

Ephemeral Cities

Erich Kesse © Digital Library Center © The University of Florida

EPHEMERAL CITIES
Presentation for the 2007
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By Erich Kesse, University of Florida

What is
History?

What is History?
This is Ephemeral Cities' central question.

Alan Bennett,
in his play, *The History Boys*,
answers the question
with a variety of answers.

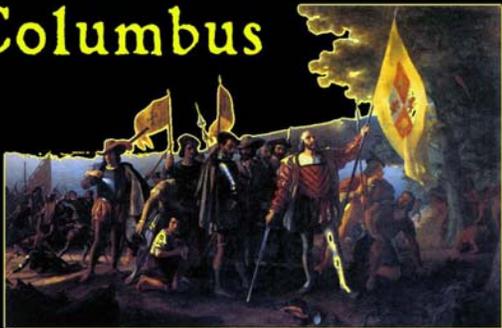
Columbus



It is easy to buy into one of these:

**History is a sequence of events,
frequently random,
in which stuff happens to people.**

**In 1492,
Columbus**



**This is the type of history
that we're most often taught.**

The big men. The big events.

**History, in this world view,
will not long remember what happened
here today.**

**In 1492,
Columbus sailed
the Ocean blue..**



**I learned, for example,
that Bucephalus was Alexander the
Great's horse.**

**I don't think that my 6th grade teacher
even knew the Thracian myth
of Hercules and the Diomecian mares
that covered history's truth:**

**Alexander stole, or, well, tamed
his father's horse
and rode it off to conquer the world.**

**What is
History?**

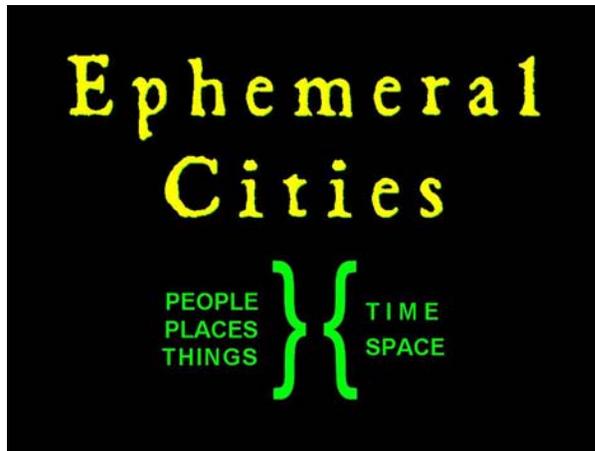
**But, this kind of History,
Bennett continues,
is more frequently about stupid,
though sometimes smart,
rich white guys
oppressing the women who supported
them.**

What is
Herstory?

**“Herstory”,
some in the feminist community
of the 19-80s suggested
might be more apt.**

**Ephemeral
Cities
STORY**

**Whether about his or her story,
Ephemeral Cities
was first about finding
the common ground of story.**

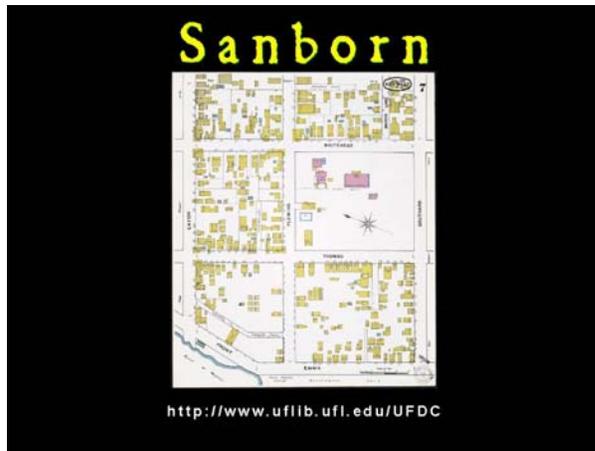


To do this,
the project needed to find
people, places and things
on the event horizons
of time and space.



