

Henry Flagler and Henry Plant: Entrepreneurship That Led to the Development of Florida

[Lisa Gallagher](#)

Purdue Global University

[Jack Deem](#)

Purdue Global University

[Bea Bourne](#)

Purdue Global University

[Carol Schubert](#)

Purdue Global University

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present events and circumstances which motivated Henry Flagler and Henry Plant's entrepreneurial efforts. A critical biography methodology was used to present a historical representation of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant in the development of their business enterprises. A critical biography methodology was chosen to provide a framework for analyzing Flagler and Plant's entrepreneurial contributions to the development of Florida.

Flagler and Plant's business ventures provided the infrastructure that enabled Florida to be transformed into a destination for health, tourism, and land ownership. Prior to the contributions of Flagler and Plant, Florida was one of the most economically challenged states in the United States. In 1870, Florida's population was one of the smallest in the U.S. compared to other states east of the Mississippi. After railroads were built in Florida, it was promoted as an area suitable for a life of leisure or as a place referred to by many as a Tropic of Hope (Knight, 2013). Flagler and Plant's entrepreneurial efforts were crucial in making Florida one of the largest states in the United States with an economy larger than 90% of the nations in the world (Henry Morrison Flagler Museum).

The paper highlights the importance of vision, strong entrepreneurial spirit, business acumen, and the ability to rebound from failure, willingness to take risks, strategic thinking, and perseverance despite personal and professional challenges. This paper uncovers events and circumstances which motivated Flagler and Plant's business ventures, practices, and any signs of collaboration between the two men.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Florida, infrastructure, economic systems

Introduction

In the late 19th Century, Henry Flagler and Henry Plant each engaged in building railroads. Flagler's East Coast Overseas Railroad traversed the east side of the state, opening travel to Key West. Plant's ambitions combined rail and steam ship operations to develop Central and Western Florida. Because of

Full Citation:

Gallagher, L., Deem, J., Bourne, B., and Schubert, C. (2018). Henry Flagler and Henry Plant: Entrepreneurship that led to the development of Florida: Critical Biography Research. Small Business Institute® Journal. Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 31-43.

their vast contributions to the development of Florida, several biographers have chronicled the lives of these two men (Akin, 1992; Chandler, 1986, Reynolds, 2010; Ford and Petersen, 2011; and others).

This paper looks at the lives of these two men through critical biography methodology to identify how their entrepreneurial spirit led them to the develop separate railroads in Florida and ultimately contribute to the growth of a state now considered to be one of the top travel destinations in the world (State of Florida.com, 2017). We look at their motives as well as their business practices. It is proposed that the success of Flagler and Plant can serve as a model for future entrepreneurs. According to Millard “Mickey” Drexler, chief executive officer of J. Crew Group Inc., “The world is homogenized today and to make a mark, fledging entrepreneurs should seek to “be a contrarian.” (Lockwood, and Palmieri, 2012).

Critical Biography Methodology

The craft of biography has been described by Edel (1984) as “writing lives”. Biographies may be presented in many different forms including: portrayals, portraits, profiles, memoirs, life stories, life histories, case studies, autobiographies, journals, diaries, and others (Smith, 1984, p. 287). Smith (p. 302) posited that as a qualitative research method, biography is a “rich and only partially exploited form of inquiry for reaching multiple intellectual goals and purposes.”

The critical biography methodology was developed by Daniel Wren to provide a framework for analyzing management history. In such methodology, the focus is on management thought rather than those responsible for the advancements (Abraham and Gibson, 2009, Gibson; Hodgetts and Herrera, 1999; Gibson, et. al 2015). We will apply such framework to our study of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant to support the importance of historical representation in the development of business enterprise. As Cummings and Bridgman (2015) concluded, students would more likely have a positive impact on the future of management if they were more engaged with the history and tradition of management.

Born within a year of each other and to similar circumstances of a struggling, working class family in the mid-1800s, both Henry Flagler and Henry Plant achieved success in a multitude of enterprises early in their careers. Ultimately circumstances in each of their personal lives impacted their singular decisions to pursue opportunities in the southeastern part of the United States, circumstances themselves that did not present opportunity, but instead fostered their willingness to take risk and create a vision for the future, motivating rather than dispiriting, stimulating a reason for study and consideration. As DiBattista (2009, p. 237) stated, “when people ask me how to find a “good” biography, I tell them to look for a critical biography because, I say, you can be sure it will discuss the author’s work, not just his or her life.”

