

THE FIRST FLORIDA CAVALRY (US): UNION ENLISTMENT IN THE CIVIL WAR'S
SOUTHERN PERIPHERY

by

TYLER CAMPBELL
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2014

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2018

ABSTRACT

In 1863, along the southern periphery of the American Civil War, a Union Brigadier General began recruiting Southern white men into a Union cavalry regiment known as the First Florida Cavalry (US). This study investigates the regiment and those who enlisted in it to show the fluidity of Southern loyalty during the Civil War and the conditions of the Deep South Homefront that existed on the periphery of Union occupation and continue to exist on the periphery of Civil War historiography. While scholars have recently addressed many aspects of Southern dissent in the Civil War, significantly less attention has been given to those who fought in the Union ranks. Utilizing previously unused archival materials paired with geospatial mapping, this study reveals the lives of Southerners who enlisted and their homeland. It examines both those who formed the regiment and those who enlisted in it. This analysis illuminates common soldier experience in the Sectional Conflict's Southern borderland. This study concludes that the volatile nature of loyalty and the needs of the homefront in the Deep South encouraged both Union generals to form the First Florida Cavalry and Southerners to enlist in it. While this assessment analyzes only several hundred men, it provides insights into the larger populations of Southern Union soldiers throughout the Deep South and their competing loyalties to nation and community.

For Olivia

Without whom, none of this would have been possible

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who have contributed to the success of this project. I would like to thank my fellow graduate students, including Kayla, Mike, and Drew for listening to my long rantings about this topic and for giving me useful feedback. I would also like to thank the staff of the National Archives in Washington D.C. Their assistance in locating pension files and other hidden documents impacted the quality of this work greatly. I owe James Cusick at the University of Florida Smathers Library some special thanks for finding a non-circulating text on the regiment and saving me a trip to Gainesville.

There are so many professors at the University of Central Florida that have helped me in my research for this project. Dr. Dan Murphree and Dr. Amelia Lyons have given me feedback on concepts and pushed me to ask the hard questions. My Thesis Committee members, Dr. Ezekiel Walker and Dr. John Sacher have given me incredible feedback on every aspect of this project and helped me understand the value of this work. Most importantly though, I would like to thank my Thesis Advisor Dr. Barbara Gannon. I have been lucky to have a supportive and involved advisor that has pushed me and helped me to develop this thesis from a casual conversation three years ago into the Thesis it is today.

Finally, I must thank Olivia, my wife, support system, and the love of my wife. Thank you for sticking with me through the countless stressful nights and for always supporting me in my endeavors. Your support is what has gotten me to the place where I am now.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
INTRODUCTION: A DIVIDED SOUTH	1
CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY AND GENERALSHIP.....	21
CHAPTER 2: TORIES, REFUGEES, AND DESERTERS, WHY THEY ENLISTED.....	45
CHAPTER 3: REGIMENTAL ACTIONS AND DESERTION	69
CONCLUSION: A STILL DIVIDED SOUTH.....	101
REFERENCES	108

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Weiss’s Map of Pensacola Bay, c. 1860, courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory	23
Figure 2 Enlistee’s Place of Birth	58
Figure 3 Enlistee’s 1860 Residence	59
Figure 4 Military Map of Southern Alabama and Florida, by Peter Haines, Courtesy of Library of Congress.....	74
Figure 5 Desertion in the First Florida Cavalry from Compiled Service Records	95

INTRODUCTION: A DIVIDED SOUTH

On January 7, 1861, Leonidas W. Spratt, a secession commissioner from South Carolina stood before the Florida Secession Convention and encouraged the delegates to vote for secession. “Within this government,” Spratt said, “two societies have become developed. The one is the society of one race, the other of two races. The one is based on free labor, the other slave labor. The one embodies the social principle that equality is the right of man; the other, the social principle that equality is not the right of man, but the right of equals only.”¹ His speech focused on the divisions between North and South and the similarities among all white Southerners. The message resonated with the delegates, who voted three days later to secede from the United States by an overwhelming majority of sixty-two to seven.

Concurrently, Alabama’s Secession Convention debated the same issue. Only a day after Spratt’s speech, another South Carolina Secession Commissioner, Andrew Calhoun, the son of John C. Calhoun, addressed the Alabama delegates and claimed, “A common cause unites Alabama and South Carolina and the other cotton States.” His speech also centered on the united nature of whites in the slave states and their shared need for independence.² Like Florida, the Alabama Convention agreed with Calhoun’s rhetoric and seceded from the Union on January 11 by a vote of sixty-one to thirty-nine.³

¹ Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 42-3.

² *Ibid.*, 42-3.

³ “Ordinance of Secession, 1861, Florida Convention of the People,” *Florida Memory*, Series S972, 1861.

While Spratt rightfully argued that “the contest was inevitable” between the two societies, Calhoun and Spratt depiction of a united South in opposition to the north ignored the many internal divisions that existed as well.⁴ While many whites throughout the Deep South embraced the ideology expressed by the secession commissioners, a large minority disagreed with secession and with the formation of the Confederate States of America that followed. Dissent took various forms and evolved as the war progressed, but all dissenters shared a desire to change the conditions thrust upon them because of secession. Some dissenters took up arms against the newly formed country and joined the Union Army. One example of Southern Union service is the First Florida Cavalry, formed on the Southern periphery of the Confederacy in Pensacola, Florida.

Southern Union soldiers in Florida’s panhandle and the southern region of Alabama acted upon a variety of loyalties to family, community, and nation, in enlisting in this Pensacola-based unit. These men created a formidable fighting force in the Southeast Confederacy, and in turn facilitated Union efforts to control the region. In many cases, the enlistees formed a conditional Unionism based less on their passion for the Union cause and more on their local loyalties including their families and communities. Union officers, aware of the needs in the region, capitalized on this conditional Unionism to continue their efforts to restore control over this region and by extension, diminish Confederate officials’ ability to govern this area. A close examination of the regiment’s success suggests that these men’s loyalty to the Union cause withstood the test of campaigning and combat. While some men deserted from the regiment suggesting that their loyalty was limited, the vast majority only did so after combat operations

⁴ Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion*, 43.

ended, suggesting that they understood the importance of their wartime service. Though their services seemed to be a sideshow in a much larger war, they helped the Union Army to control areas on the Southern borderlands and undermined the Confederate authority on the periphery. Overall, the First Florida Cavalry represents a larger group of Southern white dissenting soldiers recruited throughout the slave states, who demonstrated that the secession commissioners' portrayal of a united South was erroneous.

Few studies on Southern white Union regiments exist; however, scholars have spent a great deal of time discussing broader issues of Southern dissent in recent decades. Southern Union soldier studies contributes to larger scholarship assessing dissent and loyalty in the Civil War South. This subfield in Civil War studies is a relatively recent development, because for a long time most Americans, including historians, accepted Southerners' version or memory of the Lost Cause. This memory included a core element expressed by the secession commissioners in 1861, that all Southerners united in the fight against the Union. Accepting this version of history, scholars marginalized Southern dissent as an irrelevant outlier well into the twentieth century.⁵

Challenging this ideology, Scholars began critically analyzing Southern dissent in the 1970s. Historians such as Rollin G. Osterweis, in *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, and Gaines M. Foster, in *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, began reevaluating the Lost Cause ideology overall and prompted others to challenge the Lost Cause as a myth.⁶ These scholars set the groundwork for

⁵ Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924); Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army: A Study of Sectionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932).

⁶ Margaret M. Storey, "Southern Dissent" in *A Companion to The U.S. Civil War*, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014). Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900* (New York: Archon Books, 1973); Charles Regan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1980). Gary W. Gallagher, and

future researchers to study Southerners' divergent loyalties. In an era of change, marked with domestic dissent against the Vietnam War and Civil Rights activism, scholars focused on a more critical approach to studying the Civil War South. Carl N. Degler embodied this shift in his work, *The Other South*, where he argued against the idea of the South as a "monolith."⁷

Building from these works, others interested in southern dissenters' wartime experiences initially focused on the Border States and Northern Confederate states. Works such as Philip Shaw Paludan's *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War*, Wayne K. Durrill's *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion*, and William W. Freehling's *The South vs the South*, elaborated on Degler's argument, focusing mainly on communities in the Border States and Appalachia region, leaving out the Deep South.⁸ Despite their regional bias, these studies documented how dissent divided communities and affected the Confederate war effort.

Building from studies such as McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades* that examined common soldiers' motivations, scholars studying Southern dissent increasingly emphasized dissenters' motivations.⁹ At the same time, they expanded the scope of Southern dissent studies to the Deep South. Scholars analyzed motivating factors, including socioeconomic class, kinship

Alan T. Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

⁷ Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 6-7. Degler established the historical understanding of the presence of large groups of white dissenters that existed throughout the South during the Civil War.

⁸ Philip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981); Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); William W. Freehling, *The South Vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁹ James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

ties, and age, that resulted in varying forms of dissent.¹⁰ Monographs, such as Victoria E. Bynum's *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War*, and Daniel Sutherland's *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*, assessed dissenting populations and exposed the varying reasons Southern dissenters rejected the Confederacy.¹¹ The fault in these studies is that they are focused heavily on civilian dissenters and largely ignored dissenters who took up arms against the Confederate army.¹²

Although there has been a tremendous increase in studies analyzing guerrilla warfare, African American soldiers, and the opposition from within the Confederacy, there is far less research conducted on white Southerners who joined Union regiments.¹³ Richard Nelson Current's *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* is one of the few works to

¹⁰ For socioeconomic class and loyalty see Philip Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1981), Robert Tracy Mckenzie, "Oh! Ours Is a Deplorable Condition": The Economic Impact of the Civil war in Upper East Tennessee" in *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays*, eds. Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson (Knoxville University of Tennessee Press, 1997): 199 – 226.; For kinship ties see, Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

¹¹Victoria E. Bynum, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Sutherland, Daniel E. *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 2009.

¹² James Marten, *Texas Divided: Loyalty and Dissent in the Lone Star State 1856-1874* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990); and Barton Myers' *Rebels Against the Confederacy: North Carolina's Unionists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014) Michael Shannon Mallard, "Faithful Found Among the Faithless": Popular Opposition to the Confederacy in Civil War Mississippi" (Thesis M.A. Mississippi State University, 2002); Adam Domby, "War Within the States: Loyalty, Dissent, and Conflict in Southern Piedmont Communities, 1860 – 1876" (PhD Diss. University of North Carolina, 2016).

¹³ Daniel E. Sutherland ed., *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1999), Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson eds., *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co, 1870); Smith, John David. *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; Barbara A. Gannon, *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

address these soldiers in detail. In his book, Current argues that these soldiers were vital to the Union war effort.¹⁴ He focuses mainly on the Border States, but describes soldiers' presence in all Southern states. A pioneering study, Current's work still contains some gaps. While addressing these soldiers as loyalists in the title, the book does little to explain what motivated these men. Additionally, other books such as James Alex Baggett's *Homegrown Yankees* address specific regiments from other regions of the Confederacy, but focus mainly on the regiments' actions and less on why men enlisted and fought in the regiments.¹⁵ Overall, Current's work provides an analysis of Southern Union soldiers, but leaves room for future research assessing Southern Union soldier's loyalties.

More recent studies reassessing southern dissenter's loyalties and motivations has led to more complex analysis of Civil War dissent overall. In addition to studies focused on specific groups of people, some studies shifted to a state and regional focus. Margaret Stoney's *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* studied dissenters in Alabama, but only those who maintained their loyalty to the Union from the war's onset.¹⁶ Another study by Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: Union Occupation of East North Carolina*, addresses two occupied cities that acted as contraband camps in North Carolina and found that Southerners' loyalties shifted multiple times throughout the war with changing

¹⁴ Richard Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), ix.

¹⁵ James Alex Baggett, *Homegrown Yankees: Tennessee's Union Cavalry in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009);

¹⁶ Margaret Stoney's *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004)

economic and racial conditions.¹⁷ In total, the study of southern dissent remains a vibrant subfield in Civil War studies, with many still unanswered questions.¹⁸

Few scholars have examined these dissenting groups in Florida. The first study to address southern dissent in the state, William Watson Davis' 1913, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, argued that those opposed to the Confederacy in Florida were unorganized individuals who failed to influence the war effort. He did not acknowledge the state's organized Southern Union regiments.¹⁹ Moving into the mid-20th Century, several articles published in the *Florida Historical Quarterly* acknowledging the dissenters' presence, but rarely discussed the nature of their dissent.²⁰

More recent Florida Civil War studies have begun addressing the various opposition groups in the state and their motivations.²¹ George E. Buker's *Blockaders, Refugees, and*

¹⁷ Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

¹⁸ Adam Domy, "War Within the States: Loyalty, Dissent, and Conflict in Southern Piedmont Communities, 1860 – 1876" (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2016); Barton Myers, *Rebels Against the Confederacy: North Carolina's Unionists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁹ William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1964), Chapter X. The Dunning School was a scholarly group based in Columbia University, under William A. Dunning, that supported a Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

²⁰ John F. Reiger, "Secession of Florida from the Union: A Minority Decision?" *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 46. No. 4 (1968) 358-368; Ralph A. Wooster, "The Florida Secession Convention." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 36. No 4. (1958) 373-385. accessed 2 August 2013. URL: <http://www.jstore.org/stable/30139845>. Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962.

²¹ For a recent publication that discredits dissenters in the state see: John A. Adams, *Warrior at Heart: Governor John Milton, King Cotton, and Rebel Florida, 1860-1865* (Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2015). For a discussion on Richard Keith Call see Herbert J. Doherty, *Richard Keith Call: Southern Unionist* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961); For an in depth analysis of Jacksonville's dissenters see Daniel L. Schafer, *Thunder on the River: The Civil War in Northeast Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); Stephen V. Ash, *Firebrand of Liberty: The Story of Two Black Regiments That Changed the Course of the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2008); For South Florida's

Contrabands: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast discusses dissent in the state, focusing on the Second Florida Cavalry (US) in Key West and the blockade along Florida's Gulf Coast.²² Tracy J. Revels' *Florida's Civil War: Terrible Sacrifices* provides the most recent and in-depth analysis of dissent in this state, but she bases her analysis on older secondary source material.²³ Florida's Unionists still remain largely understudied by scholars, leaving out a significant population's role in the sectional conflict.

While scholars have largely neglected the Pensacola-based white Union soldiers, two authors have conducted genealogical research and created regimental histories depicting the actions of the First Florida Cavalry (US) and those who served in the regiment. Mark Curenton's *Tories and Deserters* and Sharon D. Marsh's *The 1st Florida Cavalry Union Volunteers in the Civil War* depict the regiment's actions and provides biographic information on those who served in the unit.²⁴ Marsh's and Curenton's works are invaluable to the study of the First Florida Cavalry and provide detailed information on the regiment's movements and composition, but fall short in assessing why the regiment formed and what motivated men to enlist in it.

dissenters see Irvin D.S. Winsboro and William B. Mack, "Blue Water, Brown Water, and Confederate Disloyalty: The Peculiar and Personal Naval Conflict in South Florida During the Civil War." Vol. 90 *Florida Historical Quarterly* (2011): 34-60, and Nick Wynne and Joe Crankshaw, *Florida Civil War Blockades: Battling for the Coast* (New York: The History Press, 2011); David James Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory: Military Operations in Florida During the Civil War, 1864-1865" (PhD Dissertation, Florida State University, 1996).

²² Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees, & Contrabands*.

²³ Tracy J. Revels, *Florida's Civil War: Terrible Sacrifices* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2016), 107-122.

²⁴ Mark Curenton, *Tories and Deserters: The First Florida Federal Cavalry* (Laurel Hill, FL.: M. Curenton, 1988); Sharon D. Marsh, *The 1st Florida Cavalry Union Volunteers in the Civil War: The men and Regimental History and what That Tells Us About the Area During the War* (Sharon D. Marsh, 2016).

Overall, the First Florida Cavalry (US) and Southerners' motivations to enlist in the regiment remain unexplored.

Assessing enlistment in the First Florida Cavalry requires an expanded discussion of both the region in Florida where the regiment formed and a discussion of Southern Alabama. Although, the First Florida Cavalry organized in Florida, many of its soldiers came from Alabama, a state with a divided population during the secession crisis and the war that followed. Many citizens in the northern and southern counties opposed secession from the outset of the conflict. In their secession convention, almost all delegates from the northern counties voted against disunion. Additionally, although less studied, the southern counties, home to many First Florida Cavalry enlistees, housed large populations of anti-secession and anti-Confederacy Southerners. As an example of the region's divisions, the Constitutional Unionist presidential candidate John Bell won three counties in Southern Alabama in 1860. Bell's platform focused on preserving the Union at all cost. Additionally, several others had closely divided results in this election between Bell and Breckinridge. While this is not an indication of their support or denial of secession or the Confederacy itself, it is an indication of secession's divisive nature in the southern counties.²⁵

Similarly, along Florida's western panhandle region, division existed in the 1860 election where, like in Alabama, three counties voted for John Bell and again, others were highly contested. Beyond the 1860 election, many of the counties in the region also elected anti-secession delegates to the Florida Secession Convention. Although many of these delegates did

²⁵ J Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society Alabama, 1800 -1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014).

not follow through on their views once in Tallahassee, the local elections demonstrate a reluctance to secede in the region at odds with Confederate officials in Tallahassee.²⁶

Although Florida's population amounted to less than one-fifth that of Alabama, the two states were similar in many ways. The percentage of households owning slaves, 35 percent for Alabama and 34 percent for Florida, demonstrate a similar reliance on slavery. Additionally, the enslaved population percentage, 45 percent for Alabama and 44 percent for Florida, indicates the economic similarities in the states. While these numbers make it appear that slavery permeated these states, in both cases most slaves lived in much stronger densities in the blackbelt regions with fewer residing in Southern Alabama and the western panhandle region of Florida. Therefore, while the slave economy appears to be vibrant in both states, a county level analysis reveals distinct regional differences. In many of the counties along the Florida Alabama border, the white population greatly outnumbered the slave population. Like similar regions across the South, these conditions led to a greater Unionist population and weaker connection to the slave economy.²⁷

Regardless of the Unionism, both states seceded and joined the Confederate States of America. The war that ensued brought death and destruction to both North and South. Although portrayed as a united southern front, some Union loyalists disagreed with secession from the very beginning of the war. As the war dragged on, hardships exacerbated the divisions in every Southern state, leading others to dissent due to deteriorating conditions on the battlefield or

²⁶ George E. Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees, & Contrabands: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861 - 1865* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993).

²⁷ 1860 U.S. Census, National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm publication M653.

homefront. Regardless of their path, dissenters affected the Union and Confederate War effort both at home and on the battlefield.

Some dissenters, refugees, and deserters in the south Alabama and the Florida panhandle region rebelled against the rebellion within their communities or hid in the swamps to avoid Confederate authorities. Others traveled to Union controlled Pensacola, Florida, for the protections Pensacola Bay offered. Fort Pickens, located in the bay, never fell into Confederate hands and served as a beacon of Unionism in the Deep South. Beginning in late 1863, a Union Brigadier General and Hungarian Revolutionary utilized these dissenters to form a Union regiment, The First Florida Cavalry. This Southern Union regiment, enlisted over six hundred and fifty southerners and successfully engaged in many raids and battles throughout West Florida and Southern Alabama.

While not the only Union regiment in the South, the First Florida Cavalry was the only all white southern Union regiment in this region. So, why did this regiment form? Why did these men enlist in this Union regiment in the Deep South? How did they understand their Union service? What loyalties led these enlistees to join a Union regiment in a Southern state? How did their identity as both dissenter and southerner impact their ability to serve and fight alongside northerners suspicious of their loyalties and freed slaves from those same communities? What was the nature of desertion in the first Florida Cavalry and how does it compare to the way enlistees deserted from the Confederate Army? While the First Florida Cavalry enlisted less than a thousand men, the regiment illuminates a broader discussion of Southern dissent and loyalty in the Deep South. At its core, this study evaluates how and why this regiment formed while

focusing on the nature of multiple loyalties that impelled Southern dissenters to pursue Union military employment and fight against fellow Southerners.

Loyalty is a relative and evolving condition. At its core, loyalty is a strong emotional feeling of connection or allegiance. Individuals conceptualize the notion of loyalty to a multitude of entities through the interactions, emotions, and perspectives that they experience. As conditions change over time loyalty evolves, keeping every individual's various loyalty commitments in a constant state of flux. External and internal changes can become a catalyst that dramatically alters any person's prioritized loyalties. Priority matters when there are competing loyalties, for example to a family, or to a nation. Naturally, those priorities begin and are the strongest with those whom the individual is the closest to and the most emotionally invested in. The family and the home are the core of most individual loyalties; it is where the individual feels the safest.²⁸

Expanding outward, loyalty to larger communities, political parties and nation becomes weaker and more susceptible to change as they interfere with an individual's stronger loyalties. Theorist Benedict Anderson depicts the nation as an imagined community and as "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."²⁹ Therefore, the national imagined community, in this case the Confederate States of America, must make its citizens feel a sense of safety and freedom within its borders while also imposing ultimate power. Nationalism or loyalty to one's nation are created constructs built by those within cultural and social groups and only persists while those

²⁸ David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *The American Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1962): 925-6.

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

groups support it. In this framework, Southerners around Pensacola, Florida broke from their Confederate loyalties because of the country's inability to control the region and the citizens disconnect with the national ideology. Without the strong presence of the Confederate government and army and without the ability to control the nation's southern border, loyalty to the Confederacy from within this borderland became blurred and weak and possibly drove more men toward the Union.

Loyalty to community, family, and nation never rests in an absolute loyal or disloyal and instead fluctuates on a spectrum based on the changing conditions. Therefore, the dilemma of Southerners Confederate nationalism or if Southerners had the "right" to dissent is unimportant and instead the focus of this study shifts to assessing the motivating factors leading southerners to dissent from the Confederacy and enlist in the Union army.

