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RICHARD K. CALL vs. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON THE SEMINOLE WAR

by HERBERT J. DOHERTY, JR.

In the city of Washington in the autumn of 1836, the United States War Department was in a state of high confusion. On the sixth of October Lewis Cass had resigned as Secretary of War and the vacancy was temporarily filled by an under secretary, C. A. Harris. Within a few days the office was bestowed upon Benjamin F. Butler, an interim appointee. These changes came during one of the crises of the Seminole War in Florida, which added to the confusion in Washington. In midsummer the command of that war had been vested in Governor Richard K. Call who launched an end-the-war campaign in early October. This initial move was not successful and rumors of its failure kept official circles in Washington in a state of nervous tension.

By the first of November, Washington had learned of the circumstances of Call's withdrawal through second-hand sources, yet no report from Governor Call had been received. President Andrew Jackson expressed surprise and disappointment at news of the retrograde movements of Governor Call, and directed Secretary of War Butler to relieve Call of the command of the campaign.¹ Accordingly, on November 4, 1836, Butler wrote a lengthy letter to Call relieving him of his command and explaining the confusion in Washington. He related that no official reports had been received and urged that Call explain fully without delay. In the absence of any report, Butler said, the public interest demanded that the government take what action it thought necessary. He related that reliable reports

1. B. F. Butler to R. K. Call, November 4, 1836, *Senate Documents*, 26 Congress, 1 Session, No. 278. Unless otherwise noted, all information in this article comes from the Senate Document here cited. This document is a 250-page compilation of all War Department correspondence relating to Call's conduct of the Seminole War in 1836.

stated that Call was suffering from illness and fatigue, consequently, the president had found it expedient to place Major General Thomas S. Jesup in command,

Jackson's order, sent through Butler, did not reach Call for several weeks. Meanwhile, after his initial failure of October 13, and before the orders relieving him were delivered, Call reorganized his forces and met the Indians in battle on November 17, 18, and 21. In each encounter the Indians were driven from the field, but their losses were relatively small. All three engagements took place east of the Withlacoochee River, in the area north of Dade's battleground. After the last battle, Call withdrew to his supply base at Volusia on the St. Johns River. It was there that he received the news of his removal.

After a lapse of several weeks time, Call replied to Butler in a bitter letter which was an index of his disappointment and chagrin at being removed from a post which he had so ardently desired. His bitterness toward the president was evident as he wrote, "I have been visited with the greatest injustice by the orders of the President." The nature of the injustice which he believed had been inflicted upon him was seen in his criticism of the president for removing him "on rumor, without waiting for my official report." He declared that his intent was to resign the governorship as soon as Jackson should grant him an investigation of the conduct of the war - a step which Jackson declined to take.

II

The dismissal of Richard K. Call from command of the Seminole War was an important point in the personal relations of Call and Jackson. Call had been an early protege of the old general, had served under him in the War of 1812 and in the Florida invasions, and had received important positions due to the esteem in which he was held by Jackson.

Their relations were of a most cordial and close nature during their military and brief Congressional careers. However, when Jackson became president in 1828 the two men began to drift apart. Their first major differences were over cabinet appointments. Call vigorously objected to the appointment of John H. Eaton as Secretary of War and John M. Berrien as Attorney-General. Jackson was offended, particularly by Call's opposition to Eaton, and both men served despite Call's objections.

Call played no major role in Florida during the Jackson administrations but devoted the years from 1828 to 1836 to private business for the most part, enhancing his personal fortune considerably. He had held the post of Brigadier General of the Florida Militia since 1823 and in this capacity he was concerned over the rising difficulties with the Seminole Indians. The federal government by 1830 had determined upon a policy of Indian removal to an area west of the Mississippi River. By 1834, treaties had been concluded with the Seminoles for their removal, and Indian agent Wiley Thompson and General Duncan Clinch had arrived to supervise the removal. Under the influence of fiery young warriors, however, the Indians became sullen and uncooperative and not until April of 1835 did Thompson secure their half-hearted assent to removal plans.

Plans were drawn up for the departure of the Indians from Tampa Bay in January, 1836, but all were forgotten when on December 28, 1835, Wiley Thompson was murdered near Fort King and Major Francis L. Dade and his troops were massacred in Big Wahoo Swamp. Three days later the first pitched battle of the Seminole War was fought at the Withlacoochee River. In this battle Call commanded a group of mounted volunteers and General Clinch commanded the regulars. Clinch ferried his men across the river while Call and his volunteers proceeded on the north and west side. Clinch soon engaged

his troops with the warriors of Osceola and a bitter battle was waged. Call's volunteers, probably about four hundred men, watched the battle from across the stream despite the fact that Call and several of his officers crossed over to the aid of Clinch. Why the volunteers did not cross has been the subject of much controversy. Call claims that he was unable to force the men over. The official excuse was that the stream was too fast and too deep, at the point of battle, for a safe crossing. The regular army was bitterly critical of Call and the volunteers, and the newspapers censured Call unmercifully.²

About a week after the Withlacoochee fiasco of December 31 Call wrote to Jackson that Clinch had only 150 men and that at least 2500 to 3000 would be necessary to end the war. He added that he had put at Clinch's disposal 150 mounted volunteers. Though Call had disagreed with Jackson on some of his policies the two men had not yet broken friendly relations and Call ended this report on the state of affairs with a plea for command of the war: "I should be highly gratified to command the army, and believe I could soon bring the war to a close. I fear, however, this I cannot do without injustice to General Clinch; he is a brave and good man, but I fear he is too slow in his movements to conduct a war against the Indians." With this letter, Call began his campaign to win command of the Seminole War.

Call's interest in the conduct of the war was diverted in February when personal tragedy struck him. On the twenty-eighth of that month his beloved wife, Mary Kirkman, died after a very brief illness. This loss came as a climax of personal troubles, for in their twelve years of married life Mary and Richard Call had lost five children. Andrew Jackson was sorely touched by each of the deaths in the Call family, par-

2. Sidney W. Martin, "Richard Keith Call," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXI (April, 1943), 339-341.

ticularly that of Mary whom he had regarded almost as a daughter. He forwarded his condolences to Call, then within two weeks time affixed his signature to a commission naming Call to the governorship of Florida. In later years Call claimed that the appointment was a complete surprise to him, coming without his knowledge or application.³

Call accepted the office and requested Jackson to name Leigh Read of Tallahassee to his former post of Brigadier General of Militia, which request was granted. Call succeeded his one-time friend, John H. Eaton, whom he accused of attempting to keep him out of military activity, and started immediately a barrage of correspondence to the War Department requesting attention to the Seminole War and offering advice as to its conduct. Almost two months after taking office he directed an indignant letter to President Jackson informing him that he had received no answer whatever from the Secretary of War and asking presidential attention to the correspondence. He pictured the Territory as being in dire straits and said, "I can hear of no measure proposed for our defense, and I assure you, sir, if something is not promptly done, that this country will be desolated during the summer."

In his voluminous correspondence, Call proposed a summer campaign to be launched as a maximum effort, with the aim of destroying the homes and crops of the Indians. This was based upon the theory that offense is the best defense. One thousand men employed in such a campaign would, he believed, do more good than ten thousand stretched on a line across the peninsula for purely defensive purposes. Call's plan struck Andrew Jackson very favorably and before his letter complaining of inattention reached Washington Secretary of War Cass wrote him that he and Jackson had approved his plan. They had believed, Cass wrote, that a summer campaign

3. *House Executive Documents*, 26 Congress, 1 Session, No. 136.

could not be endured in Florida, but had decided to defer to Call's experience and knowledge.

Call immediately replied to Cass, apologizing for his warmth of expression and outlining at greater length his war strategy. He added, "I should be gratified by being directed to lead the expedition against the Seminoles." To Andrew Jackson he wrote, "Nothing have I so much desired as to have the direction of the Florida War," and he added, "In conducting the campaign, I shall be governed by the rules pursued by you with so much success, and with which I am perfectly familiar."

General Winfield Scott had been placed in command of the forces in Florida in January, 1836, but by May the Department of War had decided to move him to Georgia to direct operations against the Creeks. Cass wrote to Call that should Scott leave Florida and General Clinch retire from the service, then Call was authorized "to assume the command of the regular forces and the militia serving in Florida, and to employ them in the best manner for the defence of the country and the speedy subjugation of the Indians." Call was further advised that should General Thomas Jesup move into the Territory then the command would automatically devolve upon that officer.

III

On June 18, 1836, the letter which Call had so long desired was dispatched by Jackson. It placed command of the regular army, fifteen hundred Tennessee mounted volunteers, and the Florida militia in the hands of Governor Richard K. Call. Joyfully Call wrote to the president, "I accept, with great pleasure, of the trust you have conferred on me; and I promise you that I will soon put an end to the war in Florida, or perish in the attempt." Cass cautioned Call that everything rested upon his judgement, for Florida conditions were unknown in Washington. He urged him to use extreme care in

exposing the troops to the Florida climate and authorized him to procure all necessary supplies and equipment for the campaign. Five steamboats, he advised, were being sent under naval personnel for Call's use.

Call planned to assemble all available regulars, marines, seamen, and militia to attack the Indian homeland in the Withlacoochee River area. His program called for the setting up of a supply depot on the Withlacoochee by moving in from the Gulf. This would provide an advance base for land forces. He would also concentrate supplies at Micanopy and at Tampa Bay. Mounted troops would advance from Tampa Bay and Micanopy while infantry would be landed at the Withlacoochee base. These troops would converge upon Indian settlements in the Withlacoochee valley. Call also sent an immediate request to Commodore Alexander J. Dallas at Pensacola to blockade the coast for the prevention of all communication between the Indians and Spanish fishermen, whom he feared were supplying the Indians.

In organizing his forces, Call ran into immediate difficulties. The regulars resented being placed under the command of a civilian and remembered bitterly the inactivity of Call's volunteers at the first battle of the Withlacoochee. The naval forces cooperating with him resented being placed under the orders of a civilian who had once been in the army. The Florida militia were restless because of their uncertain pay. The regulars were badly in need of officers and Call found that among eleven artillery companies there were only six officers; eight infantry companies had no officers at all; and there were no ordnance, subsistence, or quartermaster officers in the entire Territory. ⁴ To these difficulties was added the fact that Call

4. The Adjutant-General informed Call that he had often told the Secretary of War about the officer shortage, but that that official had insisted that internal improvements demanded attention and "he will not consent that the absent officers so employed shall be withdrawn and ordered to join their companies." The Adjutant-General saw no early remedy.

had never before had complete charge of a major campaign. Despite these hindrances, Call's plan of operations won the approval of prominent military men, including President Jackson and General Jesup.

In putting his operations into effect, Call asked Commodore Dallas for his cooperation and requested that he establish a blockade to cut off foreign aid to the Seminoles. Commodore Dallas, aboard the U.S. Frigate *Constellation* in Pensacola Bay, replied that he had used all measures to prevent contact between the Spanish and the Indians, and observed, "I flatter myself nothing has been neglected or left undone that could in any way give effect to the military force in Florida. This explanation of what has been done is given, not that I feel in the least called upon to make it, but out of courtesy to your station as Governor of Florida, and the high consideration I entertain of you as a gentleman." Dallas assured Call that he should be happy to cooperate with him by complying with any of his suggestions which did not interfere with more important duties, but added, "I beg that your suggestions may have less the character of an order than those heretofore received."

Call was indignant at the coolness shown by the Navy and informed Cass that the measures of Dallas had been totally ineffective in suppressing contraband trade. The Indians, he asserted, continued to kidnap Negroes and to exchange them with the Spaniards for supplies. The only remedy Call could suggest was for Cass to have several revenue cutters placed directly under his command for the blockade activities. Cass, however, felt that this move would be improper in that it would imply lack of confidence in the Navy. That Call felt such lack of confidence is obvious, but Cass was content to minimize the difficulties in Florida. He advised Call to correspond "frankly" with Dallas on naval matters and said,

"Should you find it indispensable that some vessel be under your immediate direction, would it not be better to employ one of the steamboats already engaged, or to procure another for the purpose?"

