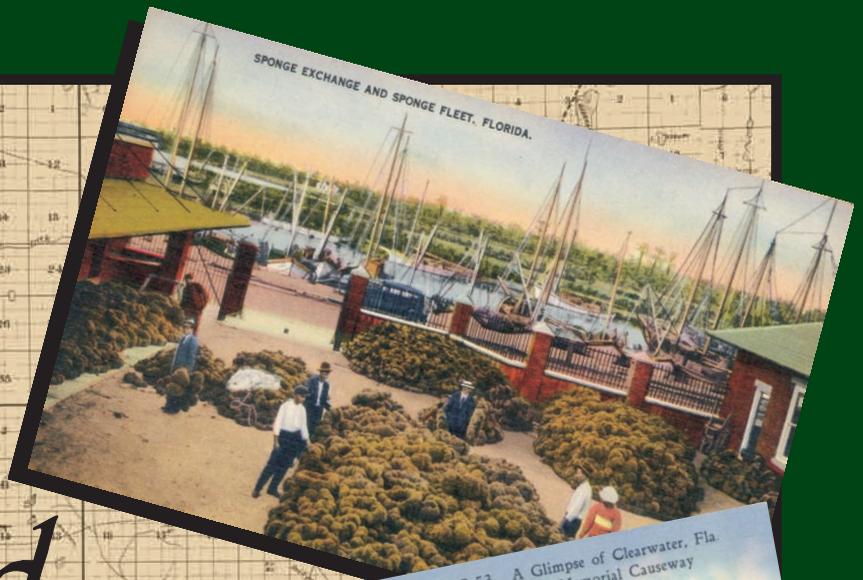


# Pinellas County Historical Background

Pinellas County  
FLORIDA.

COMPILED FROM U.S. LAND OFFICE, U.S. COAST SURVEY  
And Special Surveys  
BY THE  
FLORIDA LAND & IMPROVEMENT CO.  
November 1882.



C-53 A Glimpse of Clearwater, Fla.  
from the Memorial Causeway



S-61— Recreation Pier, St. Petersburg, Fla.



314-GC A POPULAR WINTER PASTIME AT THE SURF CLUB, ST. PETERSBURG BEACH, FLORIDA

# **PINELLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prepared and Published by:  
THE PINELLAS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

For the  
PINELLAS COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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*Third Edition  
December, 2008*

## PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**T**he purpose of the Pinellas County Historical Background document is to provide a unified natural and cultural history of the area that now constitutes Pinellas County. The historical background aims to serve both as an educational tool for the County's citizens and as a support instrument in the continued implementation of the "Protecting and Restoring Pinellas County's Natural and Cultural Heritage" agenda, as set forth in the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan.

The first two editions of this document were prepared and published by the Pinellas County Planning Department in 1986 and in 1995. The Planning Department acknowledges the assistance provided by Heritage Village in the preparation of this report. The Planning Department also wishes to thank the cities of St. Petersburg, Dunedin, and Oldsmar for their photographic contributions.

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# SUMMARY



## SUMMARY

Through the centuries, the Pinellas Peninsula has attracted a diverse mix of people: Tocobago Indians, Spanish explorers, pioneer farmers and fishermen, real estate speculators of the 1920s, tourists, and since World War II, a tremendous influx of retirees and working people. Dramatic growth and urbanization since the war has made Pinellas the most densely populated and intensely developed County in Florida.

Initially slow to develop due to its inaccessibility, Pinellas grew rapidly following the arrival of the Orange Belt Railroad in 1887. Since that time, the County's consistent growth has been interrupted only briefly: During World War I, following the collapse of the Boom period of the 1920s, during the Great Depression, and during World War II.

Among the most notable changes of the past 100 years:

- Twenty-four municipalities have been created in Pinellas, ranging in population size from 78 to 249,068.
- The County's population, often subject to dramatic rates of growth in the past, is now the sixth largest in Florida and the 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation.
- The median age of Pinellas residents, 43 according to the 2000 census, is consistently higher than that of the state and the U.S., due to a substantial influx of retirees into Pinellas following World War II. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, the County's median age decreased by 3.8 years as large numbers of working-age people moved into Pinellas to take advantage of the County's employment opportunities.
- Undeveloped and agricultural lands, which dominated the Pinellas landscape until the 1960s, have yielded to urbanization as farms and citrus groves grow scarce. As of 2004, only 5.2% of the County's land (9,266 acres) remained vacant and agricultural land had fallen to only 625 acres or 0.3% of the County's land area
- Over the decades, the County's economy has been influenced to various degrees by such diverse industries as agriculture, tourism, retirement, service, trade and manufacturing. The past decades have seen the decline in the importance of agriculture and manufacturing, with almost 60% of total employment concentrated in services and 18% in trade.
- As buildout approaches and remaining undeveloped land disappears, the County must deal with additional capacity strains to water systems, residential areas, parklands, and highways. As Pinellas takes steps to address present problems and future needs, renewed consideration must be given to the historic character and natural environment that continue to make the County a unique and desirable place to live and work.

## **SIGNIFICANT DATES IN PINELLAS COUNTY'S HISTORY**

The following list presents a selection of significant events in Pinellas County's history. Many of these events are described in greater detail within the text of this report. Others are included not only for their historical significance, but also for their general interest to Pinellas citizens.

c. 200 A.D. Weeden Island culture emerges along the Gulf Coast of Florida

1000 A.D. Tocobago Indians are at their zenith in the Safety Harbor area.

1528 Spanish explorer Pánfilo de Narvaez, it is believed, lands somewhere on the Pinellas Peninsula.

1539 Hernando deSoto, it is believed, explores the Tampa Bay area.

1832 Odet Philippe establishes the first permanent white settlement on the Pinellas Peninsula in the Safety Harbor area.

1834 Hillsborough County is formed. Included within Hillsborough County's jurisdiction is the Pinellas Peninsula, then known as West Hillsborough.

1842 The federal government's Armed Occupation Act takes effect, providing 160 acres to any head of family or single man over 18 years of age who would bear arms and live on the land in a fit habitation for five years and cultivate at least five acres. This Act provided the first material impetus to white settlement of the peninsula.

1848 An intense hurricane lashes the Pinellas Peninsula, causing widespread damage and destruction.

1853 Odet "Keeter" Booth, son of Richard Booth and Melanie Philippe-Booth, born; reputed to be the first white child born in Pinellas County.

1884 Zephaniah Philipps, a Civil War veteran, was the first settler on the barrier islands (Long Key/Pass-a-Grille).

1855 Pinellas County's first public school opens on land donated by area pioneer John Taylor on site of present Clearwater High School.

1859 A post office is established at Clearwater (then called Clear Water Harbor). Clear Water Harbor is the first point on the Pinellas Peninsula to become a community.

- 1885 Dr. W. C. Van Bibber of Baltimore presents a report to the American Medical Society convention in New Orleans, lauding the healthy climate of the Pinellas Peninsula. His recommendation helps introduce tourism to Pinellas.
- 1887 Tarpon Springs becomes the first incorporated city on the Pinellas Peninsula.
- 1887 The Orange Belt Railroad arrives on the Pinellas Peninsula. Terminating in St. Petersburg in 1888, the railroad is a significant stimulant to growth and economic development in Pinellas.
- 1887 Captain Samuel Hope built his home in Anclote.
- 1897 Construction of the Belleview Hotel, later known as the Belleview-Biltmore, completed. The building of many resort hotels, combined with the coming of the railroad and the popularity of the area's climate, signaled an early boom in Pinellas County's tourist industry.
- 1900 to 1910 Pass-a-Grille/Long Key became the first barrier island development containing hotels, beach cottages and a casino.
- 1905 A large number of Greek sponge divers and fishermen arrive in Tarpon Springs changing the face of the industry and the community.
- 1912 Pinellas becomes a county, separate and apart from Hillsborough County.
- 1914 Aviation history is made in Pinellas County when Tony Jannus pilots the world's first scheduled airline flight from St. Petersburg to Tampa.
- 1918 World War I ends; shortly thereafter, in 1921, the real estate boom period begins in Pinellas and throughout Florida. Before the Boom ends sometime between December 1925 and June 1926, Pinellas experiences a period of multi-million dollar development, the construction of magnificent hotels, and the frenzied buying and selling of real estate.
- 1921 A severe hurricane hits Pinellas, causing significant destruction throughout the County. The storm carves Hurricane Pass between what are now Caladesi and Honeymoon Islands.
- 1924 The Gandy Bridge opens, shortening the traveling distance between St. Petersburg and Tampa from 43 to 19 miles. On opening day, it is the longest automobile toll bridge in the world.

- 1929 The Great Depression hits the nation. This further devastates the local economy, still reeling from the collapse of the real estate boom.
- 1934 The Ben T. Davis Causeway is completed, providing Clearwater with a valuable transportation link to Tampa. The causeway is later re-named to honor Courtney Campbell of Clearwater, a local road board member.
- 1941 The United States enters World War II; population growth in Pinellas slows dramatically.
- 1942 The Army Air Corps leases the county airport under construction for training center; after the War the "Pinellas Army Air Base" is returned to the County and later becomes the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.
- 1945 World War II ends; Pinellas enters a period of rapid growth and development.
- 1954 The first span of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge opens, linking Pinellas and Manatee Counties.
- 1955 The last segment of the Gulf Coast Highway (now known as U.S. Highway 19) opens for traffic in St. Petersburg, providing a direct route from Pinellas County to Tallahassee. Rapid development along this new roadway in Pinellas begins almost immediately.
- 1955 Faced with record growth rates and corresponding land development, the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners institutes a system of zoning regulations and building permit procedures.
- 1956 Faced with salt water intrusion of the aquifer due to overuse, Pinellas County leases the Eldridge-Wilde wellfield at the corner of NE Pinellas and NW Hillsborough County.
- Late 1950s New industry, typically electronic and electronic component firms, begins moving into Pinellas County, marking the beginning of a new, dynamic economy. Increasing numbers of tourists and retirees, however, continue to make retail and service industries the dominant employers in Pinellas.
- 1960 The Howard Frankland Bridge opens, providing another transportation link between Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties.

- 1964 Pinellas voters approve a referendum adopting a commission-administrator form of County government, the first in Florida. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, Attorney James B. Sanderlin sues the Pinellas County School system on behalf of five African-American families, challenging the Florida state dual system of public schools. The complaint was successful, with the decision simultaneously desegregating the Pinellas, Sarasota, and Hillsborough County school systems. A court ordered desegregation plan was not approved and implemented until July 23, 1971.<sup>i</sup>
- 1969 A proposed plan for a north-south freeway, the Pinellas Expressway, is abandoned after the plan draws criticism from politicians and taxpayers. The freeway would have linked the downtown areas of St. Petersburg and Clearwater.
- 1970 The Central Pinellas Transit Authority (CPTA) is created by a special act of the Florida Legislature. Implemented by voter referendum during this same year, the CPTA began operations in 1973, providing bus service to the portion of the County north of the city of St. Petersburg. In later years, the CPTA becomes the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), which eventually merges with the St. Petersburg Municipal Transit System to provide countywide bus service (see 1984).
- 1971 Initial development of a long range transportation plan is completed by the St. Petersburg Urban Area Transportation Study with the adoption of the 1985 Street & Highways (Network 7) Plan.
- 1971 A second span of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge is opened.
- 1972 Red Flag Charette, a document listing environmentally sensitive properties, is first established to set the stage for County conservation strategy. Also this year, the first voter referendum for park acquisition is held, in which voters approved an additional ad valorem tax to fund environmental land purchases.
- 1973 Community services and facilities are outpaced by a tremendous surge of new growth and development during the early 1970s. The unprecedented building boom creates an acute shortage of potable water and sewage treatment capacity. A short-term building moratorium and a program for water rationing are instituted, while the County expands its water system and develops a managed growth program.

- 1974 A Comprehensive Land Use Plan is adopted by the Pinellas Planning Council -- the first formal Countywide attempt to manage growth and control ad hoc development.
- 1974 The Environmental Assessment Task Force, a joint effort between Pinellas County and the cities of St. Petersburg and Clearwater, completes an 18-month-long study designed to gather information on the natural systems of Pinellas County to help forecast future conditions. In addition to air and water quality, the assessment includes geology, topography, soils, groundwater, vegetation, wildlife and open space. The Task Force produces three volumes which focus on the effects of urbanization on these natural systems and indicates directions for improved management. This assessment provides the basis for all the later land acquisitions and regulatory efforts such as tree protection programs.
- 1976 County voters overwhelmingly defeat a referendum for the Pinellas Parkway. The proposed north-south toll road would have been located east of U.S. Highway 19, providing a link between central Pinellas and the Pasco County line.
- 1976 The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is created by federal law to function as a countywide transportation planning organization, and to provide a public forum for cooperative decision-making in countywide transportation issues. The MPO replaces an earlier group known as the Pinellas County Transportation Authority.
- 1977 Pinellas County's Heritage Village opens, providing a museum of historical artifacts, documents, manuscripts, and other memorabilia, and maintaining exhibits of historically significant Pinellas County structures.
- 1980 Portions of the southbound span of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge collapse when the freighter Summit Venture hits a bridge support. Thirty-five people die in the accident.
- 1980 County voters approve state legislation providing for a home rule charter, which enables County government to submit matters of local interest directly to the voters without asking the Legislature for permission.
- 1983 Pinellas County opens its new Resource Recovery Plant, burning 2000 tons of garbage per day to generate electricity.

- 1984 Amtrak discontinues passenger train service in Pinellas, ending an era of passenger train travel in the County which had begun in 1887.
- 1984 Countywide bus service is established in Pinellas County with the absorption of the St. Petersburg Municipal Transit System into the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority. The 1983 passage of a transit unification referendum had paved the way for the merging of the County's two public transit systems.
- 1985 Severe drought results in water restrictions for Pinellas and numerous other counties in Southwest Florida. Pinellas County's restrictions last from April to early September.
- 1985 A four-cent local option gas tax is passed by the Board of County Commissioners. The tax, in effect for the next ten years, raised an estimated \$120 million for improvements to Pinellas County's overburdened streets and highways.
- 1985 Growth management legislation is passed by the Florida Legislature. Representing one of the most significant steps toward controlling Florida's future, the new legislation significantly enhanced planning at the local and state government levels.
- 1985 Hurricane Elena threatens the Florida West Coast, forcing the evacuation of an estimated 300,000 persons in Pinellas, and causing more than \$100 million in damage in the County.
- 1987 The new Sunshine Skyway is completed, replacing the old twin span, part of which was destroyed in an accident seven years earlier. Taking six years and \$225 million to complete, it is the largest construction project undertaken in Florida and the largest cable-stayed box girder-type bridge in the United States.
- 1989 Pinellas County and its municipalities adopt local comprehensive plans, in compliance with the State's 1985 Growth Management Act. The plans evaluate current conditions and prescribe future improvements for such public facilities as roads, parks, and water systems. The purpose of the comprehensive planning is to ensure that Florida's rapid growth doesn't overwhelm its public facilities.
- 1989 By a narrow margin, Pinellas voters approve an additional penny sales tax to fund infrastructure such as road improvements, jail facilities, parks, environmental lands and the Pinellas Trail. Over its 10-year lifespan, the tax generated \$827.9 million.

- 1990 The first segment of the Pinellas Trail, later renamed Fred E. Marquis Pinellas Trail, which extends between Seminole Park (Seminole), and Taylor Park (Largo) opens. The 34-mile trail, when completed, will be the longest urban linear recreational trail in the eastern United States. It has been nationally recognized for its advanced design and for the high level of community participation.
- 1993 A Management Plan for the 7,100 acre Brooker Creek Preserve was completed and Pinellas County received a \$2.7 million dollar Preservation 2000 grant from the State of Florida to purchase several infill properties within the Preserve. The establishment of the Brooker Creek Preserve by the Board of County Commissioners accomplishes a variety of goals related to the preservation of the quality of life in Pinellas County. These goals include wellfield recharge for potable water use, floodplain protection, preservation of ecosystems, preservation of habitat for native wildlife, and provision of a unique environmental education facility.
- 1993 The Bayside Bridge spanning part of Old Tampa Bay opens, connecting 49th Street with McMullen-Booth Road. The Bayside Bridge and McMullen-Booth Road together provide an alternative north-south arterial route to relieve traffic congestion on U.S. Highway 19.
- 1993 In April, at a referendum held by the City of St. Petersburg, the voters approved a change in their city charter from a City Council/Manager to a strong Mayor form of government.
- 1994 The City of Seminole instituted a Charter Review Committee to review the existing strong Mayor form of government. After many weeks of review, they presented their findings to City Council which recommended that the form of government be changed to City Manager/Council. This question was put to the voters at a referendum held in September, 1994. The referendum passed with the voters approving the change in government to City Manager/Council to become effective in March, 1995.
- 1994 The Lake Seminole Bridge opens and provides a needed additional east-west route in the Largo-Seminole area. This bridge is an important addition to the new County Road 296 route, which will eventually span the width of the County.
- 1997 On March 25, a ten-year extension of the Penny for Pinellas, the one-cent additional local government option sales tax, is approved by 65% of voters.

- 1998 Major League Baseball arrives in the Tampa Bay Area. The "Tampa Bay Devil Rays" open their first season at their new home, the Thunderdome, in St. Petersburg.
- 1999 On November 2, an expansion of the Board of County Commissioners from five to seven commissioners is approved by voter referendum, with four district-specific members and three at-large commissioners.
- 2001 On April 7, the Boca Ciega Millennium Park is dedicated. The 184.6 acre park in Seminole hosts a canoe launch, dog park, boardwalks, and an observation tower. In July, Wall Springs Park opens to the public. The park, whose land the County began acquiring in 1988, preserves an important section of gulf-front land in the northern part of the County.
- 2002 Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center opens, with the mission of interpreting the natural, cultural, and archaeological history of the Preserve.
- 2003 On May 6, the Board of County Commissioners adopts "Planning to Stay", an additional element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan that addresses the County's move towards buildout.
- 2003 In August the School Choice Plan, approved in 2000 by the Pinellas County School Board, goes into effect. The Choice Plan, granting the School District unitary status, aims to increase voluntary integration of schools through parent choice.
- 2004 Four hurricanes sideswipe or narrowly miss Pinellas County, causing only minor damage but increasing awareness of hurricane vulnerabilities and disaster preparedness.
- 2005 The Board of County Commissioners passes a resolution establishing a Countywide Historic Preservation Task Force with the aim of studying, analyzing, and developing a comprehensive historic preservation program plan for the County.
- 2007 The Belleview Biltmore, constructed in 1897, was saved from demolition.
- 2007 A second 10-year extension of the Penny for Pinellas, the one-cent additional local government option sales tax, was approved.

2008 The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners adopted the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Ordinance to help implement the County's Historic Preservation Task Force initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/USI/history2004.html>

# **PINELLAS COUNTY: A Historical Perspective**



# **PINELLAS COUNTY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

## **PEOPLE OF PINELLAS AND WHAT BROUGHT THEM HERE**

The Pinellas Peninsula's early history witnessed the arrival of several waves of settlers and explorers: Native American civilizations, Spanish explorers in search of treasure, Cubans who established transient fishing camps, and eventually, in the mid 19th century, the first pioneers. These few early settlers had to be hardy and persistent, as the Pinellas Peninsula was at that time extremely remote and access was difficult.

Fishing and farming variously sustained the early residents of Pinellas, and water was their only link with the outside world. The first pioneers in Pinellas followed in the steps of the Tocobaga, locating their communities on sites conducive to agriculture and on sheltered coastal areas. Very little of the Peninsula's interior was accessible or desirable for early settlement. Towns were isolated from one another, and even small distances seemed great during that early period of development. As described by W. L. Straub in the History of Pinellas County, "When it is said 'far apart' on a peninsula only four to fifteen miles wide, it should be remembered that, in addition to the forests, the land was generally covered with densely growing bushes, shrubs, and small trees jammed with tall grass that made a jungle difficult to penetrate, with streams of water everywhere. There were no roads and little use to them if there had been. So a mile or half a mile between neighbors was a long way."<sup>i</sup>

The famous Pinellas beaches that beckon 20th century tourists meant little to the early settlers, who were attracted here by the sunny climate and plentiful land. Not until the early 1900s did the beaches become a focal point for development as the United States population acquired more leisure time, higher incomes, and greater mobility, and as highways, bridge access, and utilities were provided to the beach areas. When demand exceeded supply, new fill land was created, doubling the quantity of available waterfront property. Commercial and residential development proceeded rapidly. The interior regions of the Peninsula began developing as population pressures expanded the urban fringe areas, and as accessibility and services to these areas were improved.

Today, Pinellas is home to 947,052 people, which makes it the sixth most populated county in Florida and the 41<sup>st</sup> in the United States. Additionally, some 5.3 million come each year as tourists and visitors.<sup>ii</sup>

## **MAJOR ECONOMIC INFLUENCES**

Pinellas County's economy has been influenced at different times and to different degrees by agriculture, tourism, retiree in-migration, and

manufacturing. Agriculture was the major industry in Pinellas from the time of settlement until the early 20th century, with the highest, best-drained land devoted to citrus production. When the benefits of modernization became available, the agricultural industry profited from new methods of processing and packing and used the newly constructed railroad to export its products. However, harsh freezes in the early 1960s, rapid population growth, urbanization, and high land values caused most of the citrus growers to abandon the citrus business in Pinellas and sell their groves for development.

The Pinellas tourism industry began in the early 1880s. The burgeoning industry was given a tremendous boost by a report lauding the healthy climate of the Pinellas Peninsula, presented by Dr. W. C. Van Bibber at the 1885 American Medical Society Convention in New Orleans. Tourism expanded rapidly with improvements of transportation into and throughout Pinellas: the arrival of the railroad in 1887, completion of the Gandy Bridge in 1924, the 1955 completion of the Gulf Coast Highway (present day U.S. 19), and in more recent decades the general expansion of airline activity. In 2006, 5.3 million tourists visited Pinellas County, injecting over \$3.2 billion into the local economy.

The warm climate, coastal location, and abundance of recreational activities have historically attracted retirees to Pinellas County. According to the 2000 Census, 21% of the County's population was aged 65 and over. The substantial number of retirees is reflected in the County's demographic figures. Compared to Florida and the United States, the median age in Pinellas is substantially greater, average household size is smaller and a greater portion of people receive most of their income through transfer payments, dividends, interest and rent. The combination of tourist and retiree populations together creates an unusually large market for retail trade and service sector business. Moreover, it appears that the tourist and retiree populations will continue to play an important role in the Pinellas economy in the future.

The manufacturing sector of the local economy did not develop to any great extent until the advent of the space program in the late 1950s, when new industry, primarily electronic and electronic component firms, began moving to Pinellas, helping to diversify the economy. Although the manufacturing sector grew steadily during the 1960s, the service and trade sectors, supported by increasing numbers of tourists and retirees, continued their domination of the County's economy.

The local economy maintained a similar pattern of development throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Many new companies, typically high technology manufacturing firms, have moved into Pinellas to take advantage of the favorable business climate. The financial sector, including the insurance and real estate industry, grew to meet the demands resulting from this economic growth and development. The shift from an economic base dominated by the relatively

low wages and the seasonal business cycle associated with the tourism/retirement industry to high technology has helped strengthen and stabilize the local economy. Additionally, the expansion of high technology employment and growth in business and health services and other sectors of the service industry in Pinellas have created job opportunities that have attracted large numbers of working-age people. As a result, the County's median age actually decreased by 2.8 years between 1980 and 2000.

During the early 1990s Pinellas, like many other areas of the United States, faced uncertain economic prospects due to cyclical recession in the national economy and major changes in the global economy. The 1990 recession dealt a heavy blow to the electronics, computers and boat-building industries -- all major manufacturing employers in Pinellas. Cutbacks in national defense spending at the end of the cold war, meanwhile, cut local jobs with defense contractors. As the United States is losing traditional mass-production jobs and some service sector jobs to less-developed countries with cheaper production costs, one growth sector in domestic manufacturing consists of smaller companies that make highly sophisticated or customized products such as computer software and medical goods. This national trend is reflected in the success of such firms in Pinellas.

As Pinellas County enters the new millennium, high-tech and service-sector based employment complement traditional manufacturing jobs. The County continues to attract working age residents, with a solid manufacturing sector and strong growth occurring primarily in the services industries. By 2003 Pinellas ranked #2 in manufacturing employment and was home to the third largest number of manufacturing firms amongst Florida counties.<sup>iii</sup> Median household income in 2004 was \$37,111, with job growth measuring 4% annually. As development continues, special emphasis is placed on promoting educational attainment and attracting a highly-trained workforce to support the County's diversifying economy.

### **FROM COUNTRYSIDE TO CITIES TO SUBURBS**

In terms of land area, Pinellas, with 280 square miles, is the second smallest County in the State. Its small land area and large population have made Pinellas the most densely populated and the most intensely developed county in Florida. At present, Pinellas County has more than 3,380 persons per square mile. This density is comparable to the urbanized portions of other large counties in the State of Florida, such as Broward County.

The rapid development and urbanization that<sup>35</sup> have occurred in the last few decades have had a dramatic effect on the land and the lifestyle within Pinellas County. One of the major consequences of urban development has been the obvious disappearance of undeveloped or vacant land. As recently as 1952, developed acreage in Pinellas accounted for only 14

percent of all land. By 2002, this trend had starkly reversed, with only 5.2% of the County's developable land remaining vacant.<sup>iv</sup>

The story of Pinellas County's growth is evident, among other places, on a modern day street map. The earliest roads often followed irregular, somewhat meandering routes to connect the County's scattered settlements. Existing examples are Clearwater-Largo Road and Tampa Road. The sites of early towns are apparent in the compact grid pattern formed by their streets, as can be seen in St. Petersburg's downtown and its older neighborhoods along Central Avenue, as well as in downtown Clearwater and downtown Dunedin. The street grid, for centuries a traditional form of city design, was especially common in 19th century America because it was quick and easy to lay out and it provided convenient access to all properties.

Gridded streets remained in favor well into the 20th century, but blocks and home lots became noticeably larger as the automobile eliminated people's need to live in compact neighborhoods near the central downtown. Such larger, longer blocks can be seen in Clearwater east of Missouri Avenue. Not only did the auto allow for more expansive development, it also allowed for the decentralization of commerce and industry. No longer did business need to be in the downtown core. Locations along major roadways, with maximum traffic exposure and access, were often preferable. A contemporary version of the downtown does exist, however, in the shopping mall. Indeed, the mall has virtually taken over most of the functions of the traditional downtown, providing a variety of goods and services in an enclosed, climate-controlled "main street" for pedestrians. A recent variant of the enclosed mall is the "power center," an unenclosed large shopping center that usually contains big box retailers (e.g. Target) and several smaller retailers.

In the decades after World War II, residential developments moved away from the grid pattern toward subdivisions with curving streets, cul-de-sacs, and few connections with the surrounding road network. This reduced traffic in residential areas, but it greatly restricted access and funneled huge volumes of cars onto major roads. Most residential developments built in Pinellas since 1970, mainly in the northern end of the County, have followed this pattern.

While such physical evolution has occurred in cities all over the Country, it has had an especially profound effect in Pinellas County, where the vast majority of development has taken place since the World War II.

Since the 1880s, towns within a continuously growing Pinellas decided to incorporate. As of the 2000 census, the County contained 24 municipalities which ranged in size from 78 (Belleair Shore) to 249,068 (St. Petersburg). Unincorporated Pinellas had 287,952 residents. The number of incorporated

areas in Pinellas is remarkable in comparison to neighboring Hillsborough County, which contains only three municipalities. This is largely attributable to the different economies that drove the growth of each County. Hillsborough developed primarily around its Tampa port -- a necessarily centralized source of economic activity. Development in Pinellas, on the other hand, was mainly based on tourism and agriculture, industries that didn't require such a concentrated economic center. Small towns along rail lines, major roads and beaches, could support themselves economically. As history has shown, a number of them also chose to govern themselves.

## **FACING THE CHALLENGE OF URBANIZATION**

Given Pinellas County's extensive urbanization and its numerous local governments, residents and elected officials are confronted with numerous challenges in managing future growth and development. One response has been the establishment of countywide planning agencies, such as the Pinellas Planning Council and the Metropolitan Planning Organization, to assist in coordinating land use and transportation planning in the County among the various local governments. Of special note was the 1985 Florida Legislature's passage of the Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act (commonly referred to as the Growth Management Act). This act greatly strengthened a previous law passed by the Legislature in 1975 by requiring that comprehensive plans adopted by each local government be financially feasible, include a process to ensure that public services and facilities are provided concurrent with the impact of development, and tie down those specific actions needed to effectively respond to issues associated with the unmanaged growth of the past and future growth.

After several years of effort, the local comprehensive plans were updated in response to the Growth Management Act, and most in Pinellas County were adopted by their respective governing body in 1989. That year was also important in that the voters of Pinellas approved a referendum in November 1989 to increase the sales tax by 1¢ for ten years to provide the funding necessary to implement the local comprehensive plans. This action by the voters was crucial since the levels of service established in the plans for public services and facilities could only be accomplished through an additional commitment of funds, such as the 1¢ infrastructure sales tax.

Many of the problems associated with unmanaged growth have, historically, occurred prior to the advent of local and countywide planning. While some of these problems still exist today, the following examples show how communities are responding to the challenges they present:

- Requiring new development and substantial redevelopment to meet floodplain management and flood damage prevention requirements.

- Reducing demand on potable water supplies by conservation efforts and the reuse of treated effluent.
- Reducing demand on solid waste disposal facilities through recycling efforts.
- Protection of significant natural habitat through aggressive public endangered lands acquisition and land management programs.
- Protecting potable groundwater supplies through effective land use policies and development regulations.
- Responding to the perennial concern over traffic congestion through an expansive capital improvements program that has constructed major east/west and north/south road corridors (e.g., C. R. 296 and the Bayside Bridge/McMullen-Booth Road/East Lake Road corridor), with plans for additional improvements.
- Developing and implementing watershed management plans to comprehensively respond to flooding, water quality, and natural habitat concerns within the context of neighborhood support.
- Developing programs and incentives to preserve and protect historic and archeological resources.
- Planning for transportation alternatives to the automobile.
- Initiatives that address the interrelated issues of land use, economic development, housing needs and education.