Similarly, as the home and family are viewed as a safe and free places, the further out from that position into space the more unknown and dangerous the world seems, and less emotional connection is attributed to it. While some long for the unknown adventure of space, others are reluctant to embrace it.³⁰ As theorist Timothy Cresswell states in his work, *Place: A Short Introduction*, "home is an exemplary kind of place where people feel a sense of attachment and rootedness."³¹ Through this framework, this study examines the varying loyalties of First Florida Cavalry enlistees and how those loyalties influenced their decisions to enlist and fight.

A portion of early enlistees on both sides of the Civil War conflict sought adventure away from the home and eagerly enlisted. However, many of them were younger men with few

³⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 220.

³¹ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 24-5.

dependents.³² Conversely, the First Florida Cavalry enlistees were largely older than those early enlistees suggesting that they were not drawn in by the early enlistment fever of 1861.³³ Their connection to the Confederate government and military evolved, some holding stronger loyalties to the Confederate ideology at the outbreak of war than others. As the war progressed, those living in the western Panhandle and Southern Alabama region experienced hardships that shifted their loyalties and prompted them to enlist in a Southern Union regiment.

In other words, the catalysts for dissent varied widely among the enlistees, but all were either pushed or pulled toward Pensacola and toward a conditional loyalty to the Union. They were pushed from the deteriorating conditions of their homeland and pulled for the benefits that service provided them. While, for many, this allegiance never superseded their emotional allegiance to their families, it connected them together as a group and propelled them to fight for the Union army throughout the region. It is important to note, however, that enlistees' loyalty to the Union was fragile, similarly to their connection to the Confederacy. Many stayed within the Union ranks for the benefits the regiment offered, some for the financial opportunities it provided, some because of the bonds that they made with fellow soldiers, some formed a loyalty to the regiment, and others out of a strong loyalty to the Union and what it represented. If one loyalty superseded others it was often to their families; many enlisted to protect and support their family. While this relationship worked in the favor of both enlistees and Union officials, it was subject to change if the needs of their stronger loyalties dictated it.

³² James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), viii, 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

By the war's end roughly one-third of the enlistees broke their loyalty to the Union and deserted from the regiment. For many, their experience with desertion began first with the Confederate army. Men deserted from the Confederacy because their military commitment interfered with their loyalty to family or other groups. Their Confederate desertion occurred during the conflict, largely due to the deteriorating conditions in their communities and the inability of the Confederate government and military to help provide for and protect their families. Comparatively, the largest portion of desertion in the First Florida Cavalry occurred between April and November 1865, in their postwar service. Many viewed their commitment to the Union as complete and wanted to return home to their families. Their motivation for desertion, while similar to their Confederate desertion, differs greatly in the mentality, timing and repercussions of their dissent. Enlistees in the First Florida Cavalry enlisted in the regiment because it fit into their priority of loyalty to their family, stayed because their regiment community and their loyalty to their comrades, and some deserted when they believed their commitment to the Union was complete and the importance of other loyalties outweighed their commitment to the Union.

The conditional Unionism that formed with the formation of the regiment benefited both the Union military and government and the Southerners who enlisted in it began. Southern dissenters' loyalty to the Union helped undermine both Confederate government and military authority in the region. In return, the soldiers received pay and employment to care for their refugee families. Within this framework, conditional Unionism evolved and their loyalty to the Union cause either strengthened or weakened based on wartime circumstances. When it benefited their needs, enlistees fought and supported the Union cause and when they believed

their service was over at the war's conclusion, some deserted and returned to their families and communities.

This study fills a void in southern dissent scholarship and brings a voice to the southern Union soldiers. It expands the understanding of Southern dissent in the Pensacola area as well as the role of Southern Union soldiers during the war. However, interpreting complex motivations and loyalties of a population with limited written sources provides a unique challenge that requires alternative modes of analysis. First-hand accounts from those who served in the regiment and other soldiers serving in Pensacola provide a window into the life of First Florida Cavalry enlistees, but very few sources of this type exist for the First Florida Cavalry.

Approaching the regiment from a different perspective, Civil War pension records can illuminate the lives of enlistees. On July 14, 1862, President Lincoln signed the pension act that gave Union soldiers compensation for disabilities resulting from military service.³⁴ Later, the pension system, evolved and more soldiers were eligible based on their financial circumstances. Additionally, Widows and dependents could in some cases apply for financial compensation. Soldiers and their dependents often applied for these pensions in the decades after the war and well into the twentieth century. These documents often contain written statements from enlistees, their widows, fellow First Florida Cavalry veterans, and community members. They address a variety of topics from the soldier's military career to postwar life, mostly focusing on the nature of the soldier's disability and the compensation they should receive for this injury. Although not its created purpose, these documents provide a window into the lives of Southern Union soldiers

³⁴ Wagner, Margaret E., Gary W. Gallagher, and Paul Finkelman, eds, *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 745.

through their own words and the words of those around them. For this study, forty-five pension files from the First Florida Cavalry, selected through a random number generator, provide previously undocumented perspectives of Southern Union Soldier life.³⁵

Beyond pensions, other government documents chronicle the actions of the First Florida Cavalry and its enlistees. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (known as the *OR*) preserved government communications, reports, and orders in a one hundred and twenty-seven-volume collection that covers the war across all theaters. While the collection provides limited access to the lives of common soldiers, it helps to illustrate their actions and the way the commanding Union general in the region viewed their service. Complementing the *OR*, other government documents including papers discussing Southern Union citizenship and the personal correspondence of Union generals acquired from the National Archives in Washington D.C. provide additional information on the lives of Southern Union soldiers in the First Florida Cavalry and the officers that commanded them.³⁶

While these documents create a window into the First Florida Cavalry and its soldiers, additional quantitative methods such as ArcGIS, a geographic information system, mapping and infographics provide a spatial assessment of the enlistee's motivations that are otherwise difficult to assess by creating a visualization of their experience. These quantitative elements require a different level of organization and analysis. To that end, a database houses the data used in this

³⁵ In total, I examined two officer pensions and forty three enlistee pensions.

³⁶ United States War Department. Department of the Army, Department of the Interior, Navy Department War Office. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington D.C.), 1894.

study's visualizations. This database contains information including birth location, age, location of residence in 1860, service information including enlistment and desertion date among other fields largely derived from their service records. Soldiers' pension files provided additional information on soldiers' postwar residence. As with qualitative data, quantitative data collected for this project does not treat each soldier equally. The lives of some enlistees proved easier to trace than others and thus produced a clearer depiction of their movements across time and space.

The data used and analyzed represent the best collection of information available and may not be complete. While absent data is a problem, for the vast majority of those who enlisted in the First Florida Cavalry (US), a clear understanding of their basic biographic information is available. David W. Hartman and David Coles' *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers* brings together data from the Compiled Service Records for each soldier in the regiment.³⁷ Additionally, Sharon D. Marsh's research illuminated many of the enlistee's residence just before enlistment from the 1860 census in *The 1st Florida Cavalry Union Volunteers in the Civil War: The Men and Regimental History and What That Tells Us About the Area During the War*.³⁸ These sources contribute information that is organized in the database, bringing together all known information on the regiment and each enlistee. Building from this base, additional information from Pension files, Ancestry.Com, Fold3.Com, and other sources round out the database. The infographics and ArcGIS rendered maps in this work are derived

³⁷ David W. Hartman and David Coles, *Biographical Roster of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers, 1861-1865* (Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995).

³⁸ Book citation

from this dataset and provide an alternative route to assessing the First Florida Cavalry (US), the men who enlisted in it, and their region of origin.

In total, the dataset comprises 38,280 cells, covering 660 enlistees and 58 different categories. Due to the focus of this study, only enlistees were included and not officers because most officers were northerners and not Southern dissenters. Despite all efforts to ensure accuracy, sometimes this data includes conflicting information; documents such as the census and pensions sometimes provide conflicting ages or spellings. For the sake of uniformity, the birth dates, name spellings, and place of birth recorded for each enlistee reflects the information in their Compiled Service Record, even if conflicting names and birth dates are present. While this could present problems for a few soldiers with widely varying birthdates or name spellings the vast majority of the discrepancies are within a year or a letter from each other. In total this database provides an insight into the lives of First Florida Cavalry enlistees that would be difficult to obtain otherwise.

The First Florida Cavalry formed on the fringe of Union occupation at a time in the war when both governments focused on other regions—for example, the eastern theater near Washington, D.C. The regiment formed from a mutually beneficial relationship between a brigadier general exiled to a peripheral outpost and a group of southerners who were willing to enlist in the Union army for their families and fight for their community. A combination of location, leadership, and southerners' needs created the conditions for the regiment to form and succeed in the Southeast region of the Civil War.

The lives of dissenters in the Deep South have become a large part of Civil War South studies, but those who served in the Union Army seem too often ignored. Regiments including

the First Florida Cavalry played a large part in the Union war effort in regions where the Union army stretched thin and needed support to enact their strategic and tactical goals. Their experiences and the experiences of the officers who organized them is vital to a fuller understanding of Union occupation as well as Southern identity, loyalty, and nationalism in the 1860s.

CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY AND GENERALSHIP

We see with deep sorrow the glorious Republic of the United States, our adopted Country, upon the verge of dissolution, the realization of which would be a triumph for all despots and the doom of self-government.

-Alexander Asboth in *The New York Times*, May 4, 1861

At the height of the 1860–61 secession winter, a Key West newspaper attacked anti-secessionists, calling them “Submissionists” or “Union shriekers.”³⁹ These groups opposed secession with their voices and their votes, but in the end the powerful secessionists in Tallahassee and the surrounding region pushed Florida out of the Union. Despite this defeat, dissenters did not back down, and instead, as the war progressed and the homefront conditions deteriorated, many more opposed Confederate rule.

In Florida’s Western Panhandle and Southern Alabama dissenters passively and actively fought against the Confederacy from within. As the war progressed, Pensacola, a large port city along Florida’s Gulf Coast, evolved into the hub for dissent in the region. The Union Army based in Pensacola, led by Hungarian Revolutionary and Union Brigadier General Alexander Asboth capitalized on the anti-confederate sentiment in the region and formed the First Florida Cavalry. The Union position in Pensacola and the leadership of Brigadier General Asboth, are key elements that created the conditions needed for southerners to enlist in the First Florida Cavalry in 1863. Geography and generalship help to explain the unlikely creation of a Southern Union regiment in Pensacola, Florida.

³⁹ “Union Men,” *Key of the Gulf* (Key West, Florida), January 6, 1861.

Prior to the war, Pensacola thrived as Florida's most populous city and a bustling port.⁴⁰ The naval yard, located south of the city, contributed to Pensacola's success and its population boom. The United States congress commissioned the naval yard in 1825 because it offered benefits as a port in close proximity to naval operations in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean.⁴¹ To protect the newly-constructed naval yard, the government built three forts. Workers began construction on Fort McRee, located on the mainland along the Pensacola Bay's west shore, in 1829. Completed in 1839, the fort housed 125 seacoast and garrison cannons by 1861.⁴² The second fort, Fort Barrancas, was built in the 1830s at the location of San Carlos de Antonio, a Spanish fort dating back to the conquistadors. Barrancas stood closest to the naval yard, located on a bluff overlooking the bay.⁴³ Finally, Fort Pickens, was constructed in the 1830s and overlooked the bay from Santa Rosa Island. From its position in the mouth of Pensacola Bay, Fort Pickens held the strongest military position and controlled access to and from the mouth of the bay.⁴⁴ In addition, Pensacola Bay surrounded Fort Pickens to its North and West and the Gulf

⁴⁰ George F. Pearce, *Pensacola During the Civil War: A Thorn in the Side of the Confederacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 1.

⁴¹ Ernest F. Dibble, *Ante-Bellum Pensacola and the Military Presence* (Pensacola, Pensacola Bicentennial Series, Pensacola News-Journal, 1974), 8.

⁴² Pearce, *Pensacola During the Civil War*, 20; James C. Coleman, *Fort McRee, The Castle Built on Sand* (Pensacola: Pensacola Historical Society, 1988); Bearss, *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore*, 71.

⁴³ Bearss, *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore*, 71. A barrancas is defined as a steep bank or bluff and this feature on the coast of Pensacola Bay is where the fort gained its name.

⁴⁴ Bearss, *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore*, 71; Dibble, *Ante-Bellum Pensacola*, 31. The military complex aided Pensacola's social and economic development and helped to expand the city's population to almost three thousand by the Civil War's onset, but the growth came at a cost. The humid, hot and rainy Florida climate led to many deadly cases of malaria and yellow fever in Pensacola and the neighboring communities.

of Mexico bordered the island to its South, making it easily defensible. In total, these military installations provided a strong defense for the naval yard and Pensacola Bay.

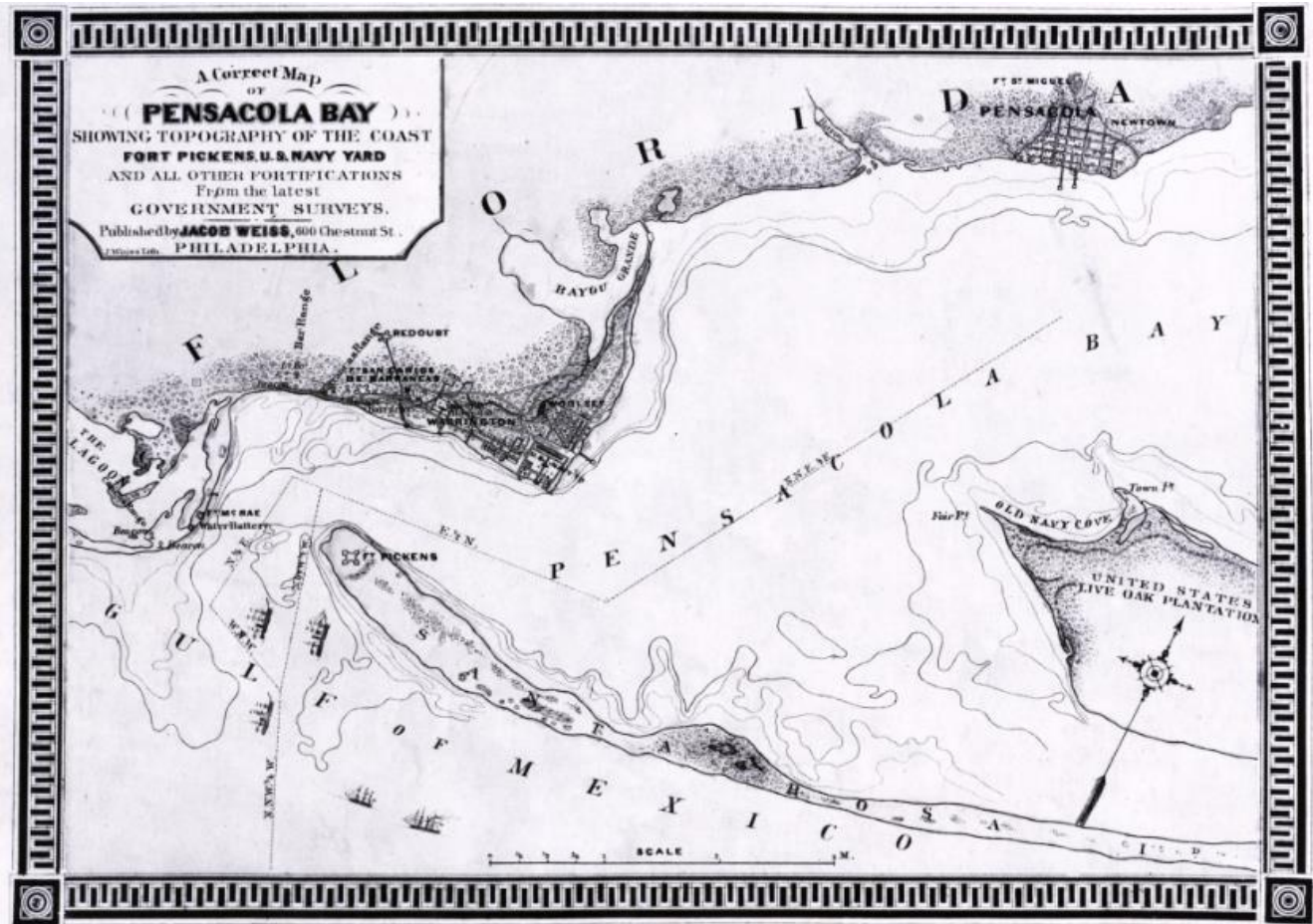


Figure 1 Weiss's Map of Pensacola Bay, c. 1860, courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory

During the 1860 crisis, secession fever engulfed many Southern communities, including Pensacola. During the heightened emotion, the U.S. Storeship *Supply* arrived in Pensacola. One crew member, native New Yorker Lieutenant Henry Erben, reported "We found the people of Pensacola in a state of great excitement."⁴⁵ Many in the city, and in the South at large, believed

⁴⁵Henry Erben, "Surrender of the Navy Yard at Pensacola, Florida January 12, 1861," in *Personal Recollections of the War of the Rebellion: Addresses Delivered before the Commandery of the State of New York, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, vol. II, A. Noel Blakeman, ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 215 – 216.

secession necessary to preserve slavery.⁴⁶ Lt. Erben noted that citizens held meetings supporting secession where “speeches were made to fire the Southern heart.”⁴⁷ One month after Lincoln’s election, secession debates dominated southern politics as local meetings turned into state meetings to answer the question of secession or union.⁴⁸

Even with the growing pro-secessionist population in Florida, many supported maintaining the Union. Many of these Unionists resided in poor rural communities or larger port cities along Florida’s Gulf and Atlantic coasts.⁴⁹ Pensacola followed this trend. When Florida Governor Madison Perry called for a convention to debate secession in December 1860, each county hosted elections to select delegates to the convention.⁵⁰ Pensacola is the county seat of Escambia County and in 1860 accounted for half of the county’s population. In Escambia County, citizens elected anti-secession delegates, voting 258 to 95 in favor of Union.⁵¹ In the end, supporting union in Florida’s secession debate proved futile as many of those elected to the convention on a ballot of union voted secession at the state convention. Although smaller in number, Unionists existed in pockets throughout the state, especially in Florida’s Panhandle and

⁴⁶ Barney, William L. “Rush to Disaster: Secession and the Slaves’ Revenge,” in *Secession Winter: When the Union Fell Apart*, ed. Robert J. Cook, William L. Barney, and Elizabeth Varon (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 26-31.

⁴⁷ Erban, “Surrender of the Navy Yard at Pensacola,” 216.

⁴⁸ For the Governor’s call for a statewide convention see: “Governor’s Message,” *The Floridian and Journal*, December 1, 1860, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00079928/00430/1x>. For a study of Secession conventions see James L. Abrahamson, *The Men of Secession and Civil War 1859-1861* (Delaware, Scholarly Resources Inc, 2000); Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

⁴⁹ Revels, *Florida’s Civil War*, 11.

⁵⁰ Ralph A. Wooster, “The Florida Secession Convention,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 36, No 4. (1958).

⁵¹ “A UNION VOTE IN FLORIDA,” *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Jan 7, 1861.

across the Alabama border, but their numbers were not enough to overcome secessionism in 1860 and 1861.

The local conflict over secession divided families in the bay area. One Union supporter, Alvan Wentworth Chapman who resided Pensacola throughout the Civil War experienced the divisions first hand. When his wife decided to side with the secessionists, she left her husband and moved to her family home in Marianna, a strong Confederate community. As a result, the two lived apart throughout the war because of their ideological differences.⁵² The Chapman's experiences exemplify a broader trend that divided families and communities along secessionist and unionist lines. These conflicts began the divisions that eventually led to families fighting each other, both verbally and physically.

When Florida seceded from the Union on January 10, 1861, state militias began confiscating United States military installations across the panhandle. In the frenzy, militias and state soldiers from Florida and the surrounding states inundated Pensacola. These soldiers marched to seize the Navy Yard and the forts protecting Pensacola Bay. The pro-secession men who greeted Lieutenant Erben in December now planned to make their threat that the Union forces in Pensacola would be "blown to another place within three months" a reality.⁵³

The Union military encampment in Pensacola Bay was in complete disarray. The army had not properly garrisoned Fort Pickens since the Mexican-American War, over a decade earlier and only one ordnance sergeant manned Fort McRee, which served as a warehouse for ammunition.⁵⁴ The only fort with an active military presence was Fort Barrancas, with only

⁵² Dibble, *Anti-Bellum Florida*, 116-17.

⁵³ Erban, "Surrender of the Navy Yard," 214.

⁵⁴ Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 8.

forty-six defenders.⁵⁵ In the naval yard, many senior US officers were Southerners and favored secession further diminishing the Union position. In the Union defense, many junior officers were strongly pro-Union leading to internal strife over the future of Pensacola Bay.⁵⁶ The Union defense of Barrancas and Pensacola Bay fell to First Lieutenant Adam J. Slemmer, a graduate and former instructor from the U.S. Military Academy, who fought Seminole Indians in Florida early in his military career.⁵⁷

After receiving word that Florida Governor Madison Perry ordered the seizure of the US arsenal at Chattahoochee, Northwest of Tallahassee and Fort Marion, also known as the Castillo de San Marcos, in St. Augustine, Slemmer began fortifying his position against any secessionist attempt to take the forts.⁵⁸ On January 9, Slemmer received instructions to “Take measures to do the utmost in your power to prevent the seizure of either of the forts in Pensacola Harbor,” an impossible task given the manpower Slemmer had on hand.⁵⁹ As a result, in coordination with the naval officer Commodore Armstrong, Slemmer moved men, ordnance, and provisions from

⁵⁵ George F. Pearce, *The U.S. Navy in Pensacola: From Sailing Ships to Naval Aviation, 1825 – 1920* (Pensacola: University Presses of Florida, 1980), 66.

