

Daniel McMullen House: A Brief Introduction

Construction Information

- This is the second oldest structure in Heritage Village, built in 1868.
- Original home site was along Rosery Road. The family moved into the house in August 1868. They lived close to Lake Largo, a beautiful lake at the time. The town of Largo was named after the lake, a body of water drained during the early 1900s and used by many farmers (including McMullens and Jesse Ancil Walsingham) as a site to cultivate crops.
- This structure, presently at about 1450 square feet, includes additions made over the years. The original home, built of native pine, had two formal rooms and two “shed” rooms connected by a breezeway.

History of Occupants

- Members of the McMullen family continuously occupied this home throughout its history until the structure moved to Heritage Village.
- Born in Georgia in 1825, “Uncle” Dan McMullen died at his home in August 1908. He homesteaded 160 acres near the intersection of Rosery Road and Missouri Avenue in Largo by 1852. Joined brother James P. McMullen in the cattle business. His first child was born at the family’s log cabin in the Coachman area.
- Daniel McMullen returned to the family homestead in Georgia by 1857, probably so he could care for his elderly parents and watch over their farmstead.
- Leaving his wife and children in Georgia (probably for their safety), Daniel McMullen returned to Florida by September 1863 to enlist in the Florida Infantry on the side of the Confederacy. McMullens probably fought on the side of the Confederacy to protect their holdings, rather than because of sympathy for the Confederate cause.
- Daniel McMullen’s pension application for his service in the Confederacy indicates that he was present with forces that surrendered to U.S. troops in Sumter County, Florida. By the fall of 1865, he traveled by wagon back to the homestead area in Largo. He acquired a 160-acre tract near Rosery Road and Highland Avenue. He soon began raising crops, cattle, and other farm animals. He cultivated citrus by 1875, and was possibly the “biggest cattle rancher” along the Pinellas Peninsula by the mid-1880s. In 1900, though nearly seventy-five years of age, census reports note Daniel McMullen continued to engage in “fruit growing.” He also played a role in the creation of the Bank of Largo in 1907. He also was a part-owner of the Alliance store in Largo, a two-story building that sold groceries, hardware, and other commodities during the early years of Largo’s history.
- At the time of his death on 5 August 1908, Uncle Dan had sixty-five children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.
- He often sat on his front porch and talked with family members. At times he lit his pipe with a strong magnifying glass.

Significant Events/Activities

- Members of the McMullen family held reunions on the Dan McMullen property by the 1920s. Reunions often coincided with the July 4 weekend.
- Into the late 1940s, the family maintained a twenty-acre grove in back of the house.
- The McMullen family occupied the land and house for approximately 123 years before deciding to have the house moved to Heritage Village.

Moving of the House to Heritage Village

- By the fall of 1990, park administrators had talked with members of the McMullen family about the possibility of moving the house to Heritage Village.
- In May 1992, park administrators noted that Nancy McMullen McLaughlin had moved from this house to live with a daughter in Bronson, Florida. The McMullens had lived in the house continuously since its construction, and by the early 1990s, the tract still included 8.3 acres with century-old oaks and numerous citrus trees. The structure, then located along Rosery Road, became property of the county, with the Pinellas County Historical Society assisting with costs to maintain the security system before the house moved. Plans to move the house by the autumn of 1992 encountered delays. According to one newspaper article, the movers separated the structure into three pieces before moving it to Heritage Village.

Daniel McMullen House

Overview

Daniel McMullen brought his family to the Pinellas Peninsula in the early 1850s, following in the footsteps of his older brother, James Parramore McMullen. Daniel and his wife, Margaret Campbell, secured a 160-acre homestead in the Largo area. They abandoned their Florida landholdings before the beginning of the Civil War, probably so Dan could return to the family farmstead in Quitman, Georgia, and take care of his elderly parents. During the Civil War, Daniel participated in the Confederate “Cow Cavalry” while Margaret and the children remained in Georgia. The family returned to the Pinellas Peninsula in the fall of 1865, acquired a parcel of land, and built a substantial Florida Cracker house by the summer of 1868. The homestead eventually grew to 200 acres in the area that later became Rosery Road near the present East Bay Drive in Largo. Dan raised cattle and grew cotton, but eventually joined his brother James in cultivating citrus by the mid-1870s.

“Uncle Dan” McMullen lived in the house for forty years until his death in 1908. By 1910, one of his daughters, Margaret Nancy McMullen Hardage, moved into the house with her husband to raise her youngest brother’s six children after their mother had died. One of these children, Nancy McMullen McLaughlin, resided in the house for more than eighty years until 1992, when she donated the residence to Heritage Village.

The white clapboard house made of native pine initially had two rooms and two shed rooms on either side of a “dog trot.” As the years passed by, successive generations added other rooms and outbuildings. By 1900, the Daniel McMullen House had four bedrooms, a dining room, kitchen, living room, and large porch. Since authorities assessed closets as rooms for tax purposes during this period, only two closets existed inside the entire house. Daniel’s daughter, Nancy McMullen Hardage, modernized the house with a bathroom and electricity in 1923. The twelve-foot high ceilings and low windows allowed for cross-ventilation, but in later years, Carl and Nancy McMullen McLaughlin added single room air conditioning units.

At the time family members donated the Daniel McMullen House to Heritage Village, it represented the oldest continuously occupied dwelling in Pinellas County,

having housed four generations of the McMullen family for 124 years. The Pinellas County Historical Society and the McMullen family underwrote the cost of moving the structure to Heritage Village. The house now serves as a fiber arts center that features a variety of craft demonstrations and displays.

Early Settlers in the Largo Area

Members of the McMullen family proudly trace their ancestry from Scotland to Florida. By the mid-1770s, three brothers from Scotland came to Halifax, Nova Scotia. James McMullen, the youngest of the three, apparently became a drummer during the American Revolution. Family tales claimed that he had participated in the skirmishes at Lexington and Bunker Hill. After the war came to an end, James received a land grant of approximately 300 acres for his service. He married Sarah Minton in 1781, and the couple moved to a plantation in Georgia that James McMullen called “Halifax.” In 1788, the McMullens had a son, James McMullen, Jr., who exchanged vows with Rebecca Fain in 1811. James and Rebecca raised twelve children: seven sons and five daughters. Between 1841 and 1871, each of the McMullen brothers settled in the Tampa Bay area. James Parramore McMullen became the first family member to arrive at Tampa Bay, though he made his initial journey by necessity rather than choice: The Telfair County, Georgia, native came to Florida an eighteen year-old man suffering from tuberculosis, then often known as “consumption.” In order to prevent exposure to other family members, James McMullen’s father told his third and namesake son to leave the Quitman, Georgia, area until his health improved. Young Jim then decided to follow a path into the Territory of Florida in search of a solitary location to overcome tuberculosis. James arrived in the Rocky Point area on the Tampa side of the Courtney Campbell Causeway sometime in 1841. He later moved to a higher tract of land at a bluff near the west end of the Courtney Campbell and the north end of the Bayside Bridge. While living in solitude, James P. McMullen enjoyed a bountiful supply of seafood, wildlife, and sunshine. Soon, his tuberculosis went into remission and he returned to Georgia. After witnessing Jim’s recovery and hearing his description of the sparsely settled lands as “the closest thing to heaven he could imagine,” other brothers of the McMullen family

decided to visit the Pinellas Peninsula. Daniel McMullen, the fourth brother, became the second to establish a claim in the area.¹

Born on 12 July 1825 in Telfair County, young Daniel McMullen moved with other family members to their new farmstead at Quitman at a young age. He spent much of his childhood assisting family members with chores on the farmstead. When Dan reached the age of seventeen in about the spring of 1843, James Parramore McMullen rejoined the family at Quitman and told his siblings about the remote frontier. By December 1844, Jim had returned to the settlement of Melendez in Benton (now Hernando) County to marry Elizabeth Campbell. Over the next few years, Jim and Elizabeth started a family and settled on the Pinellas Peninsula. Dan followed his older brother's path. He exchanged vows with Margaret Ann Campbell, the younger sister of Elizabeth, at an 18 November 1851 ceremony at the Spring Lake Methodist Church near present-day Brooksville. A daughter of the former Nancy Taylor and John Campbell, Margaret Ann entered the world on 17 April 1833 at Hamilton County, Florida. During her childhood, the Campbell family moved from north Florida to Hernando County. Margaret's father had perished in 1838 during a battle of the Second Seminole War. In 1851, Dan and Margaret Ann secured a homestead in the Largo area, near the eastern boundary of the current intersection of Missouri Avenue and Rosery Road, including part of the site commonly known as the "Markley Grove" property.²

The newlyweds probably settled on their land in the Largo area by the winter or spring of 1852. They constructed a log cabin, smaller in size than the McMullen-Coachman cabin built by James on his homestead. The elevation of the land and good drainage provided an excellent location for the cultivation of crops and vegetables. At this time, very few settlers lived in the general Largo area, though a surveyor named A. M. Randolph had set aside township and range boundaries in the area by 1844 and had noted the presence of a large body of water indicated as "Lake Tolulu." Later known as Lake Largo, this fresh water reservoir occupied an area south of East Bay Drive between

¹ Census information included in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Robert C. Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers of Pinellas County," *Tampa Bay History* 1 (Fall/Winter 1979), 62-64, 73; Donald J. Ivey, "The Life and Times of Daniel 'Uncle Dan' McMullen (A.D. 1825-1908): A Chronological Biography," undated manuscript, pp. 1-4, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo. Some accounts placed James P. McMullen's arrival in 1841, while others claimed that he arrived in 1842.