Henry Flagler

Henry Flagler was born on January 2, 1820 in Hopewell, NY. He was the son of Isaac Flagler, a Presbyterian minister, and Elizabeth Caldwell Morrison Harkness Flagler (Akin, 1992). Little is known about his early life. However, a key event in his life occurred in 1828 when the family moved to Toledo, Ohio. At this time, Flagler was brought together with his half-brother Dan Harkness and cousin Stephen Harkness along with the Harkness family frontier mercantile network.

In the years that followed, the Harkness family enterprises expanded with the charting of the Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad, as they developed the land along the railroad. This resulted in business opportunities and ultimately wealth for Harkness family members including Dan and Stephen. Henry Flagler, seeing this success, left home to pursue his own fortune at age 14 (Akin, 1992).

In 1844, at the age of twenty-four, Flagler joined Dan Harkness in his store in Republic, Ohio. It was here that he learned business basics. Their partnership grew in more ways than one. In 1852, Dan Harkness purchased the assets of the Chapman, Harkness and Company and formed a partnership with Flagler and Dan's uncle, Lamon Harkness. In 1853, Flagler married Mary Harkness, daughter of Uncle Lamon. At the same time the Harkness enterprises continued to diversify. They became a de facto banking operation. Ultimately they became involved in grain trade. It was the grain trade that brought Flagler in contact with John D. Rockefeller, a grain broker for Hewitt and Tuttle (Akin, 1992). As a result of their affiliation, Rockefeller brokered most of Flagler's grain in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

The Civil War years were financially successful for the Harkness enterprises and for Flagler in particular. In 1862, Flagler continued his pursuit of profitable opportunities. He diversified his current interests and invested in new opportunities, selling his interests in the grain trade to Dan Harkness and forming a new partnership with Barney York to produce salt in the seemingly profitable salt fields around Saginaw, Michigan. By 1862, Flagler and York soon became one of the area's largest salt producers. The end of the war, however, brought the end to the salt boom. Prices dropped from more than \$3.00 per barrel to \$1.50 per barrel and Flagler and York ended in bankruptcy three years later due to the decline in demand for salt (Flagler Museum, 2014).

Despite the closing of Flagler and York in 1866, Flagler continued to pursue other business ventures. In debt of over \$100,000, Flagler moved to Cleveland to join Clark and Sanford, once again investing in the grain trade business. His resurgence in the grain trade allowed him to reunite with John D. Rockefeller. Rockefeller had himself worked for Clark and Sanford but had left to fully engage in oil trade. With his credit running out, Rockefeller saw in Flagler a pathway to the Harkness fortune and a talent for identifying business opportunities. In 1868, the relationship they established in the grain business was resurrected and eventually evolved into a partnership (which included Samuel Andrews), and the formation of the Rockefeller, Andrews, and Flagler Oil Refinery (RA&F). The company eventually became the Standard Oil Company in 1870 (Wilkinson, 1998).

In the 1870s, transportation of crude oil from the Ohio/Pennsylvania oil region to ports along the Eastern coast of the US and around the world became a major concern. Transportation via the Erie Canal had been the most cost efficient mode, but the railroads were a much faster alternative. In the five years that followed the formation of RA&F, Flagler distinguished himself as the primary negotiator for the transportation of their crude and refined oil. He was successful in leveraging competition amongst the railroads while taking advantage of favorable seasonal rates on the Canal. At the same time, Flagler was becoming Rockefeller's right hand man (Akin, 1992). In 1870, RA&F incorporated with an initial capitalization of \$1,000,000, under the name of Standard Oil, with Flagler named the Secretary, Treasurer and being granted 1,333 shares of 10,000 shares issued.

The decade of the 1870s saw Flagler in a constant battle with the railroads, in particular the Pennsylvania, as well as pipeline operators. Yet he continued to be successful in his maneuvering to control shipping costs, as Standard Oil worked to eliminate competition in the oil industry. During this time, he would match wits with the likes of Jay Gould, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and others.

As the company grew, it became apparent to Flagler that a new corporate structure would be required. Flagler is widely credited with developing the concept of setting up Standard Oil companies in those states where they chose to operate (Chandler, 1986), and with a single trust agreement, brought the companies together under a central management team, under the name of Standard Oil Trust, in 1882

(Akin, 1992). This was the first multi-state corporation in the US. It became the model for large corporations of the future (Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, 2008). It is around this time that Flagler began to focus on Florida.

