

World War II and Hillsborough County

Much of the content of this paper are excerpts and quotes from “Hillsborough County Goes to War” written by Gary R. Mormino and published by the Tampa Bay History Center.

The United States’ efforts during World War II drew heavily on both the people and resources of the state of Florida. Over 250,000 Floridians volunteered or were drafted into the armed forces. Dozens of military bases were established or expanded in the state and people flooded into Florida by the thousands.

Growing Fears of War

Growing fears of war in 1940 and perhaps anxiety over the war raging in Europe, the peninsula west of the city of Tampa was being transformed into MacDill Army Air Field and Drew Army Air Field with a road planned to connect the two military installations later called Dale Mabry Highway. The new road was eventually built which replaced the old Vera Avenue. The transformation of the area into multiple military installations wasn’t the only change in the landscape. Realizing that Japan and Germany had both expanded their maritime reach in the Atlantic and Pacific, President Roosevelt began a publicity campaign to the American people that a modern merchant marine and navy would be a critical factor to protect the country. These factors led to a vast expansion by the US Maritime Commission to speed up production of American ships. One such expansion was in Tampa with the help of the Maritime Commission and an \$8 million contract to build four cargo ships. These early developments helped save a struggling ship building industry and led directly to a surge of construction and 39 reinforced concrete cargo ships for Merchant Marine use were launched between 1942 and 1945. This subject is addressed in a later chapter of the war effort in Tampa.

1941

While things were kicking up on the military front with many folks concerned about protecting their homes and businesses, the National Guard began forming units around the country. One of these rose at Benjamin Field which hosted the 116th Field Artillery commanded by its namesake, Colonel Homer Hesterly. Ironically, Colonel Hesterly and the men of the 116th Field Artillery unit left Tampa on a training mission for Fort Blanding (near Starke, Florida) on December 7, 1941.



Like many other parts of the country, when military recruiters opened their doors the next day, hundreds of residents were lined up eager to enlist. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Major General Walter Frank, Base Commander, MacDill Army Air Field suspended all leaves and furloughs for officers and men, strengthened security around equipment/aircraft and laborers began constructing new fencing around MacDill Army Air Field. On the local front, armed sentries blanketed the Tampa shipyards, Port Tampa City, the beaches and sensitive civilian targets. In addition, the Tampa Civilian Harbor Patrol doubled its vigilance along the waterfront, ham radio operators were ordered to silence their sets and blackout signals were publicized to alert civilians of pending air and sea attacks. The attack on Pearl Harbor gave the people of America a wake-up call that brought war into their homes and lives, creating a new resolve to join the fight against Japan and Germany no matter the cost or harm done to their family or friends. No longer was the country divided over what needed to be done.

1942 to 1945 Shipbuilding Industry

Shipbuilding became a major factor during the early days of the war effort in Tampa primarily due to the efforts of George Blaine Howell who rescued the Tampa Shipbuilding Company (TASCO) from mismanagement and near bankruptcy. Investments exceeding \$8 million toward infrastructure was necessary to accommodate the demand for military ships in all shapes and sizes. Of course, employment soared, from 1,350 workers in 1940 to almost 9,000 by 1942 and peaked at 16,000 in 1944. TASCO became the largest civilian employer in the region and they also stunned the shipbuilding industry by turning out 75 ships for the Navy while maintaining and repairing almost 599 vessels. The variety and breath of accomplishment was impressive; seven ammunition carriers, 12 destroyer escorts, 24 coast guard minesweepers, plus a number of barges and cargo ships.

Construction of cargo ships became a problem when TASCO, owned by the McCloskey family faced a shortage of plate and machine steel, so McCloskey began specializing in the construction of concrete ships. McCloskey's 6,000 workers built and launched 39 concrete reinforced ships between 1942 and 1945. These ships were destined to be a big part of the Merchant Marine fleet responsible for moving cargo to the war zones.

Another shipbuilding company to join the effort was Tampa Marine Company which was established at the southern end of Ybor Channel. Tampa Marine's 2,300 workers including some handicapped veterans who constructed 78 light tug-boats for the US Army. Bushnell-Lyons also joined the effort by constructing steel lighters, barges designed to carry tanks and guns in shallow harbors.



