

Beware Of The Yellow Jack

Yellow Fever Epidemic in Tallahassee, FL 1841

Ayanna Nesbeth, Benjamin Gunter & Idy Codington

ABSTRACT

The 1841 Yellow Fever epidemic in Tallahassee, Florida was a distressing event that affected the city's population and infrastructure. The outbreak began in the summer months and quickly spread throughout the community, causing widespread illness and death. Symptoms of the disease included fever, headache, jaundice, and vomiting, and it was particularly deadly for the elderly and young children. The epidemic overwhelmed local healthcare facilities and caused panic among the residents. Despite efforts to contain the outbreak, it continued to spread and ultimately resulted in significant loss of life and damage to the community. The exact cause of the epidemic is not well-documented; public officials at the time believed the epidemic was caused by contaminated water, mosquitoes, and gases from hot marshes. The event significantly impacted the city's development and serves as a reminder of the devastating consequences of infectious disease outbreaks. In our research, we go back 200 years in Tallahassee's past, by reading limited works of literature by historians who specialize in Antebellum Tallahassee history. From these sources, we gained knowledge on how Doctors would diagnose and treat Yellow Fever, how schools and businesses navigated during that tough time, and the culture surrounding the disease.

INTRODUCTION

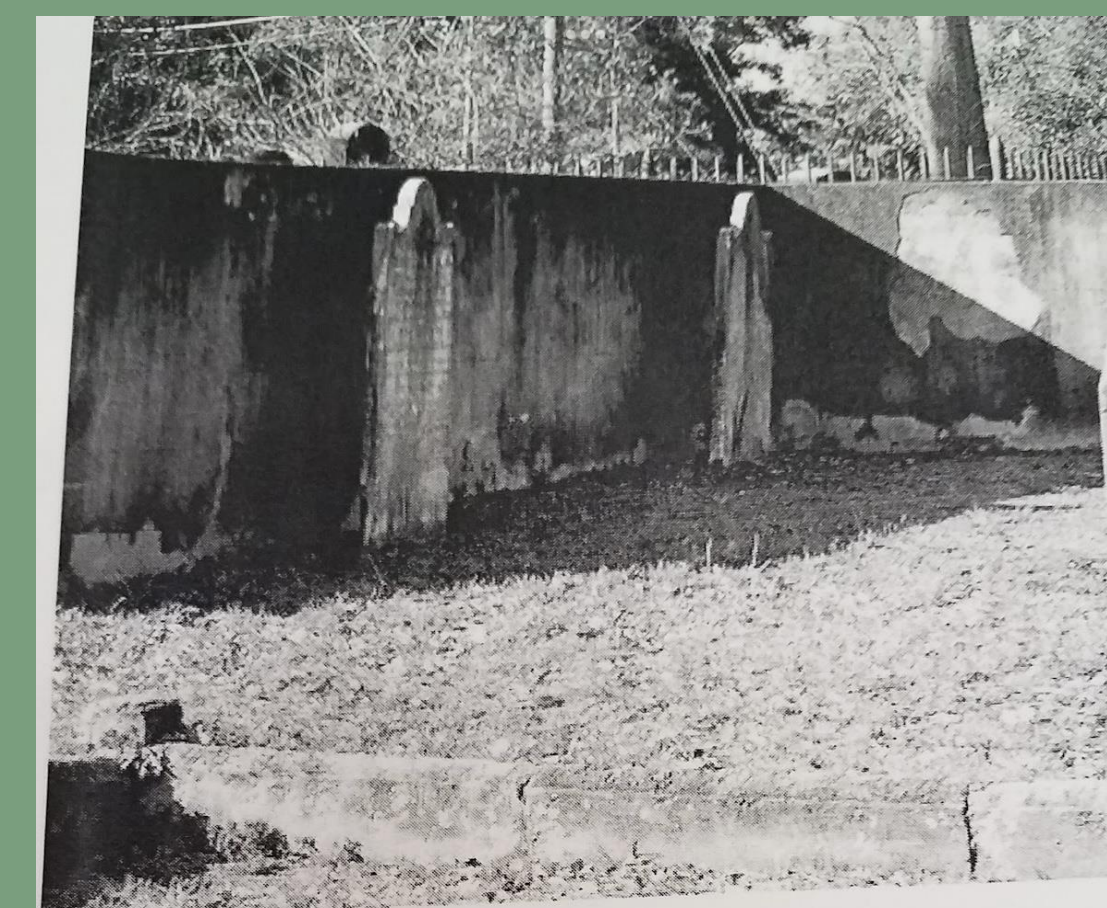
Tallahassee, the capital city of the state of Florida, was hit by a devastating Yellow Fever epidemic in 1841. During that time, the disease was poorly understood, and there were no effective treatments or vaccines. The epidemic spread rapidly throughout the city, with many residents falling ill and dying within days. The impact of the epidemic was particularly severe in downtown Tallahassee, where the population (1600 people) was relatively small and isolated, and there were few medical resources available. The outbreak had a profound effect on the city and its residents, leading to significant social and economic disruption, as well as a renewed emphasis on public health measures and medical research.

