



The New History of Florida

Edited by
Michael Gannon



A Florida Sesquicentennial Book

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18 World War II

Gary R. Mormino



For a state that trafficked in optimism and imagination, Florida had good reason to welcome the first Sunday in December 1941. Not since the giddy years of the early 1920s had Floridians seen signs of recovery and growth. Symbolically and socially, the first Sunday in December marked the official beginning of Florida's tourist season. By Sunday afternoon, December 7, news of Pearl Harbor shattered the dream of Florida beaches filled with tourists in swimsuits; yet, ironically, out of the maelstrom of war came a huge new stream of visitors, wearing khaki, olive drab, and navy blue.

"Japan has done one thing for us," proclaimed the *Tallahassee Democrat*. "The cowardly attack . . . has united the nation as nothing else could have done."¹ On the eve of Pearl Harbor, Floridians seemed deeply divided over the question of intervention or isolation. Now a surge of patriotism swept the state. In Pensacola, a civic club pledged fifty dollars to the first aviator to drop a bomb on Tokyo. News of Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle's raid on Tokyo on 18 April 1942 thrilled Floridians—even more so when it was revealed that the crew had trained at Eglin Field in the Panhandle near Valparaiso.

The most tangible evidence of war in Florida was the explosive growth of military establishments. Florida laid claim to 172 military installations, ranging from megacomplexes at Camp Blanding and the Jacksonville Naval Air Station, to fledgling facilities such as the Sopchoppy Bombing Range and Immokalee Army Air Field.

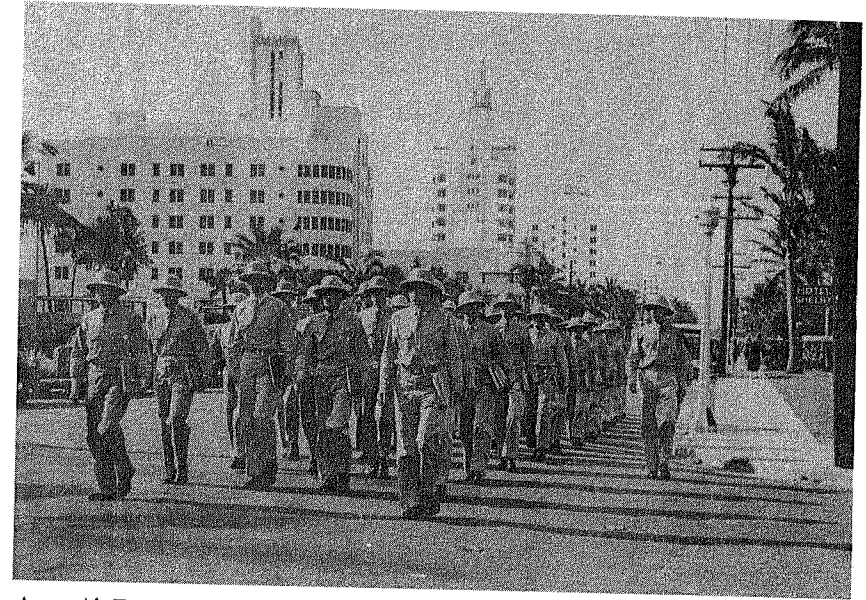
Pork-barrel politics, ample sunshine, and jungle-like terrain made Florida especially attractive for military training. The evolution of Eglin Field and Camp Blanding provides dramatic examples of military growth. In the early 1930s, the Works Progress Administration installed a runway in Okaloosa County, and the Eglin Bombing and Gunnery Range opened in 1935. Okaloosa County supported a population of only 10,000 residents in 1930, but the county garnered the largesse of Congressman Robert "He Coon" Sikes. Before his retirement in the 1970s, Sikes had obtained nine bases and three shipyards for his district. The war's imperatives allowed Sikes to lobby for the expansion of Eglin Field, which eventually became a 724-square-mile base.

Camp Blanding, conceived in 1939 as a \$700,000 summer camp for the Florida National Guard, expanded dramatically with the coming of war. Officials selected a 27,000-acre preserve in rural Clay County, not far from Starke and thirty miles southwest of Jacksonville. Clay and Bradford counties, historically poor entities, suddenly brimmed with carpenters and contractors. Construction companies, in need of 21,000 laborers, pulled unemployed workers from throughout the Southeast. Obtaining housing became nearly impossible; many workers slept in cars and tents. So many migrants flocked to the area that the Florida Welfare Board distributed food to the needy. Transportation demands created a traffic gridlock. To relieve the congested roads, a special train carried over 1,000 workers between Jacksonville and Starke, the latter an instant boomtown.

Camp Blanding became Florida's fourth largest city during the war. The complex, which featured no building over two stories high, grew to 180,000 acres and provided housing to 55,000 army personnel. It included a 2,051-bed hospital and 125 miles of paved road. Construction costs spiraled to \$60 million.

The urgency of mobilization imposed severe limits on America's military training facilities. An expedient solution was found in an unlikely setting: Florida's resort beaches. Critics initially attacked the prospect of raw recruits sweating in the splendorous Don Ce-Sar or Ponce de Leon Hotel, but Undersecretary of War Robert Patterson answered adroitly, "The best hotel room is none too good for the American soldier."

Florida's hotel operators, expecting a banner 1942 season, initially balked at the conversion proposal, but traveling restrictions, the presence of German U-boats off the Gold Coast, and appeals to patriotism and pocketbook persuaded the industry to turn over the keys to the military. By February 1942, the first wave of ninety-day wonders arrived in Miami. By the fall of 1942, almost 300 hotels in Miami and



Army Air Forces trainees march to their classroom in Miami Beach. The Air Forces occupied 70,000 hotel rooms on the beach, where one-fourth of all air officers and one-fifth of all air enlisted men received basic training. The largest ground army basic training center in the state was Camp Blanding, near Starke. At its peak, Blanding was Florida's fourth largest city (after Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa) during World War II.

