

1973

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Recommended Citation

Loftin, Bernadette K. (1973) "A Woman Liberated: Lillian C. West, Editor," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 52 : No. 4 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol52/iss4/5>

A WOMAN LIBERATED
LILLIAN C. WEST, EDITOR

by BERNADETTE K. LOFTIN*

LILLIAN CARLISLE WEST'S professional name, L. C. West, graced the masthead of the weekly *Panama City Pilot* from 1917 to 1937. She also managed or edited two other local papers, the *St. Andrews Bay News* and *Lynn Haven Free Press*, during part of this period, and she operated the Gulf Coast Development Company and the Panama City Publishing Company. Thus, for almost two decades, Mrs. West successfully assumed a leadership position generally reserved only for the male sex by the society of her time. How she managed to accomplish this feat in a small southern town where women's struggle for equality was not widely accepted is a question of some merit.

The traditionally conservative Panama City-Bay County area of Florida did not receive with much enthusiasm the progressive ideas of the early twentieth century, including changing ideas about the proper role of women in society. Transportation facilities were sparse, and there were very few visitors. The only main road ran northward, unpaved, for fifty-one miles to Cottondale where it forked east and west or continued northward to Dothan, Alabama.¹ Cottondale served as the connecting link for rail travel. It was not until 1929 that bridges spanned the three branches of the bays. Five years later, the Gulf coast highway was completed with federal funds.² New Deal funds also made possible the paving of other area roads.

Union veterans had settled Lynn Haven, and small colonies of Midwesterners were scattered throughout the county. Sometimes there were visitors from the North, and families from Alabama, Tennessee, and South Georgia vacationed at the bay,

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1. Interview with James E. Churchwell, Panama City, Florida, July 7, 1970. Churchwell, who started the Long Beach Casino in 1936, felt strongly that poor transportation hindered the development of Panama City.
2. *Panama City Pilot*, August 29, 1929; October 4, 1934.

roughing it on the beaches or going out on fishing trips.³ Even the Florida boom of the 1920s, which saw the construction of two hotels— the Cove and the 100-room Dixie Sherman— had little impact on the area. As late as 1930, only 111 out of a Bay County work force of 4,339 were employed in hotels, restaurants, and boarding houses.⁴ Some business interests were attracted into the area as were a handful of celebrities who sought out the relative isolation of Panama City. These included Asa Candler of Coca Cola, who owned a cottage, and Minor C. Keith of United Fruit, who built a home in Bunker's Cove. The Mayo brothers of Rochester docked their yacht in the bay, and Peter Lorillard Kent called Panama City his home, donating a trophy to the Yacht Club.⁵

Chartered as a municipality in 1909, Panama City remained small for many years. In 1920, the county population numbered 11,407; 1,722 people lived in Panama City.⁶ In 1930, Bay County's population had increased to 12,091; Panama City, with the annexation of St. Andrew and Millville, numbered 5,402.⁷ By the end of the 1930s, Panama City's population was 11,610, but it could hardly be considered metropolitan in character. Many of the people were life-long residents; others had migrated from Alabama, other parts of Florida, southwestern Georgia, and the Midwest.⁸ Randall H. Gray's family exemplified this migration.⁹

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3. Taped interview with Mrs. Jacque Godfrey, Panama City, June 11, 1970. Mrs. Godfrey's parents, the Melvin Mayers, arrived in Panama City in 1914 and operated the Bay Hotel, which catered to these tourists. Mrs. Godfrey lived in the Bay Hotel during her childhood.
 4. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population*, III, pt. 1 (Washington, 1932), 426.
 5. Taped interview with John Henry Sherman, Panama City, May 16, 1970. The local newspapers, such as the *Pilot*, recorded the arrivals and departures of notable visitors and part-time residents.
 6. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Population*, II (Washington, 1922), 1332; *Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, Population*, II, pt. 10, Florida (Washington, 1952), 10-8.
 7. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population*, III, pt. 1 (Washington, 1932), 411, 423.
 8. A random sample of Bay county families of this era indicates origin points as follows: Alabama— Bedsole, Calloway, Carlisle, Culbreath, Farris, Lisenby, Newberry, Sudduth; northern Florida— Anderson, Churchwell, Daffin, Harman, Hutchinson, Kennington, Laird, Mayers; Georgia— Gore, Hobbs, Moore, Sherman; the Midwest— Allan, Cooley, Fox, Hoskins, West.
 9. Interview with Randall H. Gray, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

