Pensacola’s Cast Iron Architecture

by Cynthia Catellier

Late at night on July 5, 1880, while most of Pensacola’s citizens were sleeping, flames erupted from Cheap John’s Clothing Store. The flames became a blaze that eventually destroyed most of the buildings west of the public square. Five months later, an even more devastating fire consumed Pensacola’s downtown business district. On December 11, over 100 buildings burned, including Pensacola’s two newspaper buildings, every drug store, stationery store, and even the telegraph offices. As the year 1880 ended, over ninety percent of Pensacola’s commercial structures had succumbed to flames, and antebellum Pensacola lay in ruins.¹

Rather than repressing progress, the fires of 1880 engendered a turning point in the city’s history. Desiring to reduce future conflagrations, and seeking to propel the torpid little town into a nationally competitive economy, Pensacola’s leaders rebuilt the city in a fashion more suitable to their newly expanding prosperity and optimism. The resultant buildings and infrastructure, combined with local and national events, provide us with an interesting story of how Pensacola, Florida, emerged from the ravages of the 1880 fires into a vibrant economic center.

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A stroll along the main streets in the numerous American towns that developed a commercial economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will likely provide a pleasing view of some lovely old vernacular buildings. Ornate details recall an era with a predilection for embellishment. Easy to overlook when admiring these old buildings are the extant cast iron and stamped metal components. Sometimes the only surviving clue indicating a building's origin is a metal cornice or a single pilaster. Cast iron and sheet metal, once ubiquitous building materials, are often mistaken for stone or wood.

This article, a vernacular architectural history, explores the question of why builders used cast iron to rebuild after the fires of 1880 laid waste to a majority of the commercial buildings in Pensacola, Florida. Examination of the material culture developed after the 1880 fires provides an overarching theme to this history. The study of these buildings is important because the use of iron for building support and architectural ornamentation was very brief, lasting only thirty to forty years. For these few decades, cast iron use was the segue between masonry and steel as builders' primary choice for structural load bearing systems. Little literature exists documenting the confluence of this building material within its historical context.

Architectural history is about period, form, style, and the architect. Cast iron materials came from utilitarian manufacturers who were duplicating styles and materials. Representing an advent of pre-fabrication and mass production, these buildings were not designed, but rather, they were assembled. Art historian Pamela Simpson notes that architectural historians have frequently scorned iron ornamentation as unimaginative. According to historic preservation pioneer James Marston Fitch, "Cast iron, like modern synthetic plastics, was never conceived of as having its own independent aesthetic identity." The patterns used in decorative iron either are copies of another iron manufacturer or borrowed from classic Greek and Roman architecture. Albeit beautiful and decorative, iron manufacturers' goals were speed and inexpensive reproduction.

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2 Vernacular Architecture Forum (http://www.vafweb.org/) dedicated to the material culture part of the larger tradition of social history.
That is not to say there is no literature about cast iron architecture. Architectural historian Turpin C. Bannister’s articles focus on iron manufacturing pioneer James Bogardus. When 1960s development and demolition threatened the cast iron buildings in New York’s SoHo district, Margot McCoy Gayle brought attention to the significance of the material. Gayle’s extensive research focuses primarily on New York City and the work of James Bogardus. There are various publications about iron, such as James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black, editors, *Baltimore’s Cast-Iron Buildings & Architectural Ironwork* (1991) and John S. Sledge’s *An Ornament to the City: Old Mobile Ironwork* (2006), but all of these studies have a narrow focus. What is missing from the overall body of research is the underlying and embedded historical significance that explains why these buildings are an important material reminder to the emergence of America’s commercial economy.

Historic preservation literature primarily focuses on the technology of preserving buildings, legality of preservation ordinances, and demonstration of adaptive re-use. The Historical Overview sections in *Preservation Briefs* 11 and 27, published by the National Park Service, contain some background about the advent and spread of cast iron. Aroused by aggressive urban renewal in the 1960s, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 galvanized the historic preservation movement. It created the offices of the National Register of Historic Places and the State Historic Preservation Officers. Among their duties, these state agencies conduct historical surveys to identify historic properties and review nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. In 1983, the National Park Service and the American Institute of Architects established the

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Historic American Buildings Survey, putting unemployed building and landscape architects to work during the Great Depression. The Historic American Buildings Survey focused on photographing and documenting historical and monumental buildings. This story, a vernacular history, focuses on ordinary buildings.

National architects surveyed some of Pensacola’s historic buildings for the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1968, including one of the buildings in this article, 404 South Palafox Street. While the extensive narrative identifies and documents the building’s use of iron and sheet metal, the team failed to identify the manufacturer, the Mesker Brothers. Omission of the manufacturer overlooks the historical context of the building’s components. Bypassing the manufacturer misses the description of how the building’s metal materials connect it and its city to the national market economy.

The 1982 historical survey conducted by Florida’s State Historic Preservation Office demonstrates how the iron components of a building can be mistaken for another material. The documentation for 401 South Palafox Street notes the building’s masonry construction, but it fails to mention the building’s cast iron post and beam front or the Snead & Bibb marker on one of the iron columns. The same survey does note that both 409 and 411 South Palafox Street retain their pressed metal cornices and cast iron pilasters; however, the surveyors did not think the Geo. L. Mesker & Co. moniker on one of the columns was worthy of mention in the document.

The National Register’s standards require a statement about why a building is significant. Since cast iron lacks architectural importance, its merit depends on demonstrating how the material relates to broader economic and cultural history. Providing a narrative on why these buildings were constructed helps preservationists argue for their survival.

Vernacular history combines historical context, an examination of the built environment, documentation of local history, advertising and manufacturing materials, architectural history, and preservation. This study of iron building material opens a window into a small American town’s economic and political evolution in

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10 D.L. Campbell and Ruth Marcille, Florida Division of Historical Resources, Florida Master Site File #ES1196, survey conducted October 1982, (Hereafter cited as MSF).
the post-Reconstruction South. Because it can be hard to differentiate from other building materials, and because its use was relatively short-lived, the significance of cast-iron in the development of the late nineteenth-century national market economy is an important story to tell. This vernacular history fills in the lacunae of why these buildings are important.

