay View Community

James P. McMullen believed that Bay View offered the best location for agricultural development in the Tampa Bay region. He frequently touted the settlement during visits across the bay to Tampa. For example, in late December 1878, he visited the office of the *Sunland Tribune* newspaper to present the editor with sugar cane specimens ten feet in length. The following week, he dropped off an orange that weighed over one pound while conducting business in Tampa. His reputation in raising cattle grew throughout the region. John C. White, a visitor to the area, wrote a letter to his uncle while anchored at Johns Pass in March 1883. In his correspondence, John mentioned that "if you can find any person that wants to buy Florida cattle they can address James P. McMullen, Bay View, Fla." Florida's 1885 agricultural census offers a glimpse at J. P. McMullen's agricultural holdings: He kept 1,000 acres as woodland, and grew crops and raised animals on much of his other holdings. He claimed a farm and outbuildings valued at \$2,500, along with \$80 in equipment, \$400 in livestock, produce valued at \$600, and wages paid to others listed at \$120 per annum. At that time, James kept two horses, two mules, thirty-six cows, ten swine, sixty-two poultry, and about forty other animals. Two of Captain Jim's sons advertised in the *Sunland Tribune* by January 1882 to sell some of their groves and acreage. Daniel C. McMullen offered a 200-acre tract "under good fence," with fourteen acres under cultivation at the time. The plot included 400 orange trees "in fine order," available for "easy terms." Meanwhile, Dr. Bethel McMullen planned to sell two separate forty-acre tracts, with "some fifty acres under good fence and cultivation, [and] good water." The 1000 fruit trees included about 200 orange trees. The property also came with "a good plain building . . . in a healthy location." William

¹⁹ Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 70; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 7 January 1904; *St. Petersburg Times*, 7 September 1901, 19 August 1956.

McMullen, Captain Jim's oldest brother, cultivated oranges in the Clear Water area, including ten large specimens that weighed a combined fifteen pounds during the spring of 1880. J. J. McMullen and J. P. Nash offered large groves and lots for sale in early editions of the *West Hillsborough Times* by 1886. By the summer of 1890, young John T. McMullen of Bay View had patented "a most complete orange clipper" that he planned to place on the market to expedite crop gathering.²⁰

Captain Jim and his sons developed Bay View into a town by 1874. Originally known as "Eagle's Nest" for the large nest Captain Jim spotted in a tree by the 1840s, the settlement became known as "Swimming Pen Point" as early residents began to bring cattle to the region. The deep water along the shore allowed boats to sail into the area by the mid-1840s, a few years after Captain Jim's initial visit, and transport produce and livestock to distant markets. Early settlers of the region often herded cattle from as far north as Taylor County and as far east as Polk County to the area. They kept cows in pens until schooners arrived along Tampa Bay. The farmers then brought about six cows at a time out of the pen, and had them swim from the shoreline to the boat, using horses and rowboats to herd them into schooners. During the late nineteenth century, strong family ties connected Bay View to Tampa. For example, members of the McMullen family regularly traveled to Tampa to conduct business or participate in politics. Members of the Culbreath family, notable in Tampa business and social circles by the early 1900s, first settled on a seventy-acre parcel near Bay View in December 1866 after moving from South Carolina. Expecting the railroad to reach this site in the near future, James P. McMullen built a sawmill, a packing house, and a hotel with two stories and about forty rooms at Bay View. Meanwhile, his son, Dan C. McMullen operated one of the two stores in Bay View by the mid-1870s. Dan—not to be confused with "Uncle Dan" McMullen who had since moved to Largo and built his residence—shipped approximately 2,000 "fine" cabbages from his Bay View property to merchants in Louisville, Kentucky, by March 1881. The community celebrated the dedication of Bethel Presbyterian Church in Bay View on 1 April 1887, a structure built from cypress logs shipped from Pensacola by Captain Jim. One son, James Robert McMullen, left the

²⁰ *Sunland Tribune*, 4 January 1879, 27 May 1880, 4 September 1880, 26 January 1882; *West Hillsborough Times*, 1 April 1886; John C. White to Uncle, 22 March 1883, Heritage Village Library and

area to study law at the East Florida Seminary (the precursor to the University of Florida). After meeting Caroline McBride Summerlin, he fell in love, quit school, and raised cotton on forty acres. Young Jim and Caroline wed in a 7 June 1881 ceremony at Anona. While waiting for his citrus crops to mature, Captain Jim's namesake son built a boat named the *Carrie Bell* that he later expanded and renamed the *Gypsy Maid*. His navigational skills soon won him the nickname "Captain Jim Junior," though close family members distinguished him from his father by calling him "Jimmie." By the 1880s, the junior Jim regularly ran shipments of crops, including watermelons, to Tampa, Port Tampa, Sarasota, and other venues along the Gulf. By the end of Reconstruction, members of the McMullen family (including William and John) served as delegates to the Hillsborough County Democratic Party, led at the time by Captain John T. Lesley.²¹

The McMullen family also has a direct connection with the legendary kapok tree along McMullen-Booth Road. Daniel C. McMullen, a leader at the Friendship Methodist Church, received kapok tree (*bombax ceiba*) seeds from a church missionary. Captain Jim's son took the seeds to the nursery of Robert D. Hoyt. A noted taxidermist, Hoyt visited Payne's Prairie in Alachua County and other Florida sites during the years after the Civil War to collect specimens. During one trip to Florida, he met Agnes Denny, a young woman who had moved from Illinois to teach at the Bay View schoolhouse. Robert and Agnes soon married in Illinois and moved to New York. Within a short period of time, Agnes fell ill and the doctor suggested that she return to Florida. When the Hoyts came to the Seven Oaks area about 1875, they stayed at Captain Jim's cabin for awhile. Later, they purchased about 100 acres from the McMullens, planted citrus trees, and grew exotic crops. They called this settlement—located on McMullen-Booth south of Alligator Creek—"Seven Oaks" for the majestic oaks on the property. Agnes's sister, Emma Denny, became postmistress at Seven Oaks. Soon, the Hoyts built a greenhouse and established a mail order nursery that sold their exotic plants to patrons throughout the world. Hoyt grew two small kapok trees from Dan McMullen's seeds; both survived the freezes of the 1890s because Hoyt and McMullen kept the small plants in the greenhouse.

Archives, Largo; Agricultural census information located in Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

²¹ *Clearwater Sun*, 20 November 1949, 11 December 1949, 25 December 1949, 1 January 1950; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12 May 1957; *Sunland Tribune*, 29 June 1878, 19 March 1881; Donald Brenham McKay, ed., *Pioneer Florida* (Tampa: Southern Publishing Company, 1959), vol. 3, p. 982.

After 1895, Hoyt sold his holdings in the business, which later became American Exotic Nurseries, an early place of employment for a young teenager named John S. Taylor who rode his bicycle from Largo to work at the location long before becoming a state senator. Hoyt maintained an extensive collection of stuffed animals from the local area, including tigers, wildcats, minx, alligators, numerous birds, raccoons, possums, snakes, and a large black bear. These specimens became an attraction for visitors to Bay View. Hoyt sold the business, but kept his kapok: As the trees grew, Hoyt placed one on his property and Dan planted the other. Dan's tree perished after the 1962 freeze, while the sapling raised by Hoyt became the impressive behemoth that adorns the site of the former Kapok Tree Inn Restaurant along McMullen-Booth Road.²²

While the McMullens and Booths share their names on a road, early family leaders played a large role in building early road networks along the Pinellas Peninsula. The extended Bay View community covered a broad portion of the east-central Pinellas Peninsula by 1880. In October of that year, Captain Jim retrieved his sharpest hatchet and climbed upon his strongest horse for a ride to see Richard "Uncle Dick" Booth. Together Jim McMullen and Dick Booth carved a pathway between Uncle Dick's cabin, near present-day McMullen-Booth (once Haines) Road, to Bay View. Robert Hoyt agreed to construct a bridge across Alligator Creek if Booth and McMullen built an extension to his house. In time, the families built what McMullen family member Nancy Meader called "the first road in Pinellas County laid-off and built according to surveyors' specifications." At Bay View, Captain Jim had erected his store and hotel. The old "Swimming Pen" docks remained an important site for visiting steamships. A journey north along present-day McMullen-Booth took early settlers past the James R. McMullen's home, the kapok tree site, and the Hoyt home. After crossing Alligator Creek, travelers saw G. Ward McMullen's home and the Booth house north of present day Main Street. Sylvan Abbey church and lake became a focal point along present-day Main Street/Sunset Point. A path from Sylvan Abbey generally following Coachman Road took early travelers to Captain Jim's log cabin and the McMullen cemetery. Dan C. McMullen's farmstead sat near the current intersection of Drew and Belcher, while

²² For a discussion of the "Kapok Tree" story, see: Katherine C. Downs, *My Memories of Safety Harbor, Florida (December 1835 to February 1896)* (N.p.: n.p., 1986); *Clearwater Sun*, 4 December 1949.