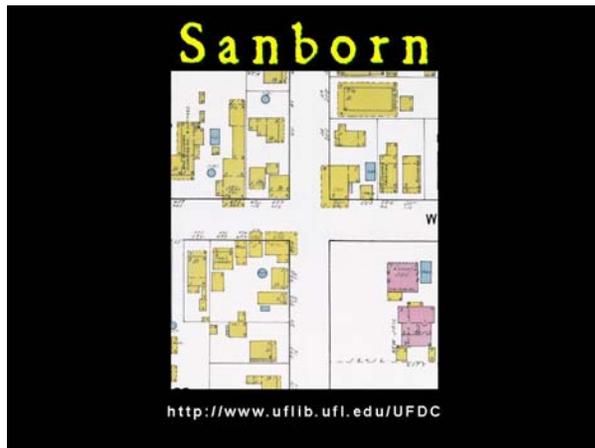
Ephemeral Cities
begins with the Sanborn maps.

Anyone who has worked with these maps
will tell you that they are “golden”.



In historical society libraries, they are among the most used reference resources.

And, in most states, environmental and land-use legislation requires them as documentation of prior use.



The Sanborn Maps document nearly every insurable property and its building materials in every major and in many minor cities of the United States.

Sanborn

Tampa, Florida

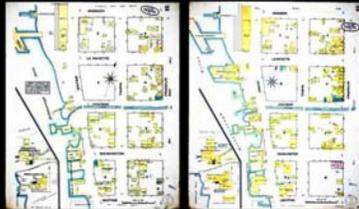


1884

The Sanborn maps
gave
Ephemeral Cities
a footprint.