Wrought iron fences, funerary art, fountains, and balconies are pronounced aspects of American Gulf Coast cities. Abundant iron flourishes are distinguishing features of southern cities like New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama. The iron balconies along Palafox Street remind us of Pensacola’s strong historical connection to its neighboring cities along the Gulf of Mexico. Often hidden behind those conspicuous iron balconies are cast iron building components mistaken for carved stone or wood. Remaining as tangible evidence of Pensacola’s progressive spirit are over a dozen buildings in the historic downtown section with nineteenth-century state-of-the-art cast iron components built within a 30-year span after the 1880 fires. A study of these extant buildings reveals a story of time, survival, and, most of all, progress. Their chronicle and their remaining footprint tell a larger story of the era in which they were built and reflect Pensacola’s incipient connection to local, regional, and national events.

The year 1880 was not the first time fires consumed large swaths of Pensacola, but it does mark a turning point in how the community determined it would mitigate such destruction in the future. Pensacola has the footprint of an old colonial city. This is not to say Pensacola developed haphazardly; the city’s layout is a product of British and Spanish town planning. In 1767, during Pensacola’s British period, engineer Elias Durnford (1739–1794) laid out the lots and streets in a classic gridiron pattern. During the second Spanish period, town planner Vicente Sebastián Pintado (1774–1829) deemed Durnford’s plan inelegant and therefore modified the grid and inserted the plazas the city continues to enjoy today.

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This arcade of iron columns along the 300 block of South Palafox Street is across from the Public Square (today known as Plaza Ferdinand). The first buildings erected after the 1880 fires demonstrate the resilience and beauty of cast iron. Photo taken by author in 2012.
Like many antebellum American cities, Pensacola's early buildings were primarily made of wood.\textsuperscript{13} The relative ease with which the 1880 fires created so much destruction exposed Pensacola's vulnerability not only because of its construction materials but also due to its dilapidated infrastructure.\textsuperscript{14} On that cold December night in 1880 when Damiani's Confectionery caught fire, residents were unable to contain the blaze primarily because the city's sole steam engine was in a machine shop undergoing repairs.\textsuperscript{15} Unrestrained, the fire raged until it ran out of fuel. During the two decades following the fires, Pensacola made significant improvements to its infrastructure and fire prevention systems.

Compared to an 1880 population of 30,000 in neighboring Mobile and over 216,000 in New Orleans, Pensacola, with a population of 7,000, was still on the periphery of late nineteenth-century America's rapid expansion into industrial and urban development.\textsuperscript{16} Combined, the value of Pensacola's municipal buildings totaled only $10,000.\textsuperscript{17} Streets were unpaved. There were no sewers; drainage flowed from open gutters into the streams and bay. With no municipal water system, residents drew their water from

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\item and addition made in the Years 1807, 1808 and 1809 and other alterations made up to the date, By Vicente Sebastian Pintado, Captain of Infantry and Surveyor General for His Majesty of West Florida. Year of 1814,” 1814, Vicente Sebastian Pintado, Papers, 1781-1842, University of West Florida University Archives and West Florida History Center.
\item The “public square” is now called Plaza Ferdinand, located on the east side of the 500 block of South Palafox Street between Government Street on the north and Zaragossa Street on the south. Plaza Ferdinand is bordered by Jefferson Street on the east.
\item Hayden, Miller & Maltbie, The Insurance Year Book for 1874: A history of the Fire, Marine, Life, and Accident Insurance business for 1873, with Abstracts of Insurance Statistics and Decisions, and Other Valuable Statistical, Historical, and Chronological Information Useful to Underwriters and Agents (Hartford, CT: Hayden, Miller, & Maltbie, 1874).
\item "Pensacola population about 5,000 principal building material wood, volunteer fire department. One hand engine, hook and ladder truck, water supply insufficient; private wells and cisterns and Pensacola Bay." p 86.
\item Waring, Report on the Social Statistics of cities, 188. The value can be compared to an Opera house under construction in Pensacola at the same time, estimated to cost $50,000.
\end{itemize}
those streams or from wells. Open ditches ran down the center of sandy lanes bordered by rickety plank walkways. Prisoners had the unfortunate task of clearing the foul smelling gutters. Occasionally, city workers would fill swampy potholes with ship ballast to render roads passable. Irregularly lit oil lamps provided meager lighting at night.\textsuperscript{18} The streets of Pensacola were hazardous and unhealthy.

Frequent outbreaks of Yellow Fever were a strong disincentive to new residents or enterprise. Reporting on a Yellow Fever outbreak in 1882, William Martin, Assistant Surgeon of the U.S. Navy, conveyed to his superiors in Washington D.C. that, “The lower portions of the city are, for the most part occupied by sailors’ and stevedores’ boarding-houses, drinking-saloons, negro huts, and dens of all sorts.”\textsuperscript{19} Officials believed the disease was imported by foreign elements. Pensacola’s harbormaster required incoming vessels to undergo a quarantine process before cargo and crew could disembark. Shipping delays, expenses, and irritations would have served as a deterrent to increased port activity. Additionally, captains and crews of ships at port would have had concerns about contracting the disease themselves. Such obstacles would have rendered Pensacola as a less than attractive center of commerce. Concerns over relations and trade at the port of Pensacola caused the federal government to send officials to provide updates on the city’s containment measures. Quarantines imposed during episodes of Yellow Fever served as a hindrance to Pensacola’s economic development. Another impediment to growth was Pensacola’s geographic isolation.

Relatively isolated from the continental interior, Pensacola was accessible mainly through its port. Pensacola lacked access over

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 187. In 1880, there were 7 miles of unpaved streets, streetlights were oil lamps, and water came from wells, iron pipes, and pumps; James S. Herron, \textit{Annual Report of the Supervising Surgeon of the Marine Hospital Service of the United States} (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1874). “...plank walks have been laid in order to permit pedestrians to cross it, and the roads for vehicles have been ditched and covered with ballast to render them passable.” 229.

land to much of America's emergent post war economy. The Perdido and Escambia Rivers that might have connected Pensacola to its inland neighbors are shallow and difficult to navigate. Thick vegetation and overhanging branches provide additional deterrents. Traversing in and out of Pensacola through sandy loams and swamps via terrestrial routes proved difficult as well. While rail connections were crossing the American continent, connecting rural producers with urban consumers, Pensacola did not have rail access to Florida's east coast until 1883. Just before hostilities erupted into the Civil War, the town briefly flirted with railroad access to the interior; however, Brigadier General Samuel Jones ordered retreating Confederate forces to destroy the Alabama and Florida Railroad rolling stock and track in 1862.

