

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**  
  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Tampa Bay Hotel

AND/OR COMMON University of Tampa, Plant Hall

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
401 West Kennedy Boulevard

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN  
Tampa

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

7

STATE  
Florida

CODE

12

COUNTY

Hillsborough

CODE

057

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
City of Tampa

STREET & NUMBER  
Tampa City Hall - 315 East Kennedy Boulevard

CITY, TOWN  
Tampa

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
Florida

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hillsborough County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
500 Pierce Street

CITY, TOWN  
Tampa

STATE  
Florida

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
National Register

DATE  
1972

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS National Register of Historic Places

CITY, TOWN  
1100 L St., N.W.

STATE  
Washington, D. C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Henry Bradley Plant, financier and railroad magnate, built the massive Tampa Bay Hotel in 1888-91 to house his collection of art and furnishings, which he had gathered from all parts of the world. Since then, the building has played several roles: a popular gathering place during the Florida boom of the 1920's, it provided a stage for theatrical artists such as Anna Pavlova and Sarah Bernhardt, and it served as headquarters for the American forces that invaded Cuba during the Spanish-American War. In 1933 the hotel became the central building on the campus of the University of Tampa. Alterations to the hotel have been mostly for the sake of modern convenience. Outside posts on the veranda have had to be replaced in a few instances, but the building appears virtually the same as it did on its opening day, January 31, 1891.

To establish the hotel, Plant bought 60 acres of land from Jesse Hayden, a ferryboat operator, and then spent more than \$2 million on construction and \$500,000 on furnishing the massive building. Plant died in 1899, and in 1905 his heirs sold the building and its furnishings to the city of Tampa for \$125,000. The hotel continued to be the center of Tampa social life until 1932, when leaseholder W. F. Adams went bankrupt. In 1933, the University of Tampa, then operating as a junior college in a Hillsborough High School building, decided to expand into a 4-year college. The city of Tampa offered to lease the Tampa Bay Hotel to the university for an annual rent of one dollar. Since then the University of Tampa has occupied the building and surrounding grounds.

Tremendously complex, the irregularly shaped, multi-storied, flat-roofed, red brick edifice is decorated in the Moorish style with 13 imposing silver-painted, crescent-crowned minarets projecting from towers at various corners of the building. About 900 feet long, the hotel consists of two sections connected by a lengthy, curving, multi-storied corridor. The building rests on a brick and stone foundation, and has numerous capped-brick interior chimneys which pierce the roof. Also there is a basement that once contained a billiard room, rathskeller, shuffleboard rooms, mineral water baths, massage rooms, and cafe facilities.

Byzantine-style trim on windows and doors carry out the Turkish theme of the exterior. Extending across the east facade is a 2-story gallery supported by white-painted iron posts and decorated by black-painted iron balusters and a white-

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## MILITARY & LITERATURE (JOURNALISM)

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1888-1920

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. A. Wood

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tampa Bay Hotel has a twofold significance. First, it served as the headquarters for the Army that invaded Cuba during the Spanish-American War, the conflict that clearly established the United States as a world power. This war, **says** diplomatic historian Wayne S. Cole, "was a dramatic preview of the burgeoning power that the United States was to command in the twentieth century."<sup>1</sup> Many of the Nation's leading news correspondents gathered at the hotel and from there reported the history-making developments to the American public.

Second, the hotel is symbolic of the pioneering efforts that opened Florida for development and made possible its tremendous growth in the 20th century. Although on a more grandiose scale, the Tampa Bay was typical of the hotels built by railroad men and other developers to attract tourists to Florida in the hope they might purchase property and become permanent residents.

A combination of Moorish and Turkish architecture, the magnificently decorated, multi-storied, approximately 900-foot-long hotel was built in 1888-91 by Henry Bradley Plant. Still in excellent condition, the little-altered structure now houses offices and classrooms of the University of Tampa.