Miami Beach hosted 78,000 military "guests." The government purchased some of the more elegant hotels, including the Biltmore in Coral Gables. The Hollywood Beach Hotel became a naval training school while The Breakers at Palm Beach saw service as an army hospital. Even the rustic and isolated Rod and Gun Club in Everglades City hosted the Coast Guard during the war. Dan Moody's experience must have been repeated many times. The young Virginian arrived at Miami Beach on 29 January 1944, and he wrote to his parents from the Hotel Blackstone, "Mother, this is the most beautiful place that I have ever seen. . . . I really think when the war is over, I'll move down here."²

Florida became a garrison state, armed and trained for every conceivable military function. In Fort Pierce, 150,000 men passed through the Naval Amphibious Training Base, which graduated frogmen and underwater demolition experts. Along the Big Bend, at Camp Gordon Johnston in Carrabelle, thousands of soldiers perfected future invasion tactics that would be employed on beaches in North Africa, Normandy, and Okinawa.

Wings over Florida became a familiar sight. In 1939, Florida boasted

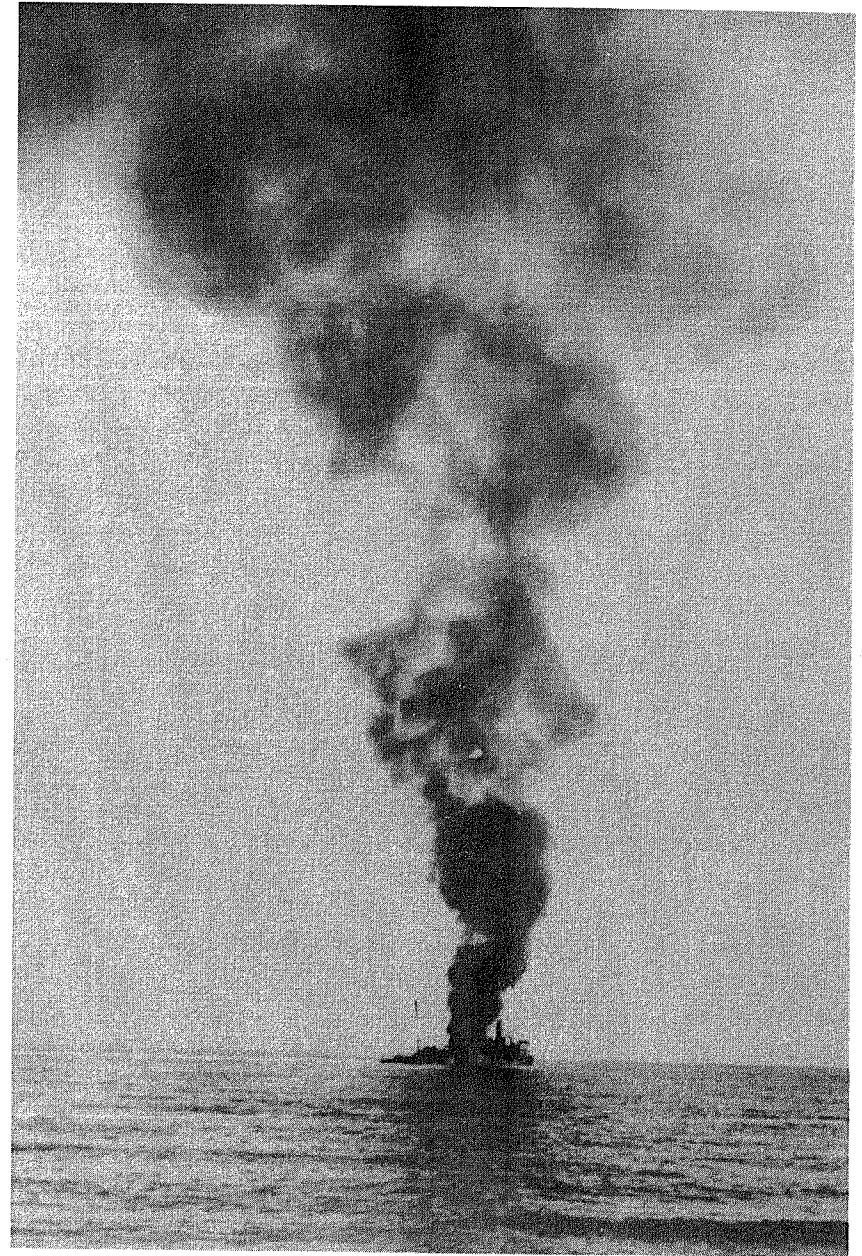
six aviation schools; by the end of the war in August 1945 the state claimed forty aviation installations. Residents became accustomed to the distinctive sounds and formations of Navy Hellcats, B-17 Flying Fortresses, and TBM Avengers. Airfields offered specialized training. Pilots at the Lake City and Sanford naval air stations flew fighters, while their counterparts at DeLand and Vero Beach perfected dive bombing. A young pilot named George Herbert Walker Bush learned to fly torpedo bombers at Fort Lauderdale's Naval Air Station.

The state also served as a backdrop for the South Pacific as filmmakers took advantage of Florida's good weather and impenetrable swamps in movies such as *Air Force* (1942) and *A Guy Named Joe* (1943). A not-yet-fashionable Key Biscayne doubled as Sisiman Cove, the Philippines, in John Ford's memorable *They Were Expendable* (1944).