At the age of eighteen in 1899, Gray, and his family, arrived in a caravan from Crestview, Florida. Earlier the family had lived in southern Alabama. Gray recalled that for many years over half the members of the Millville Baptist Church, which he and Lillian Carlisle attended, were from Alabama. The land company promoters—Cincinnati Land Company, Gulf Coast Development Corporation, and St. Andrews Bay Development Company— attracted Midwesterners to the area. An Indiana visitor in 1923, Clarence W. Jones, described the area and a “colony” from his home state living in the Millville area in a news story.¹⁰ He reported that Baptist and Methodist fundamentalists predominated, and that the Masons composed the strongest fraternal organization.

Few career opportunities existed for women. Mrs. Frank Nelson, Sr., mother of nine children and wife of a long-time Panama City mayor, recalled that she and most other women kept busy as homemakers.¹¹ R. H. Gray emphasized that it was unusual for a woman to be employed outside her home.¹² Women could work as teachers or nurses; they could also be employed as clerks or stenographers, but in a small town like Panama City there were few such openings.

It was within this environment that Lillian Carlisle West emerged as a community leader. Born August 18, 1884, in Troy, Alabama, one of five children, she came to the Bay area as a child when her father, Moses M. Carlisle, retired from his law practice.¹³ Her maternal grandfather, lumberman Pitt Milner Calloway, had arrived in the Bay area from central Alabama before the Civil War, and had served as Baptist minister in the Calloway community named for him. Lillian received a very elementary formal education, but she and her sister Rose were active in the Millville Baptist Church, participating in both religious and social functions. Randall Gray recalled that Lillian was shy with the young men during their most popular activity — hunting turtles from sailboats.¹⁴ Rose played the piano at

10. Clarence W. Jones letter to the Peru (Indiana) *Republican* quoted in the *Panama City Pilot*, March 1, 1923.

11. Interview with Mrs. Frank Nelson, Sr., Panama City, August 16, 1973.

12. Interview with Randall H. Gray, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

13. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

14. Interview with Randall H. Gray, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

church, and Lillian served as Sunday School teacher. By the time Lillian was twenty, she was managing her family's Calloway property. It was through her interest in an East Bay canal which would help promote growth of the eastern bay section, that Lillian met George Mortimer West.

West was one of the founders of Panama City. Born in New York in 1845, he moved with his parents to Wisconsin in 1860, where he went to work on the railroad. Later he was a newspaper publisher and was admitted to the Wisconsin bar. In 1872 he was employed by the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, and it was while he was assistant superintendent for the Peninsula division that he acquired a winter home on St. Andrews Bay. In 1905 he organized the Gulf Coast Development Company and purchased most of the original homesite of Panama City. A. B. Steele completed his logging railroad from Dothan, Alabama, to St. Andrews Bay for a share of the Gulf Coast Development Company's holdings. The company authorized a printing plant and newspaper to promote both its holdings and the St. Andrew area. With this in mind, West began publication of the *Panama City Pilot* on May 30, 1907, prior to the incorporation of Panama City. Throughout its operation, the *Pilot* continued the promotion of Panama City.¹⁵

From his first marriage George West had one son, Charles E. West, whose own family included a son and a daughter. It was when West's second wife died in Panama City in 1908 that Lillian Carlisle decided that she would become the third Mrs. West.¹⁶ West was sixty-three and Lillian twenty-four when they met. She had approached him one day about the possibility of a column in the *Pilot* promoting an East Bay canal.¹⁷ As she later pointed out, "I got my husband and the canal." In 1909 she married George West, and in 1915 the canal became a reality. Lillian always remembered that she kept the first dollar she received "working for Mr. West."¹⁸

The household was already large when Lillian came into it as a bride. West's granddaughter, Grace, lived with them until she

15. *St. Andrews Bay News*, November 2, 1926; *Panama City Pilot*, November 4, 1926.