The city gained a northerly rail connection to Flomaton, Alabama, in 1870 during Reconstruction. By 1883, additional rail lines connected Pensacola to the east coast of Florida. With ten wharves serving up to 200 vessels at a time, the port of Pensacola exported over two million dollars of timber, hides, tallow, wool, cotton, turpentine, and rosin. The fishing industry flourished as well. A port full of traffic meant city coffers filled with money. The financial and structural components were in position to facilitate development. New buildings to replace the fires' ruins required a large amount of both skilled and unskilled labor, bringing new employment opportunities to the city. The destruction caused by the fire provided the impetus for the city's transformation. Still a small city in 1880, census taker George Waring Jr. optimistically reported that Pensacola was "a rising place" that was "beginning a new era of prosperity."

Reconstruction had ended in Florida only three years before the fires, but Republican rule remained intact in the state. Across the South, Redeemers maneuvered to regain political supremacy.


23 Virginia Parks, Pensacola: Spaniards to Space Age (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Historical Society 1986), 80. In 1885, over 3,000,000 tons of fish shipped from Pensacola.

In January 1885, one of those Redeemers, former Confederate General Edward Aylsworth Perry (1831–1889), a Democrat from Pensacola, became Florida’s governor. After appointing two amenable state Supreme Court justices, Governor Perry replaced Pensacola’s post-Reconstruction city government with a new government called the Provisional Municipality of Pensacola (PMP). The PMP supplanted the Mayor and Alderman with a President and a Board of Directors. Thus, by 1885, local Democrats had wrested control of city governance from the hands of Reconstructionist Republicans and some of the community’s black leaders.

In March 1885, the “intelligent, enterprising, business men” of the newly formed PMP were heralded by the Pensacola Commercial as leaders who would “enforce all ordinances, collect all taxes, and mete out exact justice to all, without discrimination.” To ensure that the public would be informed of the new government’s actions, the PMP decided that new ordinances would be published once a week for a period of four weeks in each of the city’s newspapers. An examination of the ordinances passed in its first year shows that none addressed race directly, but focused on fire mitigation and

26 Although formed in February, the Provisional Municipality of Pensacola did not become official until sanctioned by the Florida Supreme Court on March 17, 1885 in “Acts of the Legislature of Florida relating Specially to Provisional Municipalities, Chapter 3606, No. 51,” January 28, 1885. “An Act to Dissolve Municipal Corporation under Circumstances therein Stated and to provide Provisional Government for the Same. Section 1: wherever any city or town in this state incorporated ... 4th day of February A.D. 1869, is indebted to the amount of two hundred thousand dollars and has defaulted...town shall be and the same is hereby declared repealed and the incorporation thereof dissolved.” The City of Pensacola was reformed in 1895 under “Chapter 4513, Laws of Florida 1895,” “An Act to provide for the creation of the City of Pensacola, Now known as the Provisional Municipality of Pensacola, and for government of said city of Pensacola, and to provide for its officers and their terms of office, and to provide for the support and maintenance of said government and improvement of said city.”
29 PMP, (Hereafter cited as PMP), February 17, 1885, 21.
infrastructure. That said, efforts to establish order and develop government that would "no longer be run in the interests of bawdy houses and gambling hells" is consistent with the language of control often associated with race.30

Among the first of the PMP's board members were local business men Samuel S. Harvey (1837-?), railroad tycoon William Dudley Chipley (1840-1897), and banker and lumber magnet Francis Celestino Brent (1848-1914).31 S.S. Harvey, owner of a Pensacola carriage manufacturing business, was president of both the Pensacola Building and Loan Association and the Workingmen's Building and Savings Association. W.D. Chipley's colorful dealings included positions as General Manager of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, President of the Pensacola Board of Trade, and co-owner of the Citizen's Hotel Company. F. C. Brent, also on the boards of the Workingmen's Building and Savings Association and the Citizen's Hotel Company, was the proprietor of the First National Bank of Pensacola. He was related to a family of merchants and flush with lumber and timber wealth.32 All of these men were finan-


31 PMP, "The Board of Commissioners for the Provisional Municipality of Pensacola met this day with the following members present..." February 17, 1885, Pensacola, FL.

32 W.S. Webb Pensacola City Directory (Pensacola, FLA; April 1885), 154-155, University of West Florida University Archives and West Florida History Center. The Osceola Club was a social club of some for Pensacola's most prominent citizens, including Stephen R. Mallory, former secretary of the Confederate Navy, and Edwin A. Perry, Florida's new Democratic governor. E.A. Perry was
cially embedded in the efforts of rebuilding Pensacola to facilitate increased economic activity.

The PMP was composed of the city’s business leaders who had a stake in connecting the city with the rest of post-Civil War America’s rapidly expanding economy and developing a city demonstrative of their wealth and power. Rebuilding with materials designed not only to resist fire, the edifices and infrastructure constructed during the last two decades of the nineteenth century were meant to endure as their legacy. In fact, more than half of the extant buildings in downtown Pensacola originate from the time after the 1880 fires to the advent of World War I. These men were able to use the fires as a springboard to transform the city and thereby enrich themselves.

Once established in their new positions and in charge of city ordinances, in March of 1885 the board members of the PMP required property owners in the commercial core of the city to construct substantial sidewalks in front of their businesses:

The owners of all lots fronting on Palafox Street between Main and Belmont streets and the owners of these portions of lots . . . are hereby required to construct along the fronts of said lots good and substantial pavements of wood not less than one and one half inches thick having their bearings or of [sic] stone, brick or cement of a uniform width of 10 feet, said pavement to be begun within 20 days and to be finished within 40 days after the passage of this ordinance. Four days later, board members began removing impediments to sanitation and commerce by issuing, “An ordinance prohibiting the

also a member of the Citizen’s Hotel Company, along with . . .


Cynthia Catellier, National Register Nomination (Hereafter cited as NR), 14001085, listed April 27, 2016, “Palafox Historic Business District,” National Park Service, Washington, DC.

PMP, “An Ordinance entitled an Ordinance referring to: Streets and Sidewalks of The Provisional Municipality of Pensacola, March 13, 1885 pg. 5. The original hand written ordinance books of the PMP are available at Pensacola’s City Hall. In 1889, four years after the establishment of the PMP, Pensacola Attorney William A. Blount compiled a typeset book of the PMP ordinances, Code of Ordinances of the Provisional Municipality of Pensacola. Most likely to make it easy to find the pertinent law, Mr. Blount’s book reorganized the ordinances from chronological to categorical grouping.
obstruction of streets, avenues, lanes, alleys, sewers and gutters.\textsuperscript{35} Offenders would be subject to fines of up to $500 for throwing or depositing "offal or other offensive matter in any street . . . or obstructing the gutters or sewers." Another ordinance forbade the construction of buildings in the streets and dictated that loading and unloading of cargo should not take longer than 12 hours.\textsuperscript{36} Making the sidewalks easy to navigate and the streets clean and safe encouraged wealthy customers to come downtown and spend their money.

