

Clear Havanas: Tampa's Cuban Community, 1886-1929

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Zhodnoťte fakta a údaje o kubánském společenství na Floridě.

Vyhodnoťte informace o soužití Kubánců mezi sebou a spolu s dalšími národnostními menšinami.

Zaměřte se na osobnosti, které hráli důležitou roli při vzniku společenství.

Analyzujte vliv doutníkového průmyslu na život Kubánské komunity.

Rozeberte důvody, proč doutníkový průmysl uspěl právě v Tampě.

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce dokumentuje důležitost kubánské imigrace do Tampy na konci devatenáctého a počátku dvacátého století. Mezi lety 1886 a 1929 žil v Tampě významný počet Kubánců narozených v cizině. V jižanském prostředí, kde převládalo obhospodařování vlastní půdy, vybudovali centrum pro výrobu doutníků, což nejen významně přispělo k ekonomickému rozvoji regionu, ale zátoka Tampa Bay se také stala jedinečným místem v oblasti Jihu. Levicové a stále radikálnější společenství obyvatel latinského původu významně přispělo k úspěchu kubánské revoluce. Multirasová, multietnická a z velké části nebělošská komunita následně obrátila svou pozornost k odborovým organizacím, což vytvořilo pracovní prostředí, které odráží jihoevropské modely. V porovnání s dalšími americkými výrobními centry bylo toto prostředí relativně rovnostářské.

Klíčová slova: Kubánci, Clear Havanas, Vicente Martinez Ybor, dělnické nepokoje, společenství vzájemné pomoci, Jim Crow, Kubánci černé rasy, Ybor City, West Tampa

ABSTRACT

This work documents the importance of Cuban immigration to Tampa at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. A substantial number of foreign-born Cubans lived in Tampa between 1886 and 1929. In a Southern environment largely centered on sharecropping, they worked in a cigar manufacturing center which not only significantly contributed to the economic development of the region but made the Tampa Bay area unique within the South. Tampa's leftist and increasingly radical Latin community significantly contributed to the successful Cuban revolution. Afterwards, the multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and largely non-white community turned its attention to labor organization, creating a working environment that echoes southern-European patterns and was comparatively egalitarian among U.S. manufacturing centers.

Keywords: Cubans, Clear Havanas, Vicente Martinez Ybor, labor unrest, mutual aid societies, Jim Crow, Afro-Cubans, Ybor City, West Tampa

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INTRODUCTION

Tampa's cigar making community was one of many socioeconomic experiments conducted in the United States at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Immigrants, the vast majority of which were of Latin origin, created an economic force that spurred the local economy and served as a catalyst for Tampa's transformation from a town to a city. Vicente Martinez Ybor's unique company town produced a booming and vibrant community consisting of Italians, Spanish and predominantly Cubans. The Cubans were mostly political refugees and supported Cuban independence. They possessed three key characteristics: militant socialism, solidarity and migratory tendencies.

Cubans contributed to the establishment of the vibrant and distinct Latin communities in Ybor City and West Tampa. They brought with them their culture and habits, which largely contrasted with those prevalent in the American South. They maintained their distinct identity, despite pressure from locals to conform and assimilate. They also possessed unique cigar making skills and remarkable economic power, which they used to their advantage in organizing first for a free Cuba and later for labor equality. Their colorful racial spectrum continually challenged Jim Crow segregation and state and federal laws. They formed two major mutual aid societies, both black and white, which were unique in the wide spectrum of services they provided.

Ybor City and West Tampa tried to steer clear of Gilded Age labor issues, but did not fully succeed. Independent West Tampa was led by more progressive politicians and eventually surpassed its original model, Ybor City. The Cubans were often in the middle of things, including labor strikes, illegal gambling, or racial integration. Despite sizeable obstacles, black and whites worked and lived together and took pride in being Cuban. This common ethnic identity trumped racial segregation, at least for a while. Unlike the Spanish, who were classified as white, Cubans were never accepted into the upper echelons of Tampa society.

Tampa's native community already contained a sizeable black minority and introduction of three more major ethnic groups (Spaniards, Cubans, and Italians) complicated American racial divisions. Their use of Spanish and Italian, which were mutually intelligible, further alienated them from Tampa's white society. However, Tampa needed the cigar industry in order to grow and the cigar industry needed the Cubans.

This thesis documents relationships among Cubans themselves and their Latin neighbors, their jobs in the cigar factories, social hierarchies, economic and living

conditions, along with the societal implications of the presence of a large non-white economically powerful community with the Jim Crow South. It notes the various benefits which the Cuban community and the cigar industry produced for Tampa, and it argues that presence of the Cubans culturally enriched Tampa's society and laid the basis for over three decades of economic prosperity.

1 IMPORTANT FLORIDA CUBAN CIGAR MANUFACTURING CENTERS

In the late nineteenth century four cigar manufacturing centers existed in Florida. Key West was the first to accommodate a large number of Cubans, who followed their employers to the island. The success of Key West encouraged Vicente Martinez Ybor to expand his production to New York and establish his own town at Tampa. Soon other manufacturers followed him and built over two hundred factories in Ybor City and neighboring West Tampa. Cubans and other Latin communities of Tampa had to overcome many obstacles such as racism ingrained in the Southern society.¹ Although Tampa was a town of one major industry, hundreds of firms participated in the production.² Unlike Tampa manufacturers, who mostly imported from Cuba, Fort Meade grew tobacco right in Florida. Fort Meade's industrial venture failed due to the mass exodus of Cuban cigar artisans at the end of the Spanish American War.

1.1 Key West

Key West, an island situated 150 miles southwest of Miami and 90 miles north of Cuba was where the initial Cuban community in the United States was founded. The Cuban cigar industry first appeared there in 1831. Prior to 1868 most of Key West's population were white Anglo-Saxons. Composition of Key West residents changed rapidly in favor of the Latin immigrants. By the 1870s, the island was home to the biggest clear Havana Cuban cigar industry in the United States with Spaniard Vicente Martinez Ybor being the largest manufacturer.³ Clear Havanas were Cuban cigars made outside of Cuba but with Cuban tobacco and by Cuban artisans. They were renowned and smokers willingly paid high prices, which reflected expert workmanship.⁴ Despite these successes, Key West had no potable water, no railroad and repeated labor strife. As a result, Ybor and his friend Ignacio

¹ Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 51.

² Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 113.

³ Jefferson B. Browne "Key West: The Old and the New," Key West HISTORY, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://www.explorekeywesthistory.com/Jefferson%20Brown/1900chapter19.html>.

⁴ Patricia Ann Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 16.

Sánchez y Haya decided to scout for new locations. After strongly considering Galveston, Texas, Ybor and Haya settled on Tampa, a Gulf coast port town.⁵

1.2 Ybor City

Ybor City, founded in 1886 by Vicente Martinez Ybor, is referred to as the first company town in Florida. In 1882 Tampa had about seven hundred inhabitants. Timber production, cattle, citrus and fishing was the key local industries.⁶ Before the arrival of Henry Plant's railroad to the village in 1884, the area was largely isolated from the rest of the United States, approachable mainly by water. When Plant's railroad was completed, Tampa became a terminus of railroad network extended via Jacksonville to New York City.⁷ The existence of this railroad was an important factor in attracting cigar manufacturers to the town.

After building a company town, Ybor provided other manufacturers free ten-year land leases and helped them to build their factories in return for a proportion of their employees hiring or buying his houses. Doing so attracted thousands of Cubans, Spaniards and Italians to what was by then referred to as Ybor City.⁸ They were people from different cultural background and nationalities. Many of the Cubans shared history prior to Ybor City, rolling cigars back in Cuba or Key West.⁹ The town grew so fast that street numbers were used instead of proper titles. In 1890s Ybor City surpassed Havana in cigar production. Among the best known were brands such as Flor de Ybor City or Tampa Royal.¹⁰ According to Mormino and Pozzetta due to lack of heavy manufacturing in the early twentieth century Tampa was labeled "Smokeless City of Smokes."¹¹ Hundreds of small cigar shops were present as well. Cigar manufacturing prospered until the Great Depression, when the industry began to decline rapidly.¹²

⁵ Paula Harper, "Cuba Connections. Key West. Tampa. Miami, 1870 to 1945," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 22, no. 1 (1996): 283.