Flagler first visited Florida in 1878, at the direction of a doctor who thought the warm climate would be better for his wife's poor health. It was during these visits to Jacksonville, and then St. Augustine, Florida, that Flagler began to become discouraged by the lack of transportation and hotels. It is these initial visits that are believed to have prompted him to invest his vast oil fortune into the development of Florida (FCIT, 2002) as he was not discouraged by the situation in Florida but rather motivated to use his entrepreneurial skills and instincts to change it. Unfortunately, his wife succumbed to tuberculosis prior to his first investment in the state. Flagler

Rather than be dispirited by his personal circumstances, Flagler capitalized on them to create new business opportunities for himself. Sometime between 1884 and 1885, Flagler gave up his day to day involvement in Standard Oil to focus his attention on his business interests in Florida (Flagler Museum, 2014).

In 1885, Flagler made two investments that began his twenty-year pursuit of developing the east coast of Florida. The first is the purchase of a small hotel in St. Augustine and the second was a short-line railroad between Jacksonville and St. Augustine. The purchase of the short-line railroad is described as the turning point in both Flagler's life and Florida's history according to historian Jerry Wilkinson (1998).

Flagler's personal life was encumbered by a series of misfortunes. These included the loss of his first wife to illness, the divorce to his second wife due to her insanity, an estrangement with his only son Harry until Flagler's death, and the death of a three-year-old daughter (Akin, 1992). In spite of these setbacks, he continued to pursue the expansion of the railroad to South Florida and his hotel portfolio, with a zealous passion. At first, Flagler's railroad business was developed by purchasing distressed, existing lines. Along with these existing lines came the land grants that accompanied the rights granted by the State of Florida in the amount of 8,000 acres per mile of track. Flagler further added to his holdings as he built new tracks southward down the Florida coast. At its peak, Flagler's land holdings totaled some 2.04 million acres (Chandler, 1986). Some of the land was sold off to Northerners at prices of \$1.50 - \$5.00 per acre and resulted in the establishment of villages along the right of way. These ultimately grew into the cities of West Palm, Delray Beach, Ft. Lauderdale and Miami.

With the goal of transforming Florida's eastern coast, Flagler would ride his own railroad in disguise in an effort to discover properties that could be developed into resorts. The disguise was to avoid tipping off landowners of his plan and thus drive up prices. In 1892, Flagler discovered Palm Beach, and returned to St. Augustine to proclaim, "I have found a veritable Paradise." It was in this area that Flagler set out to build what is now known as the infamous Breakers Hotel (Standiford, 2002, p. 59).

Flagler is credited with providing many opportunities to those who came to settle in Florida. An example was the temporary reduction of freight rates by 50% for those willing to bring nursery stock to the state. He also established a model farm at Hastings, which provided the town with a good lead in the production of potatoes (Chandler, 1986, p. 132).

Flagler's desire was to disturb as little as possible of the natural landscape, while building what he planned to be the most magnificent hotel in the world. Accordingly, he decided that the workmen would camp on the west side of Lake Worth and row across the lake to work each day. The implications of Flagler's

decision have had lasting implications on Palm Beach. The location of his hotel became known as the land of the “haves” and the area west of Lake Worth, where the workers resided, now known as West Palm Beach, became known as the land of “have-nots” (Standiford, p 60). Despite the stigma of West Palm Beach being known as the service town of Palm Beach, Flagler tore down temporary houses for employees and replaced them with permanent structures. He also contributed to funds for all of the town’s new public buildings and gave land for cemeteries and churches among other things (Chandler, 1986, p. 136).

Despite criticism from those who objected to a northeasterner coming into Florida and changing its landscape, there were many who believed in Flagler’s vision and supported his expansion of the railroad and resorts along the east coast of the state. According to Martin (1949, p. x), “Flagler gave Florida new life.”

Flagler continued his development of the East Coast, traveling farther south down the state. In Miami, as he had done elsewhere, he built an electric company, water company, schools, churches, streets and homes for his workers. He also purchased three ships in 1899 to transport people to and from the Bahamas to work in his hotels (Wilkson, 1998, p. 6). Flagler spent the last part of his life fulfilling the dream to build a railroad that extended to Key West. On January 22, 1912, Flagler at the age of 82 rode to Key West in his private rail car for a three-day celebration. Nearly blind by now, tears were said to have streamed down Flagler’s face as he proclaimed, “I can hear the children, but I cannot see them.” And later, “Now I can die happy. My dream is fulfilled.” (Wilkson, 1998, p. 5).

While researchers have not been able to uncover letters or diaries following the death of Flagler’s first wife to understand his emotions at the time and how they may have correlated with his desire to develop Florida, they instead have a track of his conduct. Wrote Chandler (1986, p. 91), “It is a track of a new Henry Flagler, a man who leads Florida out of the wilderness and a man who, along the way, becomes a humanitarian.” It is said that Flagler once told an associate that he believed that his fortune was given to him, “To help his fellow men to help themselves and that he wanted to see if a plain American could succeed there where the Spanish, French and English had not.” (Wilkson, 1998, p.8).

