

Women of Ybor City



Women's History Month – March 12, 2024

Historical Women of Ybor City – 100 Years
Ago. Culture, Ethnicity, and Heritage.

National Women 's History Alliance 2024 Theme: Women who advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

“No other industry permitted blacks, Latin Americans, European immigrants, and women to labor side-by-side at the same workbench.”

(Mormino and Pozetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 101.)

Ybor City was ahead of it's time from the beginning.



The work force of Ybor City -



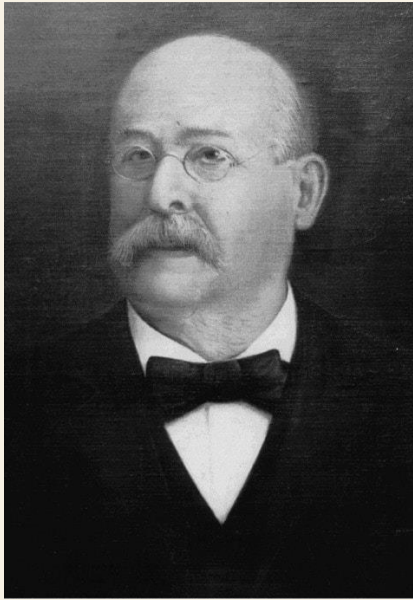
nately 1,150 cigar makers were at work
n of the Ybor factory — now Ybor
in 1925. They worked almost silently,
the reader shown in the upper right

hand corner as he told them the news of the day
and amused them with poetry and fiction — all in
Spanish. There were two other rooms of this same
dimension in the Ybor plant and a number of

smaller size. Only a few women
but these received the same pay
as the men. The women voted
long before they received nati

- This picture was taken in 1925 primarily men but women are also seen diligently working alongside them.
- Although women could not vote in a U.S. election before 1920, they could vote in union issues well before that.
- And although equal pay for equal work did not legally happen in this country until 1963, in Ybor City women received equal pay and privileges during this time.

Founding Father's of Ybor City



Mercedes Ybor - Wife of V.M. Ybor

**YBOR'S WIDOW,
TAMPA PIONEER,
DIES IN HAVANA**

**Helped Husband Start
Cigar Industry Here**



MRS. MERCEDES YBOR

- (1884-1931) The second wife of Ybor. She watched the first tree cut October 8, 1885 to clear the forest for what was to become Ybor City.
- They had 8 children together.
- After her husband's passing, she held substantial wealth and donated the property for V.M. Ybor school, and other property for public and religious purposes.
- She was known throughout her life for her charitable work and generosity.

Fannie Haya - Wife of Ignacio Haya

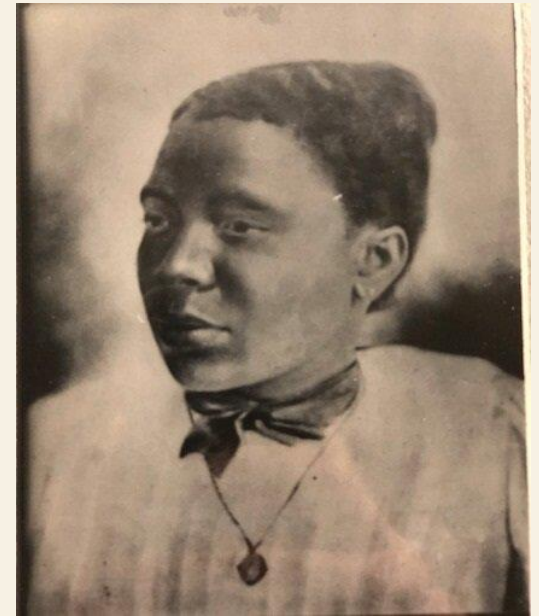
- When Ignacio Haya passed away in 1906 Fanny Haya took over the company and was known as TAMPA'S FIRST FEMALE EXECUTIVE. President & CEO of Factory Number 1.
- Mrs. Haya used the trolley on a regular basis but was also consistently late for its departure. A niece regularly held up the trolley until she arrived, and this soon became a joking custom of Ybor City. One of the trolley cars was named the "Fannie" because of her tardy reputation.
- When her beloved homes land was in the way of progress in Hyde Park, she sold the property but had her 3-story house moved. Her home was one of the first on record in Tampa to be relocated because she wasn't leaving it!