⁶ José R. Muniz, "Tampa at the Close of the Nineteenth Century," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1963): 332.

⁷ James W. Covington, "1882-1887: The Five Years that Changed a Town into a City," *Sunland Tribune* 9, no. 1 (1983): 26.

⁸ Harper, "Cuba Connections," 283.

⁹ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 69.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹² U.S. National Park Service, "Ybor City: Cigar Capital of the World," accessed March 13, 2014, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/51ybor/51facts1.htm>.

1.3 West Tampa

West Tampa, originally called Pino City, is situated across the Hillsborough River from Ybor City. In 1890s Col. Hugh C. Macfarlane attempted to develop cigar industry in the area. Based on Ybor's model, he offered free land to the manufacturers with prospect of selling housing. Manuel and Fernando J. del Pino accepted his offer and together they erected The Del Pino Factory, which started producing cigars by the summer of 1892. Even though the venture failed due to a lack of housing and infrastructure, Cuban-born cigar maker Rafael O'Halloran and his sons Blas, Estanislau and Ignacio bought the factory and ran it successfully. Due to an influx of immigrants, who came either right from Cuba, Key West or Ybor City, a Cuban born mayor Fernando Figueredo was elected in 1895 and friends of Cuban revolutionaries worked in the area.¹³ The cigar that contained the message to start the Cuban revolution in 1895 was made in West Tampa and smuggled to Cuba.¹⁴

The success of West Tampa was based on an emulation of Ybor City practices. Initially the area struggled to attract cigar manufacturers and foreign labor, but the construction of a bridge across the Hillsborough River and a trolley line helped the development. Eventually, West Tampa surpassed Ybor City in cigar production. West Tampa prospered and grew for more than two decades. The total population grew to about 3,500 in 1895, and in 1910 whites constituted as little as eight percent of the total 8,258 inhabitants. By 1912 the town was the fifth largest city in Florida with ten thousand inhabitants, mostly foreign born.¹⁵ Unlike Ybor City the municipality resisted annexation by Tampa until 1925. This made it possible for the residents to elect their own authorities, who invested tax and custom incomes more efficiently.¹⁶

Despite an early failure and crude conditions, inhabitants of West Tampa soon enjoyed similar comforts as pioneers of Ybor City. Workers of West Tampa and Ybor City combined earned almost \$2 million annually by 1894 and moved freely between the two

¹³ Arsenio Sanchez "West Tampa: A City Made to Fit and Opportunity," Tampa Bay's Cigar City Magazine, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.cigarcitymagazine.com/articles/history/item/west-tampa>.

¹⁴ "TAMPAPIX," accessed March 20, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/>.

¹⁵ Steve Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Tampa* (Stroud: The History Press, 2007), 55.

¹⁶ "Tampa's Cigar Factories Part 2," Gator Preservationist Blog, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://gatorpreservationist.wordpress.com/tag/tampa-cigar-factories/>.

municipalities. During the decline of the cigar industry in late 1920s many Cubans permanently relocated from Ybor City to West Tampa.¹⁷

1.4 Fort Meade

Fort Meade is located in Polk County, Florida approximately 50 miles east of Tampa. In nineteenth century the area had undergone rapid changes. Citrus growing and the phosphate industry were temporarily replaced by tobacco growing and cigar factories. In 1895, E. Alonzo Cordery, the president of the Fort Meade Board of Trade, founded a tobacco plantation backed by several Cuban growers. Soon afterwards the Cuban Tobacco Growers' Co. built a cigar factory. Despite discrepancies in humidity, cigars made in Fort Meade were fully compliant with quality standards and customers pre-ordered them. By 1896 Fort Meade had attracted 60 to 70 upper-class Cubans. Similarly to Tampa, the Cubans adapted themselves to the new environment and sent their children to English schools in order for them to learn the language and customs.¹⁸ Fort Meade authorities agreed to the construction of a waterworks and irrigation plant, allowing the growers' company to cultivate another 147 acres. That resulted in increased profits and local investors constituted the La Cosmopolita plantation. Overall 700 acres of ground allowed the cultivation of nearly 5,000 pounds of tobacco. Production peaked in 1898, when a single factory made and shipped 3,000 cigars a day.¹⁹

Among Cubans there were laborers of German, English and American origin including native blacks. Thanks to rapid growth, by August 1897 the population of Fort Meade almost doubled compared to the previous year.²⁰ Fort Meade Cubans supported the idea of Cuban independence and several young men from Fort Meade fought in the Spanish American War. Unlike Cuban residents of Tampa they were not real revolutionaries. Their numbers shrunk to less than one hundred after Cuba gained independence. The Cuban exodus and consequent lack of expertise caused the industry to collapse, forcing the area

¹⁷ Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 99–100.

¹⁸ Canter Brown Jr., *Fort Meade 1849-1900* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 146.

¹⁹ Cinnamon Bair, "Fort Meade Inhaled Prosperity from Cuban Cigars," *Lakeland Ledger*, October 27, 1997, 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

into an economic recession. This annoyed local whites, who eventually accused them of spoiling the last crop.²¹

²¹ Greenbaum: More Than Black, 151.

2 KEY PERSONALITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CUBAN COMMUNITY

Several important personalities were involved in the foundation and daily life of the Cuban Community in Tampa. Among them were Spanish-Cuban Vicente Martinez Ybor, founder of Ybor City, his Spanish friends Ignacio Haya and Serafin Sanchez, Cuban Eduardo Manrara and especially José Martí, who embodied the ideas of Cuban independence and racial equality. Extraordinarily prominent in the Afro-Cuban community was the family of Ruperto and Paulina Pedroso. The Carbonell family constituted both a revolutionary and educational authority in the area. Hugh Macfarlane, a Scotsman by birth, was also an important figure in the foundation of predominantly Cuban West Tampa, but spoiled his reputation with the Cubans by suppressing strikes and supporting vigilante activities targeted against them.

2.1 Vicente Martinez Ybor

Vicente Martinez Ybor was a Cuban cigar manufacturer and a prominent Latin immigrant. He was born in 1818 in Valencia, Spain to an aristocratic family. At the age of 14 he moved to Cuba to evade military service in the Spanish Army.²² This sentiment was shared among other Spaniards, who eventually relocated to Tampa. At the age of seventeen he became a successful broker in the tobacco industry. By 1853 he was already producing El Principe de Gales cigars in his own factories. This brand became popular all around the worldwide, which later allowed him to make a smooth transition to the United States. His production in Cuba lasted thirteen years. Ybor's upper-class background allowed him to build good relations with government members, who let him use convict labor. In Tampa he used his experience with politicians in the establishment of the Tampa cigar industry.²³ In addition, he married with a dowry of \$100,000, which helped him substantially in his Florida venture.²⁴

²² Gregory Fyffe, "The Legacy of Vicente Martinez Ybor," *Humanities* 360, accessed February 25, 2014, <http://www.humanities360.com/index.php/the-legacy-of-vicente-martinez-ybor-10258/>.

²³ Loy Glenn Westfall, *Don Vicente Martinez Ybor, The Man and His Empire: Development of the Clear Havana Industry in Cuban and Florida in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII.

With 20,000 cigars produced in his factory in 1869 Ybor left Cuba to avoid imprisonment for supporting Cuban revolutionaries in the rebellion against Spain. Ybor covertly financed the uprising, while his intention being to avoid high taxation imposed by the Spanish on Cuban products.²⁵ By the time he moved to Key West, Ybor and his associates had formed a monopoly over Cuban cigar production.²⁶ The new Florida environment closely resembled the humid climate of Cuba, but the same labor issues repeated themselves.