16. Interview with Ralph E. Wager, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

17. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

18. Interview with Charles A. West, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

married. Grandson Phil West, his wife, and four sons made their home with them also. In the early years of Lillian's marriage, she bore twins who died at birth. It was a busy house; frequently company arrived from Michigan and New York. Mr. West's granddaughter usually supervised the housework,¹⁹ although a great-grandson remembered that he sometimes helped Lillian with the chores.²⁰ Tony, the black cook, and his family lived in a dwelling behind the family house, and performed domestic services. Although George West followed the Methodist faith, Mrs. West was a member of the Baptist church, first at Millville and later at Panama City. Other than the Woman's Missionary Union, she joined no local organizations. She taught the mid-teenagers in Sunday School.

As George West grew older and his health declined, Lillian assumed more business responsibilities; she managed all of the West interests for several years before her husband died. The Wests acquired the *St. Andrews Bay News* in 1916, and the following year Lillian's name appeared as business manager of the papers. Advertisements for the Gulf Coast Development Company listed her as salesman. By 1923, she was listed as owner, publisher, and business manager of the *Pilot*. She was described as "a hustling and capable business manager and would put to shame many of the much-flouted hustlers of the North."²¹ The *Lynn Haven Free Press* became the third West newspaper in 1926. An examination of the editorial style of the three journals reveals the gradual transition from George to Lillian West. George's editorials carried his by-line, and they were usually dramatic, full of allusions, and oftentimes scholarly. By the early 1920s a new style of editorial writing began to emerge: terse, simple, opinionated. These editorials were written by Lillian. Later her editorials became more folksy. She wrote on a large dining room table, and her husband, before his death, corrected the manuscripts.²² The newspapers contained few typographical errors, indicating careful proofreading.

19. Telephone interview with Mrs. Grace Wilson, Panama City, March 23, 1973.

20. Interview with Charles A. West, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

21. Charles W. Jones letter, reprinted in *Panama City Pilot*, March 1, 1973.

22. Interview with Charles A. West, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

The progressive movement was reaching its zenith in the United States after World War I. The West papers generally supported progressivism and advocated government regulation of big business, prohibition, and honesty in government. They opposed the formation of a new Ku Klux Klan in 1920, while complimenting the federal government on its aggressive anti-Bolshevik drive.²³ The *Pilot* also labelled the proposed child labor amendment as “Soviet-Bolshevik” and “pernicious.”²⁴

The *Pilot* strongly supported women’s suffrage, and the articles and editorials indicated that Mrs. West wrote most of them. She argued that all natural rights came from God, and were not meant for men only.²⁵ When the nineteenth amendment was ratified in August 1920, Lillian became the first woman to register to vote in the St. Andrews precinct. A *Pilot* editorial predicted that “the women will vote as they please,” and “a drink of shinny, or a cigar, is not going to produce the results that they have [*sic*] heretofore.”²⁶ In the November election, the *Pilot* reported that the women were “first and last at the polls.” The “surprised old election gangsters were wondering what it all meant” because the “women displayed more knowledge of conditions than the majority of the men.”²⁷

When George West died on October 29, 1926, there was little question as to who would control the family’s business interests. There were sixteen Panama City Publishing Company employees, including Lillian as managing editor, Phil B. West, feature writer, and Charles West.²⁸ Mrs. West was known as a good businesswoman, and according to one observer she never asked for any special treatment because of her sex.²⁹ No prototype of a gracious, beautifully-dressed southern belle, the sturdy-framed Lillian West pursued her work six days a week wearing unusual hats and small-printed dresses with large serviceable pockets.³⁰ Her only concession to adornment consisted of a cameo pin which she always wore.

23. *Panama City Pilot*, July 15, 1920.

24. *Ibid.*, August 14, October 4, 1924.

25. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

26. *Panama City Pilot*, September 9, 1920.

27. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1920.

28. *St. Andrews Bay News*, November 2, 1926.

29. Interview with Wayne H. Marshall, Panama City, March 23, 1973.

30. Interviews with various Panama City citizens indicated almost an identical description. Charles A. West substantiated this description.

During the first year following her husband's death, she reprinted many of his botanical articles and wrote few editorials. By the end of the 1920s, however, the West papers clearly expressed her simple and concise style. Her editorials usually required ninety minutes each week to write, and the social column took about the same amount of time.³¹ For entertainment she worked, since she did not travel, enjoyed the radio very little, and only attended the movies rarely. She reprinted many unsyndicated articles from other papers and magazines, indicating a comprehensive coverage of the current news media.