² Ibid.

Seminole Boulevard/Missouri Avenue and Starkey/Keene Road. John Fain McMullen, another brother, moved from Georgia to the area near the current intersection of Indian Rocks Road and Wilcox Road, probably by the end of 1852. He stayed in the area for about five years before selling or transferring some of this property to Captain John T. Lowe, an early settler who later developed the Anona settlement. By the late 1850s, John Fain McMullen relocated to Madison County, Florida.³

Dan and Jim McMullen collaborated on agricultural pursuits and expanded their families during the 1850s. Together, they raised and herded livestock, especially cattle, on the open range in and between present-day Largo and Clearwater. With few nearby settlers, they could carry on their activities with little interruption or interference. Both brothers also grew crops. The brothers McMullen and sisters Campbell also witnessed the growth of their families: James and Elizabeth raised eleven children, while Daniel and Margaret Ann had nine children. With Elizabeth acting as a midwife, J. P. McMullen's log cabin became one of the earliest "hospitals" in the region. During the fall of 1853, Dan and Margaret Ann came to Jim's log home so Margaret could give birth to that couple's first child, John James McMullen, an infant probably named in honor of the other two brothers living in Florida at that time: John Fain and James Parramore. Genealogical records mark the date of his birth as 15 October 1853. Less than two years later, on 12 May 1855, Dan and Margaret celebrated the arrival of William Alonzo McMullen at their own homestead in Largo. The debate over slavery and other related issues exacerbated sectionalism as a growing chorus of Southern "fire-eaters" passionately called for secession from the Union throughout the 1850s. By 1856, Dan and Margaret sold their land, left the Pinellas Peninsula, and settled in southern Georgia. Recollections by family members indicate that Dan most likely returned to the McMullen farmstead to take care of his aging parents. He may have sold most of his land to Scott Whitehurst. While living in Brooks County, Margaret gave birth to Daniel Thomas, the third child and son, on 24 June 1857. About a year later, on 7 May 1858, Rebecca Fain McMullen—family matriarch and the elder Daniel's mother—passed away on her sixty-fifth birthday. According to federal census records from August 1860, Daniel and his

³ *Largo, Florida, Then Til . . .* (Largo: Largo Bicentennial Committee, 1979), 3; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 64, 73.

family lived in the “Tall Oaks” region of Brooks County on lands next to his father, seventy-three year old James, and brothers David and Malcolm. Daniel valued his personal estate at \$1,350 in that year.⁴

The elder Dan McMullen joined five of his six brothers in fighting on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War. While James Parramore organized a company of volunteers at Clear Water Harbor during the summer of 1861, Dan lived on the Georgia side of the Florida-Georgia border and celebrated the arrival of his first daughter and fourth son: Josephine Catherine arrived on 8 May 1860 and Eli Bartow entered the world on 19 June 1862. Like Daniel Thomas, both Josephine and Eli were natives of Brooks County. While research by former curator of collections Robert Harris noted that Daniel served in the Quartermaster Corps of the 19th Georgia Infantry, Confederate pension files maintained by the State Archives in Tallahassee and additional research by curator Donald Ivey mentioned his later activities in Florida. On about 19 September 1863, Daniel left his family at their Georgia farmstead, an area away from the battles of the war, so that he could enlist in the Confederate forces. He joined Captain John McNeill’s Independent Company, a unit of the Florida Infantry based at Brooksville. Earlier that summer, James Parramore McMullen had enlisted in the same company. By October 10, Daniel transferred to Captain William B. Watson’s Independent Company of Cavalry. In time, this unit became Company D of the 1st Battalion of the Florida Special Cavalry, under the leadership of Colonel Charles J. Munnerlyn. This unit included experts at herding cattle who had the responsibility of driving cows from grazing fields in Florida to locations in Georgia and the Carolinas and removing Union sympathizers from peninsular Florida. The livestock led by members of this “Cow Cavalry” provided the hides, tallow, and meat needed by Confederate forces to sustain the war effort. After General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, other Confederate

⁴ Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 64-65, 68; Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, pp. 4-10; *Largo Sentinel*, 18 June 1914; Interview of Nancy and Carl McLaughlin, descendants of Dan McMullen, by Robert Harris, Curator of Collections, Heritage Village, 14 August 1979; Genealogical information about the Daniel McMullen family appears in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; “Widow’s Pension Application: Margaret McMullen,” 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>.

units also abdicated to Federal forces. Daniel, still a member of Watson's company, ended his service at Adamsville in Sumter County, Florida, during the spring of 1865.⁵

Dan McMullen brought his family back to central Pinellas by the fall of 1865. He probably spent some time in the Quitman area, settling his family's estate and packing his belongings into a wagon. The journey along the small paths and corduroy roads took nearly one month, as Daniel and Margaret Ann—who was pregnant at the time—also had to watch over their children (John, William, Daniel, Josephine, and Eli). According to one family history, during one of the journeys between Georgia and Florida young John James remembered seeing twigs and stones set in a pattern along the trail, probably as messages from one group of Indians to another. They reached the Pinellas Peninsula in October 1865, and certainly noticed dramatic changes to the sparsely-settled landscape: During the war, Union forces and Southern marauders had damaged many cabins and farmsteads; some residents abandoned their frontier homes either to serve in the military or to live in more settled and secure areas. Dan reacquired his land holdings in the Largo area and reestablished a homestead. Within a short time, on November 8, Margaret gave birth to Margaret Ann McMullen, the couple's sixth child and their youngest daughter. Family narratives mentioned that the other children suffered from the measles in early November, forcing Margaret Ann to stay at her mother's residence, located south of present-day Cavalry Baptist Church along the Clearwater bluffs near Turner Street. While Nancy Campbell and daughter Margaret Ann McMullen celebrated the arrival of a namesake daughter, Dan diligently cleared the land and started to raise crops. At that time, an abundance of bears, deer, and turkeys populated the frontier. John James remembered on many occasions hearing the loud squeal of pigs in the night, knowing then that a bear had attacked some of the family's swine for a meal. Meanwhile, Captain Jim McMullen returned to his two-story log residence at Coachman and another brother, David McMullen, moved to the Morse Hill area of Safety Harbor in late 1865 or early 1866.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

An Impressive Home Surrounded by Fertile Fields

Daniel McMullen built bridges with his neighbors, erected a signature house on the frontier, and strengthened his agribusiness holdings. During 1867, Dan held public office for the first and (most likely) only time when the Board of County Commissioners in Hillsborough named him to a one-year term as one of three road commissioners for District # 1, the Old Tampa district. His knowledge of the disjointed road network throughout Western Hillsborough made him a logical choice for this appointment. By the spring of 1868, family members prepared the lumber from native pine and started to build the original rooms of their home. The family moved into the Daniel McMullen House on 8 August 1868. At that time, the structure included two rooms used as living areas and two “shed” or storages rooms connected by a “dog trot” breezeway. An expanded version of the Florida Cracker house, this vernacular dwelling included an elevated first floor, a large front porch, and a fireplace. Subsequent generations of the McMullen family modified the home to suit their needs for the next 124 years. Dan also built a log smokehouse, corn crib, and other structures on the property. The family cultivated cotton, sugar cane, and vegetables. Dan also raised chicken, hogs, and cattle along the frontier. According to the 1870 census, he estimated the value of his lands at \$600 and his personal estate at \$475, amounts no doubt lowered by the malaise that had stifled the region’s economy in the years immediately following the Civil War. By the 1870s, Dan shifted from cotton to citrus, a move accelerated as reliable railroad networks reached the region in the late 1880s. During this period, he also acquired additional acreage for his growing cattle enterprises. He paid only fifty cents per acre to obtain forty additional acres. According to some family narratives, Dan had acquired nearly 1,500 cattle by 1890, making him one of the largest—if not the largest—cattle farmer in Western Hillsborough.⁷

Daniel and Margaret Ann McMullen cherished the arrival of their youngest children while living in their new home. Robert Lee “Dr. Bob” McMullen entered the world on 14 October 1868, barely two months after the family settled into their home.