Sanborn

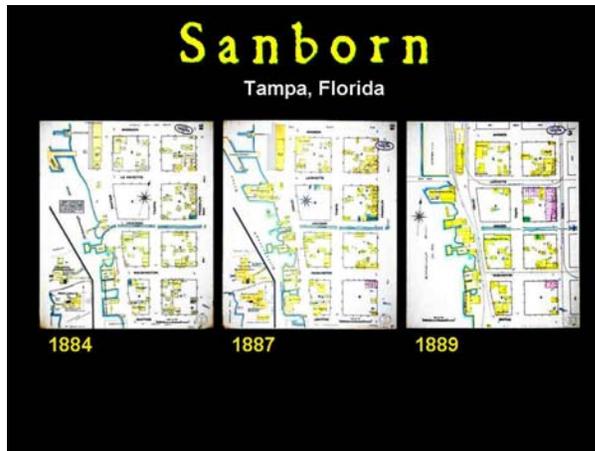
Tampa, Florida



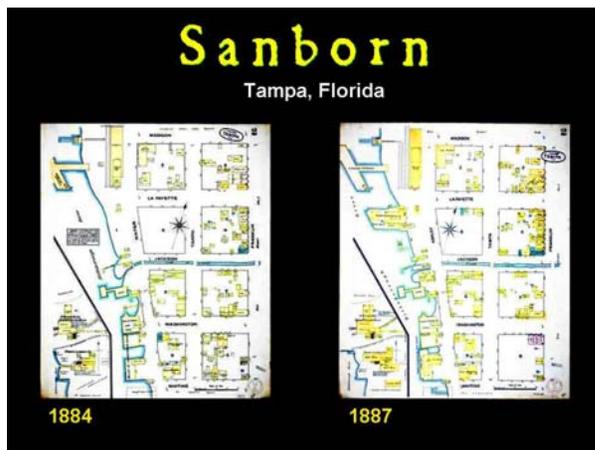
1884

1887

Literally a footprint ...
that danced over time

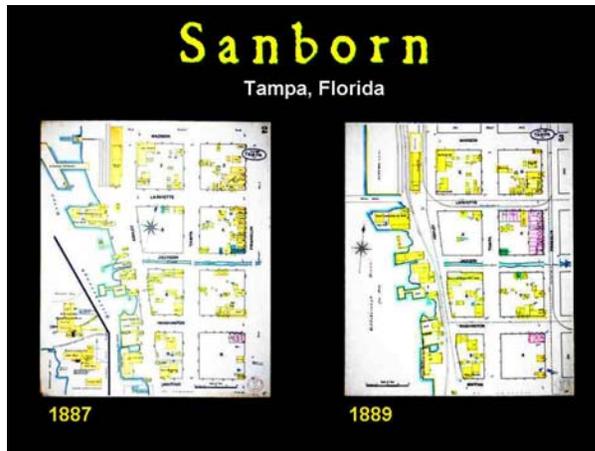


**And
which reflected the changing character
of our cities.**



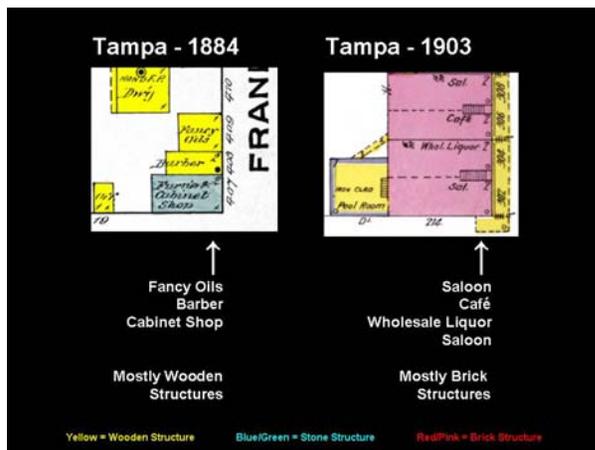
**Between 1884 and 1887,
one reached Tampa by sea.**

**The seaport developed
and the yellow of wooden structures
anchors the city.**



Between 1887 and 1889,
one could also reach Tampa by rail.

The Seminole Wars were over,
the pink of brick solidified the city's
skyline,
and ...



And ...

Florida's agricultural newspapers
began extolling the virtues
of the railroads,

proclaiming a motto of Florida tourism
that still rings true:

“Tourists in! Vegetables out!”

The user has zoomed into a location of interest on a period Sanborn® map : here, Gainesville, 1884.

The user may either point and click, or, construct a particular search strategy, here, by building information.



This is how we envisioned the site would work.

The user has zoomed into a location of interest: here, Gainesville, 1884.

The user may either point and click, or, construct a particular search strategy; here, by building Information.

In this case, the user has decided to search "Building Use" for "Cigar Factories".



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The cigar factory in this block is identified by a red dot.

If the user so desired, all of the cigar factories in Gainesville, or, in any or all of the target cities could be seen.



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Clicking on a red dot (or, on any building) displays all of the known information about that building's use and occupants at that approximate time in history.

Advanced queries will allow searches of building uses and occupants over time.

This information is extracted from name-rich resources.

Ephemeral Cities Concept Demo

Ephemeral Cities

UNION

E. MAIN

MASONIC

Building Information

Building Name: Coal

Uses: Coal Factory, Grocery, Tavern, Tobacco

Occupants: Simmons, Joseph (Lamarite, J.) Work 1888, Ormsworth, Thomas A. (Lamarite, J.) Work 1888

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When the user clicks on an alternate use – say, Grocery – red dots indicate the location of other grocers.

Ephemeral Cities Concept Demo

Ephemeral Cities

UNION

E. MAIN

MASONIC

Building Information

Building Name: Iron Mill

Uses: Coal Factory, Grocery, Tavern, Tobacco

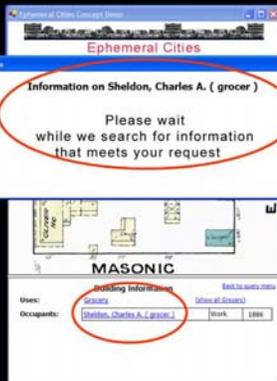
Occupants: Simmons, Joseph (Lamarite, J.) Work 1888, Ormsworth, Thomas A. (Lamarite, J.) Work 1888

When the user clicks on an alternate use – say, Grocery – red dots indicate the location of other grocers.