Through comprehensive planning, policy directives, and capital improvement programming, problems associated with rapid urban growth have been and are continuing to be addressed and documented in greater detail by state and regional agencies, countywide planning agencies, and local governments. The improvement and maintenance of Pinellas County's quality of life are dependent upon corrective hindsight designed to ameliorate past problems and organized foresight designed to prevent their recurrence.

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<sup>i</sup> W. L. Straub, History of Pinellas County (St. Augustine, Fla.: Record Company Printers, 1929), p. 64.

<sup>ii</sup> Research Data Services, Inc. 1992-2002 Visitor Profile. Provide to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau

<sup>iii</sup> 2003 Bureau of Economic & Business Research Data – U. of Florida

<sup>iv</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Socioeconomic Report." 2002.

**EARLY HISTORY:  
Pre-Columbian Era  
1880**



## **EARLY HISTORY: PRE-COLUMBIAN ERA -1880**

### **NATIVE AMERICANS IN PINELLAS**

Archaeological evidence indicates that the first humans arrived along the Gulf Coast between 10,000 and 8,000 B.C. From what scientists can postulate about the terrain, the plant life and the water resources of prehistoric Florida, it is probable that these earliest residents lived in small kin-based groups near dependable water sources such as springs, and sources of rock for tool making. As these nomadic hunters and gatherers migrated to prehistoric Florida's bays, they became less nomadic and more sedentary. Shellfish became a more important part of the diet and permanent settlements were created around quarries, sites for hunting and butchering, and cemeteries.

By 2,500 years ago, native Indians along the Gulf Coast organized into village complexes and developed what has come to be known as the Manasota culture.<sup>i</sup> Middle Archaic Period (5000-3000 BCE) artifacts extracted from the Weedon Island archaeological site during a famous 1920s excavation led by the Smithsonian's Walter Fewkes include arrow points, knives, drills, hammerstones, and other evidence supporting the existence of permanent settlements on the Pinellas Peninsula during this early period.<sup>ii</sup> Mounds excavated on Weedon Island evidence the finely crafted, ornately decorated pottery vessels produced by the County's earliest human residents. In fact, the importance of the pottery discovered at Weedon Island is such that today the title Weedon Island culture designates an entire group of Indians living on the Florida peninsula pre-A.D. 750.<sup>iii</sup>

Ultimately, in the five centuries before the arrival of the Spanish, Indian culture around Tampa Bay evolved into a rather complex society, governed by a hierarchical system of chieftains, whose settlements contained large plazas and tall, pyramid shaped mounds. At the time of the first Spanish exploration, several related groups of Timucuan speakers inhabited the area that is now Pinellas. Specifically, the Ucita, Mocoso, and Pohoy groups lived on the southern and eastern shores of Tampa Bay, and a group known as the Tocobaga made their homes on the North side of the bay.<sup>iv</sup> Archeological exploration continues at burial sites and middens in Safety Harbor, Bay Pines, and Weedon Island, producing further information about the first residents of the County.

### **THE SPANISH ERA**

Encounters between the Tocobaga and the Spanish were seldom friendly, as the latter were engrossed in the search for treasure and behaved accordingly. Ultimately, the conquistador's militaristic conduct combined with the spread of European disease to decimate Pinellas County's native human residents.

The first, and perhaps most notorious, Spanish explorer was Pánfilo de Narvaez, who arrived in 1528, 15 years after Ponce de Leon became the first white person

to set foot in Florida. Although the exact location has not been positively confirmed, there is general consensus among local historians that Narvaez, accompanied by 300 men and several horses, did make landfall somewhere on the Pinellas Peninsula and claimed the land for Spain.<sup>v</sup>

Narvaez apparently explored the lower Pinellas Peninsula before trekking northward, crossing Tampa Bay and engaging in extreme cruelty to the Indians in an attempt to find the treasures he was convinced they possessed. This encounter led to the capture by the Indians of one of Narvaez' expedition, Juan Ortiz, who was reportedly saved from death at the hands of the Indians by the chief's daughter, thus launching a legend many believe was eventually stolen by John Smith and transplanted to the Virginia colonies to form the now famous Pocahontas story.



*Drawing of Pánfilo de Narváez*



*Engraving of Hernando de Soto*

*©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida*

On May 25, 1539, Hernando de Soto reached Tampa Bay, most probably via the Manatee River. Initially setting out to establish a colony in the region, upon landing de Soto found Ortiz, a ten-year captive of the Indians, who joined the De Soto expedition as interpreter and guide. Quickly swept up in the lust for treasure, De Soto soon abandoned his settlement plans, marched northwardly and inland, and for the next three years desperately attempted a fruitless search for gold until succumbing to yellow fever in 1542.<sup>vi</sup>

There were other treasure-seeking Spanish expeditions in the area, but none met with success. What these early Spanish explorers did encounter on the Pinellas Peninsula was a primeval forest dominated by pine flatwoods. In fact, the County's present name "Pinellas" is derived from the Spanish term for their landing site, "punta pinal," meaning point of pines. In addition to pinelands, the peninsula included expansive beaches and dunes, mangrove-lined bays and lush hardwood. Among the vegetation lived a wildlife community, including bear, panther, deer and turkey, whose abundance modern-day residents could barely conceive of. In addition, the Peninsula was home to huge rookeries of wading birds. Bald eagles nested throughout the Peninsula.<sup>vii</sup>

In retrospect, the total contribution of the Spanish to the Pinellas Peninsula was small. Essentially, the Spanish thought of Florida as a mere buffer between their Caribbean empire and the English colonies to the north. Most of the Spaniards' settlement was in North Florida, between St. Augustine -- the first town established in North America -- and Tallahassee. Some have suggested, however, that the Spanish paved the way for more extensive white settlement by contributing to the decline of the native population through disease and warfare. After a presence of more than 200 years, the Spanish relinquished control of Florida to the British in 1763 as part of the Seven Years War settlement, taking over again after the British lost the Revolutionary War in 1783 before finally ceding Florida to the United States in 1819.<sup>viii</sup>

### **NEW MIGRATIONS OF INDIANS, HISPANICS AND WHITES**

During the 18th century, new groups began moving into Florida. Creek and other indigenous people, often merging with fugitive slaves and displaced by white settlers in the Southern colonies, moved southward to Florida and became known as the Seminoles. Cuban fishermen in search of mullet set up temporary camps on the Pinellas shore to process their catch. In the first decades of the 19th century, these groups were joined by fugitive African-American slaves, many of whom worked in the Cuban fish camps or integrated into the Seminole communities.<sup>ix</sup>

In the summer of 1821, two years after the United States bought the Florida territory from Spain, Colonel Charles Miller led a band of mercenaries to raid the Cuban fish camps and capture runaway slaves. The expedition burned many camps between Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor, and captured about 300 African-Americans. Many coastal settlers, terrified by the raids, fled to the Florida Keys or the Bahamas.<sup>x</sup> The first federal government establishment in Tampa Bay was an army fort set up in 1824 at the mouth of the Hillsborough River, created to oversee a 256-square-mile Indian reservation. Pinellas was not part of the reservation, and was one of the few Southwest Florida regions that saw no encounters between Indians and whites during the Seminole Wars of 1835 to 1842. However, in 1841 construction of Fort Harrison, named for President William Henry Harrison, began in the area now known as Clearwater. Although the fort was not fully completed prior to the end of the Seminole Wars, the facility served as a recuperation center for sick and wounded soldiers of the 6th Infantry.

In 1845, after lengthy debate, Congress granted statehood to Florida. At the time, the Pinellas Peninsula was but a small piece of Hillsborough County, which extended from present day Hernando County south to Fort Myers and east to the Kissimmee River. Only three other sprawling counties comprised the rest of sparsely settled south Florida: Monroe, Dade and St. Lucie.



Map of Florida 1845

From "A System of Geopgraphy for the use of Schools" by Sidney E. Morse, 1945. When Florida achieved statehood, Pinellas was a small part of the expansive Hillsborough County.

Courtesy of the private collection of Roy Winkelman. **Exploring Florida: A Social Studies Resource for Students and Teachers.** Produced by the **Florida Center for Instructional Technology.**

College of Education, University of South Florida ©2002.

<http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps/1800/miss45.htm>

## **THE FIRST SETTLERS AND COMMUNITIES**

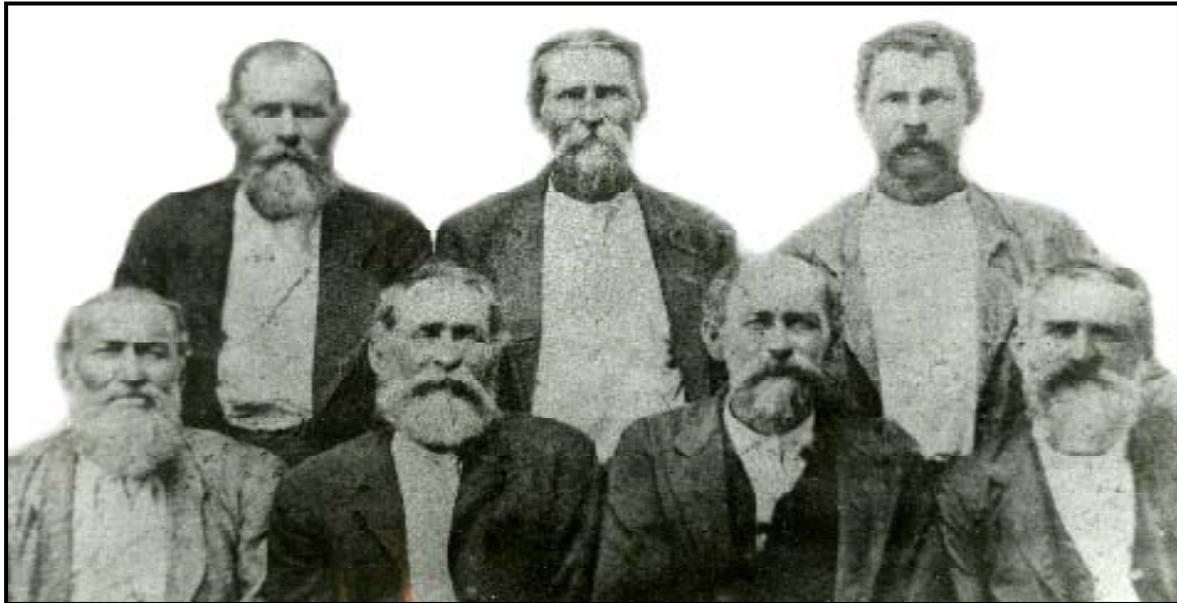
Around 1832, Odet Philippe established the first permanent white settlement on the Pinellas Peninsula on the bluffs of what is now Safety Harbor. His farming and fishing endeavors were successful. Philippe has been credited as the first local person to grow citrus, which was to become the leading agricultural product of Pinellas, and his grove is recognized as the first commercial citrus venture in the state of Florida. Odet Philippe's daughter, Melanie, married Richard Booth, a veteran of the Indian wars. Their son Odet "Keeter" Booth, born in 1853, was said to be the first white child born in Pinellas.



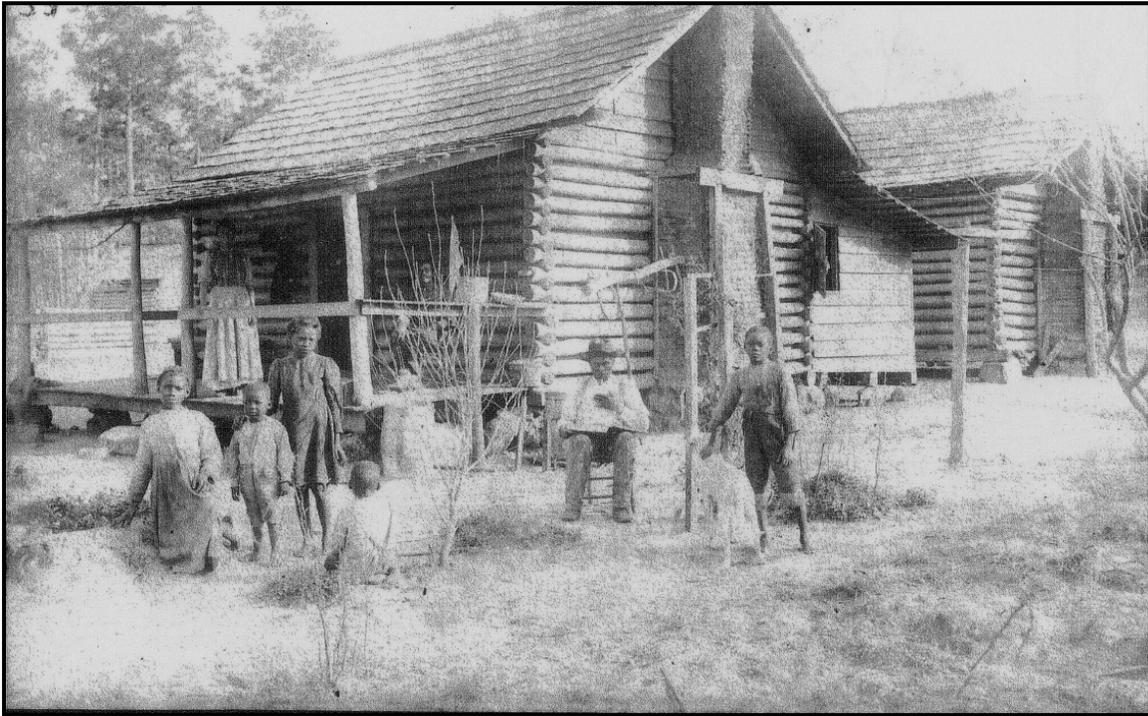
*Portrait of Odet Philippe (1787-1869), native of Lyon, France, credited with establishing the first permanent white settlement on the Pinellas Peninsula.*

©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida

Another of the earliest families to settle in Pinellas was that of the McMullens -- seven brothers (James P., John, William, Thomas, Daniel, David, and Malcolm) who came to the Peninsula with their families in the beginning of the 1840s. Many of their descendants remain in Pinellas today.<sup>xi</sup> Also during the post-Civil War period, a small number of African-American tenant farmers settled in the area.



*The seven McMullen Brothers, 1881. Left to Right: Back row - John Fain, David, Malcolm; Front row - William, Thomas Fain, James P., and Daniel. Amongst photographs of early settlers, this photo is unique in showing all the McMullen brothers together. It was taken at the Southern Cotton Exposition in Atlanta, GA. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



*Early African-American residents. Although the historical documentation of African-Americans in Pinellas still lags behind white settler histories, it is believed that Anna Germain and John Donaldson, who arrived in 1868, were the first African-Americans to settle in lower Pinellas.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

In 1842, the Armed Occupation Act gave Americans the first real incentive to settle in South Florida. The Act provided that 160 acres would be given to any "head of family or single man over eighteen" who bore arms, cultivated at least five acres, and lived on the land in a fit habitation for five years. While several claims were made along Tampa Bay and Clearwater Harbor, few pioneers came to Pinellas during the period from 1840 to 1880. Only 50 families lived in the area when the Civil War began, and even fewer after the war. The few agriculture or fishing settlements established during this period were located directly along the coast.



*Arthur Campbell Turner log cabin homestead, built about 1870. The home, no longer in existence, was located at the corner of South Fort Harrison Avenue and Woodlawn Street. One of the earlier settlers of the Pinellas Peninsula, Turner was an enterprising Clear Water Harbor merchant who is said to have fathered 20 children. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

Pinellas County, Florida, W. L. Straub notes that early settlement spread slowly in fan-like form, north and west to the site of Ozona, south and west to Indian Rocks, and to the Point which is now St. Petersburg from Pinellas' first established community in present-day Clearwater.<sup>xii</sup> One of the area's first public schools opened at the site of present day Clearwater High School as early as 1855. A post office was established in Clear Water Harbor, as it was then called, in 1859 by David B. Turner. Around this time, Dunedin also developed as a trading post of some importance. Both communities, however, were still basically frontier settlements, with few amenities. Cedar Key, the only major town on frontier Florida's west coast, was more than 100 miles north of Pinellas by boat. The schooners, and later the steamers, that sailed from Cedar Key carried mail and supplies to Pinellas communities and transported their farm products -- mainly cotton, citrus and vegetables -- to market.



*Late 1800s, J.C. Craver's Store, Sutherland, Florida. Craver was an early settler in the northern peninsula. His store served as the first post office for old Palm Harbor and Ozona.  
©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida*

The lower part of the peninsula was also settled by pioneer homesteaders who engaged primarily in agriculture. Prior to the arrival of the railroad, families in the region specialized in growing cotton, which because it was lightweight and nonperishable, could be easily shipped by boat. In 1868 a horse operated-gin was established in the Dunedin area, from which local growers transported their bales via rowboat to larger shipping vessels.<sup>xiii</sup> Other agricultural pursuits also began during this period. The famous Leonardi grapefruit were introduced to the area; Abel Miranda became the leading cattleman, with over 1,000 head; commercial fishing, begun by Maximo

Hernandez in 1843, continued as John Bethell pursued the Cuban mullet trade. By 1876 homesteads dotted the Pinellas Peninsula, with approximately 25 pioneers settled as far south as the St. Petersburg Point. Also, located in the most northwesterly corner of present day Pinellas and straddling the line between Pasco and Pinellas was the old community of Anclote. Anclote has been described as a small village that never became a town.<sup>xiv</sup> The word Anclote is a rough translation for the small anchor ships use in safe waters and can be found on many early Spanish explorer's maps.

Following Florida's admission to statehood a young surveyor, Samuel Hope, began surveying the area and was the first land purchaser in Anclote in 1861. Hope went on to serve in the Confederate Army and didn't move to Anclote until after the war. Captain Samuel Hope became a delegate to the Florida constitutional Conventions in 1865 and 1885 and built his home in Anclote in 1887.<sup>xv</sup>



*Samuel Hope home, circa 1887*

The first settlers in Anclote arrived around 1867-1874. By the early 1870s about 40 families lived in Anclote making it one of the larger villages on the Pinellas Peninsula. While Anclote may not be able to secure the title of oldest settlement in present Pinellas, it can lay claim to recording the first subdivision. In 1874 Samuel Hope recorded a plat (in then Hillsborough) for the Town Lots of Anclote.<sup>xvi</sup>

As quaint as it may have seemed by modern standards, early settlement was already causing extensive environmental change and decline around the peninsula. Homesteaders harvested vast stands of virgin pine, cypress and hardwoods. Native vegetation was also replaced by groves and farm fields. Huge rookeries of wading birds, such as snowy egrets and roseate spoonbills, were decimated by plume hunters, and organized hunts commonly targeted bear, panther and other major predators, which were considered a threat to livestock.<sup>xvii</sup>

## **EARLY TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS**

With the Peninsula's interior a rugged wilderness, waterways took the place of highways. Consequently, settlements around Pinellas Point, near present-day St. Petersburg, were more closely tied to Tampa, the County seat across the bay, than to Clearwater, much farther away by boat. For years, Pinellas Point's early settlers had to sail to Tampa for their mail.<sup>xviii</sup>

The few roads that did exist were nothing more than rough trails. For more than three decades after Hillsborough County was established it lacked a road between Pinellas and the center of government and commerce in Tampa.



*Postal Cart, 1880s.*

*Mr. Shaw was a rural free delivery postman whose route included south Clearwater and the Belleair area. Lack of railways or easily traversable roadways mark the pioneer period.*

© Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida

The first road was described in Bethell's History of Point Pinellas: "The first road to this section (Big Bayou) was made by Old Tampa stockmen from the John Taylor Place to the James R. Hay Place, now known as Folland Grove, in 1856. In 1857, Hay continued it on just east of Salt Lake to Big Bayou. In 1868, John L. Branch cut a road from what is now Foster Grove to intersect the Old Tampa Road, as it was afterwards called, about eight miles north of the Folland Grove. The people of Pinellas traveled this road very often due to the fact that Old Tampa was headquarters for schools, churches, voting, entertainment, speech-making, and such-like, just after the war."<sup>xix</sup> The Old Tampa Road ran close to the eastern edge of Old Tampa Bay through bayside settlements but bypassed Gulf Coast settlements, another indication of the separation of the St. Petersburg area from the rest of the Peninsula.

Inaccessibility was one major reason for the slow pace of early development on the Peninsula. One historian notes that when General John Constantine Williams brought his family to this area in 1879, it took his four covered wagons nearly a month to travel from Gainesville.<sup>xx</sup> The primitive state of transportation particularly caused hardships for farmers wishing to market perishable agricultural products such as citrus to northern markets. One historical account indicates that: "Cotton and cattle were the only things that brought money into the County at first. The people of Indian Pass (Anona) worked away from home or ran on boats. Every farm had a small seedling orange grove. Hucksters from

Mobile and New Orleans came in boats for oranges. They did the picking and hauled the fruit by team of oxen to a small boat which carried its load to the schooner at anchor in the bay. Difficulties of marketing hindered the citrus industry."<sup>xxi</sup>

*Citrus barge at the Ozona docks,  
circa 1915.*

*This small port was important to early residents of north Pinellas, providing a link to other Gulf Coast markets.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



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<sup>i</sup> Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. "Pottery."

<sup>ii</sup> Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management. "The Weedon Island Story." Third Edition. April 2005. p. 7.

<sup>iii</sup> Milanich, Jerald T. *Florida's Indians from Ancient Times to the Present*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998.

<sup>iv</sup> Florida Anthropological Society. "Florida Archaeology: An Overview." P. 13

<sup>v</sup> Pinellas County Historical Museum.

<sup>vi</sup> Hampton Dunn, *Yesterday's St. Petersburg* (Miami, Fla.: E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc., 1973), p. 13.

<sup>vii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "The Conservation of Natural Resources and Coastal Zone Management Element of Pinellas County's General Plan: An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of Pinellas County," Final Adoption, 18 April 1979, p. 227.

<sup>viii</sup> Piper, Q. cit., P. 27./ Wills, Charles A. *A Historical Album of Florida*. Brookfield, CT: The Millbook Press, 1994.

<sup>ix</sup> Page S. Jackson, *An Informal History of St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 31-32.

<sup>x</sup> Piper, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>xi</sup> Straub, *pp.* cit., p. 33.

<sup>xii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>xiii</sup> Schnur, James Anthony. "Heritage Villagers: A Social History of Pinellas Peninsula as Revealed through the Structures at Heritage Village." Published by the Author. 2004. 1919.

<sup>xiv</sup> Pent, R. F. *History of Tarpon Springs*, Great Outdoors Publishing Company 1966

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<sup>xv</sup> Florida Archives picture and date.

<sup>xvi</sup> Pinellas County Plats-Old Hillsborough micro-film.

<sup>xvii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "The Conservation of Natural Resources and Coastal Zone Management Element of Pinellas County's General Plan: An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of Pinellas County," Final Adoption, 18 April 1979, p. 227.

<sup>xviii</sup> Straub, W. cit., p. 38.

<sup>xix</sup> John A. Bethell, Bethell's History of Point Pinellas (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1962), p. 88.

<sup>xx</sup> Jackson, cit., p. 52.

<sup>xxi</sup> Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction, Pinellas Resources, Report of the Workshop in Resources Education (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Tomlinson Technical Institute, Printing Class of 1946), p. 10.

**PERIOD OF TRANSITION:  
1880 - 1900**



## PERIOD OF TRANSITION: 1880-1900

Until the 1880s, the Pinellas Peninsula remained a traditional pioneer society -- agriculture was the main activity and productivity was limited. Technologies that revolutionized transportation, farming, and industry elsewhere in the United States had not yet come to the area. Family and clan connections were the primary form of social organization. For Pinellas to move beyond this phase, it would need an external stimulus to introduce new economic activity, capital and ideas. In his theory of economic development, Walter Rostow states that, in this transition stage: "New types of enterprising men come forward -- in the private economy, in government, or both, willing to mobilize savings and to take risks in the pursuit of profit or modernization."<sup>i</sup>

Such men came forward in Pinellas County. The first of these was Hamilton Disston, a Philadelphia manufacturer and land speculator who acquired four million acres of Florida in 1881 for a mere 25 cents per acre. According to Bethell's History of Point Pinellas: "The Disston interests acquired some acreage in the section which became known as Tarpon Springs. Hamilton Disston and a party of friends came by sea from Cedar Key and landed at Anclote in 1882. At first, Disston believed that a town site should be situated near Lake Butler (Tarpon) which was near better transportation facilities, but later changed the location to Spring Bayou. The town of Tarpon Springs was laid out in 1882, and the first hotel, the Tropical, was erected in 1883. When Marks platted the streets and lots, there were only three families in the section. But when the town of Tarpon Springs was incorporated in 1887, it had a population of 52 persons."<sup>ii</sup> Thus, Tarpon Springs became the first incorporated city on the Pinellas Peninsula.

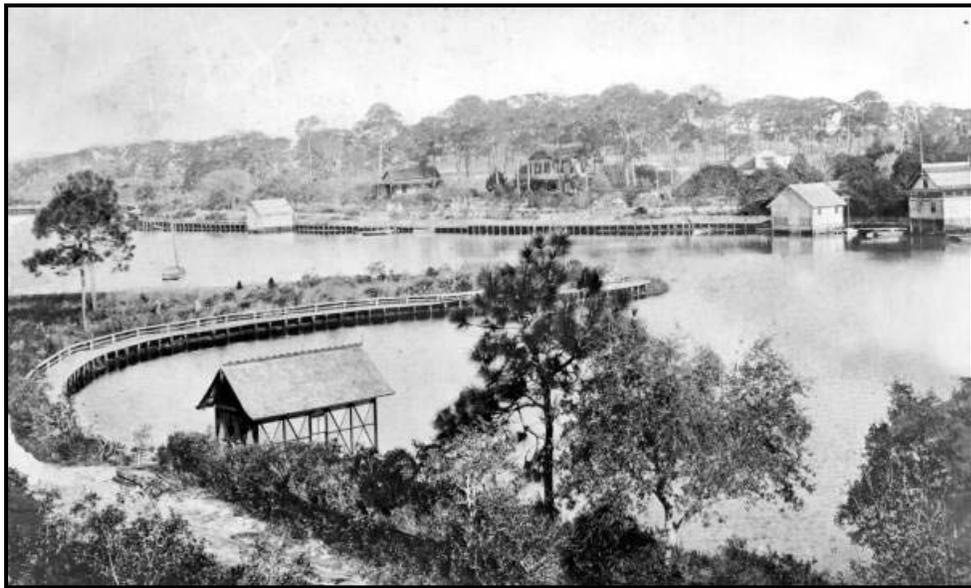
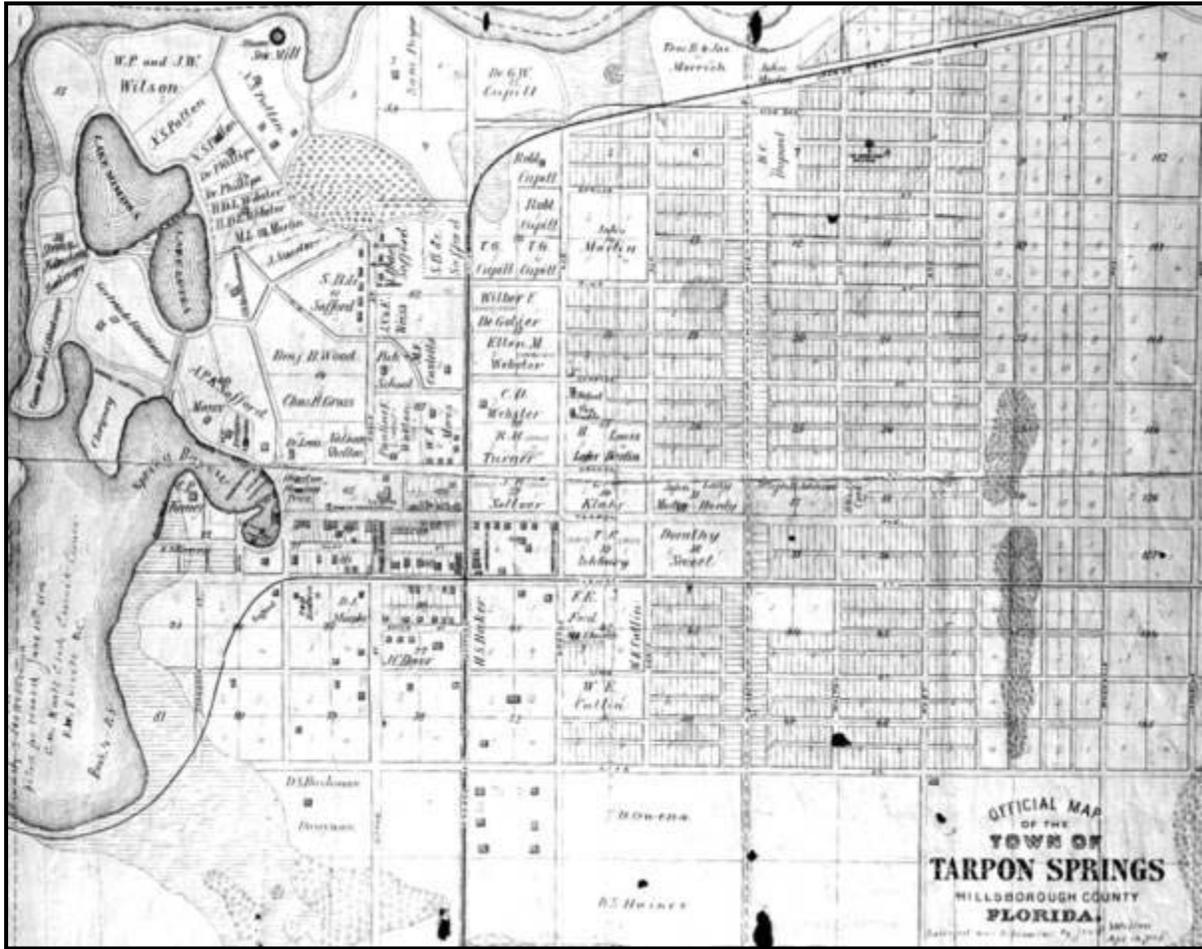
The man responsible for carrying out Disston's plans in the Tarpon Springs area was Anson P.K. Safford, ex-territorial governor of Arizona. Safford convinced many prominent Philadelphia families in the 1880s to build winter homes around the bayous in Tarpon Springs. Many of these homes still exist today, including Safford's home, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>1</sup>

Hamilton Disston advertised in the North and in England to attract tourists and residents to his newly created city of Tarpon Springs. He invested even more capital in the Pinellas Peninsula by establishing another town, Disston City, on the present site of Gulfport. On paper, Disston City occupied 12,000 acres; in actuality, the first construction included only the Hotel Waldorf, a warehouse, a wharf, some homes, and several stores.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix - Exhibit 1, "Pinellas County Historic Structures Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

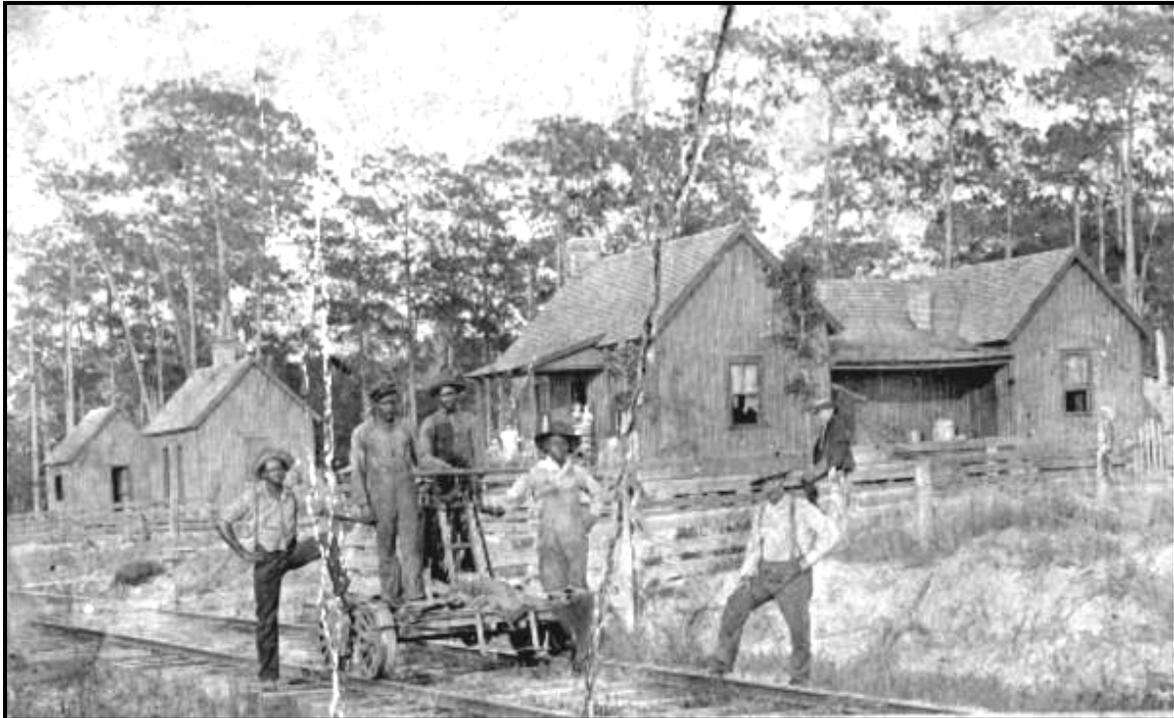
1883 Plat Map of Tarpon Springs  
 ©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida



View of Spring Bay in  
 Tarpon Springs,  
 early 1900s  
 ©Florida Photographic  
 Collection,  
 State Library and Archives of  
 Florida

## **THE COMING OF THE RAILROAD**

Disston's land development efforts were only the first steps in the transition of Pinellas. Of much greater impact was the arrival of the Orange Belt Railroad in 1887, the building of which was made possible by a grant to Russian immigrant Peter Demens from Disston. This tremendously significant event ended the pioneer period and ushered in a new era of development. Although the early railroad was not very dependable, it made accessible the necessities of life so that residents no longer needed to extract them from the wilderness.