Bethel McMullen lived near U. S. Highway 19 near Druid Road. Within a few decades, the McMullens, Booths, and other early families had carved a substantial settlement out of the wilderness. Ironically, by the early 1960s it took a “complicated series of parliamentary maneuvers” to preserve the name of McMullen-Booth name on that road. Members of the Pinellas County Historical Commission wanted the road to honor the families that had cleared the original path. At the time, most maps referred to the two-land thoroughfare as North Haines Road, an extension of Haines that followed the path of present-day U. S. Highway 19 to its junction with present-day Haines Road in Pinellas Park. After debating the issue, the Board of County Commissioners agreed to restore the McMullen-Booth designation. Not everyone in the audience agreed with the outcome: One North Pinellas resident told a newspaper reporter, “They already have a McMullen Road and a Booth Avenue. . . . If they want a monument let them put one up on private property.”²³

The McMullens and Booths celebrated their combined families. Lucy Marian McMullen, Captain Jim’s youngest daughter, left for school at Valdosta, Georgia, in about 1878, after completing her primary education at the original Sylvan Abbey. On 23 November 1886, she married DeJoinville Booth, son of Richard (Dick) and Millicent Booth and grandson of Odet Philippe. The newlyweds followed in their parents’ footsteps by establishing citrus groves in the Safety Harbor area. Lucy’s work with the Sylvan Abbey’s missionary society helped lay the groundwork for the establishment of the Safety Harbor Methodist Church, also located at Heritage Village. DeJoinville maintained a longtime membership in the Safety Harbor church. After an extended illness that sent him to Clearwater’s Morton Plant Hospital, he returned to his Safety Harbor home where he passed away on the afternoon of 18 September 1939. Known as “Aunt Lucy” in her later years, by the time this matriarch passed away on 3 October 1951, she left seven children, eighteen grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Both DeJoinville and Lucy occupy plots at the McMullen family cemetery. One of their sons, Leland Byrd Booth, grew citrus and worked as agricultural inspector from 1924 until 1959. Roy Booth, an early Pinellas County sheriff and the son of Odet William “Keeter”

²³ *Clearwater Sun*, 4 December 1949; *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 December 1962.

Booth, also married a McMullen when he exchanged vows with Margaret Rose, daughter of William A. McMullen, Sr.²⁴

Captain Jim also enjoyed time spent with an “adopted” member of the family. Juan Patricia (sometimes spelled “Patrecia,” “Petrecia,” or “Betriese”), was born probably in the 1820s in Vera Cruz, Mexico. Losing his father at a young age, Juan left Mexico in the early 1830s on a Spanish boat. According to family stories, he became a servant in the Havana palace of a governor general in Cuba. He claimed he had stolen a boat and sailed single-handedly from Havana to Key West, with a later journey to New Orleans. By this time, he went by the Anglicized name “John Sanders.” He caught a ship from the Crescent City filled with cotton and bound for Liverpool, England, but that boat apparently sank off the coast near Manatee County after getting hit by lightning. Juan said he arrived at Tampa by 1856, in time to see the Seminoles deported during the closing battles of the Third Seminole War. Juan later found his way to present-day St. Pete Beach, and hid from troops during the Civil War in the Coffee Pot Bayou area of St. Petersburg. After the war, he spent time with Abel Miranda near Pinellas Point, before finally drifting to Captain Jim’s log cabin. Juan apparently respected James P. McMullen because Captain Jim never made remarks about the Mexican’s short size. He lived at the estate from about the late 1860s until Elizabeth McMullen’s death in 1890. During this time, “Uncle Johnnie” took care of the chickens and cultivated crops in the garden at Captain Jim’s home. Between 1890 and his death in 1920, Juan spent much of his time with the family of Bethel McMullen. Members of the McMullen clan buried Juan in the family cemetery after he passed away.²⁵

Educational facilities expanded by the late 1800s. In 1880, settlers of Bay View built a new log schoolhouse to replace the Sylvan Abbey structure. Ten years later, they replaced this structure with a two-story building that also included an upstairs office for the local Masonic Temple. This building had two doors: the left door offered a covered staircase to the meeting hall, while the right door opened into the classroom. Students attending classes often stopped at the cloak room, just to the left of the school entrance. Inside this closet, nearly every student’s family kept a labeled bottle of syrup. School

²⁴ *Safety Harbor Herald*, 22 September 1939, 5 October 1951, 15 May 1959; *St. Petersburg Times*, 19 September 1939, 17 August 1970; *Clearwater Sun*, 19 September 1939.

lunches, brought by the students from home, often included cold hominy and possibly a slice of bacon, sweet potato, or biscuits. Students grabbed their bottle of syrup, and poured it on the bread for dipping at lunchtime. An outdoor well and pump provided a “drinking fountain” for the school, though students often had to worry about frogs getting caught in the pipes. On more than a few occasions, frogs became mangled in the pump and students had pieces of frog “meat” in their water. Like the “soccer moms” of today, parents sometimes escorted their younger children part of the way to school. These concerned parents did not fear vehicular traffic; instead, they worried that livestock and wild young horses in the woods might harm their children. As early as 1882, some members of the small community even hoped to establish a college in the area, a very ambitious proposal given the region’s small population and rural character. On 18 May 1882, Captain Jim told a correspondent with Tampa’s *Sunland Tribune* that he had started to solicit “aid for the purpose of constructing and equipping the College building at Bay View.” By that time, J. P. McMullen had acquired 160 acres of land and \$1,930 towards this project. Although this facility never opened, probably in large measure because the Orange Belt Railway and other transportation networks bypassed Bay View by the 1890s, the up-and-doing attitude illustrated the enthusiasm that Captain Jim had for the community.²⁶

Pioneer Settlers Pass Away and the Train Bypasses the Region

As members of the McMullen family grew older, Captain Jim established a family cemetery in 1881 on about ten acres of land southwest of his log house. He probably dedicated this land after the death of Mary Katherine Belcher, his third daughter and former wife of William Alexander Belcher. Mary passed away on January 31. Members of the Belchers and McMullens gathered for a funeral service at Jim’s log house before her burial, the earliest interment at the family cemetery. William A. Belcher married another of Captain Jim’s daughters, Sarah Jane, on 12 October 1881. Captain Jim remained active in the family’s business throughout the 1880s. He hired a Philadelphian named H. L. Huff to ship oranges from his property in the fall of 1890; Huff also assisted

²⁵ Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 66; *St. Petersburg Times*, 14 September 1919.

²⁶ *Clearwater Sun*, 18 December 1949; *Sunland Tribune*, 18 May 1882.

Robert Whitehurst's family by preparing their crops for shipment. Marriages and children expanded the family. George Ward McMullen married his wife, a native of London, England, in April 1891. She had arrived in the St. Petersburg area as a teenager, and soon met members of the McMullen family. After their ceremony, the newlyweds continued to live at the family cabin for awhile before moving to Safety Harbor.²⁷

Bay View's fortunes began to change after the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway to the Pinellas Peninsula in 1888. At the time when the iron horse reached the small and remote settlement at St. Petersburg, residents of Bay View enjoyed a thriving commercial deep water port that rivaled others in the region. Although the Orange Belt followed a path from Tarpon Springs along the western end of the Pinellas Peninsula that bypassed Bay View, the settlement continued to enjoy regular steamship service into the 1890s. For example, during the summer of 1890 the steamer *Erie* regularly traveled the "Old Tampa Bay Route" from Tampa to Bay View and Safety Harbor, with extended service around Pinellas Point to Dunedin and Clearwater. Despite the settlement's decline in prominence by 1900, the *Tampa Weekly Tribune* continued to publish an occasional column, "Brevities of Bay View," after the turn of the century. As early as the winter of 1904, leading residents of Bay View wanted Hillsborough County officials to allocate funds for a spur road—probably following the general route of Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard—that would connect their settlement with Clearwater. By this time, residents considered Bay View more of an enclave of Clearwater than a separate community. The construction of the Tampa and Gulf Coast Railroad—often called the "Tug and Grunt"—brought rail service to the region by the mid-1910s; however, the growth of St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and other cities had eclipsed Bay View by that time. Myron A. Smith, a man who purchased James R. McMullen's old Bay View home in 1917, played an important role in having Bay View incorporated into the City of Clearwater in 1925. Shortly thereafter, city leaders placed gas lights along the eastern portion of Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard and widened the roadway that connected Bay View to Gulf-to-Bay. By early 1925, developers McKinley and Langston had purchased twenty acres in Bay View and