To see the war Floridians did not need to attend the Bijou or Rialto; rather, the war came to them. German submarines, taking advantage of U.S. intelligence blunders and the strategic importance of the Gulf Stream, launched "Operation Drumbeat" in January 1942. German U-boats sank twenty-four ships off Florida's east and Gulf coasts. Residents and tourists at Jacksonville Beach and Cocoa Beach watched with horror as tankers burned and thick oil coated the white sand. Hundreds of lives and millions of dollars in cargo were lost until the Allies deployed an effective convoy system. Volunteers softened the human tragedy. Helen Muir wrote the story of a young nurse wiping tar off a traumatized merchant mariner, asking him, "Is this your first visit to Florida?"³

Floridians normally welcomed the sight of soldiers in uniform. German prisoners of war, however, met with suspicion and fear. Of the 372,000 German POWs incarcerated in the United States, 4,000 spent time in Florida, most of them imprisoned at Camp Blanding. They picked oranges at Dade City, Leesburg, and Winter Haven, cut sugarcane at Clewiston, and swept the streets of Miami Beach. When POWs assigned to the kitchen at MacDill Air Field in Tampa complained of the presence of African Americans, authorities appeased the Germans. In one of the war's more ironic moments, a contingent of German POWs picked cotton at El Destino, once one of Jefferson County's great antebellum plantations.

World War II unleashed the greatest economic boom in American history. From 1940 to 1945, federal expenditures soared from \$9 billion to \$98.4 billion. Nationally, per capita income doubled during the war, personal savings increased tenfold, and the labor force expanded by 9 million workers—all during a two-front war that absorbed 16 million



Twenty-four U.S. and Allied freighters and tankers were sunk in Florida coastal waters by German submarines (U-boats) during World War II, particularly during the period February–July 1942. Many torpedoed merchant vessels could be seen burning from the front porches of beach houses and from the balconies of tourist hotels. Here a stricken tanker burns off Hobe Sound.

soldiers. The American South, once a subject of pity, once the "Nation's No. 1 economic problem," was swept into the vortex of prosperity. *Fortune Magazine* translated the heady events into understandable terms: "For the first time since the War between the States, almost any native of the Deep South who wants a job can get one."⁴

The war poured huge sums of money into Florida's underdeveloped, narrowly based economy. In 1933 Floridians earned \$424 million in income; by 1943 they earned \$2 billion. War contracts revived the state's agricultural and manufacturing sectors, while tourism thrived (perhaps shockingly so). The war rejuvenated Florida's moribund ship-building industry, and Pensacola, Panama City, Jacksonville, and Tampa shared in the bonanza.

Panama City provides a vivid example of the war's galvanic effect. In 1940, Bay County languished in poverty, an isolated wedge supporting 20,000 residents along Florida's Big Bend. The county's population more than doubled by 1945. The Wainwright Company there constructed 108 vessels during the war. At its peak, the shipyards employed 15,000 workers, earning unheard-of wages. The general contractor, J. A. Jones, assumed the role of urban planner and city boss, building homes for workers and delivering milk and ice to families.

Defense contracts breathed life into Tampa, a city reeling because the Great Depression devastated the once-vaunted cigar industry. The construction of MacDill Air Field in 1939 and the reconstruction of a shipbuilding industry spelled a new prosperity. The Tampa Shipbuilding Company employed 9,000 workers by the end of 1942 and desperately advertised for more laborers, a problem exacerbated with the establishment of a second major shipbuilder in Tampa at Hooker's Point. The shipyards paid premium wages; by 1943 defense workers averaged \$1.08 an hour, with unlimited overtime. The companies sponsored athletic teams, published a newspaper, *Tasozette*, and even provided alarm clocks for workers.

The war's cornucopia also enriched the economies of Pensacola, Jacksonville, Miami, and Orlando. The Pensacola Shipyard and Engineering Company employed 7,000 workers by early 1942. In addition, the government spent \$55 million expanding and constructing the Pensacola Naval Air Station and auxiliary fields. Jacksonville's docks bustled with trade and defense. Local firms constructed 82 liberty ships and scores of wooden minesweepers and PT (patrol torpedo) boats. Jacksonville also served as headquarters for the Naval Overhaul and Repair facility. In Miami, vessels from the Caribbean and South America thronged the Miami River docks. Miami's economy surged

from the syncretic stream of military recruits, defense contracts, and tourist spending. Orlando, not endowed with a deep-water port, nonetheless manufactured 9,000 assault boats. Local firms, such as Florida Aircraft Corporation, won \$20 million in wartime contracts.

The parade of industrial statistics might lead one to believe that the Sunshine State had become the Steel State. For all the new and rejuvenated industries, Florida's economic standing changed little during the war; indeed, one can argue that the state actually slipped in areas critical to long-term growth. In 1939, Florida's manufacturing accounted for one-half of 1 percent of the national total, but the state's proportion declined by 1943 to two-fifths of 1 percent. Of nineteen manufacturing categories, Florida improved its relative position in only two sectors during the period 1939–43. Shipbuilding accounted for two-thirds of the industrial gains achieved in wartime Florida, but at war's end the lucrative shipbuilding contracts went to other states. Moreover, in industries critical to sustained growth—chemicals, oil refining, iron and steel foundries, aircraft manufacturing, electronics, automobiles—Florida cities fared poorly, even when compared with southern rivals such as Atlanta, Mobile-Pascagoula, Norfolk, Wilmington, Galveston, and Houston.

Agriculture achieved dramatic gains during the war, realizing new profits and incorporating new technologies. Southern farms in general, and Florida in particular, had experienced two lean decades since the flush times of World War I. But World War II brought the good times back. Cotton prices, for instance, rose from 10 cents to 22 cents a pound between 1939 and 1945.

Grove owners harvested orange gold during the war. Notable milestones in the marketing and processing of citrus occurred. Florida's citrus harvest surpassed California's for the first time in 1942–43, producing 80 million boxes of oranges and grapefruit. The 1942–43 yield also marked Florida's first \$100 million citrus crop. Scientists helped solve a problem historically plaguing the industry: waste and spoilage resulting from blemishes, market conditions, and transportation. Chemists perfected a dehydrated citrus concentrate, an awful-tasting but welcome beverage in embattled England. In 1942, Florida plants produced 28 million cans of concentrate. More significantly in its implications, chemists at the Florida Citrus Commission patented a process to make frozen concentrated orange juice, a much better tasting product than the dehydrated beverage.