Mrs. West always maintained direct control over the *Pilot*, even though at times she allowed someone else to edit the other two newspapers. The *Pilot* concentrated mostly on local news, but it did include some national and international news. It covered all important social events, describing the young ladies as "beautiful" or "graceful." Obituaries noted that residents had passed on to "their reward" or had answered the "last roll call." The names of white and black laborers seldom appeared in the paper unless an unusual event, such as a crime, occurred. The *Pilot*, calling the area the "Eden of West Florida," never mentioned the paper houses which mill workers in the Springfield and Bay Harbor communities built from two and three thicknesses of scrap paper, generally over sand pits.³²

Lillian West believed that a newspaper should lead the people and should express what the editor considered to be right and just.³³ This did not always happen in Panama City, and Lillian once admitted, "I bet I had more cussing than any younger woman in town." Others in town agreed that the outspoken Mrs. West evoked a lot of criticism.³⁴ Her coverage of the 1928 presidential campaign between Herbert Hoover and Alfred E. Smith exemplified this kind of strong editorial stance. The editor of the *Pilot* argued that religious objections to Smith were unjust. According to the paper, the voter should consider important issues rather than "asinine attacks upon Governor Smith based upon his religion" or allegations that Hoover advocated

31. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

32. Taped interview with Mr. and Mrs. Luther Kennington, Panama City, May 22, 1970.

33. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

34. Interview with W. W. Sturling, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

“equality between the white and black races.”³⁵ The *Pilot* even criticized Bob Jones, the popular evangelist who had founded the area’s only college just north of the city in 1927. The newspaper carried an alleged quotation from Jones stating he would rather see Negroes in office and “a saloon on every corner” than a Catholic in the presidential chair.³⁶ A satirical correction of a football score for Bob Jones College followed in a subsequent issue with the error attributed to a “direct order of the Pope in Rome” and a request from Al Smith.³⁷ While Florida voted Republican in 1928, the first time since Reconstruction, Bay County remained Democratic.³⁸

The *Pilot* remained unalterably opposed to all types of crime, alcohol, gambling, and obscene motion pictures. A fervent prohibitionist, Mrs. West equated whiskey with crime, and from her point of view the movement for repeal sprang from “aliens” and “anarchists.”³⁹ In 1931, her editorials grew increasingly disturbed over the incidence of crime in the Panama City area. In May the community was shocked by the shooting from ambush and subsequent death of Walter Sharpless, former deputy sheriff and Long Beach pavilion operator. When a night watchman killed the grandson of a former city commissioner the following month while the youth and five other boys attempted to enter a warehouse, Mrs. West complained that the citizens of Panama City seemed to be asleep on the subject of crime. She continued her hard crusade against crime throughout that summer.

In the September 24 issue, the *Pilot* printed a note which Mrs. West said she had received: “I am leaving here[.] I have refused to do you as I did Sharpless[.] Keep your eye on Black.” It was signed “O.K. Ignite.”⁴⁰ Unintimidated, Mrs. West responded: “Many of us have reasons to believe there is a certain bunch of grown men who use the youth of Bay County to peddle their liquor, run rum, and do many other crimes that are damaging to others, purely for their own gain or spite-work.”⁴¹ The following

35. *Panama City Pilot*, September 27, 1928.

36. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1928.

37. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1928.

38. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1928.

39. *St. Andrew Bay News*, March 30, 1926.

40. *Panama City Pilot*, September 24, 1931.

41. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1931.

spring Mrs. West still persisted in her argument that: "Overdoses of bad liquor has [*sic*] been the foundation cause of every homicide that has been committed in Panama City."⁴²

The *Pilot's* editor generally defended Panama City and Bay County vigorously and extolled their virtues. When Edward N. Pagelson made a humorous talk to the Rotary Club in Harbor Beach, Michigan, in which he allegedly described the Bay County people as a lost tribe of white people without churches who could not read or write, both the *St. Andrews Bay News* and the *Pilot* severely criticized him. He was denounced as an "ungrateful adopted son," and the *St. Andrews Bay News* called him a "flat-footed, hook-nosed, distorted-brained windjammer."⁴³ Mrs. West, who always gave equal space in her paper even to those she opposed, printed Pagelson's explanation of how he had been misquoted opposite her article in the *Pilot*.