⁶ Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 11; Nancy and Carl McLaughlin interview; *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 August 1967.

Nearly three years later, on 10 October 1871, the McMullens welcomed Donald Campbell, their eighth child and sixth son. At about this time, Malcolm McMullen, the youngest of the seven brothers, homesteaded on lands just southeast of Dan's property near the present intersection of Belcher Road and East Bay Drive. Margaret gave birth to the ninth and last child, Charles Breckenridge, on 9 June 1874. At some point shortly after the birth of Charles, Margaret Ann fell ill. She spent much of her life from the mid-1870s until her death on 21 April 1909 as an invalid who never fully recovered her vitality. For example, the 1880 census listed her as experiencing an illness noted as a "female complaint." Her daughter, Margaret Nancy McMullen, apparently shouldered a large part of the burden in raising her younger siblings. An 1894 photograph preserved by the State Archives of Florida shows the extended family of Daniel and Margaret Ann McMullen at their farm. In this image, an incapacitated Margaret Ann rests in a simple wheelchair or bed next to her husband with children and grandchildren surrounding her and Daniel. Gladys Tucker Booth, a member of a pioneer family, noted that Margaret Ann often spent time at Captain Charles Wharton Johnson's residence in the Safety Harbor area to take advantage of natural spring waters. The Johnsons originally settled near the current site of the Belleview Biltmore Hotel and later acquired other properties in central and northern Pinellas, including parcels in the Green Springs area that later became part of the Safety Harbor Methodist Church, now located at Heritage Village.⁸

Daniel remained close to James P. McMullen during the late 1800s. For example, he joined James and three other brothers—John, David, and Thomas—as five of eleven leaders in Western Hillsborough who met to establish a Masonic lodge on 14 August 1875 at J. P. McMullen's new settlement in Bay View. After the Masons granted a charter on 13 January 1876, they met at Jim's hotel in Bay View. By 1889, they had converted the third floor for use as a lodge. Daniel enjoyed participating in Masonic gatherings. He served as treasurer for the lodge between 1894 and 1900, and again from 1902 until 1905. After 1908, this lodge moved from Bay View to Largo. By the mid-1870s, Daniel also joined James Parramore in converting family farmlands from cotton to

⁷ Census information appears in building files at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, pp. 12-13, 16; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 68-69; Nancy and Carl McLaughlin interview.

citrus to meet the growing demands of merchants in the North. Daniel's children welcomed this move, preferring the gleaning of oranges and grapefruit over the harvesting of cotton. For example, Robert L. McMullen noted his pleasure when his father, Daniel, switched from fields to groves: "I hated picking cotton and was mighty glad when the citrus trees brought in income so we did not have to grow it."⁹

Daniel also diversified his business holdings during the end of the 1800s. He still conducted cattle drives across the Pinellas Peninsula, including trips that brought herds to the bluffs near the present-day grounds of the Belleview Biltmore Hotel. The family's citrus holdings continued to expand, especially as many of Uncle Dan's children became farmers and grove owners. In 1891—fourteen years before the incorporation of the Town of Largo—R. J. Whitehurst commissioned D. W. Meeker to survey the first subdivision in the area. Some of the others involved in this enterprise included Daniel McMullen, W. A. Belcher, and Alonzo Lowe. Uncle Dan became a partner in Largo's first ice company and held an interest in the Farmers' Alliance Exchange, the largest mercantile store in region by the 1890s. As a member of the growing business community, he also held interests in the Largo Bank, an institution chartered on 21 October 1907. His son, Donald Campbell McMullen, served as the bank's first president.¹⁰

By 1900, the children of Daniel and Margaret McMullen had engaged in business and most had started families. The 1900 census revealed that Daniel continued to cultivate crops at the age of seventy-four. That year, a twelve year-old boarder named Elmer Roesseau lived with "Uncle" Dan and attended a Largo school. Daniel's youngest son, Charles B. McMullen, lived on lands adjacent to his parents and frequently visited them. As a young child, Louise Rosanna McMullen, daughter of John James, vividly remembered seeing her grandfather after the turn of the century. She considered Dan a "gentle, intelligent, kindly old man with a long gray beard, who always had time to talk with children." He often sat on the porch and spent time with his children and grandchildren while smoking his pipe. On some occasions, he even lit his pipe by using a strong magnifying glass. She recalled his many trips to Largo on his buckboard wagon to

⁸ Genealogical information appears in building files at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, pp. 11-15; Harris, "Seven McMullen Brothers," 73.

⁹ Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, p. 15.

check on business at the Alliance store, a two-story structure he operated with others that included hardware, clothes, and groceries. Louise remembered his generosity, such as when he provided funds to support the first band in Largo. On 15 November 1907, Daniel applied to the State of Florida for his Confederate service pension. Although he described himself as “old and feeble,” he did not elaborate on any specific illnesses. Officials approved his application on 8 February 1908 and awarded him an annual stipend of \$120.¹¹

Daniel McMullen’s death marked the passing of an era. On the morning of 5 August 1908, Don McMullen learned that his father had fallen ill and quickly came over from Tampa to get to his father’s bedside. Louise McMullen remembered seeing her father, John James, cry for the first time. The eighty-three year old patriarch passed away at about 3:00 p.m., surrounded by many loved ones. At the time of his death, he and Margaret Ann had sixty-five family members—children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—most of them living in the Tampa Bay area. The *Tampa Weekly Tribune* mourned the passing of one of the region’s “noblest characters” in a lengthy obituary, while the *St. Petersburg Times* briefly noted his passing. The funeral at Largo’s Methodist church attracted a large gathering, including many residents of Tampa who made the journey to pay their final respects. Margaret Ann, his widow, had already suffered from years of incapacitation. She joined her husband in eternal rest on 21 April 1909. Although saddened by the death of Daniel and Margaret Ann, family members could also celebrate the contributions of the nine siblings and their growing families to the Largo area. The Daniel McMullen Home and farmlands remained an important gathering spot for family members for the next eight decades; the children reared in the house and their subsequent families had notable careers in agribusiness, commerce, and public service. Indeed, many chapters of Pinellas’ history have their origins with the extended family that lived in this structure.¹²

¹⁰ *Largo, Then Til*, 27; Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 69-70; Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 17.

¹¹ Genealogical information appears in building files at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 August 1967; Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 17; *Largo, Then Til*, 155; Dan McMullen’s records reside in the Florida Confederate Pension Application Files, Record Group 137, Series 587, State Archives of Florida.

John James and William Alonzo McMullen

John James McMullen became an early educator on the Pinellas Peninsula who also started a large family while living in the Largo area. Educated in log cabins, John James later taught classes in some of the first school facilities in the central Pinellas region—including the Anona School—for about fifteen years. He married Joseph Drayton “Jo” Ramage, an 11 November 1857 native of Ocala and daughter of a Colonel Ramage and Rosannah Kilgore. The ceremony took place on 18 July 1880 at Clear Water Harbor. Between 1881 and 1901, John James and Jo Ramage McMullen conceived ten children. The eldest, Mary Ellen “Mamie,” entered the world on 2 May 1881. Mamie later married William Beasley “Uncle Bill” Harris, patron of the original Harris School in eastern Lealman portrayed by a replica at Heritage Village. In 1883, John James entered public life as a member of the 1883 Florida Legislature. His leadership efforts in the Hillsborough County legislative delegation won him praise from state Senator John T. Lesley of Tampa. In a letter to the senior Daniel McMullen, Lesley praised John James as a “young man of no ordinary talent and if a field is offered him, his future is a fixture, his station high, and far above the mediocrity of man.” As the legislative session came to an end, Josephine gave birth to John Ramage on 4 June 1883. Other children included: Lillian Elvira (born 19 March 1886), Catherine Rebecca (born 8 December 1888), Daniel Drayton (born 13 August 1891), David (born 9 February 1893; died in infancy), Josephine Nancy (born 16 July 1896), twins Daphne Mae and Louise Rosanna (born 10 November 1898), and Margaret Eugenia “Jean” (born 26 June 1901). Louise later followed in her father’s footsteps, serving as a teacher at the Clearview and Seminole elementary schools. She also became the deputy chief clerk for the Board of County Commissioners for many years. John James supported his large family by farming, growing citrus, and raising chickens and livestock. He acquired large land holdings in the Seminole/Largo area. By 1929, then in his mid-seventies, John had reduced his acreage to about eighteen acres of citrus, though he still continued to raise cattle, hogs, and chickens “on a considerable scale.” He passed away at the age of eighty on 21 November 1933 at

¹² *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 6 August 1908; *St. Petersburg Times*, 8 August 1908; *Largo, Then Til*, 155.

Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater. His wife, Josephine Drayton Ramage McMullen perished on 11 May 1946 in Largo.¹³

William Alonzo McMullen followed a path similar to his older brother, John James. He fell in love with Rosanna Benjamin Ramage, younger sister of Josephine Drayton Ramage and 24 December 1862 native of Ocala. A member of the pioneer Dieffenwirth family conducted their 12 July 1883 wedding ceremony in the Largo area. William Alonzo and Rosanna Ramage McMullen raised four sons and three daughters while living in the Largo area. Their eldest child, Alonzo Benjamin, entered the world on 1 June 1884. On 24 November 1908, Alonzo B. McMullen married Edna Katherine Jeffords at a ceremony at Captain Charles W. Johnson's large three-story home once located southeast of East Bay Drive and Seminole Boulevard. During the ceremony, family members placed bed sheets on the porch and steps to protect the dresses of the wedding party. Gas mantles provided ample light. Alonzo attended Washington and Lee University in Virginia and lived in the Tampa area during his later years. Alonzo died on 19 March 1957 in Tampa¹⁴

William Alphonso, another grandchild of Daniel and Margaret and the second child of William Alonzo and Rosanna, had an active life as one of the earliest professional engineers in the region. Born on 26 October 1886 at the family's log house two miles east of Largo—in an area near Dan McMullen's homestead—young William had many close calls during his childhood years on the Pinellas frontier. As a small child, he followed older brother Alonzo and a cousin in about 1888 as they picked blueberries along the open range. Young William fell into a spring and nearly drowned. The cries of Alonzo summoned father William, who grabbed his young namesake son by the heels and rolled him back and forth to resuscitate “the lifeless body.” By the early 1890s, the family had moved from the cabin to a house built with sawed timber. On one afternoon, he saw his father and Uncle Bob (William's brother and Daniel's son, Robert Lee McMullen) capture a young buck that foraged in the garden for sweet potatoes. By

¹³ Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, pp. 4, 12; Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 69; John T. Lesley to Daniel McMullen, 14 February 1883, copy available in Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; William L. Straub, *History of Pinellas County, Florida: Narrative and Biographical* (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1929), 407; *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 August 1967.

¹⁴ Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 4; *Largo, Then Til*, 15, 191. In *Largo, Then Til*, William's middle name appears as “Adolphus” rather than “Alonzo.”

1902, young William learned that an atrophy of the optic nerve threatened to blind him in his right eye. Between 1902 and 1904, William Alphonso attended the South Florida Military College in Bartow, where he took classes and played football without his parent's permission during his senior year. After the 1905 Buckman Act reorganized public higher education in Florida, William received a bachelor of science in Civil Engineering from the University of Florida. For awhile, he held jobs with a railroad line in Alabama, a northern coal-mining firm, and a Virginia railroad company. By 1907, he returned to the Tampa Bay region to work as a surveyor on dredging operations in the bay and near Egmont Key; he also assisted with the building and repair activities at Fort Dade and Fort Desoto at the mouth of Tampa Bay. Between 1907 and 1909, he inspected progress on the dredging of the first major channel into Tampa, and soon oversaw other outside engineering work funded by federal dollars in the Tampa region. Seeking advanced training, he resigned as an engineer in the fall of 1910 and enrolled in the Rensselaer Institute of Technology to continue his studies. While at the campus in Troy, New York, he also played football, coached baseball, and managed the Glee Club. By 1914, he earned another degree in Civil Engineering. On 17 October 1916, he married Annie Maude Laird, a native of Indiana and graduate of Purdue University who majored in Home Economics. During World War I, blindness in his right eye prevented William Alphonso from serving in the military. Instead, he worked for Hillsborough County as an engineer for brick road construction and served as an engineer for the Lake Largo Drainage District (and similar entities in other areas). As the land boom hit St. Petersburg, William moved to the Sunshine City by 1921 to serve as that city's chief engineer. He later returned to private practice. As the Great Depression persisted during the mid-1930s, William Alphonso found a job as the Works Progress Administration's State Director of Operations and later Assistant State Administrator. In July 1937, he returned to Largo and became the engineer for Pinellas County. Although he later lost sight in his other eye, McMullen continued to work as an engineer in Pinellas during the early 1950s. He passed away on 18 December 1958 in Largo. His wife, known as "Miss Ann" to many in Largo, died in 1970.¹⁵

¹⁵ Gladys M. Wallis, "W. A. McMullen," *Florida Highways*, December 1950, 5, 42-44; *St. Petersburg Times*, 16 June 1937, 4 July 1937; *Largo, Then Til*, 191. During deliberations on the hiring of W. A.

The other children of William Alonzo and Rosanna Ramage also made important contributions to the community. Margaret Rosanna, the third child and first daughter, was born on 6 April 1888 in Largo, at about the time that workers from the Orange Belt Railway struggled to build tracks from Sanford to St. Petersburg. Margaret attended Florida Southern College and also married Richard Leroy Booth on 31 December 1919 in a ceremony at Largo. Frances Eleanor came into the world on 3 February 1890. She earned an A. B. degree from Florida Southern College in 1907. Clements Manly arrived on 5 February 1892 at the family's home in Largo. Clements learned how to fly airplanes by January 1918 while stationed at Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas. He later served as an officer and pilot in the Army Air Corps (now the United States Air Force), with tours of duty during World War I, World War II, and Korea. At National Air Races in St. Louis in 1923, he reached 139 miles per hour in his airplane and received the Liberty Engine Trophy. In 1930, he set a long-distance speed record by flying from New York to Buenos Aires in fifty-two hours, thirty minutes. Clements attended Washington and Lee University, retired as a major general, and served at one time as commanding general at Kelly Air Force Base at San Antonio until his retirement on 28 February 1954. He perished on 9 January 1959. After the 1895 freeze damaged the family's citrus trees, William Alonzo had difficulty getting many vegetables to grow during the chilly winter, except for beans. Thus, beans became a regular companion at the dinner table until springtime brought warmer weather. Philip Ramage joined the family as the youngest son on 8 February 1897, five years after Clements's birth. As an adult, he attended the University of Florida during the early years of the Gainesville campus. In April 1901, young William Alphonso returned from town to discover their family home on fire. Despite his efforts to douse the blaze, the conflagration consumed the house. Until the family built a new home, family members often slept in the barn. On August 25 of that year, the family welcomed its youngest member, Lillie Evelyn. She attended classes at

McMullen, Jr., one member of the Board of County Commissioners, Ed Beckett, raised a loud and sustained protest against recruiting McMullen from his Works Progress Administration post in Jacksonville. W. B. Harris (builder of the Harris School in Lealman) rebutted "There's not a better engineer than Mr. McMullen." Beckett, however, remained unconvinced.

the Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University) in Tallahassee before returning to the region.¹⁶

Young Daniel McMullen and His Sister, Josephine, Start Families

Siblings Daniel Thomas and Josephine “Joe” Catherine also found spouses, raised families, and maintained strong connections with central Pinellas after leaving the Daniel McMullen House. Daniel Thomas McMullen became a Methodist minister who rode the circuit, though he later decided to pursue farming and citrus growing. He also taught classes at a school in the Curlew area during the early 1880s. His younger sister, Margaret Nancy, often called him “Tommie.” At some point, family members also gave him the nickname “Seat” (or “Sete”). The junior Daniel courted Symadocia Ella “Docia” Freedman; they exchanged vows on 17 April 1887. Daniel and Docia raised nine children while living at a home in the Largo area. Reverend Dan McMullen fertilized his groves by penning the cattle in the area near his trees. In 1903, his groves yielded approximately 800 boxes of citrus. Meanwhile, Josephine McMullen raised a family with Elias E. Belcher. The native of Henry County, Virginia, married Josephine on 29 November 1877. They raised six children: Margaret A., George Horton, D. Bascomb, Elias E., William Henry, and Kate. William Henry Belcher, their fifth child, worked as a deputy sheriff in Pinellas County from 1924 until 1932. He also held public office as mayor, commissioner, and town manager of Largo, as well as a twelve-year stint on the Board of County Commissioners between 1939 and 1951. Other branches of the Belcher and McMullen clans also came together during the late 1800s. For example, William A. Belcher and the former Sally McMullen—daughter of Dr. Bethel McMullen—lived in the Largo area during the 1880s, where Sally gave birth to a son, Irving James Belcher, on 8 June 1883. Irving graduated from the University of Florida in 1906 and earned a medical degree from Vanderbilt University four years later. By 1911, he became a notable physician in the Tarpon Springs area who also held substantial real estate and citrus interests. During his life, he also had a growing interest in Tarpon’s booming sponge