<sup>1</sup>Wayne S. Cole, An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations (Homewood, Ill., 1968), 266.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brown, Charles H., The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ca. 4 1/2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	3 5 5 9 4 5	3 0 9 1 9 3 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dorothy K. Dickens and Ralph Christian, Assistant Editors

ORGANIZATION Historic Landmarks Project, American Association for State and Local History DATE October 1975

STREET & NUMBER 1400 Eighth Avenue South TELEPHONE 242-5583

CITY OR TOWN Nashville STATE Tennessee

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE _____
ATTEST:	DATE _____
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	(60)

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painted, open-worked, wooden frieze or fascia with ornamental support brackets. The frieze forms an arch between each pair of posts. At the west entrance a shorter, similarly trimmed, two-story veranda adjoins two one-story verandas that pass around two semicircular-shaped ells, one on each side of the entrance. These are topped by onion-domed minarets. At the northwest corner of the main section of the hotel, there is an irregular-shaped, smaller wing, also crowned and bordered by minarets, that connects with the principal building by a curving corridor.

Inside, on the first floor of the main section, there is a massive, centrally located lobby with east-west orientation. A wide central walkway bisects the lobby north to south. The ceiling is supported by many sets of paired marble columns. At one time the lobby had an open, second-floor balustraded balcony, but this has been closed off to insure better acoustics and fire safety. Ceilings and walls are plaster. The flooring in the hall is terrazzo, now carpeted, and flooring in most of the other rooms is wooden, with some carpeting.

Off the northwest corner of the lobby is the Grand Salon, now referred to as the ballroom. Matching fireplaces with rare Italian tile mantles grace the north and south walls. Floor-length windows allow access to the west veranda. Off the south side of the lobby is a museum containing some original pieces that furnished the hotel in 1891. Also on the south side of the lobby is a mahogany-banistered, double stairway that winds upward four floors. The staircase features carved newel posts which were once topped by statues of African slave girls, but the latter have been replaced by horse head figurines.

Most of the rooms in the main section are now used as classrooms and offices. Various civic groups have decorated and furnished them. Only one room is probably still furnished as it was originally; this is the writing room which is on the south end of the first floor and which is part of the museum.

At the north end of the main section the multi-storied, curved corridor leads to the smaller portion of the building.

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Perhaps the most outstanding room in this smaller section is the elegant Main Dining Room, which has been restored. It has a high domed ceiling with elaborate ornamentation. Although the Main Dining Room is basically one massive room, it is separated into smaller sections by sets of carved columns supporting byzantine arches.

Most of the interior doors are covered with tooled leather. Entrance to many rooms is through Moorish arches. The original elevator on the south end of the lobby is still in operation, though it now utilizes electric rather than hydraulic power.

Support Buildings. On the south end of the entrance to the campus is a red-brick gatehouse with Moorish trim. Built in 1894, it has a truncated-hip roof.

The boathouse which stood on the east side of the hotel along the Hillsborough River has been demolished. In 1941 a fire destroyed a frame structure northeast of the main building. This building, called the Cassino, had an indoor swimming pool covered by a removable floor. The Cassino also doubled as a theater, and many outstanding artists of that day performed there.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** Tampa Bay Hotel ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

History

The Tampa Bay Hotel, "an example of both Moorish and Turkish architecture," was constructed between 1888 and 1891 by the financier and railroad magnate Henry Bradley Plant.<sup>2</sup> Plant, a Connecticut native, opened a rail line to Tampa in 1884, and subsequently established a steamship line running to Havana. These actions converted Tampa, previously a sleepy village of barely 700 people, into a boom town. Because of his rivalry with fellow railroad developer Henry M. Flagler, who had built a luxury hotel in St. Augustine, Plant erected his hotel in Tampa on a grand scale. After purchasing land and winning street and tax concessions from the city, he hired New York architect J. A. Wood to supervise construction. Over the next 3 years, 452 freight car loads of brick were used in building the huge structure, which when completed was some 900 feet long and some five stories tall. Eventually it cost over \$2 million. Most of the hotel's furnishings, many of which were antiques, were purchased in Europe under Mrs. Plant's supervision and cost an additional \$500,000.