Therefore in 1886 he decided to move his operation to Tampa. There he founded to an entirely new town called Ybor City, which became home to thousands of Cuban immigrants.²⁷ Even though Ybor was originally Spanish, Cubans accepted him as their patron. To his workers, he provided interest-free loans and housing mortgages. His wooden *casitas* were priced cheaply at \$750 to \$900. These houses were superior to those of Havana and Key West and they attracted many Cubans.²⁸ Ybor sometimes became godfather of his employees' children or organized picnics at his villa, which considerably improved employer-employee relations.²⁹ The importance of Ybor for the Cubans was illustrated by their gathering in front of his Tampa factory in 1889 when the war for independence was over.³⁰

2.2 José Martí and struggle for *Cuba Libre*

José Martí was a journalist, publisher, political theorist and hero of the Cuban independence movement. After he was expelled from Cuba, he resided in New York City and wrote texts supporting *Cuba Libre*. Cuban cigar workers considered him a patron and he inspired them to organize voluntary resistance movements and contribute to the cause of the revolution. In Tampa alone, there were forty one Cuban patriotic clubs, thirty in Ybor City and eleven in West Tampa. The strife for independence even halted labor union activities for a while and helped to maintain order. After visiting Ybor City in 1892 and igniting anti-colonial tempers, Martí died in 1895 skirmish in Cuba. That further fuelled

²⁵ Ibid., VIII.

²⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁷ Fyffe, "The Legacy of Vicente Martinez Ybor."

²⁸ Loy Glenn Westfall, "Latin Entrepreneurs and the Birth of Ybor City," *Tampa Bay History* 7, no. 2 (1985): 12.

²⁹ Louis A Pérez Jr., "Cubans in Tampa: From Exiles to Immigrants, 1892-1901," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (1978): 132.

efforts of the Cuban exiles to defeat the Spanish.³¹ After meeting Martí or his fellows, cigar manufacturers such as Ybor, Domingo Villamil, Teodoro Pérez or Cecilo Henríquez publicly supported Cuba's independence. Unlike Martí's, their motivations were predominantly economic, while they wanted tax-free tobacco imports.³² A famous Cuban anarchist and writer Carlos Baliño spread propaganda among Tampa Cubans, largely based on Martí's ideas.³³

Support for the revolution occurred among powerful native Tampans, who previously associated themselves rather with the Spanish than Cubans due to strong cultural differences. Cuban independence was one of the few topics on which the whites, factory owners and Cuban workers agreed. José Martí was invited by the cigar manufacturers and gave speeches to Cubans of West Tampa (formerly Pino City) and Ybor City.³⁴ In his works he condemned racism and stated that Cuban nationality means more than race. These principles, to a certain degree, were applied in West Tampa and Ybor City as a strong opposition to practices of the Jim Crow South.³⁵

³⁰ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 80.

³¹ Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Tampa*, 55.

³² Pérez Jr., "Cubans in Tampa," 134.

³³ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 80.

³⁴ Araceli Tinajero, *El Lector: A History of the Cigar Factory Reader* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 91.

³⁵ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 12.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF TAMPA'S COMMUNITY

Between 1880 and 1885 Tampa's population quadrupled. In 1884, Henry Bradley Plant connected Tampa to the railroad, allowing local businesses to export fish and phosphate, which boosted Tampa's fading economy.³⁶ In 1885, Plant established a port that was heavily used during Spanish American War. Shipments of arms from Port Tampa travelled to Cuba, and Cuban revolutionaries often visited the town. Plant's steamships *Mascotte* and *Ollivette* delivered both tobacco and a Cuban workforce right to cigar factories. These rapid developments constituted an incentive for the cigar manufacturers to leave an unstable Key West. Their workers followed them and blended with the newcomers. The neighborhoods of Ybor City and West Tampa were distinctly Latin populated mainly by Cubans, Spanish and later Italians. Jim Crow laws put an end to fluid racial relationships. Despite that, Afro-Cubans maintained their place in the community. Jim Crow was often crossed due to great racial diversity. Among other things, segregation applied to churches. However, as a result of previous oppression, the Cubans and the Spanish shared resentment against Catholic Church and rather created their own mutual aid societies.

3.1 Latin immigrants of Tampa

At its peak cigar production gave jobs to 12,000 people working in more than 200 factories. Prior to the Latin immigration and cigar industry, Tampa was in a dismal state, with population of only 720 people in 1880. There was a minor inflow of Cubans prior to 1885. However, in five years' time, it more than tripled. The immigrants stuck together and the Latin quarters remained largely isolated. That allowed the manufacturers to have greater control of their lives.³⁷ In 1887, Ybor himself protested against Ybor City joining Tampa, but was unable to stop the merger. During the late 1880s, the community faced issues such as a lack of potable water and a shortage of food supplies. Neither the Cubans nor the Spanish were used to growing crops, and a retail network had to be established first.³⁸ Despite these problems, the total population of Tampa, out of which the majority was formed by Cuban immigrants, increased to 5,500 by 1890.³⁹

³⁶ Covington, "1882-1887: The Five Years that Changed a Town into a City," 26.

³⁷ Westfall, "Latin Entrepreneurs and the Birth of Ybor City," 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁹ U.S. National Park Service, "Ybor City: Cigar Capital of the World," accessed March 13, 2014, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/51ybor/51facts1.htm>.

The growth continued steadily and in 1900 Tampa's population increased to 15,839, which was only 1,275 less than Key West. That year, Tampa beat Key West in the number of cigar factories, having 129 compared to 92. By 1905, 30,000 people lived in Tampa, and nearly a third of them were immigrants from Cuba, Spain and Italy.⁴⁰ They brought with them a distinct architectural style, a hybrid of European, Spanish and Cuban styles and influenced by their distinct mentality. A cigar box label TA-CU shows Southern Florida and the island of Cuba right next to each other, signifying the close connections between the two places.⁴¹

Cuban immigration to Tampa declined from 1891 to 1895, but it reached new heights between 1896 and 1910, which corresponded with the Spanish-American War and its aftermath. Among the Cubans were people of different backgrounds from working class artisans up to Havana intellectual elite, which often surpassed native Tampans in terms of education and standards of living.⁴² The end of World War I led to another drop in the number of Cuban immigrants due to a decline in the industry and an improving economic situation in Cuba.⁴³ Cuban exiles arrived to the area at a time of rapid societal, demographic, and economic changes. Even though the town of Tampa annexed Ybor City, historical records suggest that both an economic and cultural boundary still existed between the old town and the industrial quarter. On the other hand, West Tampa remained independent, which allowed town officials to moderate the impact of racial segregation.⁴⁴

White Cubans in Tampa were always the more numerous group. Their numbers swelled from 1,116 in 1890 to 5,227 in 1910. In comparison there were 900 black Cuban residents in Hillsborough County in the same year. By 1908, 65 percent of Tampa's population consisted of immigrant families, which made Anglo-Tampans a minority group. Relations between the Cubans and the Spaniards had improved by the 1910s and mixed families became common. However, within the Latin community a hierarchy still existed. Spanish were considered superior to white Cubans, followed by mixed-parentage Cubans,

⁴⁰ Harper, "Cuba Connections," 284.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴² Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 63.

⁴³ Lisandro Pérez, "Cubans in the United States," *Annals of the American Academy* 487, no. 1 (1986): 128.

⁴⁴ U.S. National Park Service, "Ybor City Historic District," accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/American_Latino_Heritage/Ybor_City_Historic_District.html.

while Afro-Cubans found themselves at the very bottom.⁴⁵ In spite of the Cubans earning adequate wages and the profitability of Latin-owned businesses, white residents owned most of the capital and resources.⁴⁶

Many of the Sicilians and other Italians who came to Tampa previously worked in Louisiana at sugar plantations. In Tampa some of them ran restaurants and other small businesses, while others joined the cigar industry. At first, the Cubans were not fond of them, but their attitudes changed. The Italians quickly acquired cigar rolling skills and were more amicable than the Spanish. Despite the Latin flavor of Ybor City, Germans, Romanian Jews, and Chinese also the in search of work. The Germans were skilled lithographers and produced cigar boxes. Romanian Jews and Chinese operated retail stores and services. The Cuban community interacted with them almost exclusively in terms of business.⁴⁷

A significant level of job changing was common among Tampa's Cubans, who also moved freely between Ybor City and West Tampa and switched accommodation. Very few of them bought real estate prior to the first decade of the twentieth century. The second generation of immigrants placed emphasis on education, while most of the Italians abandoned cigar production for other trades.⁴⁸

3.2 Cuban immigrants

Throughout the period from 1886 to 1929, Cuban immigrants were the most numerous group of Cigar City residents. They immigrated to Tampa from both Key West and Cuba. During the Ten Years' War, which took place between 1868 and 1878, many Cubans fled to Key West. By 1873 Cubans formed a majority of Key West residents, and two years later they elected Carlos Manuel de Céspedes a mayor. In Key West they established a prosperous community, but at its decline in the late 1880s many of them moved to Tampa and replicated the previous successes.⁴⁹

The Cubans of Ybor City and West Tampa shared the prospect of returning to Cuba when the war for independence ended. Their sense of comradeship gradually deteriorated,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁶ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 98-99.