Seeking to contain the unruly forces that might interfere with progress and commerce, the next set of ordinances were leveled at cleaning up those "dens of all sorts."\textsuperscript{37} The board outlawed public drunkenness on April 9, 1885.\textsuperscript{38} Many ordinances were aimed at containing prostitution. Pensacola's harbor attracted numerous ships' crews and sailors who frequented the city's barrooms and boarding houses. Rather than curtail incoming revenue from the visitors, the PMP pursued the women who entertained them. Beginning on April 6 1885, "An ordinance regarding street walkers" pursued "women of disreputable character currently known as street walkers." The city did not prohibit prostitution, but implemented measures to keep that business off the streets and behind closed doors. Women who plied their trade "at ground level who cannot prove they are on unavoidable business shall be arrested upon conviction shall be fined not more than $500.00 or 60 days in prison."\textsuperscript{39} A fine of $500 would have been a strong deterrent to prostitutes who charged less than five dollars for their services.\textsuperscript{40} The board rounded out the first year by taxing pool tables, arms sellers, saloons, public hacks, liquor, and the circus.\textsuperscript{41} The newly

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\item \textsuperscript{35} PMP, March 27, 1885, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Herron, Annual Report of the Supervising Surgeon of the Marine Hospital Service of the United States, 229; Martin, "Report on the Yellow-Fever Epidemic of 1882 at Pensacola, Florida," 67-120.
\item \textsuperscript{38} PMP, April 9, 1885, 135.
\item \textsuperscript{39} PMP, April 6, 1885 19, "That the ordinance Regulating Street Walkers be amended to read—That all women of disreputable Character commonly known as Street Walkers or women of ill fame." May 11, 1885 27.\textsuperscript{39} Cynthia Catellier "Red Light District" Pensacola Maritime Walking Tour," http://pensacolamaritime.wix.com/historictour#!_the-red-light-district (accessed May 4, 2016); and James R. McGovern "Pensacola Florida: A Military City in the New South," Florida Historical Quarterly 59 no 1 (July 1980), 37-39. Pensacola did not criminalize prostitution. It criminalized street solicitation. The city allowed prostitution in a certain section of the town west of Palafox Street.
\item \textsuperscript{41} PMP, September 2, 1885, 1885, 43-53. The city began taxing "pool tables, circus, arms sellers, saloons, boats, public hacks, and liquor."
elected board of the PMP targeted disturbances that would disrupt trade and progress. Seeking to clean up and organize Pensacola’s infrastructure, the Board paired these ordinances seeking to support a more inviting and prosperous business climate with ordinances to build clean, safe, well-constructed, and wide sidewalks that enabled patrons to stroll in front of Pensacola’s newly built businesses.

While the 1880 fires caused considerable damage to Pensacola, destructive fires were common occurrences in nineteenth-century cities and towns. In 1871 for example, Chicago suffered a devastating fire but reemerged from the destruction to experience an era of exponential growth. A city’s failure to mitigate fire risks could result in higher insurance rates for its residents and business owners. A cautious insurance industry paid financial actuaries to conduct thorough surveys of municipal fire prevention measures. This industry chronicled annual insurance payouts and damages due to
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infernos. Thus, before the end of its first year, the PMP contracted with Samuel R. Bullock and Company of New York to install a municipal water system complete with a four million gallon capacity pump, eleven miles of water mains, and numerous fire hydrants to mitigate fire hazards.\textsuperscript{42} By the end of its introductory year, the officials of the PMP had truncated disorderly behavior, raised taxes, and hired a fire chief.\textsuperscript{43}

As an additional measure to minimize fire hazards, the PMP required all structures constructed in the business district to use specific building methods to ensure strength and fire resistance. Business leaders recognized the benefits of rebuilding the city with fireproof masonry and state-of-the-art materials. The fire insurance industry supported the national building industry and created another connection linking Pensacola to the national economy in the use of the strongest and most advanced fire resistant building material at the time – cast iron. With the exception of outhouses, new city codes banned wooden structures in the downtown core and called for fines on anyone constructing a wooden building.\textsuperscript{44}

All buildings within the fire limits to be hereinafter erected shall have for 1 story buildings not less than one brick thick walls and for two story buildings not less than one and a half brick walls for first story. If built of other material shall have brick walls to be not less than nine inches for one story and not less than twelve inches for first-story walls of buildings two stories or more.\textsuperscript{45}

These building codes required a masonry structure to have at least one foot of solid wall for every four feet of wall opening. For each subsequent floor, the first floor masonry requirements increased,

\textsuperscript{42} PMP, no date "An ordinance to provide for a public and private supply of water in and near the city of Pensacola" 55-79. Public fire hydrant belonging to the said S.R. Bullock and Co. of NY installed November 11, 1885 "... now time for water to revert to city," 253 June 28, 1886. Also in J.J.R. Croes, \textit{Statistical Tables of American Water Works} (New York: Engineering News Publishing Co., Tribune Building, 1887), 20. In 1886, Pensacola was one of over 600 cities nationwide, and one of seven in the state of Florida that installed a public waterworks. This is compared to only seventy-nine built in the U.S. in the years 1861-1870. Nationwide, 1,402 towns had water works by the publication of the book.

\textsuperscript{43} W.S. Webb \textit{Pensacola City Directory}, (Pensacola, FLA; April 1885), University of West Florida Archives and West Florida History Center, pg. 150.

\textsuperscript{44} PMP, December 19, 1885, 69. "Any party erecting a forbidden structure fined $500."

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., Print announcement (no source indicated), June 10, 1886, 93.
thus a two or three story building's vertical load bearing walls would have to consume a large amount of street level floor and window space. Bulky masonry storefronts would thereby provide less retail capacity and smaller window openings along the sidewalk. Because the Provisional Municipality did not dictate any size restrictions for iron supports, many of Pensacola's downtown businesses rebuilt their stores with slender yet sturdy cast iron components. Strong and thin, first floor cast iron columns were able to sustain heavy second-story loads and consume less ground floor area. Cast iron was a desirable building material because it could bear more weight and consume less space, but more importantly, cast iron was desirable because it was fire resistant.