²⁷ Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 68; *Sunland Tribune*, 19 February 1881; *Largo Sentinel*, 28 September 1933; McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, vol. 3, p. 117. For a list of those buried at the McMullen Cemetery, please consult a database created by members of the Pinellas Genealogy Society at:

began selling lots for as low as \$950. As the land boom exploded, some properties sold for as much as \$25,000. Smith and “Uncle Birt” McMullen donated lands for picnic areas and a park. During the early 1930s, Smith assisted Ben T. Davis in the construction of Davis (now Courtney Campbell) Causeway.²⁸

The 1890s marked an important transition period as four of the seven brothers McMullen passed away during that decade. Thomas Fain, the first brother to die, had passed away during the previous decade, in 1888. His family buried him at the Sylvan Abbey cemetery in Safety Harbor. John Fain perished in 1895, probably at his home in Taylor County. That same year, James Parramore McMullen died on April 17 in the Clearwater area. After services commemorating his active life on the Pinellas frontier, kith and kin buried Jim at the family cemetery he had established fourteen years earlier. He rested at a site near his wife, Elizabeth Campbell McMullen, who had passed away on 17 December 1890. With Captain Jim’s passing, his eldest son, Bethel, became the patriarch of that branch of the McMullen family. Son Jim purchased Captain Jim’s hotel in Bay View from his siblings for \$900, tore the building down, and constructed a large home and store along the bay. This was the home Myron Smith had purchased in 1917. David perished in 1896. He had moved to Lakeland about a decade earlier. The Lakeview Cemetery in Lakeland was his final resting place. William, the oldest brother, died in 1898. Family members placed his body at the Lone Pilgrim Cemetery on 102nd Avenue North near Ridge Road., a site established two years earlier by the Long Pilgrim Primitive Baptist Church. Other members of his immediate family, as well as relatives from the O’Quinn and Walsingham families, also occupy plots at Lone Pilgrim. The last surviving brothers perished during the first decade of the twentieth century: “Uncle Dan” McMullen perished 1908 and rested with many members of his branch of the family at the Largo Cemetery. Malcolm, the youngest of the seven brothers and the last to die, was interred at the McMullen family cemetery after his death in 1909.²⁹

<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/fl/pinellas/cemetery/mcmullen.txt>; *Tampa Tribune*, 16 October 1890.

²⁸ *Tampa Tribune*, 26 June 1890; *Clearwater Evening Sun*, 3 January 1925, 10 January 1925; *Clearwater Sun*, 22 January 1950, 29 January 1950; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 11 February 1904. For an example of the “Brevities of Bay View” column, see: *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 11 July 1901.

²⁹ Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 73; *Clearwater Sun*, 29 January 1950. Members of the Pinellas Genealogy Society have joined others who have compiled cemetery information as part of a “tombstone

Long before his father's death, Bethel McMullen became an important leader in the Tampa Bay region. Captain Jim's oldest son and a native of Brooksville born in December 1845, Bethel came to the Pinellas Peninsula as a young child during his father's treks to the area in 1848. He enlisted in the Confederate forces at the age of sixteen and fought alongside his father and other family members during the later stages of the war. After the Civil War, Captain Jim gave Bethel a dentist's kit and taught him basic skills. Shortly thereafter, Bethel began traveling along sand and dirt roads to Tampa, Brooksville, and other locations to build a clientele. After an 1868 law required college course work to practice dentistry, Bethel raised \$100 of the required \$600 tuition by driving oxen for a year. He earned additional funds by bringing cedar logs from Brooksville to Tampa, along both the Weeki Watchee River to the Gulf and the Hillsborough River directly to Tampa. During this early part of the Reconstruction era, he worked with Jude, an African-American woman and former slave, who rode the logs with him as a lumberperson. Bethel and Jude often hired former slaves to ride in a raft in front of them and use long poles to scare away the alligators that populated the rivers. In 1872, Dr. Bethel McMullen completed his studies at the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery and became the first professional dentist in Hillsborough County. Chartered by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1840, this educational institution later became part of the Dental School at the University of Maryland. He soon established a practice that spanned from Perry to Key West, often with stops in settlements such as Brooksville, Fort Meade, and Bartow. He often traveled by buggy, and frequently spent up to a week in each community taking care of residents. Even before finishing his classes, Bethel solicited patients in an advertisement appearing in the *Florida Peninsular*, a Tampa newspaper, in May 1871: "Dentistry: Dr. B. McMullen offers his professional services to the citizens of Tampa, and requests a share of their patronage." Newspapers often announced Dr. Bethel's "professional tours," such as when a September 1878 issue of the *Sunland Tribune* told residents along the Alifia River told residents there that "those having dental work to be done cannot consult a better dentist." Bethel made at least one mistake, however, during his six decades as a dentist: Brother James Robert McMullen

transcription project." For a link to Pinellas cemeteries indexed by volunteers, visit: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~cemetery/florida/pinellas.htm>.

once visited him to have a tooth pulled. Lacking anesthesia, Bethel and James decided to have a few drinks so that Jim's face would become numb and Bethel could prepare himself for the painful procedure on his brother. Bethel performed the procedure, and Jim returned home only to find out after the alcohol had cleared his system that his older brother had yanked the wrong tooth.³⁰

Bethel started a family after marrying Nancy "Nannie" Elizabeth Taylor on 24 March 1874. Daughter of John S. Taylor and Margaret Carter, Nannie entered the world on 1 March 1854. Bethel and Nannie tied the knot in Brooksville, and returned to the Pinellas Peninsula to start their family. They raised eight children: Blanche, Francis Paramour, Eliza, James Swinson, Frederick Bethel, Mildred Elizabeth, Millie Carolyn, and Julia. While building his dental practice, Bethel also remained an avid farmer and gardener. He served as a member of the Hillsborough County School Board in the early 1880s, at a time when the schools operated on a five-month term and teacher salaries averaged one dollar per pupil per school month. Bethel built the first house made from lumber in Bay View; other structures of the time were log cabins. He also owned one of the first automobiles in Clearwater, an "Overland" model that he purchased for \$885. By 1909, Bethel and Nannie owned a parcel valued at \$1,730 and at least \$200 worth of cattle and livestock. Known for his photographic memory, Dr. B. McMullen frequently cited long passages of literature and poetry, including works by Robert Burns. Indeed, his childhood passion of reading poetry, academic training in Baltimore, and professional activities along Florida's Gulf coast dispel commonplace notions about the "simple" lives of many frontier residents. During the early 1900s, Bethel attended the annual Blue-Gray reunions of Civil War veterans; his last trip took place in the summer of 1938, when son Frank escorted his ninety-two year old father to Gettysburg.

After fifty-eight years as a professional dentist, Bethel retired from his practice in 1930. His son, Dr. Fred McMullen, became the third generation to practice dentistry. Bethel and Nannie remained prominent residents of the area until their deaths. On their sixtieth anniversary in March 1934, seven children, twenty grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren joined them to hear their milestone mentioned by an announcer on the

³⁰ *Clearwater Sun*, 29 October 1939, 1 February 1940, 27 November 1949; *Florida Peninsular*, 27 May 1871; *Sunland Tribune*, 28 September 1878.

national “Cheerio” radio program. Well into his nineties, Bethel worked in a garden east of his Druid Road home and walked daily to a nearby bakery to purchase bread. An intellectual by nature, he remained interested in world events until the day he died. In January 1940, the United Daughters of the Confederacy honored Dr. B. McMullen at a luncheon at the Clearwater Yacht Club. Bethel suffered a heart attack on the afternoon of 31 January 1940 at his residence of 609 East Pine Street. Before his death, Bethel was the last living Confederate veteran in Pinellas County and possibly the oldest member of the Masonic Order of the United States. His wife, ill at the time, joined him in eternal rest when she perished on March 21.³¹

The Coachman Family Acquires Part of the James P. McMullen Estate

The heirs of James Parramore McMullen decided to sell the log cabin and much of the accompanying lands to Solomon Smith Coachman in 1902. An article in the 10 April 1902 *Tampa Weekly Tribune* claimed that Coachman purchased the grove property for \$8,100. Second of five children born to Hugh McCauley and Frances Moselle Lane Coachman, S. S. Coachman entered the world on 4 April 1862 in Echols County, Georgia. Known to family members as “Smith” or “S. S.,” Coachman attended Valdosta Institute in 1870. In the early 1880s, Coachman arrived in Polk County, Florida, where he taught for awhile at a school in a village north of Lakeland known as Foxtown. He later lived in Webster, a community in Sumter County, before opening a sawmill business in the new settlement of Lakeland in about 1883. He may have taught at a school in Plant City by 1884. During his travels in the region he met Ella Tucker, a resident of Richland, a small community in eastern Hernando (now Pasco) County between Dade City and Zephyrhills. On 6 January 1887, he married Ella—daughter of Joseph W. and Elizabeth Tucker—in a ceremony at Richland. This union produced two children, both born in Richland: Hattie Lane (born April 1888) and Joseph Herbert Coachman (13 May 1889). W. L. Straub and other sources claimed that S. S. Coachman arrived on the Pinellas Peninsula by 1886 and established a sawmill near the present site of the Belleview

³¹ *Clearwater Sun*, 29 October 1939, 1 February 1940; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12 May 1957; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 2 February 1940; *Sunland Tribune*, 21 May 1881, 12 October 1882; Bethel McMullen’s records, along with some other family members who fought in Florida, appear in the Florida Confederate Pension Application Files, Record Group 137, Series 587, State Archives of Florida.