¹⁶ Ibid., 5; Genealogical research located in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; *Largo Sentinel*, 17 January 1918. Graduates of (Florida) Southern College, 1890 to 1934, located at: <http://www.tbtc.org/fsc/archives/grads1890to1934.html>; *St. Petersburg Times*, 10 January 1959.

industry. For almost six decades, he practiced medicine in Tarpon Springs. Irving passed away on 24 June 1968.¹⁷

“Uncle Eli” McMullen’s Family

Eli Bartow McMullen started a large family and served as the first tax collector in Pinellas County. Fondly known as “Uncle Eli” to kith and kin, he tied the knot with Emma C. Cox on 4 March 1885. Published histories, including W. L. Straub’s *History of Pinellas County*, noted that Cox lived in the area of present-day St. Petersburg during the mid-1880s before she married into the McMullen clan. Eli and Emma had nine children: Winifred, Chester Bartow, Clara, Mabel, Margaret, Mary (who died as a one year-old infant), Melvin, Grover Cleveland, and Newton. By 1890, E. B. McMullen worked in the mercantile business. He soon became the manager of the Farmers’ Alliance Exchange, the largest store in the Largo area. Beginning in 1903, he opened his own store and ran it for nine years with the assistance of his sons. “Uncle Eli” entered public service after Pinellas gained its independence from Hillsborough County: Governor Albert Waller Gilchrist named Eli as the tax collector in December 1911. He served in that capacity from 1 January 1912 and won successive elections on the Democratic ticket until he stepped down seventeen years later on 8 January 1929. Throughout this time, E. B. McMullen remained a devout member of Largo’s Methodist church, singing in its choir for nearly forty years. After learning about the possible discovery of oil in a well near Bushnell, Eli signed a five-year lease with F. E. Fenderson of St. Petersburg on 29 July 1921 to search for gas and oil reserves under his land in Largo; apparently, Fenderson failed to locate any subterranean oil or gas. By 1929, he opened a real estate office in the Largo area. After Emma passed away on 14 January 1923, Eli married Florida Dewar—

¹⁷ Genealogical research included in building files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Nancy Meador, “Nancy Hardage, 85, Helped Invalid Mother Raise Family,” undated *Clearwater Sun* clipping, circa 1950, located in Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 6; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 184-187; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 3 December 1903; *Largo, Then Til*, 13; *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 June 1968; Sue Searcy Goldman, *A History of the Board of County Commissioners of Pinellas County* (Clearwater: Board of County Commissioners, 1996), 45; *Largo Sentinel*, 8 December 1949.

an Anona native and Largo-area schoolteacher—on 26 August 1925. “Uncle Eli” passed away at Morton Plant Hospital on 4 August 1934 at the age of seventy-two.¹⁸

Two of Eli’s children married members of the Ulmer family. Winifred exchanged vows with Henry Ulmer, an entrepreneur who organized the Indian Rocks Fruit Packing Company in the 1920s and by the mid-1940s expanded this business along Oakhurst Road to include a gift shop and restaurant. Chester Bartow McMullen, a 1920 graduate of Largo High School, married childhood friend Veda Ulmer in 1923. Chester graduated from the University of Florida in 1924 with a law degree and established a practice in Clearwater later that year. Governor John W. Martin appointed him as prosecuting attorney for Pinellas in 1927. Three years later, he won office as the state attorney for Florida’s sixth judicial circuit covering Pinellas and Pasco counties, a position he held without opposition until he stepped down in 1950. He then ran for Florida’s First Congressional District in the House of Representatives after the incumbent, J. Hardin Peterson, had resigned. He ran on a platform that called for adequate old age assistance and the exemption of families earning less than \$2,500 per year from federal income tax. While campaigning in Largo, he drove through the community in a convertible with a loud speaker that reportedly proclaimed, “I love those dear hearts and gentle people that live and love in my home town.” He defeated J. Tom Watson of Tampa in the second primary, nearly carrying the majority in Hillsborough County because of his stand that supported changes to the Taft-Hartley Act favoring labor. With this victory, Chester B. McMullen became the first native of Pinellas County elected to Congress when he served in the House of Representatives from 1951 to 1953. His first bill as a member of Congress called for veterans serving in the Korean conflict to gain eligibility for benefits offered under the G. I. Bill of Rights. He condemned the average disbursement of \$44 per month to elderly Americans little more than “slow starvation” and advocated on their behalf. Chester and Veda opened their home at 1008 South Druid in the Harbor Oaks area on 30 October 1951 for the annual membership tea of the Democratic Women’s Club of Upper Pinellas County. Nearly 200 women attended, with Nancy Meador in charge of arrangements and many other McMullen women also involved in the planning. On 16

¹⁸ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 58, 406-407; *Largo, Then Til*, 22; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 29 July 1921. Straub claimed that E. B. McMullen became involved in the Farmers’ Alliance Exchange by 1889,

January 1952, Chester decided against running for a second term due to “personal financial considerations” and returned to his law firm—McMullen, McMullen, and Pogue—after leaving Congress in early 1953. Later that year, he suffered an illness that lasted for months. At 10:55 a.m. on November 3, he passed away in a Clearwater hospital at the age of fifty. The following day, the *St. Petersburg Times* ran a leading editorial that paid tribute to the county’s first home-grown member of Congress: “Of all the large and useful family McMullen, none ever served his native county more faithfully or ably . . . than Chester B. McMullen. . . . Pinellas County has lost one of its finest citizens, and the people of Pinellas one of their warmest and most genuine friends.”¹⁹

“Aunt Nannie” McMullen Hardage

Margaret Nancy (Nannie) McMullen married James Newton Hardage on 2 January 1902. As a child, Nannie attended classes at a log school near the Largo Road at Curlew. For awhile, she boarded at the home of Walton Whitehurst while taking classes at the school where older brother “Tommie” also worked as a teacher. She enjoyed picking violets and buttercups, and spent endless hours roaming through the woods near the Daniel McMullen Home “on a magic carpet of pine needles.” She remembered seeing her father arrive at the homestead on horseback with two bears he had killed in the nearby woods. Clara Duncan, a neighbor whose family grew citrus near present-day Keene Road, offered young Nancy piano lessons as soon as the child learned how to read. In time, she learned how to play the organ for services at Curlew’s Methodist church. As previously mentioned, her mother became ill after the birth of Charles B. McMullen in the mid-1870s, forcing “Auntie Nannie” to assume a large role in raising her three younger brothers (Robert Lee, Donald Campbell, and Charles Breckenridge). In a retrospective interview, Nannie claimed that: “The boys just had to help. I often told my mother I did a better job rearing the last three boys than she did the first ones, because they learned to do everything around the house as well as the farming.” Every week, she

while the commemorative history of Largo noted that he had started in the mercantile business in 1890.

¹⁹ Ibid.; Indian Rocks Area Historical Society, *Indian Rocks: A Pictorial History* (Indian Rocks: Historical Society, 1980), 96; “Chester Bartow McMullen, 1902-1953,” Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress, available electronically at: <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000577>; *St. Petersburg Times*, 4 November 1953; *Safety Harbor Herald*, 26 October 1951, 2 November 1951; *Largo, Then Til*, 67.

collected the laundry and made a horse-and-buggy journey to Captain Jim's log house where a Mrs. Black helped her with it. In what may have been one of the earliest "Chamber of Commerce" publicity stunts along the Pinellas Peninsula, Nannie wrote a letter to a "Family Circle" column that appeared in the *Kansas City Times*. Apparently, Uncle Dan's family received a subscription to that newspaper while living on the Largo frontier. In her letter, she described the beauty of the Pinellas beaches, Indian mounds, and the woods. Soon, Nancy received a "deluge" of letters from people throughout the United States who wanted to learn more about Pinellas. This event occurred about three years before Dr. W. C. Van Bibber's famous 1885 report on "Health City" touted the wonders of Pinellas. Daniel sent Nancy to a Largo sawmill to get boards for orange crates sometime in 1890. While there, she met the proprietor, "a handsome young man" named James Hardage who apparently told some of his employees he expected to meet Nannie again, even if it meant that "he had to walk a hundred miles." They courted for a decade, with James moving the sawmill near the Dan McMullen House so he could work close to his in-laws. Hardage later joined Robert and Don McMullen in establishing the Indian Rocks Investment Company, a firm that oversaw construction of the first bridge between Indian Rocks and the mainland. "Dr. Bob" McMullen visited the bridge on a daily basis while workers built the structure. Located at The Narrows and later known as the "Old Bridge," this structure opened on Thanksgiving Day 1915 and remained a toll bridge until purchased by Pinellas County in 1937 for \$16,350. Hundreds came from throughout Pinellas, Tampa, and other areas to celebrate the opening of the span in an atmosphere that resembled a fair. Members of the Largo School band played at the opening ceremonies. For awhile, swimming in the moonlight became popular as people traveled across the bridge and parked along the Gulf of Mexico. Although James and Margaret never had children, they did take care of the six children of her youngest brother, Charles, after the death of his first wife, the former Mattie Abigail Caruthers, in 1908.²⁰

²⁰ Meador, "Nancy Hardage" clipping; Ivey, "Uncle Dan McMullen" manuscript, pp. 11, 14; Indian Rocks Area Historical Society, *Indian Rocks*, 24; *Largo Sentinel*, 2 December 1915; *Largo, Then Til*, 46-47; *Largo Sentinel*, 8 December 1949. Charles's middle name appears in some records as "Breckenridge" and in others as "Breckinridge."