Pensacola's cast iron buildings are primarily a hybrid of brick side and rear walls with cast iron columns and lintels (horizontal bars) comprising the front. Pensacola's local brick industries provided inexpensive and readily available fire-resistant masonry, and the iron columns and lintels allowed for larger window and door openings. The post and lintel building system, two vertical columns or posts supporting a lintel across the top, was used in ancient Greece and Rome and is still used in modern construction to support a building's weight over windows and doors. Interior iron structural supports left more open space for merchandise, natural light, and customers. Larger window and door openings were especially practical for catching breezes in the warm Gulf Coast climate. Pensacola's business owners who rebuilt their shops with iron façades allowed for larger display windows adjacent to those new substantial sidewalks and the cleaner, well-regulated streets. Elaborate architectural ornamentation created by iron manufacturers demonstrated the good taste and prosperity of a building's owner. The use of iron fronts helped improve the experience for shoppers along Palafox Street.

**The Development of Cast Iron Buildings**

Iron's functionality precedes the Industrial Revolution. The first uses of iron were utilitarian, such as plows, pumps, and church bells. Iron's strength naturally led builders to begin experimenting with the material for support and structural purposes. Technicians quickly realized iron could replicate wood and stone for...
ornamentation. America's most recognizable structural and aesthetic combination of iron is the United States Capitol dome designed by Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1887). The elaborate, soaring dome demonstrated that iron could not only be beautiful but strong. Across the country, a cascade effect occurred as builders realized buildings could be supported with cast-iron columns as an alternative to masonry. It was a small leap for visionaries to combine iron's utility with aesthetics.

A former blacksmith, Daniel D. Badger (1806-1884), claimed to have built “the first structure of Iron ever seen in America” in Boston in 1842. The building's owner was so skeptical of the use of iron columns and lintels for his store front that he forced Badger to guarantee that he would remove the components at his own expense if the builder’s “bold innovation” was not a success. In his catalog, Badger immodestly noted, “All Iron Buildings in this country have been erected since that period, and owe their existence to that humble introduction.” In 1843, Badger purchased a design patent from A.L. Johnson of Baltimore for rolling iron shutters that provided building owners with protection from the elements, theft, and fire. Mirroring the long held design concept of post and lintel, he developed iron columns with grooves to accommodate the rolling iron shutters overhead. Storefronts constructed with cast iron posts and lintels and large glass windows sprouted up along American main streets. Like many cities, Pensacola's cast iron buildings are mostly a derivation of post and lintel construction.

James Bogardus (1800-1874), another pioneer of cast iron buildings, was a contemporary and neighbor of Badger. Bogardus

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48 Daniel D. Badger, Badger's Illustrated Catalogue of Cast-Iron Architecture (Mineola, NY: Dover Publishers, 1992), 3. In her introduction to this book on page vii, Margo Gayle states that there are some other indications of iron buildings including one that J.L. Mott placed on display at the American Institute of NY in 1837, which preceded Badger's claim by 5 years.

49 Ibid., 3.

50 Ibid.

developed the cast iron façade, a multi-story arcade of arches. These façades were coveted in densely crowded cities where taller buildings were necessary. New York’s SoHo district has preserved many of its multi-story nineteenth-century cast iron arcade façades. Both Badger and Bogardus, along with other Industrial Revolution architects, engineers, and foundry owners, combined the utility of iron with replication. Foundry owners recognized that standardization facilitated the pre-fabrication of parts. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the use of cast iron components made in a factory fostered the nascent idea of pre-fabrication and mass production into the United States building industry. Nationwide, railroads were shifting the American economy away from agriculture towards manufacturing, and increased demand and access to railroads spurred production and lowered costs. Savvy foundry owners realized their market was national and designed beautiful mail order catalogs to display their products. In the late nineteenth century, the uses for iron were state-of-the-art.

Differing from malleable wrought iron, cast iron is hard and must be cast into shape. Ironworkers pressed a wooden pattern into a moist mixture of sand and clay. When they removed the wood, it left an indentation in which to pour the molten, 2,700°F metal. Foundries could inexpensively pre-fabricate large quantities of iron components with pre-formed molds. Ornamentation such as rosettes and acanthus leaves for building façades fulfilled elaborate Victorian tastes. Mass-produced, less expensive iron imi-

53 Jandl, "Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts."
54 For more information about prefabrication, see Robert S. Woodbury “The Legend of Eli Whitney and Interchangeable Parts,” Technology and Culture 1, no. 3 (Summer 1960): 235-253.
55 Jandl, "Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts."
tated the more costly carved wood or stone and eliminated the salary of an artisan. Iron manufacturers produced mail order catalogs detailing their parts and patterns, and potential building owners ordered pre-fabricated building components from these catalogs. Foundry workers produced the components, laid them out on the factory floor, numbered each one, and shipped the parts with assembly instructions by rail or by sea to cities across the United States. Once the parts arrived at the building site, workers used step-by-step instructions to bolt the pieces together, forming the interior framework or storefront.

In small towns lacking skilled architects or in large towns with a surplus of cheap labor, a relatively unskilled local carpenter or an enterprising business owner and his relatives could inexpensively erect the typical iron storefront in as little as three days. Cast iron building parts were economical, decorative, strong, and fire resistant. Pensacola’s newly acquired rail connections enabled local builders to take part in the mail order phenomena to rebuild quickly and economically after the fires. Concurrent with advances in the use of iron, advances in glass manufacturing lowered the price of windows. The typical nineteenth-century storefront consisted of single or double doors flanked by large display windows; a recessed entry protected the customer from inclement weather and increased the amount of window display space. Iron building components provided more floor space, larger display windows, and better natural lighting. Larger windows gave merchants a medium to advertise their wares, and better lighting helped workers improve productivity. In a cascading effect, the transformation of main streets into downtown commercial districts was occurring across the nation, and Pensacola was no exception.

Regardless of patents, iron foundries pirated each other’s patterns. Many motifs were not necessarily original to the manufacturers; they were adapted from classic Greek and Roman architecture. Acanthus leaves and dentil molding are two popular, classic design elements found in Pensacola’s iron buildings. Elaborate building details, such as pilasters, columns, cornices, and window hoods manufactured inexpensively in iron, mimicked

60 Jandl, “Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts,” 11.
61 Ibid.
costlier architectural details carved from stone or wood. Iron was not only beautiful; it was practical. Building owners could easily paint the iron details, adding more décor and personalization to their façades. Painted iron is quite durable and weather resistant. Unlike wrought iron, which tends to flake, cast iron’s carbon-off gasses provide an imbedded resistance to corrosion. This is why nineteenth-century cast iron remains relatively unscathed by the volatile Gulf Coast climate.62

Iron manufacturers could be found nationwide, but many of the nation’s iron industries were located in the Mid-Western cities. Manufacturers stamped their business logo on one or more of the main structural components. Among the manufactures who shipped iron building components to Pensacola were Snead and Bibb of Louisville, Kentucky, the George L. Mesker and Company in Evansville, Indiana, and the Mesker Brothers Iron Works in St. Louis, Missouri.63 The Mesker Brothers, for example, marketed their catalogs towards smaller towns such as Pensacola, which has at least five extant buildings with Mesker components.64 Some details are unique to certain manufacturers, and this allows us to identify the origin of uncovered cast iron today.