The war wrought a green revolution. While researchers at the Bureau of Entomology in Orlando worked to advance the frontiers of

jungle warfare, they discovered an insecticide with revolutionary implications. By 1945, DDT was available for commercial use, promising an end to a south Florida teeming with palmetto bugs, cattle ticks, and saltwater mosquitos. A Sanford farmer exclaimed, "The product . . . kills insects like crazy." *Time* magazine cautioned against careless optimism: "Not much is known as yet about the full effect of DDT on large areas."⁵ Undeterred, Floridians rushed to apply the new witches brew on swamps and backlots. Not until 1962 and the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* would they learn how damaging pesticides were, particularly DDT, to the natural environment.

The war's new technologies augured a bright future for grove owners and planters, but one serious problem confronting farmers beginning in 1942 was a drastic labor shortage. The Draconian tactics used by some to recruit and coerce workers for the sugar plantations and truck farms resulted in what a CBS-TV special report called in 1960 a *Harvest of Shame*.

"Food will win the war and write the peace," promised a poster in Clewiston. Yet, beneath the veneer of patriotism rested a labor system more in practice with nineteenth-century peonage than twentieth-century egalitarianism. The roots of the labor crisis reflected the legacy of the Black Codes but also revealed a willingness to seek new solutions and alternatives.

State, county, and municipal officers worked to bolster the supply of agricultural workers. Experts predicted a shortage of 10,000 workers for the 1943-44 Florida citrus crop. Across Florida, cities passed new or enforced existing vagrancy laws, determined to punish slackers and recruit seasonal workers. In Clearwater, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* reported, "The city has put more than fifty chronic loafers, including some gigolos to work. . . . Many were Negroes and borrowed money from their girlfriends to aid their loafing."⁶ Pinellas County officials announced a "Work or Jail" edict. Apopka strengthened its vagrancy law and arrested scores of African Americans, assigning them to the celery fields. Miami's police chief, Jimmy Sullivan, announced, "Able-bodied men in Dade County must find essential employment or face a charge of vagrancy."⁷

In 1945, Governor Millard Caldwell asked Florida sheriffs to eliminate indolence. The sheriff of Martin County stated with candor that it would be the policy of his office to cooperate with farmers, saw-mill men, and others doing essential work in seeing that they got all the help they needed. Few officials acted with the vigilance of Broward Sheriff Walter Clark. His deputies rounded up men from the area's slums and,

without trial, impressed them to work on a farm owned by the Oakland Park mayor. The sheriff of Glades County was indicted on six counts of peonage for using Negro prisoners on his farm.

Nowhere was the line between freedom and bondage more blurred than on the vast sugar plantations of south Florida. Historically, the cane fields attracted the most desperate or oppressed workers. When the war began, the United States Sugar Company dominated Florida, controlling 86 percent of the state market. With the fall of the Philippines in 1942, U.S. Sugar successfully lobbied the government to lift the domestic quotas on sugar production, resulting in a scramble for laborers. Court testimonials and FBI records paint a dismal portrait of life inside the Clewiston camps. Florida's antiquated laws—declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1944 in *Pollock v. Williams*—prohibited debt-ridden workers from quitting a job, further reinforcing the prison-camp setting, serving the interests of Big Sugar but not those of the workers.

The short- and long-term solution to Florida's shortage of agricultural laborers came from afar. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) signed agreements with the governments of the Bahamas and Jamaica to allow the temporary immigration of 75,000 workers, and to pay for their transportation. Planters and corporations won what they had long sought: absolute control of a compliant labor force. L. L. Chandler, chair of the Dade County USDA War Board, openly observed, "The vast difference between the Bahama Islands labor and the domestic . . . is that the labor transported from the Bahama Islands can be deported and sent home if it does not work."⁸

What happened in Florida may well have been a harvest of shame, but it was also a harvest of plenty. The war provided Floridians, accustomed to decades of depression and scarcity, a taste of prosperity and abundance. City dwellers also came to terms with the dizzying changes brought by the war.

In September 1940, the *National Municipal Review* prophesied that American cities were threatened less by Stuka dive bombers than by mounting crises in public health. Had the editor visited Miami, Jacksonville, or Pensacola, he might have added alarming crises in public education, urban services, and affordable housing.

World War II accelerated Americans' mobile tendencies. Fifteen million Americans, in search of new opportunities, moved their residences and workplaces between 1940 and 1945. Another sixteen million men and women served in the armed forces. For most Americans, the war was more *Odyssey* than *Iliad*. Florida cities functioned as dynamic hives

of activity as millions of Americans encountered Florida for the first time, trying to establish moorings in the quicksand of wartime. Never static, the cities shuffled constant streams of defense workers, rural migrants, tourists, and servicemen and -women, who all competed for scarce housing and transportation.

Jacksonville and Pensacola shared a symbiotic relationship with the Georgia and Alabama hinterlands. Jacksonville drew large numbers of rural residents from south Georgia. "Jacksonville came up in conversations like the weather," reminisced novelist Harry Crews, whose family left Bacon County for opportunities in Florida.⁹ Pensacola's "official" population increased modestly from 37,000 in 1940 to 43,000 in 1945, but, according to James McGovern, these statistics ignore at least 100,000 temporary residents who spent time in Pensacola. Trailers and tents became commonplace as the city groaned under the burden of accommodating newcomers, many of whom spilled into unincorporated areas.

Unlike Pensacola, Key West enjoyed neither the luxury of new land nor the latitude of old land. The federal government had saved Key West from insolvency in the 1930s; now it would reshape the once isolated island. In the 1940s, the federal government not only primed the pump but built the pump, in this case the long-sought water pipeline from the Everglades to the Keys. Water began flowing in September 1942.