*C. J. Johnson (sitting on fence) and African-American men at Orange Belt Railway. St. Petersburg  
©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida*

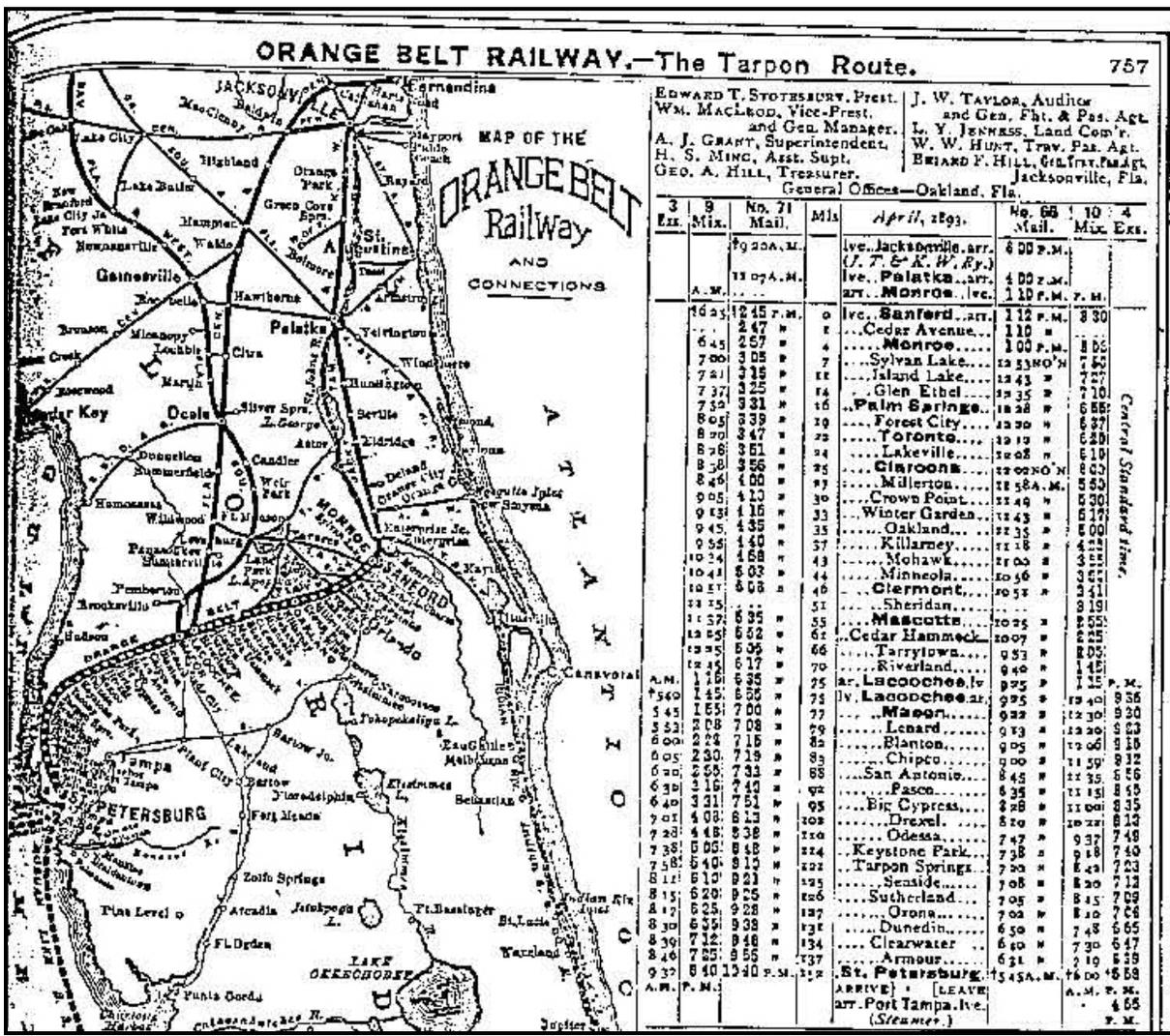
Running southwest from Sanford, the Orange Belt extended through central Florida swamp and scrub that had only rarely been traversed before. Work crews, many of them African-American laborers who would settle in the region and would continue to work in the citrus and rail industries, performed the grueling work of cutting the rail line through this rugged wilderness. Financing also proved a considerable challenge. At one point, the Orange Belt's locomotive was chained to the tracks until the owners could pay the workers. Financial help for the railroad came from H.O. Armour, the Chicago meatpacker, and A.J. Drexel, the furniture manufacturer. On June 8, 1888 the rail line finally reached its terminus at a point on Tampa Bay which was named St. Petersburg, after the native city of Peter Demens, the railroad's organizer.



*Orange Belt Railroad Depot in Sutherland (now Palm Harbor), circa 1890. Note the Russian-style architecture of the depot which reflected the influence of the Orange Belt Railroad's Peter Demens, a Russian emigrant.*

Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

An interesting feature of the Orange Belt came about as a result of a deal between Demens and John C. Williams, a wealthy merchant from Detroit who was determined to turn his land holdings in southern Pinellas into a city. Demens needed waterfront access for the rail line, and Williams wanted the rail line on his property. Williams offered to donate a portion of his land in St. Petersburg to the Orange Belt if the railroad would complete the line to his property and erect a wharf into Tampa Bay at the line's end. The resulting railroad pier was about half a mile long, extending to a point where the water was 12 feet deep. According to Bethell's History of Point Pinellas, "The railroad pier was built out to deep water so the steamers and sailing vessels could land.



Official Time Table and Map from the Orange Belt Railway, 1893

The steamers, the H. B. Plant and the Margaret, ran from Tampa to St. Petersburg, on to Manatee, up the river as far as Ellenton. The train would go out on the pier to meet the boats and bring the passengers and mail into the depot."<sup>iii</sup>

Demens' railroad was narrow gauge and the trains were extremely uncomfortable, a situation that was to be remedied in 1895, when railroad tycoon Henry B. Plant purchased the Orange Belt system, converted it to standard gauge, and improved the service. The railway's name changed in 1895 to the Sanford and St. Petersburg Railroad.



*Postcard showing the extent of development in St. Petersburg in 1895.  
Notice the railroad pier extending into the water.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



*The Railroad Pier, St. Petersburg.  
Extending out to a point where the water was 12 feet deep, the approximately half-mile long  
Railroad Pier was built to facilitate freight loading between steamships and trains.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

## **ESTABLISHING THE PATTERNS OF GROWTH**

Growth inevitably followed the railroad, and towns that the train ran through -- Tarpon Springs, Sutherland (now Palm Harbor), Ozona, Dunedin, Clearwater, Largo, and St. Petersburg--immediately began to grow. Settlements the rail line bypassed -- Safety Harbor, Anclote, Bayview, Anona, Indian Rocks, and Disston--for years remained relatively unchanged.<sup>iv</sup> As the terminus of the railroad and a deep-water port, St. Petersburg was poised to become the Peninsula's major city. Its growth came partly at the expense of other Pinellas towns, most notably Tarpon Springs.<sup>v</sup> By the end of the century, St. Petersburg had electricity (the St. Petersburg Lighting Company, precursor to Florida Power Corporation) and a public telephone system. It was also during this period that, spurred on by the Spanish-American War, the military base now known as Fort De Soto was built at the far southern tip of the peninsula.



*Early white settlers on the Largo Railroad Platform.  
Left to right: Robert L. McMullen, Louise Johnson, Joel Morris, Aunt Polly Lewis, Blanche McMullen, Margaret Nancy McMullen and Florida Morris.  
© Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida*

Another contributing element to growth was the area's climate. At the April 1885 American Medical Society Convention in New Orleans, Dr. W.C. Van Bibber of Baltimore lauded the Pinellas Peninsula as the healthiest spot on earth. His report fueled the growth of tourism with the arrival of visitors, many sent by their doctors, and solidified the area's reputation as a resort and retirement locale.

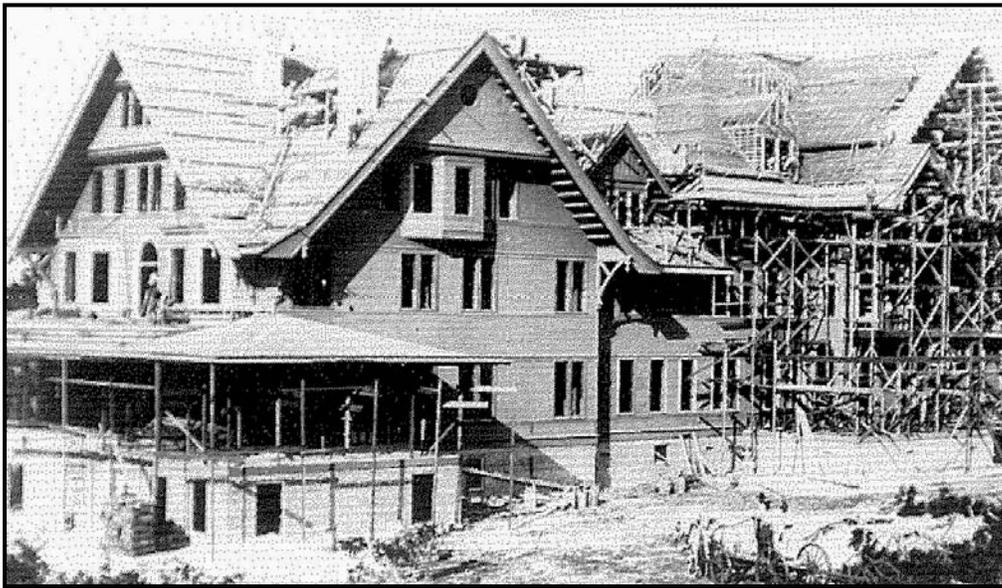
St. Petersburg's tourist industry thrived from the beginning, quickly creating the need for secondary industries. A newspaper account from 1897 noted the following businesses: three general stores, a jewelry shop, a novelty store, two drug stores, a barber shop, a bicycle shop, a livery stable, an ice company, a cigar factory, a steam laundry, one tailor, two bakeries, two millinery shops, a blacksmith and wheelwright, a sawmill, several hotels and boarding houses, and an opera house.<sup>vi</sup>



*Vacationers at the Belleview Biltmore Hotel, circa 1908. As early as the 1880s, Pinellas was a center of tourism.*

Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

Elsewhere along the rail line, businesses prospered as more hotels were built. In 1895, Henry Plant began constructing the Belleview Hotel now renamed the Bellevue Biltmore, in Belleair. The hotel, at one time the world's largest occupied wood-frame structure, opened on January 15, 1897. In his Clearwater - A Pictorial History, Michael L. Sanders notes that the Belleview Hotel did more than any other establishment to promote the area as a tourist resort.<sup>vii</sup> The hotel featured one of the first golf courses in the state, and attracted wealthy industrialists, steel magnates, socialites, and railroad executives, who were brought into the grounds via private railroad tracks which ran off the main line.<sup>viii</sup>



*Belleview Hotel : Belleair, Florida, built 1896 by H.B. Plant.  
The completion of the Belleview solidified the area as a major tourist resort  
©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida*

The citrus industry, which had previously been dependent upon water routes to ship its products, quickly took advantage of the railroad. This new form of transportation provided citrus growers with a greater opportunity to market their products. One historian provides the following description of early citrus marketing:

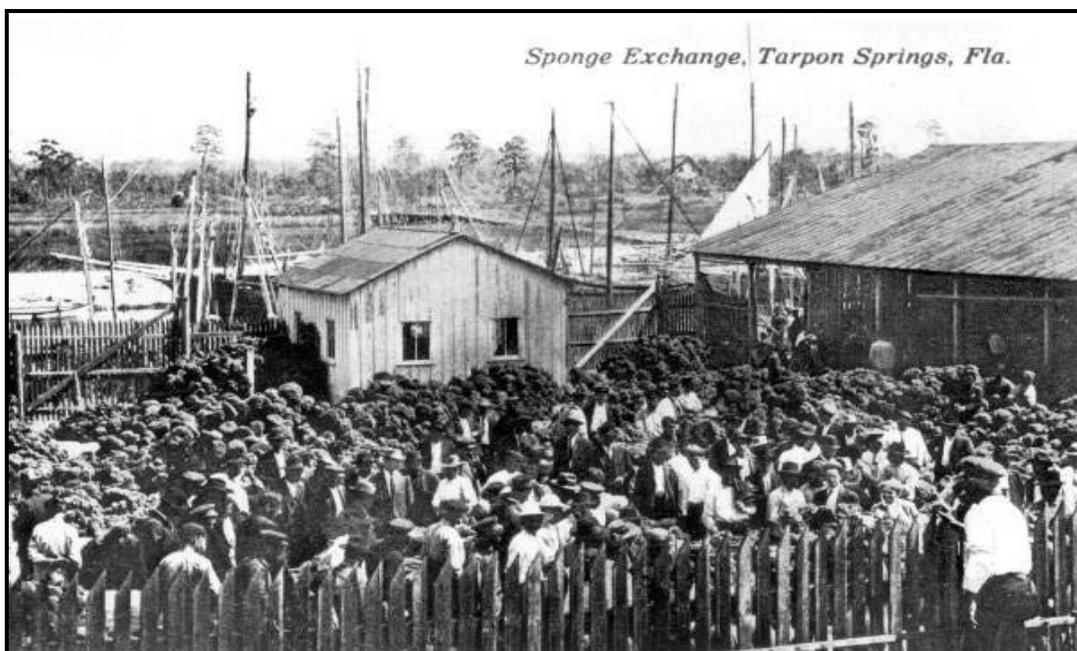


"In 1893, Dan McMullen of Largo shipped 104 crates of oranges to market and received \$174 in return. Before a profit was realized, he had to pay the railroad \$110 for shipping charges, which left him a payment of \$64 for his crop."<sup>ix</sup>

It was also during this period that the sponge industry and the Greek community in Tarpon Springs were established on the Peninsula. According to The Story of Southwestern Florida, "As early as 1873, a rich sponge field lying off the coast near present-day Tarpon Springs had been accidentally discovered by some Key West turtles."

Soon, boats from Key West made regular trips to the sponge beds and returned with rich harvests, and an influx of Bahamian sponge fishermen established posts along the Anclote River. In 1890, John K. Cheyney established the Anclote and Rock Island Sponge Company with headquarters in Key West but with Anclote as a base for his boats. The sponge industry now began to move to Tarpon Springs and Anclote from Key West. In 1900, there were 120 vessels operating in the sponge fields, and 35 of these boats were based at Tarpon Springs. In 1905, a large influx of Greek migrants arrived in the area after John Cocoris, a Greek immigrant hired by the Anclote and Rock Island Sponge Company to improve productivity. Cocoris recruited hard hat sponge divers seeking to transfer their expertise to the Gulf of Mexico industry. Within the span of one year, some 1,500 Greeks had come to Tarpon Springs, joining with the Bahamian residents to support a thriving industry."<sup>x</sup> By 1908, sponge harvesting was one of the largest industries in Florida, with Tarpon Springs as a major base of operations.<sup>xi</sup>

*Sponge Exchange, Tarpon Springs, circa 1910*



The three distinct elements of the Pinellas Peninsula's early 20th-century economy -- the tourist industry, the citrus industry and the sponge industry -- had been clearly established by the end of the 19th century. These industries were arranged in a clear geographic pattern. The tourist industry centered mainly around St. Petersburg in the south. The citrus industry covered the central region of the Peninsula and shipped its products through the central railway depots at Largo, Clearwater, and Dunedin. The sponge industry was the province of Tarpon Springs and Anclote at the northern end of the peninsula.

The booming citrus, railway, and tourist resort industries drew African-American families to the area, many of them tenant farmers originally from Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina drawn by ample employment opportunities in the County. These migrants developed distinct communities both within municipal areas designated for people of color and in rural areas of the County, reflecting patterns of physical segregation dominant during this period in American history.<sup>xii</sup>

While the railroad provided the first reasonably reliable travel between peninsula communities, there is little evidence that it was used for local transportation. So, while communities still remained distinct and independent, their sudden connection to the outside world changed the face of the Peninsula forever.<sup>xiii</sup>



*Central Avenue in St. Petersburg, circa 1900 - Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



*Clearwater Dock at the end of Cleveland Street, circa 1885. It is interesting that this photograph was taken by Louis Ducros, Clearwater's first photographer.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

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i W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 7.

ii Bethell, pp. cit., pp. 89-90.

iii *Ibid.*, p. 8.

iv Straub, pp. cit., p. 50.

v *Ibid.*, p. 50.

vi Robert Hooker, *100 Years - St. Petersburg Times - July 25, 1884 to July 25, 1984* (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Times Publishing Company, 25 July 1984), p. 12.

vii Michael L. Sanders, *Clearwater - A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company Publishers, 1983), p. 27.

viii *Ibid.*, p. 27.

ix James W. Covington, Ph.D., *The Story of Southwestern Florida*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), p. 190.

x *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.

xi Bucuvalas, Tina. "Sponge Divers Bring Greek Culture to Florida." *FORUM* Summer 2006.

xii Goldman, Sue Searcy. "Baskin-Dansville: An African-American Community in Transition."

xiii Straub, pp. cit., p. 50.

**THE EARLY  
TWENTIETH CENTURY:  
1900 - 1920**



## THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: 1900-1920

To carry forward the momentum of growth established before the turn of the century, large capital investments in transport, communications and utilities were necessary. Newcomers who arrived via the railroad brought along their wealth and a demand for the modern conveniences developed in this age of invention. During the first two decades of the 20th century, electricity, telephones, modern utilities and the automobile were introduced to the citizens of Pinellas, thus stimulating further change and growth. The infant telephone system, begun in 1898, was acquired in 1904 by the Peninsula Company, which began operations in Clearwater and Tarpon Springs. F.A. Davis, who introduced electric service to St. Petersburg in 1897, opened an electric street car line in 1904 in St. Petersburg and extended it to Gulfport one year later. In 1913, the street car line was extended all the way from Tampa Bay to Boca Ciega Bay.



*Downtown St. Petersburg, circa 1900.  
Looking east towards Tampa Bay, this photograph shows Central Avenue around the time of the automobile's arrival. The steeple in the immediate foreground is the Detroit Hotel.  
©Florida Photographic Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida*

Davis also tried to enhance St. Petersburg's deep-water port, but he failed. Henry Plant, who by the turn of the century controlled all rail lines around Tampa Bay, used his power to stimulate the growth of Tampa while stifling St. Petersburg. One historian notes, "When a storm took about 500 feet of the St. Petersburg railroad pier, it was never rebuilt, and St. Petersburg was never permitted to become a major port facility in competition with Tampa.<sup>1</sup>



*ABOVE: Downtown St. Petersburg, looking east towards Tampa Bay, circa 1900.*

Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

*BELOW: The New Clearwater Depot, connecting Clearwater with St. Petersburg, circa 1914.*



One of the most significant developments of the first decade of the 20th century in Pinellas was the coming of the automobile. Few people could have predicted the vast effect this machine would have on the Peninsula, or the tremendously expensive road network that local governments would be required to build. In fact, the need for roads on the Peninsula and Hillsborough County government's unwillingness to provide them, prompted public clamor to create Pinellas County. The following historical narrative is indicative of the poor quality of the Peninsula's roads: "There was no question that the public streets were badly in need of improvement, since they were, for some years, so bad that the story is told of E. H. Tomlinson, proud owner of the first automobile in St. Petersburg, who became so tired of getting stuck in the sand of the roads that he took to driving his automobile on the wooden sidewalks. There being no ordinances covering this situation, it appears that he was left undisturbed to drive where he chose."<sup>ii</sup>



*The most significant development of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Pinellas County was the coming of the automobile. Central Avenue, St. Petersburg. Circa 1918  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

The overland route to Tampa was a long and arduous journey. It was far easier to cross Tampa Bay by boat, even though that left many Pinellas residents without personal transportation in Tampa. According to historian Karl H. Grismer, "As a result of the lack of worthwhile improvements, the people of the lower end of the Peninsula found it almost impossible to drive to Tampa, either with teams or by automobile. They had to follow a trail which zigzagged around swamps and swales and through the pine lands. In places the sand was deep; in other places wheels sank hub deep in mud. During the rainy season, the travel was often impossible for months at a time. In January 1907, a party of motorists left Tampa for St. Petersburg. They were three and one-half days on the road."<sup>iii</sup>

## **SECESSION FROM HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

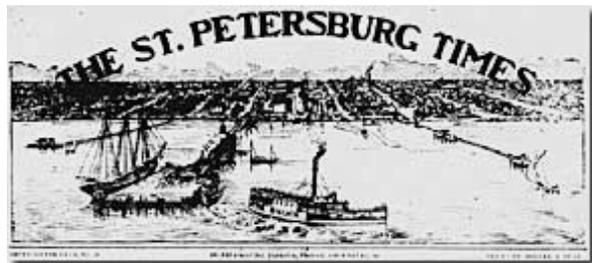
Because Pinellas was in the first decade of the 20th century a part of Hillsborough County, all of its official business transactions took place in Tampa, the County seat. The long distance between Pinellas citizens and their government caused increasing dissatisfaction. The difficulty of travel between the Pinellas Peninsula and Tampa meant Pinellas residents had little opportunity to participate in local government decisions. Also, tax dollars collected in Pinellas were spent by Tampa politicians, usually on Tampa schools, roads, and buildings.<sup>iv</sup> As a result of these and other problems, Pinellas residents began to talk of secession from Hillsborough.

Hillsborough County would not meet the Peninsula's need for basic public facilities, and it failed in its attempts to placate the secessionists. In 1906 Hillsborough County constructed a graded shell road from Tampa to Ozona. However, as most of the Pinellas population lived in the southern part of the Peninsula, Pinellas residents were only angered by this token. In another effort, the Hillsborough government built a bridge across Long Bayou at Seminole. According to one historian, the bridge fell down as soon as it was finished and subsequently was not rebuilt, which angered the Pinellas insurgents even more.<sup>v</sup>



On February 23, 1907, W. L. Straub, then editor of the St. Petersburg Times, published a lengthy editorial which came to be known as the "Pinellas Declaration of Independence," and called for a separation of the Peninsula from Hillsborough County. While this idea met with opposition from County officials in Tampa, Straub nevertheless continued to bombard his readers and

legislators (who were mailed the paper free for one full year) with editorials and cartoons, and even traveled to Tallahassee to pursue the issue in person.<sup>vi</sup> It took the Florida Legislature four years to approve the separation.



On May 23, 1911, Governor Albert Gilchrist signed into law a Pinellas independence bill. Six months later the proposal was overwhelmingly ratified by the Peninsula's voters, and on January 1, 1912, the area officially became Pinellas County.

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Once Pinellas became a separate County, controversy quickly arose over the location of the County seat. Although the legislative bill which had created Pinellas County named Clearwater as the County seat, St. Petersburg wanted an election to determine the permanent location. However, up-County commissioners outvoted those from the lower County and quickly awarded a contract for the construction of a two-story frame courthouse, guaranteed for two years, to be built in Clearwater within thirty days at a cost of \$3,750.<sup>vii</sup> The courthouse was quickly built on lots donated by the city of Clearwater on the present site of Peace Memorial Presbyterian Church at S. Ft. Harrison and Pierce Street. According to historian Ralph Reed, "The first courthouse was built with volunteer labor, while the neighborhood women brought food to the workers. Torches blazed around the rising structure as work went on through the night, and armed guards with shotguns patrolled it constantly, because rumors had been spread that St. Petersburg people planned to come to Clearwater and burn it down."<sup>viii</sup>

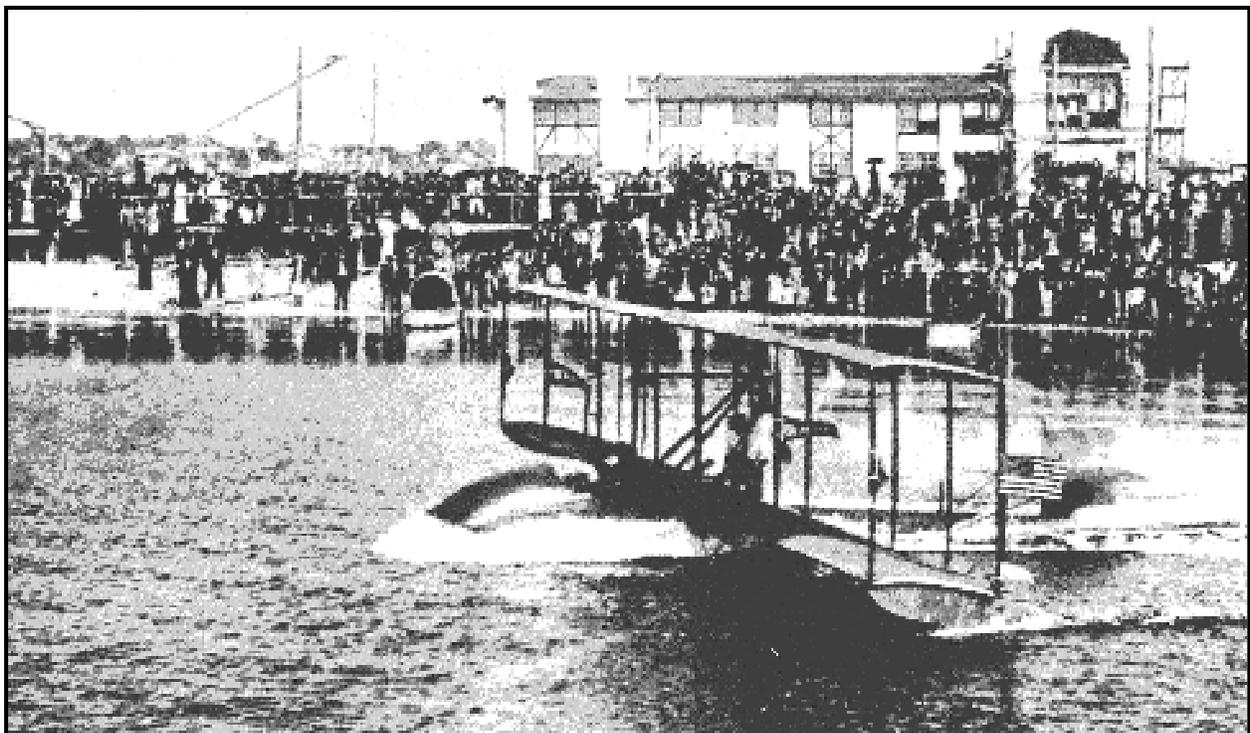


*Officials in front of Pinellas County Courthouse, 1912.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

In 1917, construction of a new courthouse, expected to have adequate space for many years, began. However, seven years later the building had already reached capacity, and two additions, one in 1924 and another in 1926, were made.