Biltmore Hotel in Belleair. If he settled near Clear Water Harbor at this early date, Ella must have traveled to her parents' homestead at Richland to have their children. He undoubtedly settled at Clear Water by the early 1890s, where three of his brothers (Benjamin Green, Hugh McCauley, and Edwin Horace) joined him. He made an unhappy visit to Richland in 1892, after his wife passed away. Coachman had her buried at the Tucker Cemetery, the oldest graveyard in present-day Pasco and resting place for many of her kin.³²

The Coachman brothers operated a profitable sawmill by the 1890s. They supplied wood used for many early buildings in present-day Clearwater, including the Verona Inn (later renamed Gray Moss Inn) that opened in the late 1890s and the first section of the Belleview Hotel. Solomon soon opened a general merchandise store at Fort Harrison Avenue and Cleveland Street, while his brother, Edwin, worked at both the mill and the store, and later entered the banking business and played a part in organizing the First National Bank of Clearwater. In 1894, S. S. Coachman helped to construct this bank, one of the first brick buildings on the Pinellas Peninsula. He also hired "Old Uncle Jack," an African American man, to deliver groceries from the Coachman mercantile store, serve as a porter, and perform various jobs. By June 1900, S. S. Coachman resided on Fort Harrison Avenue with his two children (Hattie and Joseph) and his sister, Hattie Massie. Meanwhile, Benjamin Green Coachman, Solomon's older brother, worked as a butcher and lived on Cleveland Street with wife Bell, and their six children: Loveridge F., Mammie I., Lula, Hugh, Estell, and Benjamin G. Coachman. Ben, who abandoned a grove north of Tampa during the terrible freezes of the 1890s, may have served as the first butcher in Clearwater. Edwin Horace Coachman operated a sawmill around the turn of the century.

Solomon met Jessie Candler while visited his sister's lodge, the Seaora. This structure along North Osceola Avenue later became the Sandcastle Inn. Eldest of five children raised by Samuel Charles Candler and Jimmie Beville, Jessie was born on 19

³² *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 10 April 1902; Bette Coachman Hochman, "Solomon Smith Coachman—A Pinellas Pioneer," *Pinellas Genealogist* 22 (Summer 1999): 35; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 234; Genealogical research on the Coachman family appears in building and other research files located at Heritage Village Library and Archives. For more information on the Tucker family's cemetery in Pasco County, visit: <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/fl/pasco/cemetery/tucker.txt>; Marge Costa, "Clearwater's Beginnings: The Role of Solomon Smith Coachman," *Southern Homes*, Spring 1985, 90.

September 1877 in Villa Rica, Georgia. She attended public schools in Villa Rica before completing her studies at the West End Institute then located at Cartersville, Georgia. After teaching for about four years, her health declined and her father encouraged her to travel to Florida to recuperate. She first visited some of her mother's relatives in Sumter County before venturing to Clearwater. In January 1901, Solomon and Jessie became acquaintances, and soon learned that they had a shared ancestry and were fourth cousins. By March 1901 Solomon and Jessie announced their engagement. Solomon married Jessie as his second wife at a 27 June 1901 ceremony at her family's home in Villa Rica. An uncle, Bishop Warren Candler of the local Methodist church, united them in matrimony. Warren later served as the leader of Emory University in Atlanta. A July 13 edition of the *St. Petersburg Times* announced the return of the honeymooners as they arrived by train in Clearwater.³³

Another one of Jessie's relatives, Asa Candler, had business connections that brought him great wealth. Asa left the family farmstead near Villa Rica, studied medicine, and worked as an Atlanta druggist. He became acquainted with Dr. John Stith Pemberton, a pharmacist who developed Coca-Cola as a tonic. After Pemberton's death in 1888, Candler consolidated his holdings in the enterprise and soon obtained control of the manufacturing process for this beverage. By 1892, Asa Candler incorporated the Coca-Cola Company. Before 1900, the company successfully distributed Coca-Cola syrup to independent bottlers under licensing agreements that brought the soft drink to all forty-eight states of the Union, as well as the provinces of Canada. Candler sold the company for \$25-million in 1919 and soon thereafter helped Emory College relocate to the Atlanta area and expand into Emory University. An examination of Asa Candler's business activities may uncover possible speculative or commercial connections between him, his niece, and the Coachman family.³⁴

S. S. and Jessie Candler Coachman celebrated the arrival of seven children. Genealogical records indicate that Jessie gave birth to their three oldest children while

³³ Hochman, "Solomon Smith Coachman," 35; Nancy Meador, "Mrs. Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls Clearwater in 1901 and County Split," undated *Clearwater Sun* clipping, located in Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 January 1901; Costa, "Clearwater's Beginnings," 90-91.

³⁴ "Asa Griggs Candler" and "The Coca-Cola Company" *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com>, 18 December 2003.

living in Clearwater at a home on North Fort Harrison near Cleveland Street or at a rooming house in the Harbor Oaks area: Solomon Smith (born 19 August 1902), Samuel Candler (born 6 December 1904), and Hugh “Mack” McCauley (born 6 January 1907). Although the Orange Belt had arrived many years earlier, Clearwater still resembled a small “cow town” during the early years of the twentieth century.³⁵ In a retrospective interview, Jessie C. Coachman remembered the town in about 1901:

The sand was two feet deep on Fort Harrison Avenue . . . where we lived was country—deep woods all around. One night I started across the street to see one of our few neighbors . . . It was quite dark and I fell sprawling over a cow and nearly broke my neck.³⁶

Although S. S. Coachman had acquired the former McMullen residence, the family initially lived in downtown Clearwater for a few years before moving into the cabin. The Coachmans wanted to live near Samuel and Jimmie Beville Candler—Jessie’s parents—who resided at the Gray Moss Annex during the early 1900s. As their children grew older and more automobiles began to clog city streets, the Coachmans decided to move from their residence on Fort Harrison in the center of the city to the log house in the countryside. According to stories passed down to relatives, they initially planned to stay in the cabin for a summer but soon decided to remodel and improve that dwelling as their residence. The Coachmans sealed the cracks that Captain Jim had included in the building for excellent ventilation; windows replaced the wooden shutters. Jessie gave birth to at least four of her five youngest children at the former McMullen cabin: Anne (born 20 July 1909), James Warren (born 14 March 1911), Francis Lane (12 December 1912), Jessie Candler (20 April 1916), and Bonnell Ponteau (6 April 1920). In 1909, Solomon Coachman and Daniel Campbell McMullen, one of Captain Jim’s sons, hung the first telephone line in the area outside of Clearwater when they connected the log cabin to the nearby Coachman store and Dan McMullen’s house. This simple, three-way telephone system allowed the Coachmans and Dan McMullen’s family to contact each

³⁵ Meador, “Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls” clipping; Genealogical information appears in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Interview of Shirley Coachman Moravec, by Ellen Babb, 23 June 2003, Heritage Village, Largo.