⁴⁷ U.S. National Park Service, "Ybor City: Cigar Capital of the World," accessed March 10, 2014, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/51ybor/51facts1.htm>.

⁴⁸ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 12.

and after the defeat of the Spanish, a new social order emerged.⁵⁰ In Ybor City, Cubans concentrated in the Ybor-Manrara factory, whereas the Spanish monopolized the Sanchez Haya factory. When more factories started production, the division became less clear-cut.⁵¹

Tampa's Cubans cared about preservation of the Spanish language and their culture for future generations.⁵² Surviving pictures from Ybor City suggest that houses of Cuban workers closely resembled Havana's working class neighborhoods.⁵³ Among the Cubans was a whole racial spectrum from whites to Caribbean blacks just like in Cuba. Cuban blacks did not fit into any ethnic group previously known in the United States. They had genes similar to the former slaves, but behaved like their lighter skinned fellows adding their own habits and rituals. Most Cubans, regardless of race, shared ideas of patriotism.⁵⁴ They showed that to determine ethnicity takes more than just race.⁵⁵ Whites and blacks earned similar wages and had comparable responsibilities, while the Anglo population of Tampa openly discriminated against African-Americans, who were denied opportunities. Cuban independence, in addition to the enforcement of Jim Crow laws caused the lighter-skinned Cubans to gradually disaffiliate themselves from Cuban blacks.⁵⁶ Some of the mixed-race Cubans tried to join white society. In accordance with Cuban convention, they often succeeded based on their lighter skin tone.⁵⁷

3.3 Cuban neighborhoods in Tampa

At the beginning of the twentieth century Tampa's Cuban community was the largest in the United States.⁵⁸ Within the community, similarly to Cuba, there was no clear division between whites and blacks. Cubans in Tampa lived in very similar conditions. Social class was the deciding factor in the case of purchased or rented housing. However, Cuban blacks mainly belonged to the lower classes and their percentage was much lower compared to Cuba. Even though there was inclination to concentrate in some sections of the Cigar City,

⁴⁹ Harper, "Cuba Connections," 279.

⁵⁰ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 13.

⁵¹ Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, "The Cradle of Mutual Aid: Immigrant Cooperative Societies in Ybor City," *Tampa Bay History* 7, no. 2 (1985): 37.

⁵² Harper, "Cuba Connections," 280.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁵⁴ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁸ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 14.

no Cuban neighborhoods were exclusively black or white and neighbors of different races had neutral to good relations.⁵⁹ In the Latin quarters, Cubans only spoke Spanish, while many of them disliked American culture. Even though many of the Cuban children knew English, it remained a language of business. Partial mutual intelligibility with Italian was another reason for the preservation of Spanish. The Cubans maintained a level of singularity even among the Latin community. Regardless of race or social background, they shared socialist ideology, customs, and a distrust of the Catholic Church.⁶⁰

Cuban men strengthened their sense of comradeship by involvement in leisure time activities such as musical groups and sports, mostly organized by social clubs. Cuban women were to a large extent left out of socializing. These principles were rooted in Cuban social hierarchy, where men were at the top.⁶¹ Males controlled their families with the intention of keeping them respectable and to protect their spouses and daughters from the aggression of other males.⁶² Cuban husbands discouraged their wives from working in the factories according to tradition of *machismo*. Paradoxically, that applied especially for blacks, who were the poorest. On the contrary, young Cuban girls left school early to get a job before they married.⁶³

Almost no unmarried couples existed, as marriage was required by the strictly Catholic Cuban community. In the first years of the settlement, there was a lack of women and Cuban and Spanish visited prostitutes, who occupied the Scrub area. A large proportion of them were Afro-Cuban women.⁶⁴ Inequality between Cuban men and women also stemmed from Cuban laws, which allowed marriages between white man and black or mulatto woman, but the reverse was forbidden.⁶⁵

3.4 Cubans immigrants and religion

The vast majority of Cubans were Catholics as opposed to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants of Tampa. These two types of Christianity differed in perception of slavery and

⁵⁹ Ibid., 204.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 206.

⁶¹ Ibid., 188.

⁶² Ibid., 25.

⁶³ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁴ Westfall, "Latin Entrepreneurs and the Birth of Ybor City," 12.

⁶⁵ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 121.

consequently racial equality with Catholicism being more benign to the blacks.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the Catholic Church in Cuba was to a large degree associated with Spanish oppression and favoring the upper class. While the cigar factory workers in Tampa often shared a socialist worldview, they were alienated from the church. Even though less than three percent of Cuban males attended church, they still believed in God, and Catholic principles shaped the community in terms of behavior. Cuban women were more orderly churchgoers since they were not allowed to attend other activities. Afro-Cubans were dissatisfied with the racial segregation in the church, which resulted in their redirection to the Martí Maceo mutual aid society.⁶⁷ Many Spaniards, who came to Tampa through Cuba shared similar attitudes to the Catholic Church and Spanish crown, and some of them even supported Cuban independence.⁶⁸

3.5 Afro-Cubans in Tampa's society

In the 1890s, racial relations in the American South deteriorated. Afro-Cubans formed a significant minority in the Tampa's immigrant community, which worked alongside the whites. Some white Cubans and especially the upper-class Spanish did not wish to be in the same category with Cuban blacks. They did not fit into any of the previously established categories, but racial segregation forced on them by Jim Crow laws did not prevent them from living a full-featured life. Racial attitudes in Tampa resembled those in Cuba, and manufacturers chose their employees mainly based on skill. These fluid racial relations among Cubans annoyed Tampa's whites, who increasingly clung to Southern social orders. Even though the Cuban community was far from racist, white Cubans were on top and paradoxically enjoyed more acceptance than native African-Americans. Despite many skin tones among Cubans, Afro-Cubans were easily distinguishable.⁶⁹ They were especially active in the revolutionary activities and labor unionism, while they wanted to compensate for the injustices of the past.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 208.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 188.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 63.

By 1893 there were nineteen Afro-Cuban households in Tampa, seven of them in the Scrub.⁷¹ At first Afro-Cubans intentionally avoided contacts with African-Americans, while they considered them irresponsible and incapable of taking care of their families.⁷² Later, more favorable relationships formed through baseball games and other activities segregated by Jim Crow. Unlike the opposite, marriages between Afro-Cuban men and African-American women became common. Fourteen marriages between Afro-Cuban men and West Indian women further strengthened racial diversity of the community by 1900.⁷³ Consequently the Afro-Cuban subgroup showed similar growth tendencies as white Cubans, fluctuating around 15 percent of total Cuban population in Tampa.⁷⁴

A family of prominent Afro-Cubans, Ruperto and Paulina Pedroso, housed José Martí in exile and was influential in the development of the Cuban community.⁷⁵ Most members of the Pedroso family were illiterate, yet they owned two boarding houses and a restaurant. Some members of the Afro-Cuban community concentrated around the Pedrosos on 8th Avenue in Ybor City.⁷⁶ In 1895, the Florida legislature forbade integrated schools. The Cubans did not protest; they simply ignored the law. Other laws requiring segregation were created as well. As a result, native white supporters of Cuban liberation only dealt with white Cubans and the negotiations and hospitalities were organized only by white Cubans, which the black Cubans considered inappropriate, while their monetary contribution was equal.⁷⁷

3.6 Mutual aid societies of Ybor City and West Tampa

While the Tampa's Latin population could expect little help from Anglo-Tampans and the Catholic Church was generally rejected, individual communities built their own societies. Based on experience from home countries, social clubs of Ybor City helped knit the communities closer together. The headquarters of most of them were located on 7th Avenue in Ybor City, the heart of the town.⁷⁸ For a certain membership fee, workers could experience many cultural events such as music, dancing and games. The clubs were

⁷¹ Ibid., 82.