During the 1930s Mrs. West frequently analyzed the economic situation and suggested ways to bring the country out of the depression. She claimed that business had stagnated because "every business man and woman retrenches to such an extent as to try to live within themselves."⁴⁴ World War I began the era of waste, overspending, and unpaid debts which helped to bring on the depression. Mrs. West always encouraged her readers to pay their debts. She blamed public spending and high taxes for America's bad economic conditions.⁴⁵ In 1932 she endorsed gubernatorial candidate Dave Sholtz's economical government campaign. The middleman who demanded high prices in a market already glutted with raw materials received her censure. Mrs. West's formulas for recovery always included an optimistic view of the world. She forecast that the unemployment question would be solved if everyone would just have the confidence to spend money. She admonished the people of Panama City to: "Do all the work that you have been putting off, buy your clothes you have been planning on, and you will begin to see the effect almost at once."⁴⁶ She followed her own advice, and in 1932 built a log cabin on Beach Drive, where she lived with a midwestern

42. *Ibid.*, May 19, 1932.

43. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1934.

44. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1931.

45. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1932.

46. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1931.

relative.⁴⁷ While Mrs. West never related any of her personal activities in her newspapers, she did cover all other construction, new businesses, industry, and retail promotions, always praising such endeavors.

As another antidote to the depression, Mrs. West supported all back-to-the-soil movements and encouraged home production of food. She proposed the purchase of a farm by the city so that beggars could earn their subsistence; in work lay "the best remedy for hunger."⁴⁸ The American Colonization Development plan to settle the area between Fountain and Youngstown met with her approval.⁴⁹ The proposal included twenty-five to forty acre farms, a mule, a cow, chickens, seeds, and implements. This proposal fitted Mrs. West's conception of the American way of counteracting hard times.

In Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mrs. West found the savior of the country. Even when his policies appeared incompatible with her published opinions, the *Pilot* supported him vigorously as the "Paul Revere of 1933."⁵⁰ To her, his recovery programs were not inconsistent with the states' rights philosophy, since in emergencies the President should act quickly and speedily to save the country. The National Industrial Recovery Act, she wrote, "freed the slaves of labor as much as Lincoln's proclamation freed the Negro slaves."⁵¹ Although many Southerners soon became disenchanted with Roosevelt, Mrs. West never lost faith in him.

Since religion existed as a significant force in the life of Lillian West, she felt compelled to pass on her beliefs to her readers. She insisted that she "never wrote an editorial in my life that I didn't offer a little prayer before I started."⁵² Many of the *Pilot's* editorials of the late 1920s resembled sermons, and they usually began with a Biblical quotation. An editorial in 1928 carried the advice: "May God help you to 'Be careful how you vote!'"⁵³ Each week the West papers carried a syndicated Sunday School lesson. At times the papers also carried articles on Mrs. West's Bible classes and lessons. Although Mrs. West was a

47. Interview with Charles A. West, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

48. *Panama City Pilot*, September 17, 1931.

49. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1932.

50. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1933.

51. *Ibid.*, August 8, 1935.

52. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

53. *Panama City Pilot*, March 1, 1928.

Baptist, her newspapers reported the activities of other religious groups— Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Adventists, Catholics, and Holiness. The *Pilot* reproduced sermons such as the ones delivered at the annual Bible conference at Bob Jones College. Fundamentalist Methodist Bob Jones received full coverage in the *Pilot* even though Mrs. West considered his approach too commercial. She agreed with him, however, in his advocacy of the “old time religion.”⁵⁴

People in Panama City generally accepted and respected Mrs. West, even when they did not agree with her. Although her papers failed to report circulation figures, a competing journal, the *Bay County Herald*, claimed the *Pilot's* circulation in 1932 was 1,950 copies. Presumably most of the people in the area subscribed to the West papers.⁵⁵ Jimmy Daffin, a local druggist who advertised extensively in the West papers, later recalled her Sunday School lessons.⁵⁶ W.W. Sturling felt that the *Pilot* reflected the higher values of the community.⁵⁷ Randall Gray, Millville merchant, claimed that while the *Pilot* expressed the views of the area, a rival paper, the *Beacon*, owned by the St. Andrews Bay Lumber Company, had little impact.⁵⁸ Although some people considered Mrs. West to be unique, they accepted her in the community. One of her contemporaries noted that while Mrs. West's disposition was bossy and some regarded her as cranky, she was “true blue.”⁵⁹