³⁶ Meador, “Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls” clipping.

other, but the lines did not connect anywhere else for quite a while. Though he claimed to be an “orange grower” in the 1910 census, S. S. Coachman remained involved in many business ventures in upper Pinellas.³⁷

The Coachmans moved to the Bay View area at a time when residents of the area demanded better infrastructure and facilities. As previously mentioned, when the Orange Belt Railway bypassed the region, settlers in Bay View and Seven Oaks became part of the extended Clearwater area, yet lacked adequate roads to Clearwater, Sutherlin, or other communities in upper Pinellas. Citrus growers around the Seven Oaks area demanded better infrastructure, with one correspondent reporting that “petitions for hard roads are as common now as poor men.” They also clamored for a packing house in that area. Although Coachman may have built a packing house on his property as early as 1903, it resembled a small shed. Many of the oranges and grapefruit harvested in Safety Harbor, Seven Oaks, and around Bay View traveled overland along the poor and contorted roads to packing houses and shipping facilities at Largo, Clearwater, or Dunedin. Citrus operators in Bay View finally built a shared packing house about 1909. Transportation to Tampa also remained difficult. Although occasional steamship service connected Tampa with Bay View, St. Petersburg, and other settlements in western Hillsborough County, the Plant Railroad System did not provide a fast, direct route. Maurice McMullen once described a horse-and-buggy journey from the Safety Harbor area to Tampa along the established dirt road as a two-day journey past Oldsmar and around the northern shore of Tampa Bay. Travelers often camped overnight along the way, and during the winter months Maurice McMullen even filled his wagon with sand and lit a fire within the wagon to keep warm.³⁸

Declaring Independence from Hillsborough County

S. S. Coachman strongly advocated the creation of Pinellas County. As a leading entrepreneur on the Pinellas Peninsula, Coachman understood the difficulties of conducting business in a distant county seat when a poor transportation system isolated the Pinellas Peninsula from most of Hillsborough County. While W. A. Belcher first

³⁷ Ibid.

broached the issue in the mid-1880s, momentum for the division of Pinellas from the rest of Hillsborough County began to take shape by 1907. W. L. Straub's *St. Petersburg Times* launched an appeal commonly known as the "Pinellas Declaration of Independence" in February 1907. During the 1908 political campaigns, three candidates for Hillsborough's senate seat debated the issue of separation. F. A. Wood of St. Petersburg ran as a strong candidate of division. Robert McNamee, a Tampa attorney with earlier connections to St. Petersburg, ran as a "wet" candidate who opposed attempts to legislate prohibition. Don McMullen, a native son of Pinellas and of "Uncle Dan" McMullen who had moved to Tampa to practice law, became the third candidate in the competition. McMullen had wed the former Mary Lou Ball in the fall of 1903, and they settled in to a Hyde Park home after their honeymoon. McMullen, a strong advocate of prohibition, told his supporters along the Pinellas Peninsula that he could not let the issue of division harm his chances of losing the election. The three candidates came to a debate at Courthouse Square in downtown Tampa in late April 1908. McMullen the prohibitionist stood between Wood, the "county division candidate," and McNamee, the "local option candidate." Both Wood and McNamee hurled criticism at McMullen, considering him the most vulnerable candidate, but for different reasons: Wood thought his focus on "dry" laws made him a traitor to those in Pinellas, while McNamee condemned his stand on prohibition.³⁹

The debate focused on two issues: prohibition and county division. McNamee and Wood came together to condemn McMullen for his advocacy of a prohibition amendment for Florida constitution. Realizing the importance of winning over the Tampa audience, McMullen joined with McNamee in questioning the need for a new county as proposed by F. A. Wood, "the St. Petersburg." McMullen emphasized his previous government service and "his devotion to Tampa." McMullen, who maintained strong ties with family members throughout the Pinellas Peninsula, nevertheless claimed Wood wanted division only to increase the value of a subdivision he planned to build near St. Petersburg, arguing that if St. Petersburg became the seat of a new county Wood would reap great profits. Meanwhile McNamee claimed that if McMullen's plan for prohibition had come

³⁸ *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 4 February 1904; Downs, *My Memories of Safety Harbor*, 38; *Clearwater Sun*, 15 January 1950.

into place twenty years earlier, “Tampa would be today still a hamlet, without a cigar factory, without a magnificent building or business enterprise.” S. S. Coachman attended this Tampa speech and assisted “in arousing enthusiasm in regard to county division.”⁴⁰ Coachman’s opinion placed him at odds with a prominent member of the family that had built and once owned his residence. Don McMullen modified his position in a statement to the *St. Petersburg Times* in early May when he proclaimed:

I am opposed to division. I do not believe it best for the people of the West Coast, but that it is for them to say. But if a division bill comes to the senate during my term I will not permit it to be defeated by unfair tactics. I will call it up and have it considered on its merits. I will give it a square deal.⁴¹

During the primary, Wood won St. Petersburg, but ran a distant third in the county. Despite his stand against division, McMullen received support many from Pinellas voters during the runoff who had decided to defer their dreams of division.⁴² Don C. McMullen, a prominent member of the McMullen family during the early twentieth century, later gained recognition when he probably become the first public speaker to use commercial air service to get to his speaking engagement. After completing his duties at a Hyde Park Sunday school in Tampa, McMullen flew to St. Petersburg on the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line. According to the 29 January 1914 *Largo Sentinel*:

In order to make a prohibition speech in St. Petersburg on last Sunday without missing his Sunday school or being compelled to take a long, hard drive in an automobile, [he] consented to go to St. Petersburg in the passenger airboat, now operating between that city and Tampa. So far as known, this is the first time in history that a public speaker has gone to his appointment by flying.⁴³

The battle to create Pinellas County succeeded during the 1911 legislative term. Coachman worked day and night to rally support for this legislation. Jessie Coachman

³⁹ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 52-55; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 22 October 1903, 23 April 1908.

⁴⁰ *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 23 April 1908, 30 April 1908.

⁴¹ *St. Petersburg Times*, 6 May 1908.

⁴² Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 55; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 18 June 1908.

⁴³ *Largo Sentinel*, 29 January 1914.

later claimed that she “had made and served more cookies and lemonade on her front porch to political caucuses than any other woman in Pinellas.” Although a Pinellas Peninsula legislator strongly opposed the measure, when the bill reached the upper house Senator Don McMullen did not derail the measure. On 23 May 1911, Governor Albert Gilchrist signed Chapter 6247, an act that provided for the creation of Pinellas County. That evening, many people came to Clearwater for a street dance and celebration, sponsored in part by the Coachmans, who did not get back to their log cabin until after three in the morning. Solomon’s happiness for the creation of Pinellas was cut short by the death of his oldest brother, Benjamin, on 7 August 1911. The bill required that voters in the proposed county affirm this measure by referendum, and John S. Taylor, A. C. Turner and other leaders created a “Pinellas County Club” to muster support for the required three-fifths majority vote. After winning popular approval for division, authorities established the constitutional officers of the new county before separation occurred on 1 January 1912.⁴⁴

The log cabin became Coachman’s home office during the important period of Pinellas County’s history. In December 1911, Governor Gilchrist selected S. S. Coachman as the first chair of the Board of County Commissioners. Other commissioners included L. D. Vinson, Jefferson T. Lowe, F. A. Wood, and O. T. Railsback. One of his first duties of business was to reaffirm the location of the county seat. Although section three of Chapter 6247 specified that the “Town of Clearwater shall be the County Seat of said county,” residents of the booming St. Petersburg area hoped to place government offices at the south end of the county. Almost overnight, Clearwater residents quickly constructed a two-story frame courthouse to establish a seat of government in their city. Lit torches allowed workers to erect this building without interruption, while armed patrols prevented malicious St. Petersburg residents from destroying the structure. S. S. Coachman assisted in the construction, while his wife joined other women in boiling endless pots of coffee to keep workers on task. Jessie refused to allow her husband to run for a third term, later claiming that she told him that if she “had wanted to run the grove with Tom Taylor (one of their hired hands), I would have married him” instead of

⁴⁴ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 56-58; Meador, “Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls” clipping; Sue Searcy Goldman, *A History of the Board of County Commissioners in Pinellas County* (Clearwater:

Solomon. In addition to his service to the new county, Coachman also became a member of the Clearwater city council. According to a family story, Jessie answered a knock at the door while Solomon was away from the property. As soon as she opened the door and recognized the people on the porch, she exclaimed, "I know what you want and the answer is 'No!'" She then slammed the door on the men, knowing that they had paid a visit to encourage her husband to run for governor.

In addition to overseeing her husband's busy political and business schedule, Jessie also coordinated restoration efforts to keep the old "double-pen" cabin in good shape. At some point by the early 1900s, probably about 1910, the family had attached a separate kitchen "cabin" to the original structure, complete with its own fireplace and a second chimney for the cooking stove. When the old cypress roof shingles deteriorated by the early 1930s, Jessie located a ninety-four year old African-American man who rived new shingles from cypress logs. Unfortunately, many of the smaller outbuildings originally erected by the McMullens had deteriorated beyond repair by the early 1900s.⁴⁵

Coachman's leadership of the commission benefited Clearwater and the Bay View area, but not without controversy. On 3 December 1912, voters approved \$370,000 in bonds for the construction of hard-surfaced roads. Nancy Meador once remarked that Coachman built the first brick road in Pinellas County, a thoroughfare that extended from Clearwater along Drew Street to Safety Harbor, through his land holdings at Captain Jim's former estate, then often referred to as "Coachman." This road connected Coachman's extensive land holdings with commercial enterprises in Clearwater at a time when other public works projects languished. This and other projects resulted in a September 1914 grand jury investigation chaired by Straub. The *St. Petersburg Times* editor condemned the commissioners for condoning "pork-barrel" projects. Jefferson T. Lowe and Coachman garnered the most criticism, with the grand jury indicting Coachman for using convicts to dig ditches to improve his property. Neither Lowe nor Coachman faced a conviction, and both claimed that Straub and others had a political

Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, 1996), 13-14.