Governor Call made it a point to keep General Jesup, who was commander of the Army of the South, informed as to his plans. In one letter after his exchanges with Dallas and Cass he told Jesup that Dallas had "imperfectly complied" with his request for cooperation. He further related to Jesup:

I have since addressed the Secretary of War on the subject, who, instead of acting with the promptness and energy which the importance of the case required, refers me back again to Commodore Dallas, and suggests that I may employ one of the crazy steamboats of the Government on this service, while the whole West India squadron is lying at anchor in the bay of Pensacola.

This information was forwarded to the War Department by Jesup, but was not answered by Lewis Cass who resigned as of October 6, 1836. The acting Secretary of War, C. A. Harris, replied on October 7 reproving Call for his censure of the War Department. Harris deemed it "highly indecorous, improper, and unjust." He reminded Call that the Department had no control over naval operations and asserted that the Navy Department had not been laggard: "Full and positive instructions have been repeatedly given to Commodore Dallas . . . to cooperate with you." Harris also was irked at Call's criticism of the "crazy steamboats." "This department," he wrote, "certainly had no expectation that you would select a 'crazy' one . . . as you had already been invested with full public power to buy or charter whatever vessels might be necessary for your marine operations." Harris, apparently annoyed by Call's habit of writing to the president, closed with, "This letter has been seen and approved by the President."

The interim Secretary of War, B. F. Butler, later got Call's explanation for his low regard for the steamboats. Call wrote that he called them crazy ". . . on the report of the officers who commanded them, and who represented them as being dangerous in running from one port to another, along the coast, even in most favorable weather. He [Harris] says that he did not expect me to send a crazy one. When all were crazy, how could I do otherwise?" Scornfully Call declared that the War Department would have had him charter or build boats while the whole West India squadron idled in Pensacola Bay.

IV

Meanwhile General Thomas Jesup, who was to assume the command upon arrival in Florida, ended his service against the Creeks and arrived with his forces in West Florida about September 25. Call immediately tendered the command of the war to Jesup, but the general declined, insisting that Call carry out the operations which he had planned. Call communicated this news to Washington and reported that Jesup had voluntarily placed himself and his forces under his command.

Call's first major setback came when the regulars abandoned Micanopy which he had planned to use as a supply base. The supplies which were destined for Micanopy he then directed to Volusia. In the west, he set up a supply depot at Suwanee Old Town and concentrated supplies at St. Marks for transport to the Withlacoochee. Supplies from New Orleans and St. Marks were then moved to the mouth of the Suwanee River from which place the expedition to the Withlacoochee River was to depart. Of the five "crazy" steamboats, two were laid up for repairs, two were unsuited for operations on the Withlacoochee, and the other had been ordered back to Pensacola by Commodore Dallas. Call coun-

termanded this order and sent instead the two vessels unsuited for his needs. Call reported that these two never returned and that he had no idea what became of them. General Leigh Read was ordered to take the one good steamboat, two barges, and a chartered vessel and establish a depot fifteen miles up the Withlacoochee River.

The major movement of troops overland from Middle Florida was then begun. On October 8 the troops were strengthened and refreshed at Fort Drane and marched southward to the Withlacoochee. The day of October 13 was spent in unsuccessful attempts to cross the river in the face of Indian resistance. With only about a day's rations left on the fourteenth, Call decided to seek out the depot which Leigh Read had been order to set up. However, due to a series of comic opera mishaps, Read had not yet reached the point upon the river where the supply center was to be located.

Read had left the mouth of the Suwanee River with one government steamboat, the barges, and the chartered vessel according to plan. However, in proceeding up the Withlacoochee, the government steamboat had run aground straddling the narrow channel, and at low tide promptly broke in two. That the vessel ran aground, Call blamed upon the Navy. He declared that officers used to ocean navigation had been placed in charge of directing this vessel in a narrow unfamiliar stream. Read's second attempt to plant the depot was made on October 22 and succeeded, but Call's forces had by that time fallen back on Fort Drane and Black Creek.

It was this initial reverse, due to Read's failure to establish his base, which led to Call's removal. Through some mishap Call's reports, which do not indicate that Call considered the withdrawal anything more than a temporary delay, did not reach Washington. Reports from other sources, together with the accurate news that Call was not well, so alarmed the

administration that orders were forwarded for General Jesup to take immediate command.

President Jackson reported to Congress that “. . . early measures were taken for placing at the disposal of Governor Call, who as commander in chief of the Territorial Militia had been temporarily invested with the command, an ample force for the purpose of resuming offensive operations in the most efficient manner so soon as the season should permit.” He informed the Congress that Call’s moves had had results which “excited much surprise and disappointment. A full explanation has been required of the causes which led to the failure of that movement, but has not yet been received.” Meanwhile, fearing that Call was not in condition equal to the crisis, he had given Jesup the command.⁵

As we have noted, news of his removal did not reach Call until after he had reorganized his campaign, repulsed the Indians in three engagements, and retired to Volusia. In his letter of removal, Secretary Butler informed Call that no definite judgement against him had been formed but that he had been “instructed by the President to express to you his disappointment and surprise that you should have commenced the execution of a campaign of so much importance, and so long meditated, without first taking effectual measures to secure all needful supplies from the various depots, which, for several months, have been subject to your orders; and . . . after approaching with so large a force within so short a distance of the enemy . . . you should have retired without a more serious attempt to cross the river and to drive him from his position. This disappointment and regret are greatly increased by the considerations that these retrograde movements will probably expose the frontiers to new invasions by marauding parties, and encourage the Indians in their resistance, thereby

5. James D. Richardson (ed.), *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 20 volumes (Washington, 1896-1927), III, 253.

increasing . . . the severity of the measures which will now be required to subdue them."

On December 2, 1836, Call replied to Butler in a lengthy, bitter letter which he said was delayed by ill health. He scoffed at Butler's words that no judgement had been formed of him by pointing out that the president had visited upon him the highest disgrace possible in removing him from command. Should I be able to show injustice, he asked, can the injury be repaired? Call then retraced the entire campaign under his command, citing his preparations, his difficulties, and the accidents involved. He defended his original withdrawal from the Withlacoochee on October 13 and declared that the crossing "could not have been accomplished by General Jackson himself." The successful November crossing had cost four lives by drowning.

Butler was unsympathetic with Call's position and viewed his report as excited and full of rash statements. He wrote, ". . . you indulge in many remarks not at all necessary to the explanation of your conduct, or the defense of your character." Call was in error, Butler said, in assuming that his removal was punishment for misconduct. He reminded the governor that he had been only temporarily put in command from the beginning and that information at hand in Washington had caused the decision that Jesup must assume the command for which he had been intended in Florida. The demand for an explanation Butler thought was well warranted by conditions in the Territory. He reminded Call that the fact that what occurred should excite and surprise the president, "no one better knows than yourself."

The Secretary of War told Call that after due deliberation he had been exonerated of any responsibility for the failure of General Read to establish his supply depot, but he asserted that the exoneration was "the fullest measure of justice

to which you are entitled." In the opinion of the War Department, Call was still at fault for moving his troops without definite knowledge that the indispensable depot had been established. Butler pointed out that from the outset the chances had been great that Read would fail, however, he conceded that the president cheerfully allowed that Call's error lay in a patriotic desire to win the war. "More than this . . . it seems to us impossible, consistently with justice, to concede." The administration held that the basic cause of the fiasco was still Call's negligence in not insuring a steady flow of supplies to maintain a vigorous offensive.

Call's exchanges with Butler continued until the end of Butler's term of office in March, 1837. In February, Call struck back at Butler's censure, holding that the Secretary of War was in no position to judge his moves from a vantage point 1000 miles away. "You may," Call wrote, "by intuition, possess that knowledge of the profession of arms which others have acquired by years of hardy service in the field . . ." He admitted that his letter of reply to his dismissal was written under excitement and deplored any injustice he may have done to the president, for whom he professed the deepest respect. In further defense of his reputation, the governor related that when he took command the Indians had been conquerors and he had relieved the frontier from invasion; he had rebuilt Fort Drane; he had established the Withlacoochee depot; he had in thirty-four days made all necessary preparations for a vigorous campaign; and he had won three victories after being relieved.

With a note of relief, Butler directed his last letter to Call on March 13 saying, "I shall leave the department this day. . . . I find it impossible to reply, in detail, to the various suggestions, arguments, and complaints presented by you. Nor do I deem it at all necessary that I should do so." Call de-

livered up his command to Jesup and returned to Tallahassee, a proud man deeply wounded.

V

Call remained Governor of Florida, and in 1839 was re-appointed by President Martin Van Buren. Yet his criticisms of the government's war policies continued, much to the disgust of Joel R. Poinsett who was Secretary of War in the Van Buren administration. In Florida, Call's pro-Whig political activity caused local Democrats to petition the administration constantly for his removal. Finally, in December, 1839, Van Buren replaced Call with a staunch Democrat, Robert Raymond Reid. Probably both Call's Whiggish political activity and his criticism of war policy were the causes for his removal, but the latter was the official reason. According to Poinsett, ". . . no disgrace was attached to his removal. He thought proper to assume an attitude opposed to this department, and his continuance in office was therefore deemed incompatible with the interests of the public service."

When Jackson relieved Call of his military command the cordial friendship between the two men came to an end, though Call continued to respect the military prowess of the old general. Increasingly Call had been drifting away from the president in politics. His growing property interests inclined his political views more and more toward the policies of the Whig party and in 1840 Call openly avowed his support of the Whigs and his opposition to the Democrats. Jackson was provoked at the apostacy of his old protege and assumed that he must be in debt or broke, "for we find all who are broke join the opposition and are in favor of Banks, wishing to pay their debts by a depreciated paper."⁶

6. Andrew Jackson to F. P. Blair, Sept. 26, 1940, John Spencer Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 7 volumes (Washington, 1926), VI, 78.

In Call's mind, both of his removals had been injustices to him. Van Buren removed him, as he saw it, only because he had been critical of the "weakness and imbecility" of Poinsett in prosecuting the war. However, there seems to be more real grounds for a plea of injustice in the case of the earlier removal from military command. The original appointment of Call as commander of the Seminole War seems illogical, even fantastic, in light of all the circumstances, unless it was intended as a purely interim appointment during which time no extensive military activity was to be undertaken. Call was notoriously unpopular with the regulars and had no reputation for successful field command of any element larger than a battalion. He had held no regular army rank higher than captain, and that fourteen years earlier, and he had given up his post as militia general when he became governor.

These are marks against the Jackson administration, however, not against Call. The worst that can be said of Call is that he was an overly ambitious man who sought a post which another might have filled to better advantage. In Call's favor is the vigor with which he pursued his frustrating task in the face of War Department complacency, militia rebelliousness, Navy hostility, and Army suspicion. He was awake to the seriousness of the Indian troubles while the War Department was still trying to believe that only a minor disturbance threatened. His plans for the attack upon the Indian home territory were admirably conceived, even if not well carried out. Of his activities, General Jesup told Secretary of War Butler, "As an act of justice to Governor Call, I take the occasion to remark that no man could, under the circumstances in which he has been placed, have accomplished more than he has done. His plan of campaign was admirable."

Studying the documents from the vantage point of the present day, Jackson's action in relieving Call appears to have

been hasty and not based upon sufficient information. However, in that day of poor and slow communication, his removal probably was the only safe step which could be taken in Washington. Call was known to have been ill through the entire campaign. Jesup was known to be on the scene, and had previous orders to assume command - orders he had declined to carry out until Call should complete his campaign. If the reports which Washington had received of a disastrous withdrawal were true, then Call's campaign must have been wrecked. In the absence of any word from Call the administration must assume that he was incapacitated by illness, or that he might even be dead. At any rate, with the news available of events in Florida the federal government took the steps which seemed to it to be those best calculated to protect the public interest.