Since the 1880 fires destroyed over ninety percent of the buildings downtown, Pensacola’s business community needed to rebuild quickly. Control of the city government allowed them to capitalize on this opportunity to rebuild the city using more substantial building materials. With a bustling port and new railroad connections to the interior, local businessmen could see the advantage of ordering the fire resistant, pre-fabricated, inexpensive, modern, and easily installable iron. Pensacola business owners would have been aware of the trend in large cities of using iron fronts. Beneficiaries of the prosperity brought by the region’s vast natural resources of timber and fish, Pensacola’s business leaders chose to rebuild their city’s

63 These are the identified manufactures of iron buildings in downtown Pensacola. There are other identified iron fences and gates, such as the fence surrounding the property at 417 East Government Street bearing the mark of the “Industrial Architectural Iron Works Cincinnati, O.” This article focuses on buildings.
PENSACOLA'S CAST IRON ARCHITECTURE

Pensacola's Cast Iron Buildings

The first construction after the devastation of 1880 occurred on the west side of Palafox Street across from the Public Square, between Government and Zaragossa Streets. All of the buildings on this block were constructed as hybrids with brick sides and rear walls and cast iron fronts. Today, the extant buildings west of Plaza Ferdinand maintain most of their cast iron components. By the mid-1880s, this block in downtown Pensacola near the once seedy waterfront housed PMP Commissioner F.C. Brent's bank. Brent ordered several cast iron bank vaults topped with mythological masques watching over the money and an elaborate cast iron façade for the exterior. While many of the iron structural components remain in this building, over the years the façade was covered first with glass bricks and later with aluminum siding.

This block, devastated by the July 1880 conflagration originating from Cheap John's Clothing store, lay only one block north of the harbor. 'Cheap John' was a nineteenth-century colloquialism for a peddler of inferior goods. After the fires, the occupants of the newly constructed buildings reflected Pensacola's changed and emergent prosperity. By 1890, Brent's bank, the First National Bank of Pensacola, offered to exchange currency for Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and other European countries. The commercially vibrant buildings contained a watchmaker, entertainment venues, several clothing stores, shoe stores, tobacco and cigar shops, grocery stores, and numerous offices.

Other tenants included W.A. Brosnaham Accident and Life Insur-

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65 Escambia County Tax records, individual property files, University of West Florida Historic Trust. Because building permits were not issued in Pensacola until the last part of the twentieth century, an examination of tax records can provide information about property improvements. A large increase in taxes paid can be an indicator of a building erected on the property. 313-315 S. Palafox St. was assessed $3,000 in 1880 and $5,000 in 1883; 321 S. Palafox St. was assessed $8,000 in 1880 and $17,500 in 1883. Compared to 100 S. Palafox St. (among other buildings) which did not pay taxes until 1888. Webb's 1885 Pensacola Directory, shows four buildings on the 300 block of S. Palafox St.

66 The Daily News (Pensacola, FL), February 23, 1900, g.5, Image 5.

The 400 block of South Palafox Street was once the last strip of terra firma fronting the Pensacola Bay. South of this block were numerous wharves, some with buildings erected on them. Over the years, ballast dumped from incoming vessels created over 60

68 The Daily News (Pensacola, FL), February 23, 1900, 5, Image 5; Pensacola Commercial, March 1, 1885, 2; W.C. Jones and Frank Jones, Jones' Pensacola Directory, 1893-1894, “MERCHANTS HOTEL — Has a capacity of 42 guests. Rooms rent at the rates of $2.50 and $3.00 per day.”), University of West Florida Archives and West Florida History Center.

69 NR Nomination prepared by John P. Daniels in 1995. On file at University of West Florida Historic Trust.

70 Occie Clubbs "Pensacola in Retrospect: 1870-1890" Florida Historical Quarterly, Pensacola Quincentennial Issue, XXXVII, nos. 3 and 4 (1959), 381.

71 Carter Quina, AIA, Quina Grundhoefer Architects received an Award of Excellence from the Northwest Florida Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for their restoration work on the building, "Quina Grundhoefer given architecture society award," Pensacola News Journal, February 19, 2011, Business Section.
acres of new land south of this block. Extant iron buildings stand on both sides of the street. One bears the mark of Snead & Bibb from Louisville, Kentucky, two are from George L. Mesker & Co. Iron Works in Evansville, Indiana, and one is from the competing Mesker brother’s company, Mesker Brothers Iron Works in St. Louis, Missouri. John M. Pfeiffer constructed the first building after the 1880 fires on the southwest corner of Palafox and Zarragossa Street. 401 South Palafox Street contained Pfeiffer’s grocery on the street level and housed the United States Signal Service Station upstairs. Pfeiffer, who was a Provisional Municipality Commissioner in the 1890s, ordered his fire resistant building façade (which retains the marker) from Snead & Bibb. From the roof of the building, the United States Signal service flew flags displaying weather and other conditions to the ships in the nearby harbor. After Pfeiffer’s death, the Dannheiser Brothers Saloon occupied the street level of the building. When Mrs. K. Pfeiffer allowed the Christian Moerlein Brewing Company to rent the building, she added the codicil, “the 2nd floor of said building shall not be used for any lewd or unlawful purpose.”

By 1888, John Sheppard was operating a pharmacy from the next building to the south at 409 South Palafox, with tall cast iron columns, pilasters, and an elaborate pressed tin Mesker cornice. Next door to the pharmacy at 411-415 South Palafox Street, lumber planing mill owner O. Bronnum built the large post and lintel storefront with a sheet metal cornice from George L. Mesker & Company Iron Works. This building retains the company marker and morning glory motif on the cornice. Bronnum was so pleased with his building that he wrote a testimonial that appears on page eight of the 1905 George L. Mesker & Company catalog. (Image 3) The adjacent building on the northwest corner of Palafox and Main streets is another example of a hybrid brick and iron building.