⁴⁵ Meador, "Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls" clipping; Hochman, "Solomon Smith Coachman," 36; *Clearwater Sun*, 29 May 1980, 25 October 1982; *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 February 1926; Costa, "Clearwater's Beginnings," 91.

motivation for their charges. Just a few years after obtaining independence from Hillsborough, this drama indicated a rift forming within Pinellas County.⁴⁶

Coachman also lobbied for a new railroad to crisscross his property. By 1914, workers cleared right-of-way along the route of the new Tampa and Gulf Coast Railroad. Commonly known as the “Tug and Grunt,” this line when completed would offer direct service between Tampa and St. Petersburg by way of an extension through upper Pinellas County. Coachman encouraged the company to bring the line through his property at the present-day intersection of Old Coachman and Coachman roads. Straub later claimed that Solomon’s move increased the value of his land “immeasurably.” When opened, the Tampa and Gulf Coast offered stops in Safety Harbor, Dellwood (near present-day Alligator Creek and McMullen-Booth Road), Coachman Station, and Clearwater. Residents of Bay View could make a mile-and-a-half trek to Dellwood to catch the train. By 1914, R. J. “Bob” Knight built a packing house at Dellwood that expanded upon or replaced the earlier building to allow local growers to prepare their fruit for shipment in the Bay View area rather than sending them to other areas of the county. As the Coachmans expanded their business activities on the former McMullen homestead, the regular visits of trains to Coachman Station proved profitable for the family. It also expanded family ties: Estelle Coachman, a relative of S. S. Coachman, fell in love with Joseph R. “Captain Joe” Drane, a crew member on the first “Tug and Grunt” train to pass through Coachman Station in September 1914. Joe and Estelle soon married. He remained a train conductor after the Seaboard Air Line Railroad (SAL) took over the route. A notable event during his fifty-two year tenure on local railroads was when he conducted SAL’s last train to leave downtown St. Petersburg.⁴⁷

Solomon maintained his commercial and citrus interests while holding public office. By 1916, his namesake five-story office building opened in downtown Clearwater at the intersection of Cleveland and Fort Harrison. When S. S. Coachman built this structure, it represented one of the largest buildings in the county and the largest edifice in northern Pinellas. Although he had one of the largest groves in Pinellas, Coachman

⁴⁶ Meador, “Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls” clipping; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 68; *Largo Leader*, 2 December 1999.

⁴⁷ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 234; *Clearwater Sun*, 15 January 1950, 22 January 1950; *St. Petersburg Times*, 31 December 1980.

often came to the aid of those who owned smaller nurseries. During a meeting of the Pinellas County Plant Board, Coachman and Largo nurseryman Barnard Kilgore protested an order compelling growers to scrub their trees, arguing that it burdened those who owned smaller groves and those who could not afford to hire additional field workers. Representatives of the Taylor Groves replied that clean and “absolutely sanitary groves” improved business prospects for all growers. Despite this debate, members of prominent Pinellas citrus families, including the Coachmans, worked closely to promote the bountiful cash crop that brought wealth to the region. A February 1917 Sanborn map of downtown Clearwater listed S. S. Coachman as owner of the West Coast Fruit Company, prominently located on Railroad Avenue between Drew and Grove streets. When not growing crops or attending to business or his duties as commissioner, Coachman continued to herd and raise livestock. Many issues of the *Largo Sentinel* during the fall of 1914 included this prominent advertisement: “Mules! Mules! Do you want [a] good team? See, ‘phone, or write Coachman, at Clearwater, Fla. He has them and those that are good.”⁴⁸

The family decided to move to a new house on the property in the early 1920s. During the 1920 census, seven family members and one servant lived at the original homestead. Solomon and Jessie shared their residence with children Samuel, Hugh M., James W., Francis, and young Jessie. A sixty-five year old African-American woman named Reda Graham lived on the premises and worked as a cook and servant. Hidden within the groves near the intersection of Coachman and Old Coachman roads, a new two-story home rose on the property by 1921. This structure had four large bedrooms, four fireplaces with a wide chimney, a formal foyer area, twelve-foot high ceilings, and a wide staircase with polished banisters. Coachman had devised an early “air-conditioning” system by including a large attic fan that pulled cooler air into the rooms. A nearby well in the groves provided water, and a small room with a toilet and sink on the back porch offered an attached “outhouse.” The dwelling passed its first structural test when it

⁴⁸ *Largo Sentinel*, 8 October 1914, 13 December 1917; Sanborn Map Company, *Fire Insurance Maps: Florida* (Teaneck, N.J.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1983), February 1917 map, microfilm reel 1; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 234.

survived the 1921 hurricane with minimal damage. Over the years, the home became an important meeting place for family and friends.⁴⁹

Although S. S. Coachman retired during the early 1920s, he did not immediately slow down. The estate continued to grow as family members expanded the packing house and hired many seasonal workers. Hugh “Mack” Coachman’s 1922 graduating class at Clearwater’s grammar school included names associated with many pioneer families that remained in the area. Principal E. W. McMullen oversaw commencement exercises and Nannie McMullen offered a piano solo. Candidates for graduation included Mack Coachman, Daniel and Nannie McMullen, Brownell Meares, Jennie Plumb, and Oween Sumner. During the Great Depression, Mack attended college in Georgia and became a member of the Sigma Nu fraternity. Western Electric and Bell Labs had even offered him a position in St. Louis as soon as he earned his degree. However, he cut his studies short and quickly returned to the Clearwater area after the death of his father. S. S. Coachman suffered a heart attack in the late evening of 9 March 1931. Family members placed the patriarch of the Coachmans in their family lot at Clearwater Cemetery. As residents of the Clearwater area mourned Solomon’s passing, the sons assisted their mother with the operation of the groves and the other business interests of the family.⁵⁰

Jessie Coachman possessed a strong entrepreneurial spirit. With passenger trains of the Seaboard Air Line regularly passing along the family’s property at Coachman Station, Jessie and family members erected another log cabin alongside the train station at the intersection of the tracks and roadways. She opened her famous Kumquat Sweet Shop, a store that also included numerous “antiques of rare description.” Throughout the year, but especially during tourist season, the Orange Blossom Special passenger train made a stop at Coachman Station to allow passengers to purchase marmalades, preserves, boxed fruit, and other items at the store. During the winter, the Coachmans celebrated their Georgia roots by making and selling pecan pralines. She compiled some of her favorite recipes into a popular cookbook. At one time, a large sign announced the

⁴⁹ Census information included in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; *Clearwater Sun*, 25 October 1982.

⁵⁰ *Clearwater Sun*, 5 August 1984; *St. Petersburg Times*, 11 March 1931; “Graduation Exercises of the Grammar School of Clearwater,” commencement program, 18 May 1922, located in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Meador, “Jessie Candler Coachman Recalls” clipping; Shirley Coachman Moravec interview.

location as “Coachman’s Kumquat Shop.” The structure, designed to resemble the older log house built by James P. McMullen, included shelves for sundries and products in front of a shipping counter. Behind a counter, a cooking and food preparation area included a large sink and gas stoves. Jessie maintained her sales offices in an attached companion structure across an elevated catwalk. Behind her desk sat a large fireplace, and in front of the building rested a large kumquat tree. Family members assisted Jessie with the business. They also hired Mary Mann as a secretary, and Columbus Moore, an African-American man who worked with the Coachman family for thirty years. Moore and another man of both Indian and African-American heritage known as “Uncle Jack” brought fruit from the groves and kept at least six stoves with large ten-gallon porcelain pots boiling every day. Columbus Moore tended the family’s gardens, packed and shipped fruit, and performed many other chores on the Coachman property.⁵¹

The Coachman complex became a stopping place for many locals and tourists during the early era of Florida’s roadside attractions. Although the groves, cabins, and train station lacked the natural beauty of Florida’s many springs or the amazing architecture of Bok Tower, many visitors flocked to Coachman station for Jessie’s famous marmalades, jellies, candies, and honey. The family also sold gift boxes of fruit and fruit products, and even developed a “Log Cabin Brand” label by January 1934 that commemorated the old log house on the property. During the mid-1930s, Mrs. B. W. Laws welcomed visitors to the Coachman property. As a hostess, Laws served guests a glass of orange juice as well as a good dose of history. Visitors often took tours of the original cabin. They saw a large spinning wheel near the fireplace brought to the area by Captain Jim and Elizabeth McMullen about 1850, an old brass kerosene lamp left by the McMullens, as well as a muzzled rifle used by Captain Jim during the Civil War. Many McMullen handicrafts remained in the historic cabin, including hand-built chairs with cow hide bottoms, a long bench with peg legs, a bookcase built by Captain Jim, and a wall cabinet that held china over 250 years old, as well as dolls and other mementos. Several blue plates and a glass water pitcher, allegedly brought from France to America by Odet Philippe, also adorned the room. By the 1930s, Jessie’s preserves and sweets