Had telegraphic communications been available, Richard Keith Call might have been the military hero of the Seminole War. The story which has been related, however, shows that he was allowed to command the war only about four months and in this period he was unable to launch any decisive action against the Indians.

Whatever his shortcomings may have been, Call must be credited with having had a clearer view of the overall picture of the war than did the War Department. The department, with President Jackson's approval, planned to suspend the war each summer in the mistaken belief that a summer campaign could not be endured by the troops. Call correctly foresaw that such a policy would allow the Indians to harvest their crops and prepare to sustain another winter campaign. Rather than concentrate the troops in forts through the summer, Call would maintain a mobile striking force to lay waste the Indian fields and villages and draw back the marauding warriors to defend their own homes. He realized that no stationary defense line could contain the Indians, who were masters of infiltra-

tion tactics. Call's plan would thus carry the war to the Indian territory and provide the best defense against Indian attack upon rich Middle Florida. The War Department, with hesitation, eventually deferred to Call's experience and knowledge. It is to be regretted that his plans were not earlier executed with firmness, efficiency, and the full cooperation of all responsible authorities.

(The author in his research for a biography of Richard Keith Call is using all known collected material, but for certain periods and episodes the amount available pertaining to Call and his associates in Florida is limited. Should any reader possess or know of Call letters, letters referring to Call, or other unpublished or scarce material which might touch upon this subject, the QUARTERLY as well as Mr. Doherty would be grateful to be told of such.)

THE RAILROAD BACKGROUND OF THE FLORIDA SENATORIAL ELECTION OF 1851

by ARTHUR W. THOMPSON

The national schism concerning the state of the Union following the Mexican War affected the character and intensity of political debate on the Florida scene no less than it did that of other areas throughout the nation. In Congress, Jefferson Davis and other eminent defenders of the Southern position gained the ardent support of Florida's Democratic senior Senator, David L. Yulee. In his advocacy of the principle of the concurrent majority, as applied to the bicameral nature of the national legislature, Yulee was dealt a devastating blow by Webster and Clay.¹ By late July of 1850, the proponents of the "Omnibus Bill" were still hopeful, and remained so until Maryland's James A. Pearce suddenly allowed Yulee's parliamentary maneuvers to divide the bill. The "ultras" had won a temporary victory, though the final compromise could not be averted." In the final tabulation, Yulee was joined by his Whig colleagues from Florida, Senator Jackson Morton and Representative Edward C. Cabell, in opposing the California and District of Columbia slave-trade bills and approving the extension of slavery in the new Territories. Morton and Yulee also joined hands in support of the fugitive slave bill, with Cabell absent or not voting in the House.

Despite the stand of their Congressional delegation, public reaction in Florida was overwhelmingly in favor of the Compromise. The Committee on Federal Relations of the State's General Assembly reported a resolution against the new law, but this was tabled permanently.³ The Congressional canvass

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1. J. T. Carpenter, *The South as a Conscious Minority* (New York, 1930), p. 102; Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (New York, 1947), I, 320.
 2. *Congressional Globe*, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, p. 1162-63, 1447-91; Nevins, *op. cit.*, 340; G. G. Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay* (Boston, 1937), p. 411.
 3. *Florida House Journal*, v (1850-51), p. 60.

of that year was conducted primarily on that issue, with Edward C. Cabell soundly thrashing the Democratic candidate, John Beard, who would gladly have accepted the end of the Union in preference to compromise.⁴ The Democratic *Floridian and Journal* of Tallahassee wrote that "the result of the election proved that there was a majority of the people who heartily approved Clay, Foote & Co's Compromise." Reports of Union Nationalist meetings held in various sections of the state serve to substantiate this view; and the second Nashville Convention was virtually ignored.⁵ Even Whig Governor Brown's request for authority to call a convention, in the event of the repeal of the fugitive slave law, was tabled.⁶

It must be added, however, that the more urgent task of selecting a United States Senator was a contributing factor in determining the public attitude. The subsequent election of Stephen R. Mallory over David L. Yulee has been accepted, by virtually every historian of the subject, as conclusive evidence of Florida's wholehearted endorsement of the famous compromise.⁷ That Floridians approved the Compromise of 1850 has been amply demonstrated, but to attribute Yulee's defeat to that fact would seem an error. Moreover, it would obscure the more important domestic clash on the issue of internal improvements. The role of the railroad question in the 1851 Senate election offers a more substantial clue to David Yulee's defeat.

The development of a transportation system was guided during Florida's Territorial period by the needs of an agrarian

4. J. B. Mool, "Florida in Federal Politics," (Master's thesis, Duke University, 1940), p. 58-59; Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "The Florida Whigs," (Master's thesis, University of Florida, 1949), p. 155.

5. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, September 20, 1851; Edwin Williams, "Florida in the Union," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1951), p. 512, 519.

6. *Florida Senate Journal*, v (1850-51), p. 9.

7. A. C. Cole, *The Whig Party in the South* (Washington, 1913), p. 193-94; R. S. Cotterill, "David L. Yulee," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1936), XX, 683; Dorothy Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XII (July, 1933) 14; Doherty, *op. cit.*, p. 167-68; Mool, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

economy. In this frontier region, internal improvements would serve to promote settlement. The Territory's Legislative Council freely granted charters for almost any kind of transportation that would increase mobility within its jurisdiction. Its governors consistently urged that action be taken. John H. Eaton, for example, recommended that the people use the opportunity available to a Territory to get National aid, particularly since there would be no constitutional questions involved.⁸ Despite this, the period prior to 1845 was one of promotion and agitation rather than one of construction. When Florida achieved statehood in 1845, there were only four short railroad lines, totalling sixty-three miles,⁹ and these were virtually abandoned during the next several years. Engineering difficulties, labor shortages, inadequate capital, Indian warfare, and the panic of 1837 had all taken their toll.

The only major undertakings had been military roads constructed by the Federal Government during the Seminole War. The canal fever was short-lived and ended with the depression of 1837; steamboats played an increasingly significant role in the forties; but it was not until the mid-fifties that the railroad began to be really developed in Florida.¹⁰

In the over-all development of internal improvements in the United States prior to 1830, government aid had played a large part. Unfortunately for Florida, however, her relatively late appearance as a full-fledged member of the political community brought her face to face with a fairly tightly closed pork barrel - at least insofar as the traditional distribution was concerned. But Federal aid could still be approached by other avenues, and the engineering surveys, right of way through the public domain, and the outright land grant emerged as the new stimuli. Behind this movement for Federal aid, so

8. *Journal of the Florida Legislative Council*, 13th Session, 1835, p. 6.

9. Dorothy Dodd, "Railroad Projects in Territorial Florida," (Master's thesis, Florida State University, 1929), p. 3.

10. Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 255-60.

far as Florida was concerned both before and after 1845, lay persistent attempts to construct a connecting link across the peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The resolve to execute such a project dominated internal-improvement thinking throughout the thirties. During the following decade David Yulee, both as Territorial Delegate and United States Senator, rarely missed an opportunity to further the project.

Throughout both these decades, Whig advocates of a trans-peninsular railroad also sought government aid to expedite its construction by private enterprise. But the laws of incorporation, passed by the 1837 Legislative Council, called for a measure of state participation,¹¹ and the charters of the four short lines built during the Territorial period contained provisions permitting government purchase of all stock at par, with interest.¹² The Democratic view of the matter was ably stated by Yulee in his *Circular Letter . . . to the People of Florida . . .* in 1844. Such a road, he wrote, "ought to be . . . the property of the State" for the use of its citizens "without the impositions and exactions which a private chartered monopoly would impose."¹³

The culmination of the seven-year political battle between the planter-dominated Whigs and the growing middle class strength of the Democratic Party helped to resolve the clash between divergent attitudes as to the role of the State in railroad construction. The complete triumph by 1845 of the Florida Jacksonians had broken the back of Whig political power. Under Democratic control, freer and more widespread enterprise was possible, and their earlier advocacy of government ownership, as a counter-force to the economic

11. *Acts of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, 1837* (Tallahassee, 1837), p.30.

12. *Executive Documents*, No. 126, 23rd. Congress, 2nd Session, p.6.

13. D. Levy, *Circular Letter of D. Levy to the People of Florida Relative to the Admission of Florida Into the Union* (n.p. 1844). In 1845, David Levy changed his name to David Levy Yulee.

power of the politically entrenched Whigs, rapidly diminished. In the five years that followed admission to the Union, agitation for railroad development reached new heights. The press, town meetings, and railroad conventions maintained a constant clamor for rail transportation.¹⁴

As a result of this agitation a number of roads were planned in the years between 1847 and 1851, among them Yulee's Atlantic and Gulf Railroad. In the meantime, the recommendations of the various Southern Commercial Conventions of the 1840's, that the South carry on commerce directly with Europe as well as tap the trade of the Valley of the Mississippi, gave greater scope to the Yulee enterprise.¹⁵ It is certainly clear that by 1850 Yulee conceived of the Atlantic and Gulf not merely as a means to serve local needs or as a plantation carrier, but as a transit line which would tie the Mississippi Valley as well as the Pacific (the latter by isthmian road across Tehuantepec), through the lower South and across Florida, with Europe. That these developments would, as well, regenerate Southern economic life, encourage immigration, and increase the South's national power, was an added spur to Yulee's existing interest in the railroad.¹⁶

The new road, incorporated in 1849, was to construct and maintain "a railroad within the state between the Atlantic Ocean, or the waters tributary to or connecting with the same, and the Gulf of Mexico, or the waters emptying into or connecting the same."¹⁷ Wide latitude had been permitted in the choice of terminal sites. In the selection of these termini, Yulee would be influenced 'not only by the report of the

14. Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

15. W. W. Davis, "Southern Commercial Conventions," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, v (1904), 159; Herbert Wender, *Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859* (Baltimore, 1930), p. 49.

16. R. R. Russel, "A Revaluation of the Period Before the Civil War: Railroads," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XV (December, 1928), 346.

17. *Laws of Florida*, 4th Session, 1848-49, Chapters 242, 244-45, p. 49-63.

Federal survey he had requested two years earlier,¹⁸ but also by the amount of additional aid forthcoming from the government. In January 1849, almost immediately after the road's incorporation, Yulee presented to the U. S. Senate a Florida legislative resolution in favor of establishing a port of entry and delivery at Cedar Key.¹⁹ A week later he introduced a bill granting a right of way to his new road. On the 25th of January it was given two readings, and passed on the following day without amendment.²⁰ In the meantime, as Chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, Yulee had written to Secretary of State James Buchanan regarding the establishment of steamship and postal communications between Mexico and Florida's Gulf region. Mr. Buchanan's reply, based upon his Minister's report from Mexico, indicated that this would indeed be a desirable step.²¹ In February, consequently, Florida's enterprising Senator introduced another resolution, this time calling on the Post Office and Post Roads Committee to inquire into the "practicability and expediency of expediting the transmission of mails between New York and New Orleans."²² That it might be expedited *via* his projected Fernandina-Cedar Key route probably occurred to Yulee at the time.

It is rather interesting to note at this point how Yulee justified his invocation of governmental assistance in the light of his earlier Jacksonian *laissez-faire* position. The road, he observed, was to be built by private enterprise, not as a private monopoly, but as a *public trust*, one which would promote the prosperity and welfare of the State and of the maximum number of its citizens.²³ The news that Yulee had

18. An engineering survey report of the Federal Government in 1848 had recommended the Fernandina to Cedar Key route as most advisable.

19. *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 274.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

21. J. Buchanan to D. L. Yulee, Washington, January 29, 1849.

22. *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 600.