The newly formed county consisted of emerging communities and vast undeveloped areas. Densely settled communities were concentrated in relatively small areas, generally with some distance separating each from its neighbors. A substantial majority of the land was either unused or in cultivation. Among the towns that were already incorporated at this time were: Tarpon Springs (1887), Clearwater (1891), St. Petersburg (1892), Dunedin (1899), Largo (1905), Gulfport (1910), Pass-a-Grille (1911), Pinellas Park (1913), and Safety Harbor (1917). Settled but unincorporated communities included Oldsmar, Sutherland (Palm Harbor), Ozona, the Crystal Beach/Wall Springs area, the Seminole/Oakhurst area, Indian Rocks (mainland area only), the Harbor Bluffs area, and the Anclote area.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, a new form of transportation arrived to facilitate development in Pinellas County. In fact, a key historical moment in aviation, which would come to greatly influence migration and tourism in the County and beyond, occurred in Pinellas. On January 1, 1914, St. Petersburg became home to the first scheduled airline flight when pioneering aviator Tony Jannus and one passenger made a 23-minute trip from St. Petersburg to Tampa in the 26-foot seaplane *The Benoist*. Known as the St. Petersburg-



*The inaugural flight of Tony Jannus, January 1, 1914. Jannus made aviation history when he made the world's first scheduled airline flight from St. Petersburg to Tampa.*

*Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

Tampa Airboat Line, 1,200 passengers had flown on the service by March 1914 without any accidents.<sup>x</sup> However, business dropped off when publicity declined and service discontinued shortly thereafter.

During the period from 1900 to 1920, the County's established communities began to experience steady, often dramatic growth. During these years, St. Petersburg's population grew by 804 percent (from 1,575 to 14,237); Clearwater's population increased 608 percent (from 343 to 2,427); Dunedin's population grew by 468 percent (from 113 to 642); and Tarpon Springs' population increased 289 percent (from 541 to 2,105).

With the growth in the County's population came the need for more school facilities. According to the [History of Pinellas County, Florida](#), Pinellas had 25 schools and a total school enrollment of 3,263 in 1913. By 1918, the number of schools had increased to 34, and total school enrollment numbered 4,781.<sup>x</sup>



*School Band outside the first school house in St. Petersburg, circa 1900*  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

Renewed interest in establishing a Pinellas County road system occurred during this time. The bickering over the location of the County seat had somewhat delayed any progress in establishing a good County road system. In 1912, a \$370,000 bond issue was approved for the construction of a system of rock or semi-hard surfaced roads. However, as it only provided for pieces of road here and there, the County still lacked a paved road system between its principal cities and towns.<sup>xi</sup> Moreover, the handful of existing roads were not maintained, and they quickly became rough and full of holes.



*Automobiles on Central Avenue in St. Petersburg. Circa 1913.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

To help develop the much needed County road system, the Pinellas County Board of Trade was established in 1913 to promote all County building interests and activities. Under the authority of the board, a road committee formed to plan a system of roads and develop preliminary surveys and cost estimates. The committee had ten members, one representative from each town and community (Largo, Pinellas Park, Tarpon Springs, Sutherland, Dunedin, Clearwater, Safety Harbor, Seminole, St. Petersburg, and Gulfport). Pass-a-Grille was not included, as it was located on an island and was, therefore, considered to be out of reach.

The road committee spent a year developing plans for the County road system, which eventually resulted in the approval of a \$715,000 bond issue for the construction of 75 miles of 9-foot brick roads. When the roads were completed in early 1917, Pinellas County began to enjoy its first system of real paved roads.



*First Street in Largo, circa 1920, when the small town was the center of Central Pinellas County's growing citrus industry. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

In Clearwater, a \$10,000 bond issue to build a wooden bridge to Clearwater Beach was approved in a 1916 election. The election was made more significant by the fact that Clearwater was one of the first Florida cities to give women the right to vote, and a number of women in town cast their first ballots.<sup>xii</sup> When the bridge was completed in 1917, it provided the access necessary for the eventual development of the barrier island.

Another notable development prior to 1920 was the building of the first bridge to Pass-a-Grille. Opened on February 4, 1919, the new toll bridge was built by W. G. McAdoo, who owned property on the northern part of the island, about five miles north of the city of Pass-a-Grille. The opening of the bridge allowed McAdoo to develop his property as a beach resort, which he named St. Petersburg Beach.

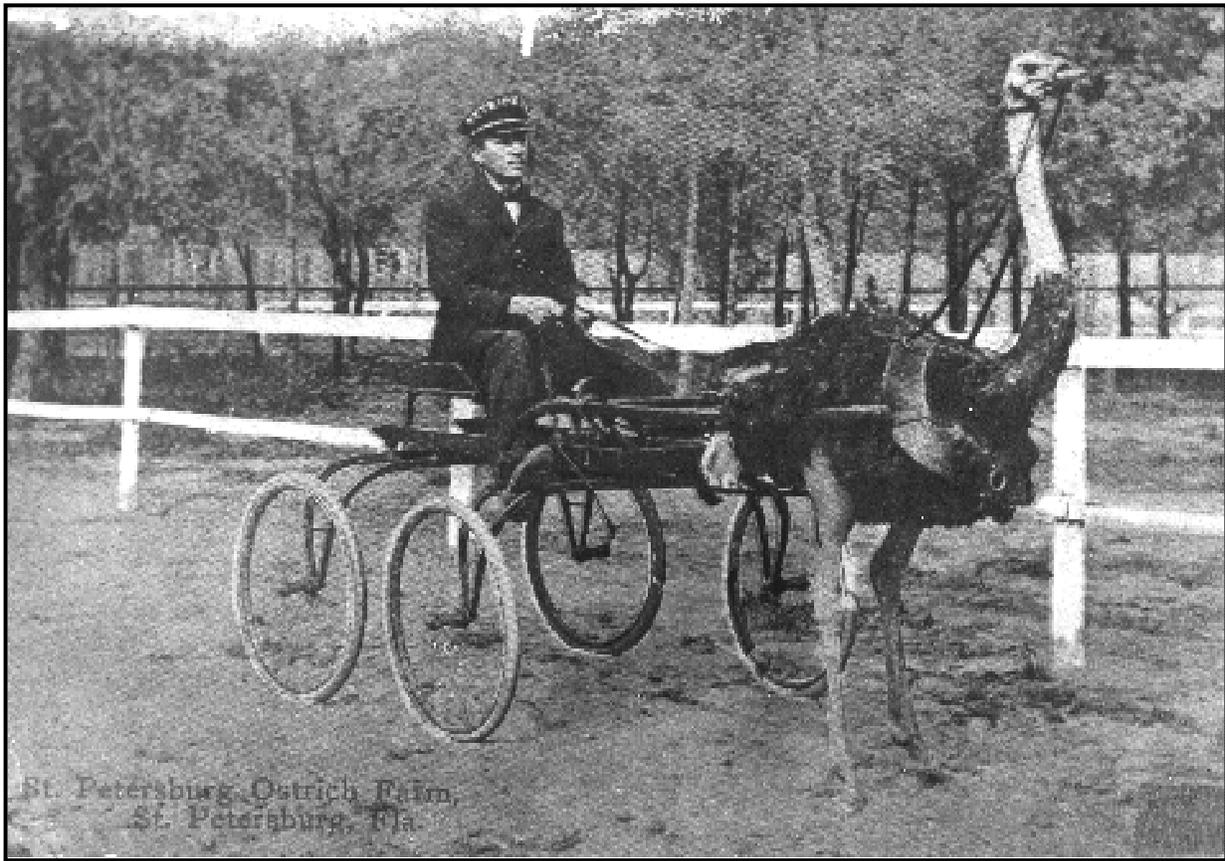


*Pass-a-Grills Bridge, circa 1919. Built by W.G. McAdoo,  
This bridge was the first bridge connecting Pass-a-Grille to the mainland.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

During the two decades between 1900 and 1920, the County had, thus, experienced substantial population growth and the necessary development of its communities, schools, road system, and businesses. The area's growth was interrupted by World War I, but this interruption was short, leaving local governments with the task of keeping pace with the demands of the County's steadily increasing population.



*First Pinellas County School Bus  
Courtesy of Heritage Village  
Archives & Library*



*The St. Petersburg Ostrich Farm in the early 1900s.  
According to the Pinellas County Museum, this gentleman started a business raising  
ostriches for transportation purposes prior to the advent of the automobile.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

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<sup>i</sup> Jackson, Q. cit., p. 79.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>iii</sup> Karl H. Grismer, The Story of St. Petersburg (St. Petersburg, Fla.: P. K. Smith and Company, 1948), p. 115.

<sup>iv</sup> Hooker, pp. cit., p. 19.

<sup>v</sup> Straub, pp. cit., pp. 67-68.

<sup>vi</sup> Hooker, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>vii</sup> Ralph Reed, "The Story of Pinellas," written for the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Mar. 1965, p. 4.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>ix</sup> Dunn, Yesterday's St. Petersburg, p. 28.

<sup>x</sup> 'Straub, pp. cit., p. 64.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>xii</sup> Sanders, op. cit., p. 48.

**BOOM, BUST  
AND DEPRESSION:  
1920 - 1940**



## BOOM, BUST AND DEPRESSION: 1920-1940

On October 25, 1921, a hurricane struck Pinellas County, the worst such storm to hit the area since 1848. The hurricane caused widespread damage: two wooden bridges to the beaches were demolished, as was the Municipal Pier in St. Petersburg; two people were killed, and all communication with the outside world was knocked out.<sup>i</sup> Had this storm occurred during another era, it might have taken years for Pinellas County to recover. However, another important event was about to take place.

When World War I ended in 1918, thousands of tourists invaded the state of Florida, many of whom headed for Pinellas County. Spurred on by the financial boom of the early 1920s tourists, flush with spending money and a desire to travel, came to vacation, buy new homes, and invest their money. Additionally, Henry Ford's inexpensive Model T's enabled even people of moderate income to make the trip to Florida. In describing these less affluent tourists, one writer has noted that, "Although their expenditures may not have pumped a lot into the economy, they were great at talking up the virtues and attractions of Florida when they got home, luring others in their wake."<sup>ii</sup> Soon, visitors of all income levels exposed to Florida's allure began to speculate in real estate, drawn by the lure of easy money. This was the start of a period in Florida that came to be known as the Boom, a fast-paced period that saw the creation of multi-million dollar developments, magnificent hotels, and the frenzied buying and selling of real estate.

The Florida real estate boom began in 1921, and reached its height in 1925. As more people migrated to Florida in the early 1920s, the housing supply became inadequate, which, in turn, touched off a building boom. Numerous houses, apartments, offices and churches were constructed. It was also during this period that many of Pinellas County's big hotels were built.



*The Don CeSar Hotel on St. Pete Beach*

According to historian Walter P. Fuller, ten large new hotels were constructed in St. Petersburg alone, adding some 2,000 rooms to the City's inventory of public accommodations.<sup>iii</sup> These ten hotels were, in order of completion: the

Soreno, the Pheil, the Suwannee, the Mason, the Pennsylvania, the Dennis, the Vinoy Park, the Jungle Country Club, the Rolyat, and the Don CeSar.<sup>iv</sup> A considerable number of small hotels were also built to accommodate the new automobile tourists.

The Boom period produced a new breed of entrepreneur characteristic of this era--the real estate speculator. The fast turnover of property and profits made by these people was contagious, and people with no knowledge of land or markets were drawn into the speculation. One historian notes that profits were made possible by the so-called "binder boys," named for the nominal binder fee paid they collected from a prospective buyer to secure a property purchase on the promise a down payment would be made perhaps a month later.<sup>v</sup> Another writer states, "A \$500 binder, which would hold down a \$10,000 piece of property, could be sold the same day for a profit and would probably be re-sold dozens of times before the thirty days were up. By then, the \$10,000 price might have been kited to \$50,000, while everyone along the line took their share of the profits. The original \$500 plus profit could be put into other binders, the process repeated, and, within a short period of time, an impressive paper fortune would result."<sup>vi</sup> The frenzied buying and selling of real estate swelled the ranks of realtors substantially. According to one account, "In St. Petersburg, which had started the decade with a population of 14,237, there were six thousand real estate salesmen in 1925."<sup>vii</sup>

Building statistics also reveal the tremendous effects of the boom. The value of building permits in St. Petersburg increased from \$2.8 million in 1920 to more than \$24 million in 1925, while the City's land area grew from 11.05 square miles in 1920 to 53.22 square miles in 1926.<sup>viii</sup> Other parts of Pinellas County were also sharing in the boom. The County's assessed property valuation increased from \$11.4 million in 1920, to \$26.2 million in 1924, to \$38.4 million in 1928.<sup>ix</sup> Clearwater, whose public beach was its main attraction, enjoyed popularity as a tourist resort, while Safety Harbor attracted numerous visitors to its mineral springs.



*Agriculture in Largo, circa 1919*  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

Contemporaneous with the land boom, Pinellas County agriculture continued to thrive in the 1920s. In particular, wild land speculation bypassed inland areas such as Largo, which maintained its agricultural economic base and slow growth rate and was known during the era as "the agricultural 'metropolis' of the County".<sup>x</sup>

After the Great Freeze of 1894-1895 devastated much of the Florida citrus industry, but spared the Pinellas Peninsula, citrus production flourished. By 1927, Pinellas ranked fourth overall in citrus shipments out of Florida counties, shipping out 3,600 railroad cars worth of fruit.<sup>xi</sup>



*Indian Rocks Fruit, circa 1920s*  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

## **OLDSMAR**

The development of the community of Oldsmar typifies the blend of entrepreneurism and civic vision by which many Florida towns were created early in the 20th century. In 1916, Ransom E. Olds, the automobile tycoon and creator of the Oldsmobile, purchased 58 square miles of land in the northeastern part of the County for \$400,000 with the intent of establishing a town. The site had the advantage of being located on Old Tampa Bay, 15 miles from the city of Tampa, at the intersection of a highway from Tampa and the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. A fan-shaped city was laid out with the main streets converging at the shore of the bay.



*Ransom Olds enjoys a tour of Oldsmar*



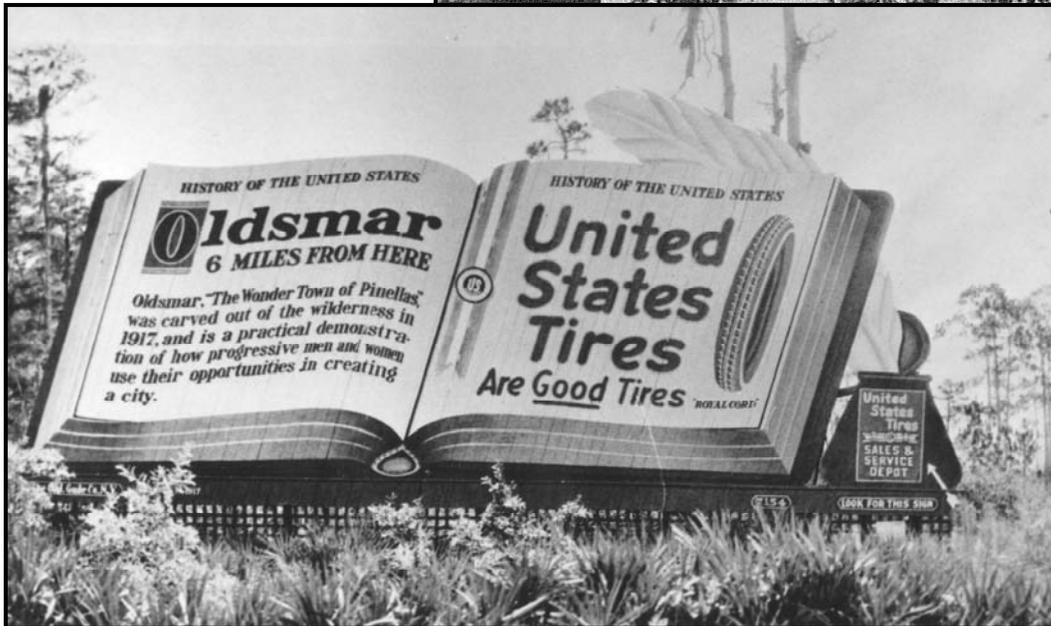
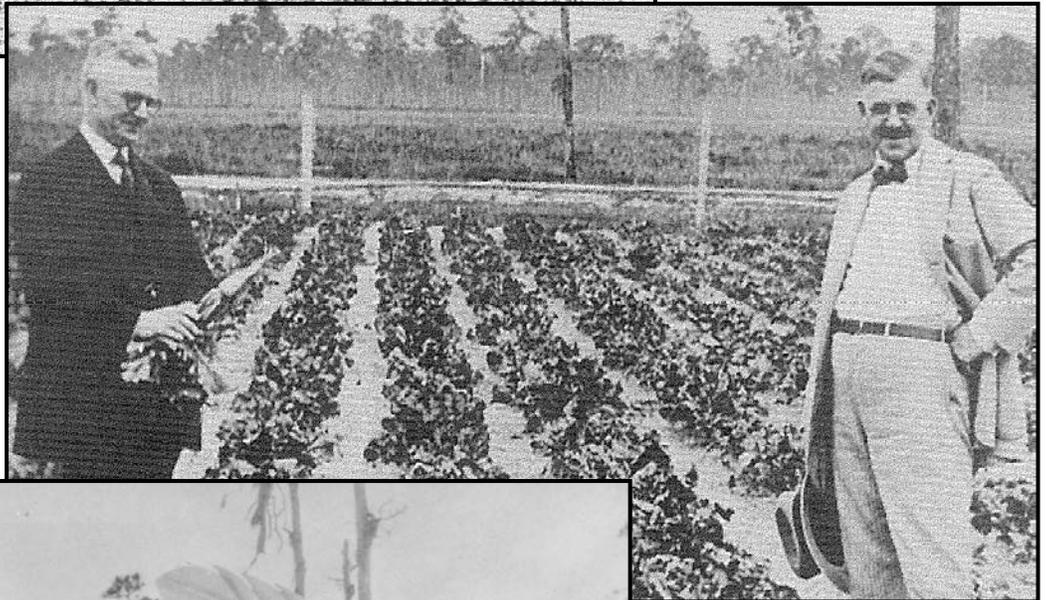
Olds invested considerable sums of money clearing land, paving streets and building homes, hotels, a post office, a bank, a railroad station, a racetrack and a power plant. He intended the town, which he named Oldsmar, to become a model farming-industrial community whose outlying farms would promote northern investment and stimulate growth. A large demonstration farm was started, employing experienced Florida farmers to teach farming techniques to new arrivals. Olds even drilled an oil well, and although the well struck only water, he reportedly poured oil into the well each morning to give the appearance of success. During the early 1920s, when Olds realized his substantial investments in the town were not realizing a profit, he sold all of his holdings in Oldsmar for a loss of nearly \$3 million.

In 1923, the bustling town of 100,000 Olds had imagined remained a farming outpost of 200 with its name changed to Tampa Shores. It was incorporated in 1926 and would again become known as Oldsmar in 1937. It would be several more decades before rapid growth and development would come to Oldsmar.

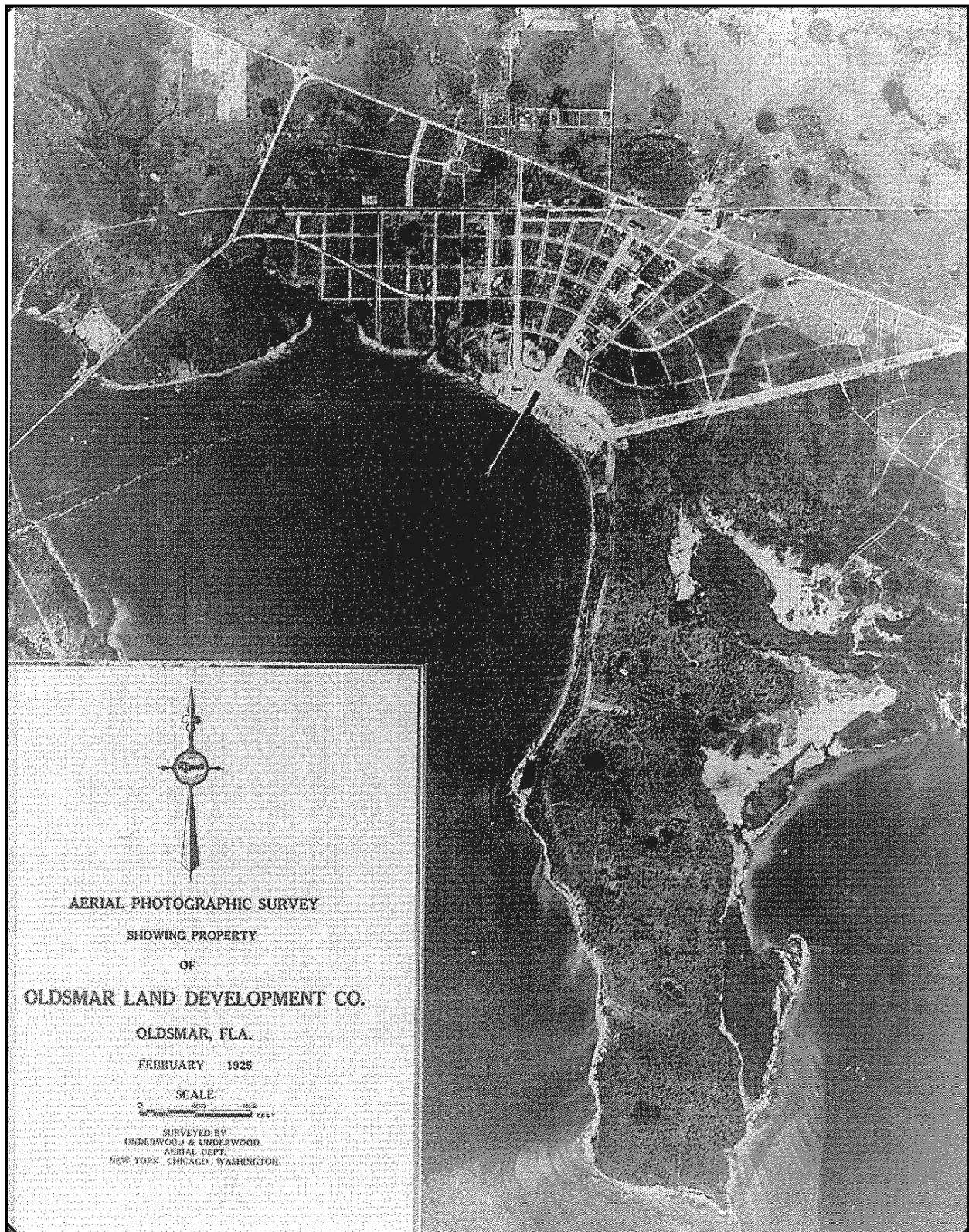


Oldsmar Tractor Company, circa 1920

Ransom E. Olds (on right), the founder of Oldsmar, standing in a field of sugar beets with an agent from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, circa 1920.



Creative advertising found on the Memorial Highway near Oldsmar, circa 1920. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library



Aerial photograph of Oldsmar, 1925.

## **UTILITY AND TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS**

As in previous decades, the continued growth of Pinellas cities placed pressure on existing infrastructure and created demand for better roads, bridges and water service. For example, under the increased population pressure of the 1920s, the city of St. Petersburg's wells began to produce poor quality water. After studying the problem, the City decided to search for a better water source, eventually resulting in the City's 1940s purchase of areas in northwest Hillsborough County for future wellfield development.<sup>xii</sup>



*Laying curbs on Druid Road, circa 1910.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

Road building during this period increased at a steady pace. According to the History of Pinellas County, Florida, "Plans were begun in 1922 for the first modern system of standard type highways to serve each section of Pinellas County. When the plans were completed in 1923, a \$2,863,000 bond issue was approved and contracts were awarded for the construction of 100 miles of modern paved highways. Twelve Special Road and Bridge Districts were created for the purpose of providing connecting systems with the main County highway roads, and bonds totaling \$6,251,000 were approved and sold, resulting in the construction of 167 miles of modern paved highways, many large bridge structures, and three causeways connecting the mainland with the Gulf Beaches. Transportation statistics for the years 1923 through 1928 indicate that traffic on Pinellas County's roads increased approximately 2,000 percent."<sup>xiii</sup>

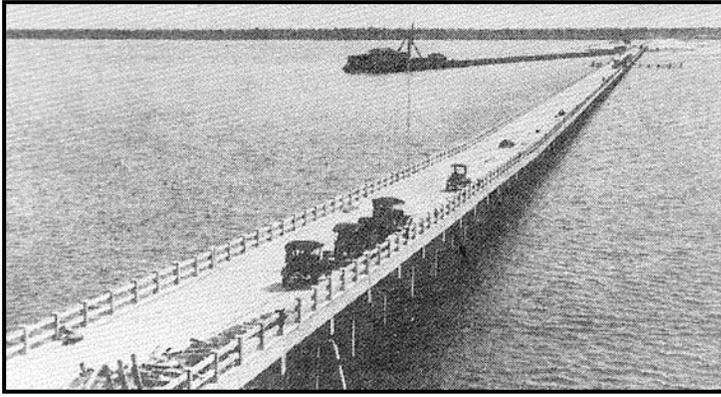
One of the more significant transportation improvements during the 1920s was the construction of the Clearwater "million dollar" causeway, named Memorial Causeway in tribute to World War I veterans. Stretching from downtown Clearwater to Clearwater Beach, the causeway replaced an old wooden bridge. The new causeway helped to further enhance the popularity of the beach by providing easy access from the mainland to the island.



*Clearwater Causeway Bridge, circa 1920s*  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

The designers of the County's updated road system weren't merely interested in moving people from town to town. They were also mindful of the County's tourist industry and the appeal of a leisurely drive by the water's edge. Several of their early roadways were scenic routes. According to one historian, these scenic routes included the highway surrounding Boca Ciega Bay, from the Pass-a-Grille Bridge to the Madeira Beach causeway; the causeway to Clearwater Beach; and the shore drives from Dunedin to Ozona, from Bayview to Safety Harbor, and from Safety Harbor to the Safety Harbor Bridge.<sup>xiv</sup> In later years some of these same facilities were designated as scenic/non-commercial corridors by local government and the Pinellas Planning Council.

The most important transportation improvement to be constructed during this time was the Gandy Bridge. Built by George S. Gandy, the bridge linked St.



*Official Opening of the Gandy Bridge*

Petersburg to Tampa, shortening the traveling distance between the two cities from 43 to 19 miles. Officially opened in November of 1924, the bridge was the longest automobile toll bridge in the world. One historian has noted that, "When the completion of the Gandy

Bridge became assured, the value of property along the

roads leading to the bridge increased phenomenally, and a number of new subdivisions were put on the market, presaging the rapid development of that section of the peninsula."<sup>xv</sup>

Other transportation improvements were also introduced during this period. In 1926, municipal bus service was inaugurated in St. Petersburg. The total number of bus passengers carried that year was 257,593; by 1928, the number of passengers was 408,670, an increase of approximately 59 percent.<sup>xvi</sup> Additionally, a ferry service carrying passengers and automobiles between the southern tip of Pinellas County and Manatee County began operations in 1924.

Clearwater received a valuable transportation link to Tampa when the Davis Causeway was completed on June 28, 1934. Built by Captain Ben T. Davis, the causeway took seven years to complete. Like the Gandy Bridge, the Davis Causeway was initially a toll facility. Years later during World War II, the Federal government forced both Gandy and Davis to sell their bridges, and then lifted the tolls. Davis received \$1,085,000 and Gandy received \$2,383,000. According to *Yesterday's Clearwater*, this was done under the War Powers Act, because wartime workers and thousands of soldiers on furlough crossed these spans during the war years.<sup>xvii</sup> Following World War II, the Davis Causeway was re-named the Courtney Campbell Causeway when the State Road Department made improvements to the facility. Courtney Campbell was a Clearwater resident who was largely responsible for these improvements.<sup>xviii</sup> Davis' memory is recognized today in the name "Ben T. Davis Beach," a Tampa municipal beach located on the Hillsborough County side of the causeway.



*Ben T. Davis Causeway, circa 1934.*

## **THE END OF THE BOOM**

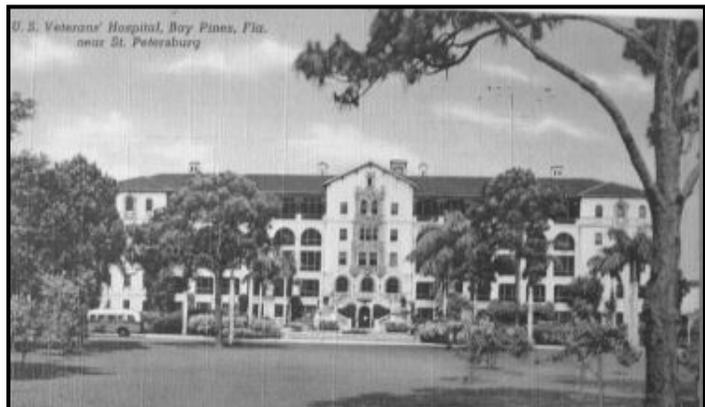
According to The Story of Southwestern Florida, sometime between December 1925 and June 1926, the Florida boom came to an end. At this time, the public lost interest in Florida land, and real estate values dropped to low levels.<sup>xix</sup> To understand why the boom ended, it is necessary to remember why it began. One historian has noted that, "The 1925 boom was not an urge to retire in a pleasant cottage in Florida or to bask in luxurious villas or seaside hotels. It was, instead, a greedy delirium to acquire riches overnight without benefit of effort, brains, or services rendered."<sup>xx</sup>

The end of the boom sparked a steep decline in land prices, which shook all layers of the local economy. Construction activity all but ceased, merchants were unable to sell their inventories, tourism declined dramatically, and many banks weakened and then collapsed.