⁵¹ *Clearwater Sun*, 25 October 1982. Researchers may also wish to examine copies of photographs included in building and site files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Meador, “Jessie Candler

won rave reviews at the annual Pinellas Free Fair, quite an achievement in a county with a cornucopia of citrus champions, such as the McMullens, Kilgores, and Walsinghams.⁵²

The Coachman homestead included a number of buildings by the mid-1930s. A 1934 city directory lists Jessie, sons James and Francis, and daughter Jessie living at her large Coachman Station home located on N. E. Coachman road to the east of the railroad tracks. Jessie managed the Kumquat Sweet Shop at the time. A large garden and pig pens occupied lands west of the Sweet Shop and train station, and a large packing house with at least 100 employees sat at the other side of the SAL tracks. The family maintained a barn along Old Coachman, north of the packing house and west of the road. Across the street, a small dirt road led to Captain Jim's original log cabin and a nearby well and shop used to repair farm equipment and lawn mowers. Large guava trees, a source of many family recipes, adorned the landscape around the cabin. This estate provided ample room for many social gatherings, such as an April 1933 birthday party for seventeen year old Jessie that included a hayride, a picnic lunch at Alligator Creek, and a "manless wedding" for the young ladies. Mack and Evelyn Coachman served as chaperones for this event. Mack lived across the street from Jessie and managed the S. S. Coachman and Sons firm. Family members noted that Mack had moved his house from its original foundation in Safety Harbor to the new location on the family property. Despite the sluggish market, other family members dabbled in real estate. For example, Edwin H. Coachman operated a real estate firm in downtown Clearwater with Cleveland Street offices on the same block as the namesake Coachman Building while living with his wife, Mary, at 114 North Osceola.⁵³

The Clearwater chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) placed a shrine at the McMullen-Coachman Log House in a 22 February 1936 ceremony. By the early 1930s, members of DAR and other groups interested in the county's history considered the cabin a "true relic" of pioneer life in the region. Nancy Jean and Elizabeth Ann McMullen, six year-old twins of Hugh McMullen and great-granddaughters of

Coachman Recalls" clipping; Shirley Coachman Moravec interview.

⁵² *Largo Sentinel*, 11 January 1934; *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 February 1936; Shirley Coachman Moravec interview.

⁵³ *City Guide and Directory (Clearwater and Tarpon Springs)* (N.p.: C. L. Coy, 1934), 14; *Clearwater Sun*, 23 April 1933; Shirley Coachman Moravec interview.

Captain Jim, unveiled the DAR plaque.⁵⁴ Recognizing the nascent stages of the historic preservation movement and evincing a spirit of boosterism, a March 1 editorial in the *St. Petersburg Times* encouraged community leaders to make the structure a county shrine:

The coming of those seven McMullen brothers into this Florida wilderness . . . marked the beginning of the first epoch of Pinellas history, and the building of this homestead by Capt. James P. McMullen, the most outstanding pioneer of them all, was indeed an historic event.

This, the oldest structure now standing . . . in what is now Peerless Pinellas county, is worthy to be made . . . a veritable County Shrine. As has been done for so many other shrines in our country, beginning with Mount Vernon, [citizens] should have the old McMullen homestead at Coachman together with a suitable area of its land owned and maintained as a monument and shrine to the memory of the pioneers who began here what is now one of the gems of American home development.⁵⁵

A member of the Coachman family had a modern use for part of this “shrine” during this time. Mack Coachman set aside storage space in the log house as a place to store his growing collection of photography. By this period, the family had added electrical outlets to parts of the cabin. In a retrospective interview, his son, Michael Coachman, described Mack’s hobby: “We’ve got a house full of pictures that go back to the early days. There’s a lot of history. . . . My whole childhood is in pictures. He had a darkroom in the old cabin where he used to live, and he did all his own developing.” Thus, while DAR members celebrated the cabin’s place as one of the earliest dwellings on the Pinellas Peninsula, Mack Coachman enjoyed his “high-tech” hobby in the oldest existing dwelling on the peninsula.⁵⁶

The Coachmans remained important members of the Clearwater community during the post-war years. In about 1945, E. H. Coachman sold the City of Clearwater some of his downtown land holdings on the bluff for \$40,000. Part of this tract later

⁵⁴ *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 February 1936, 22 February 1936.

⁵⁵ *St. Petersburg Times*, 1 March 1936.

became Coachman Park, a site familiar to many as the venue for the annual Clearwater Jazz Holiday. Other portions of the land include parking lots and the Harborview Convention Center. Edwin Horace Coachman died on 6 February 1949, and his wife—the former Mary Serena Moase—joined him in eternal rest on 30 January 1950. Tragedy came to Coachman Station in November 1951. An early morning blaze destroyed the Coachman Packing Plant located directly across the SAL tracks from the railroad station. Three fire battalions from Clearwater, one from Safety Harbor, and additional firefighters from Dunedin responded to the call and battled the flames for more than four hours in their successful attempt to keep the fire from spreading to a nearby room that housed explosives. Lacking a hydrant, the crews drew water from a creek approximately 1,500 feet away from the blaze. At the time of the fire, the plant employed nearly 160 people. Losses, estimated at \$250,000, included over 4,000 boxes of citrus located in the building at the time. The family later built a new packing house southeast of the original building between Old Coachman and the railroad tracks that operated into the 1970s. As she grew older, Jessie remained an active gardener and continued to sell her homemade preserves. She also opened a popular Coachman Coffee Shop, frequented by patrons who enjoyed “a good pungent cup of coffee” served with a large dose of conversation. She continued to operate the coffee house until she became ill in the spring of 1959. By early July, family members placed the Coachman matriarch in Morton Plant Hospital. She passed away at noon on 9 July 1959. Shortly after the death of the lady known for making the “world’s finest marmalade,” telephone operators in the Clearwater area reportedly received “an unprecedented number of queries” from people throughout the region expressing disbelief at her passing.⁵⁷ When asked to describe his mother, James gained his composure and said:

I remember when mother made some wonderful marmalade and the president of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad came to our home on Coachman Road. He tasted mother’s marmalades at breakfast. And he went back to his railroad and later we

⁵⁶ *Clearwater Sun*, 5 August 1984; Shirley Coachman Moravec interview.

⁵⁷ *St. Petersburg Times*, 10 July 1959, 12 April 2001; *Clearwater Sun*, 30 January 1950, 10 July 1959; *Safety Harbor Herald*, 23 November 1951.

learned that Mom's marmalade was a regular item on the menu of all dining cars.⁵⁸

By the time of Jessie's death, members of the Coachman family no longer offered tours of the McMullen-Coachman Log House. They used the structure for storage.⁵⁹

Early Attempts to Preserve a County Shrine

Nancy Meador, a granddaughter of Captain James P. McMullen, enlightened and entertained readers with her occasional newspaper columns on local history that appeared in the *Clearwater Sun*. In late 1949 and early 1950, she offered weekly installments that described life in Bay View during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She gathered many family archives and photographs, became the McMullen family's historian, and called for the preservation of the cabin her family had sold to the Coachmans in 1902. On 21 June 1961, Meador asked her colleagues on the Pinellas County Historical Commission (PCHC) to allow County Historian Ralph Reed to meet with Hugh "Mack" Coachman to discuss the possibility of acquiring the cabin and creating a public park on the site. Although many people in Pinellas referred to the structure as the "Coachman cabin," Meador reminded her colleagues that they should refer to the structure as the "McMullen log cabin . . . to avoid any inference that the building was erected by anyone other than Jim McMullen." In the July 1961 meeting, Reed informed PCHC members that Mack Coachman had no interest in selling, donating, or otherwise disposing of the cabin. The physical deterioration of the cabin bothered Meador, who in May 1966 volunteered to write to the Coachmans on the Historical Commission's behalf to urge that family to preserve and hopefully sell the cabin. Meeting minutes from the time indicate that the Coachmans "did not want to bother" with the matter; PCHC members even considered the possibility of contacting state officials for assistance. Two months later, Meador reported that she could not "accomplish anything further" with plans for the Coachmans either to sell their property or allow county officials to move the cabin, perhaps to Philippe Park or the McMullen family cemetery. Part of Nancy Meador's urgency no doubt came as the youngest and last of Captain Jim's

⁵⁸ *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, 10 July 1959.