23. David Yulee undated memoranda, 1848-52 (Yulee Papers, University of Florida).

interested Northern capitalists in the project strangely enough pleased and impressed many in the State despite the sectional struggle which was raging at the time.²⁴

In the spring of 1849, however, not all Floridians were pleased with the prospect of this road. There were those among the Democrats who felt that plank roads were still the most important and unpretentious means of giving maximum utility to most.²⁵ Others, among them Abel Baldwin of Jacksonville, had their own railroad ambitions. The Whigs opposed Yulee's scheme on both political and economic grounds. Some planters favored plank roads as an inexpensive and easily maintained form of transportation which they themselves could own. Others would have preferred to see any trans-peninsular railroad in Whig hands. In any case, the Whigs did not care to have Mr. Yulee's political prestige enhanced by his economic activities. These groups were to present formidable opposition when the Fifth Session of the General Assembly convened in November 1851. The opening gun was fired when Whig Governor Thomas Brown, in his message to the Legislature, called for the creation of a Board of Internal Improvements to draft a plan for an over-all state system, and thereby eliminate what he termed "local disorganized projects." Having received legislative sanction, the newly created board was composed of the following: James W. Bryant of Duval County, A. T. Bennett of Franklin County, Richard Keith Call of Leon County, with Governor Brown as *ex officio* president, and three other Whigs of his Cabinet, Attorney General David Hogue, Treasurer William R. Haywood, and Comptroller Simon Towle, as members.²⁶

At the same session, Yulee and his associates attempted to

24. St. Augustine *Florida Herald and Southern Democrat*, March 10, 1849; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 17, 1849.

25. Yulee memoranda, May 25 and June 8, 1850 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

26. *Florida Senate Journal*, v (1850-51), p. 9-11; Doherty, *op.cit.*, p. 123, 164; Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, January 28, 1851.

amend the charter of their Atlantic and Gulf Railroad to increase the company's capitalization, as well as to empower the enterprise to own real estate, warehouses, and storage facilities in accordance with their plan to establish the road as an intersectional and international carrier. After much difficulty the amended charter was passed, only to be vetoed by Governor Brown. His argument that its route was confined entirely to East Florida had some justification. Yet his signature of the heavily Whig-sponsored railroad bill two weeks later, chartering the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Central Railroad, served to cast some doubt upon his earlier motives, and made manifest his support of the newer road.²⁷ What is of particular significance in the case of this new trans-peninsular competitor was the fact that James W. Bryant and Richard Keith Call were among those designated to superintend the stock subscription in Jacksonville and Tallahassee.

It may be seen, therefore, that insofar as the Whigs and Democrats were divided on the question of internal improvements, it was not a matter of one group's advocacy of railroad construction and the other's opposition to it. Rather, differences seem to have been confined to determining which party would initiate and successfully complete the system, creating thereby not only political capital for the perpetuation of party power - so essential in the light of national events, - but also private capital for the advancement of those concerned.

It was against this background of divergent party views, relating to both national and local issues and encompassing economic as well as political differences, that David L. Yulee came before the General Assembly of Florida for re-election to the United States Senate. Despite Edward C. Cabell's victory in 1850, the Democrats had captured a majority in the Legislature and anticipated no difficulty in electing "D. L.

27. T. Brown to M. A. Long, February 3, 1851; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 22, 1851.

Yulee, or some other Democrat and friend of the Southern Convention." ²⁸ But if the Democrats and their newspaper supporters were sure of success for one of their party, Yulee was not entirely confident that he would be the chosen Democrat. By late fall of 1850, he had become aware of the growing combination against him. ²⁹

In December, when the Democrats met in caucus, there was no apparent opposition to Yulee, at least so far as the public was concerned, and he easily won the party's nomination. But the election would prove to be quite another matter. The party caucus had taken place sometime during the second week of December, yet it was not until January 13 that the Democrats were willing, however reluctantly, to allow the matter to come before the combined membership of both houses for a final vote. The fact is that even before the caucus vote took place, it was apparent that Yulee would have serious opposition from some within his own party. Although Yulee had received the nomination by a comfortable majority, what made this party defection serious for his supporters was the fact that the Democrats enjoyed only a very narrow majority in the Assembly. Fear that this dissident group would join with the large Whig minority in preventing Yulee's re-election was very real. ³⁰

What men constituted this opposition? To begin with, John P. Baldwin and James T. Magbee, both of South Florida, felt personally aggrieved because they believed the Senator had not given adequate attention to, or obtained sufficient favor for, their districts. In addition, the extreme South Florida representation - particularly Key West - was disgruntled. Stephen R. Mallory of Key West had written in November:

28. *Ibid.*, August 31 and October 26, 1850.

29. Mrs. D. L. Yulee to Mrs. J. Holt, Washington, December 17, 1850 (Holt Papers, Library of Congress).

30. W. A. Forward to D. L. Yulee, Tallahassee, December 10, 1850 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

We are but of little use to the State, & are fit subjects for independent government. . . . At present -our only vocation seems to be to give large Democratic majorities for any & every candidate whom the wisdom of others may designate, - to pay a large portion of the State taxes & to send a certain number of legislators to vote for the benefit of others.³¹

Furthermore, the commercial interests of Key West were apprehensive of Yulee's trans-state railroad, which they feared might draw off much of their trade.³² That these views strongly motivated the extraordinarily bitter opposition of Monroe County's William W. McCall to Yulee seems evident. In addition, the railroad interests of both Jacksonville and St. Augustine, the latter under the leadership of Dr. John Westcott,³³ were in Tallahassee during the session aiding "B[aldwin] in his schemes."³⁴ It is evident, therefore, that a few Democrats sought the defeat of Yulee, some because they desired to advance their own railroad ambitions, and others because they would have preferred no railroad at all.

On the other hand, there was also a strong rival railroad faction in East Florida. The two Whig representatives from Duval County, James W. Bryant and James Plummer, clearly reflected the interests of the Jacksonville to Pensacola rail route projected by the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Central which sought to defeat Yulee's proposed Atlantic and Gulf road, its potential competitor for trans-state commerce. In this the Duval legislators undoubtedly had general Whig support. As for the majority of the Whigs, little was required to convince them that their votes should be cast against the incumbent.

31. S. R. Mallory to C. Byrne, Key West, November 22, 1850 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

32. A. H. Cole to D. L. Yulee, February 20, 1854 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

33. Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* (Atlanta, 1902), II, 157-58.

34. W. Anderson to D. L. Yulee, Tallahassee, January 1, 1851 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

How many of them opposed Yulee on political grounds, and how many because of economic hostility, it would be almost impossible to say. For the majority of them, Yulee's nomination by the Democratic Party was undoubtedly sufficient reason.

Election of United States Senator

On January 13, 1851, a committee of three from the lower chamber informed the Senate that they were ready to proceed with the major business of the day. When the upper body had filed into the great hall, and its president, R. J. Floyd, succeeded the House speaker, Hugh Archer, as presiding officer of the joint session, the long-delayed election was under way. John Milton of Jackson County rose and nominated David Yulee. There were no further nominations and the voting began. The four balloting that ensued on the 13th and 15th of January have been discussed elsewhere and there is little need to recount them here.³⁵ When the smoke of party battle had cleared, it was evident that the earlier misgivings of Yulee's supporters had been justified. The Baldwin and Mallory factions of South Florida had joined a great majority of the Whigs. This, coupled with some effective parliamentary maneuvering, resulted in the election of Stephen R. Mallory as Senator, and of a group of Whig judges.³⁶ The exact number of Whig judges elected is difficult to determine, little evidence being available in any of the contemporary records now at hand which would indicate party affiliation. Nevertheless, checking the Assembly votes as well as previous and subsequent political and economic views and contacts of these men, it seems probable that at least three of the four Circuit

35. An accurate description of the balloting in the General Assembly is given in Walker Anderson's letter to the Senate of the United States, which is appended to this article.

36. W. A. Forward to D. L. Yulee, Tallahassee, January 17, 1851; I. H. Bronson to D. L. Yulee, Tallahassee, January 17, 1851; and J. B. Browne to D. L. Yulee, Key West, January 29, 1851 (all in the Yulee Papers, U.F.).

Court justices were Whigs as well as both of the associate justices of the Supreme Court. Walker Anderson, the new chief justice, was clearly in the Democratic ranks.

In the light of these developments, it would seem necessary to call into question the original interpretation of this senatorial election, namely, that Yulee was defeated because of his radical stand in 1850. The obvious question must also be raised: What was Mallory's attitude toward the Compromise? There is every indication in his correspondence with Yulee and, more significantly, with his own political supporters, that he completely endorsed his predecessor's position.³⁷ To Charles Byrne, one of his close friends, he wrote before the Fifth Session convened, "I agree with you perfectly in your views of Mr. Yulee's course, & in his right to the position he has so nobly sustained. In that course, - I am with him - even unto the end."³⁸ And to Yulee, before the balloting took place, he wrote, "Your re-election will nerve the action of our friends throughout the State, and speak a lesson to the North."³⁹

The incumbent's defeat, therefore, was regarded with grave concern, not because it was a repudiation of his radical stand, but because it might be regarded as such.⁴⁰ The traditional interpretation of the disputed election,⁴¹ cannot be completely rejected. The narrowed margin between Democrats and Whigs

37. S. R. Mallory to B. M. Pearson, Key West, June 8, 1850, in *Tallahassee Floridian and Journal*, February 8, 1851.

38. S. R. Mallory to C. Byrne, Key West, November 22, 1850 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

39. S. R. Mallory to D. L. Yulee, Key West, January 4 and February 22, 1851 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

40. M. S. Perry to D. L. Yulee, Fort Crain, August 18, 1851 (Yulee Papers, U.F.).

41. Yulee contested Mallory's right to a seat in the Senate, claiming he had been elected on the first ballot 29 to 0. There was little debate on the issue of the blank ballots. The major question in the minds of those on the Senate Elections Committee centered on the point of whether Yulee needed an absolute majority of all those elected to both houses. In his defense, Yulee enlisted the legal aid of Reverdy Johnson and Edwin M. Stanton, but to no avail. *Congressional Globe*, 32nd. Congress, 1st Session, p. 1170-76; *Senate Miscellaneous Documents*, No. 2, 32nd. Congress, Special Session.

in the Assembly, which made the political maneuver possible, was, after all, the result of previous elections which *had* been fought on the issues of the Compromise.

* * * * *

(The following letter by Florida's Supreme Court Chief Justice Walker Anderson is included not only because it offers a succinct summarization of the election details, but also because it presents additional evidence of someone in accord with Yulee's political views who nevertheless voted for Mallory on the final ballot.⁴²)

To the Honorable Senate of the U. States.

The following statement is respectfully submitted by the undersigned, at the request of the Hon. S. R. Mallory.

I was a member of the last Legislature of the State of Florida and took part in the Senatorial election which in January 1851 resulted in the election of Mr Mallory.