⁵⁶ Revels, *Florida’s Civil War*, 16; Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 8-9.

⁵⁷ Moses Auge, *Lives of the Eminent Dead and Biographical Notices of Prominent Living Citizens of Montgomery County, PA* (Norristown, PA: Moses Auge, 1879), 224-226; John H Eicher and David J Eicher, *Civil War High Commands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 491; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1992), 450-51. Slemmer served in several capacities throughout the war after leaving Pensacola including as Assistant Inspector General, Department of Western Virginia to the battle of Stones River, Tenn. He achieved the rank of bvt. Brigadier General at the war’s end.

⁵⁸ Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 11.

⁵⁹ George W Lay to Commanding Officer Barrancas Barracks, January 3, 1861, *OR*, S. 1, V. 1, p. 334

the naval yard and Fort Barrancas to the unmanned Fort Pickens. Slemmer knew that Fort Pickens would be the easiest to defend and that it controlled Pensacola Bay.⁶⁰

Slemmer's early consolidation proved invaluable to preserving the Union position. Prior to his actions, Florida's pro-secession state government and national senators recognized Pensacola's strategic importance and pushed the local militias to take Pensacola Bay and all forts protecting it. Senator David Levy Yulee from Washington County wrote to Joseph Finegan, a member of the Florida Secession Convention, "the naval station and forts at Pensacola are first in consequence." He continued in the post script, "Lose no time about the navy yard and forts at Pensacola."⁶¹ Pro-Secessionists in Florida moved quickly, but realized that they did not have the manpower to take the Pensacola forts alone. Knowing the need for manpower, a West Point graduate and retired major, William H. Chase took up the secessionist cause. Previously, Chase worked as the head engineer for constructing Fort Pickens and worked on the other two forts as well, so he understood their importance. He approached Alabama Governor Andrew Moore for military aid and Moore agreed to send Alabama soldiers to support the effort to take Pensacola Bay.⁶²

By January 11, the day Florida seceded from the Union, several hundred secessionists from Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi amassed in Pensacola, with their eyes set on the federal installations. Starting in the city, the combined forces traveled two miles south to Fort Barrancas and the Pensacola Naval Yard on January 12. At this point, Commodore Anderson had not

⁶⁰ Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 12; George W. Lay to Commanding Officer Barrancas Barracks, January 3, 1861, 335; There were four U.S. ships in the bay during this period, the *USS Fulton*, the *USS Crusader*, the *USS Wyandotte*, and Lt. Erben's *USS Supply*.⁶⁰

⁶¹ David Levy Yulee to Joseph Finegan, August 6, 1861, *OR*, S. 1, V. 1, 348, 49, 351.

⁶² Bearss, *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore*, 71-2; Dibble, *Ante-Bellum Pensacola*, 31-35.

removed all ordnance from the Naval Yard and Fort Barrancas to Fort Pickens as Slemmer requested, believing that he could defend the navy yard. However, outnumbered and unprepared for the hostile forces' arrival, Anderson surrendered the navy yard, an act that later led to his court-martial, and retreated to the *USS Supply* and *USS Wyandotte*.⁶³ Lt. Erban recalled, "At noon, on January 12, 1861, our flag was lowered for the first time, and another, the flag of Florida, hoisted in its stead."⁶⁴ By day's end, secessionist forces occupied Pensacola and forts Barrancas and McRee without a single fatality. While the secessionist troops succeeded in most of their goals, they failed to take control of Fort Pickens, Santa Rosa Island, and the mouth of the bay.

In the days succeeding the retreat to Fort Pickens, Southerners demanded Slemmer surrender; he refused. Secessionists throughout the South demanded the capture of Fort Pickens. A citizen from Baldwin County, Alabama offered a \$400 reward for "the first company or regiment who gets or takes possession of Fort Pickens."⁶⁵ The two sides stood guard, but did not engage for four months. In the meantime, Union attention shifted to South Carolina and Fort Sumter and then on to larger and more pressing conflicts, leaving little attention devoted to holding Pensacola Bay and Fort Pickens. On April 12, 1861, Slemmer finally received reinforcements. Company A, First US Artillery and one hundred and ten marines arrived and relieved Slemmer and his exhausted forces, but under assignment to defend the fort and not take

⁶³ Revels, *Florida's Civil War*, 24.

⁶⁴ Erban, "Surrender of the Navy Yard," 218

⁶⁵ *St. Johns Mirror* (Jacksonville, FL), May 7, 1861; Schafer, *Thunder on the River*, 33.

back Pensacola.⁶⁶ Pensacola's importance continued to wane, but the standoff between both forces continued.

Eight months after Confederate occupation began in Pensacola, Union forces set a Confederate privateer ship *Judah* on fire attempting to bait a response from Braxton Bragg, the regional Confederate commander. The measure worked and shortly after, Bragg moved one thousand Confederate infantrymen onto Santa Rosa Island to surprise the Union forces and capture Fort Pickens. Union forces repelled the attack and chased the Confederates back to their landing boats.⁶⁷ In retaliation, a collaborative effort by the US Navy in the bay and US Army at Fort Pickens opened an artillery barrage beginning on November 22 and ending the following day. The Union fired roughly 5000 shells compared to the Confederacy's 1000 rounds.⁶⁸ Overall, this incident marked one of several skirmishes and brief exchanges of artillery that occurred during the Confederacy's occupation of the naval yard, resulting in both minimal casualties and minimal consequences to the overall war effort. In total, the two sides sat at a stalemate, neither having the resources needed to defeat the other.

Throughout Confederate occupation in Pensacola, rumors reached Fort Pickens of Union men living in the region. In September 1861, two Pensacola citizens arrived at the fort where they reported the "many Union men in this country" were afraid because "the expression of Union sentiments [is] dangerous."⁶⁹ At the same time, ten Confederate deserters arrived at Fort

⁶⁶ Auge, *Lives of the Eminent Dead*, 228-229; Pearce, *Pensacola During the Civil War*, 64; Dibble, *Ante-Bellum Pensacola*, 116.

⁶⁷ Pearce, *Pensacola During the Civil War*, 118.

⁶⁸ Bearss, *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore*, 383-398.

⁶⁹ Colonel Harvey Brown to Lieutenant Colonel E. D. Townsend, September 10, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol 6, 666.

Pickens seeking refuge. These two exchanges marked the beginning of Pensacola's Union presence serving as a refuge for those avoiding Confederate service and dissenting civilians looking for an alternative to Confederate control. The Union presence in Fort Pickens gave those who opposed the Confederacy a possible refuge even while the Confederacy held most of the southeast. As Union control of the region strengthened, more men and women fled to Pensacola and escaped Confederate rule.

Despite its role as a refuge, the War Department continued to neglect Pensacola and Fort Pickens, but they were not alone.⁷⁰ The Confederate Government also shifted their focus to what they considered more urgent matters. In March 1862, Robert E. Lee, at the time the commander of the Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, articulated the Confederacy's tepid support for this region when he told General Samuel Jones in Pensacola that "you are desired to hold Pensacola, the navy-yard, provided you have the ability to do so."⁷¹ Lee assigned reinforcements and guns from Tallahassee to support Pensacola's position; however, as the year progressed the Confederate government syphoned the troops and equipment to reinforce armies facing Union offensives in the western theater.⁷²

More pressing conflicts in the North and West eventually led the Confederacy to abandon Pensacola all together. In anticipation of the Confederate removal, local officials attempted to form a home guard to relieve the departing Fourth Battalion Alabama Volunteers. Brigadier General Jones argued in a letter to C. L. LeBarron that, "the people of Pensacola are fully able to

⁷⁰ Lieutenant Colonel E. D. Townsend to Colonel Harvey Brown, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol 6, 668. October 14, 1861.

⁷¹ General R. E. Lee to General Samuel Jones, March 31, 1862, *OR*, S. 1, V. 6, 868.

⁷² Chester G. Hearn, *The Capture of New Orleans, 1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 157-59; Revels, *Florida's Civil War*, 31.

guard their own town quite as well as it is guarded now.”⁷³ By this time, however, most Pensacola residents already abandoned the city because of the turmoil and economic instability, leaving few to defend the cause.⁷⁴ The last Confederate forces left Pensacola Bay on May 9, 1862, roughly a week after the Union took New Orleans. The following morning, Union Lieutenant Richard H. Jackson accepted the city’s surrender from Pensacola’s Mayor and Union forces began occupying the city, the naval yard, and the forts protecting the bay.⁷⁵ The Confederate retreat and subsequent Union occupation created a Union foothold on the southern Confederate boarder.

Despite their retreat from Pensacola, Confederate military and government officials worked to maintain Floridians’ loyalty. Although they burned the city as they left, the scorched earth policy they enacted only targeted military and public buildings in Pensacola.⁷⁶ The Confederate Secretary of War wrote to the commanding officer, Brigadier General Thomas M Jones, that burning private property “would merely prove a convenience to the enemy, the loss of which inflicts great and lasting injury to our own people, and should not be destroyed.”⁷⁷ Confederate authorities, aware that loyalty in the region was contested, enacted these policies to preserve Southerners’ loyalties in the community they left behind.

Overall, the first conflict between Secessionists and Union troops occurred in Pensacola Bay and it did so without causing large-scale bloodshed or destruction. However, throughout the

⁷³ Brigadier General Samuel Jones to Mr. C. L. LeBarron, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol 6, 838, March 4, 1862.

⁷⁴ Dibble, *Ante-Bellum Pensacola*, 118. The statement from a Pensacola resident at the time stated that all but roughly twenty families had evacuated the city.

⁷⁵ Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 157.

⁷⁶ ⁷⁶Bearss, *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore*, 416; Revels, *Florida’s Civil War*, 30.

⁷⁷ John H. Forney to Thomas M Jones, May 24, 1862, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol 6, 663.

conflict, both Union and Confederate authorities understood the need for allegiance from locals in the surrounding area to create stability and support from those with conflicting loyalties. Ultimately, the Confederate retreat marked Pensacola's transition from contested control to Union control and the expansion of Pensacola Bay's existence as a haven for dissenters, refugees, and deserters.

By controlling Fort Pickens, the Union army sustained a persistent presence in the region, challenging Confederate sovereignty. After the Confederate departure, the Union command began navigating their relationship with the local community that held varying degrees of loyalty to the Confederacy and the United States. Their success in this endeavor, hinged on the arrival of Brigadier General Alexander Asboth. A veteran of the Hungarian Revolution, Asboth understood contested loyalties in a civil war and used this knowledge to improve the relationship between the Union army and the community, while bolstering his military capability to fight the Confederacy from within its southern border.

Born on December 18, 1811 in Kezthely, Hungary, within the Austrian Empire and the Habsburg Dynasty, Asboth grew up in a noble family with the surname, de Nemesker. He attended Selmechanya and Presburg academies where he studied Law and engineering. After graduating and serving briefly in the Austrian Army as a cuirassier, a heavy Cavalryman, Asboth received an appointment to work as an engineer for the Austrian government.⁷⁸ When the 1848 Hungarian Revolution broke out, Asboth sided with the revolutionaries and served under Lajos

⁷⁸ "Asboth, Alexander Sandor," in *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 1, James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds. (New York: D, Appleton and Company, 1888), 108. A Cuirassier described the Breastplate worn by cavalrymen in this period.

Kossuth, a journalist, politician, and the revolution's leader.⁷⁹ Asboth began as a captain and was subsequently promoted to lieutenant colonel as Kossuth's aide-de-camp.⁸⁰

The Hungarian revolutionary forces achieved moderate success in their efforts to obtain independence from the Austrian Empire. They mustered in roughly 200,000 national guardsmen, but only had 40,000 firearms by summer 1848. The Hungarian revolutionaries and the Austrian Empire were relatively equally matched until the Austrian Empire pleaded for help from Russian Czar Nicholas I. Answering the plea, Nicholas I sent 200,000 Russian troops to assist the Austrians in defeating the rebels. Seeing defeat in the near future, Kossuth abandoned his efforts and fled to Turkey in 1849.⁸¹

When Kossuth abdicated his command and fled to exile in Turkey, Alexander Asboth, along with twelve hundred others, fled with him.⁸² During this time, Kossuth promoted himself as a martyr for European Liberty, even while many criticized him for deserting his people. Many Americans supported his cause and after receiving an ultimatum from the Turkish Sultan to convert to Islam or leave, the United States presented the exiled Hungarians with an alternative;

⁷⁹ Róbert Herman, "Hungary's Supreme War Leadership: Organization, Operations, and Personalities," in *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848 – 1849: A Military History*, Gábor Bona, ed., Nóra Arató, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 41; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1992), 11.

⁸⁰ Gábor Bona, "Relation and the Hungarian Military Exiles," in *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848 – 1849: A Military History*, Gábor Bona, ed., Nóra Arató, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 449; "Asboth," *Appletons' Cyclopaedia*, 108. He fought in the battles of Tomaszowacz, Kapolna, and Nagy Sarlo.

⁸¹ Gábor Bona, "Armed Forces of the Hungarian War of Independence," in *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848 – 1849: A Military History*, Gábor Bona, ed., Nóra Arató, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 80.

⁸² Donald S Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and young America : A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy 1848-1852* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1977), 2; Edmund Vasvary, *Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes: The Participation of Hungarians in the Civil War* (Washington D.C.: The Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, 1939), 44.

Asylum.⁸³ Accepting the US offer, Kossuth, Asboth and the other Hungarians boarded the *USS Mississippi* and left for America on September 10, 1851.⁸⁴

Separated from his commander briefly when Kossuth traveled to Britain, Asboth and the other refugees arrived in New York on November 10, 1851. Kossuth arrived the following month on December 5, 1851 to tens of thousands of New Yorkers frenzied and excited to receive the defender of republicanism.⁸⁵ The reception closed the city courts and crowded the streets with people eager to see and hear a defender of liberty and freedom in Europe.⁸⁶ After his arrival, Kossuth began a tour of the United States to procure United States government support for his endeavors in Hungary. Asboth toured with Kossuth for a short time, but remained in New York as Kossuth traveled the rest of the country. After a six-month tour of the United States, Kossuth boarded a ship to England, unsuccessful in procuring government support.

Asboth, on the other hand, desired to remain in the United States and became a naturalized citizen on July 17, 1852.⁸⁷ Living in New York City, Asboth worked to acquire arms and munitions for Kossuth and served as his agent in the United States. Additionally, Asboth worked as an architect in the city for Frederick Law Olmsted. Asboth succeeded in this profession, where he worked in the city planning commission on city construction projects such

⁸³ Spencer, *Kossuth and Young America*, 2.

⁸⁴ Vasvary, *Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes*, 45.

⁸⁵ David M. Hankin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 127.

⁸⁶ *New York Times* (New York, New York), December 8, 1851; Spencer, *Kossuth and Young America*, 5 – 10.

⁸⁷ *Naturalization Records*. National Archives at New York City, New York, New York, found in: "State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794 – 1940," database, Ancestry.com (accessed August 8, 2017), entry for Alexander Asboth.

as the Washington Heights neighborhood and Central Park.⁸⁸ Following the outbreak of the Civil War a decade later, Asboth returned to his first career, the military, and traveled to Washington D.C. to offer his services to the Union cause.⁸⁹

Asboth was subsequently appointed as a Union general. In an effort to utilize his fame as a Hungarian revolutionary and encourage Hungarian immigrants in New York to enlist, the government sent him back to New York City. Asboth published an article in the *New York Times* appealing to his fellow Hungarians' sense of patriotism and nationalism. Asboth wrote "You all know the value of the Union as it was, and will stand by it faithful and true, and defend it at all hazards, with that same firmness and gallantry displayed so emphatically in the defense of your own native land, the rights and Constitution of Hungary."⁹⁰ Although he encouraged many Hungarians to enlist, he could not form a regiment and was reassigned to Missouri.

In that border state, he became the chief of staff for former Republican presidential candidate, Major General John C. Fremont. On September 26 of that same year, Fremont promoted Asboth to Brigadier General and appointed him to command of a division near Rolla, Missouri, where German immigrant Brigadier General Franz Sigel commanded a division as

⁸⁸ Vasvary, *Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes*, 45-46.

⁸⁹ Asboth was not the only Hungarian Patriot to serve as a general in the Union Army. Julius H. Stahel-Szamwald served as a Major General from New York, earning a Medal of Honor for his service at the Battle of Piedmont. Frederick Knefler, also a fighter in the failed revolution became a brevetted Brigadier General in the US Army on March 13, 1865. Eugene A. Kozlay achieved the rank of Brevetted Brigadier General after the war's conclusion in honor of his service.

⁹⁰ Alexander Asboth, "LOCAL MILITARY MOVEMENTS.; CALL OF COL. ASBOTH UPON THE HUNGARIANS IN AMERICA. THE GERMAN REGIMENT. MUNICIPAL AID TO VOLUNTEERS. The Montezuma Regiment The Metropolitan Home Guard. British Volunteers. Meeting of Ex-Members Of The Eighth Regiment. The Highland Guard. Garibaldi Volunteers A Fighting Regiment. The Salem Zouaves. Major Anderson and The Deaf And Dumb Mutes. Col. Wilson's Zouaves. The Second Regiment. Second Regiment Scott Life Guard. The Advance Guard. The Ulster Guard Excelsior Regiment. National Zouaves. Flag Raising. Spiritualism And The War," *The New York Times* (New York: New York), July 4, 1861.

well.⁹¹ Asboth remained a prominent figure in his home town of New York City. His exploits frequented the pages of the *New York Times* throughout the war.⁹² After President Lincoln relieved Fremont in November and replaced him with Major General Henry W. Halleck, Halleck assigned Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis to command Asboth and Sigel's divisions and established the Army of the Southwest with the goal of pushing the Confederates out of Missouri and into Arkansas.⁹³

On January 1, 1862, General Halleck ordered Curtis to take his two divisions and march south to Springfield, Missouri and attack the Confederate forces commanded by Missouri militia general, and former Missouri Governor, Sterling Price in winter quarters.⁹⁴ The Union forces marched south with limited rations through the worst weather of the year, including snow, sleet, and freezing rain without a reliable supply line. Throughout this campaign, Curtis relied on Southern Unionists for information about the enemy and the region.⁹⁵ Asboth also experienced an Arkansas Unionist's hospitality. After his cavalry trampled local Unionist Jonas M. Tebbett's garden and property, Asboth approached Tebbett and apologized for the destruction. Tebbett promptly invited Asboth into his home and offered it to Asboth as his headquarters.⁹⁶ These early

⁹¹ "Asboth," *Appletons' Cyclopaedia*, 108.; Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 11. Although Fremont Appointed him Brigadier General in 1861, he would not receive official recognition of it until March of 1862.

⁹² "From Pensacola: Gen. Asboth on an Expedition," *New York Times* (New York, New York), August 6, 1864.

⁹³ William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 7.

⁹⁴ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 50, 65. It was an Arkansas Unionist who warned Curtis of an impending attack the day before the Battle of Pea Ridge and prevented the Confederates from having the advantage of surprise.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53-4.

interactions between Asboth and southern Unionists contributed to his positive view of Southern Unionists and dissenters that later affected his career in Pensacola.

As the campaign proceeded, Union and Confederate forces clashed several times with minimal losses until they met at the Battle of Pea Ridge, just below the Missouri Arkansas border, on March 7-8, 1862. The Battle of Pea Ridge marked a rare occurrence where the Confederate forces outnumbered the Union; Earl Van Dorn's Confederate forces numbered 16,500, while Curtis commanded 10,250 Union soldiers.⁹⁷ During the battle, Alexander Asboth received a bullet wound in his arm, but refused to leave the battlefield despite the severe pain.⁹⁸ He later left the regiment to recover from his wounds. Curtis and his outnumbered Union forces finally won the battle on the second day and pushed the Confederate forces out of Missouri and south into central Arkansas.⁹⁹

In early October, after spending several months in Washington D.C. recovering from his wounds, Asboth, requested reassignment to a combat unit.¹⁰⁰ Initially Asboth was assigned to return and command his old division then being commanded by Major General Gordon Granger in the Department of the Ohio. However, in December 1862, Asboth received orders reassigning him to Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida.¹⁰¹ The well-educated noble who had served in a high-ranking position in a revolution and commanded a Brigade comprising thousands of troops during a western campaign of the American Civil War, now found himself assigned to the

⁹⁷ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 14, 270-71.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹⁰⁰ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Rosencrans, July 28, 1862, in CWGP, Record Group 94, Entry PI-17 159-GG, National Archives, Washington DC.

¹⁰¹ CWGP, Record Group 94, Entry PI-17 159-GG, National Archives, Washington DC. There was a brief order for him to be reassigned to command a prison camp at Alton, Illinois, but it was revoked.

periphery, removed from the battlefield and in command of minimal soldiers and meager resources. Pensacola Bay was not strategically valuable to either the Confederacy or Union by 1863, and served largely as a place for ships on blockade to resupply and repair.¹⁰²

Although first assigned to the Pensacola command on December 13, 1862, he was not relieved of his command in the Army of the Tennessee until September 21, 1863, and finally arrived in Pensacola on November 7, 1863.¹⁰³ Asboth's first assignment in Pensacola tasked him with bolstering Union position at Pensacola. The War Department believed a Southern regiment could be formed in Pensacola. In October 1863, Brigadier General Charles P. Stone reported to Asboth that "it has been represented that a regiment of cavalry could be easily raised in that portion of Florida."¹⁰⁴ Asboth also actively prepared to expand his command when, prior to his arrival, he wrote the Adjutant General of the United States Army, Lorenzo Thomas, and asked for permission to form a United States Colored Troops regiment in this area.¹⁰⁵ From these letters it is clear that there was an eagerness by both Asboth and his superiors to bolster the military position in Pensacola using Southern soldiers, both black and white.