Henry Plant

Henry Plant was born in 1819 in Branford, CT (New Haven County). When he was six years old, Plant lost his sister and father to typhus, and as a result was raised by his mother and grandmother in a Puritan household (Henry B. Plant Biography, 2014). Plant’s mother remarried and moved the new family to Martinsburg, NY, and later to New Haven, CT.

Plant was a member of the First Church and Society of Branford, which carried on tradition as a descendent of Congregationalists. Congregationalists were often characterized by their fierce independence and belief that each person had civil and religious liberties (Congregationalism, 2014; Reynolds, 2010). The Plant’s religiosity extended to their dreams for Henry. Plant’s grandmother saved a tidy sum of money to send him to Yale College to become a clergyman, but at 18, Plant had different ideas and became a captain’s boy for the New Haven Steamship Company.

Understanding the political climate at the time assists in providing perspective to the influences on Plant’s thinking, which began at an early age. Prior to Plant’s birth, the British blew up a US Navy ship in retaliation for US citizens resisting British conscription. British recruiters were forcing Americans into service by the thousands because many of their own soldiers were AWOL due to inhuman working conditions during the Napoleonic Wars. Branford was in the heart of the upheaval, and further

independence and stubbornness of the populous resulted. President Jefferson effectuated an embargo against Great Britain and France in retaliation, but the embargo simply resulted in smuggling—a natural outcome of the independent spirit that prevailed (Napoleonic Wars, Reynolds, 2010). These events helped mold Plant's independent and sometimes radical thinking.

At 18, Plant eschewed his grandmother's offer to pay for divinity school, and instead went to work for the Vanderbilt line of steamships. Because he was keen to improve his accommodations aboard ship (he worked on quite a few), Plant worked hard and volunteered for duty that allowed him to gain his own quarters, albeit in a package freight room. His desire to sleep in an area other than the forecastle, for privacy, was an early indication of his "pluck" and business acumen that he displayed all through his life (Reynolds, 2010).

Plant married Ellen Elizabeth Blackstone when he was 22, and subsequently resigned his work on steamships (Sammons, 2010). He took an office position in New Haven working with Beecher & Company, where he quickly moved up the ranks. Beecher asked Plant and his wife to move to New York, where they happily lived until Ellen started having a nasty cough just after the birth of their second child. Her doctors believed Ellen would do better in a more southerly, warmer climate, and thus they moved south. The journey south in 1853, which included a steamship from New York City to Charleston, and another steamship to Savannah (a total of eight full days) was a nightmare due to a series of events. Once in Savannah, the Plants took a dugout canoe down the St. John's River to Strawberry Mills to stay at an acquaintance's home. To travel to St. Augustine they embarked on a 20-mile horse and buggy ride over extremely rugged terrain (Sammons, 2010).

Once Plant realized that his wife needed a more permanent solution for her health, he made arrangements to begin work with the Adams Express Company in Augusta Georgia. At Adams, Plant quickly advanced, overseeing the entire southern growth of the company. His new job required extensive travel, which was every bit as difficult as the Plant family's move to the south. However, his travels afforded the opportunity to learn about the express business, and they provided him with the knowledge that there needed to be a more efficient way to travel between destinations (Sammons, 2010).

Unfortunately, in 1861, just a year after the Civil War began, Ellen's cough worsened. She died that year, and Plant was completely devastated. Despite his grief, later that year Plant arranged to buy the southern operations of the Adams Express Company, and called it the Southern Express Company. There is a great deal of mystery about the dealings that culminated with Plant owning the southern operations of Adams Express. Some believe that the directors of the Adams Company created a dummy corporation and made Plant its owner.

As the new owner of Southern Express, Plant immediately contacted Jefferson Davis (the president of the Confederacy) to convey that while he did not agree that the war was a good idea, he stood willingly to meet the confederacy's needs with Southern Express. Granted confederacy citizenship, Plant worked feverishly to move necessary packages and supplies to the soldiers. His unyielding work ethic is thought to have possibly been a symptom of his attempt to escape his deep grief over his wife's passing, eventually leading to doctors' diagnosing him with exhaustion, and Plant sailing for Europe to try to recuperate (Sammons, 2010). Plant survived as did the Adams Express.