⁷² Ibid., 22.

⁷³ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁵ Mormino and Pozzetta, "The Cradle of Mutual Aid," 47.

⁷⁶ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 75.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 81.

founded between 1891 and 1902. Centro Espanol was the first club, and it brought Spaniards together. Asturian Renegades from Centro Espanol formed El Centro Asturiano. L'Unione Italiana followed in 1894 uniting the Sicilians. Affluent German lithographers and merchants met in Deutscher-Americaner society.⁷⁹ Branches of several of these mutual aid societies were established in West Tampa shortly after Ybor City.⁸⁰

Despite frayed tempers between Cubans and Spaniards, Centro Espanol served as a model for the Cuban clubs.⁸¹ The newly established El Club Nacional Cubano, Octubre 10 accepted all ethnicities of Cubans for a while. In 1902 white Cubans left the club and founded El Círculo Cubano. Cuban *sociedades* were always segregated and the short attempt for integration gives an example of progressive ideas shared by the Cuban community. Despite the fact that rules of the club forbade discussion about labor, politics or religion, they were the main topics.⁸² Eventually racial segregation resulted in the establishment of Sociedad La Union Martí-Maceo. An interview with Cuban eyewitness suggests that the split was also forced by Ku Klux Klan made to white Cubans.⁸³ Other sources suggest that Cuban whites wanted to separate the society regardless of laws or outside pressure.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, both of these clubs offered a place to discuss events in Cuba, in which the Tampa Cubans were still interested.⁸⁵ Membership in both Cuban societies, which was strongly influenced by the strikes, consisted mainly of youngsters, who constituted the main economic force. By the early twentieth century all the clubs accepted members either based on nationality or ethnicity. Cross-society meetings were organized and the Cubans could meet their Latin neighbors outside of work, which contributed to the betterment of Spanish-Cuban relations.⁸⁶ Even though at first the establishment of mutual aid societies contributed to the spread of radical revolutionary thoughts, eventually it resulted in greater stability for the migrant Cuban community. Numbers of members in the Cuban clubs

⁷⁸ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 5.

⁷⁹ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 153.

⁸⁰ West Tampa Chamber of Commerce, "West Tampa History," accessed March 29, 2014, <http://www.westtampachamber.com/AboutUs.aspx>.

⁸¹ Mormino and Pozzetta, "The Cradle of Mutual Aid," 37.

⁸² Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸⁶ Mormino and Pozzetta, "The Cradle of Mutual Aid," 57.

fluctuated, since they sometimes needed to spare the membership fees, but the vast majority of male Cubans belonged to one of the clubs.⁸⁷

3.7 The medical care system

The social clubs also offered its members medical care and insurance following the tradition of Cuban *sociedades* for as little as 60 cents a week. No hospital for Tampa blacks existed before.⁸⁸ There were social and linguistic barriers. Recurring epidemics of yellow fever and tuberculosis undermined the stability of the community.⁸⁹ During the 1918 influenza epidemic, demand for sick benefits in both Cuban clubs was the highest yet.⁹⁰ Cooperative medicine organized among the Latins annoyed Anglo-Tampans, who labelled it as socialist and white doctors who would treat the Cubans, were threatened with license revocation.⁹¹ Both Centro Espanol and Centro Asturiano organized the construction of well-equipped hospitals, which eventually accepted Italians and white Cubans.⁹² Afro-Cubans were forced to leave for Cuba in case of serious illness, while the Martí Maceo society paid their expenses.⁹³

3.8 Education, *lectores*, and leftist propaganda

For the purposes of education Mr. Leonelo Carbonell, the son of a Cuban revolutionary, founded a library, from which laborers borrowed books. Carbonell became an educator and was elected director of newly established school, which provided several degrees of education.⁹⁴ This was a necessity as Tampa posted strict injunctions against Spanish speech at school, which resulted in poor performance among the Cuban children.⁹⁵ The socialist Carbonell family owned a book shop and organized collections for the cause of free

⁸⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁸ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 148.

⁸⁹ Mormino and Pozzetta, "The Cradle of Mutual Aid," 37.

⁹⁰ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 167.

⁹¹ Ibid., 18.

⁹² Ibid., 19.

⁹³ Ibid., 156.

⁹⁴ Muniz, "Tampa at the Close of the Nineteenth Century," 334.

⁹⁵ Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 216.

Cuba.⁹⁶ In addition to the library, the Cuban social clubs organized courses of English for adults, and courses of Spanish and Cuban history for the children.⁹⁷

Workers also donated part of their wages to hire readers, usually intellectual Cuban immigrants or Jews. Those readers earned \$80 a month on average.⁹⁸ Pioneer cigar rollers of Ybor City and West Tampa had skills and talent, but little education. They strived for knowledge and showed interest in culture. Especially the Cubans were proud to know about current events in Cuba, Tampa and all around the world. Literature read by *lectores*, who sat at raised platforms in the factories, included newspapers, modern novels, regularly imported Cuban newspapers, but also propaganda which was often very radical. Paradoxical situations arose, when Spanish readers declaimed Cuban revolutionary newspapers, because they were paid by the workers. *La Doctrina*, published in New York, was especially popular with Tampa Cubans and contained extreme leftist ideas. The New York based *Daily Worker*, a communist paper was often read as well as translated by the reader.⁹⁹

The laborers also listened to Marx's ideas of equality and Bakunin's revolutionary anarchism.¹⁰⁰ Cuban workers enjoyed these papers and doctrines as the revolution was backed by the idea of social justice, which eventually was applied more in Tampa than Cuba itself.¹⁰¹ During World War I the Bureau of Investigation monitored lives of Ybor City anarchists, who were suspected of plots against Woodrow Wilson and the Mexican president.¹⁰² In 1922 a famous Cuban *lector*, Victoriano Mantiega, started publishing the tri-lingual newspaper *La Gaceta*, which tried to be less influenced by ideologies. This newspaper was popular but failed to change the deeply ingrained Cuban mentality.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Tinajero, *El Lector*, 91.

⁹⁷ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 172.

⁹⁸ Carolina Hospital and Jorge Cantera, *A Century of Cuban Writers in Florida* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 1996), XIII.

⁹⁹ Jose Yglesias, "The Radical Latino Island in the Deep South," *Tampa Bay History* 7, no. 2 (1985): 168.

¹⁰⁰ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 102.

¹⁰¹ Gerald E. Poyo, "Tampa Cigarworkers and the Struggle for Cuban Independence," *Tampa Bay History* 7, no. 2 (1985): 94.

¹⁰² Frank S. DeBenedictis "Ybor City: From Its 19th Century Founding to Fidel Castro and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee," Cuban Information Archives, accessed April 5, 2014, http://cuban-exile.com/doc_426-450/doc0442.html.

¹⁰³ Cameron B. LeBlanc, "Preserving the Memory of Ybor City, Florida," Southern Spaces, accessed April 10, 2014, <https://southernspaces.org/2009/preserving-memory-ybor-city-florida>.

3.9 Revolutionary clubs

Almost all of the Cubans in Tampa strived for Cuban independence. In addition to mutual aid societies, they founded revolutionary clubs, which raised funds for the cause. They were located not only in Tampa, but also Key West and Ocala and competed. In Tampa two Afro-Cuban patriots Bruno Roig and Ruperto Pedroso initiated founding of several clubs. Articulate leaders such as reader Ramon Rivero, fundraiser José Dolores Poyo or the Carbonell family participated in operation of these clubs. They also helped in establishment of two political cells named Los Independientes and Club Ignacio Agramonte and stirred up passions by reading stories of French revolution.¹⁰⁴ Cuban workers contributed one day's pay and the most ardent patriots even worked on Sundays, which helped to steer the course of the revolution. Additional monetary contributions of the manufacturers were just as important as the theories, which they spread.¹⁰⁵ Ideas of socialism and anarchism were common among the members.¹⁰⁶ Militancy of the Cuban cigar rollers rooted from class issues back in Cuba, which they transferred to Tampa.¹⁰⁷ Cuban women formed their own revolutionary clubs. Unlike men's clubs they were almost exclusively white and hosted and entertained white American dignitaries.¹⁰⁸

3.10 Jim Crow laws

The Jim Crow laws separated American citizens by the color of their skin from 1881 to 1964. It was unlawful to serve customers of different races or skin color and at the same place completely legal to refuse them completely. The Jim Crow laws were a result of daily practice and were often extralegal.¹⁰⁹ Sports, housing, medical care, exhibitions, performances and even the burial ground had to remain separated.¹¹⁰

These principles were applied in Tampa as well. Cuban blacks were forced to found a separate mutual aid society, were given a separate space in the streetcars and required to form their own sports teams. The Florida legislature even required the black Cuban

¹⁰⁴ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 79.