¹⁰² Revels, *Florida's Civil War*, 31. Union occupation forces that arrived after the Confederate retreat relocated to support the Mississippi Campaign in March 1863. Only a small number of forces remained to hold the forts protecting the bay.

¹⁰³ Special order 17, CWGP, Record Group 94, Entry PI-17 159-GG, National Archives, Washington DC; Special Order, No 87, Headquarters thirteenth Army Corps, October 3, 1863, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol 26; pg. 755; Special order, No. 252, Headquarters Department of the Gulf, October 8, 1863, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, p. 756; William C. Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Services of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the 7th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers (Veterans) from 1862 – 1866* (New York: American Bank Note Company, 1882), 137.

¹⁰⁴ Brigadier General Charles P. Stone to Brigadier General Alexander Asboth, October 29, 1863, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol 26, p. 780 – 781. Brigadier General Charles P. Stone to Major General N. P. Banks, Commanding Department of the Gulf, October 31, 1863, in *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, p. 782.

¹⁰⁵ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to L. Thomas, October 25, 1863, in CWGP, Record Group 94, Entry 159A, July – October 1863, National Archives, Washington DC.

In contrast, Asboth's predecessor, Colonel William Holbrook of the 7th Vermont Infantry, possessed a dogmatically anti-Southerner perspective. In discussing the effort to enlist Southern dissenters, Holbrook believed that it is "not all together safe... to rely too much upon (Southern) troops." He argued that "They were not entirely loyal, and hence were unreliable and untrustworthy."¹⁰⁶ Prior to Asboth's arrival, the Union army had not attempted to form a white or black southern Union regiment in Pensacola.

Asboth disagreed with his predecessor. He had experienced firsthand southern loyalists' value earlier in his Civil War career under General Curtis. The Army of the Southwest's victory at Pea Ridge relied on an Arkansas loyalist's warning of an impending Confederate attack.¹⁰⁷ While in Washington D.C. recovering from his wounds, Asboth echoed his gratitude for loyal southerners in a letter congratulating Curtis on his continued success in Arkansas. "I beg to congratulate you, your army and all the loyal citizens of the Southwest."¹⁰⁸ He experienced firsthand southern Unionists and dissenters value while in Missouri and Arkansas and knew they could also aid him in Pensacola. Additionally, his experiences in the Hungarian revolution informed him on the value of trained militias and civilians loyal to the cause. Asboth knew that recruiting Southern dissenters both bolstered his command and undermined Confederate authority in the region similar to the revolutionary groups he commanded in Hungary.

¹⁰⁶ Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Services of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the 7th Regiment of Vermont*, 137.

¹⁰⁷ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 53-54, 65.

¹⁰⁸ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major General S R Curtis, September 27, 1862, in Alexander Asboth, *Civil War Generals' Papers*, Record Group 94, Entry PI-17 159-GG, National Archives, Washington DC, (hereafter referred to as CWGP)

Asboth's arrival came at a time when the conditions in Pensacola required a stronger Union force. After arriving in Pensacola, he wrote that the Union army could not control the city of Pensacola, located only two miles north of the Union camp at Barrancas and the navy yard. A few Union infantry companies occupied the city, but "the other inhabitants, very few in number, also strongly sympathize with the rebellion."¹⁰⁹ Small Confederate forces and guerrillas moved in and out of the city without any real threat from the Union forces. The Union army could not control the immediate area surrounding the bay and it had no impact on any territory further inland. Asboth had a hard road ahead, but he began to devise a plan to recruit more southerners into the ranks to improve his command over the region.¹¹⁰

While the Union army was unable to control anything beyond Pensacola Bay, several refugee communities did exist on the Panhandle Gulf Coast. The Union Blockade protected some communities along the coastline; others lived in secrecy throughout Southern Alabama and the western Panhandle. In addition, other Southerner loyalists, dissenters, and deserters lived isolated in this region dissatisfied with the Confederate government's confiscation and conscription. Asboth knew potential enlistees resided around Pensacola bay and along the coast and appealed to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone for support in getting them to Pensacola. In a letter, he requested two small ships to reach the refugees and defend against confederate attack. "I am confident that the result would be a success, securing our schooners in the gulf against further

¹⁰⁹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P Stone, December 5, 1863, in *OR*, Series 1, Volume 26, 833-34.

¹¹⁰ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P Stone, November 23, 1863, in *OR*, S. 1, V. 26, 818. Asboth wanted to focus on crippling the Mobile, Pollard and Montgomery Railroad which he claims was the fastest way for the Confederacy to get foods from Mississippi to the East.

annoyances, and enabling me to collect at once sufficient men for two Florida regiments.”¹¹¹ He concluded this letter acknowledging his initial recruitment success; “Deserters are constantly coming in, taking the oath of allegiance. Fifteen young men have enlisted in my cavalry company.”¹¹² Asboth knew that men lived along Florida’s panhandle coast who were sympathetic to his cause. His intention was to go up river and recruit even more refugees who were willing to take the oath and enlist. However, Stone did not give Asboth the boat he needed for this operation.

Initially, the regiment only accepted southern enlistees without previous Confederate service. The Department of the Gulf initiated the prohibition on Confederate service partially out of fear that rebels would not recognize them as a legitimate Union force and give no quarter. The attempt failed, however, as many enlisted without mentioning their previous Confederate service.¹¹³ Asboth himself did not heed the Confederate service mandate. By late January 1864, only a few months after the First Florida Cavalry began recruiting, Asboth actively recruited an entire confederate unit located in the region that wished to desert and join the Union Army.¹¹⁴

By February 1864, Asboth sent the few enlistees in the First Florida Cavalry into action. The newly appointed Captain named Galloway, some new Southern recruits, and a company of the Seventh Vermont Infantry traveled up river to Point Washington, Florida, to expand

¹¹¹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P Stone, November 23, 1863, in *OR*, S. 1, V. 26, 818.

¹¹² Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P Stone, December 5, 1863, in *OR*, S. 1, V. 26, 833-34.

¹¹³ Coles, “Far From the Fields of Glory,” 283.

¹¹⁴ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Captain J. L Galloway, January 28, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 2, 6-7.

recruitment.¹¹⁵ While there, Galloway found out that a rebel company encamped forty miles up the Choctawhatchee River at Boydton's Bluff. Taking advantage of this information, he mobilized fourteen Southern enlistees and seventeen soldiers from the Seventh Vermont Infantry. They traveled up river on February 7, 1864 and surprised the unsuspecting Confederates, capturing two lieutenants and fifty men without firing a shot.¹¹⁶ Despite this initial success, a Confederate cavalry regiment cut off their retreat capturing Galloway and many of the Southern recruits. In total, only nine recruits and five Vermont Men escaped back to Fort Barrancas where they reported the events to General Asboth.¹¹⁷ This encounter marked both the First Florida Cavalry enlistees first skirmish and one of their biggest defeats.

Despite this defeat Asboth continued recruiting from Point Washington and expanded his efforts by creating another location at East Pass. Asboth's recruiting stations at East Pass and Point Washington, roughly seventy miles east of Pensacola along the Gulf Coast, proved to be highly successful in recruiting Southern Union soldiers.¹¹⁸ By the war's end, seventy-three First Florida Cavalry soldiers enlisted at East Pass. Additionally, The First Florida Cavalry enlistment numbers from these locations do not reflect the full number of loyal southern men recruited by the Army. Some enlisted in the Pensacola-based Fourteenth New York Cavalry and other regiments later stationed at Barrancas.

¹¹⁵ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 11

¹¹⁶ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, January 10, 1864, OR, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 453

¹¹⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel D. B. Peck to Lieutenant E. T. Sprague, February 17, 1864, OR, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 356.

¹¹⁸ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 11; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, March 4, 1864, in OR, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 2, 4-5; Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 280.

Numbers do not tell the complete story; Southerners escaping the Confederate South faced enormous difficulties reaching the Union lines at Pensacola. Eventually, a network of “Union men” in the region provided haven for those traveling to Pensacola Bay and helped them get to the Gulf coast, similar to the Underground Railroad.¹¹⁹ In 1863, Wade Richardson experienced the challenges of escaping and the aid available to Unionists while traveling on foot from Macon County, Alabama, to Pensacola. He and a traveling companion eluded Confederate soldiers and disguised their identities in an effort to reach the Union lines.¹²⁰ The boys utilized the network of Southern dissenters to hide out and eventually reached Pensacola via the pro-union camp at East Pass.

Richardson succeeded in his efforts, but others were not as lucky. Upon reaching Pensacola in April 1864, Alfred Holly, a refugee informed Asboth that another family in a small boat were “fired upon, killing 3 and wounding 2” for attempting to reach the Union line.¹²¹ By this time, troops from Mississippi and Tennessee began replacing the local home guardsmen and increasing their presence to counter Asboth’s growing Southern recruitment.¹²² The Confederacy controlled most of West Florida in early 1864, and Asboth’s meager forces in Pensacola struggled to defend deserters and refugees who sought Union protection. Despite this adversity, and with the aid of Asboth’s outposts, men passed into Union lines and began enlisting in the First Florida Cavalry into early spring 1864.

¹¹⁹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, December 27, 1863, *OR*, S. 1, V. 26, pt. 1, p 886-887.

¹²⁰ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 19.

¹²¹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, April, 4, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 386.

¹²² Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 12.

Through Asboth's efforts, Pensacola Bay became a sanctuary community for anyone seeking protection from Confederate control. Asboth's life experiences prior to arriving at Fort Barrancas influenced his actions in this isolated borderland. His experiences in the Hungarian Revolution improved his understanding of dissenting communities and their military value. His experiences in the Union army in the West demonstrated Southern dissenters' value to the Union war effort. His previous experience as a refugee in Turkey evading the Austrian Army helped him to understand Union refugees. In total, his life experience informed his actions as Pensacola's commanding officer and helped him respect the value of Southern dissenters and refugees. Ultimately, this alliance between Asboth and Southerners allowed him to make his position on the periphery of the Civil War more relevant and rejoin the fight for the Union.

Overall, Brigadier General Alexander Asboth's arrival combined with conditions in Pensacola and the surrounding area created the necessary conditions for the First Florida Cavalry to form. While his predecessors in the region had little desire to bring in Southern Union soldiers to bolster the position, Asboth, understood the refugees' value and broke from that tradition. Additionally, due to the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel Slemmer and others, the Union maintained a presence in Pensacola Bay, beginning the process of undermining Confederate authority and sovereignty in the region. Having a Union presence in Pensacola meant that deserters, refugees, and dissenters in the region had an alternative to Confederate rule. When the Confederate army pulled out of Pensacola, and the Union Army brought more forces to the region, the relationship between Pensacola and Unionist southerners deepened, eventually to the point where over six hundred and fifty men broke from their Confederate ties and enlisted in a Southern Union regiment--the First Florida Cavalry.

CHAPTER 2: TORIES, REFUGEES, AND DESERTERS, WHY THEY ENLISTED

*There went up a shout from those on board
that I hope I shall never forget to my dying day:
a shout of deliverance and joy that we had again
assembled under the flag of the Union.*

- Private Wade Richardson, First Florida Cavalry US¹²³

Brigadier General Alexander Asboth and the Union army formed the First Florida Cavalry, but Southern men had to join it. Between 1863 and 1865, over six hundred and fifty men from Florida, Alabama, and Georgia broke from the Confederacy and volunteered to serve in the First Florida Cavalry. Men dissented from the Confederacy, sought refuge in Pensacola and enlisted in the First Florida Cavalry for a variety of reasons including the regiment's proximity to home, financial need, loyalty to the Union, and a disconnect with the Confederate Cause. Their enlistment motivations illuminate the nature of loyalty, nationalism, and Confederate sovereignty in the Deep South. In some cases, these same motivations also led men to desert from the First Florida Cavalry. The context of their enlistment and desertion during the Civil War all center on weighing the significance of varying loyalties constantly in flux during a tumultuous period. Asboth and the Union Army understood Southern soldiers' value and worked to bring in southerners, but these dissenters also sought out opportunities to serve and fight.

¹²³ Wade H. Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines* (Milwaukee: E. B. Wolcott G.A.R. post, 1905), 19.

The divisions that existed in this region during secession expanded as the war progressed creating a population eager to join Asboth's cause years later.¹²⁴ Interaction with the Confederate Army, the Confederate government, and local guerilla groups deteriorated the homefront conditions for many southerners and pushed them toward Pensacola and enlistment in the Union Army. The individual experience that led men to dissent, travel to Pensacola, and enlist in the Union army varied widely based on each individual's circumstances, but overall a combination of safety, loyalty, proximity, financial gain, and evasion led men to dissent and travel to Pensacola and the First Florida Cavalry.

Some Southern dissenters during the secession crisis and the early years of the war spoke out against their condition. Others remained silent as they feared repercussions from Secessionists and later Confederates. In July 1860, disgruntled secessionists attacked Dr. William Hollingsworth because of his anti-secession views. The attackers fired on his house where he and his son were living, badly wounding the doctor. Other men were dragged from their beds, taken to the woods, and whipped. These brutal episodes demonstrate the methods used to intimidate and suppress Unionists from speaking out against secession and the newly forming government suggesting that the number of anti-secessionists and anti-Confederates in the region could be even higher.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ "A UNION VOTE IN FLORIDA," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), Jan 7, 1861. In the delegate election, Escambia County, county seat in Pensacola, elected anti-secession delegates, voting 258 to 95.

¹²⁵ Reiger, "Secession of Florida," 360; Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 43-44.

At the war's outset, thousands of men from both the north and the south enlisted to fight in what they believed would be a short and glorious war. When the war did not end quickly, a decline in enlistment paired with the Confederacy's need to expand the military in response to the Union's bolstering ranks led President Davis, in December 1861, to institute a fifty-dollars bounty for both soldiers who reenlisted and new enlistees.¹²⁶ Eventually, President Davis extended the enlistment term from twelve months to the war's duration or three years. As a result, southerner's enthusiasm waned.¹²⁷ Beginning in early 1862, pressures on military age Southern civilian men to enlist and the looming threat of conscription without a bounty motivated many to enlist late in the Confederate Army. These later enlisting bounty men included many small farmers and unskilled laborers.¹²⁸ Many of the men in Southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle fell into this category. While they enlisted, it may have not been due to a strong connection to the Confederate cause.

Many First Florida Cavalry enlistees first served in the Confederate Army. Understanding their Confederate service helps illuminate their motives to eventually desert and join the Union army. While some of these soldiers joined the Confederate service in the initial enlistment push, the majority were late enlistees. In total, two hundred and thirty-five of the two hundred and seventy-three previous Confederate enlistees in the First Florida Cavalry (US) joined the Confederate war effort after the implementation of the bounty and conscription. The largest contingent of late-enlisting confederates, sixty-six in total, served in the Eleventh Florida

¹²⁶ Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 104-5; Moore, *Conscription and Conflict*, 6-8.

¹²⁷ Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 104.

¹²⁸ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 9.

Infantry with enlistment dates ranging from January to October 1863. Twenty-three served in the Sixth Florida Infantry enlisting from March to May 1862. Twenty-two men served in Fifty-seventh Alabama Infantry before joining the First Florida Cavalry, enlisting in March 1863.

While many First Florida Cavalry enlistees previously served in the Confederate Army, their motivations for serving the South varied widely. Many enlisted to avoid conscription. One enlistee, Private Ira J. Ward evaded Confederate service through the 1861 enlistment fever, and only enlisted after conscription forced his position. Ward stated, “I stayed out as long as I could, but when I saw that I would be conscripted I went on into the service and remained there till the night before the Battle of Chickamauga,” when he deserted. Ward then traveled more than three hundred and fifty miles to his home in Henry County, Alabama and then to Pensacola Bay where he “stayed... till (he) enlisted in the U.S. Army at Barrancas, FL.”¹²⁹ Ward’s reluctant enlistment, spurred on by the threat of conscription, was not an isolated experience and likely represents a larger trend that caused many who had little support for the Confederacy to enlist. Subsequently, Ward, like many others, deserted and returned to his family and home before deciding to travel to Fort Barrancas and enlist in the Union army. Once Ward enlisted in the First Florida Cavalry, he stayed in the service until the regiment mustered out in November 1865.¹³⁰

Ward exemplifies a possible explanation for the large quantity of Confederate deserters that filled the First Florida Cavalry ranks. When given the ultimatum between enlistment and conscription, many elected to volunteer and receive the bounty. Many of these men had little connection to the Confederate ideology and only became Confederate soldiers when threatened

¹²⁹ Deposition of Ira J. Ward, September 26, 1896, in Ira J. Ward, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington D.C.

¹³⁰ Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, 2.

with conscription without any financial benefit. While some late enlisting Confederate soldiers developed relationships with their fellow soldiers and stayed in the Confederate ranks, others did not and deserted.

Ward's journey to Pensacola was not unique. Ethlered Phillips, a Unionist farmer living in Marianna, a large community in Jackson County, Florida, reported in a letter to a family member in North Carolina in 1864 that "the country for fifty miles between here and the Gulf is infested with hundreds of [Confederate] deserters in communication with the enemy."¹³¹ While not all of these men eventually enlisted in the First Florida Cavalry, many did, and this region provided a prime location for Asboth and the Union army to recruit members of their Southern Union regiment.

Florida's Governor, John Milton also noted the desertion in the panhandle. In a letter to the Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon, Milton reported that "in the counties bordering on the Gulf and especially in Washington County, there are many deserters and many persons who have fled from other states to avoid conscription. These persons have contaminated a large portion of the citizens and constant communication is kept up with the enemy who are massing forces on St. Rosa Island, evidently with the purpose of making a raid into that portion of the state."¹³² While not all these deserters enlisted in the Union army, over two hundred did.

These men deserted for many reasons, but their desertion largely stemmed from a lacking connection to the Confederate cause and a desire to be close to their families. Union service in

¹³¹ Ethlered Phillips, Letter of January 4, 1864; University of North Carolina, in Dale Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida* (Fort Smith: Dale Cox, 2007), 4.

¹³² John Milton to James A. Seddon, January 11, 1864 in *Civil War Correspondence of Florida's Governor John Milton*, ed. M. Edward Hughes (M. Edward Hughes, 2015), 545-6.

the First Florida Cavalry (US) offered an alternative for these reluctant Confederates. It offered work in the Union army with an income in a stable currency that kept the men close to their homes. The proximity to home was important to these men. In the Eleventh Florida Infantry (CSA) almost all who deserted did so just before the regiment transferred out of Florida to a northern battlefield. It also offered a sanctuary that protected deserters and conscription evaders from the repercussions of their Confederate disloyalty. Although it is impossible to determine exactly how many evaded conscription by fleeing to Pensacola, it was likely a contributing motivation for many of the almost three hundred First Florida Cavalry enlistees who perviously served in the Confederate Army. This desire to avoid Confederate service and to avoid recapture as deserters led many to Pensacola and enlistment in the First Florida Cavalry.

These deserters that later enlisted in the First Florida Cavalry further undermined Confederate authority. Many of the deserter enlistees came from a larger pool of deserters located in Florida's panhandle and Southern Alabama. As historian Mark Weitz stated in his work on desertion, "The evidence suggests not only that desertion undermined the army's fighting effectiveness, but that the worst part of desertion was that its effects spread from the army into other parts of the struggle."¹³³ Southern deserters not only destabilized the Confederate region by being relatively unchallenged in the region in their treasonous act and enlisting in the Union army, but they also contributed to a larger destabilization of the Confederate region, possibly encouraging other non-deserters in the area to join the Union army based on the weakened view of the Confederate cause and the benefits that Union service offered.

¹³³ Mark A. Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), xviii.

Confederate deserters comprised of a large portion of the First Florida Cavalry and understanding their motivations to desert, dissent, and enlist in the Union army is a vital component to understanding the destabilized nature of Florida's panhandle and southern Alabama. However, an even larger group of Southerners enlisted in the Union Army who did not serve in the Confederate army. While these men did not enter Confederate military service, their decision to enlist in the Union army was likely influenced by the weakened appearance of the Confederate homefront that deserters helped to project.

While the fear of conscription, the desire for a Confederate bounty, and social pressure pushed Southerners without a strong connection to the Confederate government into the Confederate Army, it also pushed others further away from it. Conscription forced the hand of some passive dissenters in both Alabama and Florida and brought them together as a community of dissent after conscription began. The Alabama government began to hunt down war evaders. Southerners formed vigilance committees using tactics previously employed in slave patrols.¹³⁴ These groups hunted Unionists and conscription evaders sometime using techniques typically reserved for hunting slaves. In Lowndes County, fifty dogs chased two men in 1862, who ran twenty-eight miles to avoid capture.¹³⁵ Similarly, in Florida, Asboth recorded an incident in April 1864. "In Walton County, 7 citizens were hung last week for entertaining Union Sentiments, and a woman, refusing to give information about her husband's whereabouts, was killed in a shocking manner, and two of her children caught and torn to pieces by bloodhounds."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, 64-65.

¹³⁵ Southern Claims Commission Claim 17530, Alexander Bodiford Estate, Crenshaw Co., April 20, 1875: Testimony of Isham Bodiford. Claim found in Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, 69.

¹³⁶ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, April 22, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 2, 64.