Confederate citizenship allowed Plant to gain business and freedom throughout the south until the confederacy began losing the war. Once the south's eventual defeat began, Southern Express suffered an

overload of undelivered commodities, lack of payments, and a shortage of equipment necessary to run the business. Despite the turmoil within his operations, Plant continued to be known for his forbearance and patience (Reynolds, 2010) and it paid off for him.

Plant eventually was able to capitalize on opportunities that resulted from the ruins caused by war. He had also prudently saved nearly all the money he made (Reynolds, 2010). In 1879, he used his savings to buy the Atlantic & Gulf Railroad (A&G) because he believed it would be an important addition to the southern line of railways. The A&G covered 237 miles, from Savannah to Bainbridge Georgia. The acquisition also offered a further bonus—it came with the A&G superintendent, Colonel Henry S. Haines. Haines had a good deal of experience in confederate railways during the Civil War. The purchase of the A&G began what later was known as the Plant System of Railways (Sammons, 2010).

The A&G became the Savannah Florida & Western Railway (SF&W). Plant changed many aspects of the existing structure to include standard gauge, remodeling of passenger cars to offer greater comfort, and more efficient operations. Less than a year after this first railway purchase, Plant bought the Savannah and Charleston Railroad. The purchase enabled continuous travel between Charleston and Bainbridge. While these two railroads created the backbone of Plant's line, his desire was to expand into Florida. Stiff competition from others who wanted to capitalize on the widespread devastation left by the war was pervasive; however, he applied his business acumen and political clout, to convince Georgia officials to grant a charter allowing him to build a railway between Lawton, GA, Live Oak, FL, and Jacksonville FL.

Immediately following the grant of that charter, Florida granted a second one for a line heading northwest from Jacksonville which he called the Waycross Short Line (WSL). The WSL effectively cut travel time between Savannah and Jacksonville by half (Sammons, 2010). Plant's building of the railways in Florida enabled passengers and products to now travel from New York to Jacksonville. The addition of refrigerated railroad cars meant perishables could also be transported between locations, opening up the opportunity for substantial economic growth.

In 1882, when Plant was in his sixties, he formed the Plant Investment Company (PICO) to establish a legal entity where his friends could invest. Those investments were used to expand the burgeoning railway system, and later a fleet of steamships to carry people and products to New Orleans, Pensacola, and Mobile. He had hoped to expand the steamship connection to Cuba and Key West, but was only able, at this time, to secure a route through the Suwannee River. Interestingly, Henry Flagler was one of the investors in PICO (Reynolds, 2010; Sammons, 2010).

Determined to gain Gulf access to southern points in Florida, and eventually Cuba, Plant tried to negotiate with the Yulee family who owned Cedar Key. When the Yulee family refused to negotiate, Plant set his sights on Tampa and Charlotte Harbor. Gaining the charter for a rail line down the west coast of Florida, his company began to build, but surprisingly encountered another railroad crew building in essentially the same area. A company called Florida Southern was also granted a charter (which was believed to be a mistake). Plant managed to negotiate with cash strapped Florida Southern to merge their two entities and become the controlling partner in the Florida Southern line (Sammons, 2010).

Charters for railways through Florida were numerous, and all Henry Plant needed to do was watch and wait for an opportunity to partner with a company that had already received a charter for the originations and destinations necessary to realize his dream of servicing Florida's west coast. The opportunity presented itself when the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railway ran short on cash, but still

maintained the charter to build the ambitious line through this corridor. Plant's PICO was ready to invest, but the caveat was that there was very little time to build—seven months if they were to keep the charter. PICO's investors were able to meet the deadline, and Plant's dream was realized; he had reached the Gulf of Mexico. He had also bought and employed the steamships necessary to carry people and products from Tampa to the Caribbean (Sammons, 2010).

As Tampa was becoming a boom town in 1887, yellow fever hit. All the optimism and growth in the area came to a halt. Plant, in New York at the time, but still hearing news of the outbreak and panic, quickly returned to Tampa. In a show of confidence, he promised to improve the port and build accommodations for travelers and workers. Businessmen who operated in Tampa believed Plant's assurances that Tampa was still positioned for economic boom, and upon Plant's further investments, it only took about six months for the yellow fever panic to subside, and building to begin again. Concurrently, rail lines in Florida were expanded, and Tampa was recognized as a world class port. The Plant System owned a near monopoly in Central and Western Florida (Sammons, 2010).

While Plant built a hotel on the long wharf in Port Tampa, he built other hotels around the state that are notable today. One of the best known was the Tampa Bay Hotel, which now houses the University of Tampa (Covington). The University of Tampa building is in the National Registry of Historic Places, and National Trust. It serves as a testament to Henry Plant's belief that Florida was a treasure to be enjoyed (savethebiltmore.com).