¹⁰⁵ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 63.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁷ Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 81.

¹⁰⁹ Leslie V. Tischauser, *Jim Crow Laws* (Westport: Greenwood, 2012), ix.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

children to use special books in their segregated schools.¹¹¹ Afro-Cubans felt that their contribution to the community was the same as the contribution of the whites. Shared indignity eventually caused them to affiliate with Tampa's African-Americans. The white Cubans did not try to help the Afro-Cubans; neither did they discriminate against them.¹¹² In Florida, miscegenation and intermarriage was illegal.¹¹³ Cuban immigrant couples consisting of a white man and black or mulatto woman constituted a problem for the authorities. The courts usually demanded that the white man declare himself black. Relationships between black men and white women were strictly forbidden. Tampa's Cuban immigrants were involved in a struggle between racial conservatism and economic progressivism that denied the importance of race. Despite lawful segregation, the economics eventually prevailed.¹¹⁴

The Cuban racial classification was complex and consisted of *mulato adelantado* (a light-skinned mulatto with white facial features), *mulato blanconazo* (an almost white mulatto), *jaba'o* (white with black features), *trigueno* (wheat colored skin), *pelo bueno* (a light-skinned mulatto) and *negro azul* (a very dark-skinned black).¹¹⁵ The Cubans were not classifiable and defied previous American perceptions of race. In Tampa, decisions on blackness were sometimes based on in which section of a train or boat a Cuban arrived. Business success or giving birth to light-skinned children had a whitening impact and usually resulted in an improved situation for the family.¹¹⁶

3.11 Illegal activities in the Tampa's Latin quarters

Even though the factory owners and Tampa authorities tried to maintain order in Ybor City and West Tampa, illegal Cuban games such as *bolita* were common and often accompanied by prostitution. Even white Americans visited the gambling clubs and brothels. *Bolita* had a long tradition, and many Cubans including their children were engaged in selling tickets. Allegedly there were three hundred *bolita* operations in Tampa, where the Cuban males

¹¹¹ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 119.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

lost their weekly earnings.¹¹⁷ A local native, Charlie P. Wall, largely organized the *bolita* games and gained substantial influence in politics. A colorful coalition of Wall, prominent Cuban, Spanish immigrants and officeholders were close to running the city of Tampa by the 1920s. On top of that, elections were manipulated several times in both Tampa and Hillsborough County.¹¹⁸

Cigar manufacturers quietly supported the violation of prohibition, prostitution and gambling laws, while the hot-blooded Cubans were less likely to strike without any savings.¹¹⁹ Liquor bootlegging occurred after ratification of the Volstead Act, mainly run by Italians, whereas Cubans stuck to gambling. Serious organized crime in Tampa's Latin quarters was on par with other towns, and it mostly consisted of racketeering and ubiquitous corruption with the exception of the destruction of property during massive strikes, occasional arson and vigilante activity organized in order to break the strikes. Some of the vigilantes resorted to lynching.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Emanuel Leto "Bolita," Tampa Bay's Cigar City Magazine, accessed March 29, 2014, <http://www.cigarcitymagazine.com/articles/history/item/bolita>.

¹¹⁸ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 54.

¹¹⁹ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 63.

¹²⁰ Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 234.

4 TAMPA SOCIETY IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

The end of the nineteenth century was affected by changes, which occurred in Tampa's Cuban community. They were connected to the newly gained independence and the introduction of stricter segregation laws. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cubans were affected by wage cuts and disintegration of labor unions. Many factories went bankrupt, which resulted in takeovers and mergers. Consortiums of owners intensified pressure on the labor unions and violence occurred. In the meantime many distinct buildings, which served the Cuban community, were built. Thanks to the cigar industry and gradual growth in the number of immigrants Tampa's area grew three times between 1910 and 1930.¹²¹

4.1 The Spanish American War

The Spanish American War was a result of American intervention in the Cuban War of Independence in 1898. Tampa's Cubans quickly recognized that rather than in liberation of Cuba, United States were interested in expansionism and installation of a convenient government. On one hand, the Cuban community of Tampa celebrated victory; on the other they were disappointed, while ideas of José Martí were traded away for the support of American military. Between 1895 and 1898 a minimum of twenty seven filibustering Cuban companies from Tampa departed to help the revolutionaries. After the declaration of war hundreds of Tampa Cubans fought in Cuba and faced hostile attitudes of the American military. They were assigned menial tasks and humiliated. After all their contributions and pro-revolutionary activities, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt stated that the service of Cuban troops did not accomplish anything, rather they caused problems. Even though Cuba was freer than before, its government subordinated to American plans, which caused disregard among the Tampa's Cuban community. The revolutionary clubs disintegrated and several Cuban expatriates left for home including the popular reader and activist Ramón Rivero.¹²² The war absorbed resources of the Cuban families, which were supposed to finance further

¹²¹ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 56.

¹²² Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 97.

development. At that point, the Cuban émigré community started its transformation to an immigrant settlement.¹²³

4.2 Cubans in Tampa at the turn of the century

Within four years from establishment of the industry, there were 1,313 Cubans in Tampa. This number expanded to 3,533 by 1900.¹²⁴ By then, Cubans constituted approximately 60 percent of Tampa's cigar makers, while the number of Italian immigrants surpassed the Spanish population.¹²⁵ In the 1890s Cubans hired cheap small flats or houses in order to be able to promptly return to Cuba. American Consul general to Cuba, Ramón Williams, concluded that the Cubans considered Tampa an extension of Cuba rather than a new home. To stress the importance of Cuban migratory tendencies, it is necessary to note that from 50,000 to 100,000 persons annually travelled back and forth between United States and Cuba. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, travelling Cubans usually did not check through customs or immigration offices. Therefore it was difficult to distinguish their real numbers.¹²⁶ They emigrated mainly from Havana and a cluster of towns outside of it including Bejucal, San Antonio de los Banos, Santiago de las Vegas and Cardenas. In addition, several tobacco farmers from Pinar del Río moved to Tampa. Those who came from Key West moved in sudden influxes due to lengthy strikes or bankrupt factories.¹²⁷ The Afro-Cuban immigrants came mainly from Bejucal and represented a minority within a minority. They worked almost exclusively in the cigar factories, and only several individuals had different jobs.¹²⁸

Tampa's Cuban community changed significantly after the Spanish American War. A great number of Cubans left for home, where they were disappointed by the plummeting economy. Patriotism became less important and the Cubans focused on the creation of an expatriate community. Those who came to Tampa did not just settle into an existing community. They recreated Cuban life right in Tampa with the traditional grocery stores,

¹²³ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 81.

¹²⁴ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 76.

¹²⁵ Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, 16.