ANOTHER SHIP SLIDES DOWN THE WAYS ...USS MAUNA LOA LAUNCHED APRIL 4, 1943

The ship building industry in Tampa helped bring a struggling economy back from the brink of collapse. In fact, the ship-builders had to find workers from all over south Florida and beyond to keep up with the demand for ships from the Navy and Merchant Marine. Many local school teachers, waitresses, farmers and others migrated from their chosen trade to become welders, electricians and other labor-intensive jobs because the ship building industry paid better and over-time pay was common. Workers suddenly were rewarded with a pay increase from \$16.50 a week to \$44.50. A shortage of men laborers resulted in women, by the hundreds, joining the workforce either from homebuilder, teacher or secretary to welders and other skilled trades.

This new economy of course had its trials and tribulations. Nightlife and drinking took its toll and unions began forming to help protect the workforce from abuses by management. Unions became a strong and formidable adversary for management to deal with and eventually had to be settled by politicians and the courts. Some unions even created their own troubles by refusing to hire skilled African Americans which eventually prompted federal intervention to resolve race issues that festered and sometimes affected the workforce with strikes and labor disputes. When worker shortages became a serious problem, the tide turned and African Americans joined the workforce and new rules had to be introduced so pay rates were fair for everyone.

During the course of the war, approximately 32,000 workers migrated to Tampa from other states to be part of a workforce of 54,000 building war ships. But, by May of 1945, shipbuilding in Tampa was reduced to skeletal crews. Post-war ship building advocates finally realized there was a new industry that could compete with the railroad industry and eventually the new Port of Tampa emerged which was governed by the Port Authority. Tampa's future home for shrimp fleets, banana docks, Port Sutton, American Shipbuilding Co., Tampa Bay Shipbuilding and Repair Co., and cruise ship terminals was linked to decisions made in the 1940's.

Tampa Transformation

As citizens in America began joining the fight to stop Germany and Japan, life would never be the same in this country. Many citizens left our shores to war zones and many more began a mass movement to places where they were needed. Over 20,000 Hillsborough County residents left for armed service and many others joined the exodus, migrating to defense jobs in the North and West. At the same time, one estimate placed the number of new workers who migrated to Tampa around 31,000.

The impact of all this movement throughout the country transformed a nation with minimum migration activity to one with an extraordinary chapter of mobility. For example, between 1940 and 1947, 70 million Americans changed residencies. Of course, much of this migration was only temporary and when 1945 came to a close, Tampa population only grew 16,085 persons. However, these mass movements of people coming and leaving put extraordinary demands on infrastructure of city and county resources. Employees of all types were in critical shortages, especially in the lower paying jobs. These shortages, were in large part, resolved by large numbers of women joining the workforce performing just about every skill or function. Essentially, the war was a turning point in the lives of many women.



Of course, this mass influx of new workers into the population created a major undertaking to house, feed and move everyone from place to place. While workers were arriving to build airfields and ships, construct roads and erect temporary housing to support the war effort, troops from near and far were arriving by the bus load. MacDill Army Air Field and Drew Army Air Field were beginning to grow in size and importance to the war effort and transforming open land into training facilities and military bases began operating from tents, out-houses, "tar-paper" shacks and hastily erected barracks. Eventually, Drew Army Air Field hosted over 25,000 combatants on 15 square miles and MacDill Arm Air Field grew to 6,000 acres with accommodations for 15,000 troops. Tampa was destined to become a major corner-stone of the country's contributions to the maritime and air wars to come.

1942 to 1945 Drew Army Air Field

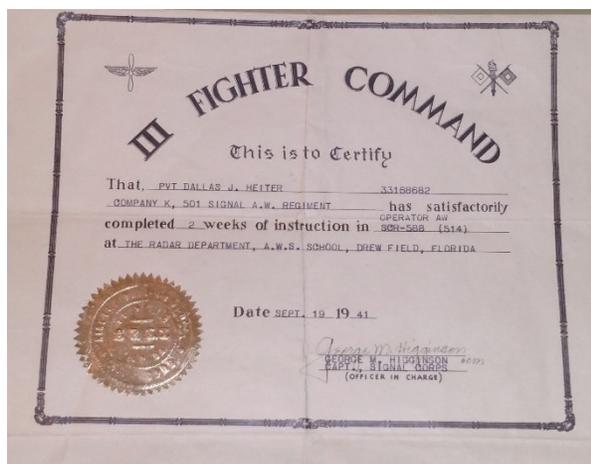
John Drew owned the land that he turned into a civilian airport in 1928. The field was named “Drew Field Municipal Airport”. It served the city of Tampa from the late 1920s through 1940. The city of Tampa offered the use of the field to the Army Air Corps temporarily and the offer was accepted on April 26, 1940. The original intent was to house around 200 soldiers at the location until MacDill was ready for them. In May of 1940, two and four engine bomber aircraft belonging to the Army Air Corps landed at Drew Field. The B-17s, B-18s, A-17s were an advance contingent of the 29th Bombardment Group. This Bomb Group was intended to be the primary flying unit for MacDill Army Air Field just a few miles south of Drew Field. MacDill Army Air Field was still under construction. Its huge hangars and the runways were not yet finished.

