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By June Hurley

"Above any other man living, Henry Plant represents the great industrial revolution which has come over the face of the Southern states and which marks the success of free over slave labor," wrote the Atlanta Constitution on his 67th birthday.

Past the age when most men have retired, Plant was just getting his second wind.

Beyond Tampa, his railroad^d steamship lines ran as far south as Panama and as far north as Nova Scotia and employed more than 12,000 people.

Again, as in Civil War days, he moved in American army to war. Tampa was seething with indignation. Many of the Latin families were still tied to their homeland and so the cry heard in Ybor City was "Free Cuba."

When the U.S. battleship Main blew up in Havana Harbor in 1898 - it was Plant's Olivette that brought the survivors to Tampa. A month later, the Mascotte brought 900 more refugees.

When the United States finally declared war on Spain, the Plant port facilities made Tampa the strategic place to be. His railroad moved 30,000 soldiers into town.

Gen. William Shafter made Tampa Bay Hotel his headquarters. Some suggested the general would have been more efficient with a good night's sleep but he insisted on sharing the hardships of his men by draping himself in blankets and sleeping on the hard porch floor.

He and Gen. Leonard Wood were so portly, it was said they shook the bridge when they walked over it.

Younger officers spent their leisure time mixing the "Cuba Libre," a popular mixed drink of Cuban rum and Coca-Cola, so Plant's famous hotel is credited as its birthplace.

When the port was tied up by too many ships and too many commanding officers, Henry Plant, now 79, went down and straightened it out. An aggressive young lieutenant threatened he'd have the War Department seize Plant's port operation "and run it effectively."

"Seize it and be damned" yelled Plant and turned his back. And "Teddy" Roosevelt went back to his camp west of Old Hyde Park and busied himself with something he knew how to run, the U.S. volunteer cavalry, The Rough Riders.

Plant and his Tampa were the hub of war machinery for the war that began in April and was finished in August.

Plant personally supervised the winding down - returning men and supplies, a tremendous feat of management for a man nearing 80. The Mascotte and the Olivette as converted hospital ships transported all the wounded and the many yellow fever victims.