Southern dissenters lived throughout the southeast and in many of these places pro-Confederates viewed the “union men” and conscription evaders as traitors. Governor Milton acknowledged these men in a report to the Confederate Secretary of War: “unfortunately for the honor and safety of the state, a few men of wicked influences remained in it and have proven themselves despicable demagogues with cunning enough to avoid the penalties of treason and yet traitors in purposes.”¹³⁷ Whether they held a pro-Union sentiment from the beginning of the war or developed their dissent through wartime military and economic measures, many southerners opposed Confederate control, a dangerous position to have.¹³⁸

The dangers of dissenting from within the South led some to seek refuge at Fort Barrancas in Pensacola. Private Wade H. Richardson was a prime example of someone who came from a southern dissenting family and evaded conscription by seeking sanctuary in Pensacola. At the young age of sixteen, Richardson saw his home state, Alabama, secede from the Union. His Unionist father and uncle both worked as yeoman farmers. Prior to Richardson’s escape, his uncle unsuccessfully attempted to reach the Union lines to the north of their home in Macon County, Alabama. After Richardson’s uncle returned to the family farm, unsuccessful in his northern escape, Wade decided to travel south to Pensacola and the Union lines there. His family ties and recent eligibility for conscription influenced the young boy to flee to Pensacola. In the middle of the night, Richardson left his home and began the journey to the Florida’s Gulf

¹³⁷ John Milton to James A. Seddon, December 6, 1862 in *Civil War Correspondence of Florida’s Governor John Milton*, ed. M. Edward Hughes (M. Edward Hughes, 2015), 418.

¹³⁸ Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, 85.

Coast. The journey took over two weeks and brought Richardson to the brink of starvation, but ended with his successful arrival at East Pass and eventually the Pensacola naval yard.¹³⁹

Richardson left his family behind, but some men brought their spouses and families with them to Pensacola. One soldier, Zachariah Cutts, a deserter from the Third Battalion Florida Cavalry (CSA), traveled to Pensacola in search of safety from Confederate retribution. To protect his family after arriving in Pensacola, Cutts wrote to his wife asking her to join him in Pensacola. She agreed and later joined Cutts as a southern refugee.¹⁴⁰ Richardson also recalled that in December 1863 that some refugees “had their families and all their belongings with them and dwelt in tents or houses abandoned.”¹⁴¹ By December 1863, enough refugees lived around Fort Barrancas that Richardson began a school to teach the children.¹⁴² Pensacola’s safety sheltered southern dissenters and deserters alike in who searched for an alternative to Confederate rule.

Richardson’s experience also illustrates another key element that drove men toward Pensacola, geography. What shifted both the Union and Confederate governments’ attention away from Pensacola years earlier, proved beneficial to deserters and evaders in the Deep Southeast region. Located on the war’s fringe, far from the battlefields and close to the refugees’ homes, enlistment in the First Florida Cavalry made logistical sense. Making Union enlistment even more enticing, the Confederate Army had few forces in the area and posed no real threat to the Union Occupation. Therefore, deserters likely looked at Pensacola as a safe place to escape

¹³⁹ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ General Affidavit of John W. Clary, May 9, 1819 in Zachariah Cutts, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington D.C.

¹⁴¹ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 24.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 25.

their Confederate service that they could reach. Additionally, the strong pro-Confederate sentiment and presence in the black belt of middle Alabama and the Tallahassee region of Florida's panhandle, made travel through these regions without detection difficult. Richardson's uncle experienced this difficulty and likely motivated Richardson and others to travel through the path of least resistance toward the Union lines at Pensacola instead of trying to reach the northern lines.

Not all Pensacola refugees were there to evade Confederate service. Over half of the First Florida Cavalry enlistees never served in the Confederate army. While some traveled to Pensacola to avoid conscription or the Confederate military, others saw a way to evade the Confederate government and economy and capitalize on the opportunities Union occupation provided. To view First Florida Cavalry soldiers as purely deserters wishing to find a place to escape the Confederate army diminishes the complexity of their decisions and their enlistment motivations.

The future First Lieutenant in Company B, Lyman Rowley, exemplifies a man who sought sanctuary in Pensacola for reasons other than evading Confederate service. Born in Vermont, Rowley moved to Santa Rosa County, Florida as an adult where he met his wife, Florida native, Margaret E. McCaskill. When war broke out, Rowley was in Washington D.C. on a work trip. To get home to his wife and children, Rowley disguised himself as a private in an Iowa regiment and snuck aboard a boat in New York bound for Pensacola.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ J. B. Wilson to Brigadier General James Bowen, Provost Marshal, Department of the Gulf, March 2, 1863, Fold3, <https://www.fold3.com/image/249/291962052>.

Once back in Florida, in March 1863, Rowley immersed himself in military bureaucracy, working as chief clerk in the provost marshal's office at Fort Barrancas.¹⁴⁴ Around this time, his superiors wrote to the Provost Marshal of the Department of the Gulf, Brigadier General James Bowen petitioning for Rowley to coordinate trade with the north to acquire goods for the Union station at Fort Barrancas. The Union officer spoke highly of Rowley and noted that he had not taken any Confederate loyalty oath. Assuming the officer accurately identified Rowley's skills, Rowley likely worked in the pre-war port economy that collapsed during the blockade. His actions during the war had less to do with overall loyalty to one side and focused more on getting back to his family and provide for them during wartime. While Rowley never engaged in the Confederate service, he put himself in danger to return home to his family and built a wartime career in Union occupation even before entering the Union military.

Southerners like Rowley capitalized on trading opportunities with Union forces to better their economic condition.¹⁴⁵ For the Union occupiers, trading with and employing southerner's fostered relationships with the communities they occupied. Specifically, local trade improved the relationship between the Union Army in Pensacola and the southerners in the region and prompted some locals to view occupation positively. In addition to trading with locals, Pensacola Bay-based troops also offered rations and safety to refugees. When Richardson first arrived in Pensacola, the Union army greeted him with "pork, beans, hardtack, sugar, coffee," as well as employment at the naval yard.¹⁴⁶ Other Southerners capitalized on trade with the Union and used

¹⁴⁴ Receipt of payment, The United States to L. W. Rowley, March 31, 1863, Fold3, <https://www.fold3.com/image/249/291962057>

¹⁴⁵ Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, 121-22.

¹⁴⁶ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 21.

the relationship to acquire goods they could not get from the Confederacy due to the failure of the Confederate economy. This further promoted Pensacola as a safe place close to home that provided a social and financial benefit to the community. This positive relationship also further deteriorated Confederate sovereignty in the region as a continuous beneficial Union presence emphasized the porous Southern border.

Many living both in and around Pensacola realized that the Union presence benefited their families. Family and community mattered greatly to Southern men. Dissenting communities who in some cases held even stronger kinship and family ties in the face of violent opposition exemplified this importance even more.¹⁴⁷ As the war progressed and the conditions on the homefront became difficult, the need to help support one's family strengthened the desire to be close to home and led some to reevaluate their loyalties.¹⁴⁸ In the letter to her relative in North Carolina, Ethlered Phillips illustrated the economic conditions for Confederate deserters in Florida's panhandle. "They had not been paid since June and their families were suffering from want of food. Everybody is tired of this war."¹⁴⁹ For these Southerners, deserters, and Unionists, family and community needs sparked their desire to stay close to their homes and away from the battlefield. Many sought refuge in Pensacola where Union enlistment provided a way to achieve their goals of remaining close to their homes and providing for their families. Asboth noted in Spring 1864 that "Here I have sheltered with condemned tents 609 destitute women and children,

¹⁴⁷ Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, 38, 58.

¹⁴⁸ David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (1962), 936. For a study of Shifting loyalties see: Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

¹⁴⁹ Ethlered Phillips, Letter of January 4, 1864; University of North Carolina, in Cox, *The Battle of Marianna*, 4.

a majority of them suffering more or less from various diseases in consequence of their privations and hardships.”¹⁵⁰ The Union presence along Pensacola Bay was a haven for Southerners in need and Union enlistment could help even more. The First Florida Cavalry’s proximity to enlistees’ family and community likely contributed greatly to their motivation to serve in this unit.

Geography played a large role in driving men to Pensacola and leading them to enlist in the First Florida Cavalry. First Florida Cavalry enlistees listed their place of birth when enlisting in the regiment. A map of these locations shows the variety of counties and states that these men were from. Their birth locations spread throughout the South, but by 1860 almost all enlistees moved into a close clustering around Pensacola and rural Gulf Coast. Southern Alabama and Florida at this time were still a United States borderland, Florida had only become a state in 1845. As seen in the maps below, First Florida Cavalry Enlistees’ residence just prior to enlistment demonstrates that most enlistees emigrated from other southern counties and by 1860 lived near Pensacola Bay. The clustering suggests that proximity to home and community, as well as accessibility to Pensacola were possibly key factors in the decision to enlist.

¹⁵⁰ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, April 22, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 2, 64.

First Florida Cavalry (US) Place of Birth

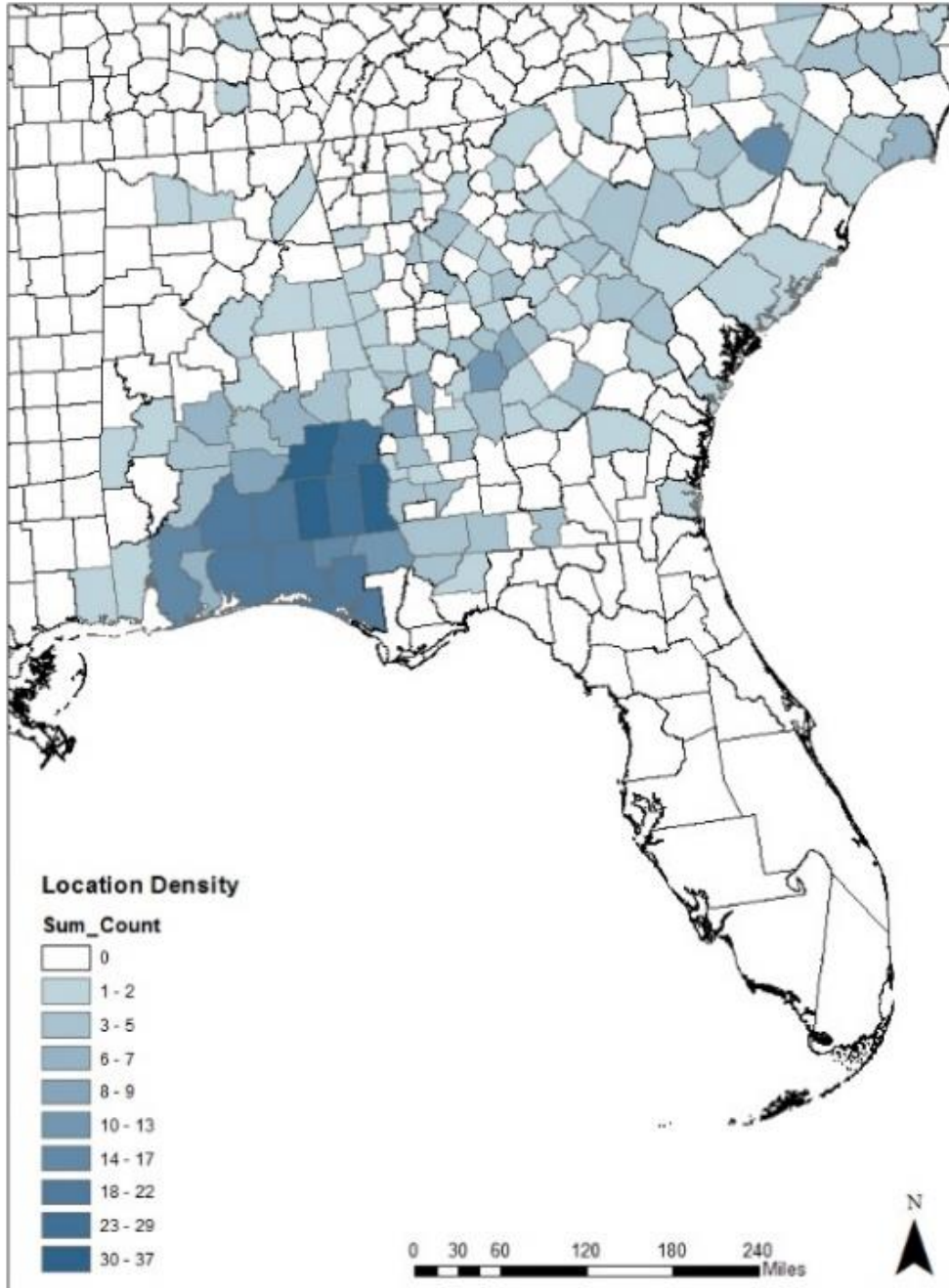


Figure 2 Enlistee's Place of Birth

First Florida Cavalry (US) 1860 Residence

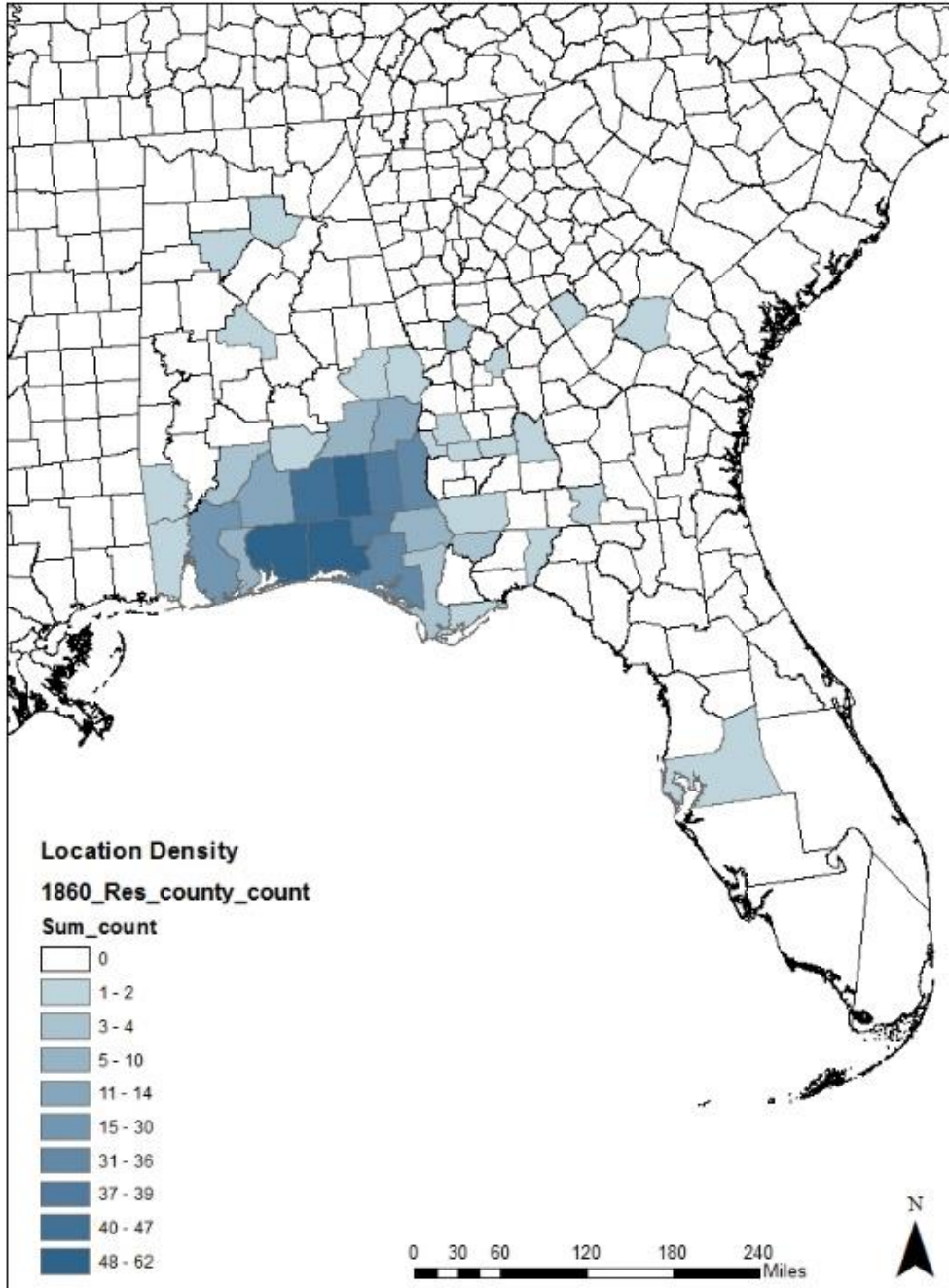


Figure 3 Enlistee's 1860 Residence

Enlistee's home location in relation to where they served is vital to understanding their motivation to enlist in the First Florida Cavalry. Place and Space Theorist Tim Creswell explains how home represents a safe place where individuals "feel a sense of attachment and rootedness."¹⁵² It moves beyond a physical geographic location to include the connectivity of an individual to those who live within it, the emotions that the physical structure evokes and the relationship with others in the community that the home exists in. Therefore, close proximity of the regiment's base in Pensacola to their homes suggests that being close to home, family, and community motivated enlistment in the First Florida Cavalry as opposed to serving in the confederacy where they would be sent away from their homes or dissenting and traveling north.

As the war progressed and conditions at home deteriorated, the need to protect the family and community grew for Southern men that led some to reevaluate their loyalties and join the Union army. Governor Milton documented some of these conditions. While the men serving in the Confederate army were away, deserters and conscription evaders banded together in the panhandle to "make raids with impunity for the destruction of property, or robbing families, whose natural protectors are soldiers in the armies of Virginia & in the West."¹⁵³ The

¹⁵¹ These ArcGIS maps were derived from a database. The birth locations were pulled from the Compiled Service Cards of soldiers in the First Florida Cavalry compiled by David W. Hartman and David Coles in *Biographical rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers, 1861-1865*. The 1860 residence is derived from Census data pulled from, *The 1st Florida Cavalry Union Volunteers in the Civil War: The Men and Regimental History and What That Tells Us About the Area During the War* by Sharon D. Marsh and from individual searches through Ancestry.com and Fold3.com.

¹⁵² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 220; Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 24-25; Stephen Shapiro and Hilary Ryglewicz, *Feeling Safe: How to Clear Space for the Self* (Englewood Cliffs: N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1976), 102.

¹⁵³ John Milton to James A. Seddon, December 6, 1862 in *Civil War Correspondence of Florida's Governor John Milton*, ed. M. Edward Hughes (M. Edward Hughes, 2015), 418.

Confederate government and army was unable to protect the civilians that soldiers left behind. In response to this threat, some men, particularly those not committed to secession and the Confederacy, returned to their homes and joined the Union army to protect and provide for their family and community.

The enlistee's age further supports their awareness of the regiment's proximity to their homes and communities. The average age of enlistees in the First Florida Cavalry in 1863 was twenty-seven. The First Florida Cavalry, like many other late enlisting regiments on both sides, was comprised of men who were older than early enlistees, making them more likely to have families and established relationships in their communities.¹⁵⁴ For many, these local loyalties stifled any desire to go far from home to serve a cause they may not have agreed with. Instead, they focused their attention on the protection and prosperity of their families and communities, which, for many in this region, could be better served by their service in the Union army.

Not only were these men connected to their families at home, but many of them also served with direct relatives in the First Florida Cavalry. Seventy-eight pairs of brothers or fathers and sons enlisted and fought together in the regiment.¹⁵⁵ These enlistees, accounting for just shy of one fourth of the enlistees in the regiment, held not only a strong connection with their homes, but also a strong familial bond with other enlistees, further strengthening the regiment in its military efforts. Therefore, these men enlisted due to the regiment's proximity to home in addition to their connections with other dissenting enlistees from their families and communities.

¹⁵⁴ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, viii.

¹⁵⁵ Marsh, *The First Florida Cavalry*, "Known Families in the 1st Florida Cavalry."

The importance of proximity and family played a large role in Private James J. Jay's decision to enlist in the First Florida Cavalry. Jay's listed age falls much lower than the norm at eighteen years old. However, it is likely that his age was closer to fifteen or sixteen at his enlistment.¹⁵⁶ Jay's motivations to enlist relied heavily on the priority of his familial loyalties over national ones. He lost his father in 1857, leaving him to care for his elderly mother in Santa Rosa County, near Pensacola Bay. Jay enlisted in the Union army at Pensacola to obtain his bounty and care for his mother. Pensacola's proximity to his home and mother, paired with the opportunity for financial gain, likely persuaded Jay to enlist in the First Florida Cavalry.¹⁵⁷ Confederate service would likely have taken Jay far away from home and could not offer as much support to help his mother. Jay may or may not have held a strong loyalty to the Union, but through a mutually beneficial exchange, he developed a conditional Unionism that both propelled him into the service of the United States Army and helped him to care for his mother in the process. Unfortunately, Jay died of disease while serving in Fort Barrancas, but his story still resonates as a prime example of the motivating factors that led men to enlist in the Union army in the Deep South.¹⁵⁸

The regiment's proximity to soldiers' homes denotes a strong motivating factor for enlistment, but, as James Jay's experience demonstrates, financial benefit also played a large role. The three-hundred-dollar enlistment bonus strongly motivated men to enlist and after. They

¹⁵⁶ James J Jay, in 7th Population Census of the United States, 1850, Walton County, Florida. This census took place shortly after Jay was born and notes him a significantly younger than his age given on his service card.

¹⁵⁷ James J Jay, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington DC. CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington D.C.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., CWPF.

received, in most cases, twenty-five dollars up front and then the remainder over the course of their enlistment. Without the financial gain, Private Jay and surely many others in the regiment could not have supported their families.¹⁵⁹

Men like Jay needed the money to help themselves and their families navigate the South's deteriorating economy. Brigadier General Asboth knew the value an enlistment bonus to these men and their families and that it aided in recruiting. "Considering the general destitution of the people here, it would be an act of humanity, as well as good policy, to grant advance payment of bounty."¹⁶⁰ The region was rural and poor. The immediate area around Pensacola, once the largest city in Florida, depended on the port economy. The Union blockade and military conflicts in Pensacola Bay negatively affected that economy. Beyond the port, the majority of those living in the region were poor farmers.¹⁶¹ In regard to the larger slave plantation economy, most enlistees from Florida lived in counties with less than five hundred total slave owners, those closest to Pensacola under two hundred of this class. In Lower Alabama, five out of six counties had larger populations of white citizens than slaves.¹⁶² Before the war, these men struggled. Wartime hardships exacerbated their difficulties and increased the need for men to be close to their homes to provide for their families and communities. Fewer slaves did not make men abolitionists, but it suggest that they may have had less connection to the Confederate cause and

¹⁵⁹ James J Jay, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington DC. CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington D.C.