Tents were erected at Drew Field for some of the soldiers but the majority of the men were based at MacDill. Soldiers were trucked from MacDill Army Air Field to Drew Field each morning to conduct flying operations. As early as July of 1940, plans were underway to accommodate approximately 1,000 men at Drew Field. Construction began April 25, 1940 of the concrete reinforced vault to house the secret Norden Bombsight. Tensions were high in Europe and the dark clouds of war were gathering. The initial plans for MacDill were expanded time and time again in rapid succession. It was becoming obvious that the area was so well suited to conduct flying operations, that the discussion began to lease Drew Field to allow the massive expansion of the Army Air Corps presence in Tampa. Drew Army Air Field was born and in May of 1941, Colonel Melvin B. Asp (Hillsborough High School graduate, class of 1913) from Tampa was assigned as the commanding officer of Drew Army Air Field. Buildings were being built to house far more troops than originally envisioned. Maintenance shops, expansion of the hangar and supporting infrastructure were all being improved as plans for this field grew in scope. By August of 1941 work on the concrete runways began and the next month, Drew Army Air Field was divorced from MacDill.

The events of December 7, 1941 propelled the development of Drew Army Air Field towards a field that would eventually rival the size of the nearby MacDill Army Air Field. Anti-Submarine Command used the field to conduct reconnaissance over the Gulf of Mexico by the 15th and 3rd Anti-Submarine Squadrons searching for German submarines. They were flying O-47 light observation aircraft, B-25 Mitchells and B-34 Lexingtons equipped with Anti-Submarine radar. These operations took place until the Navy took over that mission in mid-1943.

Training was a primary mission of Drew Army Air Field throughout World War II. The first operational mission was training and equipping the 9th Air Force IX Fighter Command to reinforce the British Desert Air Force in Egypt using P-40s. P-47 Thunderbolts arrived in early March 1943 with the Operational Training Unit, the 53rd Fighter Group. Brazilian P-47 pilots were also trained at the field.

Fighter pilot replacement training took place at Drew Army Air Field until late 1943 when the unit moved to Hillsborough Army Air Field just north of the Tampa city limits. Dive bombing was taught in the 408th Fighter-Bomber Group Operational Training Unit equipped with the A-36 Apaches in September of 1943. The primary aircraft of the field changed when four Squadrons of B-17 Flying Fortresses were assigned to Drew Army Air Field in December of 1943 joining MacDill Army Air Field's B-17s already busy skies of Tampa and the surrounding area. The loud roar of takeoffs and landings were present day and night. The field even



had its own “ditching pond” where a large pond/pool was dug and a derelict B-17 placed in it to train aircrews in water survival.

In addition to aircraft air and ground crews being trained, the Air Warning Unit Training Center was established at Drew Army Air Field in June of 1941 to train military and civilians. The unit was also involved with early radar, a new technology and a very secretive subject taught at Drew Army Air Field. Students learned to operate and maintain the mobile radar units (SCR-270), fixed units (SCR-271) and the SCR-588 Ground Control Intercept Radar designed to be deployed by small teams of operators to track and control fighter aircraft (within 50 miles) from the ground until February of 1945. These units established Ground Observer posts at various locations as part of the civil defense network. Drew Army Air Field had its own Officer Training School until October 1943. Basic weapons training and qualification took place at the Drew Army Air Field rifle and pistol range. A school was established to repair office equipment, one of the instructors was the first civilian female instructor serving in that capacity. An obstacle course was built as part of the Combat Conditioning Course.



The 3rd Air Force was headquartered at Drew Army Air Field as was the Third Fighter Command. Drew Army Air Field could not have functioned to the level it did without the dedication and support of thousands of Hillsborough County civilians. German Prisoners of War (POW) from Camp Blanding worked in kitchens, canteens, warehouses and quartermaster workshops. The Drew Army Air Field POW camp housed 395 Germans between August of 1944 and March of 1946. Drew Army Air Field was also used as a filming location for three WWII era movies. What was then considered the first patriotic war movie, “*Air Force*” was partially filmed at Drew Army Air Field in 1941. The field served to replicate the south pacific with its palm trees and tropical foliage background. “*A Guy Named Joe*” which was later remade into a movie named “*Always*” and “*Sunday Dinner for a Soldier*” was based on a soldier stationed at Drew Army Air Field and his love interest living nearby.