Close to the end of Plant's life, he became embroiled in yet another war, the Spanish-American. His two prized steamships, the Olivette and Mascotte were pressed into service, and Plant was heavily involved in stockpiling tobacco in Tampa because an embargo was anticipated. Plant's work in this area squelched the embargo, and his war efforts using his railroad, steamship, and hotel assets not only made a big difference in the outcome, but generated even more revenue for PICO (Sammons, 2010).

Henry Plant died on June 23, 1899. His legacy included 2245 miles of railroad, eight hotels, and a myriad of steamships (Henry Plant Biography, 2014). The total worth of Plant's estate upon his death was nearly \$17.5 million. Court battles and disputes surrounded the estate's disposition, and in the end, his son, Morton Plant, received the inheritance. Nearly all of Henry Plant's fortune was squandered in lifestyle and divorce, and by 1902, his legacy was all but gone (Reynolds, 2010).

Relationship between Flagler and Plant

In the absence of autobiographies, most of what we know about the relationship between Flagler and Plant is gleaned from their correspondence. Akin (1992, p. 192), described the relationship as “a friendly business relationship” while at the same time being competitive.

On the “friendly” side, we see evidence of the relationship in a memo from Flagler to Plant dated, July 31, 1880, where Flagler asks Plant to include his Palatka to St. Augustine and Jacksonville to St. Augustine rail lines under Plant's bonded warehouse bond. In the memo Flagler refers to “some arrangement with the US Government” that Plant had that would allow such an accommodation (LB54-107). In another memo to Plant, on the passing of his longtime confidante, Judge Chisolm, Flagler passes along condolences with a recommendation on how Chisolm's position might be filled (LB58-263). One other example may be found in an October 2, 1890 memo to Plant, where Flagler expresses a desire to meet regarding the Jacksonville Depot and wishes him well regarding recent health issues.

While cordial, Flagler and Plant were still competitors. Further evidence of this is found in a memo from Flagler to J.R. Parrott dated June 18, 1895 (LB56-237). :

It has recently occurred to me that if our friends of the Plant System should hear of our proposed ocean pier and bridge across Lake Worth, they might seek to influence the War Department not to grant us permission to cross the Lake. I don't believe they would do so, at the same time, the fear of this is an additional reason for making haste with the plans, and securing permission.

Florida Prior to Railroad Expansion

Flagler and Plant's contribution to the state of Florida are well documented. In the 1850s Florida was considered by many as a very undesirable place to live. Not only was Florida very remote from the rest of the United States, the swamps, alligators, insects, snakes, poor lands, and Seminole Indians all contributed to its negative image. Florida's characteristic swampland and unpredictable tropical climate also made it undesirable for agriculture. Prior to the Civil war, Florida was a slave state and was considered a far off and exotic land with little in common with the North and Midwestern regions of the United States. The prevailing attitude during the United States expansionism era was that a more temperate area was best to raise a nation of Anglo-Saxons where cooler climates were more appropriate for hard work. Florida did not fit the perception of being an appropriate place for Anglos to live. Fortunately, a change in the US political direction brought Florida closer to the rest of the country, building Florida's reinvention as a semi-tropical state (Knight, 2013).

Florida's economy also suffered as a result of the loss of slavery, the Civil War, and reconstruction (Knight, 2013). The emancipation proclamation caused former slave owners to suffer a significant decrease in wealth; farm values were decimated. After the Civil War, Floridians were desperate to attract new residents and new sources of revenue. Florida was one of the most economically challenged states in the United States. In 1870, Florida's population was one of the smallest in the U.S. compared to other states east of the Mississippi. Factors that contributed to Florida's low population included slavery, Indian wars, the swamp-like tropical environment, and location (Knight, 2013).

In 1880, "Florida's population was 270,000, with 40,000 residents living in the northwest coast between Jacksonville and St. Augustine" (Turkel, 2006, p. 64). Even prior to the Civil War, Florida was well known as a place for people with health concerns; however, rich Americans from the north were just starting to notice Florida's pleasant weather (Turkel, 2006). For centuries, the primary inhabitants of Florida were Mexicans, Spanish, Native Americans, and African Americans. After railroads were built in Florida, it was promoted as an area suitable for an Anglo-American life of leisure or to a place referred to by many as a Tropic of Hope (Knight, 2013).