¹⁶⁰ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, December 27, 1863, *OR*, S. 1, Vol. 26, pt. 1, 886-887.

¹⁶¹ J. B. Wilson to Brigadier General James Bowen, Provost Marshal, Department of the Gulf, March 2, 1863, Fold3, <https://www.fold3.com/image/249/291962052>.

¹⁶² Minnesota Population Center. *National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011. These counties include Baldwin, Conecuh, Covington, Coffee, Dale and Henry.

a stronger need for employment that could provide for and protect their families. Economic circumstances motivated them to enlist in the nearby Union army.

Additionally, in Florida, rapid inflation and economic repercussions from the blockade damaged the state's economy. Yeoman farmers suffered from rising feed and seed costs, schools were disrupted, churches lost congregants, and medical care was sparse if not absent all together.¹⁶³ Governor Milton acknowledged the food shortages problem. In a letter to James Seddon, Milton wrote, "I am informed by the judges of Probate and County commissioners of several counties in the State, that they cannot procure the corn necessary to support the soldiers families."¹⁶⁴ The deteriorated nature of the Southern homefront both brought men from the distant battlefield back home and deterred others on the homefront from leaving.

The state suffered from a breakdown in many aspects of society. Prior to secession, the area had little hard currency. After secession, Florida's economy regressed to a barter system.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, as the war continued, social and economic conditions throughout the South increasingly deteriorated. The Confederate army needed food and supplies and turned to Florida for cattle, corn, citrus, and salt. It purchased these goods for less than the market price. As the war continued and the Confederacy was more desperate, the Army confiscated these supplies, giving the owners depreciated Confederate notes in return.¹⁶⁶ Economic Historian Robert Taylor highlights the strains on Florida's agriculture. "Supply officers in [Florida] endured a constant

¹⁶³ Revels, *Florida's Civil War*, 123-153.

¹⁶⁴ John Milton to James A Suddon, January 11, 1864, in *Civil War Correspondence of Florida's Governor John Milton*, ed. M. Edward Hughes (M. Edward Hughes, 2015), 544.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, *Rebel Storehouses*, 28.

¹⁶⁶ Robert A. Taylor, *Rebel Storehouse: Florida in the Confederate Economy* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), 135-8.

bombardment of impractical requests for more and more cattle to feed troops serving all over the lower half of the Confederate States.”¹⁶⁷ This property loss pushed Floridians to turn their back on the Confederacy and support Union raiders in the area in addition to joining Union regiments to earn a bounty and a paycheck in greenbacks-Union currency. ¹⁶⁸ Bounty money in particular allowed those suffering from the war’s economic strains in this region to better their economic condition. This paired with the trade possibilities in Pensacola likely led many to work with or for the Union occupiers.

Finally, their 1860 residence also sheds light on the borders of Union influence in the region and the ongoing conflict that challenged the Confederate’s sovereignty along its Southern border. The map of 1860 residency suggests that Union influence, or at the very least knowledge of the benefits of Union service, extended further inland than Pensacola Bay. The Union influence in the region seems to be boxed in by three regions of stronger pro-Union support and the Gulf of Mexico. Beyond the northern and eastern border of this region highlights the areas where the plantation economy and Confederate control was stronger.¹⁶⁹ To the West, Mobile Bay and its tributary rivers, the Tombigbee and the Alabama, represented one of the last remaining Confederate controlled river systems and housed many more Confederate soldiers and sentiment than areas east of the river. Therefore, the Southerners in southern Alabama and Florida’s western panhandle likely chose enlistment in the First Florida Cavalry because they could reach Union lines in this area. Therefore, while outside of the region there may have been

¹⁶⁷ Taylor, *Rebel Storehouses*, 132.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 135-8. Defection due to economic reasons was present throughout the state of Florida and is strongly highlighted in South Florida through the formation of the Second Florida Cavalry depicted in Buker, *Blockaders, Refugees, and Contrabands*.

¹⁶⁹ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 19.

more support for the Confederate cause and Confederate control, within these borders the Union army was able to influence Southerners where Confederate control was weak.

Additionally, First Florida Cavalry enlistees lived in every county within the region. Each soldier, whether through the help of an underground operation, a family member, or their own will, traveled through Confederate-controlled territory to reach Pensacola and the Union lines and then enlisted with the enemy. Through these actions, enlistees continued to expose the weak Confederate government control in the region and proved that the Confederacy could not maintain its borders. They were unable to maintain a control of those Southerners dissenting and traveling through the region to the Union Army. The Union army maintained an active presence in the region and actively recruited with minimal resistance. While this may not have been the biggest concern for the Confederate national government, it did undermine their position in the region and negatively affected state and local government's ability to control and govern the region.

Union occupation undermined Confederate authority and challenged the loyalty of local Southerners. Since Union loyalty proved more beneficial to their needs than Confederate and Union service kept them close to home Southern citizens came to Pensacola and eventually joined the Union Army.¹⁷⁰ The weak connection to the Confederacy and the economic benefits of supporting the Union army in Pensacola, at least in part due to the weak Confederate border, led many to seek refuge in Pensacola Bay, even those who never enlisted in the Union army. Southerners, worn down from the confiscation of their property and rapidly rising inflation, in

¹⁷⁰ For a larger discussion on nationalism see, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Ed., 1985).

addition to Unionists and deserters, sought refuge from Confederate control. The Union Blockade's protection, the weak Confederate military presence, and the Union's economic strength, made Pensacola a prime location for refugees. Without a strong presence in the region, the Confederacy could not adequately control its citizens.

Whether arriving in Pensacola as a refugee, escaping to Unionist camps along the Gulf coast, hiding out in the woods of their local communities, or deserting from the Confederate army, the men who joined the First Florida Cavalry broke ties from the newly formed nation and acted upon a conditional Unionism in their effort to protect themselves and their families. For many dissenters, deserters, and Unionists, local and family loyalties exacerbated by the economic condition of the region may have outweighed an ideological loyalty to either nation. Brigadier General Alexander Asboth, eager to bolster his military presence in Pensacola, gave these men an option that allowed them to better their families economic condition while serving in a regiment stationed near their families.

Overall, pockets of dissenters persisted throughout Florida's panhandle and Southern Alabama even before the Confederacy formed, but the number of southern dissenters grew as living conditions worsened. Men, women, and children traveled to Pensacola Bay in search of refuge, trade, and economic opportunities, further destabilizing Confederate control in the panhandle. In this environment, the First Florida Cavalry formed. A community under economic and social stress and a Union general eager to rejoin the war, both in need of something the other offered, created a formidable fighting force on the Civil War's periphery. Without the willingness of both groups to work together, the regiment may not have formed. In the end, motivating factors including loyalty to family and community, economic forces exacerbated by

civil conflict, loyalty to the Union, and the regiment's location led over six hundred and fifty men to enlist in the Union regiment and fight against their neighbors. While they joined the Union army for different reasons, they all shared a common experience—life as a Union soldier.

CHAPTER 3: REGIMENTAL ACTIONS AND DESERTION

“They are all good horsemen, all good marksmen,
and perfectly familiar with the county and people
throughout Florida, Alabama, and Georgia.”

- Brigadier General Alexander Asboth¹⁷¹

Together, Asboth and the Southern enlistees entered the Union fight. Despite the regiment's location, it contributed to the Union war effort in many ways. Enlistees in the First Florida Cavalry participated in numerous raids in Florida's Panhandle and southern Alabama including the Battle of Marianna, Florida, and the Battle of Fort Blakely, Alabama, while extending Union control and further undermining Confederate authority in the same regions. While the regiment experienced military successes, it also suffered greatly from desertion. The desertion in the First Florida Cavalry demonstrates the relationship between duty to the Union and their obligation to their families and largely occurred after the conclusion of the war. These men were loyal to the cause while fighting the war, so desertion is not a question of fear: instead, after the war, these men left to go home where their stronger loyalties existed. In the end, The First Florida Cavalry fought in none of the great battles, but they did what needed to be done to challenge the Confederate government on its borders and improve their wartime conditions.

Richard Current's study of Southern Dissenting soldiers argues that Southern Union soldiers contributed to the Union war effort through manpower and undermining the Confederate cause.¹⁷² His study focuses mainly on the border states and gives significantly less attention to

¹⁷¹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major C. T. Christensen, July 4, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 2, 166.

¹⁷² Current, *Lincoln's Loyalties*, 212.

the Deep South, but the question remains the same; Did the First Florida Cavalry influence the Union War effort? And, if so, how? The First Florida Cavalry demonstrates how a small regiment made a large impact on the Civil War's southern periphery. Through assessing all elements of the regiment's service, a clearer depiction of southerners' experiences in the wars borderlands, and how these distant theaters affected the course of the war and the men who fought them.

All enlistees in the First Florida Cavalry were southerners, but many of its officers were not. In forming the regiment, the Department of the Gulf's chief of staff advised Asboth to take "great care" when choosing the officers of his newly formed regiment.¹⁷³ The commanding officer in Pensacola had one major problem when choosing officers—experience. There were few experienced men stationed in Pensacola and many Southern enlistees had minimal military experience. In March 1864, Asboth commissioned Eugene Kielmansegge, his nephew, Colonel and commanding officer of the First Florida Cavalry. Although one of the most experienced soldiers in Pensacola, previously serving in the Fourth Missouri Cavalry and the First Maryland Cavalry, many Union officials disapproved of Kielmansegge.¹⁷⁴ While commanding the First Florida Cavalry, an army examination board reported that he "lacks capacity to explain and is physically disqualified for any service."¹⁷⁵ Another officer, Brigadier General Joseph Bailey, informed his headquarters that if Kielmansegge was placed in command, he would recommend

¹⁷³ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Cole, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 285. Kielmansegge never formally received the rank of Colonel and served as a Major and the Lieutenant Colonel due to the regiment's size.

¹⁷⁵ Woodman to Jos. Hibbert, February 8, 1865, Kielmansegge Compiled Service Record; in Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 286.

his dismissal because of his extreme nearsightedness and incompetency.¹⁷⁶ Against strong opposition, Kielmansegge commanded the First Florida Cavalry for most of the regiment's existence. Additionally, Germans and Hungarians loyal to Asboth, served as officers. Major Albert Ruttkey, the nephew of Louis Kossuth, served as Captain of the 4th US Colored Artillery prior to his appointment in the First Florida Cavalry. Ruttkey frequently commanded the regiment in Kielmansegge's absence.¹⁷⁷ Although some officers greatly aided in the regiment's success, there were still others who the US Army saw as incompetent. One report from November 1864 found the regiment's foreign-born officers unqualified for their position in the Union Army due to their inability to speak English and their military ignorance, although this report could have been due to prejudice from the Union officials.¹⁷⁸

Some Southerners did serve in officer roles in the First Florida Cavalry. Refugee, Lyman Rowley, extended his career serving the Union and commanded Company B while also serving as one of Asboth's aides-de-camp.¹⁷⁹ Another Southerner, Lieutenant Joseph Sanders, was recorded as being a "worthy officer," in his command of Company F.¹⁸⁰ These southerners, while largely untrained in military combat were able to utilize their wartime circumstances and improve their condition in the South.

Beyond unqualified officers, a dearth of equipment prevented the regiment from adequately drilling and training. The First Florida Cavalry, hindered by the lack of firearms,

¹⁷⁶ Coles, *Far From the Fields of Glory*, 286.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 287.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 287.

¹⁷⁹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Headquarters District of West Florida, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S.1, V. 35, pt. 1, 445.

¹⁸⁰ Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Spurling to Brigadier General J. Bailey, November 18, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 44, pt. 1, 419.

drilled with borrowed weapons. Often, the men sat idly at Fort Barrancas. Asboth identified these shortages and wrote to Brigadier General Charles Stone in January 1864 requesting horses, arms, and equipment “to mount the Florida recruits and prepare them for field service.”¹⁸¹ Private Richardson recalled, “Nearly the whole summer was spent in drill as infantry with arms borrowed for the occasion.”¹⁸² By August, arms arrived, but only in the form of sabers. The First Florida Cavalry did not receive Burnside carbines for every soldier until September 1864, nine months after the regiment formed.¹⁸³ Despite this adversity, The First Florida Cavalry enlistment grew quickly beginning in December 1863 and the first company officially mustered in on March 27, 1864. The newly formed regiment traveled on its first scouting mission on July 10, 1864 to Bayou Grande and Jackson’s Bridge without any opposition.

A few weeks later, the southern regiment began its prominent role in Asboth’s plans to reenter the battlefield. Asboth received notice from Major General Edward Canby, Department of the Gulf, that General Sherman had deployed a raiding party to the Montgomery and West Point Railroad as part of his Southern offensive. If Sherman’s raiders were unable to return north, the general informed them to travel south to Asboth and the southern Union line. Asboth saw this as the perfect opportunity for him to reenter the fight and test the First Florida Cavalry enlistees in combat.¹⁸⁴

Asboth split his forces into two brigades. William Holbrook commanded the men from four companies in the 7th Vermont Infantry, as well as the 82nd USCT, and Six Companies of the

¹⁸¹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, January 10, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 454; Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 14.

¹⁸² Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 26.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸⁴ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 15; Cole, *Far From the Fields of Glory*, 289.

86th USCT. Kielmansegge commanded the second brigade, comprised of the unmounted First Florida Cavalry, Company M of the 14th New York Cavalry, and a portion of the 1st Florida Battery.¹⁸⁵ A horse shortage explained the dismounted First Florida; the First Florida Artillery (US) used mules instead of horses, earning them the nickname “Sheldon’s Mule Battery.”¹⁸⁶

The brigades traveled north on July 21, 1864. They marched through the night, skirmishing with Confederate pickets from the Seventh Alabama Cavalry, CSA at dawn on July 22 at Fifteen Mile Station along the Pensacola Railroad. As a result of this fight, the Union force pushed the Confederates back to their camp at Gonzales.¹⁸⁷ After a bombardment by the First Florida Artillery (US), Asboth’s forces charged the Confederates, pushing them out of their camp and into the woods.¹⁸⁸ That night, Asboth’s soldiers feasted on the abandoned Confederate provisions and collected seventeen Confederate horses, eighteen sabers, twenty-three firearms, a large quantity of ammunition, and twenty-three heads of cattle.¹⁸⁹ As his soldiers enjoyed the breakfast left by the Confederates, Asboth interrogated the captured Confederates, one lieutenant and seven enlisted men.¹⁹⁰ From the interrogation of Private H. L. Knox, Asboth discovered that Sherman’s raids into central Alabama had succeeded and destroyed roughly twenty-four miles of the Montgomery & West Point Railroad.¹⁹¹ Knowing Sherman’s forces had safely returned

¹⁸⁵ *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 16; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 417.

¹⁸⁶ *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 16; Holbrook, *A Narrative*, 144.

¹⁸⁷ Holbrook, *A Narrative*, 144; *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 17-18; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 413, 416-17; The Fort was named after their commander Colonel Hodgson. The Confederates numbered roughly 360 men.

¹⁸⁸ Holbrook, 145; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 417.

¹⁸⁹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 417.

¹⁹⁰ Coles, “Far From the Fields of Glory,” 290.

¹⁹¹ *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 18-19.

North, Asboth changed his objective toward Pollard, Alabama, and the railroad there.¹⁹² Pollard sat between Montgomery and Mobile and served as the headquarters for Confederate forces in the panhandle region. Its location along the rail line between the two large Confederate cities made the position easily reinforced from Mobile or Montgomery. For several months prior, Asboth received intelligence that a large Confederate force defended Pollard and the railway.¹⁹³ In total, Pollard marked the largest target in Asboth's region of the Civil War, and he intended to eliminate it.

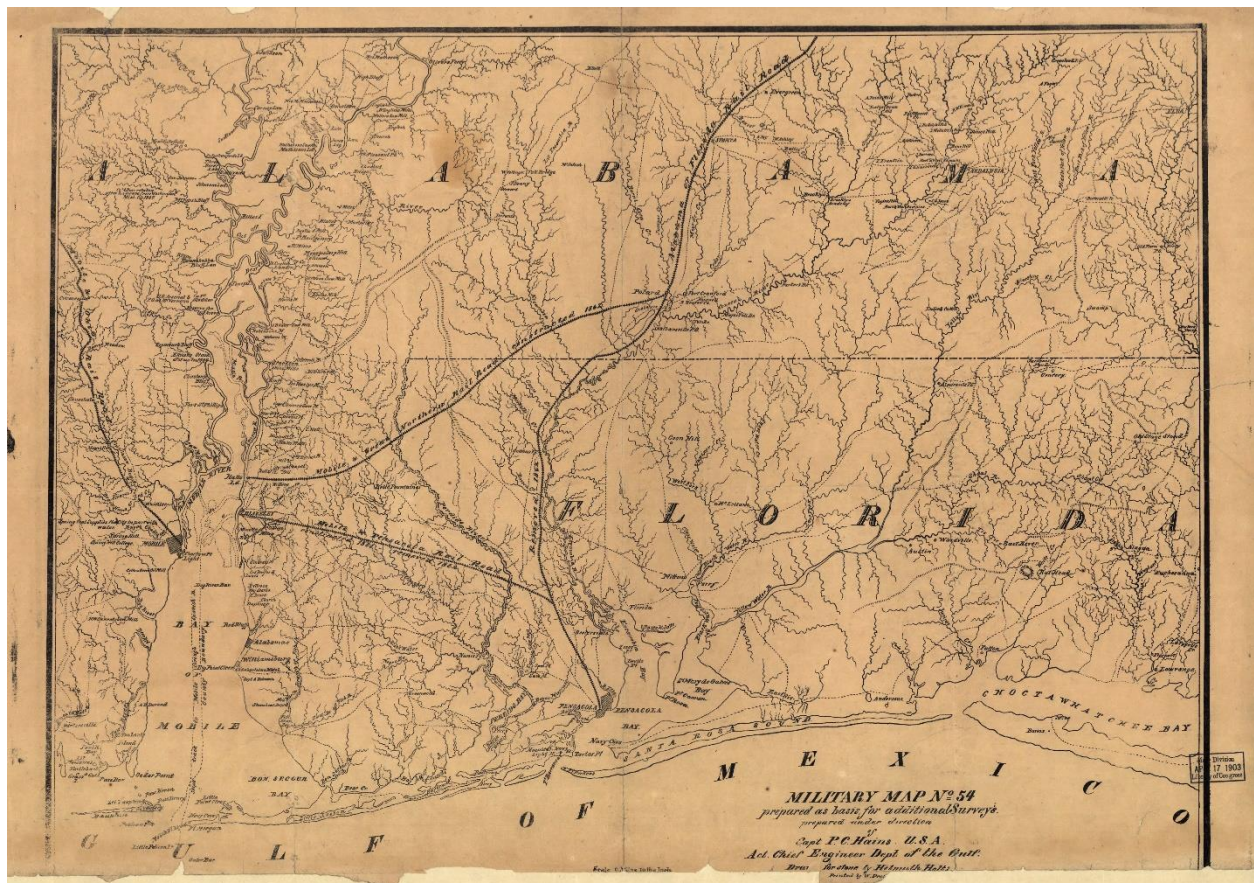


Figure 4 Military Map of Southern Alabama and Florida, by Peter Haines, Courtesy of Library of Congress

¹⁹² Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 417.

¹⁹³ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Brigadier General Charles P. Stone, April 4, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 385.

After burning the Confederate fort and camp at Fifteen-mile Station, Asboth and his men marched north toward Pollard. However, after a deserter informed Asboth that a Confederate Battery blocked the bridge ahead, and a large Confederate had marched from Mobile, the Union general decided to retreat to Fort Barrancas, “contented at present with the success already achieved.”¹⁹⁴ The Fifteenth Confederate Cavalry, a regular unit composed of various Alabama and Florida cavalry companies, under the command of Colonel Maury, left Pollard to pursue the Union forces but failed to cut off Asboth’s retreat. The following day, Confederate command in Mobile Bay called Maury and his forces back to defend another threat and the Union force returned to the safety of Pensacola unharmed.¹⁹⁵

Colonel Holbrook attributed the retreat partially to Asboth’s reluctance to test the green Union troops in the First Florida Cavalry, First Florida Artillery, and the USCT regiments. Never a fan of the Southern Union soldiers, he recalled the decision later and explained that, “we were not sure how the Florida battalion would behave in a pitched battle.”¹⁹⁶ Contrary to Holbrook’s opinion, Asboth offered the soldiers and officers praise saying, “Although unaccustomed to forced marches, they stood the fatigue well, inspired as they were with the fervent desire to meet the rebels; and all those who had the chance advanced and fought most gallantly.”¹⁹⁷ It is likely that the large Confederate cavalry force from Mobile prompted Asboth’s decision to retreat more than the quality of his smaller force. The debate over Asboth’s motivation retreat aside, the First

¹⁹⁴ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 417; *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 20-21; Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Services of the Officers* 146.

¹⁹⁵ *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 22; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 418. Coles, “Far From the Fields of Glory,” 291-2.

¹⁹⁶ Holbrook, *A Narrative*, 146.

¹⁹⁷ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, July 30, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 1, 418.