CONCLUSION

The Yellow Fever epidemic of 1841 in Tallahassee, Florida, was a harmful event that left a lasting impact on the city and its inhabitants. The epidemic claimed the lives of numerous residents, and the fear and panic it generated were palpable. The city's response to the outbreak was inadequate, as public health measures were not well understood or implemented at the time. However, the epidemic ultimately led to significant improvements in public health practices and the development of better medical treatments for Yellow Fever. The Yellow Fever epidemic of 1841 serves as a stark reminder of the importance of public health preparedness and the need for effective disease control measures to prevent similar outbreaks in the future.

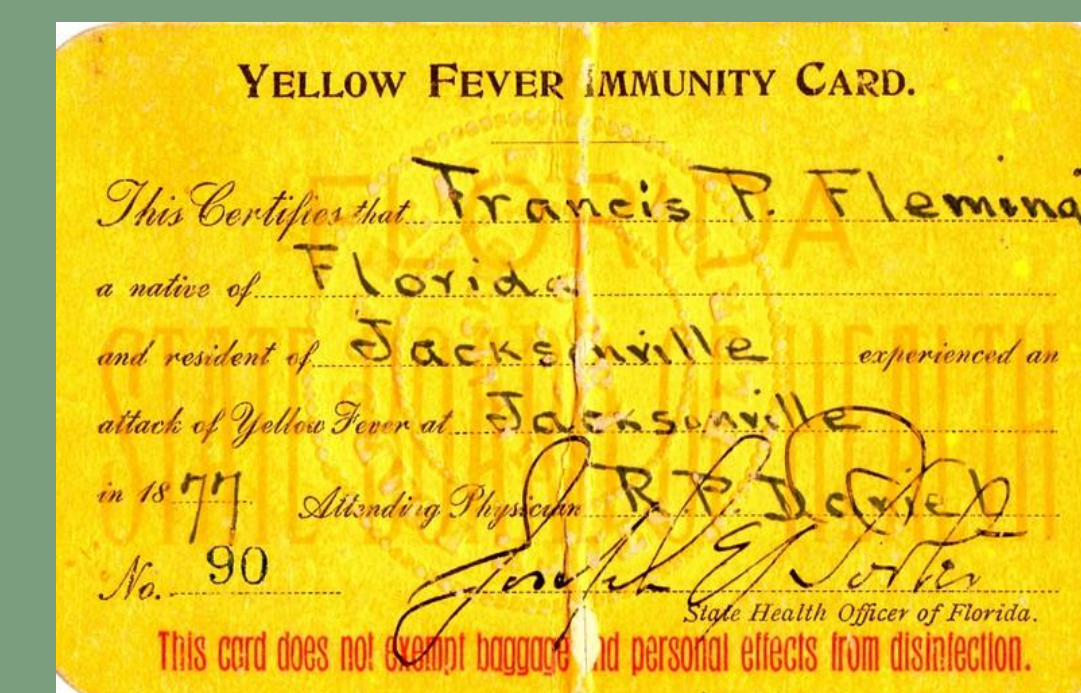


Yellow Jack wearing a Cuban hat reflecting the theory that the disease entered Florida from Havana. (image from Jacksonville, FL Historical society)