Of the 59 members constituting the Legislature, 31 were members of the democratic party and 28 were whigs - but of the former one was unable to attend in his seat but a short time and had left Tallahassee before the election for Senator took place. At the democratic caucus which was held before the election, 16 of the remaining democrats voted for the nomination of Mr Yulee. This vote was increased in the subsequent ballotings to a two thirds vote and in consequence thereof all the democrats with the exception of two members, agreed to cast their votes for Mr Yulee. These two gentlemen repeatedly declared that under no circumstances, could they be induced to vote for Mr Yulee. In addition to the remaining 28 democrats, it was known that one whig would vote for Mr Yulee. In all the consultations of the party to which I was admitted, it was taken for granted that 30 votes were necessary to an election and the chances of procuring one more vote were repeatedly and anxiously canvassed before the election. Every member not embraced in the 29, was regarded

42. This is taken from a true copy in the Yulee Papers, U.F.

as certainly hostile to Mr Yulee's election with a single exception - for some time hopes were entertained that a second whig would lend the aid of his vote to make up the requisite number of 30. Efforts were made to control this doubtful vote, on both sides & until the Legislature went into joint meeting hopes were entertained by some of the democrats that it would be cast for Mr Yulee. The two first ballotings dispelled the hope. The 28 democrats with the one whig voted for Mr Yulee, while the whig who was supposed to be doubtful voted with the other whigs and the two dissenting democrats. The vote being thus 29 for Mr Yulee and 29 Blank, the Chairman of the joint meeting declared there was no election-and it never occurred to me for an instant that a doubt could be entertained of the correctness of his decision. In all the discussion that ensued I never heard a doubt suggested, so well established and settled was the rule that it required a majority of the Legislature to elect and also that blank votes should be counted. At the third balloting, one of the democrats who had voted for Mr Yulee with reluctance under the influence of the caucus nomination, withdrew his vote, leaving but 28 for Mr Yulee and rendering it certain that any further effort to elect him was hopeless. At the fourth balloting, ⁴³ I with others, who had previously voted for Mr Yulee voted for Mr Mallory and he was elected. ⁴⁴ I have stated the foregoing circumstances to shew [*sic*] two things - first the universal acquiescence which prevailed, in the rule requiring a majority to elect and secondly the fact that it was well known that the blank votes were opposed to Mr Yulee's election and not indifferent.

I was myself a supporter of Mr Yulee, both on the ground of a long standing and sincere personal regard and because

43. The fourth balloting took place on January 15th, 1851.

44. The final vote: Mallory-31, Yulee-23.

he was the tried and approved representative of political principles which I have long and dearly cherished.

I am respectfully &c

WALKER ANDERSON

late member of the Florida Ho: of
Representatives from the County of
Es-cambia

DE SOTO AND TERRA CEIA
(Concluded)

by JOHN R. SWANTON

In connection with my work as chairman of the De Soto Expedition Commission between 1935 and 1938 I made a study of the documentary and geographical evidence regarding the location of the point where De Soto landed on the Florida coast in 1539 and the position of his first headquarters. While I was assisted to some extent by other members of the Commission, the conclusions reached were more particularly mine and I assume all responsibility for them. They were originally stated in a paper printed in "The Florida Historical Quarterly" (vol. XVI, no. 3; Jan. 1938) and were incorporated later in the "Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission" (Washington, 1939). The point where the greater part of the Spanish army was landed was believed to be Shaws Point, and the native town where he established his headquarters apparently at the Indian site on Terra Ceia Island.

However, in a recent account of archeological work on the last of these locations (*Florida Anthropological Society Publications*, No. 3, published at the University of Florida, 1951) the writer, Ripley P. Bullen, takes issue with this conclusion. I replied in a paper printed in *The Florida Historical Quarterly* (vol. XXX, no. 4; April, 1952, pages 311-316), but immediately following my article he contributed additional arguments in support of his original criticism. I understand that this was only supplementary to what he had published before and was not in reply to my article immediately preceding, but as it has not unnaturally been taken by some readers to be so intended I supply the following answer, and in it I quote his words at length so as to place everything clearly in the open.

Mr. Bullen's first argument is that Juan de Anasco who

conducted an expedition the year before De Soto set out in order to select a suitable site for the headquarters would not have chosen this one. He says:

“As McGill Bay cannot be entered by a boat drawing more than four feet of water (and then tortuously) and is itself shallower, it is reasonable to believe Anasco did not enter it. An explorer looking for a harbor would easily find the Indian site at Shaws Point, other Indian villages on both sides of the Manatee River, and other sites on Tampa Bay, but hardly the one at Terra Ceia. Hence this site does not apparently, meet the requirements of preknowledge which De Soto seemed to have.”

(p. 319)

This brings to the front what I believe to be two of his fundamental misconceptions, (1) regarding the size and draught of De Soto's vessels, and (2) regarding the depth of water in front of Ucita implied in the narratives.

1. De Soto's original fleet consisted of ships (*naos*), caravels (*caravelas*), and “*vergantines*,” a name translated “brigantines” or “pinnaces,” besides a few small boats (*bateles*). There were five or more of the first mentioned, two of the second, two of the third class, and an unspecified number of small boats. The ships were returned to Havana after they had discharged their cargoes, the caravels, or at least one of them, kept some time longer but also returned to the same port, while the “*vergantines*” and small boats were retained and used later in transporting part of the property of the expedition to the Apalachee port. Still later “*vergantines*” were sent on an exploratory voyage to the westward of that. Some caravels were very small and it has been calculated that the *Nina*, Columbus' smallest vessel, had a depth in hold of only seven feet. The “*vergantines*” were still smaller. They could accommodate a number of men but were flat-bottomed, intended for use in explorations, were particularly adapted for

service in shallow water, and it is doubtful whether they drew much more water than a large dugout canoe. Ordinances of a slightly later date specify that vessels, evidently those of the same type, were to accompany every discoverer "in order to enter inlets, cross the bars of rivers, and pass over shoals," and "thirty men and no more were to go in every 'ship.'" The name "vergantin" was used for those crude vessels De Soto's companions put together later on the bank of the Mississippi in order to escape from the country. According to Elvas, Anasco had with him in his scouting expedition in the winter of 1538-9 one caravel and two "vergantines," and with these last there is every reason to believe he could have entered either Terra Ceia Bay or McGill Bay which were canoe harbors or there would have been no Indian villages upon them. It was also in "vergantines" that the first party was sent to Ucita, and Porcallo put in charge of the town. There is every reason to believe that they were used in putting the men, animals and equipment ashore at the original landing place and they were certainly used in unloading the ships.

2. The bay in front of Ucita was shoal as indicated by the point just mentioned. Rangel says: "Since the ships with their loads could not, on account of the shoals, proceed to where the village lay, they anchored about four leagues farther back," and, after the land forces had occupied the place we read, "during all that week the ships gradually approached the village, being unloaded little by little with boats, and in that way they took ashore all the clothes and provisions which they carried." Elvas says that "going up every day a little with the tide, the end of eight days brought them near to the town," but he does not say how near, and soon afterward all of the large vessels were sent back to Cuba. There is no evidence that any of the vessels except the "vergantines" and the smallest boats did reach Ucita. According to the Coast Survey charts the channel into McGill Bay is from 3 to 7

feet at mean low tide to which the high tide would add about a foot and a half, enough water for the type of craft we have been considering, and four hundred years ago the depth may have been greater. If they approached the town by Terra Ceia Bay the situation would have been somewhat better.

But to proceed. Mr. Bullen's mention of sites on Shaws Point and Manatee River seems to suggest that he supposes they were all occupied in 1538-39 and that Anasco could choose between them. But even if all of the potsherds on those sites belong to the same horizon it does not follow that all were occupied with absolute contemporaneity, and De Soto was on the lookout for an occupied site, one he could expropriate - and plunder. If the Terra Ceia site happened to be the location of the most important village of the section at that time, it might well have met De Soto's requirements - even though without our approval. The Spaniards were the judges, not ourselves. But to continue:

"If the landing was made at Shaws Point, as has been assumed for this paper, this would mean sailing or rowing from that point westward around Snead Island, northeasterly around McGill Island, and then across McGill Bay. To do this successfully and to return easily, as the narrative implies, would indicate a detailed knowledge of these waters which neither De Soto nor Arias may be presumed to have had." (p. 319)

As we do not know how thorough Anasco's examination of the region had been and do know that the Spaniards had Indians from the section with them, the force of this argument does not seem to be very great. Mr. Bullen now quotes statements from Ranjel and Elvas, and from De Soto's letter and adds that

"all clearly imply the village was located further up the bay from the landing place (*i.e.* on the same body of water) and in two cases, that the ships finally came to

anchorage 'close' to the town. Again, a glance at the map will disclose that the Terra Ceia site does not meet the requirements. There is no suggestion in the narratives that, after the first landing, the ships went west and then north around Snead Island to Terra Ceia Bay. If they did, they must have drawn less than eight feet at high tide. Also they would have encountered a 'hard' bottom while the narratives refer to a 'soft' bottom." (p. 320)

Well, the Terra Ceia site is "further up" Tampa Bay than Shaws Point. In only one quotation is it said that the ships came near the town and this by Elvas in these words:

"The seamen only remained on board, who going up every day a little with the tide, the end of eight days brought them near to the town." (Bourne, I, 22)

But how near is not stated. "Near" is not as strong a term as "close." Apparently it was assumed that De Soto's large ships drew up close to Shaws Point and that the men, horses and equipment were landed from them directly. On the contrary there is every reason to believe that the large vessels stood off and that the landings were made by means of the small craft. It was therefore not necessary for the ships to "go west and then north around Snead Island to Terra Ceia Bay." They worked on north directly toward the town. As to the nature of the sea bottom in this region there is no statement regarding it in the immediate approach to the town. "Sand" and "mud" are mentioned during the entrance of the vessels into the bay but not later. In speaking of a "hard" bottom I presume reference is made to the use of "hrd" on the charts of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, but if one examines the Survey charts covering the west coast of Florida from San Carlos Bay to Tampa inclusive he will find "hrd" used so constantly that it would be difficult to find an "sft" area at which De Soto might have approached the coast. No rock bottom seems to be indicated anywhere.

Referring to what the narratives have to say of the Ucita site, Mr. Bullen says:

"This description may be applied to the Terra Ceia site only if one assumes the Spanish omitted mentioning two burial mounds and a narrow causeway extending 400 feet in a straight line between one of these mounds and the 'mount' upon which De Soto was housed." (p. 382)

But this assumes: (1) that the mounds in De Soto's day were of the same character, and indeed practically identical with the mounds as they exist now, and (2) that the chroniclers would necessarily supply us with a detailed description of them. Ranjel and Biedma say nothing about mounds, and, if we had only their narratives, it might be objected that there were none there. Elvas speaks of only one mound, that on which the chief's house stood, and does not say whether what he calls the "temple" was on a mound or not. We naturally think that it was but we do not know, and that was four hundred years ago. Mounds may have been built, and removed, in that interval of time.

To quote again:

"The site's suitability as the headquarters of an army is even more questionable. It consisted essentially of a long, high, and broad shell ridge or midden which might conceivably, be large enough to accommodate De Soto's 570 Soldiers, allowing for some crowding. However, as has been mentioned, the ground around the shell ridge is low and dotted with ponds. Extra high tides, such as accompany severe storms, sometimes pass through the shell ridge and inundate the land behind. Space for the expedition's horses and hogs would have been limited." (p. 322)

And still the possibility of such accommodation is not denied. As to the nature of the land around Ucita Elvas says: "The

ground about was very fenny, and encumbered with dense thicket and high trees." (Bourne, I, 23) It is altogether possible that the way in which Terra Ceia is cut off from the mainland may have been regarded as a protection from Indians of unknown force and more than doubtful disposition, and also as limiting to some extent the wanderings of the domestic animals.

Again:

"Ucita is referred to several times in the narratives as a 'port.' Elvas says, 'The Cacique of Mococo came to the "port" ' and De Soto left thirty cavalry and seventy infantry at the port, with provisions for two years.' Rangel writes, 'and there were of them forty horse and sixty foot left in guard of the village and the stuff and the harbor and of the brigantines and boats that were left.' De Biedma also states the rearguard was left in charge of the port.' McGill Bay is scarcely a 'harbor' or 'port.' If Terra Ceia Bay, in spite of its shallow entrance, should be assumed to be the 'port,' the site would seem to be in the wrong location to give protection." (p. 322-3)

The use of the word "port" is here assumed to signify what it does in the complete modern sense, as a harbor into and out of which large vessels may be constantly going. Here it is used as a general term, the point on the coast where the army had first established itself, from which and to which vessels might be sent, but not a first class harbor in our understanding of the word. After they had been unloaded the larger vessels were sent back to Cuba, as we have said, and only the "vergantines" and smaller boats retained. Moreover, by "port" the chroniclers frequently have in mind a location on Tampa Bay in general, not merely an offset from it.