In 1929, the Great Depression hit the nation. The stock market crash truly devastated the Pinellas economy, still reeling from the real estate debacle.<sup>xxi</sup> For example, money was in such short supply in St. Petersburg that a Citizens Emergency Committee began to issue scrip which could be used in lieu of cash. Many employers, including the St. Petersburg Times and the Pinellas County School Board, paid their employees at least partially in scrip, which was honored by merchants all over town.<sup>xxii</sup> Jobs in St. Petersburg were so scarce that notices were posted on the outskirts of town which stated, "Warning - Do Not Come Here Seeking Work - A City's First Duty Is To Employ Its Own Citizens."<sup>xxiii</sup> In the Clearwater area, fruit packing houses dwindled, and, in 1930, the Mediterranean fruit fly invaded the area, threatening citrus crops.<sup>xxiv</sup>

## **RECOVERY FROM DEPRESSION**

With the entire nation suffering from economic depression, the federal government took action to spur the economies of communities across the country. Pinellas County received a share of federal money, which helped to alleviate some local unemployment. One major federal project during this time was the construction of the Bay Pines Hospital and Veterans' Administration Center.



*Bay Pines Hospital*

Incorporating an ornate Spanish style of architecture, the project was built at a cost of approximately \$1 million.

In St. Petersburg, the federal Works Progress Administration provided funding for projects including the development of Albert Whitted Municipal Airport, a new campus for St. Petersburg Junior College, and park and sewer construction. Additionally, according to historian Walter P. Fuller, St. Petersburg's city hall was built with funding from the Public Works Administration program, a companion law designed to assist communities in the expansion and improvement of services.<sup>xxv</sup>

Federal money also helped along the development of the Gulf beaches. During the 1920s, beach development remained minimal because of such obstacles as limited access, inadequate utilities (especially water supply), and high mosquito populations. In the Depression years new facilities and services were provided that spurred development along the waterfront and on barrier islands. The Pinellas County water system was developed in 1935 with aid from the Public Works Administration to supply water to the beaches. The original water supply consisted of treated surface water from Walsingham and Taylor Reservoirs.<sup>xxvi</sup> There were 200 customers in 1936.

A new transportation link to the beaches was provided in 1939, when the Treasure Island Causeway extended Central Avenue from the St. Petersburg mainland to the newly incorporated city of Treasure Island. The causeway, financed with assistance from the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation, cost in excess of one million dollars.

A significant change in St. Petersburg's government also occurred during this time. In 1931, a new city charter was drafted to provide for a council-manager system of government.<sup>xxvii</sup> This new system replaced a city commission system of government and was considered to be more efficient.



*Albert Whitted Municipal Airport, circa 1935*

In 1934, St. Petersburg's Albert Whitted Municipal Airport became the site of a U.S. Coast Guard Air Station, as well as the first regularly scheduled commercial flight of National Airlines.<sup>xxviii</sup> Four years later, the U.S. Post Office authorized a daily mail service on National's St. Petersburg-Miami route via Sarasota and Fort Myers.<sup>xxix</sup>

Toward the end of the 1930s, there were out of the economic doldrums. Statistics presented in *St. Petersburg and Its People* indicate that the value of building permits in the City increased from a total of \$278,100 in 1932, to \$4,731,200 in 1939, and to \$5,830,539 in 1940; bank deposits increased from \$4.6 million to \$19.1 million to \$21.8 million during those same years.<sup>xxx</sup> The County also

began to derive some increased business from the recovery of the tourist industry, which had been sharply curtailed by the Depression.

## **DEVELOPMENT TRENDS**

Following the coming of the railroad, the County's population increasingly settled in urban areas. By 1920, the population was almost evenly divided between urban and rural, while in both 1930 and 1940 the urban population far surpassed the rural population.<sup>1</sup>

During the period from 1920 to 1940, the majority of the County's population was concentrated in the cities of St. Petersburg and Clearwater. Although the population of these two cities has continued to grow, their proportionate share of Pinellas County's overall population has declined since the 1940s, as other areas of the County have become more developed.<sup>2</sup>



*Pass-a-Grille Beach*

Following the economic hardships of the Great Depression, Pinellas County's economy developed an orientation toward the tourist industry, with the local economy becoming predominantly based upon the provision of goods and services to the County's tourists and seasonal residents.

Examination of 1930 Census data shows that 17 percent of all workers were employed in the retail trade sector, while 36 percent were employed in the service sector. By 1940, the increasing proportion of employment in the retail trade (22 percent) and service (39 percent) sectors indicated the County's growing dependence on tourists and seasonal residents.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 2: "Urban and Rural Population of Pinellas County: 1920-2000"

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 3: "Population of the Cities of St. Petersburg and Clearwater as a Percentage of Total Pinellas County Population, 1920-2000"

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 4: Pinellas County Employment Sectors: Number of Employees as a Percent of Total Employment



*Jon Taylor's Citrus Produce Packing Plant, Largo, FL, circa 1934.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

The County's shrinking agricultural sector remained primarily engaged in citrus cultivation. In 1930, agricultural employment comprised eight percent of total employment. By 1940, the proportion of agricultural employment had dropped to less than 6 percent and continued to steadily decline in each successive decade, as Pinellas County became increasingly urbanized. Of note during this period is the County's early participation in the production of citrus concentrate, with Citrus Concentrate, Inc. of Dunedin using technology related to the drying of blood plasma to produce the product as early as the late 1930s, thus playing an important role in the development of this next wave in Florida's citrus industry.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Also during the 1940s, the thriving sponge industry located out of Tarpon Springs began to decline when the advent of synthetic sponges coincided with a red tide blight that destroyed the area's sponge beds. The industry, which during the early 1900s made Tarpon Springs "the Sponge Capital of the World," never fully recovered, although a small industry continues and the Greek character of its neighborhoods remains to this day.

In the period from 1920 to 1940, Pinellas County weathered the Florida land boom and its subsequent bust, as well as the national depression. Pinellas County's population grew 119.9 percent between 1920 and 1930, and 47.8 percent between 1930 and 1940. Still, the County's population growth continually surpassed that of both Florida and the nation. This trend would continue until the 1970s, when the growth rate dropped below that of the state.<sup>4</sup>



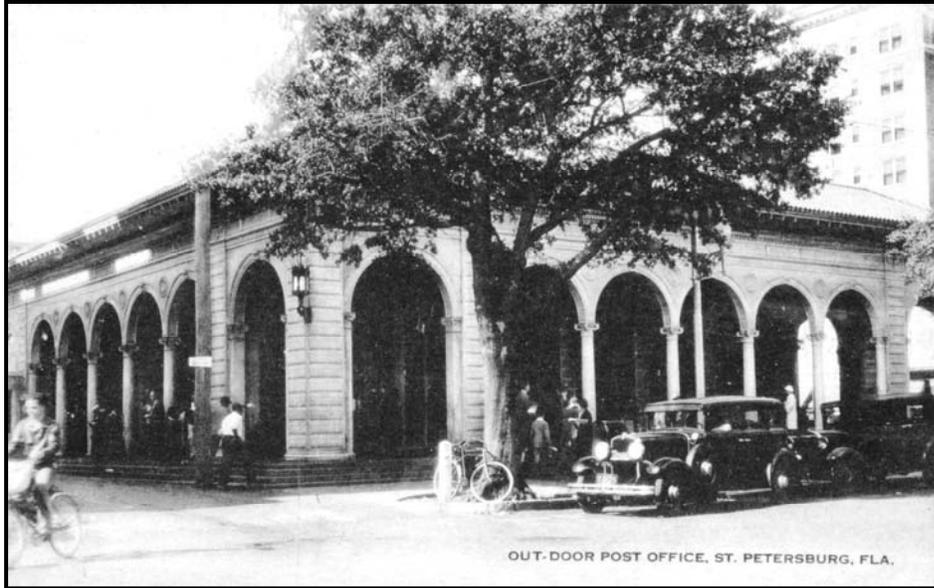
*Downtown St. Petersburg, circa 1930.*  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

*Central Avenue, St. Petersburg in the late 1930s. Retail activity was centered in the downtown area prior to the advent of shopping centers in the post World War II era.*



<sup>4</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 5: "Comparative Growth: Pinellas County, Florida, and the U.S."

It should be noted, however, that despite this phenomenal growth less than 10 percent of the County's total land was developed by the beginning of World War II.<sup>5</sup>



*Open Air Post Office in St. Petersburg, circa 1935. This was the first post office of its kind in the world. Today the building is on the National Register of Historic Places. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



*St. Petersburg Municipal Pier, circa 1935. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

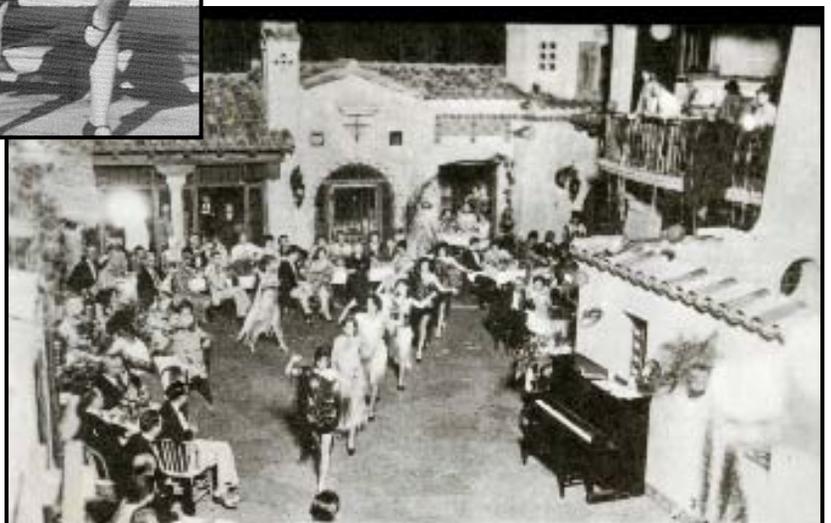
<sup>5</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 6: “Land Development Trends: 1913 - 2006”



*Playing checkers on a grand scale in a Clearwater park, circa 1925.  
This checker board was billed as "the world's largest."  
Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



*Entertainers at one of St. Petersburg's  
rooftop showrooms,  
circa 1926.  
Courtesy of Heritage Village  
Archives & Library*



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- <sup>i</sup> Hooker, W. cit., p. 29
- <sup>ii</sup> David Nolan, Fifty Feet in Paradise - The Booming, of Florida (New York, N.Y.:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1984), p. 187.
- <sup>iii</sup> Walter P. Fuller, St. Petersburg and Its People (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1972), p. 159.
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid., p. 159.
- <sup>v</sup> Sanders, op. cit., p. 83.
- <sup>vi</sup> Nolan, W. cit., p. 200.
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid., p. 201.
- <sup>viii</sup> Straub, pp. cit., p. 160, p. 126.
- <sup>ix</sup> Ibid., p. 89.
- <sup>x</sup> Ibid., p. 111.
- <sup>xi</sup> Southeastern Archaeological Research, Inc. "Historical Research of Eagle Lake Park and Property." Prepared for Heritage Village, p. 35.
- <sup>xii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "The Water Supply Element of Pinellas County's General Plan: An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of Pinellas County," Final Adoption, 8 April 1979, p. 8.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Straub, pp. cit., p. 70.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Ibid., p. 70.
- <sup>xv</sup> Karl H. Grismer, History, of St. Petersburg (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Tourist News Publishing Co., 1924), p. 162.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Straub, pp. cit., p. 160.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Hampton Dunn, Yesterday's Clearwater (Miami, Fla.: E. A. Seemann Publishing, Inc., 1973), p. 31.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Sanders, pp. cit., p. 84.
- <sup>xix</sup> Covington, Ph.D., W. cit., p. 237.
- <sup>xx</sup> Walter P. Fuller, This Was Florida's Boom (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Times Publishing Company, 1954), p. 22.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Dunn, Yesterday's St. Petersburg, p. 32.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Hooker, pp. cit., p. 36.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid., p. 35.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Sanders, W. cit., p. 84.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Fuller, St. Petersburg and Its People, pp. 186-187.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "The Water Supply Element of Pinellas County's General Plan: An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of Pinellas County," Final Adoption, 18 April 1979, p. 8.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Fuller, *St. Petersburg and Its People*, p. 262.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "The Ports and Aviation Element of Pinellas County's General Plan: An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of Pinellas County," Final Adoption, 1980, p. 69.

<sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>xxx</sup> Fuller, *St. Petersburg and Its People*, p. 258, p. 254.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Southeastern Archaeological Research, Inc. "Historical Research of Eagle Lake Park and Property." Prepared for Heritage Village.

# **World War II - 1970**



## WORLD WAR II - 1970

### THE WAR YEARS

As the 1940s began, Pinellas County's economy continued its recovery from the Great Depression of the previous decade. Then, on December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II. The war years dramatically slowed the County's population growth, with many people moving away from the area, even if temporarily, to seek employment in the large industrial centers of the North and Midwest. Simultaneously, many residents of these war production centers postponed planned relocations to Florida, staying to take advantage of labor shortages. Additionally, birth rates were held down because of the large number of men serving in the armed forces.

St. Petersburg, whose major industry was tourism, was especially affected by the war. Travel restrictions, compounded by rationing of gasoline and tires, practically wiped out the tourist trade during the war years. According to historian Walter Fuller, "Until World War II ended, life and livelihood for wage earners and persons without accumulated savings or income based on sources other than daily labor or employment was difficult indeed, and the City's hotels quickly drained of guests."<sup>i</sup>

The war might have, like the previous real estate boom, devastated the local economy. Fortunately, the U.S. military began operations in the County, capitalizing on the area's temperate climate and abundance of empty hotel rooms. St. Petersburg was selected as a site for a basic training center for the Army Air Corps. Many of the City's luxury hotels, including the Vinoy Park, the Soreno, and the Princess Martha, began filling with soldiers, while the Don CeSar Hotel in Pass-a-Grille was used as a hospital. The Fort Harrison Hotel and the Gray Moss Inn (now demolished) in Clearwater and the Belleview Biltmore Hotel in Belleair were also occupied by soldiers.



As the flood of recruits filled St. Petersburg's hotels to capacity, a tent city was established in the city's Jungle area, accommodating some 10,000 additional soldiers. According to St. Petersburg and Its People, a total of 119,057 military personnel passed through the basic training center in the city during the war years.<sup>ii</sup>

*Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

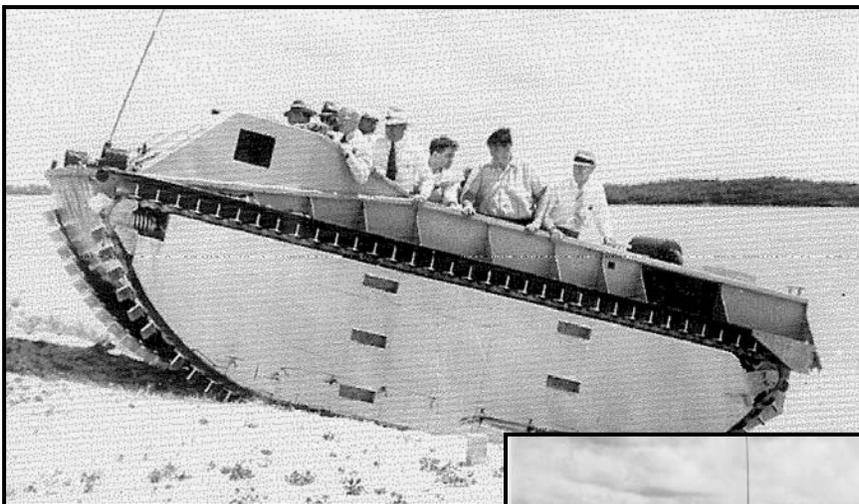


*Albert Whitted Municipal Airport, St. Petersburg, circa 1944*

Construction of the Pinellas County Airport (now known as the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport) began in 1941. Prior to the completion of the airport, the Army Air Corps leased the facility for use as a fighter pilot training facility. In November 1945, the airport was declared military surplus and given back to the County.<sup>iii</sup> The airport

opened to civil aviation in 1946 and commercial airline service initiated. Elsewhere in the County, St. Petersburg's Albert Whitted Municipal Airport served as a training facility for naval aviation cadets in the War Training Service Program.<sup>iv</sup>

A significant contribution to the war effort was made by Clearwater resident Donald Roebing, grandson of the builder of the Brooklyn Bridge. Roebing invented the Alligator, an amphibious vehicle which was used extensively by U.S. troops during World War II. Prior to its use in war overseas, the Marines tested the Alligator on the local beaches. For his efforts, Roebing was awarded a Medal of Merit by President Harry S. Truman in 1948.



*The Alligator. This amphibious vehicle, invented by Clearwater resident Donald Roebing (second from right) was used extensively by U. S. troops in W. W. II.*



*Photos on this page are Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*

## **POST-WAR LAND DEVELOPMENT**

The end of World War II in 1945 marked the start of another era of rapid growth for Pinellas County. The removal of wartime restrictions on spending and mobility contributed to the area's boom, making the post-war decade the strongest period of growth the region had yet seen.<sup>v</sup> Many of the soldiers who trained in the area during the war returned with their families. Additionally, developments in Social Security payments and private retirement pensions provided steady income, enabling retirees to migrate to Pinellas by the thousands. The end of the war also allowed for the spending of savings that many people accumulated through prudent investments and hard work during the war. With money to spend and a pent-up demand for travel, tourism resumed. The country's postwar prosperity meant that employers could provide more paid vacations and millions of families could afford cars, fueling the Florida vacation industry. This new postwar boom, built on housing construction and tourism, had a much more substantial foundation than the speculative boom of the 1920s.<sup>vi</sup>

Pent-up housing demand from existing residents, stymied during wartime rationing, combined with the need of newcomers to stimulate a local building boom. According to an account of this era in The Story of St. Petersburg, "Comparatively few large buildings were included in the gigantic building program, the one outstanding exception being the new Maas Brothers Department Store building at First Avenue North and Second Street. Most of the building permits were for houses--hundreds and hundreds of houses. They sprang up everywhere, from the old, settled sections far out in to the suburbs. Altogether, construction of 1,635 new homes started during the first ten months of 1947. Abandoned boom-time subdivisions, where paved streets were overgrown with grass, came to life again. Residential lots which had been a drag on the market for years were again in demand."<sup>vii</sup>

Statistics presented in St. Petersburg And Its People indicate that from 1945 to 1946 the City's building permit valuation more than doubled, increasing from approximately \$4.5 million to almost \$11 million. By 1950, building permit valuation climbed to almost \$31 million.<sup>viii</sup> St. Petersburg's population increased 59 percent, from 60,812 in 1940 to 96,738 in 1950.

St. Petersburg was not the only community to grow. Among the municipalities exhibiting tremendous rates of population growth during the 1940s were Belleair (341%), Clearwater (54%), Dunedin (82%), Gulfport (134%), Largo (50%), and Pinellas Park (323%). Pinellas County's total population increased from 91,852 to 159,249--a 73% jump in a single decade.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 5 : “Comparative Growth: Pinellas County, Florida, and the U.S.”

Development of the Gulf Beaches, made possible by infrastructure improvements of the 1920s and 1930s, underwent major changes during the postwar boom. According to historian Karl H. Grismer: "...and out on the beaches, the growth was little short of phenomenal, all the way from Pass-a-Grille to Indian Rocks." The beaches had developed rapidly, even during the Depression years. The main development began late in 1927 after Corey Causeway, John's Pass Bridge, and a highway along the Keys were completed. Thereafter, the growth was steady. So many new sections became built up, and were given different names, that old-timers were hard put to keep track of them -- the cities of Treasure Island, Boca Ciega, Mitchell's Beach, Sunset Beach, Madeira Beach, Bennett Beach, Sunshine Beach, Belle Vista Beach, Redington Beach, and perhaps a few more. The palm-fringed shores, where picnickers and bathers went in days gone by when seeking solitude, were gone forever. Now, all the way up and down the Keys, there were cottages, and houses, and apartments, and bathing pavilions, and stores, and hot dog stands, and beer parlors. Yes, the beaches had become developed."<sup>ix</sup>

Rapid growth continued into the next decade, with 1950s witnessing the most spectacular growth in the history of Pinellas. The County's population increased by more than 135%, from 159,249 in 1950 to 374,665 in 1960. This increase of 215,416 persons represented the largest numerical gain as well as the highest percentage increase ever recorded in Pinellas County's population.<sup>2</sup> With the rapid post-war growth in population came a corresponding increase in the County's total number of housing units. Data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, indicates that the total number of housing units increased 79%, from 40,525 to 72,682, during the decade from 1940 to 1950, and 128%, from 72,687 to 165,823, during the 1950 to 1960 decade.<sup>3</sup>

According to an account presented in The Story of Southwestern Florida, the post-war home building boom can be divided into three stages:

"The first stage came at the end of the war when the problem was to ease the housing shortage by erecting homes on vacant lots in urban centers. The second stage brought project building or site development which involved the building of one hundred to five hundred houses at one time. These projects usually were contiguous to, and abutting, established communities. Stage three was the construction of a community complete with shopping centers, gas stations, and other business firms. Throughout all of Southwestern Florida, real estate executives

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 5: "Comparative Growth: Pinellas County, Florida, and the U.S."

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 7: "Housing Units in Pinellas County, 1940-2000"

developed housing projects and communities on the outskirts of larger cities. These projects even moved to areas long forgotten since the 1925 expansion, and made use of the sidewalks and streets constructed at that time."<sup>x</sup>



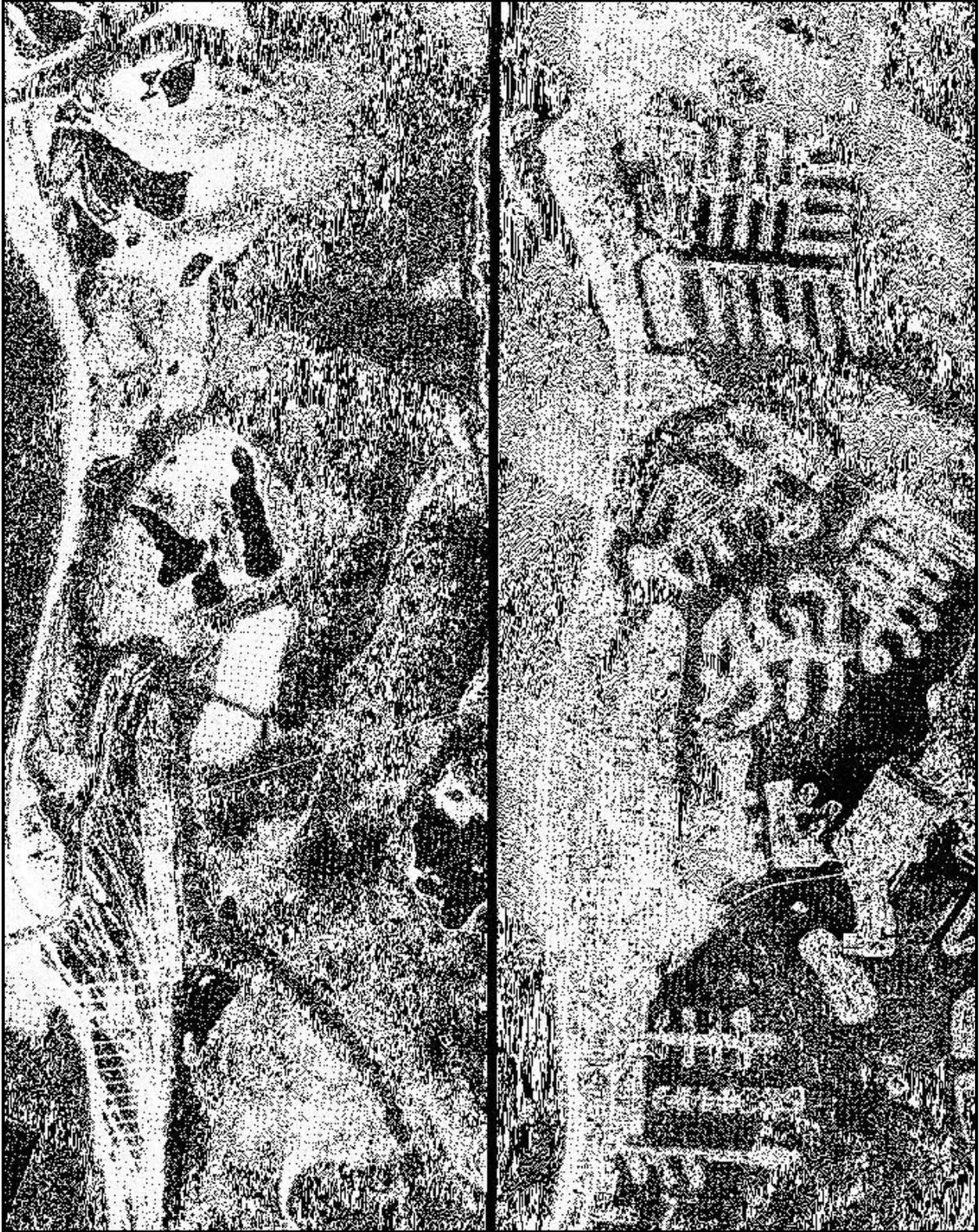
*Clearwater Beach, circa 1970.*

Developers in Pinellas County also went one step further by actually creating land on which to build new subdivisions. As the demand for waterfront property began to exceed the supply, developers started dredging sand to turn portions of shallow bays into dry land. During the 1950s, dredges ran around the clock, significantly increasing the size of many barrier islands. By 1970, dredge-and-fill had added 4,800 acres to the County, mostly in Boca Ciega Bay and Clearwater Bay.

Unintended environmental effects from dredging and filling prompted the creation of agencies to regulate the activity. In 1955, the Legislature created the Pinellas County Water and Navigation Control Authority. Continued problems from dredge-and-fill led Pinellas County to push the Legislature for two special acts to halt the sale of local submerged lands, thus ending the "manufacture" of land.<sup>xi</sup>

#### Acres of Fill, 1900-1970

LOCATION	ACREAGE ADDED
Tampa Bay	925 acres
Boca Ciega Bay	2,506 acres
Clearwater Bay	1,359 acres
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,790 acres</b>



*Aerial photographs of Boca Ciega Bay before (circa 1926) and after (circa 1970) dredge and fill operations*

With the continued pace of growth came a corresponding increase in Pinellas County's developed land area. The amount of developed land as a percentage of total land increased from 9 percent in 1943 to 14 percent in 1952 to 39 percent in 1963.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the percentage of the County's urban population grew from 81 percent in 1940 to 87 percent in 1950 to 91 percent in 1960.<sup>5</sup> As the urban area increased, the agricultural area decreased. Citrus acreage in Pinellas fell by 53 percent between 1956 and 1966 and Pinellas' position as a leading citrus producing County diminished.<sup>6</sup>

## **POST-WAR INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

The tremendous growth in Pinellas during the 1950s placed increasing demands on public services. In an attempt to provide land use controls, Pinellas County's Board of County Commissioners adopted zoning regulations and a building permit procedure in 1955.<sup>xii</sup> As growth continued, however, the provision of required public services failed to keep pace. Much development occurred without the benefit of proper planning, resulting in many of the problems that the County still suffers from today.

During this same period, saltwater intrusion threatened the County's already strained water supply. Water use by the growing population had drawn the underground aquifer below the level required to prevent seepage of salt water from Tampa Bay and the Gulf. According to the *Water Supply Element of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan*, the Pinellas County Water System realized, as the city of St. Petersburg had in earlier years, that the peninsula's internal water sources would not be adequate. Therefore, the County leased the Eldridge-Wilde wellfield in the corner of northeastern Pinellas County and northwestern Hillsborough County, and the wellfield was put into operation in 1956.<sup>xiii</sup>

Inadequate sewer facilities presented another problem for Pinellas County's growing population. Through the late 1950s, a sizable proportion of the County's total population remained unconnected to a central sanitary sewer system. In 1960, the South Cross Bayou Sanitary District was created, the first of many such districts aimed at expanding sewer service across the County. In 1969 and 1970, all of the sanitary districts consolidated into the Pinellas County Sewer System, which, along with municipal sewer facilities already in existence, helped resolve the sewage treatment problem.<sup>xiv</sup>

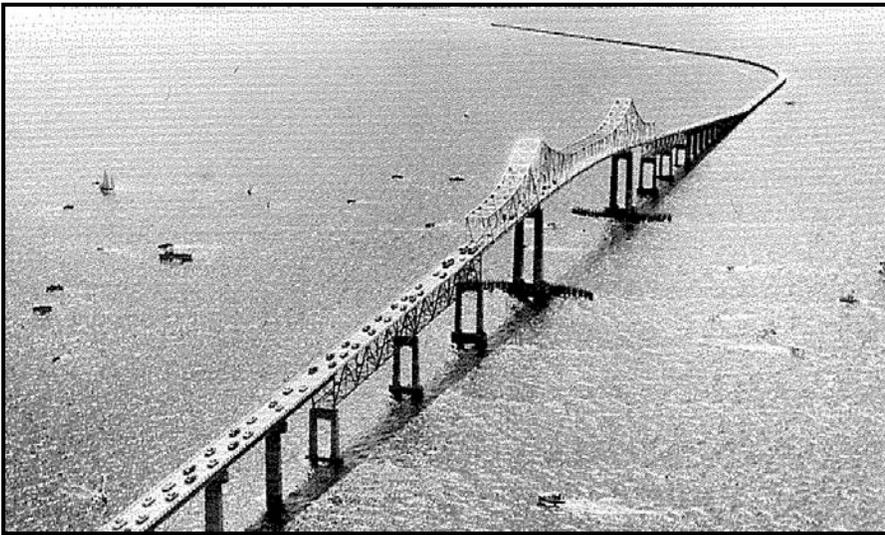
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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 6: "Land Development Trends, 1913 – 2006"

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 2: "Urban and Rural Population of Pinellas County, 1920-2000"

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 8: "Total Citrus Acreage in Pinellas County 1956 – 2005"

Having outgrown its second courthouse by the early 1960s, the County built a new courthouse immediately west of the old facility. The new building opened in 1963, and a judicial wing was later added in 1968. Also in 1963, the Florida Legislature enacted a law permitting County elected officials to appoint a County administrator, who would be responsible for implementing and administering policies established by the Board of County Commissioners. Pinellas became the first County in Florida to adopt the commission-administrator form of government when voters approved the system in a 1964 countywide referendum.



Construction of several major transportation projects also took place during this period. Perhaps the most spectacular was the first span of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, rising to a height of 150 feet across Tampa Bay and connecting the Pinellas peninsula with Manatee County. Opening on September 6, 1954, this toll bridge replaced the long-outdated Bee Line Ferry service.