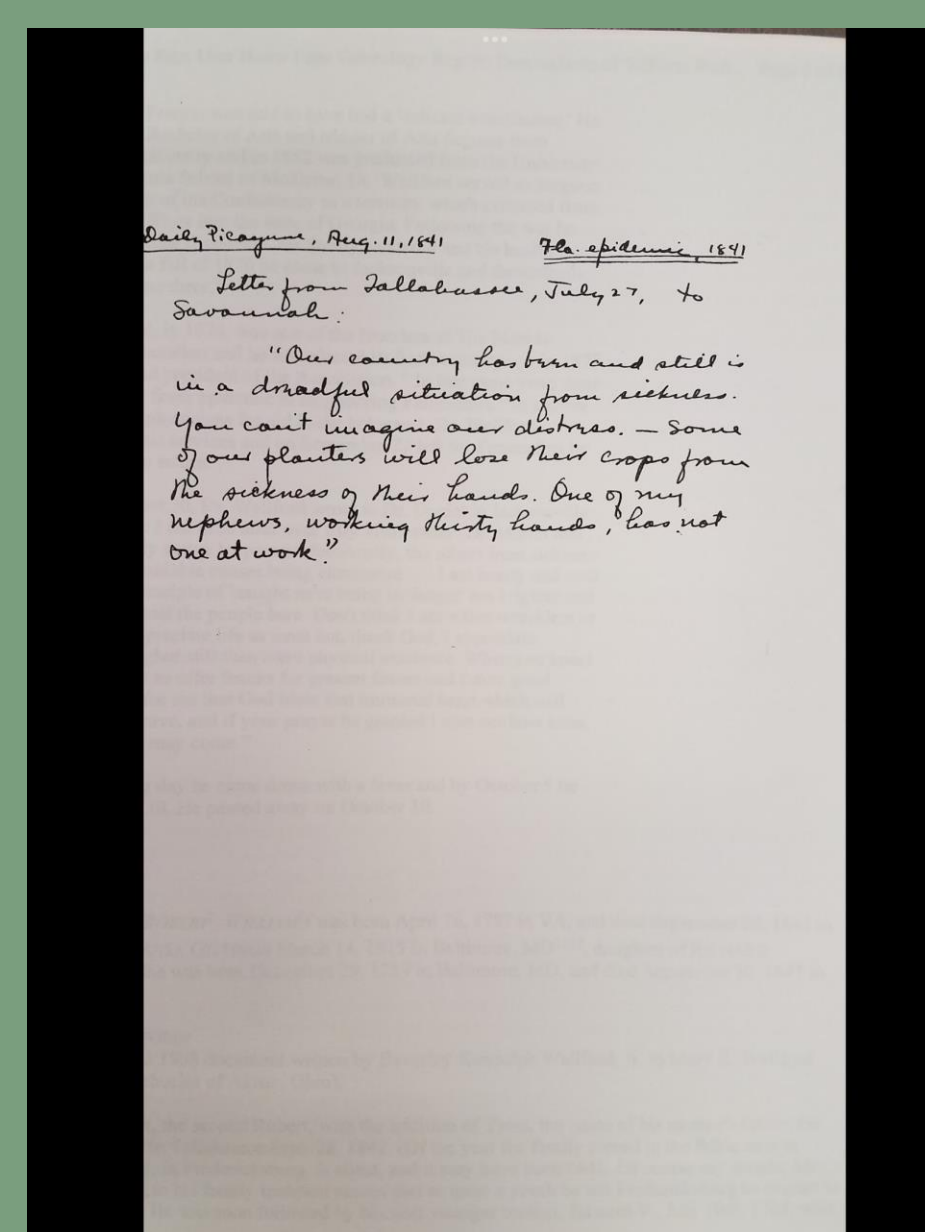


It's a family affair
Comments and faves
members of the Sept in the 1841 yel in Tallahassee, F Del City Cemetery