Drew Army Air Field grew to a huge complex extending from Hillsborough Avenue south to Columbus Avenue and from Dale Mabry Highway to several miles to the west



occupying the land that now is Drew Park and Tampa International Airport.

1942 to 1945 MacDill Army Air Field

In 1935, US Representative Mark J. Wilcox of Florida introduced a bill to create new Army Air Fields, one in each corner of the Continental United States. Funding was not available for this great plan at the time so the project was put on hold.

In early 1938, Major Craig of the Army Air Corps approached Mayor Chancy of Tampa to explore the possibility of using Peter O'Knight and Drew Army Air Field, along with local hotels to hold Army Air Service exercises in the Tampa Bay area. Once the details were worked out, the city was committed to hosting the many Airmen and aircraft coming to the area. A meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber, National Aeronautic Association and the Tampa Merchants Association was held to plan an entertainment program for the visitors. Officers were given invitations to the Madeira Beach Bath Club and Clearwater Yacht Club. They were provided free tickets to the Sulfur Springs Dog Track, baseball games and fishing trips. The city was electrified and anxious to make a good impression on their guests. The week-long exercises were a huge success.

By late 1938, partly based on growing aggression in the world, funding was finally approved for the bases Wilcox proposed. The Air Corps was impressed with what the Tampa Bay area had to offer; the great flying weather, ports for shipping and the railroad. The enthusiasm and great support the local citizens provided the military during the 1938 exercises was fresh on their minds.

On July 15, 1939 announcements were made that an Air Corps base was being built in Tampa. Construction began on what was then called "The Great Southeast Air Base." It would not be long before the base was renamed in honor of Colonel Leslie MacDill. The plan at that time was to have one huge hangar. As the possibility of war increased around the world, that was expanded to a total of three hangars but eventually the plans would change and MacDill Army Air Field would have five big hangars to support a variety of missions. Along with the constant expansion of the plan for hangars, the plans expanded proportionally. The 29th Bombardment Group and their aircraft came to Tampa before they could even land on the runways. The aircraft were based temporarily at Drew Army Air Field. GIs slept at MacDill in tents as barracks were being completed and those directly supporting flying operations were trucked to and from Drew Army Air Field each day. Finally, on April 16, 1941 the runways were complete. The dedication of MacDill Army Air Field took place with a Douglas B-18 Bolo being the first aircraft to land on the new runway.

The 29th Bomb Group primarily flew the B-18 Bolo but also had two of the early B-17s, a few PT-17 bi-planes and a B-23 Dragon. Most of the first GIs that arrived at MacDill came from other bases and Army Air Fields. Among them was Colonel Tinker, the first native American Indian who would go on to earn the rank of General. It was not long before recruiting began for the numerous local citizens that would support the military working along-side the military. The December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor stirred activity on the field like never before. Everyone was called to duty, aircraft were loaded with bombs and ammunition, defensive positions set up and security heightened.



The greatest threat was from water-based invasion so MacDill Army Air Field aircraft began patrols over the Gulf of Mexico so the mission was officially changed to train B-17 Flying Fortress Bomber crews. Men trained at MacDill Army Air Field were some of the first to help build what became known as “The Mighty 8th Air Force”. MacDill Army Air Field was tasked with flying submarine patrol while students were still being trained for other combat assignments.

MacDill Army Air Field was also home to numerous aerial mapping units where maps of the US and surrounding areas including the Caribbean, South America and beyond, were woefully inaccurate. Many secret mapping missions were flown from MacDill Army Air Field. During all this activity. Project X came to MacDill Air Field to move aircraft along the southern route to Europe lasted from December 24, 1941 to February 22, 1942. Soon after, 78 air crews were directed to fly to MacDill Army Air Field to receive verbal instructions regarding a secret mission (to preserve the project’s secrecy in case of capture) to fly to “Destination X” by the Executive Officer with special instructions. From the time of arrival to departure was only sixty hours to prepare. MacDill Field lost a total of 662 individuals to this project. The typical flight plan for the crews was from MacDill Field to various locations in Europe and the middle east. Once the crews departed MacDill, they were on their own. Not even weather reports were sent to the crews to maintain radio silence.