⁵⁹ *St. Petersburg Times*, 19 August 1956.

children had passed away: George Ward “Uncle Ward” McMullen, then the oldest native born resident of the Pinellas Peninsula, died in Clearwater on 1 June 1966. Two years later, Meador mentioned another conversation with Mack Coachman where he promised not to let the cabin deteriorate, but had neither plans for its use nor any interest in permitting the county or state to make a memorial at the building. By mid-1971, Marjorie McMullen Keery, a great-granddaughter of Captain Jim, wrote to officials at the Florida State Archives and the United States Department of the Interior to encourage those agencies to preserve the log cabin.⁶⁰

A Fire Storm and a Fresh Start

Mack Coachman’s decision not to sell the property in the 1960s became a flashpoint of controversy in the fall of 1976. Despite prominently posted “No Trespassing” signs at the Coachman, its location left it vulnerable to unwanted visitors. In November 1976, someone started a fire on the loading dock of the Coachman family’s fertilizer warehouse. Moments later, someone discovered a burning doormat at one of the Coachman cabins. An hour after that, flames spread across the cabin’s hallway wall and floors. A fourth fire in that same day damaged a caretaker’s mobile home near the cabin. During their investigation at that time, investigators detected the presence of an oily substance used as an accelerant. A total of eight fires took place at the Coachman property during the month of November, with the worst occurring on the early morning of November 29. Mack Coachman went by the building at 7:30 and did not see any problems. Less than an hour later, at 8:15 that morning, an anonymous caller notified the Clearwater Fire Department that flames had engulfed Captain Jim’s 1850s-era cabin. The fire scorched branches on a large tree located at least fifteen feet away from the roof. Firefighters climbed atop the cypress shingles to put out flames shooting through the roof. Within ten minutes, the fire brigade brought the conflagration under control, though some of the eighteen firefighters at the scene found smoldering embers over an hour later.

⁶⁰ Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 21 June 1961, 19 July 1961, 18 May 1966, 20 July 1966, 19 June 1968; Marjorie McMullen Keery to Robert Williams, director, Division of Archives, History, and Records Management, State of Florida, 22 July 1971; Marjorie McMullen Keery to Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 18 June 1971. Written records and newspaper clippings refer to Hugh Coachman as both “Mac” and “Mack.” Either spelling is proper.

Speaking at the cabin, Dave King, the city's Assistant Fire Chief, considered the structure "a total loss." Almost the entire second story had collapsed. He noted that "I can't place a monetary value on it. Some of the Coachmans were born in it."⁶¹

As authorities searched for the culprit, many pioneers mourned the demise of the oldest cabin in Pinellas County. Mack Coachman, distraught at the sight of the damage, told a newspaper reporter, "It looks like someone is out to get us. . . I hope they find out who before this whole place goes up in flames. . . . I'm a grove man; I'm not a fireman," he continued, "It's driving me to ruin mentally." Noting that the future of the site remained undecided, Evelyn Coachman—Mack's wife—stated that, "It's too soon. There hasn't been enough time."⁶² Nancy Meader arrived at the cabin with a strong, and well-understood, sense of bitterness:

We're all heartsick about it. It's almost like having someone in the family die. . . . I'm glad Uncle Ward doesn't have to see this. . . . I'm so disgusted with the sheriff's office and the Clearwater Police Department. They should have had a guard out there day and night."⁶³

By the end of the day, police arrested a sixteen year old who confessed to all of the fires at the Coachman property. The teenager apparently resented that his father had refused to take the family on a vacation; to vent his rage at his father, the boy decided to take his anger out on the cabin near to his house. Sometime in the days following the fire, scavengers visited the site and probably stole the plaque placed by DAR in 1936.⁶⁴

Mack Coachman contacted Director Kendrick T. Ford shortly after the fire about the possibility of moving the damaged cabin to Heritage Village. Ford reported at the January 1977 PCHC meeting that Mack had agreed to move the structure, though Ford required the approval of the Historical Commission before the county would pursue the matter. In the late spring, Coachman signed a contract with the Pinellas County Historical Society absolving that organization or the county of any responsibility for further

⁶¹ *Clearwater Sun*, 29 November 1976, 30 November 1976.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Clearwater Sun*, 30 November 1976.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; interview of Ken Ford, former director of Heritage Village, by Stephanie Ferrell and Jim Schnur, 3 May 2003, Heritage Village, Largo; Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 21 June 1978.

damages caused by the move of the structure. By early July, workers began to clear palmetto and pine scrub from an area of the park. On the morning of July 21, the McMullen-Coachman Log House started its four-hour trip to Heritage Village. As temperatures surpassed ninety degrees, stunned motorists remained patient as the slow moving flatbed truck provided by Edifice Wrecks stalled six times along the way. A family-owned business, Edifice Wrecks covered \$1,000 towards the \$3,000 moving cost.⁶⁵

Restoration efforts started after the new fiscal year began in October 1977. Ford received \$7,000 from the Board of County Commissioners for the project. Outside organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution, also expressed interest in providing assistance. Workers salvaged and reused the original foundation sills from the cabin. By the spring of 1978, laborers placed the charred structure on its foundation and Ford contacted a company that had developed a water-and-sandblasting process to remove charred sections of the logs. The county also submitted a federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) grant for approximately \$28,250 to assist with labor costs. CETA personnel and materials arrived in January 1979. Throughout the spring and early summer of 1979, CETA workers spliced logs, rebuilt the second story, and fashioned a new roof under the leadership of Bob Powell. The blasting of the logs revealed that despite the intensity of the fire, much of the structure's base remained in good shape. By the early fall, crew members restored the fire place.⁶⁶

As Heritage Village opened the cabin to visitors by 1979, some of the Coachman children continued to live on their family properties into the 1980s. By the 1970s, family members had rented out Solomon's 1921 house on the property; Paul and Ann Neiberger lived there for four years before purchasing a home in Safety Harbor. Unfortunately, the house fell into disrepair by the fall of 1982 and Solomon's descendants planned for its demolition. Hugh "Mack" McCauley Coachman developed some of the unused land as the Coachman Lake Estates (started in 1964) and Coachman Hill Estates (started in 1974) subdivisions. Mack also sold the City of Clearwater lands used as the site of Moccasin

⁶⁵ Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 19 January 1977, 22 June 1977; *St. Petersburg Times*, 22 July 1977.

Lake Park and Alligator Creek Park. In addition to his real estate holdings in Coachman Properties, Inc., Mack continued to operate the S. S. Coachman and Sons packing and shipping business until it ceased operations in about 1980. H. M. Coachman had married the former Evelyn Morrison, an Atlanta native who came to the area in 1930 and became a charter member of the Clearwater Historical Society. Before his death on 3 August 1984, Mack claimed a forty-nine year membership in the Downtown Clearwater Rotary Club. He also served as a charter member of the city's Downtown Development Board, and continued to have a strong interest in keeping the downtown "alive" throughout his life. Mack died at his home, 2254 N. E. Coachman Road. His wife passed away on 9 May 1997 at Morton Plant Hospital. James Warren Coachman, Mack's younger brother, had held positions as a general manager of S. S. Coachman and Sons and treasurer of Coachman Properties. A World War II veteran who served in the United States Navy, James also served as past-president of the Gift Fruit Shippers Association of Florida, held membership in the Clearwater County Club since the mid-1930s, and later joined the Clearwater and Pinellas County historical societies before his death on 19 October 1994.⁶⁷

A Legacy Made from Sturdy Logs

The McMullen and Coachman families have left an indelible impression on the Pinellas Peninsula. Upwards of 1,000 members of the McMullen family gathered for annual reunions by the 1920s, with large assemblies continuing through the 1960s. A story about the McMullen clan appearing in 1915 issues of the *Largo Sentinel* and *Tampa Times* noted the number of family members holding office at the time by stating that "no one knows just how many McMullens there are in Pinellas (C)ounty, but it is probably safe to say that the number would easily mount into several hundred and very possibly well towards a thousand." E. B. McMullen, the first tax collector of Pinellas County, once counted fifty-seven on the rolls during the mid-1910s, but knew this represented only a small number. This much is certain: At that time, family members occupied many

⁶⁶ Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 21 September 1977, 17 May 1978, 21 June 1978, 17 January 1979, 20 June 1979, 19 September 1979; Ken Ford interview.

positions in the new county, including county commissioner (Dr. Byrd McMullen), state attorney (M. A. McMullen), county engineer (Clements McMullen), former chief deputy sheriff (Grover McMullen), chief deputy clerk (B. H. McMullen), and tax collector (E. H. McMullen). By the 1890s, the Coachmans also became a bulwark of Clearwater's budding business community. In July 1915, a correspondent penned the following passage about the strong presence of the McMullens in Pinellas, a statement that one could easily extend to the Coachmans and many others that became part of these families:

And so they are. Canny, careful, respectable, respected citizens, always active in good works for the upbuilding of their county. Always among the best known and best liked citizens of their communities. And prolific, too. They read their Bibles and they have minded that injunction about multiplying and 'occupying the land.'⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Clearwater Sun*, 29 May 1980, 25 October 1982, 5 August 1984; *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 August 1984, 12 May 1997, 20 October 1994.

⁶⁸ *Largo Sentinel*, 7 October 1915.