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73 Jones Pensacola Directory, (1893), 58.
74 Escambia County Deed Book 74, County Government Office, 221 South Palafox Street, Pensacola, FL, June 15, 1914, 298; MSP #ES01196 (1982). Pensacola’s Red Light District contained several brothels on East Zarragossa Street, right around the corner from Pfeiffer’s building.
75 409 South Palafox is historically known as 405 South Palafox, Escambia County Deed Book 4, April 12, 1888, 565.
with a sheet metal cornice. While all of the buildings are characteristic of the contemporary building phenomena of large windows fronting main streets nationwide, the Snead and Bibb and Mesker buildings allow for more generous fenestration than the building on the corner.

In 1892, Lewis Bear moved across the street, buying the lot on the northeast corner of Palafox and Main, and relocating his flourishing grocery business from the store he shared with Charles Hein-berg at 327 South Palafox Street. Bear must have been impressed with the iron buildings of his neighbors and with the one built by his former landlords, Clara Byrnes and Marietta Fournier, for he ordered an impressive display of cast iron building components
from the Mesker Brothers Iron Works of St. Louis for his new store. The second-story sheet metal façade is one of the ubiquitous Mesker façades and includes imbedded pilasters with rosettes at the base, Corinthian capitals, and circular discs along the horizontal strip at the top of the building. The rectangular roof pediments once bore the moniker “Bear Block,” and the center pediment provided the building’s construction date. The second-story iron balcony, a nod to the building’s original use, displays a cornucopia motif. The side and rear walls are masonry, but the metal cornice wraps around the structure and the south side windows bear patented Mesker metal window hoods.

George O. Brosnaham, who fancied Bear’s building, ordered a similar Mesker Brothers façade for the two-story building he constructed around 1895, three blocks north at the southeast corner of Palafox and Romana Street. The two-story building, typical of main streets across America, is constructed as a brick hybrid with cast iron post and lintels at the front base level, allowing for large storefront windows and three recessed entries. While the street level portion of the building housed a dry goods store, the second story was used for various offices. For the second story, Brosnaham picked the same pilasters with rosettes in the base and Corinthian capitals as Bear’s building, but chose a different cornice and window hoods. Early images show that the building originally had three triangular roof pediments rising above the cornice, now lost either to weather or to changing tastes.

Just south of Main Street on a portion of Palafox Street that was once a wharf remains another cast iron building, 511 South Palafox, built around 1896 by Francis Jernigan. Across the street was the Cosgrove Iron Foundry. John Cosgrove was the PMP’s first...
paid Fire Chief. He served on the Board of Trade and on two Building and Loan Associations, where he rubbed elbows with Governor Perry and PMP Commissioners W.D. Chipley and S.S. Harvey. Cosgrove Iron Foundry repaired machines and ships' boilers, and for a brief time in 1896, it advertised that it sold iron building fronts. It remains a mystery whether or not Francis Jernigan ordered the iron for his building from Cosgrove or from one of the numerous midwestern iron foundries like the buildings further north on Palafox Street. The iron imprints on the pilasters and columns look very similar to those found in catalogs produced by Christopher and Simpson from St. Louis, Missouri, and by Dearborn Iron works in Chicago, Illinois, but copies of other manufacturers' patterns were common.\textsuperscript{79}

Located east of the Public Square on Government Street is another cluster of extant buildings with cast iron components. Around 1885 on the south side of the street, John M. Pfeiffer built another street level store. This time, he put his personal residence on the second floor and used cast iron post and lintel building components.\textsuperscript{80} The simple ornamentation on the structural pilasters, reminiscent of classical Greek architecture with the dentil molding on the entablature and acanthus leaf detail on the corbels, is strikingly similar to those Pfeiffer ordered from Snead & Bibb for his building at 401 South Palafox Street. Unfortunately, the building has lost its nameplate. His widow, K. Pfeiffer, the aforementioned wife, who inserted the morality codicil in the lease for their building at 401 South Palafox Street, lived above the building on Government Street until her death in 1928. John Pfeiffer Jr. occupied a separate apartment in the same building. Across the street at 130 East Government Street were the living quarters of more Pfeiffer family members above yet another store.\textsuperscript{81} Like the others, this Pfeiffer building on the north side of the street is a hybrid of cast iron and brick.

\textsuperscript{79} Dearborn Foundry Company, Chicago, IL, Erastus Foote, Jr., President, and E.T. Cushing, Secretary and Treasurer, \textit{Pocket Companion of Useful Information and Tables Pertaining to the Use of Cast and Wrought Iron Work} (Chicago, IL: J.M.W. Jones Co., 1887), 10.

\textsuperscript{80} John M. Pfeiffer built 401 S Palafox with the Snead & Bibb marker in 1883. Building information from MSF # ES01196. Occupancy information from city directories. Also from obituary, ”J.M. Pfeiffer at rest,” \textit{Pensacola Journal}, January 1, 1907, 5, Image 3.

\textsuperscript{81} W.S. Webb \textit{Pensacola City Directory}, (Pensacola, FLA; April 1885), \textit{Jones Pensacola Directory}, (1893), (130 & 136 East Government Street), MSF #ES01117.
511 South Palafox Street built in 1896 is a hybrid building with a cast iron post and lintel front combined with brick side and rear walls. The markings on the columns are similar to those found in the catalogs of both Christopher and Simpson of St. Louis, Missouri, and Dearborn Ironworks of Chicago, Illinois. Photo taken by author in 2011.

After the turn of the century, cast iron buildings went out of style in Pensacola and much of the country. However, on the north side of Government Street, the sons of Lewis Bear built the east
addition to 112-118 around 1910. Morris and Max Bear did not order a Mesker building like their father, but they did construct a post and lintel hybrid building with ornamental iron columns and pilasters very similar to the iron building Francis Jernigan built at 511 South Palafox Street. The markings on the columns are similar to those found in both the Christopher and Simpson and Dearborn catalogs. Without receipts or manufacturer’s imprint, it is difficult to identify the particular manufacturers because they liberally copied each other’s patterns.

It is a testament to the durability of iron components that these buildings have survived in relatively good condition so close to the corrosive effects of the Gulf Coast climate and hurricanes. When covered with paint, the iron remains rust resistant and retains the strength for which it was once prized among the shop owners who erected these edifices over one hundred years ago. Despite the ravages of Gulf Coast hurricane winds and floods, the passage of time, and even efforts to improve or modernize these buildings, the remaining footprint provides us with a window into this brief period of time and the people who rebuilt Pensacola after the devastating fires that could have resulted in the demise of the city.