“Doctor Bob” McMullen, Dentist and Innovative Farmer

Robert Lee McMullen worked as a dentist and farmer along the Pinellas Peninsula. He attended local schools while living at the Daniel McMullen Home. His oldest brother, John James, even served as one of his teachers at the Anona School. Bob later moved to Atlanta to enroll in dentistry classes at Southern Medical College, a school established in 1878 that later merged with other institutions to form Emory University’s school of medicine. Valedictorian of his class, R. L. McMullen returned to Florida and established a practice in St. Petersburg in 1896. Every two weeks, he made a steamboat trip to Palmetto to meet with patients in Manatee County. He later moved to the area east of Largo by 1898-1899 and built a two-story dwelling on old Keene (now McMullen) Road. “Dr. Bob” was not the first member of the extended McMullen family to practice dentistry in the region: James Parramore McMullen offered his services as a self-taught dentist, and his son, Bethel, completed his course work in dental science at a Baltimore college by 1872. Doctor Bob even made a trip to Cuba in late 1901; at some point, he worked in a Cuban cigar factory. Robert McMullen fell in love with Frances L. Mason of Clearwater. Then considered by many to be “a leading dentist of the West Coast,” Bob had a difficult time securing his marriage license due to poor weather. When storms prevented him from making a Saturday trip to Tampa, he decided to travel to the county seat on the following Monday, bringing M. J. McMullen along for the treacherous buggy ride. Fallen trees, swollen streams, and damaged bridges made Cupid’s quest quite a challenge. With license in hand, Dr. Bob finally exchanged vows with Frances on 14 September 1903. While living at their home in the Largo area, Robert and Frances welcomed the arrival of one daughter, Lucy.²¹

Robert L. McMullen enjoyed showing visitors his grove and describing his agricultural innovations. Small in stature but with an immense imagination, “Doctor Bob” always looked for ways to improve the productivity of his lands. He experimented with various plants. During the summer of 1891, he planted a potato patch at his home

²¹ Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 12; *Largo, Then Til*, 23; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, 17 September 1903; *St. Petersburg Times*, 28 December 1901, 1 September 1950. Additional discussion of James Parramore and Bethel McMullen’s work as dentists appears in the chapter on the McMullen-Coachman Log House. See page 23 of *Largo, Then Til* for a 1905 photograph of Dr. Bob McMullen’s two-story residence with family members on the porch and their horse, “Old Traveler,” patiently waiting in front of a buggy.

near present-day downtown Largo, one of the earliest dwellings in the community. Seedling oranges, pecan trees, and other specimens cultivated by Bob continued to bear fruit long after his death. During his life, he planted more than 100 varieties of citrus trees on his acreage. His pecans and cassava plants won accolades from many. The pecans often won honors at the county fair, while cassava roots made an excellent crop for fattening hogs and cattle. Florida farmers could easily cultivate between five and ten tons of cassava roots per acre. Bob enjoyed tapioca pudding, a dessert he often called “cassava pone,” as a regular staple at the dinner table. At times, he also made puddings out of sweet potatoes. An early leader in the movement to secure a “Free Fair” in Pinellas County, R. L. McMullen worked closely with Jesse Ancil Walsingham and a number of women who hoped to establish an annual gathering in the Largo area. A 12 September 1920 issue of the *St. Petersburg Times* praised “Doctor Bob” as “the original county fair booster . . . the most persistent worker for the fair.” During the 1917 Pinellas County Fair, Bob McMullen won first place for best display of citrus fruits and second for best display of threshed rice, among other honors. He continued to collect blue ribbons in subsequent fairs. Family histories claim that he possessed “a yen for show business” and often organized small performances with others that allowed for him to play the “talented end man.”²²

“Doctor Bob” lived at his home on Keene Road for nearly forty-seven years. By the late 1940s, he suffered from a number of heart attacks. After working all day on 30 August 1950, he became ill after supper and died later that evening. His wife, Frances, lived for over five more years before also succumbing on 27 December 1955. After Bob and Frances passed away, their daughter, Lucy, occupied the home with her husband, Alec White. An agricultural agent in Hillsborough County for a quarter of a century, White helped Lucy maintain bound volumes of the family’s genealogy and history in the large study room. As late as the 1970s, Alex and Lucy maintained 130 acres of the R. L. McMullen homestead, with a fence surrounding 8.6 acres that included the original home built in the late 1890s, a structure draped by pecan and shade trees.²³

²² *Largo Sentinel*, 1 February 1917, 7 June 1917, 6 July 1950, 7 September 1950; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12 September 1920, 13 August 1967; *Largo, Then Til*, 23.

²³ *St. Petersburg Times*, 1 September 1950, 13 August 1967; *Largo, Then Til*, 23; *Largo Sentinel*, 7 September 1950.

Naming a Lake, Naming a Town, Draining a Lake for the Town

During an October 1949 interview, Dr. Bob McMullen told a correspondent with the *Largo Sentinel* how pioneers selected “Largo” as the name of the settlement. In about 1881, Hamilton Disston had dispatched a man named Livingstone to examine lands he purchased as part of a larger acquisition of four million acres throughout Florida. Livingstone had hired Malcolm Campbell McMullen, one of Doctor Bob’s uncles, to assist him in this endeavor. One evening, young Bob followed his father, Daniel, to the campsite shared by Malcolm McMullen and Mr. Livingstone. During their conversations, Livingstone said he planned to rename the body of water once known as “Big Lake” or “Lake Tolulu.” He called the impressive body of water “Lake Largo,” using the Spanish word *largo* to denote the lake’s *large* size. Since Disston’s purchase included the lake, Livingstone certainly did not have to seek outside permission from other settlers to adorn the lake with a new name.²⁴

The settlement west of Lake Largo needed a name as the Orange Belt Railway moved south along the Pinellas Peninsula from Clear Water. According to Doctor Bob, in late 1887 or early 1888 Gideon Blicht, Joel McMullen, and Rufus McMullen met with others who planned to erect a railroad station for the settlement. Discussion centered on “Luluville” as a possible name that would honor Lulu, one of Blicht’s daughters. Such practices were common when naming new settlements: For awhile, a small station about one mile north of Largo went by the name Armour, in honor of H. O. Armour of Chicago, one of the men who helped Peter Demens finance the construction of the narrow-gauge railroad. As the oldest man present, Rufus suggested that the depot carry the name “Largo,” reflecting the name of the nearby lake. Rufus donated land for the station, and soon people knew the community as Largo, the “Citrus City.”²⁵

Local truck farmers hailed the drainage of Lake Largo as a progressive measure to increase crop yields. Members of the McMullen family, along with Jesse Ancil Walsingham and other local farmers, completed this task by early 1918. The once-impressive reservoir stocked with large schools of fish soon became moist, nutrient-rich

²⁴ *Largo Sentinel*, 20 October 1949; *Largo, Then Til*, 24-25.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

muck that provided bountiful harvests during the early twentieth century. Unlike later dredging operations that reshaped the Gulf Beaches, created Lake Seminole, and carved drainage canals throughout an urbanizing region, this early project reclaimed lands for agricultural purposes. Although many early residents enjoyed meals made with ingredients harvested in the former lake bed, some later regretted the decision to replace the water with farmlands. In a *Clearwater Sun* column written by Nancy Meador in about 1950, eighty-five year old Nancy Hardage lamented the loss of Lake Largo, a place where she spent “so many happy hours fishing and picnicking.” Nancy McMullen McLaughlin, raised by “Aunt Nannie” from infancy, echoed these sentiments in an August 1979 oral history interview: “It was a beautiful lake and the best fishing lake in the whole county. I will never understand why they did it.”²⁶