In 1940, Key West was a quaint community of 13,000 residents. Five years later, 45,000 persons crammed the city. "War has brought about many changes in Key West," lamented the *Miami Herald* in 1943. The reporter noted, "One of the last of the picturesque island's customs to disappear was the closing of doors to stores while a funeral procession passed. All business along the line of a funeral procession must be suspended as a final tribute to the dead. But the war ended that."¹⁰

Miami hummed with the surging currents of war, as tourists returned to the "Magic City" in 1943. Officially, Miami's population increased modestly from 173,065 residents in 1940 to 192,122 in 1945. Unofficially, the city's population fluctuated wildly. In January 1944, the *Miami Herald* estimated the city was "home" to 325,000 people, including winter residents, soldiers, and visitors. "Except for the land boom of 1925," observed journalist Nixon Smiley, "no other event in Miami's history had done so much to change the city as World War II. At the war's beginnings Miami still had many of the qualities of a small town. As you walked down Miami Avenue or Flagler Avenue you met

person after person you called by their first name. . . . The war changed all that."¹¹

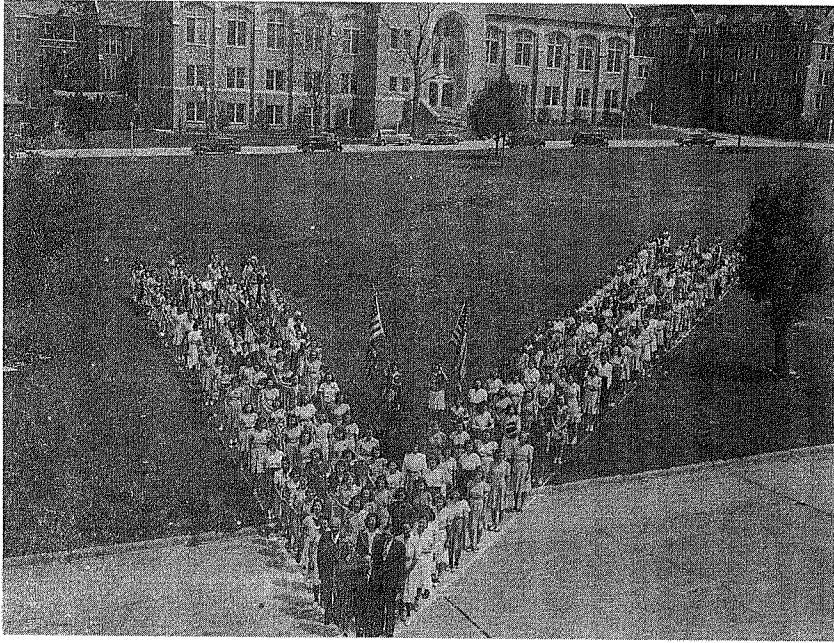
What is now called the Gold Coast exploded. The collective population of Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties grew from 387,000 persons in 1940 to 692,000 in 1950, accentuating the increasing importance of southeast Florida.

Small-town Florida was not immune to wartime drama. The *New York Times's* Dora Byron toured Panama City, Starke, and Homestead in the fall of 1942. "Dime stores are thronged on Saturday nights and churches filled on Sundays," Byron wrote. Pointing out the inevitable loss of community that came with rapid growth, she stated, "Everywhere there is noise and hurry and crowds. All three quickly are strangers to small Florida towns." In Stuart, older residents criticized the improper wearing apparel, the "very short shorts and halter tops" of the new female residents shopping downtown.¹²

Tallahassee, a quaint community of 16,000 residents in 1940, also felt the war's tremors. Over one-third of the city's lawyers enlisted in the service. "On every street, in each store, and in the homes there is some reminder of the war," observed the *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*.¹³ By 1944, the Florida State College for Women reached its largest enrollment ever, registering 2,227 women, in marked contrast to the 682 male university students at war-impacted Gainesville. On weekends, male soldiers and students, desperate for female companionship, descended upon the capital, many of them forced to sleep in hotel lobbies or on park benches.

In the big cities and small towns, residents expressed in words and deeds an outpouring of patriotic gestures and voluntary activities. On the home front, Floridians recycled scrap metal, planted victory gardens, and rolled bandages. In Lakeland, the Florida Citrus Bomber Fleet Committee raised funds to purchase fifteen Flying Fortresses. During one 1942 rally, Pine Island residents rescued ten tons of metal, including a steel dredge. In Zellwood, local children collected tons of paper and scrap metal during assorted drives. One official estimated that in 1943 Tampons tended 10,000 victory gardens. Floridians everywhere endured dimouts and ration coupons. In every community, a window flag bearing a blue star meant a son in the military. A gold star carried the somber news of a family's supreme sacrifice.

During World War I, a sardonic commentator had insisted, "War is the health of the State." During World War II, national leaders asked Americans to sacrifice, since, it was argued, the collective struggle to vanquish totalitarianism would bind society together. While that