Racial fears and apprehension about the tropical environment had once provided a major impediment for attempts to colonize tropical regions. Anglo's, "...objected to annexing "hot" lands on the grounds that they were home to "undesirable" nonwhite populations incapable of self-governing; they believed that Anglos could never thrive in such environments (Knight, 2013, p. 13). Indeed, Plant and Flagler's building of world-class hotels and technological advancements introduced by railroads were crucial factors in efforts to promote Florida's semi-tropical climate as a region suitable for Anglo-Americans (Knight, 2013).

Flagler and Plant's ownership of hotels and railroads built the infrastructure that enabled Florida to be transformed into a destination for health, tourism, and land ownership. These efforts were honored by Floridians. For example, Henry Plant was given the nickname of *King of Florida*. Henry Plant's influence and contributions still remain today. "Cities such as Plant City, Sanford, Auburndale, Trilby, and Port Tampa attribute their development to Henry Plant. Streets in Tampa and Port Tampa bear the names of Plant family members and Plant System officers" (Henry B. Plant Biography, 2014, para. 11).

After building the railroad in the Fort Dallas station, Flagler also built roads, a channel, the town's first water and power systems, and funded the city's first newspaper. The residents were very grateful to the contributions of Flagler and wanted to name the newly incorporated town, *Flagler*. He turned down the honor, and convinced the citizens to name the town Miami instead (Henry Morrison Flagler Museum). Flagler's influence stretched beyond commerce. In 1899, Flagler's wife, Ida Alice Shrouds, became mentally ill. Flagler was a resident of Palm Beach, at that time; mental illness was not considered sufficient reason for divorce. Because of Flagler's petition and lobbying for a divorce, his influence resulted in Florida passing a law making incurable mental illness sufficient reason for divorce. This law was called the Flagler Divorce Law (Reports, 1992).

Florida is now a thriving state with population of 18.8 million (United States Census, 2010). Henry Plant and Henry Flagler's legendary contributions to Florida's road and rail network, tourism, hotel, and agricultural industries still remain. These entrepreneurs were crucial in making Florida one of the largest states in the United States with an economy larger than 90% of the nations in the world (Henry Morrison Flagler Museum).

Summary

The early railroad entrepreneurs and workers helped to dictate the landscape and nature of the United States even today (Ambrose, 2000). Henry Flagler and Henry Plant, whose ability to rebound from failure, willingness to take risk, and strategic thinking, despite personal and professional challenges throughout their careers, are among these visionary entrepreneurs. According to management theorist, Peter Drucker, "the *entrepreneur* always searches for change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity" (Drucker, 1985, p.28).

What Flagler and Plant accomplished matters in several ways in that they not only built transportation enterprises, but more importantly, they effectively promoted the development of states, such as Florida, which were relatively unpopulated. Even after the Civil War, what few people lived in Florida were gathered in relatively small cities on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts. The interior was mostly forest and scrub land. Florida and southern Georgia are at the eastern extremes of North America, therefore, goods and people did not pass through, generating commerce, as they did in other parts of the south and north. Being destinations in that era, before widespread tourism, was a liability. Economic development was dependent on the land producing agricultural products, timber, or there were factories or mines. When Flagler and Plant moved into that region, they had to literally create the means for people to live, work, and trade for the railroads to have goods and people to haul.

Much like the early railroads in the western United States, such as the Union Pacific, Flagler and Plant's enterprises were as much about land and economic development organizations as they were railroads. The states of Florida and Georgia owe much to the entrepreneurial spirit of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant. The layout of communities and patterns of commerce that exist to this day were set by the railroads and commercial projects they established. Without these two entrepreneurs, the great cities of

Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, and Miami, and many smaller towns would have taken decades longer to develop.

Direction for Future Research

Flagler and Plant's entrepreneurial efforts were crucial in making Florida one of the largest states in the United States with an economy larger than 90% of the nations in the world (Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, 2014). Data could be collected to determine whether there are valuable lessons or best practices for similar ventures in developing economies. Further, the State of Florida, Flagler, and Plant had a symbiotic relationship that required not only an entrepreneurial spirit, but also a working partnership with the government entity (a public/private partnership). Did Florida plan their development and create land grants based on a cohesive plan, or was the approach more random? How did Florida's planning affect the success of the development of rail as well as the overarching economic health of the region?

Conclusion

Through the use of the critical biography methodology, the research team sought to study the work of two entrepreneurs in an effort to understand their contribution to the development of Florida. It was evidenced throughout each of their careers that their entrepreneurial spirit enabled them to overcome personal and professional trials and tribulations, to persevere when others may have failed, and to dream bigger and bolder than those before them. Flagler and Plant did not simply envision extending the railroad into Florida as a means of alternative transportation into the south but instead embodied the development of hospitality and tourism in the area. As a result, their entrepreneurial contributions resulted in the creation one of the most traveled destinations in the world.