The greatest opposition Lillian West encountered came from another community leader— Walter Colquitt Sherman. The controversy developed before the death of George West. A member of the West family admitted that the responsibility for the feud probably lay with Mrs. West who “had rather argue than eat.”⁶⁰ During World War I, the federal government seized the German-American Lumber Company located at Millville. Minor Keith and Walter Sherman, who already owned a lumber mill north of the bay and the Atlanta-St. Andrews Bay Railroad Company,

54. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

55. Telephone interview with Charles A. West, Panama City, February 18, 1974; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population*, VI (Washington, 1933), 281, 291.

56. Taped interview with Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Daffin, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

57. Interview with W. W. Sturling, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

58. Interview with Randall H. Gray, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

59. Interview with Mrs. Frank Nelson, Sr., Panama City, August 16, 1973.

60. Interview with Charles A. West, Panama City, August 16, 1973.



Lillian Carlisle West
(Courtesy, Charles A. West, Panama City, Florida)

purchased the German company in 1919, making it headquarters for the St. Andrews Bay Lumber Company. Sherman served as executive vice-president. Perhaps Mrs. West opposed Keith and Sherman because she viewed their action as a violation of private property rights, or perhaps she simply expressed her concern for the underdog. The initiation of competition in the form of a company newspaper and/or a power struggle between two important community interests may have been the basis for the enmity. The first agitation developed in 1920 when the St. Andrews Bay Lumber Company endorsed consolidation of the communities of Panama City, St. Andrews, and Millville, a move which the Wests had consistently opposed. The following year the lumber company successfully supported the abandonment of railroad service to St. Andrews, where the Wests lived. When the company encountered labor difficulties, the West papers supported the strikers. The *Pilot* criticized the lumber company for importing gunmen and strikebreakers, and accused officials of kidnapping and beating John Winstanley, a labor organizer.⁶¹ Shortly afterwards Sherman circulated a petition in Bay County which described the *Pilot* and the *St. Andrews Bay News* as being "inimical to the interest of the County" and urged West to leave the area.⁶² The *Pilot* published both the petition and a letter from Sherman accusing the West papers of lying and of yellow journalism. The paper claimed that some of the petitioners had signed under duress and others because of business affiliations with Sherman. Sherman was a director of the First National Bank, and the *Pilot* noted that all the bank's employees and directors had signed. The names of many county officials, including the county judge, sheriff, clerk, assessor, and collector, were also on the petition. The *Pilot* contended that some of the petitioners had admitted that they had never read the statement, and had signed it because they thought it was only a request to West to stop attacking the lumber company. Some signers had been told that the statement would be delivered personally to George West and would not be published. Mrs. West had tried

61. *Panama City Pilot*, June 16, 23, November 17, 24, 1921. For the history of the seizure and transfer of the German-American Lumber Company, see Edward F. Keuchel, "A Purely Business Motive: German-American Lumber Company, 1901-1918," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LII (April 1974), 381-95.

unsuccessfully to obtain a copy of the petition when it was first being circulated. It was Sherman himself who finally sent a copy.

Strike tensions gradually died. The grand jury dismissed the Winstanley case because of insufficient evidence, and the West-Sherman recriminations faded. By June 1922, the opponents apparently had resolved their major differences since the *Pilot* carried large advertisements for the Sherman interests. Personal charges and counter-charges henceforth ceased. The *Pilot* informed its readers that Walter Sherman had donated paint for the Millville Baptist Church and had given Christmas trees to the mill children. The Wests, however, continued their opposition to the incorporation of St. Andrews and Millville by Panama City, calling the consolidation act of 1926 "annihilation."⁶³

In 1926, Sherman moved his family from Alabama to a new Spanish-type home in the Bunker's Cove area.⁶⁴ They soon became the social leaders of the bay area, and the *Pilot* reported the receptions, dinners, bridge parties, and balls in which the Shermans participated. Mrs. Sherman's imported gowns were described in detail. Walter Sherman actively supported sports, helped found the Panama Country Club golf course in 1927, and was one of the backers of the Panama City baseball club which operated in the 1930s.