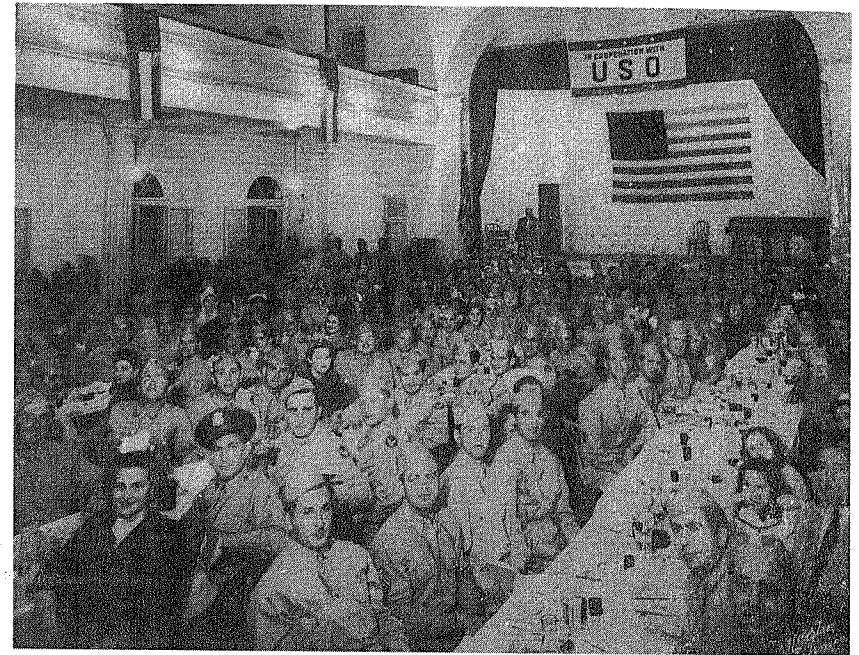


President Doak Campbell (*foreground*) and student members of the "Victory Club" at Florida State College for Women form a V for victory on the Tallahassee campus. The students tilled "victory gardens" as part of the war effort.

proved out in part, the war's dynamism also created new fears and widened old fissures. The war revealed how fragile unity and patriotism were and how crises challenged democratic institutions. The wartime struggle for racial justice, in particular, is illustrative.

Deeply moved by the idealism of the war, inspired by President Franklin Roosevelt's call for "The Four Freedoms" and committed to defeating the evil empires of Japan and Germany, African Americans joined in fighting for what was to them an undemocratic nation. The war gave them new hopes for change, however. It was a period of transition and transformation, as the old painful elements of lynchings and Jim Crow collided with landmark civil rights cases and a new generation of leaders.

African-American leaders championed a "Double V" campaign, supporting the war against totalitarianism while continuing the fight against racism at home. On the eve of Pearl Harbor, over 500,000 African Americans resided in Florida and 605,000 in 1950. While other southern states were losing black residents to the "Second Great Mi-



USO clubs throughout the state entertained the 2,122,100 servicemen and -women who trained at Florida bases and camps. These GIs enjoyed a USO banquet at Tampa in April 1943.

gration" north, Florida cities attracted increasing numbers of black migrants.

World War II was the last American conflict fought with segregated units. In spite of the Jim Crow military, African-American servicemen performed wartime tasks both at home and overseas. A total of 51,467 Florida blacks were inducted into the armed forces, constituting one-fifth of the state's soldiers. While the U.S. Navy allowed blacks to serve only as messmen and the Marines refused black volunteers altogether, black units in the Army and Army Air Forces received high marks during the war. Daniel "Chappie" James, born in Pensacola in 1920, entered the Air Corps and in 1975 became a four-star general. The famed 99th Fighter Squadron, comprised of black fighter pilots in the Air Forces, trained at Tallahassee's Dale Mabry Field.

At the same time that Americans followed the military campaigns in the Pacific and Europe, another conflict was unfolding on the home front at hundreds of southern military bases and towns. Race relations became tense as Americans from all regions, ethnic groups, and races

competed for services and respect. Floridians saw no reason to adjust the established color line for the visitors. But uniformed African Americans, soldiers fighting for democracy, expected to be treated with respect.

A series of incidents flared up in the strained wartime atmosphere. In Tallahassee, black soldiers stationed at Dale Mabry Field and black soldiers from nearby Camp Gordon Johnston frequented the capital's "Colored Recreation Center." Almost one-half of Tallahassee's population was African American, many of whom lived in the impoverished Frenchtown section. Two hundred black soldiers protested in August 1944 the arrest of five black servicemen in Frenchtown on charges of disorderly conduct. The *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Atlanta Daily World* asserted that overzealous local police aggravated the situation when they attempted to arrest the soldiers with drawn guns and tear gas. Black troops surrounded the police and insisted the accused men surrender to "colored military police." In the ensuing investigation, black troops from Camp Gordon Johnston were banned from visiting Tallahassee. The army subsequently required the base intelligence officer to file a "Weekly Report Concerning the Racial Situation." The officer noted in November 1944 that, while no racial incidents had occurred during the month, "there is of course still an occasional gripe from Negroes who are compelled to occupy rear seats in the city buses."¹⁴

In August 1942, the Fort Myers City Council unanimously enacted an "emergency ordinance to define the customs which promote and preserve the inter-racial disorders." The ordinance made it unlawful for blacks and whites to "loiter upon the streets" or to "patronize establishments serving food and intoxicating beverages . . . [without respect to] the divisional areas set apart by long established customs for colored and white occupancy and patronage."¹⁵

Elsewhere in the country a number of violent race riots erupted in Beaumont, Harlem, Detroit, and Los Angeles. In the aftermath of a June 1943 Detroit riot in which twenty-five people died, a *Miami Herald* editor wrote, "The Eleanor Roosevelt School of thought has been feeding the Negro a steady mixture of social equality that provokes such tragic incidents as Detroit's bloody battle."¹⁶

Florida prepared for the worst. The State Defense Council and Army Service Forces prepared a top secret plan in the event of race riots at Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Orlando, St. Petersburg, Tampa, or Miami. "In the City of Orlando," the report sketched out, "there is an undercurrent of tension, activated by union organizers and the presence of Northern Negro soldiers in the community."¹⁷ Officials planned to impose mili-

tary law in these cities in the event of riots. Detailed maps indicated key neighborhoods and institutions such as radio stations and newspapers.