References

- Akin, Edward, N. (1992), *Flagler: Rockefeller Partner and Florida Baron*, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, FL.
- American Society of Civil Engineers (2013), "2013 Report Card of America's Infrastructure", retrieved from: www.infrastructurereportcard.org.
- Chandler, David, L. (1986), *Henry Flagler, The Astonishing Life and Times of the Visionary Robber Baron Who Founded Florida*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, NY.
- Covington, James, W. (n.d.), "Tequesta", available at: http://digitalcollections.fiu.edu/tequesta/files/1975/75_1_04.pdf [Accessed 8 Nov 2014].
- Cummings, Stephen, and Bridgman, Todd. (2011), "The relevant past: Why the history of management should be critical for our future". *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 77.
- DiBattista, Maria (2009). *Imagining Virginia Woolf: An Experiment in Critical Biography*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Drucker, Peter, F. (1985). *Innovation & Entrepreneurship*. New York: Harper and Row.

- Encyclopedia Britannica (2009), “Congregationalism” available at: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/132545/Congregationalism> [Accessed 25 Oct 2014].
- Florida Center for Instructional Technology (2002). *Famous Floridians: Henry Morrison Flagler*. College of Education, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.
- Ford, Robert. C. and Petersen, Peter, B. (2011), “Henry B. Plant (1819-1899): Florida's West Coast entrepreneur”. *Journal of Management History*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 254 –269. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17511341111141341>.
- “Henry B. Plant Biography” (2014), available at: <http://plantmuseum.com/henry-plant-museum/bio> [Accessed 25 Oct 2014].
- Henry Morrison Flagler Museum (2014). “Henry Morrison Flagler biography”, available at: <https://flaglERMuseum.us/history/flagler-biography> [Accessed 25 Oct 2014].
- Lockwood, Lisa and Palmieri, Jean (2012). *Drexler, Burch Talk Entrepreneurism*. WWD. Oct 18, 2012, Vol. 204 Issue 82, 2.
- Knight, Henry (2013), *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise 1869-1929*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA.
- Memos from the Flagler Museum Archives
- LB54-107. Flagler to Plant, July 31, 1890 LB54-107
- LB56-237. Flagler to Plant, Oct. 2, 1890.
- LB58-263. Flagler to Plant, nd.
- Flagler to J.D. Parrott, June 18, 1895.
- Martin, Sidney, W. (1949), *Flagler's Florida*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Ga.
- “Napoleonic Wars and the United States, 1803–1815 & 1801–1829 - Milestones - Office of the Historian” (n.d.), available at: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/napoleonic-wars> [Accessed 17 Oct. 2014].
- National Council for Public-Private partnerships (2016), “7 keys to success”, retrieved from <http://www.ncppp.org/ppp-basics/7-keys/>.
- Reports (1992, May 16), “Fast Facts: Flagler”. *Sun Sentinel* [online] <http://search.proquest.com/docview/388993082?accountid=458> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2014].
- Reynolds, Kelly (2010), *Henry B. Plant, Pioneer Empire Builder*, (2nd ed.), The Florida Historical Society Press, Cocoa FL.
- Sammons, Sandra, W. (2010), *The two Henrys*, The Pineapple Press, Inc., Cocoa, FL.

- “Save The Biltmore”, (n.d.), available at: <http://www.savethebiltmore.com/BiltmoreHotelHistory.htm> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2014].
- Sclar, Elliott (2015), “The political economics of investment Utopia: public-private partnerships for urban infrastructure finance”, *Journal of Economic Policy Reform*, Vol. 18 No. 1), pp. 1-5.
- Stadler, Lea (2016), “Scrutinizing Public-Private Partnerships for development: Towards a broad evaluation conception”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 135 No. 1, pp. 71-86.
- Standiford, Les (2002), *Henry Flagler and The Spectacular Rise and Fall of the Railroad that Crossed an Ocean*, Crown Publishers, New York, NY.
- State of Florida.com, *Florida Quick Facts: Economy Strengths*, retrieved from <http://http://www.stateofflorida.com/facts.aspx>.
- Turkel, Stanley (2006), “Henry Morrison Flagler”, *Lodging Hospitality*, Vol. 62, No. 1, pp. 64-66. [online] <http://search.proquest.com/docview/236572870?accountid=458> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2014].
- Wilkinson, Jerry (1998), “History of the railroad”, available at: Keyhistory.org [Accessed 14 Oct. 2014].
- “United States Census”, (2010), retrieved from <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/population-demographics/2010-census/data/index.cfm> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2014].