Eventually, the Anti-Submarine duty was taken over by the Navy and MacDill Army Air Field could focus on training again. In addition to training bomber air and ground crews, scores of other types of training were conducted at MacDill Army Air Field. This training included building decoy airplanes from chicken wire and wood, camouflaging aircraft on the ground, shooting qualification, using the bayonet in combat, operating heavy vehicles, vehicle maintenance and building airfields. MacDill Army Air Field Aviation Engineers were responsible for building flying fields in England so B-17 crews could take on the task of bombing targets in Germany.

As the war progressed, a need for precision bombing of smaller targets was realized. The big, beautiful B-17s were soon gone and the important mission of training B-26 Marauder medium bomber crews at MacDill Army Air Field became the priority beginning in mid-1942.



B-26 aircraft were rushed into production and many of the tough lessons on how to operate this high-speed bomber were learned right here. It wasn’t long after this, in March of 1943 when the first contingent of Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) and Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) pilots arrived at the field to much fanfare.

MacDill Army Air Field was responsible for training B-26 Marauder crews to conduct precision strikes to protect England from Hitler's weapons and began flying surgical strike missions in preparation for the "D" Day invasion. As the invasion progressed, MacDill Army Air Field bomber crews took out bridges, airfields, and transportation targets to prevent the Germans from reinforcing its defenses on the coast of France. Nine of the twelve B-26 units that operated in the European theater during WWII were trained at MacDill Army Air Field. As combat lessons were learned, experienced veterans from Europe and the Pacific began arriving at MacDill Army Air Field as instructors to share their hard-earned experiences with students. As "D" Day and the ensuing fighting advanced, German forces were over-run and MacDill Army Air Field trained and segregated Aviation Engineers were called in to build and repair bombed out airfields as the Allied Forces fought their way across France to the heart of Germany.

In early 1944, B-17s began arriving at MacDill and the B-26s departed. The B-17s were a mix of new aircraft right from the factory and veteran combat aircraft that were refurbished and used for training. Of these, the most famous B-17 of all, the "Memphis Belle," was assigned to MacDill Army Air Field after the US war bond tour. With Victory in Europe (V-E Day) approaching and Germany surrendering, focus shifted to the Pacific Theater. With the open expanses between islands, MacDill Army Air Field shifted from B-17 training to the new, much longer-range B-29 in January of 1945 to lead the bombing effort of Japan ending WWII. In early 1945, German POWs began arriving at MacDill Army Air Field where they were housed while providing various jobs around the base during their captivity. The POWs remained until their return to Germany in 1946. Upon the cessation of hostilities, MacDill Army Air Field became the new home of the Mighty 8th Air Force and was tasked with the demobilization of thousands of Army Air Force personnel.

A lot was asked of MacDill's Army Air Force people and Hillsborough County civilians who worked at the base delivering an invaluable contribution to winning World War II. The primary activity in Hillsborough County during WWII was flight crew training. There were more flight crews killed during training in the US than lost their lives in actual combat during all of WWII.

1943 to 1945 Hillsborough Army Airfield

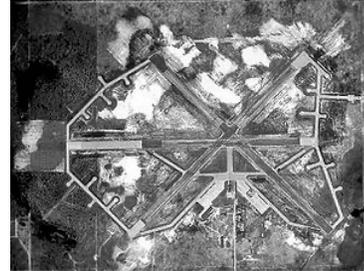
Hillsborough Army Air Field was built by the United States Army Air Forces about 1943 and its primary mission was to be an auxiliary airfield for both Drew Army Air Field and MacDill Army Air Field. It was assigned to the Third Air Force, III Fighter Command. Hillsborough Army Air Field had three runways of about 5,200 feet in length and several hangars along the west side of the airfield.

The initial mission of Hillsborough Army Air Field was as a support and training location; also, being used for emergency landings of students assigned to Drew Army Air Field and MacDill Army Air Field. It also operated a school for administrative training of junior officers. The 42nd Fighter Squadron was assigned to Hillsborough Army Air Field on May 10, 1943, equipped with P-51 Mustangs. The 42nd was detached from Bartow Army Air Field (near Lakeland, Florida) when advanced combat fighter pilot training moved from Drew Army Air Field to Hillsborough Army Air Field.

On May 10, 1945, training was ended at the base, and the 343rd Army Air Field Base Unit (AAFBU) was discontinued. Personnel and equipment were reassigned to IV Fighter Command, 473rd AAFBU and transferred to Porterville Army Airfield, California. The base was officially closed on May 23, 1945 and transferred to Air Technical Service Command for disposal. After World War II, Hillsborough was reused as a civilian airport, known as **Henderson Airport**, however it was closed in the late 1950s.