The argument based on an apparent failure hitherto to find any articles at Terra Ceia definitely and probably left by the De Soto expedition I have answered already. I have pointed

out these facts: that De Soto's main army was at Ucita only a month and a half and the detachment left there for only four and a half months longer, while the entire army (except for the company just mentioned) was close to the present Tallahassee for five months, that much material should have been found as a result of the furious battle of Mabila the general location of which is known, and that some should have turned up in the Chickasaw country. But none has. Since a great deal has been made of the amount of material Garcilaso says De Soto brought to Florida, I give the entire paragraph in which the Inca's statement is made:

"The Curaca Mucozo was entertained by Juan de Anasco and the other Spaniards for four days, during which time as well as during the rest of the period that our men were in Hirrihigua, his Indians came and went like ants, never ceasing to take back to their land all that the Spaniards were unable to carry with them. And this amounted to a great deal, for there were more than twenty-five tons of cassava alone (the bread used in the islands of Santo Domingo and Cuba, and their surroundings) besides a large number of cloaks, loose coats, doublets, breeches, hose of all kinds and weights of footwear such as shoes, buskins and sandals. And of arms, there were many cuirasses, bucklers, pikes, lances, and steel helmets. Since the Governor was a man of wealth, he had brought a great abundance of each of these things in addition to such necessary supplies as sails, tackle, pitch, oakum, tallow, ropes, panniers, hampers, anchors, cables, and quantities of iron and steel. It is true that he had taken what he could of these materials with him, but much still remained; and since Mucozo was a friend, the Spaniards were pleased to have him carry away what was left. This his Indians did and were thereby made rich and happy." ("The Florida of the Inca," translated

and edited by John Grier Varner and Jeannette Johnson Varner; the University of Texas Press, Austin, 1951; pages 227-8)

Knowing, as everyone must who has studied first contacts between Europeans and Indians, what a consuming appetite the red men had for metal, failure to find objects of the kind on Terra Ceia signifies little, especially in view of what Garcilaso says about the activities of the Indians, and the other articles would hardly survive to our day. Moreover, if objects of this kind are so likely to be found at De Soto's first headquarters, and it was not at Terra Ceia, when we remember how many Indian sites along this coast have been opened, it is strange that no article identifiable with the De Soto expedition has turned up anywhere.

Regarding the march of De Soto's army overland from his landing place to Ucita, and the manner of its approach to the latter, Mr. Bullen says:

"It will be noted from the map that the Terra Ceia site could not have been seen from the eastern side of Terra Ceia Bay because of the mile wide bay and the intervening half mile of woods on the opposite side. The only place De Soto could have seen that site across water would be from Fletcher Point. That he could have set out from near Shaws Point, gone around the Manatee River, and happened to successfully stumble through the swamps connecting Terra Ceia Bay and Bishop Harbor to eventually reach the only place from which he could have seen the site across water, Fletcher Point, is scarcely possible. And if he had done this, he could have passed around McGill Bay which, incidentally, could never qualify as 'the roadstead of the harbor.'

"It should be noted the text does not imply a trip of twelve leagues was necessary to reach Ucita by land, merely that was the distance De Soto wandered. He did not ex-

pect to have to go such a distance to reach Ucita. Clearly he went around both the village and the roadstead."

(p. 321)

The discussion here must rest mainly on what is told us in Ranjel's narrative which is as follows:

"On Trinity Sunday, June 1, 1539, this army marched by land toward the village, taking as guides four Indians that Johan de Anasco had captured when in search of the harbor; and they lost their bearings somewhat, either because the Christians failed to understand the Indians or because the latter did not tell the truth. Thereupon the Governor went ahead with some horsemen, but since they were unfamiliar with the land they wearied the horses following deer and floundering in the streams and swamps for twelve leagues till they found themselves opposite the village on the other side of the roadstead of the harbor, which they could not pass around." (Bourne, II, 55)

Elvas says that it took the army, evidently the main army, two days to reach Ucita and there can be little doubt of this because it was of course moving much more slowly than De Soto's cavalry detachment; but, although it had to pass around "great creeks which run up from the bay," nothing is said of any body of water near Ucita "which they could not pass around," nor is there mention of any such difficulty by Garcilaso. How did it happen then that, although floundering through swamps, De Soto came out on a body of water he could not pass around and yet one which seemed to have occasioned the rest of the army no difficulty? Most certainly it was not Tampa Bay nor could it have been the body of water in which his fleet was anchored, supposing that not to have been Tampa Bay, because, even if De Soto had not wandered, a circuit of twelve leagues would not have carried him around either. After entering the bay an unspecified dis-

tance the vessels were anchored four leagues back. How did De Soto perform the remarkable feat of coming blindly upon the wrong side of a body of water which apparently occasioned the rest of the army no difficulty? Perhaps Oviedo who has transmitted to us Ranjel's diary has led us astray as well as De Soto. But I think the language need not indicate physical inability to reach the village by land, only that weariness and darkness prevented them temporarily from completing the circuit. If the "harbor" of which they speak was Terra Ceia Bay they may have thought it necessary to wait for their small boats to ferry them over. But, as I have pointed out, the objection to the word "harbor" as applied to either Terra Ceia Bay or McGill Bay is based on an unnecessarily exaggerated use of the term. These bays were at least harbors for canoes or there would have been no Indian villages there, and, as has already been said, the "vergantines" of the Spaniards drew little more water. It may be added that in his letter De Soto speaks of Ucita as on an "ancon," not a "baya," and the former term was applied by the Spaniards to a very much smaller inlet than the latter.

When Ranjel writes that they came out "opposite the village on the other side of the roadstead," we naturally think that the main village confronted them, but from the character of the remains on the island it is reasonable to suppose that the population was considerable and that it exploited the whole territory to the full. That at times there were out-settlements or camps on the eastern side of Terra Ceia is indeed indicated by the shellheaps and the Kennedy mound on Mr. Bullen's map, and regarding the latter he says: "There should have been an Indian village nearby."

De Soto knew in what general direction he should march in search of that village but he became lost, travelled blindly until late at night, and all we know of the outcome is contained in the few words of Ranjel. One would naturally think

of Terra Ceia Bay as the body of water which confronted him at nightfall, but I would not be appalled if it should have been McGill. Failure of Elvas or Garcilaso to mention such an obstruction may mean merely that De Soto had sent back word which enabled the main army to avoid it.

Conclusion

Criticism adversely to the identification of the Terra Ceia site as De Soto's headquarters is largely the result, I think, of a failure to understand the kind of headquarters De Soto was looking for, what the chroniclers mean by a "port" and a "harbor," the depth of water demanded, and the draught of the only vessels said to have reached the Indian village. For instance, Mr. Bullen compares what the documents say with what he himself understands by the terms "port" and "harbor," and the sort of site he thinks they ought to have chosen. Regarding the number and type of mounds, it is too much to expect a detailed description. De Soto's men were not interested in the subject. As to the suitability of the Terra Ceia site from a consideration of the nature of the terrain, I submit that what Elvas says corresponds very well with what exists. Although Garcilaso enumerates a long list of articles landed at Ucita by De Soto, in the same paragraph he informs us that Mucozo's Indians "came and went like ants, never ceasing to take back to their land all that the Spaniards were unable to carry with them." When it is asserted that the Terra Ceia site does not "meet the requirements" laid down in the documents, it seems to me the critic is thinking of requirements which he himself has laid down.

But the documentary evidence cited by me in my earlier communication and which I need not repeat proves beyond reasonable doubt that both the landing place of De Soto and his first headquarters in Florida were on the south side of Tampa Bay between the Gulf and the entrance of Hillsboro. Within the region so circumscribed I have located sites which seem to conform with the statements of our authorities in a satisfactory manner.

AN EDUCATOR LOOKS AT FLORIDA IN 1884

A letter of Ashley D. Hurt to his wife

***Edited by* SAMUEL PROCTOR**

St. James Hotel
Tallahassee, Fla.
July 27th, 1884 ¹

My darling wife, ²

I came up here yesterday as I told you on Friday I should. I expected to be entertained by Mr. L'Engle, ³ but when I met him yesterday, he told me that his wife was very sick and he could not invite me to his house. So I am at the hotel, but will go back tomorrow to Lake City, ⁴ as I cannot afford to pay board at two places.

The trustees meet here on the 31 - inst. - which is Thursday - and I shall come back on Wednesday to Tallahassee. It is only some hundred and twenty or thirty miles, but over a very dusty road. Well, you don't care much about descriptions of earth, but as I am more interested in that than in any other country, I'll talk about my trip and its concomitants. I left Lake City at about 11 o'clock in the morning, and we stopped about every twenty miles with hot boxes, which had

(Ashley Davis Hurt, first president of the Florida Agricultural College, was a native of Petersburg, Virginia (1834). He was educated at the University of Virginia, the University of Bonn, and received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Berlin. After serving in the Confederate Navy he became principal of the Louisville, Kentucky, high school. In the summer of 1884 he was appointed president of the newly established Florida Agricultural College at Lake City. Later he held the chair of Greek in Tulane University. Dr. Hurt died March 10, 1898. The original of the following letter was presented to the University of Florida by his daughter, Mrs. H. W. Robinson of New Orleans.)

1. According to its letterhead, the St. James Hotel was "centrally located, one block from the Capitol . . . newly furnished and carpeted throughout."
2. Mary Bruce Johns Hurt.
3. Henry A. L'Engle was State Treasurer in Governor Bloxham's cabinet, 1881-1885, and was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Florida Agricultural College.
4. Site of the Florida Agricultural College.

to be cooled and oiled. Then the engine broke down on one side and the car I was in caught on fire from a hot box, the blazing grease and "waste" rising so high. Water from the tender, however, was brought and the fire was soon put out.

We reached Tallahassee, of course, several hours late - The road for 50 miles runs through a very uninteresting country, from L. City to Madison. Here, at the last named place, the hills began, and from Madison to Ancilla the country is very fine and interesting. Then it drops off again into the monotone of Florida lowlands until Monticello Junction is reached. Here it changes again and improves in beauty until Tallahassee is reached, the most beautiful region I have ever seen in the south. I cannot describe it to you properly, for it is a changing picture at every turn, but, I believe, there are few prettier landscapes in the world than the environs of Tallahassee.

The college ought certainly to have been placed here, and Lake City only got it by offering \$15,000, while Tallahassee offered 200 acres of beautiful land, her seminary and her good will. They simply made a big mistake, and the result will be that the Ag. College of Florida will be absolutely nothing. I know I am in a swamped boat, but it is too late to do anything but try to get to land. The trouble is, there is no money for the college to draw on, and I'm afraid the Legislature will not appropriate any. The different sections of Florida hate each other like the Devil, and the day is distant when one section will vote an appropriation which will benefit another.

But, to go back to my description. Tallahassee is a city set on a hill, indeed. Its streets are all of red clay and as hard as a pavement. Bicycles do finely on the compact roads, and are a good deal used by the young men. The town has a dillapidated look with its decaying houses, but a glorious future is, no doubt, in store for it, as such a country cannot long

now be kept hid from immigrants. I would consent now to live a thousand years here and never go away, so beautiful is it.⁵

I took a hack at the depot for a quarter—that is the general charge all over Florida, and all the hacks and horses are, more or less, owned by negroes - and found comfortable quarters at this hotel. I washed and dusted myself and then went to the Capitol to see Mr. L'Engle, the Treasurer of the state. He soon took me into the Governor's room and I made the acquaintance of Gov. Bloxham,⁶ a man who is lauded to the skies by some and damned to the nether world by others, Mr. Moodie included. I found him a fine talker and, altogether, a very charming man. His head is magnificent and a finer brow Jove never had. He told me he was prepared to find a very great man in me, if one half that my friends in Ky. said of me was true, Willis,⁷ Blackburn,⁸ and Proctor Knott⁹ had written him such commendations of me. You know they are all so well acquainted with me, that what they say, they know to be true!