The war forced some Floridians to reconsider the dilemma of race. In 1943, Herbert Krensky was traveling by train from Miami to Jacksonville. When the train stopped at Ocala, a platoon of German POWs, dressed in their Afrika Corps uniforms, boarded the train. The prisoners had been picking citrus. "When our train stopped at Waldo," remembered Krensky, "we stopped for a moment. . . . On the platform were these colored servicemen, one of them wounded and hobbling on crutches. They tried to board with their tickets in hand. The conductor refused to let them board. . . . He told them that since there were no colored coaches that they would have to ride in the baggage car."¹⁸

The most sensational and distressing racial episode occurred in Madison County. Jesse Payne, a black sharecropper, was lynched following a dispute with a white farmer. The spectacle brought ignominious attention to Florida since it was America's only lynching in 1945. A black army corporal wrote to Governor Millard Caldwell: "I had no idea that I would hear of similar acts of Fascism upon return to our great arsenal of democracy, America."¹⁹

But the war also offered hope. Across the South, the NAACP launched an attack upon the doctrine of separate but equal. Thurgood Marshall, representing the NAACP and black teachers, won several court cases in Florida, awarding African-American teachers salaries equal to their white counterparts. By war's end, blacks served on juries in Escambia and Pinellas counties, and cities such as Miami and Tampa hired black policemen. On 3 April 1944 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the white primary. By 1946, African Americans in Florida broke the political color line, registered as Democrats, and voted in primaries. The seeds of the modern civil rights movement had been sown.

World War II served as a great watershed for American women. The most visible and powerful symbol of the war's impact on the home front was the presence of women in the workplace. The *Daytona Evening News* wrote, "Womenpower is available everywhere. Women are eager to give it whenever and wherever they can. Why does not the government take steps to organize, recognize, and use this valuable asset?"²⁰ The *Tampa Tribune* saw the war as a harbinger. "It may hurt the masculine pride a little to think that a woman can handle a man's job, but pretty soon a lot of Tampa women may be working at the benches and docks where men used to be."²¹ The *Tribune* might have expanded the list to include orchards, welding shops, shipyards, and military bases.

Across America the number of working women rose from 14.6

million in 1941 to nearly 20 million in 1944. By war's end, married women outnumbered single women in the workplace, a landmark event. In Florida, newspapers noted the changes. One expert estimated that at least one-quarter of the state's farm workers were women. By March 1943, in Hillsborough County, 700 of 1,100 farm workers were females. "Women are doing virtually all of the cultivating and harvesting," noted the *Tampa Tribune*.²² In Miami, milkmaids replaced milkmen at Southern Dairy, and women took jobs as pole painters at Florida Power and Light and as clerks and elevator operators at area hotels. Tallahassee hired Elizabeth McLean as the city's first police-woman. Women replaced men as transit workers in St. Petersburg. "Lumberjills [have] invaded Florida," claimed the *Miami Herald*.²³ "They are doing practically every job in the saw mill today, and they are even felling trees in the woods with probably a soprano 'Timber!'"

The Tampa Shipbuilding Company eagerly recruited "Rosie the Riveter" and "Joan of Arc." A bard of unspecified gender wrote a poem for the shipyard's newspaper, *Tascozette* in August 1942: "No more girdles these dark days,/No more brassieres, no more stays/Let your stout heads be resigned/To breast and buttocks unconfined."

The Embry Riddle Aviation School in Miami and Arcadia employed large numbers of women in skilled positions, including twenty-five technical and flight instructors. Similar patterns occurred in Pensacola and Jacksonville.

The war effort relied heavily upon civic voluntarism, a field historically dominated by women. The day after Pearl Harbor, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* pleaded for "Tampa girls . . . to attend dances for soldiers."²⁴ In Miami Beach, 18,000 volunteers refurbished and staffed the Minsky Pier, a favorite recreation spot for soldiers. In St. Petersburg, teenagers volunteered as "Bomb-a-Dears," a recreational group, while the local chapter of the Grey Ladies distributed cigars and postcards at the Bay Pines Veterans' Hospital.

In a Rogers and Hammerstein musical, a lonely sailor stationed on an archipelago in the South Pacific summed up the feeling of countless American GIs: "What ain't we got? We ain't got dames!" Such was not a problem in Florida, if one believes newspaper accounts of alarming rates of VD and prostitution. The influence of sexually active men and women upon wartime manners and morals, a subject of scrutiny since the beginning of time, received tremendous attention from U.S. and Florida officials.

The war with its supercharged atmosphere of patriotism and sacrifice, strained the always confused world of gender and sexual relationships.

Newspapers conveniently blamed the problem on "Victory Girls," "VD Girls," and "Khacky-Wackies." Dorothy Parker suggested that it was time women "lost their amateur standing." Certainly it is difficult to stereotype wartime conduct or to assign labels of "victim" and "villain."

The fact is that prostitution posed a major problem around military bases and in major cities. In 1944, Pensacola's "VD Control Officer" estimated that Escambia County's population included 11,000 syphilitics. In Miami and Tampa, the military pressured city officials to eliminate red light districts. But while the police seemed to crack down on traditional houses of prostitution, the demands for illicit sex spawned new opportunities in new places. Helen Muir remarked, "Miami teenagers turned prostitute in Bayfront Park. . . . Early park closings and extra policing failed to stop this mass prostitution until all shrubbery was ordered trimmed."²⁵ The shrubbery at Tampa's Plant Park also inspired mutual affections, although one judge blamed local girls as much as prostitutes for the problem. Some military commanders, such as Colonel Edmund Gaines at Tallahassee's Dale Mabry Field, threatened to declare infected cities "off limits" to soldiers. The 1943 Florida legislature passed a State Quarantine Bill, converting four CCC camps at Miami, Ocala, Wakulla, and Jacksonville into VD hospitals. The bill empowered police to enroll for compulsory treatment any person testing positive for venereal disease.

