

boarded the steamer, "Kelson" which carried them as far as Mobile. After several days of straightening out their business, the Barnwells and Robinsons boarded a large steamer, the "Republic" which carried them to Cedar Key, Florida. They transferred their belongings onto a sailboat and set sail for Tampa. William's daughter, Mary Catherine describes the following days in "The Story of My Life", written in 1927:

"We were out in the Gulf for two days, had no wind to take us very far, so the boat sprang a leak and we all were frightened most to death as not one of our crew could swim. There was bailing and priming to do night and day till we got to Clearwater Harbor and you can't imagine how proud we were when we all got the chance to get on land once more. The Captain had to lay over and fix the boat so we were all there for a few days. Then, when we were ready again we headed for Tampa so it was not so far and dangerous a trip on in to Tampa. We got to Tampa about 3:00 in the afternoon. That was in December in 1868 and at that time Tampa was a very small little town with only two or three stores and a very few people and no streets at all but only sand roads with palmetto roots and high scrub oaks on each side of the roads. It was a terrible looking little town."

Mr. Barnwell bought a small farm about ten miles from Tampa, near present day Seffner, and with the assistance of the Robinson family and several hired Negroes, began preparations for repairing the buildings and raising crops. In the years that followed, the crops were plentiful and brought good prices at the markets in Tampa.

It was the spring of 1872 when the Barnwell's problems began. It had been a very dry year, and much of the lumber in the farm house was rotten. Mr. Barnwell had planned to replace some of the lumber in the future when he hoped a new saw mill might be built in the adjoining area. But one night the house caught on fire and their home and almost everything in it was destroyed. Neighbors gave them assistance until such time as Mr. Barnwell could go to Tampa to ask some of his friends to help him or lend him some money to build another house. He then received his second set back. The farm he had bought did not belong to him. The individual he bought it from did not actually own the property, and he would be unable to get his investment back.

A ray of hope came to this black situation when Mr. Ziba King, a friend and fellow Mason, offered William Henry Barnwell a chance to assist him in the operation his business in a small town in the wildness of Manatee County - this town was Fort Ogden. Mary Catherine describes their journey:

"It took us most one week to move from near Tampa to Ft. Ogden as the roads were most terrible. There would be large palmetto roots and sometimes the wheels of the wagon would not touch the sand for four feet at a time and then would drop off the roots with a hard jerk. It would most jolt one to death that was not used to hardships. We would drive the teams all day & then camp in the wild woods all night and let the teams and ourselves rest.