The Honorable Don, Tampa Lawyer and Public Servant

Donald Campbell McMullen became a notable lawyer, public servant, and staunch advocate of prohibition. He left the Pinellas Peninsula in the 1890s to attend Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Don graduated from Mercer with a law degree in 1896 and established a practice in Tampa by 1899. That same year, he served as a Hillsborough County delegate in the Florida House of Representatives. On 14 October 1903, he married Mary Louisa (“Mary Lou”) Ball, a Tallahassee resident and daughter of William and Annie Calhoun Ball. The newlyweds settled down in their Hyde Park home, where they raised two daughters and two sons. As a prominent attorney in a rapidly growing city, Don often had to forge a delicate balance between his civic interests in Tampa and the growing movement to create an independent county along the Pinellas Peninsula. Many of his childhood friends, relatives, and business acquaintances in Western Hillsborough expected him to remember his Largo roots and advocate for division. While W. A. Belcher discussed the idea of a new county as early as the 1880s, the independence movement gained steam by 1907, especially after W. L. Straub published his famous “Pinellas Declaration of Independence” in a February issue of his *St. Petersburg Times*. By 1908, Don McMullen hoped to win Hillsborough’s senate seat

²⁶ Meador, “Nancy Hardage” clipping; Nancy and Carl McLaughlin interview. For additional discussion on the draining of Lake Largo, please see the chapter on the Walsingham House.

in the upcoming election. Although he sympathized with those who favored division, he realized that he could not advocate that position from a perch in Tampa, especially while he remained deadlocked in a battle to win the Democratic primaries that centered on the issue of prohibition. His opponents, F. A. Wood and Robert McNamee, hoped to derail his campaign using different tactics. Wood, a St. Petersburg resident and strong advocate of separation, portrayed McMullen as a “traitor” who placed the debate over prohibition above the wellbeing of his kith and kin. McNamee, a Tampa attorney and “wet” candidate, condemned McMullen’s position on making Florida’s constitution a “dry” document. During one debate at the courthouse in Tampa, Don felt compelled to win over the locals by questioning Wood’s plan for an independent Pinellas and by professing his devotion to the Cigar City. McMullen ultimately won the primary and represented Hillsborough County as a senator during the 1909 and 1911 biennial sessions.²⁷

During his terms as senator, the Hon. Don C. McMullen introduced many important pieces of legislation. Before the passage of “home rule” legislation in the mid-twentieth century, lawmakers confronted an amazing number of bills to regulate local activities now handled by municipal and county officials. In 1909, he introduced Senate Bills 57 and 59, measures that updated city charters in Tampa and Clearwater, respectively. Senate Joint Resolution 68, a measure dealing with intoxicating liquors, also passed the chamber during the 1909 session. Between the exhaustive legislative sessions, McMullen returned to Tampa and practiced law. He made frequent visits across the bay, often to encourage prohibition. For example, in October 1910, he joined Reverend J. W. Carpenter in a “grand Temperance Rally” held under the grove trees at Largo. In 1911, Governor Gilchrist signed into law Senate Bill 65, a measure proposed by McMullen to provide a \$30,000 appropriation for the Florida State Mid-Winter Fair, located in Tampa. Recognizing the importance of division to many friends and family members, McMullen did nothing to harm the passage of a bill that separated Pinellas into an independent county. This measure received approval on 23 May 1911, and took effect on 1 January 1912 after receiving the blessing of peninsular voters in a referendum. After the session ended, Don continued his fight for “dry” legislation in the Tampa Bay region. For

²⁷ Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 13; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 52-58. An extended discussion of the 1908 senatorial debate in Tampa appears in the chapter on the McMullen-Coachman Log

example, he assisted members of a “Civic League” in Pinellas who sought a vote to close drinking establishments in the newly created county. By 1915, however, he resigned his post as state president of the anti-saloon league. D. C. McMullen remained an important leader in Tampa for the next three decades. He died on 29 September 1947 in Tampa, and was buried in the family graveyard at the Largo Cemetery.²⁸

“Uncle Charley” McMullen and His Citrus Groves

Charles Breckenridge McMullen, the youngest of Uncle Dan’s nine children, devoted much of his life to citrus cultivation in central Pinellas. Although he never held political office like brothers Eli or Donald, he remained “a staunch Democratic worker all his life.” He lived at the Daniel McMullen House and grew citrus in the areas around McMullen Road. On 27 June 1895, he married Mattie Abigail Caruthers and they started a family of two sons (Robert Campbell and George W. McMullen) and four daughters (Elizabeth, Pat “Mattie,” Ruby Elna, and Nancy). During this time, “Uncle Charley” also joined the Largo Methodist Church as a charter member. Mattie passed away at a time when all of the children were young and needed a great deal of attention. Although Charley tied the knot with Hallie Cree Bynum Ellis in the early 1920s, his sister—Margaret Nancy “Aunt Nannie” Hardage—played an important role in raising his children. Charles remained active in his groves well past his eightieth birthday, even winning membership in the Golden Age Club of Largo. A 1957 photograph taken at Charles B. and Hallie McMullen’s homestead includes nearly forty members of the McMullen, McLaughlin, Kearney, and Ellis families. Charles passed away on 3 September 1959 at the age of eighty-five.²⁹

House.

²⁸ *Journal of the State Senate of Florida of the Sessions of 1909 and 1911* (Tallahassee: State of Florida); *St. Petersburg Times*, 4 October 1910; Straub, *History of Pinellas County, 57-58; Largo, Then Til*, 46; Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, p. 13.

²⁹ *St. Petersburg Times*, 4 September 1959; Nancy and Carl McLaughlin interview; Ivey, “Uncle Dan McMullen” manuscript, pp. 13-14. To examine the photograph of Charles B. McMullen’s extended family, visit the Florida Photographic Collection at the State Archives of Florida’s website, located at: <http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us/prints/pr06328.jpg>.

New Generations, Large Family Reunions, and a New Life for a Large Home

Margaret Nancy “Aunt Nannie” McMullen lived in her parents’ home nearly her entire life. As noted earlier, after she married James Hardage the couple lived in close proximity to Daniel and Margaret Campbell McMullen during their declining years. Despite Margaret’s illnesses, Nannie considered her mother “the dynamic spirit in our family . . . although mother was confined to her bed, she managed her family well.” In 1910, Mattie McMullen passed away a few months after the birth of her youngest daughter, Nancy, leaving Charles B. McMullen as a widower with six young children. Charles brought the children to James and Nancy McMullen Hardage, who raised the children. At the time, only Robert Campbell “Robbie” stayed with his father, Charles, while the others resided in the Daniel McMullen Home. Robbie often joined his younger siblings for meals with “Aunt Nannie.” Without children of their own, the Hardages helped Charles raise his children in Dan’s 1868 dwelling. Over time, family members expanded the building, adding rooms and covering part of the patio. James and Nancy added a bathroom and electricity to the structure in 1923. As the children grew older, the Hardages took them on summer vacations to Kennesaw Mountain and the area around Marietta, Georgia. Nancy McMullen, youngest daughter of Charles, continued to live at the home with “Aunt Nannie,” except for brief periods when she attended the Florida State College for Women and lived in Dunedin. She later married Carl McLaughlin, and they stayed on the property with Nancy Hardage.³⁰

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of Uncle Dan’s birth, descendants of all seven brothers came together at the Daniel McMullen Home for the first annual McMullen family reunion in July 1925. However, descendants of Uncle Dan held large reunions at the residence long before then. In June 1914, Dan’s children and their families assembled to celebrate the fortieth birthday of the youngest sibling, Charles. Approximately sixty family members arrived at the home, sat on its porches, and enjoyed conversation and music. They gathered at a long table under shady trees to enjoy lunch, and took photographs of the various groups after their meal. The 1914 celebration paled in comparison to the more than 650 relatives who attended the first reunion for all branches of the family in June 1925. Over 100 automobiles followed signs posted

³⁰ Meader, “Nancy Hardage” clipping; *St. Petersburg Times*, 17 September 2003.

throughout the area with the message, “This Way to McMullen Picnic” as they drove on the dirt, shell, and wood roads to the Daniel McMullen House. After cars filled the area, people visited the registration tables that included addresses and other information about members of the family. By the early afternoon, children played under the moss-draped trees, while elders sat on orange crates under shady trees and reminisced. A tent covered an area with ice water, a certain necessity during the warm afternoon. Those in attendance enjoyed a “massive fish fry” and picnic. African-American cooks assisted the reunion organizers in preparing the food for such a large crowd.³¹