Florida Cavalry successfully participated in their first multi-day raid, marking the beginning of an increased Southern Union soldier presence in the panhandle region.

Shortly after Asboth's force arrived back at Fort Barrancas, the Second Maine Cavalry commanded by Ephraim W. Woodman arrived, further reinforcing the Union position. Around the same time, horses arrived for the First Florida Cavalry, but not enough for the whole regiment. Companies B and C remained unmounted.¹⁹⁸ Although the acquisition of horses allowed the regiment to embrace its title, they still lacked firearms. Private Wade Richardson recalled that many of his comrades attributed their lack of rifles to Northern distrust of Southern Unionists; Richardson was not sure that was the case.¹⁹⁹ While this is possible, given Northern officers' views of Southern Union soldiers, it is also possible that more important Union campaigns needed the firearms more. Amidst this controversy, military officials in Washington D.C. also pulled Lt. Col. Kielmansegge from his command. Due to a previous dismissal from the First Maryland Cavalry in 1863 for disability, he could not obtain another commission until he removed the disability from his record.²⁰⁰ Major Ruttkey took over command in his four-month absence. Fresh off the first large scale raid in the region and with the constantly growing First Florida Cavalry and newly arrived Second Maine Cavalry, Asboth developed another plan to get his force back in the field.

After the successful raid into Southern Alabama, Asboth set his sights on Marianna, Florida. Marianna was a relatively large plantation community and the largest Confederate stronghold in western Florida. In a report on September 11, Asboth noted that "At Marianna

¹⁹⁸ *Curenton, Tories and Deserters*, 23.

¹⁹⁹ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 26.

²⁰⁰ *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 24.

there are several hundred (Union) prisoners confined.”²⁰¹ In the same report, Asboth noted 300 Confederate infantrymen and one hundred Confederate Cavalry defended the City, with additional companies of about eighty men each in Chipola Spring, Vernon, and Sweetwater.²⁰² This information likely came from a deserter or refugee who left the Marianna region and crossed the Union lines at Pensacola.²⁰³

Marianna served as the headquarters for Confederate operations in West Florida, a trading point for the plantation community, and the county seat of Jackson County.²⁰⁴ Several roads and a telegraph line connecting Tallahassee, Montgomery, Pensacola, and cities in Georgia crossed at Marianna. Florida’s Confederate Governor, John Milton, also owned a plantation just outside of the city.²⁰⁵ While not a large city, it was a high value target for Asboth with a relatively small Confederate presence, making it a manageable target for Asboth’s growing command.

The following day, Asboth sent a letter to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Gulf, Major George B. Drake confirming his intentions to “capture the isolated rebel cavalry and infantry in Washington and Jackson Counties and liberate the Union prisoners confined at Marianna, to collect white and colored recruits, and secure as many horses and mules as possible.”²⁰⁶ On the evening of September 18, the Union force ferried across Pensacola Bay and

²⁰¹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major C. T. Christensen, September 11, 1864, in *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, Pt. 2, 283; *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 24.

²⁰² *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 24.

²⁰³ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 27.

²⁰⁴ Mark F. Boyd, “The Battle of Marianna,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 29 (1951), 226.

²⁰⁵ Dale Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida* (Fort Smith Arkansas: Dale A. Cox, 2007), 1.

²⁰⁶ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major Goerge B. Drake, September 12, 1864, in *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 2, 285-6.

began their journey east toward Marianna. The cavalry traveled along the coast, resupplied by ship six miles west of East Pass, before traveling inland toward Marianna.²⁰⁷ Asboth used only mounted Cavalry in this raid, leaving First Florida Cavalry Companies B and C behind at Fort Barrancas with other Infantry regiments to defend against possible Confederate attack. The raiding party included three battalions of the Second Maine Cavalry, the First Florida Cavalry, Companies A, D, E, and F, some armed only with sabers, and two companies of the mounted infantry selected from the 82nd and 86th USCT.²⁰⁸

By September 23, the force reached Eucheeanna, Florida, where they surprised a company of the Fifteenth Confederate Cavalry taking nine prisoners, forty-six horses, and twenty-eight rifles. Afterward, the Union forces raided the city and countryside for food, supplies, and slaves destroying anything that the soldiers found that could aid the Confederate war effort. Union forces imprisoned many men in the community in the local jail. By one local pro-Confederate account, Union actions in Eucheeanna pushed deserters and pacifists in the community away from supporting the Union due to the destruction, confiscation, and imprisonment.²⁰⁹ Asboth assigned two First Florida Cavalry Companies to escort the freed slaves and Confederate prisoners to Chattahoochee Bay where a boat waited to take them to Fort

²⁰⁷ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 25. Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 445; Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 294; Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna," 228.

²⁰⁸ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Headquarters District of West Florida, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 445; Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 24-5; Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 294; Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 26. The steamer *Lizzie Davis* traveled parallel to the regiment along the Gulf Coast to supply to forces in their eastward march

²⁰⁹ John L. McKinnon, *History of Walton County* (Atlanta: The Byrd Printing Co., 1911), 327-33.

Barrancas, while the larger force loaded bacon, lard, corn, and other food supplies and continued their march to Marianna.²¹⁰

The Confederate soldiers who escaped Asboth's raid in Eucheeanna alerted Colonel Montgomery, the commanding Confederate officer in the region, of the Union force's impending attack. Although receiving word of the Union raids a few days prior, Montgomery hesitated and only called in the home guard from Marianna and the surrounding community just before Asboth's arrival. Marianna's home guard company, nicknamed the *Cradle and Grave Company* included boys under sixteen and men over fifty-years-of-age. The company, led by a local man, Jesse Norwood, was comprised of forty-four men.²¹¹ As Asboth approached Marianna, the company likely swelled and incorporated the Campbellton and Greenwood home guard. Confederate soldiers, many home on sick leave or furlough, joined the defending force during the battle as well. The exact number of Confederate forces remains unknown, but likely fell somewhere between fifty and two hundred home guardsmen and one hundred and sixty cavalrymen under Montgomery's command.²¹² A small force in comparison to Asboth's seven hundred cavalrymen.²¹³

After continuing to raid homes and communities in Holmes and Geneva Counties, the Union force approached Marianna.²¹⁴ Documenting the event in 1951, one of the earliest

²¹⁰ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 33-4; John Love McKinnon, *History of Walton County* (Atlanta: The Byrd Printing Co., 1911), 327; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major George B. Drake, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 444.

²¹¹ Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna, 231. Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 17.

²¹² Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 53.

²¹³ Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna, 231; Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 51.

²¹⁴ Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 294; Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna," 229; Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 39-48.

scholars to attempt a comprehensive depiction of the battle explained the difficulty of his task. “The preparation of a narrative of the action at Marianna 86 years after the event is, from the scarcity and meagerness of the available accounts, particularly difficult.”²¹⁵ Sixty-seven years after this statement, recreating the battle remains a challenge.

Leaving Campbellton before dawn on September 27, the First Florida Cavalry and the Second Maine Cavalry led Union forces to Marianna through John R. Waddell’s plantation. The plantation, one of the largest in the county, served as the staging point for Asboth’s forces as soldiers scouted the road into Marianna. While stopped, a young slave and others approached the road as the Union forces walked by. The young slave, Armstrong Purdee, recalled later in life the experience stating, “During the time that they halted, a Yankee white soldier said to me, “Boy, does you want to go?” I said to him, “Yes sir.” The soldier helped the young boy onto the saddle and Purdee, who grew up to be a prominent African American lawyer in the city, provided the only freed slave’s recollection of the battle.²¹⁶

Three miles northwest of Marianna, the two forces finally met. Montgomery engaged Asboth’s Cavalry at Hopkins’ Branch to delay the Union advance and give his reinforcements more time to arrive. After an initial exchange of fire, the Confederates retreated to Marianna. According to Richardson, The Union forces pursued the retreated confederates, “keeping up a brisk fire with contesting rebels.”²¹⁷ Upon reaching the outskirts of the city, the attacking force composed of the First Florida Cavalry and Second Maine Cavalry encountered a Confederate barricade of wagons and logs across the main road into town. With the Union Cavalry halted by

²¹⁵ Boyd, “The Battle of Marianna,” 229.

²¹⁶ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 49.

²¹⁷ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 26.

the barricade, the Confederate Cavalry fired a volley at the charging Union soldiers.²¹⁸ The Confederate defenders stopped the Union advance and forced them to fall back.²¹⁹

Frustrated by his first charge's failure, Asboth regrouped and personally led a second charge.²²⁰ His advance successfully penetrated the city's makeshift defenses, but at a great cost. As the Union force charged down the street, the home guard, positioned on both sides of the street released a volley catching the Union soldiers in a crossfire. Montgomery ordered Confederate forces to retreat north, but the home guardsmen either did not receive the retreat order or ignored it and continued to fight the advancing Union forces.²²¹ Asboth himself received two wounds, while his horse knocked him off and onto the ground. Asboth's injury also initiated a defining moment for some of the First Florida Cavalry soldiers. Private Richardson recalled the event. "He would have been captured but for our boys with their sabers, who in a hand-to-hand encounter kept the enemy at bay till relief was at hand."²²² The First Florida Cavalry, some possibly only armed with sabers, ran into the crossfire to protect their commanding officer, highlighting the type of relationship the group shared with their leader.

Numerous other Union soldiers received wounds in the initial clash including Lieutenant Rowley.²²³ In his report on the battle, the Union brigadier general noted his wounds, saying "I myself was also honored by the rebels with two balls, the first in my face, breaking the cheek

²¹⁸ Holbrook, *A Narrative*, 154.

²¹⁹ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Headquarters District of West Florida, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, p. 1, 444; Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 28; Cox *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 58.

²²⁰ Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna," 234.

²²¹ Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna," 232-33; Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 56, 58.

²²² Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 26.

²²³ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 58-9; Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 29; Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Headquarters District of West Florida, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 445.

bone, the other fracturing my left arm in two places.”²²⁴ An official casualty count does not exist, but estimates place Confederate losses at ten killed, sixteen wounded and forty-one captured. Union losses included six killed, twenty-one wounded, and ten captured.²²⁵

Fortunately, earlier in the day, Asboth ordered a smaller force to flank the Confederate position and enter the city from the north, while the main force fought up the main road and pushed out the rebel defenders. In their escape, the Confederate Cavalry ran directly into this Union flanking force. Some Confederates fought through and crossed the Chipola River, ripping up the bridge as they crossed. The flanking Union force captured the rest. After a short time of intense fighting, Asboth won the battle and captured many Confederate soldiers, including Colonel Montgomery, in the process.²²⁶

The Battle of Marianna’s legacy, however, came not from the initial charge, but in the guerilla fighting that ensued after the charge. Union Captain George H. Maynard later recalled how the fighting continued for “three-quarters of an hour,” concluding with the home guardsmen seemingly surrendering. However, after the Union soldiers ceased firing, the Confederates fired upon them once more and the battle renewed. Just a short time later, the Confederates surrendered once more. Angry from the Confederates refusal to stop fighting after the first surrender, the Union soldiers, many from the 82nd USCT, attacked their Confederate prisoners. According to Maynard, “I at once dismounted and rushed into the graveyard, just in time to knock a musket placed at the head of a prisoner, and threatened to blow out the brains of the first

²²⁴ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Headquarters District of West Florida, October 1, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, p. 1, 445.

²²⁵ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna*, Florida, 73-4; Boyd, “The Battle of Marianna,” 235.

²²⁶ Boyd, “The Battle of Marianna,” 233; For a more detailed description of Montgomery’s life, see Cox, *The Battle of Marianna*, Florida, 9.

man who dared to shoot a prisoner.”²²⁷ Street-fighting through the churchyard on the main road culminated in a clash between black Union soldiers and the white men from the local community.²²⁸

Almost immediately following the battle, Marianna citizens recalled the events in the *West Florida Newspaper*, claiming “Most of our killed were butchered and beaten to death after they had surrendered, by the infernal Negro troops who finding them in power took the advantage of it.” The stigma associated with Southern African American Union Soldiers is not unique to Marianna, and stems from a long-standing fear of slave rebellion.²²⁹ While it is certain that the USCT soldiers acted with ferocity, their depiction in Southern newspaper recorded the likely exaggerated.²³⁰

After receiving a warning from the telegraph operator that the Fifth Cavalry Battalion, CSA, marched toward Marianna, and given the severity of his wounds, Asboth decided to retreat to the safety of Fort Barrancas and Pensacola Bay. Once more the Union force collected the horses, mules, and prisoners in the city as well as over six hundred freed slaves, the largest military emancipation in Florida during the war.²³¹ On their retreat, the Union force traveled through Verona, where a militia group of old men hoped to impede their progress. The Union cavalry quickly defeated the defending rebels, but at this pause in the retreat Asboth released five

²²⁷ W. F. Beyer and O. F. Keydel, eds., *Deeds of Valor From Records in the Archives of the United States Government* (Detroit: The Perrien-Keydel Company, 1907), 417.

²²⁸ Boyd, “The Battle of Marianna,” 235; *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 29.

²²⁹ Smith, John David, *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

²³⁰ *West Florida News*, October 3, 1864, quoted in Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 35.

²³¹ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 35.

boys from Marianna to return home to their families.²³² Later that same day, the Union force reached Point Washington and reconnected with the *Lizzie Davis*.²³³ The freed women and children and the wounded, including General Asboth, boarded the boat and headed for Fort Barrancas. The soldiers and freed men ferried across East Pass to Santa Rosa Island and continued their march to Fort Pickens. They arrived there on October 5, concluding Asboth's expedition into the Florida Panhandle.

The Union raid that ended in Marianna succeeded in many of its goals, but not all. Asboth's actions brought in both white and African American enlistees and bolstered the Union presence in the region, but it also alienated and demoralized some west Floridians in the process. In addition, one of Asboth's main goals, to liberate several hundred Union soldiers imprisoned at Marianna, turned out to be based on false information; Marianna did not house any Union prisoners. In this regard, while the Union raiders succeeded in their efforts, it did come with some setbacks and alienated some Southerners in the region.

Asboth's intention likely did not include an effort to garner new alliances in his raid. His actions in the region fall in line with other Union actions elsewhere. As the war progressed, the overarching Union strategy shifted from a conciliatory policy, one where the Southern civilians should not be harmed, to a hard war policy. The hard war policy emphasized demoralizing the Southern Homefront to weaken the Confederacy from within.²³⁴ The ability of Union forces to raid hundreds of miles into Confederate Florida, traveling farther than Sherman's March to the

²³² Boyd, "The Battle of Marianna," 236.

²³³ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Headquarters District of West Florida, October 1, 1864, *OR*. S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 445.

²³⁴ Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861 – 1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22,210.

Sea, undermined Confederate authority and demonstrated Confederate officials' inability to protect and defend their territory. In this regard, the expedition succeeded in its goal of demonstrating the ability of the Union army to threaten the Confederate home front.

The expedition into Florida's Panhandle solidified the First Florida Cavalry as a fighting force and validated Asboth's support for these men. Like Sherman's burning, Asboth's soldiers confiscated all resources that could be used to benefit his expedition and destroyed anything that could aid the enemy.²³⁵ The Union force recruited many African Americans and white southerners to join the Union cause. The First Florida Cavalry brought fourteen men into its ranks during the expedition alone. Additionally, hundreds of freed slaves joined the Union force in their retreat and subsequently enlisted in the USCT.

Asboth's recruitment of six hundred freed slaves from Marianna was not an isolated incident. His mission upon arrival at Fort Barrancas involved recruiting both white southerners and African American slaves simultaneously. The 82nd and 86th USCT, previously the 10th and 14th Corps de Afrique, enlisted hundreds of freed slaves from South Alabama and Florida's panhandle. This put the freed slaves and Southern whites side by side in several combat missions throughout the First Florida Cavalry's service. These freed slaves escaped from the same communities that many of the First Florida Cavalry enlistees also escaped from. While not together on every campaign, black and white regiments from Fort Barrancas marched and fought together many times throughout the later years of the war. Interracial military operations further complicate understandings of race relations in this rural segment of the Deep South.

²³⁵ Cox, *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*, 35.

The First Florida Cavalry arrived at Fort Barrancas and found that those companies who did not participated in the raid had acquired horses. Additionally, upon the regiments return in October, it received enough Burnside carbines for every soldier to be properly armed.²³⁶ Once reunited, Asboth put the regiment back to work; their knowledge of the region made them ideal for recruiting, supply, and reconnaissance missions around Pensacola Bay. These men's contacts, including families and friends, gave them more detailed and accurate information about Confederate movements in the region than a typical scouting party.²³⁷ In the month of October 1864 alone, the regiment helped bring in 270 pine logs, 20,000 bricks, and 100,000 feet of lumber to reinforce the Union position in Pensacola.²³⁸ They could also move throughout the region and elude Confederate capture with ease. Additionally, when confronted by Confederate forces on at least two occasions, First Florida Cavalry soldiers repelled their Confederate counterparts while accomplishing their supply mission.²³⁹

Additionally, during this period a leadership change took place, as Alexander Asboth required more time to recover from his wounds. In his formal request to recover in New Orleans, Asboth wrote to Major General Drake stating, "a change of location for a short time is urgently necessary for my speedy recovery."²⁴⁰ The commander who organized the First Florida Cavalry and brought the Pensacola region back into the fight left in October 1864 and spent four months

²³⁶ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 27.

²³⁷ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 31.

²³⁸ Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Spurling to Brigadier General J. Bailey, October 31, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 448; Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 31.

²³⁹ Itinerary of Military Operations January 1 – November 1, October 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 35, pt. 1, 38. These conflicts occurred on October 18, 1864 and October 25, 1864.

²⁴⁰ Brigadier General Alexander Asboth to Major General B. Drake, November 8, 1864, CWGP, Record Group 94, Entry PI-17 159-GG, National Archives, Washington DC.

in New Orleans recovering from his wounds. General Baily temporarily took over command in his absence.²⁴¹

Asboth's absence did not end Union operations in the region. On November 16, the First Florida Cavalry and Second Maine Cavalry left Barrancas on a raid around Pine Barren Creek along the railroad line toward Pollard, Alabama.²⁴² The First Florida Cavalry, still commanded by Major Ruttky, acted under the command of Lt. Col. Spurling of the Second Maine Cavalry. The First Florida Cavalry's Lt. Joseph Sanders led the advance guard who captured a series of Confederate pickets along the road.²⁴³ The raid culminated in a Union victory at Pine Barren Creek, where, after crossing the weathered bridge, the Union forces attacked the Rebel camp, capturing thirty-eight rifles, three mules and forty-seven horses. This mission, although brief, demonstrates the growing Union dominance in the Panhandle region and the role played by Southern Union soldiers in this success.

Just under one month after Spurling's raid at Pine Barren Creek, Union forces at Barrancas left on the second attempt to capture Pollard and destroy the railroad connecting Mobile and Montgomery. The Union raiders included The First Florida Cavalry, the Second Maine Cavalry, and at least one USCT regiment.²⁴⁴ Colonel Robinson of the Ninety-Seventh USCT commanded the Union forces, while Asboth remained in New Orleans recovering from

²⁴¹ Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 279.

²⁴² Coles, "Far From the Fields of Glory," 303. The force numbered roughly seven hundred men. The Nineteenth Iowa Infantry arrived at Fort Barrancas in August and had already participated in a log retrieval mission in October. Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Spurling to Brigadier General J. Bailey, November 18, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 44, 418-19.

²⁴³ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 32; Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Spurling to Brigadier General J. Bailey, November 18, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 44, 418-19.

²⁴⁴ Brigadier General Thomas J. McKean to Lieutenant Colonel C. T. Christensen, December 19, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 44, 449.

his wounds. Moving north as they did in an earlier mission, the Union forces came across and captured several pickets, reaching the Little Escambia River, just south of Pollard, by December 15.

This raid met resistance. A stockade protected the railroad bridge over the river, Confederate forces made their stand there with roughly 800 men. To circumvent the Confederate forces, Colonel Robinson ordered a detachment of the First Florida Cavalry to ford the river and flank the defending Confederate forces. Successful in this effort, Robinson took several prisoners, pushed the Confederate force back to Pollard and eventually out of the city on December 16.²⁴⁵ With the town under Union control, the troops burned the rebel camp and the train depot. Additionally, Robinson completed a goal Asboth set early in his command of destroying “the railroad for miles, including several bridges.”²⁴⁶

Pollard did not stay under Union control for long. The Confederates pressed the Union line and the threat of Confederate reinforcements from Mobile loomed. With their goals achieved, the Union raiders marched back to Fort Barrancas the same day their raid began, burning the Little Escambia River Bridge along their way. During their retreat, Confederate reinforcements sent from Mobile attacked on the west flank, while the defeated Confederates from Pollard maintained pressure from the north. The two sides engaged in a running fight for two days as the Union forces retreated to the safety of Pensacola Bay. The raid to Pollard and the

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Brigadier General Thomas J. McKean to Lieutenant Colonel C. T. Christensen, December 19, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 44, 449.

ensuing contested retreat cost the Union side eighty-one casualties, seven from the First Florida Cavalry.²⁴⁷

These actions wore down the cavalry horses to the point that Thomas J. McKean, at the time commanding officer at the District of West Florida, wrote to Major General Gordon Granger requesting five hundred new horses to “render our cavalry effective.”²⁴⁸ In the succeeding months, enlistees and officers spent their time recovering from the Pollard raid and building defenses and housing around Fort Barrancas. During this time, Alexander Asboth, partially recovered from his wounds, returned to his command, a lead bullet remained lodged in his cheek.²⁴⁹

While the First Florida Cavalry and other Union regiments raided the Panhandle, in Mobile Bay, Rear Admiral David Farragut began his attack to take the last remaining major Confederate-controlled bay. Starting in August 1864, the Union Navy squared off against their Confederate counterparts resulting in Union victory and the surrender of the forts protecting the bay.²⁵⁰ However, a strong Confederate force remained in Mobile and in the surrounding communities including the Blakeley and Spanish Fort along the bay’s east coast.²⁵¹ General Canby, Department of the Gulf, devised a two-prong attack to defeat the remaining Confederate forces. One Union force marched north along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay toward the

²⁴⁷Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 34-5; Brigadier General Thomas J. McKean to Lieutenant Colonel C. T. Christensen, December 19, 1864, *OR*, S. 1, V. 44, 449.