Tallahassee, FL Old City Cemetery, 1841



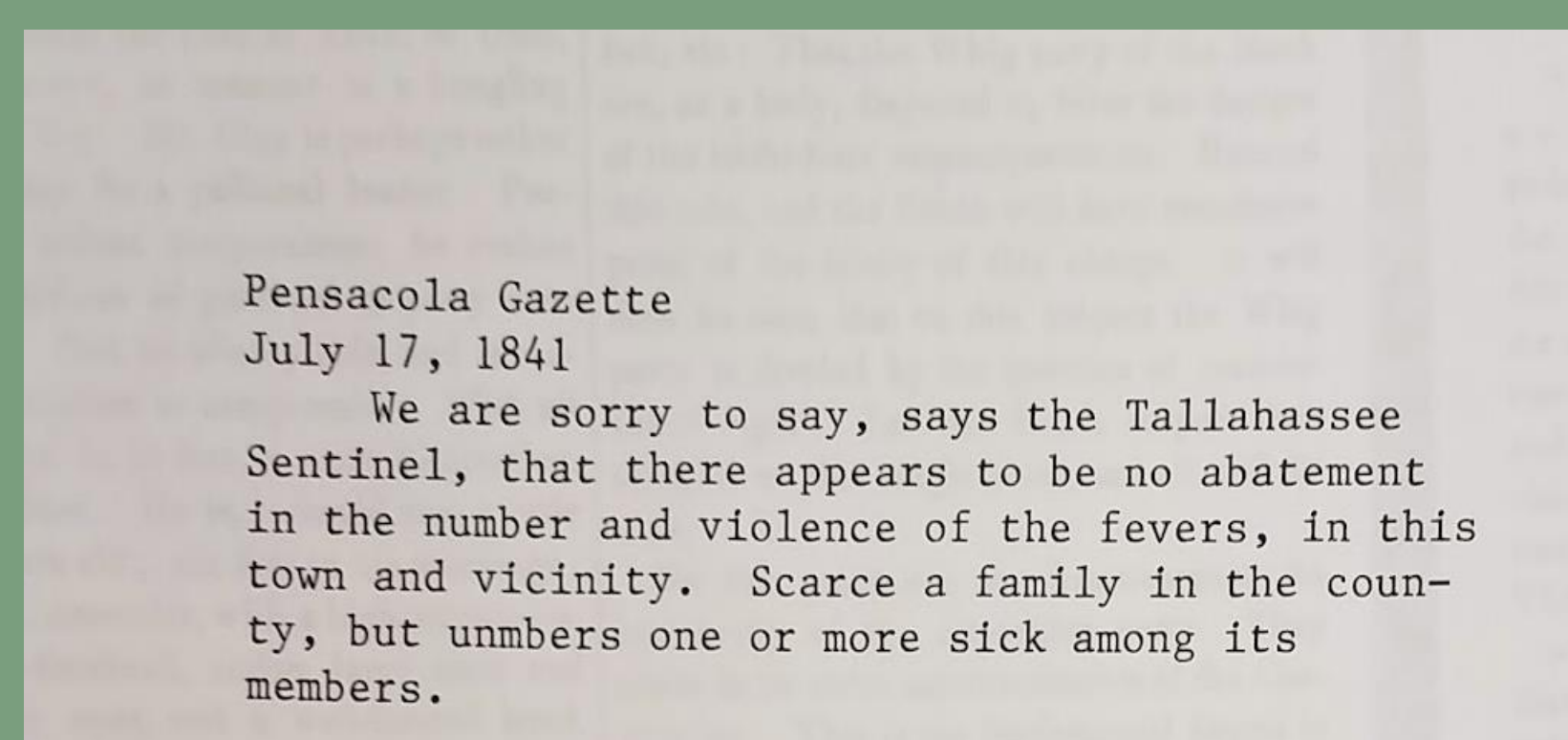
Yellow Fever Immunity Card, Jacksonville, FL 1877



Letter from Tallahassee, July 27th to Savannah "Our country has been and still is in a dreadful situation from sickness. You can't imagine our distress. -- Some of our planters will lose their crops from the sickness of their hands. One of my nephews, working thirty hands, has not one at work."



Tallahassee's 4th Territorial Governor Richard Raymond Reid. He died at his home near Tallahassee on July 1, 1841, a victim of the Yellow Fever epidemic.



Quote from Pensacola Gazette discussing Yellow Fever Epidemic in Tallahassee

METHODS

Our approach to implementing research began with a period of orientation, which involved reading books and articles about territorial Tallahassee, FL.

- First, I acquired knowledge of territorial Tallahassee through our orientation, which helped me to understand my research topic better. During my orientation I would keep weekly annotated bibliographies of the books and articles I was reading, noting which characters, events, or locations that piqued my interest. Doing this, I was able to better prepare myself for my next step, specialization.
- I chose at least two locations, occasions, or characters from the books and articles for the specialization stage, and over several weeks, I whittled them down to my final selection.
- Following my specialization, I began research on my chosen topic. With the help of the resources around or on campus, I could not only conduct my research more quickly and effectively, but I could also ask my mentors for guidance or information on the chosen topic.

RESULTS

According to Doctors in 1841:

- Yellow Fever was an infection carried by mosquitos
- the disease was brought in from a nearby port by two men who remain unnamed
- Yellow Fever was "treated" in several ways; those ways included bloodletting, a highly recommended form of treatment, applying cold ice or water for fever relief, taking opium and quinine
- Bel Air, a housing community, was established outside of Tallahassee for citizens to flee from Yellow Fever, especially in the hot summer months (June -August)
- Businesses and schools closed for a period to reduce the spread
- Andrew Jackson's personal Physician James C. Bronough died from Yellow Fever September 2nd, 1831, and the 4th Territorial Governor Robert Raymond Reid died from Yellow Fever on July 1st, 1841
- Due to many deaths an ordinance was passed for the Old City Cemetery, creating an order for burying victims of Yellow Fever.
- 400-500 people died (30% of the population)

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