Reunions became popular events for members of the McMullen family. In late December 1933, the McMullens held another large-scale reunion, this time at the Clearwater city auditorium. Bolivar McMullen, a grandson of Thomas Fain McMullen, helped to arrange the picnic. He also worked with others interested in the expansive genealogy of the McMullens to collect information about the different branches of the family. As part of the process, those in attendance registered at the event. Each family brought a basket lunch, with food placed on large tables throughout one half of the facility; the remaining area served as a venue for socializing and sharing stories. More than 1,000 McMullens participated in this reunion. E. W. McMullen, then principal of Clearwater High School, served as the master of ceremonies. Donald C. McMullen offered the keynote address, reviewing the history of the family for those in attendance. After his remarks, others performed musical and vocal selections.³²

Picnics continued through the early 1970s. According to one anecdote that illustrates the prominence of the McMullen family, one of James P. McMullen’s daughters once cautioned a newcomer at a church not to “make any disparaging remarks” about anyone in the congregation because everyone at the service was related to her. During the spring of 1937, approximately 500 McMullens gathered at B. L. “Uncle Birt” McMullen’s “Badwater” farm near Roosevelt Boulevard. While Uncle Birt circulated around the tables and cracked jokes with kinfolk, three guitarists and a fiddler played music and family members sang along with the tunes. Those in attendance at the 1

³¹ Harris, “Seven McMullen Brothers,” 72; *Largo Sentinel*, 4 June 1914, 18 June 1914; *St. Petersburg Times*, 12 July 1925, 13 July 1925.

³² *St. Petersburg Times*, 24 December 1933, 30 December 1933, 2 January 1934; *Largo Sentinel*, 4 January 1934.

January 1940 reunion at the fair grounds in Largo enjoyed the McMullen string orchestra, square dances, and a picnic lunch topped off with coffee and orange juice. At the fall 1957 reunion on the county fairgrounds, the registration table had eight large pads overflowing with names and addresses. Meanwhile, eighty-six year old George Ward “Uncle Ward” McMullen danced with his niece and proclaimed, “I don’t know the half of my kinfolks, but neither does anybody else.” Those in attendance looked forward to the prizes for oldest and youngest family member, largest family, and various other categories. In July 1960, about 200 McMullens met at the fairgrounds to enjoy baked and fried chicken, ham, rice, pies, and other items. Six years later, 400 arrived for the annual Fourth of July gathering, this time at the municipal auditorium in Clearwater. Bluegrass music filled the room, as family members enjoyed picnic baskets with fried chicken, cole slaw, and potato salad. By this time, Nancy McMullen Meador, a longtime family historian, served as publicist for the event. Five-hundred arrived the following year for the 1967 reunion, and 400 attendees consumed more than ninety gallons of iced tea at the 1972 gathering.³³

Nannie Hardage continued to live at the Daniel McMullen House until her death in March 1957. The old trees planted by Uncle Dan on the twenty acres of grove behind the house continued to bear fruit in 1949, though not with the yields found in earlier years. After Nannie’s death, Carl and Nancy McMullen McLaughlin lived in the house and tended to the groves. Over time, family members sold much of the original homestead, though members of the McMullen family continued to live in—and visit—the Dan McMullen House along Rosery Road into the early 1990s. After Carl’s death, family members worried about Nancy McLaughlin occupying such a large structure. One evening, police officers chased a burglar through palmetto scrub bushes on her land. Worried that she “couldn’t feel safe there anymore,” she decided to start discussions with Heritage Village about the possibility of donating the house.³⁴

Early discussions on the fate of the Daniel McMullen House began by 1990. At the 17 October 1990 meeting of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, members

³³ M. W. Moore, *Dunedin, Overlooking Clearwater Bay and Gulf of Mexico* (Dunedin: M. W. Moore Real Estate, 192?), 29; *St. Petersburg Times*, 2 May 1937, 1 September 1957, 5 July 1960, 5 July 1966, 5 July 1967, 5 July 1972; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 19 January 1940; *Clearwater Sun*, 3 September 1957, 1 July 1966, 5 July 1966.

debated the possibility of moving the Lowe House from the Haas Museum complex in St. Petersburg. As commissioners discussed this issue, Director Kendrick Ford mentioned to them that he had also started preliminary conversations with Nancy McMullen McLaughlin about the future of the structure built by “Uncle Dan.” Discussions continued into the spring of 1992, when Nancy McLaughlin moved out of the house to live with her daughter in Bronson. During a summer 1993 interview, McLaughlin said that she enjoyed living on the cattle farm along Alt. U. S. Highway 27 in Levy County, claiming, “It’s nice up here. It’s like Largo used to be.” Then eighty-three years old, Nancy nevertheless found it difficult to move from her home of more than eight decades: “It nearly killed me to leave there. But I’ve learned to just accept things. I could worry about it and it wouldn’t do any good.” She had offered the property to the City of Largo and to a local church, but neither entity expressed interest. Following the advice of relatives, she sold the parcel to Gerald Leach, a land developer from Seminole, and donated the Daniel McMullen Home at 1551 Rosery Road to the historical museum. The Pinellas County Historical Society paid to maintain the fire and security system while waiting for Heritage Village officials to secure funds for the move. The Society agreed to sign the contract with Roesch Housemovers to cover part of the \$25,000 relocation expense.³⁵

Logistical problems slowed the move of the Daniel McMullen House. The structure’s height required the relocation of some telephone wires. County Administrator Fred Marquis spoke with utility officials and agreed to split the cost of the bill. In September 1992, members of the Historical Commission concurred with Ford’s plan to place the structure between the Walsingham House and Heritage Mercantile. Complications with the size of the house delayed its arrival and raised the cost of the move to \$40,000. Workers had to transport the building in three sections. After movers reassembled the residence at Heritage Village, restoration of the interior allowed for the building’s use as an educational center for fiber arts and a weaver’s guild.³⁶

³⁴ *Largo Sentinel*, 8 December 1949; *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 September 1993.

³⁵ Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 17 October 1990, 20 May 1992; *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 September 1993.

The Fabric of History that Binds the Past and the Present

For nearly 125 years, members of Daniel McMullen's family occupied the wooden home he built on the Largo frontier in 1868. Until Nancy McMullen McLaughlin moved from this home in the early 1990s, it represented the oldest residence continually occupied along the Pinellas Peninsula, and one of the oldest in the Tampa Bay region. Four generations and countless cousins lived in or visited the home between 1868 and 1992. Those who walked upon the porch as children often cut paths later in life through a rugged and sparsely settled frontier, navigated capitol buildings in Tallahassee and Washington, and traveled to distant corners of the globe. In time, however, many of them returned, whether at large reunions with hundreds of relatives, or for occasional visits to the ever-changing Largo area. Some stayed close to home, tending citrus groves that later became subdivisions; others fought in distant wars or won distinct achievements that brought pride to the McMullen family. The dwelling that now showcases great quilts and crafts has displayed a human patchwork that blankets much of Pinellas, as well as places far away.

Jeff Miller, a 1959 native of St. Petersburg, took office in the House of Representatives for Florida's First Congressional District in October 2001. A 1984 graduate of the University of Florida, Miller represents constituents along the western portion of Florida's Panhandle, including the following counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, and Washington. Although he lives near Chumuckla, in northern Santa Rosa County, family connections remain strong with his many relatives in the Tampa Bay region. A grandson of Nancy McMullen McLaughlin, Miller can also claim lineage as a great-great-grandson of Daniel and Margaret Campbell McMullen. Like Chester Bartow McMullen, who represented Florida's First District in Congress from 1951 to 1953, Miller continues the long tradition of public service by descendants of the original seven McMullen brothers in Florida.³⁷

On 15 September 2003, Nancy McMullen Wallace McLaughlin passed away at her daughter's home in Jay, Florida. The last of Daniel and Margaret Campbell's sixty-

³⁶ Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 16 September 1992, 18 November 1992.

³⁷ *St. Petersburg Times*, 18 November 2001. Information about Rep. Jeff Miller's legislative initiatives appears at <http://jeffmiller.house.gov>.

three grandchildren, she lived twice as many years in the Daniel McMullen House as its namesake architect. Although “Uncle Dan” passed away two years before she entered the world, Nancy provided a bridge between the generations of McMullens, many of whom have different last names and live in distant areas. Just as Aunt Nannie nurtured young Nancy at the family homestead, Nancy in turn preserved the family landmark through her diligent efforts. When age and declining health took their toll, she gave new life to the family’s oldest occupied home in Florida by donating it to Heritage Village.