By clicking the red dot of any of these locations, information about that location is displayed.

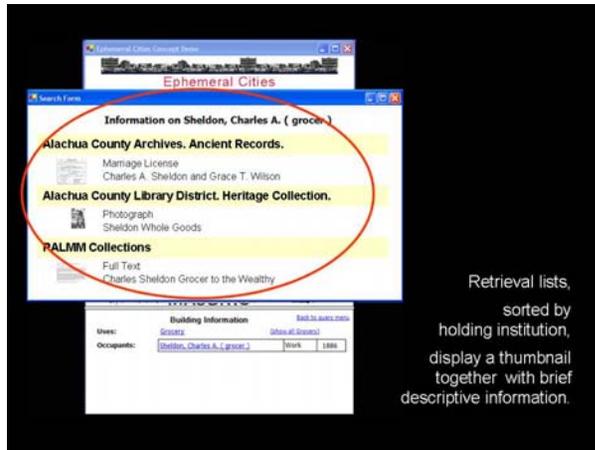


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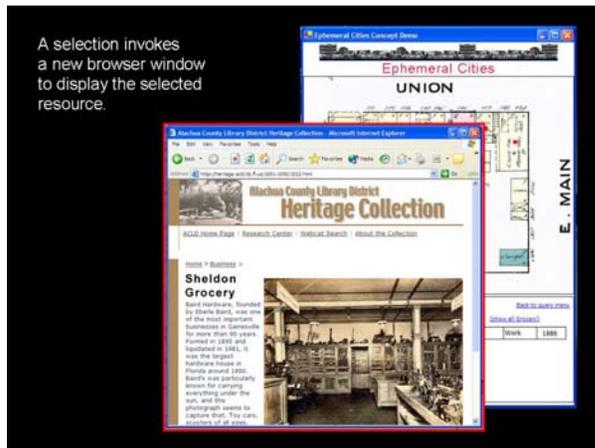
Clicking either a use or an occupant's name launches a query against targeted collections.

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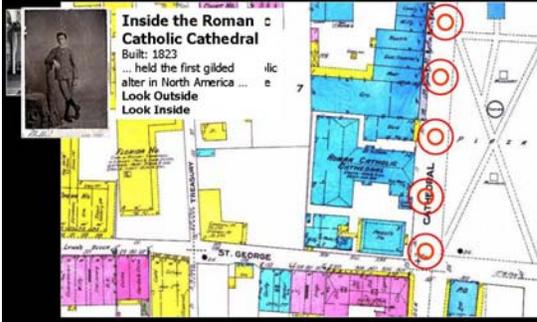
Retrieval lists, sorted by holding institution, display a thumbnail together with brief descriptive information.

Retrieval lists, sorted by holding institution, would display a thumbnail together with brief descriptive information.



A selection invokes a new browser window to display the selected resource.

Tourism



Our vision of the future was that of the living museum.

GPS enabled devices would support time travel, serving snippets of history to mobile phones and handheld computers.



**We had the bright idea
that the model should work
for all of Florida's cities.**

**But, we cautiously selected only three.
Gainesville. Tampa. And, Key West.**

**For as much as we wanted to explore
the development of any one city,**

**We also wanted to compare
and contrast Florida cities.**

Partnerships

- Archives
- Public Records Offices
- Libraries
and
- Museums



In each city,
that city's lead institution
– one for Florida's state universities –
developed partnerships
to capture the character of the city.

Sources

- Books
- Pamphlets
- Journals
- Newspapers

- Oral Histories
- Government Records
(Birth, Death, & Other Life Events)

- Photographs
- Postcards

- Artifacts



To ensure that we had the makings of
History,

We digitized the requisite stuff of digital
libraries.

What is
History?

**Funny thing about history is
that it is sometimes random.**

Let's take a look at reality.

Making
History?

**(Links removed for archive – See UFDC at
<http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/UFDC/>)**