THE IGNACIO HAYA FAMILY
Marina Haya, later Frank Ambrose Torre; Ignacio and Fannie Haya, married 1872.

The Courageous - Paulina Pedroso

- In 1893 the business journal showed that 9 of the 11 boarding houses in Ybor City were owned and operated by women. (Wetherford, p. 122)
- Paulina Pedroso 1845-1925
- Owned and operated a boarding house on 8th Avenue and 12th St.
- Seen as the prime female revolutionary in exile during Cuba's fight for independence.
- Led efforts to organize La Sociedad Libres
- Said that she and Martí would walk through Ybor City "arm and arm" to strike out against racial segregation in North America.
- Paulina inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame in 1993 by Governor Lawton Chiles



Activism - Strikes

- Women were educated alongside men in the factories by lecturers they were big proponents of strikes.
- Women would organize for many social and civic causes.
- In 1901, 1500 Cuban, Spanish, and Italian women packed the Liceo Cubano to express unity with the female stenographer strike in St. Paul Minnesota
- Women were often the first to strike and then set up soup kitchens for others.
- In the early 1920s intensified fear over “socialist agendas” led a push from cigar owners to do away with lecturers. This sparked a series of strikes, the last being in 1931 when lecturers were officially removed.



Activism

- On May 6, 1937. over 5000 Latin women marched from Ybor City's Labor Temple to Tampa's City Hall petitioning the mayor for American support of the elected Spanish Republic government.
- \$2,000 per week was raised by cigar workers (10% of their wages) was sent to the relief effort – eventually raising over \$200,000.
- Tampa's Latins purchased several ambulances, tons of beans, milk, and other food for the Spanish allies.
- Leader in the activity was Elisa Moris, a cigarmaker, who was a ardent orator – She died of a stroke while speaking at the Labor Temple – it is said that hundreds of people walked beside her casket from the Labor Temple to Centro Asturiano's Cemetery.
- Majority of Latin community supported the Republic of Spain, while many owners and priests sided with Franco. Led to the Social Clubs being the haven for activism and organization.



A Few Women of The Social Clubs

The Italian Club - Norma Tina Russo

- Norma Tina Russo (1902-1977) was an opera singer, an advocate for the arts in Tampa, who became known as Tampa's First Lady of Opera.
- She was born Concetta Centonze in Naples, Italy but was called "Tina." Her singing career started at fourteen, and by nineteen made her debut with the San Carlo Opera of Naples.
- In 1923 she was recruited by the director of New York's Metropolitan Opera and arrived in NYC. During her nine years in NYC, she performed in several productions and delivered three children.
- In 1932 she was abandoned by her husband in Tampa. To support her family taught music. In the coming decades, Russo became a local celebrity, producing many recitals, concerts, and grand operas, often under the aegis of the Italian Club, teaching music and establishing art and culture in the city.



The Italian Club - Felicia "Phyllis" Leto Traina

- Felicia "Phyllis" Leto Traina – July 11, 1925 - March 29, 2011
- She was elected the first and only woman president of L'Unione Italiana, 1989-1990. She served on the Ladies Auxiliary as well as the Cemetery Committee. She was among the first recipients of the Italian-American Women of Excellence Award
- She was among the first recipients of the Italian-American Women of Excellence.
- She owned and operated Mac Traina Interiors for over 30 years, many of those years in Ybor City.