*The Sunshine Skyway Bridge in 1954 - connecting Pinellas and Manatee Counties. This bridge replaced the Bee Line Ferry Service (below) that carried passengers and automobiles from the southern tip of Pinellas County to Manatee County across the mouth of Tampa Bay. Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library*



*Bee Line Ferry, circa 1946  
Courtesy of Heritage Village  
Archives & Library*

Additionally, a twin span was added to the Gandy Bridge, and the Howard Frankland Bridge was built across Tampa Bay midway between the Gandy Bridge and the Courtney Campbell Causeway. Opened in 1960, the Howard Frankland later became part of the federal interstate highway system. Also constructed during the period from 1960-1962 were the Pinellas Bayway, which provided another link between the southern Pinellas mainland and the Gulf Beaches, and the Clearwater Pass Bridge, connecting Clearwater Beach with Sand Key.



*Howard Frankland Bridge. 1960. Looking west toward Pinellas County, this photograph shows the Opening Day of the bridge.*

On July 19, 1955, the last segment of the Gulf Coast Highway (now known as U.S. Highway 19) opened for traffic in St. Petersburg, providing a direct route between Pinellas and Tallahassee. The new road was hailed as another boon to tourism, and commercial and residential development began alongside it almost as soon as it was completed.

As early as the 1960s, planners contended that the County would require a north-south freeway between St. Petersburg and Clearwater to augment U.S. 19. The Pinellas Expressway Authority was created by the Legislature in 1967 to develop a plan for the proposed road. By 1969, the authority proposed a bond issue for a 23-mile toll road, running roughly parallel to Alternate U.S. 19. The plan, however, drew criticism from both politicians and taxpayers. Later that year, when the Pinellas County Commission refused to commit gas tax money for construction, expressway plans were scrapped. The Legislature then dismantled the Expressway Authority and gave its powers to the County Commission.

In the immediate post-war era, Pinellas County along with the rest of the nation began to see a major revolution in consumerism -- the shopping center -- that would affect the form of urban areas as well as the way people shopped. Prompted by shifts in residential patterns and transportation modes away from traditional downtown shopping districts and towards suburban enclaves, a very different form of commercial development took form. Whereas traditional downtown districts consisted of many buildings on many lots, the new districts

were in shopping centers built by a single developer on a single parcel. Furthermore, these new shopping centers, with their expansive parking lots, were designed to accommodate cars, which were replacing buses and streetcars as the nation's predominant form of urban transportation. With the advent of the shopping center, and later the enclosed shopping mall, retail activity moved away from downtown areas, a trend that would strongly influence Pinellas County's landscape from the 1950s onward.



Another innovation that had tremendous impact on the County's postwar development was the mobile home. This low-cost dwelling was especially popular with retirees, who in this period formed an even more important sector of Pinellas's population. By the early 1960s, Pinellas contained more mobile homes than any other County in the state, a distinction which continued through the 1990s.

With the booming population and urbanization of the County, Pinellas officials became aware of the need for expanded public facility offerings. Recreational opportunities greatly expanded during the post-war period as the Pinellas County Park Department opened eight new facilities throughout the County. These parks, many of which stood on sites of historical significance, were: Philippe (1948), Taylor (1958), Ridgecrest (1962), Fort De Soto (1963), Belleair Causeway (1965), Howard (1966), Anderson (1966), and Lake Seminole (1968).

## **POST-WAR STRUCTURE OF THE ECONOMY**

The post-war boom and continued prosperity in Pinellas County reflected state and national trends. Nationally, the pent-up demand for consumer goods spurred the production of cars, homes, appliances, and other peacetime commodities to unprecedented levels. Increased production, in turn, led to higher wages and greater purchasing power. The growing availability and affordability of air conditioning technology in the 1950s provided new comfort in Florida's hot summer climate. A population able to afford new homes, with greater mobility, more leisure time, and a desire for resort living all contributed to development in Pinellas.

Through the early 1950s, service and retail trade continued to dominate the County's economy, indicative of the importance of retirement and resort industries to the area. It was, therefore, not surprising that the largest numerical gains in employment during the decade from 1950 to 1960 were made in the service and retail trade sectors. When employment growth is examined in terms of percentage change, however, manufacturing far outpaced all other sectors, increasing almost 233 percent during this period. In fact, by 1960, manufacturing had replaced construction as the third largest employment sector in the County.<sup>7</sup>

The growth in the manufacturing sector resulted largely from increased federal spending for defense and space exploration. During the late 1950s, a number of large electronic and aerospace companies began locating manufacturing facilities in Florida. Among those to set up plants in Pinellas were Honeywell, Sperry-Rand, Electronic Communications, Inc. (ECI), and General Electric. While the center of the nation's space program at Cape Canaveral may have helped attract the giant high-tech companies to the state, they were lured mainly by Florida's cheap land and labor.<sup>xv</sup> Although the traditional employment sectors of retail trade and services continued to dominate the Pinellas economy, the growth of the manufacturing sector diversified the economic base.



*Sperry-Univac, Oldsmar, FL  
circa 1960*

In 1957, the Light Industry Council of Pinellas County was established to encourage the development of nonpolluting industry and enhance employment opportunities. The Council became a full-time organization in 1961 when a permanent executive director was hired. In 1969, the Council was changed under new legislation to the Pinellas County Industry Council, with the responsibility of promoting and encouraging all aspects of economic development.

During the decade from 1960 to 1970, the manufacturing sector continued to grow steadily. As in the past, however, the retail trade and service sectors,

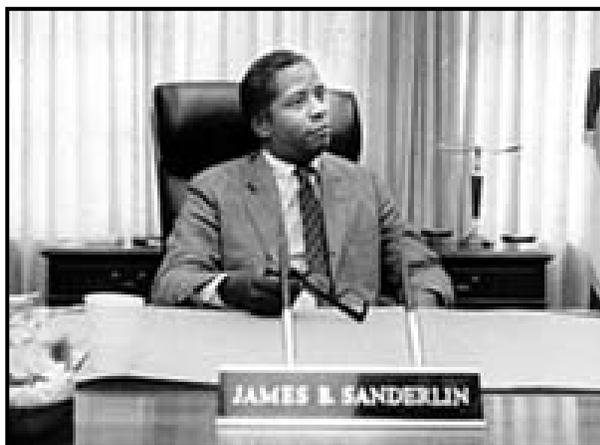
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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 4: "Pinellas County Employment Sectors"

influenced by increasing numbers of tourists and retirees, continued their domination of the local economy.<sup>8</sup> Pinellas County's labor force continued to grow during the post-World War II period, due not only to increases in the population, but also because of the massive influx of women into the labor force, a reflection of national trends.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL TRENDS**

During the mid-1960s, Pinellas County's population surpassed that of Hillsborough to become the third most populous County in the state behind Dade and Broward. The years 1950 to 1960 witnessed a tremendous in-migration of older persons. During that decade, the County's population of persons aged 65 and over increased by 63,226, or 211.2 percent. The steady in-migration of older persons had a substantial impact on the County, particularly in regard to components of population change. Prior to 1960, Pinellas maintained a positive, although declining, proportion of natural population increase (births exceeded deaths). During the years 1960 to 1970, however, the County began to experience a negative natural increase (deaths exceeded births). This unique phenomenon resulted from the disproportionate share of older persons living in Pinellas, particularly in relation to the number of females in the childbearing age groups. Population growth during this decade therefore became dependent upon in-migration. Moreover, a reversal of this trend has not occurred in subsequent year. The 2000 death rate of 13.8 persons per 1000 compared to a birth rate of 10.6 per thousand means that Pinellas County registers a -3.2 persons per 1000 natural rate of population growth, compared to 2.6 per 1000 for Florida and 6.0 per thousand for the United States as a whole.<sup>9</sup>



The nationwide civil rights movement also carried significant impact for African-American residents of the County. On May 7, 1964, Attorney James B. Sanderlin sued the Pinellas County School System on behalf of five African-American families, challenging the Florida state dual system of public schools and its continued refusal to comply with the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling. Throughout the mid-50s and 60s,

Pinellas County continued to expand segregated schools such as Gibbs Junior College in defiance of the federal courts' call for integration. The complaint

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 4: "Pinellas County Employment Sectors"

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 9: "Components of Population Change in Pinellas County, 1940-2000"

was successful, with the decision simultaneously desegregating the Pinellas, Sarasota, and Hillsborough County school systems. Although a court ordered desegregation plan, requiring busing in order to maintain integrated facilities, was not approved and implemented until July 23, 1971, the 1960s was an era when Pinellas began to confront a long history of physical, economic, and social segregation.<sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>iii</sup> Greiner Engineering Sciences, Inc., "St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport Master Plan Report," Tampa, Florida, 1978, p. 1.

<sup>iv</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "The Ports and Aviation Element of Pinellas County's General Plan: An Element of the Comprehensive Plan of Pinellas County," 1980, p. 69.

<sup>v</sup> Covington, pp. cit., p. 249.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>vii</sup> Grismer, *The Story of St. Petersburg*, p. 200.

<sup>viii</sup> Fuller, *St. Petersburg and Its People*, p. 258.

<sup>ix</sup> Grismer, *The Story of St. Petersburg*, p. 200.

<sup>x</sup> Covington, Ph.D., W. cit., pp. 249-250.

<sup>xi</sup> Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, Pinellas County Planning Department, "Bay Area Fills," Clearwater, Florida, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>xii</sup> Pinellas County Building Department.

<sup>xiii</sup> Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, "The Water Supply Element of The Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan" Final Adoption, 8 August 1989, p. xiv.

<sup>xiv</sup> Pinellas County Utilities.

<sup>xv</sup> John Koenig, "Spawned By Space And Low Costs", Florida Trend, May 1993.

<sup>xvi</sup> <http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/USI/history2004.html>

**CONTINUED GROWTH:  
1970-1990**



## **CONTINUED GROWTH: 1970-1990**

During the period from 1970 to 1990, Pinellas continued to experience rapid growth and development. Over the two decades, the County's population grew by 63% -- an increase of more than 329,330 people. Although Pinellas continued to attract a sizable population of retirees, a large number of younger adults also became residents during the 1970s and 80s. The growth in young adults can be dually attributed to the aging of the baby boomer generation within the County and expanded employment opportunities, which attracted increasing numbers of working-age people. In fact, Pinellas County's median age actually decreased by 6 years from 48.1 years to 42.1 years between 1970 and 1990, with 72% of population growth in the 1980s occurring in the 25-44 age group. However, the County's median age as well as its proportion of persons in the 65 and over age group still remained higher than that of both Florida and the U.S., signaling the continued demographic importance of the retirement community in Pinellas County.

### **DEVELOPMENT TRENDS**

During the 1970s and 1980s, Pinellas County continued to transition into an urban County. Especially prominent during this period, residential areas rapidly expanded while agricultural and forested land diminished. During the period from 1970 to 1990, the County's housing units doubled from 228,771 to 458,341. Among the communities exhibiting housing unit growth rates greater than 100 percent were Largo, Indian Shores, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs, South Pasadena, Belleair Beach, Oldsmar and unincorporated Pinellas County. Increasing urbanization and high land values, in combination with hard freezes in December 1983 and January 1985 resulted in most of the County's last remaining citrus groves being sold for development. Between 1976 and 1986, commercial citrus acreage in Pinellas decreased by 89.5%, from 3,770 acres to 394 acres.<sup>1</sup> Correspondingly, by 1990 approximately 81 percent of the County's land had been developed, signaling the end of the rural era.<sup>2</sup>

The boom period of the early 1970s saw tremendous growth in residential construction. Annual data on residential building permit activity shows dramatic increases during this period, with construction reaching its zenith in 1972 and 1973 when more than 30,000 new building permits were issued each year. During this period, construction of multi-family housing far outpaced that of single-family structures, with the period from 1970-1974 especially marked by a tremendous overbuilding of condominiums. Reminiscent of the 1920s land boom, condominium construction in the 70s was based more on speculation

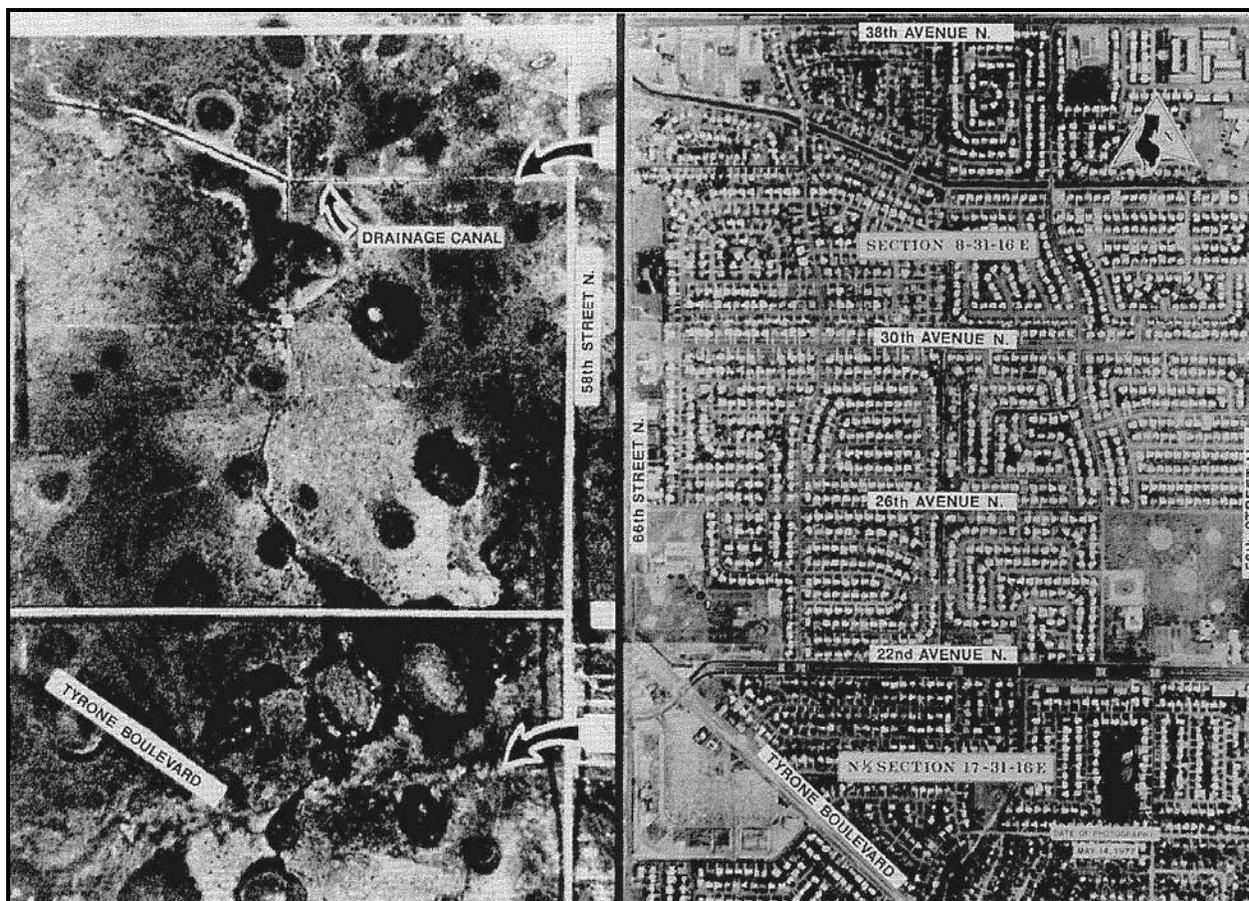
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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 8: "Citrus Acreage in Pinellas County"

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 2: "Urban and Rural Population of Pinellas County"

and anticipated demand than on a firm foundation of pre-selling to prospective occupant owners.

A steep decline in building activity occurred simultaneous to the mid-1970s recession. According to one account, when the full force of the recession hit in 1974, builders were stuck with huge inventories, and individual speculators saddled with units they often could neither sell nor rent.<sup>i</sup> Moreover, the addition of substantial numbers of multi-family units, originally developed as condominiums but later marketed as rental apartments, caused apartment vacancy levels to rise to historically high levels.<sup>ii</sup> It is interesting to note that it was not until the late 1970s that the County's inventory of unsold condominiums was finally depleted. At that point, in response to a renewed demand for condominiums, many apartment building owners began to convert their rental units to condominiums, in turn leading to a shortage of rental housing. One study indicated that approximately 7,000 rental units in Pinellas County were converted to condominiums between 1977 and early 1981, when poor market conditions halted conversions.<sup>iii</sup>



*These aerial photographs taken of St. Petersburg, illustrate the dramatic degree of development that occurred in the 50 years between 1926 and 1977. Lines on the 1926 photograph delineate that area's section, township and range.*

The steep decline in building activity recovered to pre-boom levels by 1978. During the last two years of the 1970s, residential building permits were more evenly distributed between single-family and multi-family construction. By the mid-1980s, the County entered a new building boom, with 13,657 building permits issued in 1984 -- the most since the early 1970s. Throughout the 1980s, the fast pace of construction continued, with single-family residences now the dominant form of construction.

Especially prominent since the 1980s, tremendous growth occurred in the County's northern section, with the conversion of farms and citrus groves dramatically transforming areas such as Palm Harbor, East Lake Tarpon, Highpoint and Countryside. The cities of Oldsmar and Safety Harbor experienced a far greater growth rate during the 1980s than any other municipalities in the County.

In Oldsmar effects of this growth boom, which increased the city's population by 221% between 1980 and 1990, were evident when its sewage treatment plant reached full capacity, necessitating a state-mandated moratorium on new development in May 1985. The moratorium remained in effect for six months, until the City agreed to expand and improve its sewage treatment plant. It was also during the 1970s that



*Aerial of Palm Harbor  
U.S. 19 and Lake Tarpon*

the Countryside area was developed by the U.S. Home Corporation. The opening of the Countryside Mall in 1975 signaled the area's establishment as an important economic contributor to the northern part of the County. Countryside was later annexed by Clearwater, a move which was to have a very positive economic impact on that city.

Other areas that experienced especially intensive development booms since 1980 include St. Petersburg's Maximo area and the adjacent Pinellas Bayway/Tierra Verde area. Vacant beachfront property dwindled during the eighties, with waterfront property values soaring and many older beachfront buildings demolished to be replaced with larger structures and multi-family units.

Over 1985's Labor Day weekend, Hurricane Elena skirted the Florida West Coast. A total of 300,000 persons were evacuated countywide, along with mobile home communities and low-lying areas throughout Pinellas. While the hurricane never made landfall here, the storm lingered for almost two days offshore, pounding the Florida West Coast with heavy seas, rain and wind before changing direction and slamming into Mississippi. The storm caused more than \$100 million in damage to Pinellas, with the most extensive destruction occurring to beaches and low-lying areas. Many waterfront homes were damaged or destroyed by pounding waves, while the Big Indian Rocks Fishing Pier, a landmark for 26 years, was demolished. The Safety Harbor Pier was also destroyed. In the storm's aftermath, Pinellas, Levy, Franklin and Manatee counties were declared federal disaster areas. Hillsborough, Dixie, and Wakulla counties were later added to this list.



Commercial and industrial offerings in the County likewise expanded during this period. In response to the County's rapid population growth and the increased pace of residential construction, shopping center development proliferated. The 1970s witnessed the development of large regional shopping malls of more than a half-million square feet: Tyrone Square Mall (opened 1972), Clearwater Mall (opened 1973), Countryside Mall (opened 1975), and Pinellas Square Mall (1977). The trend continued into the 80s, with the number of centers of more than 20,000 square feet growing from 126 to 192 between 1983 and

1986 alone. Smaller shopping centers also began multiplying during the 1970s and 80s, further drawing retail trade activity into the suburbs and away from traditional downtowns. Following this boom, by the mid-1980s commercial development slowed as an oversupply of retail space became evident. Despite this slowdown in construction, total retail sales in Pinellas grew significantly during the late 1980s and early 1990s, from \$3.5 billion in 1980 to \$5.3 billion in 1985 to \$8.3 billion by 1991.<sup>iv</sup>

Although service and trade continued to dominate the County's economic landscape, industrial growth did experience some expansion during the 70s and 80s. Of particular note is the mid-County Gateway/Highpoint area, which became one of the most active regions for new development in the Tampa Bay area during the 1980s.

The Gateway area continues to serve as an employment district for the County, as of 2006 hosting 14.6 million square feet of non-residential space and serving as headquarters to many of the region's largest employers including the Home Shopping Network, Raymond James, and Equifax.<sup>v</sup>



### **NEW DIRECTIONS IN MANAGING GROWTH**

New growth outpaced the development of water and sewer systems, leading to an acute shortage of potable water and strapping the County's ability to dispose of sewage. Below-average rainfall during these years compounded the problems. In response, the County instituted a short-term building moratorium and water rationing while the water system was expanded and a growth management policy was developed. Afterwards, the County, as a major water supplier, implemented a program to allocate building permits based on estimated building demand and available water supplies. The County's water rationing program was suspended shortly after the onset of the mid-1970s national recession that temporarily reduced building activity. During numerous periods throughout the 1980s, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) declared water shortages and instituted water-use restrictions on Pinellas and neighboring counties, due to drought conditions and failures of water supply pipes.

By the early 1970s it became apparent that Pinellas County's rapid growth and development were putting a severe strain not only on water resources, but on many aspects of public services and facilities (i.e. water, sewer, solid waste disposal, and transportation). In response to strains on the County's natural resources and infrastructure, the Pinellas Planning Council (PPC), originally created in 1964, was re-established in 1973 under a Special Act of the Florida Legislature, Chapter 73-594, Laws of Florida, as amended. The PPC was mandated to develop a countywide comprehensive plan and overall development policy document. When the mandatory Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) was adopted in 1974, it represented the first formal countywide attempt to manage growth and control ad hoc development in Pinellas. After the CLUP's adoption, public services and facilities in Pinellas County were planned for in accordance with the planned ultimate population arising from

the CLUP. Additionally, with the passage of the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act (LGCPA) in 1975, all municipalities and counties in Florida were required to develop local comprehensive plans, as instruments for assisting local governments and their citizens to manage growth.

In 1985, the Florida legislature passed the Growth Management Act. Representing one of the most significant steps towards controlling future growth in Florida, the legislation greatly increased planning responsibilities of both state and local governments. Among its provisions, the Act requires that roads, water systems, parks and other public services and facilities necessitated by development be available prior to new development being authorized. In Pinellas, several special funding sources have been instituted since 1985 to provide needed public services and facilities. These include a 6 cent local option gasoline tax through 2017, providing roughly \$17.7 million annually and a transportation impact fee charged to new construction. Both these sources are specifically targeted to pay for transportation improvements in the County and its municipalities.



Another vital source of revenue to support infrastructure improvements is the “Penny for Pinellas,” a one-cent local sales tax first approved by voters in a November 1989 referendum. Generating \$827.9 million dollars over a 10-year period, Penny for Pinellas funds were split between the County and municipalities to pay for such projects as the criminal justice center and County jail upgrades, the Fred E. Marquis Pinellas Trail, the Bayside Bridge, and acquisition of parkland and preserves such as Shell Key.<sup>vi</sup>

The development of a forward thinking approach to planning for development and the creation of mechanisms to ensure quality of life improvements for the County’s citizens would prove vital to the continued flourishing of Pinellas.

### **IMPROVEMENTS IN FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

With mechanisms in place to properly manage and fund expanded development, the services provided by the County expanded during the 1980s. In 1983, Pinellas County's new resource recovery plant began operating, revolutionizing the County's waste disposal process by turning garbage into electricity. The \$160 million facility, financed by a special bond issue, can burn up to 3,000 tons of garbage daily to produce enough electricity to service 45,000 homes. The plant also recovers 55 tons of metal each day, which is sold for recycling. Through burning and recycling, the plant reduces by 95 percent the volume of solid waste it processes. Also contributing to a reduction in waste volume is a recycling program, begun by the County and a number of

municipalities in 1988. The program collects glass, aluminum, steel, paper, plastics and yard waste. By 1992, the program was recycling 30 percent of the County's waste, complying with the State's waste-reduction goal two years before the deadline.<sup>vii</sup>

A prominent change in the County's service offerings was the creation of a Countywide Emergency Medical Services system (EMS) via an act of the Florida Legislature in 1980. Operated in concurrence with the contracted ambulance company SUNSTAR, and aided by a 911 system that simultaneously dispatches fire department paramedics, Pinellas County maintains an average response time of less than 4 minutes. As such, Pinellas County EMS continues to be considered a model for emergency response across the country.<sup>viii</sup>

The County made some noteworthy changes in its jail facilities during the early 1980s. Prompted by crowding at the jail in downtown Clearwater and a desire to consolidate criminal justice and confinement facilities, the County opened a new Criminal Courts Complex in 1982 and a new Pinellas County Jail Complex in 1983. Both are located in the Highpoint area near the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.

The Jail Complex, which currently houses 1,675 beds, consists of maximum, medium, minimum, and female security facilities. Total renovation of the old jail facility was completed in the mid-1980s, and the building now houses County government offices.

Rapid growth in unincorporated areas of the County led some communities to develop autonomous service offerings. In Palm Harbor, residents chose to create a system to provide public services much like those that would be offered by an incorporated city. In 1985, the Florida Legislature and the Pinellas Board of County Commissioners created a special taxing district for Palm Harbor, allowing residents within district boundaries to tax themselves for services that the County did not provide. The legislation also provided the district with a defense against annexation by neighboring cities. In their first act as a unified community in October 1985, Palm Harbor residents overwhelmingly approved a referendum to levy taxes for public library and recreational services and facilities. Today, the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency continues to oversee the Palm Harbor Library and Recreation Department.

As Pinellas grew more urban, greater cultural and educational opportunities for its residents became available. For example, in 1982, the Salvador Dali Museum opened in St. Petersburg, housing the world's largest collection of works by the famed Spanish surrealist. The Ruth Eckerd Hall performing arts center opened in Clearwater in 1983 and continues to host musical and theatrical performances along with serving as home to the Marsha P. Hoffman



Performing Arts Institute. The \$26-million renovation in the late 1980s of downtown St. Petersburg's Bayfront Center also enhanced performing arts facilities in the County. The Bayfront complex contains an 8,400 seat arena as well as the 2,000-seat Mahaffey Theater.

*Mahaffey Theater*

One more significant County cultural facility created during this period was Heritage Village, which opened in 1977. This facility, located in Largo, contains a museum with historic artifacts, documents, manuscripts, photographs, and other memorabilia, as well as a number of the County's historically significant buildings, which have been moved to the Village and restored. Heritage Village helps preserve Pinellas County's cultural legacy and serves as an important source of information on local history.

## **PUBLIC LANDS & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

As elsewhere throughout the United States, growing public consciousness of environmental protection brought changes to the County's development policy. Civic activism in the late 1960s led to legislation in 1969 creating the Boca Ciega Bay Aquatic Preserve and prohibiting further dredging in Boca Ciega Bay, thus saving the ecosystem from further destruction. In 1972, the County launched an initiative partnering citizens, government officials, environmental groups, and private interests to develop the Red Flag Charette. This document identified environmentally-sensitive land throughout Pinellas and set priorities for acquisition and protection. Also in 1972, voters passed a referendum supporting an ad valorem tax increase to support the purchase of lands listed in the Charette, and by 1974 the County created the Department of Environmental Management to manage the environmental lands that were being acquired by the public.<sup>ix</sup>



*Typical Boardwalk beach access to Sand Key*

One especially noteworthy acquisition of the 1970s concerned Sand Key in the city of Clearwater, one of the most northerly of the Pinellas gulf beaches. Until the late 1960s, the property was owned by a local individual, Ed Wright, who

left the land undeveloped and allowed public access such that the island became a popular beach area and recreation spot. When the United States Steel Corporation purchased Sand Key and began developing high-rise condominiums on the property, a citizen group called "Save Sand Key, Inc." quickly organized to prevent loss of this natural recreation space. In the following years, negotiation efforts by the City of Clearwater along with County funds from a 1974 parkland acquisition tax and federal support via the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program resulted in the County acquiring 66 acres on the north end of the island for a total cost of \$6.3 million. The Sand Key property was developed as a beach access park by the Pinellas County Park Department in the early 1980s, demonstrating the mix of citizen effort and funding commitments that continue to allow the County to protect environmentally sensitive land.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Pinellas County Park Department and the County Real Estate Division continued to expand and develop park facilities under the County park system. During this period four more County parks were opened: War Veterans' Memorial (1973), Redington Shores Beach Access (1975), Sawgrass Lake (1979), and the original Brooker Creek Park (1979), which was subsequently renamed John Chestnut, Sr. Park. Municipalities also developed and expanded several municipal parks.

## **TRANSPORTATION TRENDS**

Traffic congestion on Pinellas County's streets and highways escalated during the 1970s, as more and more motorists clogged roads designed to serve much smaller populations. Rush-hour traffic tie-ups were particularly bad. A number of transportation improvement projects were undertaken during the decade -- some successful, others not. In addition, in 1976, federal law created the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide countywide transportation planning and serve as a forum for cooperative decision-making on countywide transportation issues. Later, in 1979, the MPO also became an entity under state legislation.<sup>x</sup>



*Traffic on U.S. Highway 19*

Among the noteworthy transportation improvements completed during the 1970s and 80s were the second span of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge, the construction of a new span of the Gandy Bridge (the original bridge, built in the 1920s, was torn down in 1970), the completion of numerous segments of Interstate 275 in southeastern Pinellas, the construction of an overpass at the intersection of U.S. Highway 19 and Gulf-

to-Bay Boulevard (S.R. 60) in Clearwater, a much needed widening and resurfacing of the Courtney Campbell Causeway from McMullen-Booth Road to the Hillsborough County line, and enhancements to such thoroughfares as Belcher Road, Starkey/Keene Road, and 113th Street North/New Ridge Road. Additionally, plans were made for the widening and improvement of U.S. Highway 19 to a six-lane facility with service roads and freeway-type interchanges at major intersections.

Two planned transportation projects which proved to be unsuccessful were the Pinellas Parkway and the Tampa Bay Area Rapid Transit Authority. The Pinellas Parkway was a proposed north-south toll road to link central Pinellas and Pasco County. The road would have been developed east of U.S. Highway 19, almost parallel to McMullen-Booth Road, and was to have included a new north-south bridge spanning Old Tampa Bay. However, like the Pinellas Expressway plan in the 1960s, the Pinellas Parkway plan drew strong opposition from the public and many elected officials. In a 1976 Countywide referendum, the plan was defeated by a 3-to-1 margin.