Mr. L'Engle then took me to drive in his buggy behind one of the best mares I ever saw, and we passed through beauties I did not imagine were in Florida. The hills are superb in their greenery, and the corn is just as good as in Ky. They are pulling fodder now, and, of course, the effect is not so good as earlier. There are no pines, scarcely, to be seen, but oaks, hickory, walnut, pecan, and all of immense size. I saw several specimens of a rare species of cedar named *Torрея*, for the botanist Torrey.¹⁰ It is found nowhere in the

5. For a contemporary description of Tallahassee see George M. Barbour's *Florida For Tourists, Invalids and Settlers* (New York, 1882), 79-80.

6. William D. Bloxham, Governor of Florida, 1881-1885 and 1897-1901.

7. Albert Shelby Willis (1843-1897), Congressman from Kentucky (1877-1887), and first American envoy and minister to Hawaii.

8. Joseph Clay Styles Blackburn (1838-1918), Kentucky Congressman (1875-1885) and United States Senator (1885-1897).

9. James Proctor Knott (1830-1911) Governor of Kentucky, 1883-1887.

10. John Torrey (1796-1873), distinguished American botanist, who published the earlier portions of *Flora of North America*, with the assistance of Asa Gray.

world except just around Tallahassee, and is as beautiful as it is rare. The oleanders, cape jasmines, sweet olive, japonicas and roses are past description, although the people say that all the flowers are gone. There are orange trees, too, but they are not at home. The hedges of sweet olive are exquisite, and crepe myrtle trees in full bloom are too common to notice. Figs to perfection are seen everywhere, and the largest loquat, or Japan plums I have ever seen - trees, I mean, as the fruit ripens in February.

After my drive, I got a good supper and had a large tub of water brought to my room for a bath, and then enjoyed the only first rate night's rest I have had in Florida. There were no bed bugs, mosquitoes, nor gnats to molest me and make me afraid, and I slept until 8 o'clock this morning - a rare thing for me, as I wake up every morning at 3 1/2 o'clock, when sleep is gone for good.

When I was dressing I found I had forgotten to put up a single cravat in my valise, and the one I wore yesterday was outrageously dirty with railroad dust. I found an Israelite, however, soon, in whom there is no guile, and soon exchanged 75 cents with him for a stunning scarf, the mildest and gentlest he had, a mixture of yellow, red, black, and blue. I am ashamed of it, but I apologize for it when I am introduced to anybody, and say that all nature here is so gay that I cannot get a garment rich enough. I think the preacher at the Episcopal church took especial delight in alluding to purple and fine linen, Solomon and the lilies, just on account of my cravat. Even the soloist in the choir sang "Behold the lilies of the field," and kept her eyes fixed on my cravat, taking it for a Japan lily or a tiger lily. The preacher gave Talmage a dig for printing his sermons, because, said he, people stop going to church (and putting money into the box and the

plate) when they can read sermons for five cents at home.¹¹ I have no doubt that in 500 years there will be no more pulpit oratory - it will be a matter of history only. See if Mr. Calvert does not agree with me that it has seen its best days.

Before going to church I took a walk - and passing by a beautiful place I heard some one call "professor!" It was Gov. Bloxham, sitting at a window, and he made me come in and sit until church time, introducing me to his wife, and showing me the protrait in crayon of his daughter who died last November, just 19 years old. They both seemed broken down and he told me that this sad calamity determined him to be no more a candidate for public office, but to practice his profession of the law quietly to the end. His surviving child, a son, is an imbecile. My visit was delightful, and he begged me to come often to see him, sans ceremonie. He and his wife went to the Episcopal church, also. Here, too, I met Ex Gov. Walker, now circuit judge in the Tallahassee District.¹² He was unanimously elected Gov. just after the war, before the carpet baggers got into power. He promised to come to the hotel at 5 o'clock to take me to walk, and did so, taking me into several houses of his friends on our way. One was the house of Mrs. Archer and Miss Brown, old ladies from Fauquier Co., Virginia and sisters of one of Florida's early governor's.¹³ Gov. W. is from Oldham Co., Ky., and his father was from Dinwiddie Co., Va. He showed me many beauties of Tallahassee, and told me he fought hard to have the Ag. College located here. I am sorry he didn't succeed. He then took me to his house to tea, where I met his wife and a

11. Thomas Dewitt Talmage (1832-1902), perhaps the best-known Presbyterian minister in the United States during his life-time. Although his critics called him a pulpit clown and mountebank, thousands admired him and throngs came to hear him preach.

12. David S. Walker, Governor of Florida, 1866-1868, and early proponent of public school education in Florida.

13. Thomas Brown, Governor of Florida, 1849-1853.

Miss Somebody who calls Aunt Matilda Hunt, Aunt Mat. She has never seen her, nor, indeed, any of the family, but Dick Hunt, when he studied medicine in Atlanta. Mrs. W. is the Gov.'s second wife and has a little child 8 years old who knows Ethel Allen well. I got some really good coffee for supper, along with other goodies. They made me eat some orange blossom honey, drink some scuppernong wine made by Mrs. W., and drink a glass of Jersey milk from the Gov.'s fine cow. With ice it was capital (no pun intended), indeed, bully (no pun). Everything was elegant and beautiful, and no red table cloth. Indeed, the bare, well polished table is prettier for tea than any cloth can be. Sugar figs, too, we had - a small very sweet variety - peeled and served in glass fig dishes. The Gov. insisted on piloting me back to my hotel when I left at 9 o'clock and begged me to come see him often.

Now it is 11 1/2 o'clock and I must go to bed. I expect to ask Mr. L'Engle for \$200 in the morning and then take the 1 o'clock train back to Lake City - Now, I've written you a nice letter, and you must tell me how you like it. If I write too long and tedious letters, you must say so. God bless you for your love. Mr. L'Engle says he sent me a letter yesterday to L. C. from Pewee Valley. Did you write here?

Your devoted husband,

Ash H.

JOHN BATTERSON STETSON, JR., 1884-1952

Those who write of Florida's history, especially of the colonial era, should ever be grateful to John B. Stetson, Jr.

Following his father, from whom John B. Stetson University took its name, he became President of the Board of Trustees of that University and served for more than thirty years. An interest in historical scholarship led naturally to an interest in Florida's history. About 1918 he determined to further the writing of our State's history by collecting the needed materials, encouraging the writing of monographs and series of volumes, and supporting their publication. Visiting every section of the State, he secured the cooperation of numerous interested Floridians and winter residents, together with public libraries in and out of Florida, each of whom agreed to subscribe to the projected publications at the cost of printing alone. He then organized the Florida State Historical Society, and these subscribers became the body of its membership.

This was during a period when the Florida Historical Society was not active and he proposed a merger of the two societies, which was declined. In 1940 a merger was again considered but not consummated. So there was never any union of the two. Nevertheless, from the beginning there was the closest cooperation between them, and they worked together toward a common goal - the writing of Florida's history. Many members and several officials were common to the two, and Mr. Stetson was vice president and honorary vice president of the Florida Historical Society from 1941 until his death on November 14 last.

Dr. James A. Robertson soon joined with Mr. Stetson as editor of the projected series on Florida history. In all, eleven titles (16 volumes) were published, the first in 1922; the last, in 1933, being a translation by Dr. Robertson of the "True

Relation of . . . a Gentleman of Elvas." Some of the foremost historical scholars in their respective fields were induced to write for this series, and the publications have taken a place in the forefront of Florida historical works.

In appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Stetson the editor of our *Quarterly* wrote (the issue of January 1926):

"To the interest, the unceasing efforts, and the generosity of Mr. John B. Stetson Jr., President of the Board of Trustees of John B. Stetson University, and now United States Minister to Poland, the writer of Florida history and its readers will be under extraordinary obligation. . . . We Floridians are deeply grateful to Mr. Stetson . . . and Dr. Robertson for their interest, for what they have accomplished, and for what they plan to do. Their work should be an incentive, as it is an example, to the Florida Historical Society and to those of our members who are directing its efforts. Through the continuous cooperation with them that is assured, the knowledge of and the writing of Florida's history, which has been so limited in the past, must make steady and rapid progress."

All of this was and continued to be true, for the revival of the Florida Historical Society in 1924 and the reestablishment of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* was in good part due to the example of John Batterson Stetson Jr. (JCY)

BOOK REVIEW

Three Months in the Confederate Army, by Henry Hotze.
With an Introduction and Notes by Richard Barksdale
Harwell. 38 pp. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Ala-
bama Press. 1952. \$1.00.

The Southern Confederacy's main chance lay in interven-
tion on its behalf by the major European powers. In recogni-
tion of this fact, the new government set out to create a
climate of favorable opinion in England and France. In No-
vember, 1861, Secretary of State Robert Hunter appointed as
principal propagandist in London - though he used the dis-
arming title "Commercial Agent" - one Henry Hotze of Mo-
bile, Alabama.

Only twenty-seven years old at the time, the Swiss born
Hotze entered vigorously upon his new assignment. Within
three weeks of his arrival in London he had placed a leading
article in Lord Palmerston's *Morning Post* - and the article
was so good that many thought it from Palmerston's own pen.
His success thereafter was spectacular.

On his own initiative, and with meager backing, the young
journalist soon launched a Confederate paper, the *Index*, the
first issue of which appeared in May, 1862. For more than
three years the *Index*, with its Confederate sponsorship soft-
pedalled, dispensed news stories, feature articles and general
information designed to produce a friendly attitude toward
the Southern people and their cause. That the Confederacy
ultimately was defeated was due to no failure on the part of
the *Index* or its youthful editor. His achievement was nothing
short of magnificent.

Before receiving the London assignment, Hotze had served
three months in the Third Alabama Regiment. During this
period he apparently kept a journal. Shortage of copy, and a
brilliant inspiration to turn his army experience to propaganda

uses, caused Hotze to publish serially in the *Index* his "Three Months in the Confederate Army."

Recently, Richard Harwell had the happy inspiration of recovering Hotze's war memoirs from the rare and little known files of the *Index* and making them available to general readers. To a facsimile reproduction of the columns containing the narrative he prefixed a worthy introduction, accompanied by notes; he also prepared notes for the text. The idea was an especially good one, and while the technical part of the undertaking fails to measure up to the editorial aspect, the cause of scholarship has been well served by the project.

Since Hotze's military service was limited largely to camp routine, his narrative is hardly a stirring account of soldier life. But as a skillful propaganda piece it is extremely interesting. In the process of recounting his personal military history, the writer was able to get across unobtrusively such persuasive points as the loftiness of Southern patriotism, the eagerness of all classes to serve in the ranks, the high quality of military leadership and the superiority of Confederate soldiers over those of the North. Throughout the account may be discerned subtle suggestion of close similarity between the high-spirited Southerners and their esteemed British cousins.

BELL IRVIN WILEY,

Emory University.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

JACKSONVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Number five of the Society's *News Letter*, issued by a committee of which Miss Dena Snodgrass is chairman, appeared in November, announcing the Quarterly Program Meeting for November 19. The feature was a paper read by Mr. Herbert Lamson on "Early Jacksonville Families." A special invitation was extended to descendants of early families in the area.

Mr. Lamson first told of an Indian village on the site, of which little more than the name, Ossachite, is now known. Robert Pritchard was the first known white settler in 1791, but during the upheaval of the so-called Patriot War, the site was abandoned. Permanent settlement was begun in 1816 when Zachariah Hogans built a home within the present limits of Jacksonville, to be followed by Juan Maestre, I. D. Hart, and others coming in with the change of flags in 1821. At that time Hart purchased eighteen acres which is now a large part of the business section of Jacksonville for \$72, and he is considered the founder of the city, which was established as a town in 1822.