El Centro Asturiano - Adela Gonzmart

- Adela Hernandez Gonzmart (1920-2001) Queen of Ybor City and the third-generation owner of the Columbia Restaurant group.
- She served on the Centro Asturiano Board of Directors and was a devoted member of its auxiliary group Las Damas.
- Graduate of The Juilliard School of Music in New York City and was a renowned concert pianist.
- She was a staunch supporter of the arts in Tampa.
- Founder of Las Damas Sant 'Yago, The Ybor City State Museum.
- Ybor City Chamber of Commerce President for three terms.
- Served on the USF Presidential Latin Advisory Committee and was a member of Ybor City Rotary Club, the YCDC.
- Recipient of The Tony Pizzo Award for her contributions to Ybor City, Hispanic Woman of the Year by the Ybor City Museum and Citizen of the Year by the Tampa Optimist Club.
- Member of the Hillsborough High School Hall of Fame, and she held the Key to City handed to her by Mayor Greco.



Adela inspired many women by balancing both family and business

El Centro Asturiano - Elvira Tarmego Garcia

- Vera was the Centro's first woman president (1996-2000).
- She had a 48-year career as a classroom teacher at Broward, Ballast Point, and Mendenhall elementary schools.
- Vera told a reporter that she wasn't sure what her identity would be after retirement because it always had been "teacher." That included a bachelor's degree from the University of Tampa and master's degree from the University of South Florida in education.
- Vera was Florida's Outstanding Young Educator in 1966 and placed fourth nationally. Some of you can read this sentence because of "Miss Garcia" and her work to launch kindergarten in Hillsborough County's schools in the 1970s.
- She was a tireless advocate for Tampa's Latin heritage, helping protect the Centro Asturiano de Tampa's original cemetery and preserve that venerable 122-year-old club's building from an uncertain future.



The Cuban Club - Hortencia Lavin Morales

- Hortencia Lavin Morales (1913-1997)
- Hortencia became a Licensed Practical Nurse who was very knowledgeable and efficient. She worked at the Circulo Cubano Clinica (founded in 1908) from the 1930's until the late 1980's. She also worked part-time at the nearby El Bien Publico Clinic, (which operated from 1903-1939) during the 1930's and at its successor in the same building, the Gonzalez Clinic, during the 1940's and 1950's. The above Clinics each served successively as the de facto 'hospital' for Cuban Club members.
- Hortencia's nephew, Emilio Diaz, said that "Everybody knew Hortencia. She was in everybody's life in Ybor City." -- Hortencia's decades of devoted work primarily in the Cuban Club Clinic embodied the heart and soul of the Circulo Cubano de Tampa. She was always kind, considerate and attentive to every patient.
- When speaking about some important detail of the Cuban Club's long history, she sometimes would point upwards suddenly and say in the strong tone of a very strict schoolteacher, "LISTEN and LEARN!!"
- During a period in the late 1980's of rapidly shrinking membership and financial difficulties, Hortencia became the first woman President of the Circulo Cubano de Tampa from 1989-1991 in order to offer her strength of personality and resolve to address the Club's problems and lead the Circulo Cubano into the future.
- Hortencia Morales' love for Cuba and sense of pride in being the daughter of Cuban immigrants was so strong that, at her graveside service in 1997, the President of the Cuban Club draped a Cuban flag over her coffin. It was folded and laid at her feet just before her burial.





Tribute to the Making of Cigars

The Start of J. C. Newman - Hannah Newman

- At the young age of 14, Julius Caesar Newman (J.C.), became a cigar maker apprentice in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1890, the Newmans were recent immigrants to the United States and J.C.'s mother, Hannah, paid \$3.00 per month so that he could learn the cigar trade.
- The beginnings of JCN Cigar Company was in the family barn. The humble beginnings of J.C. Newman Cigar Co. in 1895. Though his dreams of success were great, the company's beginnings were quite simple. In 1895, J.C. created a cigar table from some old boards, borrowed \$50 for tobacco, and received his first order for 500 cigars from the family grocer, and it was Hannah who got that order.
- The business that started that day in the barn behind the family home was the J.C. Newman Cigar Company. In 1954 it moved to Tampa where it still remains today.



In Closing

“We are all bits and pieces of those that come before us”

Thank You