On May 9, 1980 a freighter rammed the support pier of the Sunshine Skyway's southbound span, plunging a quarter mile of steel and concrete roadway into Tampa Bay and throwing seven vehicles and a Greyhound bus 150 feet into the water below. Thirty-five people were killed.

The construction of the new Sunshine Skyway Bridge, at the time the largest construction project ever undertaken in Florida with a six year building period and cost of \$225 million, inaugurated a new era of transportation upgrades. The new Sunshine Skyway Bridge, completed in 1987, is the largest cable-stayed segmental box girder-type bridge in the United States. A number of safety features -- such as protective bumpers called "dolphins" to shield the piers, a message board system to warn motorists of problems, and electronic navigation aids for Tampa Bay harbor pilots--have been installed to prevent another bridge disaster.



U.S. Highway 19 received some much needed improvements when the six-laning of this facility, from East Bay Drive to Tarpon Avenue, commenced in 1980. In the mid-1980s, construction began on a series of overpasses at key intersections on U.S. 19; this work is still in progress. Other significant improvements in the 1980s included the opening of the Park Boulevard Bridge in 1982, providing another much-needed beach access and hurricane evacuation route, and the extension of Interstate 275 through south St. Petersburg to the Sunshine Skyway. Additionally, in 1988 the State commenced construction on a new southbound span of the Howard Frankland Bridge, and later the old Howard Frankland Bridge was renovated to form the northbound span of the bridge.

Public transportation also underwent extensive transformations in the 70s and 80s, in terms of local providers. In 1970 the Florida Legislature, under a special



act, created the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA). The PSTA, then called the Central Pinellas Transit Authority, began operations in 1973, providing bus service north of the city of St. Petersburg, which had its own bus service since 1926.<sup>xi</sup> In 1983 a transit unification referendum sponsored by the Metropolitan Planning

Organization passed, clearing the way for the absorption of the St. Petersburg Municipal Transit System into the Countywide Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA), which began service on October 1, 1984. The 1980s witnessed the end of Amtrak train service in Pinellas County. Passenger trains between Tampa, Clearwater, and St. Petersburg were replaced with bus service in February 1984. Amtrak's discontinuation of service represented the close of an era in passenger train travel in Pinellas County that had begun in 1887.



*PSTA Bus Station Downtown Clearwater*

Similar to trends in the creation of oversight agencies for Pinellas County's urban development, ever-growing strains on the region's highway systems led to several attempts to plan for future transportation expansions. In 1971, the St. Petersburg Urban Area Transportation Study completed initial development of a long range transportation plan, which was followed by the 1985 Street and Highway (Network 7) Plan. In the early 1970s, the Tampa Bay Area Rapid Transit Authority (TBART) was organized to develop a regional mass transportation system. When it was determined that a regional mass transit system was not justified and that each respective County should establish its own countywide system, TBART was dissolved in 1977.

## **ECONOMIC TRENDS**

In line with booming populations and increased urbanization, Pinellas County's economy grew rapidly during the 1970s, with total employment increasing by 113,151, or 69 percent. The service and retail trade sectors maintained their domination of the local economy, once again registering the largest numerical gains in employment between 1970-1980: services increased 38,785 (up 77.4 percent) and retail trade increased 21,359 (up 56.2 percent). The County's third largest employment sector, manufacturing, continued to grow steadily (up 70 percent), as more new firms, typically high technology manufacturing companies, moved into the area to take advantage of the favorable business climate. During this period there were an additional 1,010 new plants and plant expansions, creating more than 17,000 new jobs. Concurrent with the building boom of the 1970s, construction employment rose steadily, reaching a peak in 1973. When the recession hit in 1974, construction activity and employment dropped dramatically, stabilizing and again growing by the end of the decade. Overall, construction employment registered a 58.7 percent increase between 1970 and 1980.

Similar trends continued through the 1980s, and by 1990 the greatest number of jobs were in the trade (comprised mainly of construction employment) and service sectors, respectively accounting for 29 and 43 percent of all jobs. Manufacturing, which had contributed to the County's economic diversity, created nearly 16,000 new jobs for Pinellas between 1980 and 1990, yet the proportion of total employment represented by manufacturing jobs declined from 15 to 13 percent. While the manufacturing sector had been strong through most of the 1980s, it was dealt a severe blow by the recession of the late 1980s, particularly in computers and electronics, which experienced a 30 percent job decline between 1988 and 1992.<sup>xii</sup> Tourism continued to be important to the Pinellas economy, particularly with the growth in the 1980s of international tourism. Pinellas became a popular summer vacation spot for Europeans, who visited in growing numbers during the 1980s. By 1990, Europeans represented half of all vacationers in the County in the late summer months.<sup>xiii</sup>

By far the largest percentage increase amongst all employment sectors during this period occurred in finance, insurance and real estate services, which grew 113% from 1970-1980 alone. This sector's rapid growth was another result of the County's booming population growth, particularly among retirees with a disproportionate demand for financial and real estate services.<sup>xiv</sup> So great was the growth of this sector that by 1980 finance, insurance, and real estate services replaced construction as the fourth largest employment sector in Pinellas County.

In much of Florida through the 1980s, rapid job creation and low unemployment encouraged considerable population in-migration. This has been especially true in Pinellas County, where employment rose 39 percent between 1980 and 1991. In the same period, the State's employment figures rose by nearly the same rate, far surpassing the national growth of 18 percent. As favorable job prospects attracted working-age residents, the County's median age fell from 45.8 in 1980 to 42.1 in 1990. The proportion of working residents in the same period increased from 31 percent to 41 percent. While the County continues to attract large numbers of retirees, their proportion of the total population has steadily dropped while the working-age population has steadily risen. Since 1980, the unemployment rate in Pinellas, while it rose markedly in the recessions of 1982-1983 and 1990-1991, has been consistently lower than state and national levels. This has been due in part to the County's sizeable elderly population, which derives most of its income from Social Security, pensions, interest, rent, and other relatively "recession-proof" sources.

Overall, the years between 1970 and 1980 transformed Pinellas County into a truly urban area, in terms of population densities, land development trends, and economic characteristics. During the 1990s and into the new Millennium this transformation would continue, as Pinellas County matured and comprehensive planning instruments took hold.

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<sup>i</sup> Elizabeth Whitney, "Is Another Condo Glut in Florida's Future?" *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 January 1981.

<sup>ii</sup> Reinhold P. Wolff Economic Research, Inc., Rental Housing Needs Analysis - Pinellas County, Florida, Prepared for the Housing Finance Authority of Pinellas County, 24 July 1984, p. 28.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>iv</sup> Sales and Marketing Management "Survey of Buying Power", Published annually by Bill Communication, Inc. New York, NY 1981-1992.

<sup>v</sup> "Gateway Area Profile." [http://www.gatewaychamber.org/area\\_employment.html](http://www.gatewaychamber.org/area_employment.html)

<sup>vi</sup> Pinellas County Government Online, "The Original Penny for Pinellas," <http://www.pinellasCounty.org/Penny/Original.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> Pinellas County Utilities.

<sup>viii</sup> Pinellas County EMS/Fire Administration. <http://www.pinellasCounty.org/EMS/default.htm>

<sup>ix</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department, *Planning to Stay*, pg. 33.

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<sup>x</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department, "Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization 1984 Annual Report," 21 Mar. 1985, p. 2.

<sup>xi</sup> Straub, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>xii</sup> St. Petersburg/Clearwater Economic Development Council. *Journal of Commerce and Industry*, 1992-1993.

<sup>xiii</sup> St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau. *Florida's Pinellas Suncoast Visitation Trends*, 1993.

<sup>xiv</sup> Pinellas County Planning Council, "Economic Base Study," April 1983, p. 24.

# **PINELLAS COUNTY**

## **1990 - 2006**



## **PINELLAS COUNTY: 1990 - 2006**

From 1990 into the early 2000s, Pinellas County steadily continued to attract new residents, though at a slower rate than that of the 1970s and 80s. According to the 2000 Census, the population of Pinellas was 921,482 – 69,836 more than in 1990; amounting to an 8.2 percent growth rate for the decade. Whereas the 1980s saw the greatest numerical population growth occurring in the unincorporated areas (up by 61,315 out of a total population growth of 123,128), the years between 1990 and 2000 witnessed a resurgence in growth in Pinellas' municipalities (whose population grew by 41,130 persons versus the 28,706 increase in unincorporated areas).

On a percentage basis, the greatest population increases occurred in Oldsmar (42.4% growth), which remains substantially less than the triple digit growth seen in the 1970s. Indeed, in the decade from 1990-2000, population growth for the County as a whole slowed to 1/3 its 1970s level. This demographic transition reflects contemporary changes in the County's development, as Pinellas transitions from expansionary to "buildout" conditions.<sup>i</sup> In fact, early into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pinellas is poised to become the first county in Florida to experience "buildout," a term indicating the absence of virgin land available for development.<sup>ii</sup>

Pinellas now ranks as Florida's sixth most populous County, behind Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hillsborough and Orange. In terms of geographic size, however, Pinellas, at 280 square miles, is the second smallest County in Florida. (Union County is the smallest at 246 square miles). This combination of a large population and a small geographic size has made Pinellas, with 3,380 persons per square mile, the most intensely developed county in Florida. According to the 2000 Census, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is comprised of Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties, was the 21<sup>st</sup> largest metropolitan area in the United States, and the second-largest in Florida, behind Miami-Ft. Lauderdale. Additionally, U.S. Census figures show that three of the state's largest cities -- St. Petersburg, Clearwater and Largo -- are located in Pinellas. The decade from 1990 to 2000 experienced greater diversity within Pinellas County's population. During this decade both Asian and Hispanic populations doubled in size and comprised a greater percentage of the overall County population in 2000 than they did ten years earlier (12.5% versus 7.7%). As Asians and Hispanics increased their share of the total population in the County, the portion comprised by whites decreased about five percent to 75.1%, while the share of the population held by blacks held steady during this ten year period. This increase in diversity of the County's population mirrors what is occurring at the national level.

On May 6, 2003 the Board of County Commissioners adopted an additional element to the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan that addresses the County's move towards buildout. Known as "Planning to Stay," the element expresses the desire to make Pinellas County a place where families and businesses will locate and plan to stay, and outlines key principles to guide urban planning and development in the new phase of the County's growth.<sup>iii</sup>

## **EXPANDING SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Recent developments in governance at both municipal and county levels reflect the expanding responsibilities accompanying urbanization. A significant change in St. Petersburg's government occurred in April 1993, when voters approved a referendum changing their city charter from a City Council/Manager to a strong mayor form of government. A year later, the City of Seminole went in the opposite direction and replaced a strong mayor form of government with a City Council/Manager system considered more efficient for their municipality. In 1999, changes in County government took place when voters approved an expansion of the Board of County Commissioners from five to seven commissioners. Under the new Charter rules, four commissioners reside in and represent specific districts and three are elected at large.<sup>iv</sup>

On March 25, 1997, a ten-year extension of the Penny for Pinellas, the one-cent additional local government option sales tax, was approved by 65% of voters. Estimated to generate \$1.36 billion over ten years (from February 1, 2000 to January 31, 2010), the extension provides the majority of funds for the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).<sup>v</sup> The Penny for Pinellas remains the primary source of funding for the roads, parks, drainage facilities, open space purchases and other improvements needed to achieve the quality of life envisioned in the local comprehensive plans.

Myriad improvements in public services have occurred since 1990. In 2003, the County's resource recovery facility underwent a \$63 million retrofit, to expand capacity and ensure its ability to continue recovery of energy and metals from the 1,114,640 tons of solid waste Pinellas County is projected to produce annually by 2015.<sup>vi</sup> The County took a step to promote the responsible disposal of potentially harmful household chemicals with the opening of a hazardous waste collection center in 1992. The center allows households to drop off free of charge, pesticides, paint removers, automotive fluids and other substances that pose an environmental risk when they are thrown away with ordinary garbage. The center recycles what it can and disposes the rest of the chemicals at EPA-approved facilities, adding an important component to the early success of the County's recycling program.



*Pinellas County Criminal Court Complex, 1977*

To meet the projected jail bed needs through the year 2010, and the operational, functional and spatial needs of the Judicial System, in October 1992, the County government issued a development order to expand and renovate the existing jail and courthouse facilities. Construction of expanded facilities at the Criminal Courts Complex, completed in 1997, expanded capacity to 500,000 square feet, increasing the number of courtrooms from 6 to 22 and upgrading judicial and security operations.

A citizen initiative and a vote by residents of unincorporated Pinellas to tax themselves for library services led to the creation in 1990 of the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative. The cooperative effectively consolidated the collections of participating library systems in the County, allowing a library card holder to check out materials from the collections of participating libraries. Currently, fifteen library systems belong to the cooperative, offering services ranging from electronic databases to deaf literacy collections to genealogical research assistance.

Another important contribution came with the opening of the Gulf Coast Museum of Art to the public in 1999, quickly followed by the Florida Botanical Garden in 2000. The merger of these facilities with Heritage Village into Pinewood Cultural Park formed a venue for ongoing natural, cultural, education and preservation initiatives.<sup>vii</sup> The museum offerings of St. Petersburg likewise continue to expand, with the City now home to The Florida International Museum, the Florida Holocaust Museum, Great Explorations, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts, the Dali Museum, and the St. Petersburg History Museum.



On October 24, 2000 the Pinellas County School Board approved the Choice Plan, granting the school district unitary status and aiming to increase voluntary integration of schools through parent choice. The plan, which went into effect in August 2003, aimed to end the court-ordered busing in place since 1971 while preventing re-segregation that would come with traditional districting. Other developments in the Pinellas County school system during the 1990s included a large expansion of school facilities and magnet program offerings, notably the opening of the Center for Advanced Technologies at Lakewood High School, Ridgecrest Elementary School's Center for Gifted Studies in 1994, and the International Baccalaureate and the Center for Wellness and Medical

Professions programs at the newly-established Palm Harbor University High School in 1996.<sup>viii</sup>



Higher education also underwent significant improvements. The St. Petersburg campus of the University of South Florida (USF) currently has an enrollment of nearly 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The campus hosts a 160,000 volume library and recently received classification as a Carnegie-designated research facility, signifying the active research undertakings of the College of Medicine's Department of Pediatrics Children's Research Institute, the Florida Humanities Council, the USGS Center for Coastal and Watershed Studies, and the Florida Marine Research Institute and Florida Institute of Oceanography.<sup>ix</sup> In June 2001, legislation was signed by Governor Jeb Bush enabling St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) to become the first among Florida's 28 public community colleges to transition to a four-year institution. The College dropped the "Junior" from its name, but not its commitment to its two-year mission, which remains as strong as ever.<sup>x</sup> Eckerd College, one of Florida's private national liberal arts colleges, and Clearwater Christian College also provide higher education offerings within Pinellas County.

## **LAND USE TRENDS**

The continued growth of Pinellas caused a corresponding decline in the County's proportion of undeveloped land. Construction through the 1990s consumed much of the remaining vacant acreage in the County so that by 2000 only 6.3% of the County's developable land remained vacant, meaning that only 11,338 acres suitable for development had yet to be developed.<sup>xi</sup> As such, Pinellas County now imminently approaches "buildout" and is expected to become the first county in Florida to run out of vacant raw land available for development.<sup>xii</sup>

Residential construction continues to dominate the County's developed acreage. Although the rampant pace of development that occurred during the 70s and 80s slowed as land availability diminished, construction has continued at a steady but slower pace for new housing units, with annual permits averaging 3,337 during the period 1990-2002. Construction during this period echoed development throughout the 80s, with single-family residences more prominent than multi-family dwellings. As of 2008, single-family residential and mobile homes occupied 32.2% of the County's total land area. Multi-family residential development comprised 6.8%. Another prominent trend in the late 1990s and into the 2000s, as incomes in the County rose and property values increased, was a rising median size and price for homes in the County. In 2000 the median size and price for an existing home was 1,356 square feet and

\$95,000 compared to a median size of 2,224 square feet and price of \$201,750 for newly built homes.<sup>xiii</sup>



*Typical mobile home park, circa 2001*

Especially in the latter years of the 1990s and into the 2000s, as scarce land and soaring property values increased pressure on the County's stock of residences, new challenges for housing arose. Mobile home communities, which in 2000 accounted for 12% of the County's housing stock (with 56,456 units), are often located on prime real estate and come under continually increasing pressure for redevelopment.

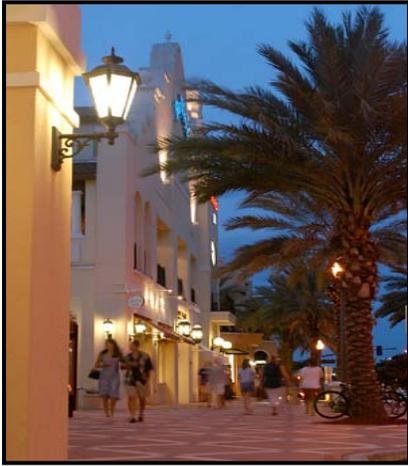
While mobile homes provide a much-needed source of affordable housing and often constitute close-knit communities, those constructed prior to 1994 suffer from high susceptibility to storm damage, and balancing safety concerns and redevelopment pressures with the advantages they provide continues to be an important goal of the County.<sup>xiv</sup> Pressure for increased residential housing availability and real estate speculation have likewise encouraged the conversion of hotels and motels and rental facilities into condominiums, a situation similar to that of the late 1970s and likely to affect both the affordable housing options and the County's tourist accommodation capacity in coming years. A recent "cooling" of the residential real estate market has substantially slowed, if not halted, these conversions.



*Storm damage to mobile home*

The approach of buildout likewise encourages a transition towards more multi-family and attached single-family townhomes, which support larger numbers of people at lower land and resource consumption levels. Such trends both raise quandaries as to protecting the historic character of the County's traditional

neighborhoods and introduce possibilities for higher-density, mixed-use development conducive to the County's increasingly urban character.



*BayWalk at Night*

Reflecting the suburban nature of development throughout the 1960s and 70s, commercial growth in recent decades siphoned a considerable amount of commerce away from traditional downtowns throughout Pinellas. Recently, however, a focus on downtown revitalization has renewed interest in the diverse mix of communities that dot the Pinellas peninsula. The earliest such efforts took place in downtown St. Petersburg beginning in the 1980s, resulting in numerous renovations and new construction of not only commercial buildings, but also public facilities and private residences.

Principal among these were the \$93-million restoration and expansion of the Vinoy Hotel in 1992; the \$139-million, 42,000-seat Thunderdome sports complex, now renamed Tropicana Field; and the 2000 development of BayWalk, a 150,000 square foot plaza including a 20-screen movie theater complex, restaurants, and retail outlets. Efforts also focused on historic preservation within Pinellas County's largest city, and St. Petersburg now boasts five historic districts recognized on the National Register of Historic Places as well as numerous individual buildings likewise designated.<sup>xv</sup> Downtown Dunedin is another example of a successful Downtown Revitalization in the County.



*Tropicana Field*

During the 1990s, revitalization plans were adopted throughout the County and efforts are now underway to recreate distinct main streets and downtowns not only in St. Petersburg but also in Clearwater, Gulfport, St. Pete Beach, Madeira Beach, Seminole, Pinellas Park, Largo, Indian Shores, Indian Rocks Beach, Safety Harbor, Dunedin, Tarpon Springs, and Downtown Palm Harbor.<sup>xvi</sup> Typically, these aim to provide landscaping, improved pedestrian facilities, parking and other features to attract more business activity to the traditional business districts of cities. As the new millennium progresses, work on these downtown projects continues throughout the County.

Also of particular note are the improvements made during the 1990s to Baskin-Dansville, a predominantly African-American community in the unincorporated

Ridgecrest area. Long bypassed by County services, in 1992 a tornado severely damaged homes in the area, attracting official attention and leading to a revitalization of local streets, drainage, lighting, and garbage disposal services as well as renewed attention to the area's history.<sup>xvii</sup> Other historically low-income areas, including portions of Highpoint and Lealman in unincorporated Pinellas County, Mid-town in St. Petersburg, Greenwood in Clearwater and Union Academy in Tarpon Springs, are also gaining renewed attention, with initiatives to improve these communities and promote investment confidence.<sup>xviii</sup>

Following St. Petersburg's lead in the promotion of historic preservation, recent initiatives have sought to secure the cultural and economic benefits of protecting sites of historical significance. Of particular note, in 1994, the County Commission voted to create the Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District with the



aim of preserving the strong sense of community and small town feel of the area while promoting business in the old part of the town. The Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District was the first Historic District established in unincorporated Pinellas County. In 1999 the Old Palm Harbor Main Street organization was created to support preservation efforts followed by the Board of County Commissioners adoption of a Master Plan for Revitalization of Downtown Palm Harbor and by addition of new land

development regulations to promote downtown revitalization. By 2006 a major streetscape improvement project of Florida Avenue, in the heart of Downtown Palm Harbor, was completed.<sup>xix</sup>

In 2005, the new owners of the historic 1897 Belleview Biltmore Resort and Spa in the Town of Belleair sought to demolish the structure for a future condominium community. From this episode, a debate ensued on the fate of historic structures throughout Pinellas County and how local governments can adequately protect their heritage.

To take a comprehensive look at rectifying the situation, and in order to promote historic preservation efforts, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners established an ad-hoc countywide, 15-member Historic Preservation Task Force in 2005 to study, analyze, and develop a historic preservation program plan for Pinellas County. The work of the Task Force culminated in recommended strategies that the County and the 24 Pinellas municipalities can use ranging from strengthening development codes that would protect recognized historic resources to granting tax breaks and other incentives to preserve structures and sites.

## **PUBLIC LAND, AGRICULTURE, AND CONSERVATION AREAS**

During the 1990s, as Pinellas County's urbanization continued, the last traces of citrus groves and other agricultural lands gave way to commercial and residential developments. In 2005, Pinellas County's last remaining commercial citrus land, Orange Blossom Groves, on U.S. 19 closed, signaling the end of an industry in the County that was home to Florida's first known citrus grove.<sup>xx</sup> By 2004 agricultural land had fallen to only 1,156 acres or 0.6% of the County's land area. These changes reflect the disappearance of agriculture, an industry once integral to the County's economy, from the Pinellas landscape.

Although pressured by the expansion of residential and commercial development, the County continued to acquire thousands of acres of land for public parks and natural preserves and to open new recreation facilities. As of 2006, fully 11.9% of the County's land (or 21,358 acres) consisted of conservation and preservation areas, and 7.9% of the County was made up of recreation and open-space land uses.<sup>xxi</sup> Between 1972 and 2006, the County undertook extensive expansion of public land holdings, opening diverse park facilities including Sand Key Park, the St. Petersburg Beach Access, the Park Boulevard Boat Ramp, the Madeira Beach Access, the Treasure Island Beach Access, and Wall Springs Parks, to name a few.

In 1999, the Friendship Trail, a 2.6 mile long recreational trail and fishing facility located on the old Gandy Bridge, opened, providing a pedestrian and bicycle link between Pinellas and Hillsborough counties. The "Save the Gandy" citizens campaign saved the bridge from being torn down after the new Gandy Bridge was constructed, and convinced Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties to assume ownership of the bridge from the State.



*Friendship Trail Bridge*

In 1990, the first section of the Pinellas Trail, extending five miles from Seminole Park in Seminole to Taylor Park in Largo opened. Now 34 miles long, the "linear park," built on an abandoned railroad right-of-way and made possible by the Penny for Pinellas tax, continues to receive national publicity as one of the longest and most heavily traveled urban "rails to trails" projects in the United States. In honor of retired



County Administrator, Fred E. Marquis, who originated and implemented the trail concept, the name of the Pinellas Trail was changed to the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail in 2001. Extension of the trail system continues.

*Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail Overpass*

On November 23, 1999, the Board of County Commissioners approved a lease agreement with Progress Energy to allow for the construction of the 20.6 mile long Progress Energy Trail Extension, extending the County's bicycle network from the East Lake Tarpon portion of the existing trail along the eastern side of Pinellas to the Weedon Island Preserve in St. Petersburg. The Cross Bayou Bridge, connecting the northern and southern portions of the Pinellas Trail across Boca Ciega Bay opened to the public in 2000. The \$4 million project was a partnership between the State of Florida and Pinellas County using federal money from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program. In early 2006, the Trust for Public Land purchased the 2.1 miles required to extend the trail into downtown St. Petersburg, the next step in what is envisioned as 80 miles of bicycle and walking trails connecting the existing trail with a loop that circles the northern portion of the County and links to the Progress Energy trail in south County.<sup>xxii</sup>



*The first segment of the Pinellas Trail opened in 1990.  
The 37 mile Trail is the longest urban linear recreational trail in the Eastern United States.*

Spurred on by the 1989 Growth Management Plan, Pinellas County vastly expanded acreage devoted to conservation in the past two decades. Preserve lands are managed to jointly provide resource-based public recreational use and promote the health of natural ecosystems. The largest tract, the 8,000-acre Brooker Creek Preserve in northeast Pinellas, was purchased by Pinellas County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. In June 2004, the Brooker Creek Environmental Education Center opened to the public, adding interactive exhibits, a resource center, and a gift shop to the Preserve's public offerings.

Similarly, 2002 witnessed the opening of the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. Complementing the 3,000 acre Preserve, Weedon Island offers a fishing pier, boardwalk and observation tower facilities, as well as extensive hiking and canoe/kayak trails. A third major conservation initiative came in 2000 with the establishment of Shell Key Preserve, a 1,800 acre habitat on one of the County's last remaining undeveloped barrier islands.



*Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center*

In addition to these major preserves, the County shares responsibility for the Mobbly Bayou Wilderness Preserve with the City of Oldsmar and manages 11 other areas of land for environmental protection.<sup>xxiii</sup>



*Shell Key (Bottom center),  
portion of Fort De Soto Park  
(upper right)  
and portion of Tierra Verde  
Community (left)*

## **CLIMATE AND NATURAL RESOURCES: CONFRONTING NEW CHALLENGES**

Record tropical activity during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons and increased awareness of global climate change have recently renewed attention to the vulnerabilities faced by Pinellas' peninsular location, in particular barrier island and waterfront communities. Tropical storm activity has always been a part of Pinellas County's history, with the 1921 hurricane that split Caladesi and Honeymoon islands into separate landforms serving as a particularly potent example. Although the County has experienced no direct hits in the past twenty years, during 2004 and 2005, Pinellas felt the affects of several storm systems. When Hurricane Charley approached the peninsula during the second week of August 2004, officials ordered the largest ever evacuation of County residents, asking 380,000 residents to leave their homes. Although a sudden eastward turn spared the County of predicted extensive damage and flooding from Charley, the County experienced the effects of Hurricanes Jeanne and Frances as well as several tropical storms and depressions during 2004 and 2005. As urbanization continues and population densities increase, hurricane awareness and preparedness plays an ever-more important role in Pinellas.



The widespread development and large population growth occurring in the Tampa Bay region faced the further vulnerability of an adequate water supply during periods of below-normal rainfall. Since March 1992, concern about the impact of groundwater withdrawals on the natural environment has limited lawn irrigation in Pinellas and adjacent areas. Watering during the midday hours is prohibited. In 1998, a major change occurred when Pinellas partnered with Hillsborough and Pasco counties and with the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg and New Port Richey to create a regional water supply utility, Tampa Bay Water. Tampa Bay Water, with funding support from the Southwest Florida Water Management District, has embarked on a major program to reduce its reliance on groundwater through development of other sources of public water supply. The County continues to expand its reclaimed water system and, with Tampa Bay Water, to explore the feasibility of a brackish groundwater desalinization plant somewhere in Pinellas County to help meet the region's growing water needs.



Finally, as in other areas of the County's development, attention is increasingly being paid to ensuring environmental sustainability in future economic expansion. For example, a partnership between Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Manatee counties resulted in the formation of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and the adoption in 1997 of a Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for continuing the progress made in restoring and protecting Tampa Bay.

## **TRANSPORTATION TRENDS**

Continued growth and development throughout the 1990s resulted in increased traffic congestion, to which state and county government responded with a number of roadway improvements. To accommodate increasing amounts of vehicle traffic in the County, considerable effort has been spent in transportation planning and road construction, as well as in the operation of the County's bus system. The 2005 version of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) strategy to address the County's transportation challenges, the 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan, focuses on developing a transportation system that relies on more than one method of transportation and that simultaneously supports economic vitality, and promotes livable communities.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Automobiles continue to dominate mobility within the County, accounting for 99% of all trips in 2000. The coming years will witness important decisions and actions in responding to the transportation challenges that come with additional growth, changing demographics, and the increasing cost of energy. For example, U.S. Highway 19 must balance its function as an economic corridor (which in 2000 was home to 39% of all jobs and 50% of commercial jobs in Pinellas County north of S.R. 580) with its function as a major north-south corridor for commuter and goods movement, while ensuring accessibility.<sup>xxv</sup> Recent efforts of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority to provide unlimited bus pass to target riders and to implement express bus routes, along with the introduction in 2001 of the Suncoast Beach Trolley servicing the route from Sand Key to St. Pete Beach, represent ongoing improvements in public transportation options within the County.<sup>xxvi</sup>

As mentioned previously, efforts to promote bicycle and pedestrian travel were given a major boost by construction of the Fred E. Marquis Pinellas Trail. In 2001, the Board of



*Bicycle lanes on roadways*

County Commissioner's passed an ordinance requiring bicycle lanes to be included in all County road widening and resurfacing projects, which along with the planned expansion of the Pinellas Trail and numerous sidewalk projects included as part of the 2010 extension of the Penny, will continue to support foot and bike travel within the County.<sup>xxvii</sup> Through these efforts, the County and municipalities hope to overcome the Tampa Bay Metropolitan Statistical Area's 2004 ranking in the top ten most dangerous areas in the United States in terms of pedestrian death rates.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Recent highway improvements completed since 1990 include the construction of a second span of the Howard Frankland Bridge, the Lake Seminole Bridge, the new Bayside Bridge spanning part of Old Tampa Bay, the widening of McMullen-Booth Road between State Road 60 and Pasco County, the extension of Belcher Road, reconstruction of the Memorial Causeway Bridge, and ongoing upgrades of the U.S. Highway 19 corridor.