¹²⁶ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 76.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

pubs and coffee shops.¹²⁹ They built their own insular town within a city in a stark contrast to the post-Confederate system of Anglo-Tampa.¹³⁰

In 1900, 1,180 tons of Cuban tobacco were imported to Tampa valued nearly \$3 million. The cigar industry transformed it into \$10 million worth of exports.¹³¹ Wages in the Cigar City accounted for 75 percent of Tampa's household incomes. As a result of the relative affluence, about 54 percent of Tampa's Cubans travelled to Cuba on occasions such as Christmas, and a large proportion of them sent monetary contributions to their families in Cuba.¹³² Moreover, Tampa became a stop for American Cubans, who created a network, which included New York, Philadelphia, Jacksonville and Key West. The migratory tendencies largely annoyed cigar manufacturers, who eventually adopted stricter measures against the Cuban workers. There was no reason for the later Cuban immigrants to Americanize, while a whole Spanish-speaking society had already existed. The less migrant Cubans bought houses and started families in Tampa, which made them reluctant to return home. High unemployed rate in Cuba, which was a result of fifty thousand Liberation Army soldiers seeking jobs, was another reason for the Cubans to remain in Tampa.¹³³

4.3 Cigar workers of Tampa

Cigars manufactured in Tampa were made of Cuban tobacco grown in the region of Vuelta Abajo in compliance with the Spanish method. All the hand-made cigars had to have the correct length, circumference, density and tightness. The manufacturing process required skilled workers and very few tools were needed in the production. The industry was scarcely penetrated by anyone else than Latins with the exception of factory owners and Jews. Practice was the most valuable asset for a cigar worker in Tampa. The cigar trade, based on Havana and Seville tradition, was based on individual craftsmanship and there was a hierarchy among the workers. The Spanish usually occupied the clerical and managerial positions in the factories. Highly skilled positions of wrapper selectors, packers and rollers of the most expensive cigars were also almost exclusive to Spanish males.

¹²⁹ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 17.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹³¹ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 68.

¹³² Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 96, 116.

¹³³ Pérez Jr., "Cubans in Tampa," 135.

Cubans rolled the less expensive cigars, packed them in wooden boxes and tied distinctive bands around them. This division existed due to a deep-rooted racial hierarchy rather than differences in skills.¹³⁴

The most skilled workers were able to roll up to two thousand cigars a week, while the average ranged from 1,100 to 1,300 pieces. Most women, including Cubans, worked as tobacco strippers, which was the least skilled job directly connected to tobacco processing. The early arriving Afro-Cubans and Italians did not work with tobacco. Instead they maintained other operational positions in the factories. Very few Cubans advanced to higher levels due to low class mobility. However, upward mobility was possible through the establishment of small businesses or cigar shops, while there was no need for expensive machinery.¹³⁵ Tampa's factory workers enjoyed a lot of freedom. They took breaks whenever they wanted and socialized in nearby cafés and restaurants or even left for a baseball game. Later, cigar trusts persecuted such conduct in an effort to increase productivity.¹³⁶

4.4 Wages and labor conditions

The ethnic hierarchy of Tampa's Latin community reflected in wages. Annually, the Cubans earned \$780, while the Spanish were awarded \$947 on average. This was paradoxical, while the Cubans were experts on cigar rolling. The factory workers sat at tables in large factory halls and were paid by the number of rolled cigars rather than receiving hourly wage.¹³⁷ Remuneration for the different types of cigars and pays of various professions differed up to five times. At the end of the nineteenth century wages of the cigar rollers ranged from \$7 to \$35 a week.¹³⁸

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, wage rates were similar among the firms. From 1901 to 1909, the biggest influx of Cubans yet caused unsteady labor conditions.¹³⁹ Newly established labor organizations had leverage to rationalize the corporate leadership of Tampa's cigar factories, but eventually failed due to fragmentation, racial disagreements

¹³⁴ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 10.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹³⁷ Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Tampa*, 39.

¹³⁸ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 116.

¹³⁹ Durward Long, "Labor Relations in the Tampa Cigar Industry 1885-1911," *Labor History* 12, no. 4 (1971): 554.

among the Cubans, nationalism and differences among the occupations.¹⁴⁰ From 1902 to 1905, labor unionism in Tampa was in the doldrums, which resulted in wage cuts up to twenty five percent. Simultaneously, profits of the cigar factories increased by up to three hundred percent.¹⁴¹ By 1909, continuous abuse of apprentices resulted in additional wage cuts. Differences arose based on gender, and Cuban women earned significantly less than men.¹⁴² Labor conditions and wages of foreign-born women steadily improved since 1890s, when they started to occupy the more skilled occupations. By 1920s, a large number of women entered the industry due to mechanization. By then, Tampa's Cubans were disappointed due to the replacement of traditional cigar crafting methods by mechanization.¹⁴³

4.5 Cigar trust and labor strife in Tampa

The development of Tampa's Cuban community was strongly influenced by labor unionism. Tampa's cigar factories went relatively unnoticed by corporations in the initial fifteen years. Until the establishment of cigar trust, the cigar community was untouched by robber baron capitalism.¹⁴⁴ Despite occasional strikes, it was the cigar industry that held the Cuban community together.¹⁴⁵ After Ybor's death in 1896, northern companies took over several cigar factories in Tampa. In 1899, there was a significant consolidation of ten factories. The Havana-American Company established a formidable trust with capital stock of \$10 million. Consequently it acquired several Tampa factories, which put an end to Ybor's paternalistic approach. Ybor-Manrara factory, which by then employed hundreds of Cubans, became a part of the trust. The trust required increased working pace and set tobacco consumption quotas. Even though the Cuban laborers were highly skilled, many of them were also quick-tempered. In 1899, Eduard Manrara introduced weighing scales in his factory. That among other reasons resulted in a great strike and the scales were removed.¹⁴⁶ The Havana-American Company eventually transformed into American Cigar Company and took advantage over smaller firms thanks to its large bank accounts. To

¹⁴⁰ Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, 26.

¹⁴¹ Long, "Labor Relations in the Tampa Cigar Industry 1885-1911," 553.

¹⁴² Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 115.

¹⁴³ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Women in Ybor City: An Interview with a Woman Cigarworker," *Tampa Bay History* 7, no. 2 (1985): 161.

¹⁴⁴ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 151.

¹⁴⁵ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 92.

protect themselves from similar strikes, owners of the trust factories did not employ union members.¹⁴⁷

The Cigar Makers' International union was the first organization to unite cigar workers in the United States. Its activities resulted in many successful strikes in both Tampa and other cigar towns in Florida. In 1892 this union attracted several cigar makers in Ybor City, grew steadily and eventually organized the 1899 strike. Only artisans were admitted to the union and Cuban workers were the most dynamic, so they occupied leadership ranks.¹⁴⁸ A competitive and predominantly Cuban union, *La Resistencia* was founded and led a successful strike in 1900, but the 1901 outrage against manufacturers moving outside of Tampa ended violently. After lockouts and disputations, the situation escalated into kidnapping of union leaders and their deportation to Honduras.¹⁴⁹ About five thousand cigar workers were in the streets, most of them Cubans. During the strikes in 1901 the West Tampa O'Halloran cigar factory burned down. The Fernandez Brothers build a new factory at the same place in 1902. However, it went bankrupt in 1909 and burned down again, which refers to the vengefulness of cigar workers.¹⁵⁰ Frequent fires caused either by arson or mistake troubled Cigar City throughout its early history. Eventually, the great fire of 1908 consumed a great number of Ybor City buildings.¹⁵¹

The second great strike was organized in 1910 due to disagreements on a pay scale. The rioters burnt down the *Tampa Tribune* newspaper building in return for the support of Afro-Cuban strikebreakers. During the strike, an accountant was murdered and two West Tampa Italian prisoners lynched.¹⁵² Other major strikes occurred in 1920 followed by a series of violent disagreements due to the introduction of cigar-making machinery. Consequently the 1931 strike was an outcome of long struggle for the presence of *lectores*, which stretched throughout the 1920s.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 136.

¹⁴⁷ Archer S. Campbell and William P. McLendon, *The Cigar Industry of Tampa, Florida* (Tampa: University of Tampa, 1939), 45.

¹⁴⁸ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 78.

¹⁴⁹ Greenbaum: *More Than Black*, 112.

¹⁵⁰ TAMPAPIX, "The Cigar that Sparked a Revolution," accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/revolution.htm>.

¹⁵¹ "Cigar City Timeline," Tiki-Toki, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/embed/130338/1340010322/?iframe=true&width=900&height=480#vars!panel=1253759!>.

¹⁵² Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Tampa*, 71.

¹⁵³ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 11.