When the hotel opened in 1891, Plant invited 15,000 persons, including Flagler, to "a banquet and ball such as Florida had never seen before."<sup>3</sup> Within a few years, the huge hotel with its 511 rooms and unique architecture had made the city famous. Among the most notable features were the long hallways, and according to historian Virgil C. Jones, "a walk from the rotunda to the dining room . . . was all one needed to work up an appetite."<sup>4</sup> In its heyday, the hotel attracted such diverse personalities as Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, William Jennings Bryan, James Bryce, and Babe Ruth, who it is said signed his first major league contract in the hotel.

The hotel's highpoint came during the Spanish-American War, when the building served as headquarters for the American force that

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<sup>2</sup>Harris H. Mullen, A History of the Tampa Bay Hotel (Tampa, 1966), 5.

<sup>3</sup>Marjory S. Douglas, Florida: The Long Frontier (New York, 1967), 245.

<sup>4</sup>Virgil C. Jones, Roosevelt's Rough Riders (Garden City, 1971), 50.

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invaded Cuba. Tampa, chosen because it was the city nearest Cuba with both rail and port facilities, had some 30,000 troops encamped in its vicinity by the summer of 1898. Plant put the hotel at the disposal of the military, and many of the leading officers, including Gens. Nelson A. Miles, Joseph Wheeler, and William R. Shafter, lived there while preparing for embarkation. Because of delays in organizing the expedition, the officers spent much time lounging around the hotel, giving many the impression of a "brilliant military ball at a fashionable seaside summer resort."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to serving as a military headquarters, the hotel served as a gathering place for news correspondents and others interested in the war. The press "passes issued and represented here number as high as 128," said the New York Sun, "and there are almost enough correspondents, counting those who have no passes as well as those who have, to make a full regiment."<sup>6</sup> Many of the leading correspondents of the era, like Richard Harding Davis and Stephen Crane, stayed in the hotel, trying to learn the latest developments for their newspapers and waiting to accompany the army to Cuba. The war also brought Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, to the hotel to organize hospital facilities, and Rev. Ira Sankey and former Freedmen's Bureau chief Oliver O. Howard, to minister to spiritual needs. Thanks to special Plant excursions, politicians, Civil War veterans, and relatives of the soldiers were much in evidence. Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt was a guest while her husband and his Rough Riders were encamped about 1 mile away. Finally, on June 14, 1898, the Army with the "largest military expedition which had ever left the United States" sailed for Cuba and victory.<sup>7</sup>

(continued)

<sup>5</sup>Charles H. Brown, The Correspondents' War (New York, 1967), 207.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in ibid., p. 206.

<sup>7</sup>Frank Freidel, The Splendid Little War (Boston, 1958), 68.



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CONTINUATION SHEET Tampa Bay Hotel ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE three

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In 1899 Plant died, and in 1905 his heirs sold the hotel and 50 acres of land to the city of Tampa for \$125,000. Although it remained the center of the city's social life, the hotel did not profit financially under several leaseholders. In 1920 W. F. Adams leased it, did extensive refurbishing, and during the boom of the twenties showed a profit. In 1932 Adams went bankrupt, however, and the hotel closed its doors. In 1933 the city leased it to the University of Tampa for \$1 a year. Now called Plant Hall, it serves the university as administrative offices and classrooms.

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Continuation Sheet Tampa Bay Hotel Item Number 9 Page one

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Cole, Wayne S., An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1968).

Douglas, Marjory S., Florida: The Long Frontier (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967).

Freidel, Frank, The Splendid Little War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1958).

Jones, Virgil C., Roosevelt's Rough Riders (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971).

Mullen, Harris H., A History of the Tampa Bay Hotel (Tampa: The University of Tampa, 1966).