*New Clearwater Memorial Causeway Bridge, 2005*

Along with roadway improvements, transportation enhancements have also occurred at the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport. While Tampa International has always been the region's predominant airport, the St. Petersburg-Clearwater facility serves growing numbers of planes and passengers. Passenger arrivals grew from 61,000 in 1982 to 747,369 in 2007. In 2000, the airport underwent substantial renovation and expansion at the cost of \$7 million. This airport has also been serving several major air cargo carriers such as United Parcel Service (UPS). Today the airport operates a 2,000 acre facility,



*St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport's main entrance*

home to the world's largest U.S. Coast Guard air station as well as the busiest automated flight service station in the U.S., employing over 3,000 people and generating more than \$400 million in yearly economic benefits to the Tampa Bay area.<sup>xxix</sup>

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

Pinellas County's three largest employment sectors (services, retail trade, and manufacturing) did not change between 1960 and 2000. However, the portion of the workforce employed in the service sector has substantially increased, now comprising almost 55% of employment.<sup>xxx</sup> Employment trends have fluctuated somewhat over the past twenty years, with the County's unemployment rate ranging from a high of 6.7% in 1992 to a low of 2.6% in 2000. Until recently, Pinellas' average unemployment rate remained consistently below that of Florida and U.S. and its average per capita income remains above state and federal levels.<sup>xxxi</sup>

In July 2005, the Pinellas Planning Council, followed by the Board of County Commissioners in September of that year, approved *Pinellas by Design: An Economic Development and Redevelopment Plan for the Pinellas Community*. Focusing on the challenges faced by buildout conditions, the document outlines goals and strategies particularly aimed at promoting economic redevelopment throughout the area, and encouraging infill construction and redevelopment of older properties to ensure buildout does not hinder business growth. *Pinellas by Design* likewise seeks to implement development around the existing framework of centers, transportation corridors and districts.<sup>xxxii</sup>



*Gateway Office Complexes*

Ensuring economic growth has also involved continuing efforts to strengthen the County's industrial and commercial land availability. The Gateway/Mid-Pinellas area, which contains a substantial portion of the County's remaining vacant land (23%) and sits at a convenient location between the County's major population centers and Tampa's economic center, remains the focus of a planned employment district and industrial acreage.<sup>xxxiii</sup> A major challenge confronting economic growth

is ensuring the County has enough adequately trained workers to meet area business demands. According to the U.S. Census, in 2000 23.4% of residents in Pinellas County held a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to a national average of 25.0%.

Tourism remains a major industry in the County. In the year 2006 alone 5.3 million visitors infused \$3.2 billion into Pinellas County's economy. The *Planning to Stay* Element seeks to reinforce the qualities that draw tourists to Pinellas, including accessible beaches and relaxed atmosphere, while addressing existing

deficiencies in accommodation properties, public transportation offerings, and outdated commercial areas.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The loss of tourist accommodations to the housing boom of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century is being rectified in some communities by changes to local development codes that encourage hotel development. Professional sports and spring training also continue to contribute to the economy. In 1995, major league baseball awarded a franchise to the Tampa Bay Area, and in 1998 the Tampa Bay Devil Rays inaugurated their first season at the Thunderdome, now renamed to Tropicana Field, in St. Petersburg. Spring training continues as a seasonal industry in the area; the Philadelphia Phillies have been playing in Clearwater since 1948, and the Toronto Blue Jays have trained in Dunedin since becoming a major-league franchise in 1977.



*Tropicana Field  
St. Petersburg*

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- <sup>i</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Socioeconomic Report." June 2004.
- <sup>ii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Socioeconomic Report." June 2004.
- <sup>iii</sup> Planning to Stay.
- <sup>iv</sup> <http://www.pinellasCounty.org/homerul.htm#sec301>
- <sup>v</sup> <http://www.pinellasCounty.org/Penny/default.htm>
- <sup>vi</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Solid Waste and Resource Recovery Element." *Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan Compendium*. 145.
- <sup>vii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "An Evaluation and Appraisal of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan." J-32.
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/magnet/history.html>
- <sup>ix</sup> "About USF St. Petersburg." [www.sptp.usf.edu/aboutus/index.html](http://www.sptp.usf.edu/aboutus/index.html)
- <sup>x</sup> "St. Petersburg College's History" <http://www.spcollege.edu/webcentral/catalog/Current/tradition.htm>
- <sup>xi</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. Total of vacant land, preservation land and potential preservation acquisitions. July 1993.
- <sup>xii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Planning to Stay." p. 1.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Socioeconomic Report." June 2004.
- <sup>xiv</sup> EAR, A-9.
- <sup>xv</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 1 : " Pinellas County Landmarks on the National Register of Historic Places"
- <sup>xvi</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. "Planning to Stay." P. 29.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Goldman, Sue Searcy. "Baskin-Dansville: An African-American Community in Transition."
- <sup>xviii</sup> EAR, A-8.
- <sup>xix</sup> <http://palmharbormainstreet.com>
- <sup>xx</sup> Lindberg, Anne. "Last Orange Grove Fades from Pinellas." *St. Petersburg Times*. 30 September 2005.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department, "Socioeconomic Report", June 2004, p. 60.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Wilson, Jon. "Where the Pavement Ends." 15 January 2006.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division. "Our Land."  
<http://www.pinellasCounty.org/environment/pagesHTML/envLands/el1000.html#managed>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Metropolitan Planning Organization. "Goals, Objectives, and Policies." *2025 Long Range Transportation Plan*. December 2004, with amendments December 2005.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Planning to Stay, 37.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. 2005 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. J-16.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Pinellas County Planning Department. 2005 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. J-17.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Surface Transportation Policy Report *Mean Streets*. 2004.

<sup>xxix</sup> "About PIE." <http://www.fly2pie.com/about/history.asp>

<sup>xxx</sup> See Appendix – Exhibit 4 : "Pinellas County Employment Sectors"

<sup>xxxi</sup> Planning Department. Socioeconomic Report 2004, 39.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Pinellas by Design, 19.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Planning to Stay, 6.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Planning to Stay, 41.

# **CONCLUDING REMARKS**



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As Pinellas County's key growth management concept "*Planning to Stay*" proclaims, "Pinellas County should be the kind of place where families and businesses will want to stay, and where children will want to remain or return once they become adults. This idea of people and businesses planning to stay in Pinellas County because they desire to live and work nowhere else is foundational to an overall vision for the future of Pinellas County." This report on Pinellas County's history yields several important observations that bear consideration as the County proceeds towards this goal. These observations include:

- Pinellas County, which has a population density that is about average for the larger metropolitan areas in the United States, is an urban area whose resources and infrastructure capacities continue to be challenged by the approach of buildout conditions. In this regard, growth management is vital both within Pinellas County's jurisdictional boundaries and throughout the State of Florida to ensure the area's quality of life. Existing public services and infrastructure, including sewage treatment, solid waste disposal, transportation, public schools, potable water and recreation facilities have limited capacities that are difficult and expensive to expand. This reality, along with land availability will shape future growth and development in the County;
- In the early 1900s, most of Pinellas County's citizens worked, lived and shopped proximate to established downtown areas within the cities such as Tarpon Springs, Clearwater and St. Petersburg. The design of the buildings and streets were oriented toward the needs of pedestrians. There were large porches, public gathering areas and a mix of land use types. These are all elements of 'livable' communities, which is central to the County's Planning to Stay Element. Post World War II development in Pinellas County largely forgot about these elements. As the road network expanded, more people chose to live further away from their jobs and became dependent on their automobiles for transportation. In these new suburban areas, mixed use environments where people could easily walk, bicycle or use transit service to get to their destinations often gave way to segregated land uses with homogeneous low density housing and strip commercial development located along the major roadways with large parking lots separating building entrances from the street;

- While the personal automobile became an opportunity for more freedom of movement among the citizens of Pinellas County as well as a means of greater economic opportunity, it also led to many of the problems it faces today in terms of traffic congestion and energy costs while contributing to the degradation of the natural environment. Recapturing the livability aspects of traditional neighborhood development that occurred prior to the population boom of the 1950s in Pinellas County is central to the theme of Planning to Stay. This requires redirecting the emphasis on road building and expansion toward alternative travel modes such as bicycling, walking and transit use. Equally important is preserving or incorporating architectural, land and street design features in the County's communities that capture a sense of place while creating a quality experience for Pinellas County citizens and visitors;
- In the past, Pinellas County's barrier islands, because of their isolation and environmental susceptibilities, were not viewed as areas that would easily lend themselves to development. However, that view changed dramatically through subsequent decades, and today some of the County's most intensely developed areas are on barrier islands. As the issues of hurricane vulnerability and beach access problems attract renewed attention, Pinellas County will need to rethink its development policies regarding these areas;
- Historically, the foundation for much of the County's economic and population growth rested upon the peninsula's natural amenities. Originally a region comprised of extensive coastal wetlands and forestlands, decades of development drastically altered the Pinellas Peninsula. Awareness of the destruction and loss of vital ecosystems and efforts to protect and restore natural areas should remain at the forefront of planning efforts;
- In the County's early years, the northern, central, and southern portions of Pinellas remained isolated from each other. With growing urbanization, however, common interests and concerns transcended jurisdictional boundaries, unifying the County and leading to the need for countywide and multi-jurisdictional organizations. Pinellas now contains 25 separate planning and zoning jurisdictions and a multiplicity of providers serve the County's growth and development. Cooperation amongst these jurisdictions and agencies is necessary for the success of countywide planning strategies;

- The 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were characterized by relative isolation of the Pinellas Peninsula from its neighbors across Tampa Bay, and eventually Pinellas split from Hillsborough to form a separate county. Once isolated, the counties and municipalities in the Tampa Bay region continue to grow and coalesce. Issues such as water supply, transportation, environmental protection and economic development are now viewed from a regional perspective, with regional authorities and acknowledgement that inter-government cooperation is essential for long-term sustainability;
- Instead of one single employment and population center, many distinct communities with unique traditions, heritage, character, and industries historically comprised Pinellas County. Recognition of the diverse nature of the County's municipalities and unincorporated areas, combined with documentation and preservation of their individual histories, is vital to supporting recent historical preservation and downtown revitalization efforts;
- From its inception, Pinellas County has confronted development challenges both specific to the peninsula and reflective of nationwide social and economic trends. In recent years, the County has taken steps to promote forward-thinking urban planning, to ensure equality amongst the County's communities and racial groups, and to protect the area's unique cultural and natural features. Pinellas County should critically examine its history, both reviewing past mistakes and embracing successes, in order to ensure proper decision-making both today and into the future.

# **APPENDIX**

## **Exhibits and Charts**



**Exhibit 1**  
**Pinellas County Historic Structures**  
**Listed on the National Register of Historic Places**

<b>FL Master Site No.</b>	<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Site Location</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Year Built</b>
PI08566	Anclote Key Lighthouse	Anclote Key Island	Anclote Key Island	1887
PI00169	Belleview Biltmore Hotel	Detroit Street	Belleair	1896
PI03168	Old Belleair Town Hall	903 Ponce De Leon Blvd.	Belleair	1931
PI00317	Cleveland Street Post Office	650 Cleveland St.	Clearwater	1932
PI00168	Donald Roebling Estate	700 Orange Ave.	Clearwater	1929
PI01261	Harbor Oaks Residential District		Clearwater	
PI00316	Louis Ducros House	1324 S. Ft. Harrison	Clearwater	1897
PI02238	Mount Olive AME Church	300-302 Pinellas Trail	Clearwater	1925
PI01894	Old Pinellas County Courthouse	315 Court Street	Clearwater	1917
PI00165	South Ward School	610 S. Ft. Harrison	Clearwater	1906
PI00104	Andrews Memorial Chapel	Buena Vista & San Mateo	Dunedin	1888
PI00235	J.O. Douglas House	209 Scotland St.	Dunedin	1920
PI00981	Louis Johnson Building / Pinellas Hotel	161 - 1st St., SW	Largo	
PI01696	Pass-a-Grille Historic District		St. Pete Beach	
PI01883	Ingleside	333 S. Bayshore Dr.	Safety Harbor	1889
PI00301	326-30 - 1st Avenue North	326-30 -1st Ave.	St. Petersburg	1920
PI00580	40 Snell Isle Blvd	40 Snell Isle Blvd.	St. Petersburg	1923
PI00315	535 Central Avenue	535 Central Ave.	St. Petersburg	1919
PI00616	Boone House	601 - 5th Ave.	St. Petersburg	1910
PI00285	Carnegie Library	300 - 5th St.	St. Petersburg	1914
PI00839	Casa Coe da Sol	510 Park St. No.	St. Petersburg	1931
PI00359	Casa de Muchas Flores	1446 Park St. No.	St. Petersburg	1925
PI0071	Central High School	2505 - 5th Ave. No.	St. Petersburg	1926
PI09654	Domestic Science & Manual Training School	440-442 - 2nd Ave.	St. Petersburg	1901
PI00114	Don Cesar Hotel	3400 Gulf Blvd.	St. Pete Beach	1928
PI10648	Downtown St. Petersburg Historic District		St. Petersburg	
PI00885	First United Methodist Church	212 - 3rd St.	St. Petersburg	1926
PI08752	Green-Richman Arcade	689 Central Ave.	St. Petersburg	1924

FL Master Site No.	Site Name	Site Location	City	Year Built
PI11176	Kenwood Historic District		St. Petersburg	
PI00904	Potter House	557 - 2nd St., So.	St. Petersburg	1905
PI00202	Renaissance Vinoy Hotel	501 Beach Dr.	St. Petersburg	1925
PI06915	Roser Park Historic District		St. Petersburg	
PI11175	Round Lake Historic District		St. Petersburg	
PI00290	S.H. Kress & Co. Building	475 Central Ave.	St. Petersburg	1927
PI00735	Sanitary Public Market	1825 - 4th St.	St. Petersburg	1927
PI00279	Snell Arcade	401-405 Central Ave.	St. Petersburg	1928
PI00751	St. Petersburg Lawn Bowling Club	536 - 4th Ave.	St. Petersburg	1918
PI00905	Studebaker Building	600 - 4th St., So.	St. Petersburg	1925
PI00223	US Post Office	400 - 1st St.	St. Petersburg	1920
PI00263	Veillard House	262 - 4th Ave.	St. Petersburg	1920
PI00199	Williams Mansion	444 Fifth Ave.	St. Petersburg	1891
PI00870	Arcade Hotel	210 Pinellas Ave.	Tarpon Springs	1926
PI01545	Arfaras, N.G. Co., Inc.	26 W. Park St.	Tarpon Springs	1930
PI01706	Cretokos, George (Sponge Diving Boat)	Dodecanese Blvd.	Tarpon Springs	1941
PI01594	E.R. Sponge Packing	106 Read St.	Tarpon Springs	1905
PI01703	N.K. Symi (Sponge Diving Boat)	Dodecanese Blvd.	Tarpon Springs	1935
PI01578	Old Tarpon Springs City Hall	101 S. Pinellas Avenue	Tarpon Springs	1914
PI01694	Old Tarpon Springs High School	324 E. Pine St.	Tarpon Springs	1925
PI00176	Safford House	Parken Place	Tarpon Springs	1883
PI01704	Sponge Hooking Boat Duchess	Dodecanese Blvd.	Tarpon Springs	1940
PI01702	St. Nicholas III (Sponge Diving Boat)	Dodecanese Blvd.	Tarpon Springs	1939
PI01705	St. Nicholas IV (Sponge Diving Boat)	Dodecanese Blvd.	Tarpon Springs	1927
PI01712	Tarpon Springs Historic District		Tarpon Springs	

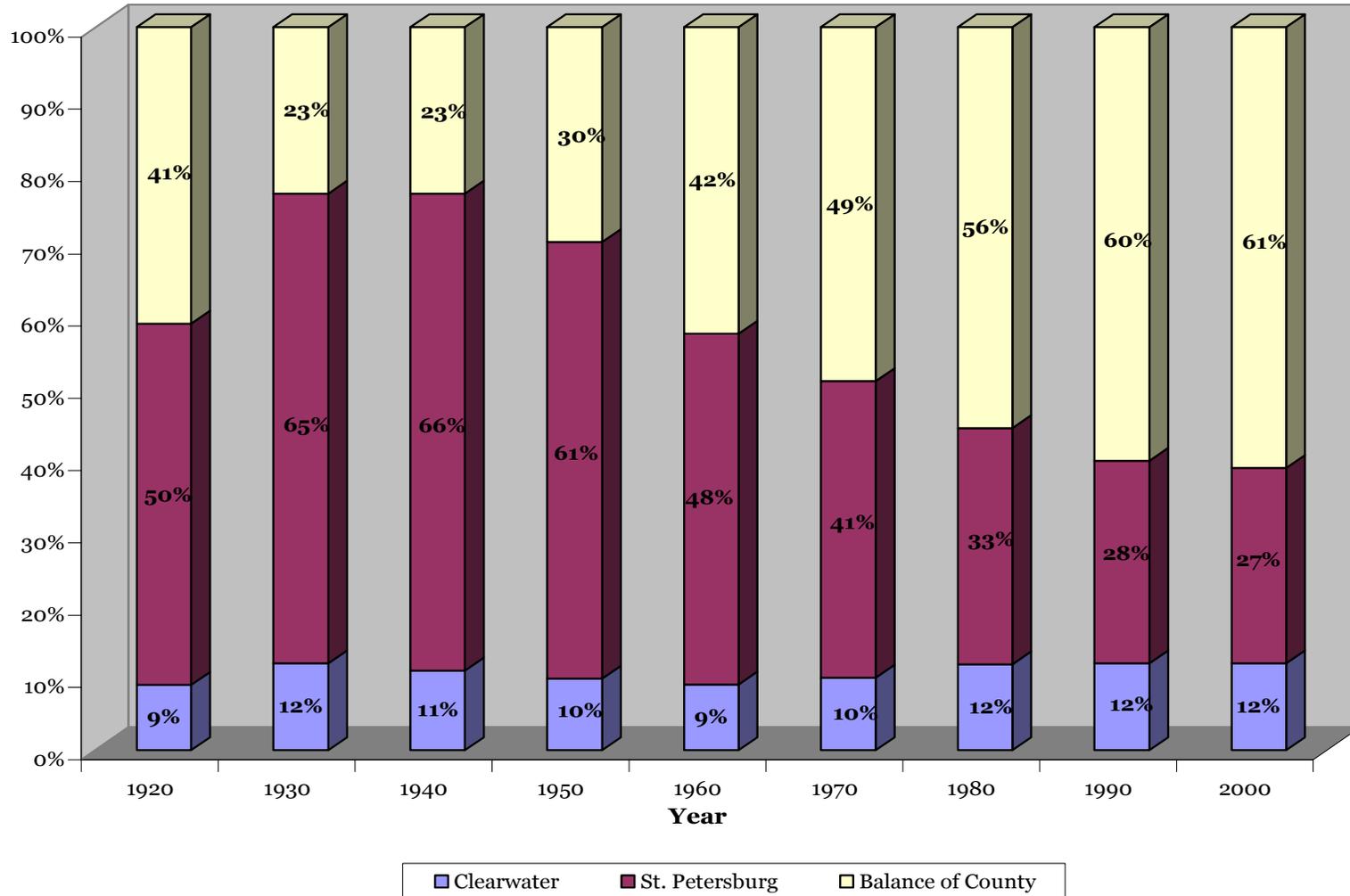
\* Source: State of Florida, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Master Site File Office, 2007

**Exhibit 2**  
**Urban and Rural Population of Pinellas County, 1920-2000**

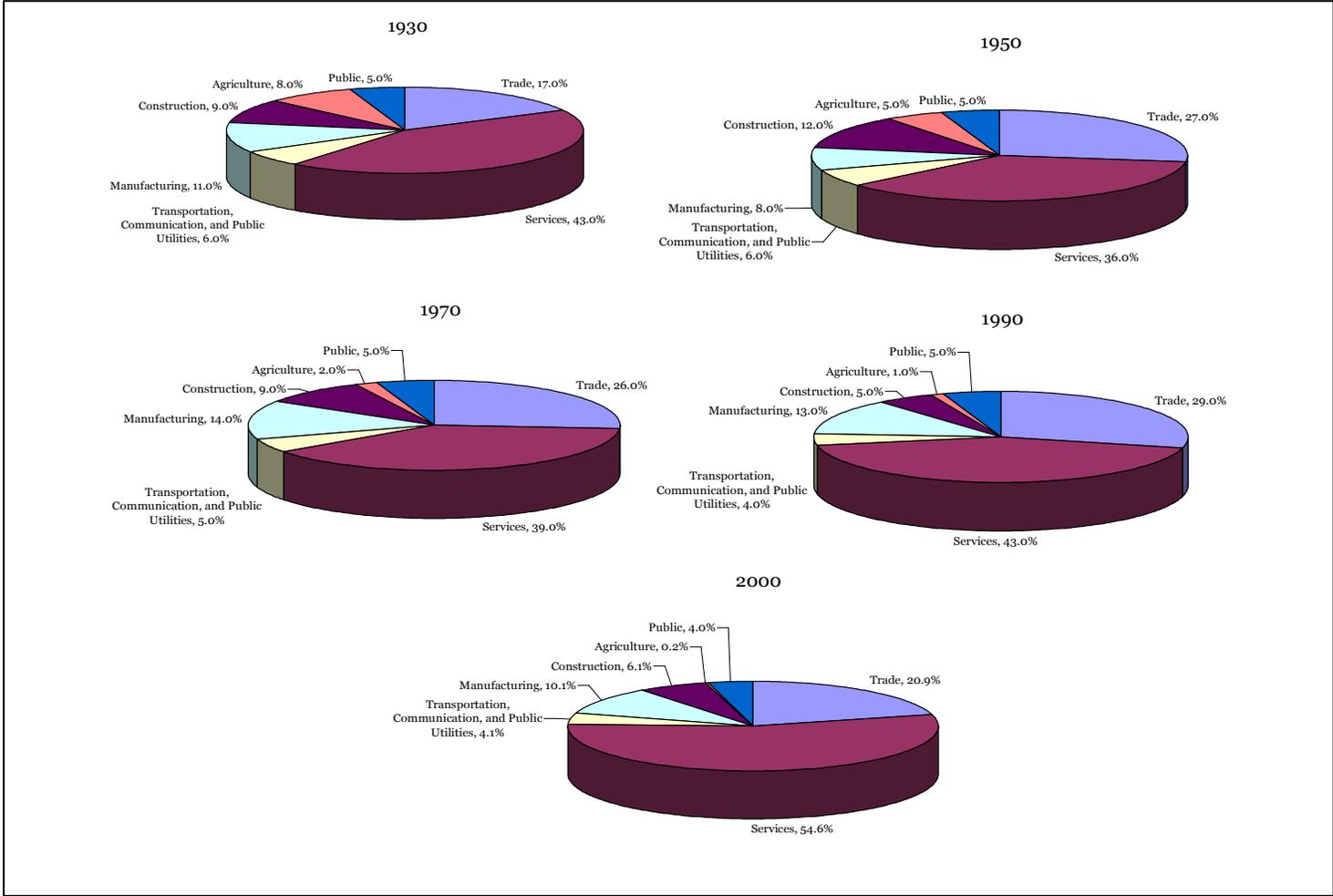
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Urban Population</b>	<b>% of Population Classified as Urban</b>	<b>Rural Population</b>	<b>% of Population Classified as Rural</b>
<b>1920</b>	28,265	14,237	50.40%	14,028	49.60%
<b>1930</b>	62,149	51,446	82.80%	10,703	17.20%
<b>1940</b>	91,852	74,350	80.90%	17,502	19.10%
<b>1950</b>	159,249	137,702	86.50%	21,547	13.50%
<b>1960</b>	374,665	341,384	91.10%	33,281	8.90%
<b>1970</b>	522,329	502,277	96.20%	20,052	3.80%
<b>1980</b>	728,531	724,988	99.50%	3,543	0.50%
<b>1990</b>	851,659	848,230	99.60%	3,429	0.40%
<b>2000</b>	921,495	920,531	99.90%	964	0.10%

Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; Bureau of Economic & Business Research, "Florida Population Studies", 34

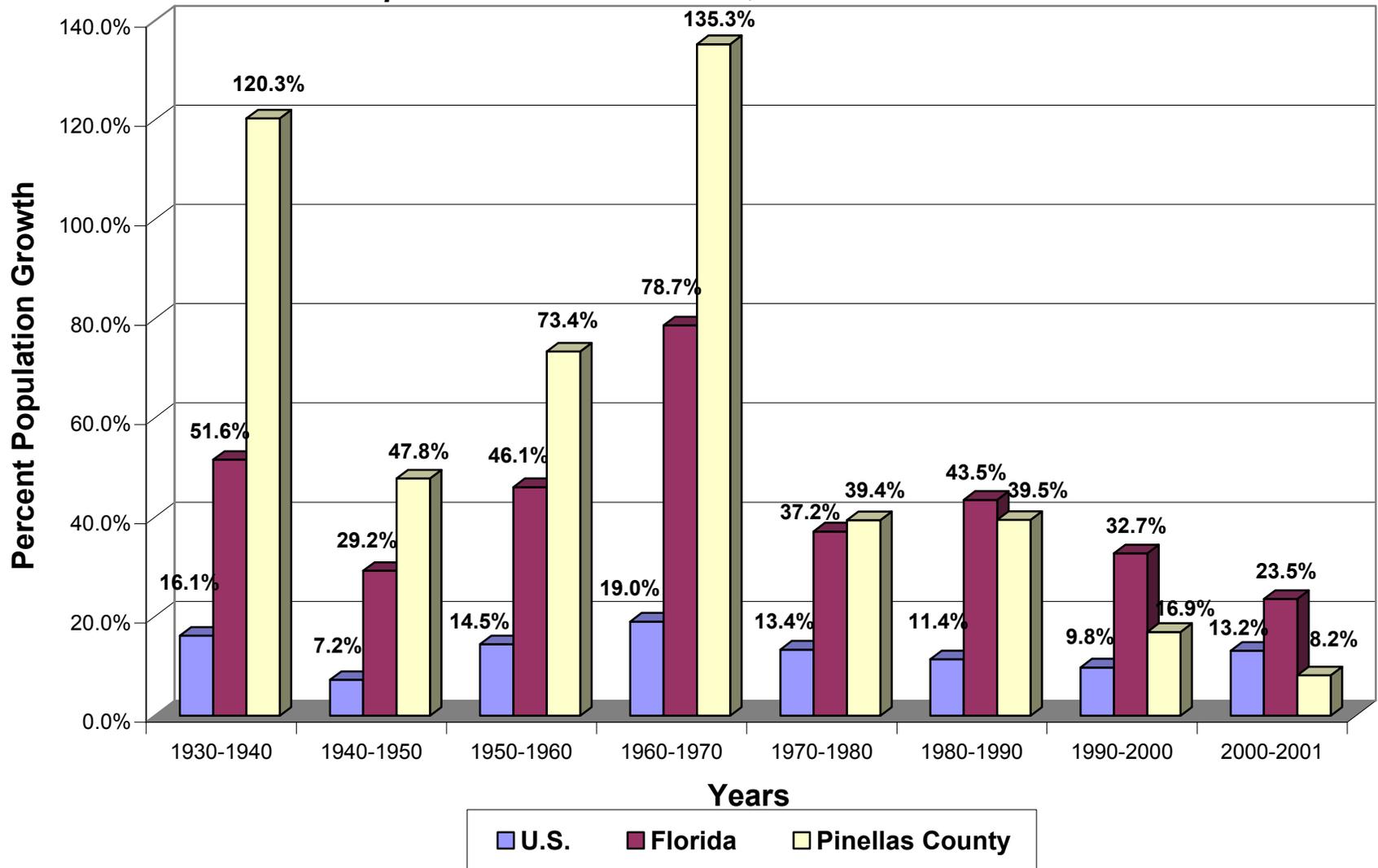
**Exhibit 3**  
**Population of the Cities of St. Petersburg and Clearwater as a Percentage**  
**of Total Pinellas County Population, 1920-2000**



**Exhibit 4**  
**Pinellas County Employment Sectors:**  
**Number of Employees as a Percent of Total Employment**



**Exhibit 5**  
**Comparative Growth: Pinellas, Florida and the U.S.**



**Exhibit 6**

**Land Development Trends: 1913 to 2006**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Square Miles Developed</b>	<b>Developed Land as a Percentage of Total County Land*</b>
1913	3.5	1.3
1926	14	5.3
1943	25	9.4
1952	37	14
1963	104	39.2
1983	154.5	55.2
1990	174.8	62.4
2006	204.8	73.1

\*Total land area revised in 1980, from 265 square miles to 280 square miles by the U.S Department of Commerce and the Bureau of the Census.

**Exhibit 7**

**Housing Units in Pinellas County, 1940 - 2000**

	<b>1940</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	40,525	72,682	165,823	228,771	377,052	458,341	481,573
<b>St. Petersburg</b>	27,945	43,710	81,346	97,073	119,486	125,452	124,618
<b>Clearwater</b>	3,897	7,927	15,013	23,333	44,183	53,833	56,802
<b>Balance of County</b>	8,683	21,045	69,464	108,365	213,383	279,056	300,153

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

**Exhibit 8**  
**Total Commercial Citrus Acreage**  
**in Pinellas County 1956 – 2005**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total COMMERCIAL Citrus Acreage</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
1956	13, 540	-----
1966	6,381	-52.90%
1976	3,770	-40.90%
1986	394	-89.50%
2002	38	-90.30%
2005	0	-100%
<b>Total Change</b>	<b>-13,540</b>	<b>-100%</b>

Source: State of Florida, Department of Agriculture, Florida Crop and Livestock Reporting Service

**Exhibit 9**  
**Componenets of Population Change**  
**in Pinellas County, 1940 - 2000**

<b>Years</b>	<b>% Due to Natural Increase</b>	<b>% Due to Net Migration</b>
1940-1950	3.90%	96.10%
1950-1960	1.60%	98.40%
1960-1970	-12.11%	112.11%
1970-1980	-21.14%	121.14%
1980-1990	-31.33%	131.33%
1990-2000	-43.54%	143.54%

Source: University of Florida, Bureau of Economic & Business Research

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