Recently elected officials of the Society are: James A. Austin, President; Joseph E. McCarthy, First Vice President; H. H. Buckman, III, Second Vice President; Miss Martha Lee Segui, Recording Secretary; Mrs. James R. Stockton, Corresponding Secretary; Miss Dena Snodgrass, Treasurer; Miss Audrey Broward, Archivist; Herbert Lamson, Historian. Directors: Mrs. Karl Bardin, Mrs. Frances Ewell, Mrs. George Couper Gibbs, Mrs. Linwood Jeffreys, Raymond H. King, Mrs. W. S. Manning, Mrs. J. L. Medlin, Mrs. W. E. Mott, Miss Florence Moorish, Warren Wattles, Mrs. Oscar Rawls. Advisory Board: William D. Barfield, Burton Barrs, D. Jordan Carrison, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert M. Corse, Richard P. Daniel, Frank H. Elmore, Jr., Albert C. Holt, Edward Jelks, H. H. Buckman, II, Webster Merritt, Bayard B. Shields.

ST. PETERSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This Society, one of the oldest local societies in the State, has recently been reorganized, and we are glad to publish the following report of its activities:

The St. Petersburg Historical Society, recently reorganized and reactivated under the leadership and direction of its President, E. C. Robison, is rapidly capturing the interest of the public of St. Petersburg in relation to its educational program which is conducted with the schools of Pinellas County. This provides daily visitation and lecture courses by Mrs. W. C. Wheatley to children of the public schools of the County in the Society's new Museum building. The program permits school children to visit the Museum and receive lecture courses, accompanied by teachers.

During the first five weeks of the last spring term some fourteen hundred students visited the Museum, and more than eighteen hundred during the first month of the current fall term. Mrs. Wheatley, who is the administrative assistant to the Curator has cooperated fully with the school officials and has stressed visual education, employing the use of the exhibits of the Museum in the subjects of biology, botany, entomology, mineralogy and zoology. The lecture period for these classes averages twenty minutes.

The Museum has received some valuable gifts, one of which is an outstanding collection of rare native costumes and utensils from China, Japan, Korea, Turkey and Africa, given by a world traveler. Another collection consists of more than one hundred and twenty pipes from the Indian Age down to 1900, including finely carved wood, Meersham-pipes from Germany and England, as well as Turkish water and metal pipes and Calabash pipes from South Africa. These were received from Mrs. Orvil Ray of St. Petersburg. A recent donation from a Pennsylvania source has brought a collection of five hundred and thirty-four walking canes of rare and exotic woods, some

of which were made from timbers from the homes of early American presidents and other historical characters. It is said to be the largest cane collection in the United States.

The officers and directors of the Society have shown renewed interest and increased activity and all indications are that the current year will be a banner one for the Museum in the way of paid admissions. The other officers are: Alfred E. Newman, Vice President, and John C. Blocker, Chairman of the Operating Committee. Mrs. Oma M. Cross has been recently appointed curator to succeed Merritt E. Gill who retired.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

This Association is carrying out an extensive program of marking historic sites in their whole area. The fourth of these was unveiled at Miami Airport on November third. The marker is placed as a reminder that this airport was the first customs airport of entry in the United States Atlantic mainland, such designation having been made by the United States Treasury Department on October 16, 1928. The airport was then known as Pan American Field, and it immediately became the largest international airport in scope in the United States - a position it still holds. The ceremony was held on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pan American Airways' first flight from Key West to Havana, a notable date in world aviation.

PENSACOLA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Pensacola Historical Society, which has been more or less inactive for some time has been reorganized through the efforts of T. T. Wentworth Jr., a member of the board of directors of the Florida Historical Society. Officials recently elected are: Mr. Wentworth, president; Mrs. Frank G. Morrill, 1st vice president; J. F. Busey, 2nd vice president; Miss Occie Clubbs, secretary; Mrs. Pauline Hoover, treasurer. Directors

are J. D. Carroll, R. N. Reedy, Dr. J. J. Niven, Mrs. Calvin Todd, together with the officials *ex officio*. Mrs. J. Stewart Milner is chairman of the program committee, with Mr. J. Stewart Milner and Mrs. E. M. Nell as members. Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month.

At the first program meeting Mr. J. Stewart Milner read a paper on the extraordinary wanderings of Cabeza de Vaca from Florida to the Pacific, an eight year journey (A.D. 1528-1536) through a country never before seen by white men.

Besides the holding of program meetings, the Society plans to mark additional sites of historic interest in and around Pensacola, and to arouse a greater interest in the history of their ancient city.

ST. LUCIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The latest addition to the growing list of local historical organizations in the state is the St. Lucie County Historical Society. In an area rich in Indian and pioneer East Coast and Indian River history the ideas of history-minded people for a local society emerged from the nuclear stage with the construction of a new St. Lucie County library at Fort Pierce and the offer of Mr. W. I. Fee of Fort Pierce to donate historical items to the library. The St. Lucie County Library Association, acting on Mr. Fee's offer, appointed a historical committee composed of David Fee, chairman, E. C. Collins, Josephine W. Humphries, Verne Kretschmer, Ora E. Burney, L. W. Halbe, W. I. Fee, Helen DeFriest, Clare Register, Emma Saunders, Pearl Chew, Dewey Crawford, and Betty Summerlin,

The committee decided to organize and incorporate as the St. Lucie County Historical Society and to invite all others who are interested to membership. Tentative plans are to construct a wing to the new library building to be designated the Florida Room. This room would house the historical society and its collection.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

In the last issue of the *Quarterly* there was an account of the successful organization of the Hillsborough County Historical Commission. On November 14 last, the Commission opened their Museum with ceremonies in spacious and elegant rooms in the new courthouse in Tampa. Already numerous historical exhibits have been installed and others are in hand to be placed on view. The response of the public, both in donating historical treasures and in attendance is above expectations.

County Museums

Most Florida county courthouses are already fully occupied, but in a few space might be found for historical exhibits relating to the county's history; and when new courthouses are planned, thought should be given, as was done in Hillsborough County, to this important part of civic interest and public service. Usually a county historical society or chartered county historical commission would be necessary for such allotment of space; but such a museum, more than anything else, would engender and nourish interest in the past of the community and the area, as well as in the history of our State and country.

FLORIDA HIGHWAYS

A brief history of transportation in Florida by Dr. J. E. Dovell was recently noted here (XXX,303). Continuing the subject, he has written "The Development of Florida's Highways." Copies of either one will be sent without charge to any resident of Florida by the publisher, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida, Gainesville.

THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL MEETING

To all members of the Florida Historical Society:

Greeting - The Annual Meeting of the Society is called to be held in the city of Lakeland, at the invitation of Florida Southern College, on March 27, 28, 1953. Dr. Charles T. Thrift Jr., First Vice President of our Society, who is in charge of local arrangements, including the historical program, promises a number of interesting papers. It is sincerely hoped that many of the members will attend, as Lakeland is centrally located and should draw members and their friends from all sections of the State.

It is at the Annual Meeting that the membership learns of the functioning of our organization, what its objectives and problems are; also, a fellowship is engendered by personal contact between the members which is very beneficial - all tending to build up the Society to a more formidable unit of historical activity and culture.

Please make your plans to be present. We have not held our Annual Meeting with Florida Southern since 1928, but those who were there still remember the cordial hospitality of our hosts. If you have not seen Florida Southern campus in recent years, that alone would be worth coming for. A circular, with the program, hotel rates, and other data, will be mailed to you later.

Sincerely yours

JOHN C. BLOCKER, *President*

MEMBERSHIP OF THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEW MEMBERS

(Sept., Oct., Nov.)

Nominated by:

George Hornell Morris, <i>Lakeland</i>	Dr. Charles T. Thrift, Jr.
Mrs. Carl Rune Hagborn, <i>Canton, Ill.</i>	Edward C. Williamson
Earl L. Bell, <i>Jacksonville</i> (Fellow member)	Edward C. Williamson
Robert M. Hatcher, <i>Bellevue</i>	Miss Sue Yent

Robert L. Sumner, <i>Bellevue</i>	Miss Sue Yent
Julian Granberry, <i>Gainesville</i>	Edward C. Williamson
Dr. Philip Dann, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	John C. Blocker
Dr. Howard H. Curd, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	John C. Blocker
Dr. Charles K. Donegan, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	John C. Blocker
Dr. C. S. Franekle, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	John C. Blocker
Dr. G. V. McLendon, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	John C. Blocker
Walton H. Owens, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Carl T. Johnson, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Walter C. Gregory, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	Alfred C. Newman
Clarence V. Griffin, <i>Howie-in-the-Hills</i>	
(Life member)	Mrs. Franklin L. Ezell
Terry McCall Richardson, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Roy S. Philpot, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Mrs. Sue Alexander, Fletcher High School Library, <i>Jacksonville Beach</i>	Edward C. Williamson
Mrs. G. L. Gerow, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Miss Kathryn Harrison, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Mrs. Frank G. Morrill, <i>Pensacola</i>	T. T. Wentworth, Jr.
Robert Reid Bowen, <i>Jacksonville</i>	
(Fellow member)	Mrs. Herbert E. Williams
Miss Clare Bowen, <i>Tallahassee</i>	Mrs. Cary D. Landis
John Melvin DeGrove, <i>Winter Park</i>	Russell H. DeGrove
O. L. Dayton, Jr., <i>Dade City</i>	John C. Blocker
Alan Patterson Stuckey, <i>Tampa</i>	James W. Covington and Miss Jocelyn J. Cooper
Jules M. Burguières, <i>Louisa P. O., La.</i>	
(\$25.00 Fellow member)	Miss Dena Snodgrass
Dr. Roscoe D. Cummings, <i>St. Petersburg</i>	John C. Blocker
L. W. Halbe, <i>Fort Pierce</i>	Sam C. Gay

SUBSCRIBERS TO THE QUARTERLY

New Smyrna Beach High School Library	Edward C. Williamson
Gainesville Public Library	Edward C. Williamson
Auburndale High School Library	Edward C. Williamson
North Texas State College, <i>Denton, Texas</i>	
Summerlin Institute Library, <i>Bartow</i>	Edward C. Williamson
Titusville High School Library	Edward C. Williamson
Bunnell High School Library	Edward C. Williamson
Mainland High School Library, <i>Daytona Beach</i>	Edward C. Williamson

MEMBERSHIP ROLL OF THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

** Life membership

* Fellow membership

t Institutional membership

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 Samuel J. Brown
 Ripley P. Bullen
 William G. Carleton
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 Samuel W. Getzen
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 t University of Miami
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W. H. Fuller
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Sylvia D. Spencer
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Mrs. A. J. Moulds
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Xavier L. Pellicer
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Ft. Pierce

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W. A. Leffler
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Holly Hill

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Cecilia A. Harris
Calvert Smith

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C. Copeland Smith
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American Antiquarian Society	Georgia Historical Society Quarterly
American Association for State and Local History	Iowa Journal of History
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American Jewish Archives	Kansas State Historical Society
Arkansas Historical Association	Library of Congress Annex
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Catholic Historical Review	Maryland Historical Society
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Minnesota Historical Society	Oklahoma Historical Society
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Mississippi History Journal	Pacific Northwest Quarterly
Missouri Historical Society	Pennsylvania Historical Society
National Society of Sons of the American Revolution	Kentucky State Historical Society
National Archives	Rhode Island Historical Society
New Mexico Historical Review	South Carolina Historical Society
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EXCHANGES (*Foreign*)

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Comunicaciones y Obras Publicas,	<i>de Janeiro, Brazil</i>
<i>San Angel, Mexico</i>	Revue De La Societe, <i>Port-au-Prince,</i>
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Economista Peruano, <i>Lima, Peru</i>	Revista de Indias, <i>Madrid, Spain</i>
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