Pensacola’s Business Climate after the Fires and the Provisional Municipality of Pensacola

Following the 1880 fires, city leaders imposed laws regulating behavior and augmenting the city’s fire mitigation measures. By erecting buildings that were more substantial and many with iron fronts, merchants and business owners enhanced the experience of shoppers along Palafox Street and increased revenues. Improvements in the city’s infrastructure after the 1880 fires provide further evidence of Pensacola’s increased prosperity. Rather than redeveloping with makeshift materials, the building owners chose to purchase modern components. Ordinances issued by the PMP assured only substantial fire resistant structures would be erected in the city, thereby excluding those without enough fortune to obtain quality materials from building in the downtown core. Reflecting the importance of the port, the United States government appropriated $200,000 and sent a professional architect to rebuild Pensacola’s Customs House. By 1890, fire industry surveyors reported

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82 Escambia County Deed Book 69, March 22, 1910, 606; 1982 Historic District Survey conducted by Historic Pensacola Preservation Board (now incorporated into University of West Florida Historic Trust).
that Pensacola’s mercantile buildings were mostly two-story masonry structures.\textsuperscript{83} Flourishing harbor activity and an expanded retail environment encouraged by the PMP’s ordinances resulted in progress for the city’s infrastructure.

From 1880 to 1910, Pensacola’s exported over four billion superficial feet of lumber valued at over $50 billion.\textsuperscript{84} Before the fires in 1880, the collective value of Pensacola’s municipal buildings was estimated at $10,000. In the three-year period 1906-1909, construction expenses in the city were $3,000,000, a 300 per-cent increase.\textsuperscript{85} By 1888, investment in fire prevention provided the city with fire engines, a hook and ladder truck, five hose carriages, and over 200 fire fighters. In 1889, the city replaced its gas street lamps with electric lights. Mosquito breeding ditches and swampy lanes were exchanged with 53 miles of sanitary sewer lines and 21 miles of paved roads.\textsuperscript{86} The first ordinance issued by the PMP led to over 115 miles of paved sidewalks being created in the city by 1902. At the turn of the century, fifteen years after the PMP began issuing ordinances aimed at quelling disturbances and improving the city’s infrastructure, the city’s population had more than doubled to 17,747.\textsuperscript{87}

In tandem with rail connections to the nation’s interior, the businessmen who wrested control of the city government and formed the PMP transformed Pensacola streets along the lines of main streets across the nation, and propelled the city into the national market economy.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Just as Pensacola’s built environment rose phoenix-like after the 1880 fires, Chicago’s architects were seeking means to build vertically without sacrificing valuable street level space to massive masonry load bearing walls. In 1884, William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907) used cast-iron columns on the inner face of masonry walls along with cast iron supports around the windows to build...
a skyscraper; the nine-story Home Insurance Company building.\textsuperscript{88} From there, with the addition of alloys to develop steel, architects and engineers vaulted Jenney’s idea into another arena of structural support; the creation of a curtain wall of steel and glass upon a lighter skeletal frame. Steel’s plasticity and durability quickly outpaced cast iron’s early uses.\textsuperscript{89} Thus, cast iron became the forerunner of the modern skyscraper as development of iron building fronts and structural elements shepherded the way for modular construction systems and structural steel skyscrapers.

Demonstrating how the city was expanding in its scope and view, in 1901, Pensacola businessman Christen Thiesen (1856-1934), hired the architectural firm Morgan and Dillon from Atlanta, Georgia, to build a five-story building on the north east corner of Palafox and Romana Street just north of the cast iron building built by George Brosnaham five years earlier.\textsuperscript{90} The Thiesen Building accommodated commercial ventures on the street level and offices above. For a brief few years, this building, with steel supports under masonry walls, and cast iron columns supporting the third and fourth floor windows, was Pensacola’s tallest until attorney William A. Blount (1851 - 1921) constructed the seven-story, steel frame, fire proof, building on the south west corner of Palafox and Garden Streets.\textsuperscript{91} In 1910, Pensacola hired one of New York’s leading architects, James Edwin Ruthven Carpenter, to give rise to what was at the time Florida’s tallest building. The ten-story, steel frame, American National Bank Building is across from the Public Square on the northeast corner of Palafox and Government Street.\textsuperscript{92} Over the course of the twentieth century, other tall buildings fortified by steel followed. Pensacola’s building boom had outpaced the use of cast iron.

Architecture and building practices were entering a new phase as the nation moved into the twentieth century. Steel replaced cast


\textsuperscript{89} W. Bates, \textit{Historical Structural Steelwork Handbook}, 66. Henry Bessemer invented a method of making steel in mass quantities in 1855, but the full potential was not realized until the Siemens Martin process was developed in the 1870s.

\textsuperscript{90} Linda Ellsworth, MSF # ES00133. 40 South Palafox (Thiesen Building) was added to the NR in 1979.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., MSF #ES00989A.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., MSF #ES00105. In addition to the 1982 survey, HPPB conducted a historic district survey in 1970 leading to the placement of the Pensacola Historic District on the NR in 1972. 226 South Palafox Street was added to the NRHP in 1978.
iron as a structural building element and American cities adapted to a new age of architecture. Tastes changed to reflect new technologies. Nationwide, streamlined utilitarian styles became popular. The ornate Italianate cast iron buildings were old fashioned compared to current trends. Cities demolished many of the cast iron buildings, modernized some, and covered many of the outmoded cast iron façades with contemporary materials.

Fortunately for Pensacola, the city’s downtown retains many of the buildings erected in the relatively brief time from 1880 to 1914. Recognizing the importance and beauty of the city’s maintenance of its historic structures, the American Planning Association named Pensacola’s Palafox Street one of America’s ten best in 2013.93 These buildings tell the story of how Pensacola’s business leaders emerged from disaster to build much of the footprint remaining in the twenty first century. Flush with the prosperity brought by the region’s vast natural resources of timber and fish, these men chose to rebuild downtown using fire resistant materials and exploited the opportunity to enhance commercial enterprises. Pensacola participated in the nation’s late nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution using the new technologies to make the city state of the art. The remaining iron façades serve as a tangible reminder of how the changes that occurred in Pensacola in the last two decades of the nineteenth century propelled the city into the national market economy. The citizens of Pensacola built hundreds of buildings, many of which remain standing, not only as evidence of this period of growth and prosperity, but also as legacies of those who built them.