Hundreds of thousands of wives, sweethearts, and children followed servicemen to Florida, hoping to reconstitute war-torn families or simply to be closer to loved ones. Florida, they learned, could be a cold place. Finding a home or apartment in crowded cities proved to be frustrating and often heartbreaking. Many called it a disgrace that servicemen with small children were turned away from homes and apartments. An "irate Navy wife" complained to a Florida newspaper in 1944 that, while there were houses and apartments galore in Florida, they seemed to be for tourists only. Philip Wylie, a trenchant critic of the hypocrisy of Florida's lavish life-style during the war, expressed outrage over the juxtaposition of the idle rich and the deserving poor in 1944 Miami. "Women and children walk the street," he complained in *Time*. "The men who have sacrificed most meet in Miami those who have sacrificed the least."²⁶

Historians debate how women's lives and their roles in American history were affected by the war. One school of thought argues that for all their individual acts of employment outside the home, and for all their wartime service as Waves and Wacs, even as pilots, America's women willingly returned to the "traditional" home roles of mother-housewife

when the war ended. Other scholars contend that World War II sowed the seeds for the modern women's movement, that the conflict profoundly changed the participants *and* the home front, and that, while many women did return to the homes, their expectations and experiences were incorporated into a changing American culture.

Largely overlooked during the war, a bill introduced and passed in the 1943 legislative session deserves mention. Representative Mary Lou Baker of St. Petersburg, the legislature's only female member at the time, introduced a bill known as the "Women's Emancipation Bill." Passed after a spirited debate, the law strengthened the rights of married women to manage their separate estates and to sue and be sued independently of their husbands. A bill to ensure the right of women to serve on juries failed.

News of the Japanese surrender ending the war swept across the peninsula and Panhandle on 14 August 1945. Collectively, in perhaps the most joyous celebration in state history, Floridians erupted in planned and spontaneous parades and demonstrations. In Miami, crowds of 30,000 filled Flagler Street with a parade of beeping automobiles and fluttering flags. In West Palm Beach, "Victory came . . . with a clattering din that served to release long-pent-up emotions with a flurry of miniature snowfalls of tattered paper."²⁷ Festive celebrants in Fort Lauderdale hanged an effigy of the Mikado on a rope. In Orlando, crowds gathered downtown, singing "Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!" In Jacksonville, the *Florida Times-Union* observed, "Sirens screamed, locomotives whistled, and automobile horns set up a deafening noise barrage."²⁸ In 1945 courthouse squares and downtowns figured prominently in the social lives of Floridians, and every one of them was filled with celebrants on what became known in history as V-J Day.

The war left lasting imprints on Florida, not the least of which was a list of war-tested political candidates. Within days after his enlistment in the Navy in 1942, Fuller Warren had launched a newspaper campaign to keep the home folks informed of his heroics and theatrics. The navy had also attracted other future governors, LeRoy Collins, Farris Bryant, and Haydon Burns. Daniel McCarty volunteered for the army and saw distinguished service with the field artillery. Claude Kirk enlisted in the marines at age seventeen and Reubin Askew served as a paratrooper. George Smathers's candidacy for the U.S. Senate was certainly enhanced by his reputation as a "Fighting Leatherneck."

Postwar politicians confronted a Florida government attempting to reconcile unprecedented demands for services with an antiquated tax structure. Educationally, Florida fared poorly, even by southern stan-

dards. In 1947, Florida still had no medical school, no community college system, and no public university south of Gainesville. The 1947 legislature passed a budget twice as large as ever approved but struggled to pay for the appropriations. In 1949 the legislature crossed a fiscal Rubicon when it approved, albeit reluctantly, a regressive three-cent sales tax.

World War II ushered in a dynamic new era in Florida history. The war years accelerated the pace of change and wrought significant developments in the social and economic lives of all Floridians.

Notes

1. *Tallahassee Democrat*, 9 December 1941.
2. Hemphill, *Aerial Gunner from Virginia*, p. 9.
3. Helen Muir, *Miami, U.S.A.* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1953), p. 2260.
4. *Fortune*, July 1943.
5. *Time*, 22 October 1954.
6. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 27 November 1942.
7. *Miami Herald*, February 1945; clipping in the Agnew-Welsh Scrapbook, Miami-Dade Public Library.
8. *Miami Herald*, 19 March 1943.
9. Harry Crews, *A Childhood* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 128.
10. *Miami Herald*, 26 July 1943.
11. Nixon Smiley, *Knights of the Fourth Estate: The Story of the Miami Herald* (Miami: E. A. Seemann Publishing Co., 1974), p. 209.
12. *New York Times*, 15 November 1942.
13. *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*, 7 May 1944.
14. Frank J. Saker, "Historical Report of Dale Mabry Field, Tallahassee," November 1944.
15. *Fort Myers New-Press*, 18 August 1942.
16. *Miami Herald*, 22 June 1943.
17. State Defense Council, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Record Group 191, Series 419, Box 57.
18. *Miami Herald*, 7 May 1985.
19. Millard F. Caldwell papers, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.
20. *Daytona Evening News*, 5 October 1942.
21. *Tampa Tribune*, 28 December 1941.
22. *Ibid.*, 14 March 1943.
23. *Miami Herald*, 22 August 1943.
24. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 8 December 1941.
25. Muir, *Miami, U.S.A.*, p. 233.
26. *The New Republic*, 21 February 1944.
27. *Palm Beach Post*, 15 August 1945.
28. *Florida Times-Union*, 15 August 1945.

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Primary Materials

Newspapers constitute an invaluable source for studying the war on the home front. The *Pensacola News Democrat*, *Panama City News Herald*, *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*, *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, *Miami Herald*, *Palm Beach Post*, *Fort Myers News Press*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *Tampa Morning Tribune*, *Gainesville Sun*, and *Orlando Sentinel* provide special insight into domestic events during the 1940s. Two out-of-state newspapers offer insights into race relations during the war, the *Pittsburgh Courier* (Florida edition) and *Atlanta Daily World*.

The P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, and the State Historical Library and the State Archives in Tallahassee provide the best holdings of primary materials related to the home front. The Millard Caldwell and Spessard Holland papers at the archives and the papers of the State Defense Council are valuable sources.

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