The University of South Florida campus began construction in 1957 on a site adjacent to the north side of Henderson Airport, and Busch Gardens Theme Park opened in 1959 just south of the airport. The surviving runways are used as a driver training area by Busch Gardens to instruct new drivers how to operate some of their vehicles.

Today, the airfield is all but unrecognizable in the urbanized area of Tampa, however the center of the airport, with two runways in an X shape, is visible from satellite images (see photo below). The Tampa Bay regional headquarters of the Florida Department of Transportation building is located on the site of the northeastern runway. Mel's Hot Dogs, a popular Tampa eatery, states on its website that it occupies the last remaining structure from the World War II Army Air Field.



Postwar Tampa and Hillsborough County 1945 to 1950

Hillsborough County residents greeted May 8, 1945 with a feeling of relief and then celebration. Victory in Europe, or V-E Day came. However, the previous four years would remain forever as memories of hardship and steep personal anguish for lost brothers, fathers, daughters and sons, the aftermath of war in Europe. Although there was reason for celebration, many were hesitant because loved ones were still returning in coffins from the extended war in the Pacific.

Then, on August 6, 1945, when news spread across the country about the destruction of Hiroshima Japan from the belly of Colonel Paul Tibbet's B-29 Superfortress "Enola Gay," a long-awaited end seemed in sight.



Less than a month later, on September 2, 1945 on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay, the Japanese envoys Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and General Yoshijiro Umezu signed their names on the Instrument of Surrender.

Now, it was time for celebration. History books and much more has been written about postwar WWII America. Just like the rest of the country, the social, economic, and technological revolutions wrought by the war profoundly shaped Tampa and Hillsborough County from 1945 to 1950. An optimism borne of victory and the promise of postwar prosperity swept Tampa Bay.

Veterans returning home quickly joined the workforce with a new program (the GI Bill) to help them improve their education. Almost empty universities and colleges were swarmed with new students. Another program, implemented soon after the war helped veterans get low-cost loans so they could purchase their dream home. One enterprising veteran (Jim Walter) helped in this effort by building new “shell” modular homes that sold for \$850. Real estate became a profitable commodity and property values jumped almost overnight. All of this rapid growth eventually had a negative impact on Tampa for a time because infrastructure and county resources were outpaced by funds to support an ever-increasing population growth of 39% above pre-war figures.

Faced with a huge increase in the popularity of automobiles, the beloved Tampa Street Car service only lasted about one year before Tampa Electric shut it down due to neglect and lack of use. Of course, streets filled with new automobiles caused traffic problems that would plague Tampa even to this day.



Postwar Tampa soon came to be known for phosphate production, shipping industry growth, military defense activity and on the down side, organized crime. Unfortunately, most of the military installations soon were faded memories with early closure of Henderson Field (formerly Hillsborough Army Air Field) and Drew Army Air Field was decommissioned in the summer of 1947 which was renamed Tampa International Airport. Only MacDill Army Air Field survived postwar demobilization. The ever-changing landscape dealt Cigar making and the huge industry surrounding tobacco in Tampa a death blow. Mechanization of the tobacco industry marked the end of thousands of cigar makers jobs in Tampa. One bright spot for Tampa in postwar days was the increased interest and focus on technological advances resulting from military and defense spending. Television suddenly appeared on the scene and FM radio soon followed.

Finally, below is a quote from Gary Mormino’s book, *Hillsborough County Goes to War* that summarizes the impact of WWII on Tampa and a good culmination of this brief history of Tampa between 1940 and 1950.

“World War II was the single most important event in Tampa history. The war rescued a foundering city, redirecting it’s future while resonating with its past. A decade of sustained prosperity brought hundreds of

thousands of new residents to the bay area. Hundreds of suburban developments bulldozed away orange groves and palmetto scrub. Television began to compete with radio and soon rooflines sprouted antennae. Hillsborough County rejoiced when State Senator Sam Gibbons helped secure the University of South Florida for Tampa. Its location anticipated the future growth of the county. The year 1956 marked the opening of Tampa's first great shopping malls, Britton Plaza and North Gate. The shopping malls signaled the decline of downtown and the boom of suburbanization. More ominously, the passage of the interstate Highway Act doomed many of Tampa's most beloved neighborhoods. Interstate highways 4 and 275 cut grievously into the urban fabric of Ybor City, West Tampa, Seminole Heights, and Central Avenue. World War II acted as a giant watershed. We are still dealing with its consequences."

-The End-