In 1931, the West-Sherman feud erupted again. As Lillian West put it, "he [Sherman] and I wouldn't eat potatoes out of the same dish."⁶⁵ Several events precipitated the crisis. The closing of the First National Bank, of which Sherman was a director and principal stockholder, in February 1931, caused a great deal of bitterness in the community, particularly when its receivership resulted in the foreclosing of several local businesses. It was just about this time that Mrs. West had begun accelerating her crusade against crime. On March 22, 1931, the St. Andrews Bay Lumber Company mill, which supplied electrical power to the area, burned along with twenty other residences at Millville with an approximate loss of \$95,000. There were rumors which suggested that the bank closing and the sawmill fire were in some way linked. The depression had begun making an impact and the financial plight of the city and county was serious. Some

63. *St. Andrews Bay News*, March 30, May 11, 1926.

64. Taped interview with John Henry Sherman, Panama City, May 16, 1970.

65. Taped interview with Mrs. L. C. West, Panama City, May 15, 1970.

people were unable or refusing to pay their taxes; there was controversy over Panama City's bonded indebtedness of nearly \$2,000,000 and the county's \$3,500,000.⁶⁶ The West-Sherman fight climaxed at a meeting June 25, 1931, when Sherman bitterly denounced the gossip about the burning of the sawmill, struck out at rum-running, and criticized the "dirty sheet published at St. Andrews." Reportedly he urged women to stay at home and allow the men to run the town.⁶⁷ In a letter to the editor of the Dothan *Eagle*, reprinted in the *Pilot*, a Sherman supporter accused Mrs. West of irresponsible news reporting.⁶⁸ The affair reached its most bitter point in the fall of 1931, with the trial and acquittal of three former mill employees on charges of burning the mill and the arrest for perjury of the three witnesses who claimed they saw the defendants running out of the mill. Later the state dropped the charges against the witnesses.⁶⁹ When Panama City's Commercial Bank stood firm and when depositors of the First National received thirty per cent dividends, some of the ill feeling in the community dwindled.

New competition faced Mrs. West in 1931, when Charles White began publishing a weekly, the *Bay County Herald*.⁷⁰ Two years later Mrs. West converted the *St. Andrews Bay News* into a daily. John Perry, who already owned several Florida newspapers, purchased White's *Herald* in 1935, and reorganized it as a daily called the *Panama City Herald*. After struggling for two years against this competition, Lillian West accepted an offer from Perry in 1937 for the publishing rights to her papers. Perry merged the *St. Andrews Bay News* with the *Herald* and it became the *News-Herald*.⁷¹ The *Pilot* and the *Lynn Haven Free Press* were turned into a weekly using the *Pilot's* name. The *Pilot* continued until 1941, but under its new management it existed primarily as a feature publication. Mrs. West continued the Panama City Publishing Company and retained management of her real estate holdings.

An era ended in Panama City in 1937 when Lillian West sold

66. *Panama City Pilot*, February 19, 1931.

67. *Ibid.*, July 2, 1931.

68. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1931.

69. *Ibid.*, November 5, 12, 1931.

70. Henry Copeland, "The Development of Panama City and Its Newspapers" (M. A. thesis, Florida State University, 1956), 74-75.

71. *Panama City Herald*, March 18, 1937.

her newspaper interests. She had possessed the most articulate voice in the community. The newcomers who moved into Panama City during World War II and the years following were generally unaware of Mrs. West as a community leader. She had never publicized herself, and had never participated in clubs or public meetings.⁷² To those who did not know her background, she was an eccentric whose automobile driving menaced the citizens and whose clothes certainly failed to conform with the styles of the times. On August 26, 1970, when she died in Panama City, the *News-Herald's* article covered less than a column and was headlined, "Mrs. West, Widow of City Founder, Dies At Age 85."⁷³

Still, for almost twenty years Lillian West had operated as a community leader in her own right. She had gradually moved into a position of control by a route that did not threaten masculinity— a loyal wife helping an ailing husband. Mrs. West's dominating and driving personality cannot be ignored. Throughout her life she refused to stray from what she considered to be correct community values. Sometimes this stirred controversy, but often it resulted in overall respect for her courage and tenacity. Lillian West, liberated in her right to work, never freed herself or wished to free herself from the community. For almost twenty years she held her place as an influential member of her community.

72. Interview with Ralph E. Wager, Panama City, August 16, 1973.

73. Panama City *News-Herald*, August 27, 1970.