Many strikes stretched for months and substantial savings were needed to survive them.¹⁵⁴ Causes for which the Cubans fought were mostly related to work rules, union recognition and foremen selection. Spanish workers usually occupied the better paid positions in the factories. That annoyed the Cubans, who sometimes demanded their dismissal. They recognized their skills were irreplaceable and many of them secured temporary jobs elsewhere while striking in Tampa. The greatest achievement of the *La Resistencia* union was a reconstruction of the collapsed bridge between West Tampa and Ybor City.¹⁵⁵

4.6 Architecture of Ybor City and West Tampa

The cigar manufacturing era caused a boom in architecture. The buildings were distinct from the rest of Tampa and often reminded of Cuban and Spanish neighborhoods. Among the greatest ventures was the Columbia Restaurant founded by Cuban immigrant of Spanish origin Casimiro Hernandez, which is located on 7th Avenue in Ybor City. Initially a coffee shop, Florida prohibition law transformed it into a restaurant, which offered Cuban and Spanish cuisine. It was popular with the Cubans, who socialized there in their breaks.¹⁵⁶

Sanchez and Haya factory stood on 7th Avenue in Ybor City. In 1919 M. Bustillo and Company bought the building and five hundred workers rolled there Espadilla cigars.¹⁵⁷ The Ybor Cigar factory and support buildings occupy a whole city block between the 8th, 9th, 13th and 14th streets of Ybor City. In 1890 José Martí gave a patriotic speech on the staircase of the factory cheered by a large crowd of Cubans.¹⁵⁸ At its peak, the factory employed about 20 percent of Ybor City cigar rollers and produced most cigars in the world.¹⁵⁹ Just across the street Ybor erected a two-story headquarter building in Italian Renaissance style.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Robert P. Ignalls, "Strikes and Vigilante Violence in Tampa's Cigar Industry," *Tampa Bay History* 7, no. 2 (1985): 119.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁵⁶ "Columbia Restaurant," accessed April 6, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/columbiarestaurant.htm>.

¹⁵⁷ Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Tampa*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁶⁰ TAMPAPIX, "Ybor City," accessed March 28, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/ybor2.htm>.

The Macfarlane Park stands in Tampa since 1909. Among other things it was used for baseball matches so popular with the Cubans.¹⁶¹ A peculiar building of the Pendas y Alvarez Cigar Company factory, which features a tower with clocks all around, is located on Albany Avenue, West Tampa. Between 1897 and 1918 it housed 700 cigar workers.¹⁶² Another factory building of Bustillo Brothers and Diaz Cigar Company lies on Albany Avenue, close to the Academy of the Holy Names, which was used as a hospital during the Spanish American War.¹⁶³

A building constructed in 1895 in West Tampa named after the Ten Years' War leader Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, Cespedes Hall consisted of an opera house and two meeting halls. It was destroyed in 1899.¹⁶⁴ Ciruclo Cubano built a modern brick Beaux-Arts style building for purposes of the mutual aid society. It is located on 10th avenue in Ybor City. To the members, the building provided a theater, pharmacy, library, cantina and a boxing arena.¹⁶⁵

4.7 Peak of the cigar industry and the end of the prosperous era

Tampa's cigar industry peaked in the 1920s. Consequently a tremendous decline occurred in 1929 due to the Great Depression. By 1919, Ybor City alone was producing 410 million cigars a year. The absolute climax came in 1929, when 500 million cigars were made in 151 factories.¹⁶⁶ By 1920, the population of West Tampa and Ybor City combined reached 68,024.¹⁶⁷ About nine thousands of them were foreign born. Despite annexation of West Tampa in 1925, the number of foreign-born Cubans in Tampa by 1930 increased only by 1,653 compared to 1920. The exact number of American born Cubans or mixed parentage citizens is unknown. However, the white population of foreign parentage increased from nearly twelve thousand to about twenty two thousand in the same decade.¹⁶⁸ By 1928, a

¹⁶¹ TAMPAPIX, "Macfarlane Park West Tampa," accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/macfarlanepark2.htm>.

¹⁶² TAMPAPIX, "West Tampa – Albany Avenue - Page 1," accessed March 28, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/albany1.htm>.

¹⁶³ TAMPAPIX, "West Tampa – Albany Avenue - Page 2," accessed March 28, 2014, <http://www.tampapix.com/albany2.htm>.

¹⁶⁴ Rajtar, *A Guide to Historic Tampa*, 55.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Emanuel Leto "Ybor City's Broadway Bakery," Tampa Bay's Cigar City Magazine, accessed April 3, 2014, <http://www.cigarcitymagazine.com/articles/history/item/ybor-broadway-bakery>.

¹⁶⁷ "Cigar City Timeline," accessed April 5, 2014, Tiki-Toki, <http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/embed/130338/1340010322/?iframe=true&width=900&height=480#vars!panel=1253809!>.

¹⁶⁸ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 130.

decline in Tampa's Cuban population occurred due to increasing mobility. The introduction of cigar-making machines worsened the situation. To further undermine the appeal of the area, issues with parking appeared in the late 1920s, while many of the buildings had no driveways.¹⁶⁹

Unlike the profits of factory owners, the conditions of workers deteriorated in the 1920s. Due to mechanization, partly introduced after World War I, many smaller factories went bankrupt. Even the larger ones were forced to face heavy losses caused by the decline in tobacco and cigar prices. New factory owners hired American women and children instead of the Latins to operate the cigar molds and presses.¹⁷⁰ Eli Witt's Hava-Tampa cigar factory was the first to introduce these practices. That move increased Witt's profits and at the same time spoiled the market, while it caused further price drops. In the 1920s the cigar manufacturers fought against labor unions, while the loss in the 1920 strike diminished their importance. As a result of this, many Cubans and other Latin workers left Tampa for good. These issues brought about more extreme anarchist and socialist ideas and the U.S. Justice Department monitored Tampa, claiming that the Soviet Union backs these disruptions. More deportations of union leaders occurred in 1920s, and Tampa's authorities decided to ignore the demands of the industrialists and focused on attracting tourists to Tampa instead.¹⁷¹

Despite activities of the city boosters and decline in demand for cigars during the Great Depression, many Cubans remained in Tampa and lived through that economic disaster. In the 1920s the power shifted to the factory owners, but due to the Great Depression only a shadow of the industry remained compared to previous decades. Eventually cigar making was largely replaced by production of cheaper cigarettes, demand for which increased in the 1930s.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Emanuel Leto "Urban Removal: Ybor City Before & After Urban Renewal," Tampa Bay's Cigar City Magazine, accessed April 3, 2014, <http://www.cigarcitymagazine.com/articles/today/item/urban-removal-ybor-city-before-after-urban-renewal>.

¹⁷⁰ Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 128.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 130.

CONCLUSION

The Cuban community of Tampa underwent a substantial transformation between 1886 and 1929. The numbers of inhabitants in Ybor City and West Tampa steadily grew, but the percentage of Cubans shrank gradually. The exiles transformed into immigrants, however still moved freely from Ybor City to West Tampa and also to other American cities. The Cuban community intermingled with the Spanish and Italians and together they started mixed families.

Changes came and most of the important events happened in quick succession. They were the fight for Cuban independence, the introduction of tighter segregation legislature and the cigar trusts seizing control of the factories. The Cubans were radical and fought against injustices forced on them by the manufacturers, their white neighbors and authorities. The 1920s presented another set of changes to the community. Profits of the factories steadily increased, and the number of cigars made counted in the hundreds of millions, but the conditions of workers deteriorated. More married women worked in the factories, which contradicted Cuban values. Eventually they were largely replaced by the native population and the traditional ways of production were substituted by mechanization.

The Cubans of Tampa never accepted American culture and nourished their own community, which denied most of the values of the American South. Their approach to Catholicism and disregard for the church was in stark contrast with the pious white Protestant population. Most of them spoke only Spanish and they visited the rest of Tampa just occasionally. The second generation of Cubans in Tampa knew English, but a large proportion of them still remained within the community. Unlike many second generation Spanish and Italians, they still participated in the running of a cigar empire. Tax incomes from the factories contributed millions of dollars to Tampa's treasury.

The Cuban community in Tampa overcame many obstacles and maintained its distinctiveness even among the Latin community. Even though Ybor City and West Tampa nowadays account for only a small fraction of the municipality, in the period between 1886 and 1929 they presented the main economic forces of Tampa. Had the community never existed, Tampa might have never become the urban center that it is today.

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