²⁴⁸ Brigadier General Thomas J. McKean to Major General Gordon Granger, January 16, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 577; Curenton, *Tories and Deserters* 35.

²⁴⁹ Coles, “Far From the Fields of Glory,” 307. Asboth returned to command on February 15, 1865.

²⁵⁰ Chester G. Hearn, *Mobile Bay and the Mobile Campaign: The Last Great Battles of the Civil War* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1993), 121-37.

²⁵¹ These two communities both housed forts that protected the eastern side of Mobile Bay.

Spanish Fort. The second left from Pensacola and traveled north to once again destroy the railroad connecting Mobile and Montgomery, before turning west toward Blakely. The two forces would then converge destroying the last Confederate regional strongholds around Mobile.²⁵²

Beginning in March 1865, additional troops arrived at Pensacola in preparation for the attack on Mobile. Major General Frederick Steele commanded the force, which included several USCT Regiments in addition to regiments from Illinois, New York, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Vermont.²⁵³ The First Florida Cavalry, commanded by Captain Francis Lyon comprised a part of the Second Cavalry Brigade, under the overall command of Lt. Colonel Spurling.²⁵⁴ The Second Cavalry Brigade included the Second Illinois Cavalry and the Second Maine Cavalry.

Steele's main force from Pensacola traveled north straight toward Pollard, while Lt. Col. Spurling's brigade, including one hundred and seventy-seven enlisted and five officers from the First Florida Cavalry, marched through West Florida and Southern Alabama to tear up the railroad north of Pollard.²⁵⁵ On March 19, 1865, two companies of the First Florida Cavalry

²⁵² *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 35.

²⁵³ For a full list of regiments stationed in Pensacola see Norman W. Haines, *Letters from Pensacola: The Civil War Years* (Pensacola: The Civil War Soldiers Museum, 1993), 97-9.

²⁵⁴ The Mobile Campaign, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 109. Lyon commanded the regiment due to Kielmansege's illness and Major Ruttkay's absence on furlough in New York. *Curenton, Tories and Deserters* 35-6.

²⁵⁵ A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 309. The force comprised of 429 enlisted men and 14 officers from the Second Illinois Cavalry, 212 enlisted men and 10 officers from the Second Maine Cavalry, 177 enlisted men and 5 officers First Florida Cavalry. Totaling 818 enlisted men and 29 officers

landed in Milton and drove the few confederate forces out of the city in an effort to mask the larger brigade's landing a few miles south at Creigler Mills.²⁵⁶

During their march toward Andalusia, Alabama, the Union cavalry captured two Confederate couriers carrying letters warning this city of the Union's advances. With the citizen defense of Marianna still fresh in Spurling's mind, he did not give the Confederates any time to prepare for his arrival. The following morning at 5:30 am, the Union forces arrived at Andalusia with no resistance. After spending a few hours destroying any ammunition they could find in the city, they left once more at 8:00 am heading toward Evergreen, Alabama, and the railroad five miles north of the city.²⁵⁷

Along the road, the Union force met minimal resistance. When they approached three confederate soldiers, the soldiers attempted to run, and Union soldiers wounded two. One of the Confederates was the governor of Alabama's son. After this skirmish, Union forces continued their march north, arriving at the Alabama and Florida Railroad forty miles north of Pollard just before midnight on March 24.²⁵⁸ The First Florida Cavalry and the rest of the brigade destroyed the railroad and then waited through the night for the trains to arrive. The first train, northbound from Pollard, "was thrown from the track, set on fire, and destroyed" around 4:30 am.²⁵⁹ At 7:00 am, the Southbound train from Montgomery arrived and was captured. This time, after a brief gunfire exchange, one hundred and seventy passengers surrendered, including one hundred soldiers and munitions headed toward Mobile. With both trains accounted for and prisoners in

²⁵⁶ A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 309.

²⁵⁷ A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 309.

²⁵⁸ A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 310.

²⁵⁹ Major Frank Moore to Captain E. V. Hitch, March 29, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 312; A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 309

hand, the Union forces returned to Evergreen and looted the city of valuables, horses, and mules.²⁶⁰

That afternoon, the cavalry traveled south toward Sparta, Alabama, and continued to raid and loot the countryside. Upon reaching Sparta, they burned the jail, six boxcars, and the depot. The following day March 26, 1865, Spurling's force reunited with the main body of Major General Steele's Eastern prong at Pollard. Together, they traveled to Stockton, Alabama, to capture supplies before traveling south toward Fort Blakely and the campaign's main objective.²⁶¹

Arriving at Fort Blakely on April 1, 1865, Steele began to lay siege the fort with the forces under his command. Shortly after leaving Spanish Fort victorious in the first week of April Canby joined Steel bolstering the Union force to over 16,000 men. This included over 5,000 USCT soldiers, making it the largest concentration of African American soldiers at a single battle during the Civil War.²⁶² Over the course of several days, skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces ensued. The CSS *Huntsville*, *Nashville*, and *Gaines* aided the Confederate position by shelling the Union lines until Union artillery was able to force them to retreat.²⁶³

The final Union push toward Fort Blakeley began on April 9, 1865. Unknowingly, this was also the day Robert E. Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox. A Union charge along

²⁶⁰ A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 310.

²⁶¹ A. B. Spurling to Captain John F Lacy, March 27, 1865, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 309

²⁶² Mike Bunn, "Battle of Fort Blakeley," in *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, November 11, 2015, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3718>

²⁶³ Mike Bunn, "Battle of Fort Blakeley," in *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, November 11, 2015, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3718>

roughly three miles of earthworks began in late afternoon. Taking casualties, the Union forces pushed the Confederates back, eventually forcing their surrender. Fortunately, the First Florida Cavalry incurred no casualties.²⁶⁴

After Fort Blakely fell, the First Florida Cavalry raided through Alabama, attacking Greenville, Alabama, on April 21, 1865, and occupying Montgomery on April 24, 1865 alongside other Union regiments.²⁶⁵ The regiment remained in Montgomery until the end of May when it returned to Fort Barrancas and rejoined the members of the regiment who remained in Pensacola. The completion of the regiment's raid in Florida and Alabama marked the conclusion of the regiments' major military actions in the war. The Southern soldiers stayed at Fort Barrancas until August 1865 when they were transferred to Tallahassee, Florida and then mustered out on November 17, 1865.

Serving in the First Florida Cavalry was seen by some as a way to sit out the war away from the battlefield in the Confederate Army, but many enlistees served in active combat several times throughout the regiment's service, sometimes fighting against their own neighbors and family. These men played prominent roles in several successful raids in late 1864, overcoming the skepticism of many northern contemporaries. The evidence supporting the idea the enlistees evaded combat derives from one aspect of the regiment service or more properly lack of service—desertion.

While the First Florida Cavalry enlistees served faithfully during the war, their commitment to the cause wavered as the war came to a close. Private Richardson, who remained

²⁶⁴ The Mobile Campaign, *OR*, S. 1, V. 49, pt. 1, 115.

²⁶⁵ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 39.

in Pensacola during the Blakeley campaign, recalled soldiers' attitudes when they returned to Fort Barrancas in May. "To us the war was over, yet we were told we should probably have to serve out our time doing provost duty in the state."²⁶⁶ Richardson believed that the regiment remained in service six months after the war to prevent conflict among white Southerners of differing loyalties. "They well knew if we were turned loose to go home there would be a lot of bush-whacking done. There were too many old scores to settle with our neighbors, as well as some new ones"²⁶⁷ However, many enlistees believed that they had accomplished their mission and wished to return home to their families instead of waiting idly along the Gulf Coast.

The men in the regiment began to desert in much greater numbers than any other period in the regiment's service. The regiment's transfer in August sparked the largest number of desertions in the regiment's short history, likely due to the fact that the transfer would take many of these men away from their homes and families. Desertion caused more personnel loss than battle or disease combined, and while it did not become a large problem until the regiment's combat days were over, it began early in the regiment's formation. By the end of the first regimental scouting mission in July 1864, eleven men already deserted from the regiment and by the time the regiment mustered out in November 1865, two hundred and forty men, roughly one third of the regiment's enlistees, deserted. While this number is staggering, it is misleading; desertion largely occurred after the final campaigns, after the surrender of Lee's army, and the assassination of President Lincoln.

²⁶⁶ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 30.

²⁶⁷ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 39.

Proximity to family and community encouraged many to enlist in the First Florida Cavalry, but it also facilitated desertion. Not surprisingly, loyalties that motivated desertion mimicked those of enlistment. They joined because it was close to their homes and away from the battlefield. As the war progressed and eventually ended, many First Florida Cavalry enlistees believed their service had ended and returned home to their families.

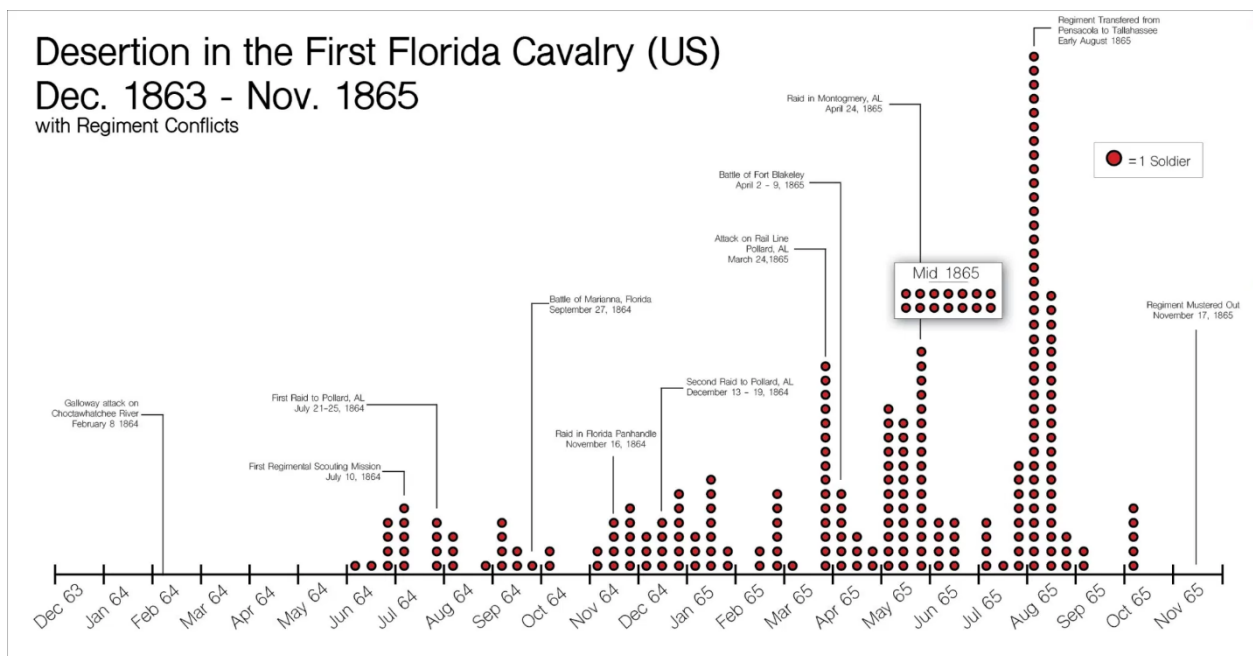


Figure 5 Desertion in the First Florida Cavalry from Compiled Service Records

As demonstrated in the chart above, for early deserters there is a correlation between the major campaigns into Florida’s Panhandle and Lower Alabama and desertion from the regiment. This suggests that desertion occurred in two ways. First, men deserted from the raiding parties while on campaign. As these raids moved farther into Southern Alabama and Western Panhandle region, soldiers left because of combat or because their location provided them an opportunity to return home with relative ease. The second method of desertion occurred when soldiers left

behind at Fort Barrancas took advantage of the regiment's absence and went home.²⁶⁸ The most notorious deserter in the First Florida Cavalry was Joseph G. Sanders who, in February 1865, left Fort Barrancas tasked by his commander to raid into Lower Alabama and capture Union deserters leaving the regiment and to recruit more soldiers. Instead, Sanders joined the deserters and together they formed a guerrilla company. The company then began raiding the countryside on their own.²⁶⁹

As previously stated, it was not the war that prompted the most desertions, but its end. Overall, desertion increased significantly after the conflict ended. The largest spike in desertion, thirty-seven soldiers in the span of ten days, occurred in early August 1865 when the regiment relocated the Tallahassee, Florida. For many who enlisted in the regiment due to its proximity to their homes, this transfer would take them needlessly away from their community and fath. Similarly, the spikes in desertion from March to May 1865 occurred while First Florida Cavalry enlistees either raided through western Florida and Southern Alabama, close to many of the enlistees' homes or sat idly in Fort Barrancas. Richardson remained in Pensacola and recalled his inability to participate in the campaign toward Fort Blakeley with dissatisfaction. "This was a great disappointment, I assure you. I felt that we should probably go on from Mobile to Montgomery and thence to my home."²⁷⁰

Well over fifty percent of the deserters in the First Florida Cavalry left the regiment between March and August 1865. A combination of traveling in close proximity to enlistees'

²⁶⁸ Many of the desertion records list their place of desertion as Fort Barrancas at the same time period that parts of the regiment were fighting in the region.

²⁶⁹ Curenton, *Tories and Deserters*, 13-4.

²⁷⁰ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 28.

homes and the idle nature of their post-war service in Pensacola likely contributed greatly to their desertion. Many historians and military leaders have noted the dangers of idle soldiers and how idleness leads to desertion.²⁷¹ This idleness paired with their desires to see and be with their families and a belief that the war was over motivated many of the over one hundred deserters. Many of them like Richardson had not seen their families in some time and wished to return to their homes.

Additionally, for some soldiers, desertion did not mean a permanent separation from the regiment. The First Florida Cavalry, like many other Confederate and Union regiments dealt with the issues of desertion by soldiers who returned home to their families but intended to come back to the regiment. Some men, like Zachariah Cutts deserted and returned multiple times.²⁷² Private James Jay traveled home to take care of his mother and give her his bounty before returning to Fort Barrancas.²⁷³ It is also likely that harvesting crops on their farms led men to desert and then return to the regiment. A few of these men are noted as being AWOL, but the vast majority of even those who returned to service are listed as deserters. By the end of the war, one hundred and seventeen out of the over two hundred deserters returned either by force or on their own and mustered out in November 1865.

The impact of desertion in the First Florida Cavalry must also be compared to Confederate desertion. Whereas Confederate desertion created harm to the Confederate war effort, Union desertion in the First Florida largely occurred after the conflict ended and therefore

²⁷¹Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter*, viii, 298.

²⁷² War Department Military Service, April 24, 1891, in Celestine Ward, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington DC.

²⁷³ James Jay, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington DC.

created significantly less harm to the Union's goals in the region and their overarching military strategy. While their loyalty to both the Confederacy and the Union were inferior to their local loyalties, the Union army was able to engender a stronger commitment from the enlistees due to the benefits that Union service offered to the soldiers and the financial benefit to their families. Therefore, while desertion was a problem for both the Confederacy and the Union, in this remote Southern landscape the loyalty to the USA was strong enough to keep almost all enlistees in the ranks of the Union army until the end of the conflict.

Overall, while the regiment fought, enlistees deserted at a relatively low rate. Soldiers largely deserted when there was no fighting and the war was over. These men were able to desert for the same reason they enlisted, their proximity to their homes and communities. As the raiding parties moved into regions close to home, some men left. Desertion did not always mean abandonment of their Union service. Almost half of the deserters returned to Fort Barrancas and the First Florida Cavalry suggesting that they were still committed to their unit.

The First Florida Cavalry finally mustered out on November 17, 1865, bringing an end to the regiment's twenty-three months of service. Looking at the First Florida Cavalry's service overall, Southern men who enlisted in the Union army formed an effective Union military force. Loyal southerners contributed to the Union war effort in the area and turned a region controlled by the Confederacy into one in which the Union Army faced little opposition. They were a small regiment in an outpost with limited resources, but through the leadership of a capable brigadier general, they successfully interrupted Confederate control on the Southern Homefront and brought in well over a thousand freed slaves and Southern dissenters to join the Union ranks. The regiment's prominent role in many raids in late 1864 and early 1865 including the battles at

Marianna and Fort Blakeley demonstrated their success in overcoming Northerners' distrust of Southern Unionists. Their commitment to their fellow soldiers and the Union war effort is evident in their loyalty to the regiment even when fighting against their neighbors.

Judging by their recruitment and raiding radius, the Union position in Pensacola served as a constant threat to Confederate autonomy and authority in western Florida and southern Alabama. While they did not threaten the Confederate government, they were able to undermine its control of the region and its citizens, allowing black and white men to serve as Union soldiers; men who played a critical role in offensive operations against Confederate forces and resources.

Despite their success, Union supporters and Confederate dissenters combined with northerners stationed in Pensacola did not constitute a large enough force to adequately control the region and set up a new state government as happened in Louisiana. This is partially due to the sparse population in the region and its distance from the battlefield. The Union force was able to turn Florida's Panhandle and Southern Alabama from a largely Confederate controlled region to a Union leaning no man's land, where, at any time, the Union cavalry could travel through with little opposition in the countryside. While this meant the Union could impose its control in a very large radius around Pensacola, the region it could maintain a constant control over was smaller. Brigadier General Alexander Asboth understood that he did not have the numbers or resources to control the entire panhandle region, and instead proceeded with a series of raids over the course of a year to reenter the fight and achieved his modest goals. While the First Florida Cavalry under Asboth was unable to fully control the Southern Alabama and Florida Panhandle region, their impact in the region expanded far beyond the boundaries of Pensacola Bay.

Through a larger scope, part of Union war strategy in the later years included attacking the Confederacy from within, and the First Florida Cavalry is an example of the great success of this mission. The enlistees simultaneously undermined Confederate authority by “illegally” enlisting in the Union army, destabilized Confederate control of the region by raiding in the Panhandle and Lower Alabama and furthered the Union military operations by gathering intelligence in the region.

The enlistees in the regiment overcame supply challenges, a cavalry unit with no horses or rifles, and the bias of Northern-born Union soldiers and succeeded in forming a formidable fighting force in the region. During one inspection, while the officers were reported as lacking, the inspection listed the enlistees as being in good standing.²⁷⁴ The First Florida Cavalry existed for twenty-three months. During that time, they expanded Union control in the region and destabilized Confederate control in the region despite the skepticism of their fellow soldiers. While desertion affected the regiment, the soldiers connection to their communities and families that brought them into the regiment in the first place that prompted their early departure from the Union Army. The men joined their regiment to be near their families, and many deserted for the same reason. Although their service ended in November 1865, being a Union soldier changed their lives forever as both pro-Union and pro-Confederate Southerners attempted to navigate the postwar period.

²⁷⁴ Coles, “Far From the Fields of Glory,” 287-8.

CONCLUSION: A STILL DIVIDED SOUTH

Almost immediately after the war's conclusion, the distant battlefields in Florida's panhandle drifted into obscurity. The enlistees returned home to their families and began to navigate the postwar period; Alexander Asboth transitioned into his new role as a US Minister. Asboth received his appointment in 1866 to become the minister to Argentina and Uruguay. Unfortunately, he did not survive long. He passed away in 1868 from complications relating to his battle wounds at the Battle of Marianna. His obituary, published in the *New York Times*, revealed both Asboth's importance to the New York community and also the waning importance placed on his role in Florida, as his time there is not mentioned in the remembrance.²⁷⁵ The death of the eccentric general who commanded both white and black southerners demonstrates how the war, and more specifically the conflicts in the Panhandle and Southern Alabama, impacted the lives of all who served and lived in the region.

While Asboth's untimely death was a direct result of his time spent in Florida, enlistees in the regiment also faced new challenges as their lives were forever altered by the changing conditions of the postwar period and their Union service. Tensions between pro-Unionists and pro-Confederates in the postwar period, exacerbated by Northerners migrating south, led to many conflicts throughout Florida, Alabama, and the rest of the Deep South. While Southern Union soldiers from the First Florida Cavalry were part of this conflict, their experiences varied by location and circumstance.

²⁷⁵ "Obituary," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), February, 1868.

Wade Richardson recalled the tension in his community on his first Sunday trip to church after arriving home. “While going into church on Sunday I walked with a brother on one side, father on the other, and a younger brother kept close in the rear, that if attacked it should be in front. After church, as I leaned up against the building several ex-Confederates crowded around and one asked to see my revolver, which I carried in my belt. My reply was that he could see the muzzle only.”²⁷⁶ Richardson understood the tensions in his community resulting from internal divisions based on the Civil War.

Realizing this tension in his Southern community, Richardson decided to use his bounty from his time in the Union service to attend college far away from his hometown, “believing that time would heal the wounds of war in our Southern people.”²⁷⁷ However, it quickly became apparent to Richardson that his optimism was in vain. After getting into an altercation with an ex-Confederate at East Alabama Male College in Auburn, he decided to abandon his home state of Alabama and move north. Richardson claimed that “the North with all its resource after a four-years’ war had been unable to conquer the South, it was useless for me to stay there and try to do it alone.”²⁷⁸

Richardson’s experiences moving north further emphasizes the importance of his wartime service on his post-war life. He first moved to Lexington, Illinois, where he stayed with a friend he had made during his service from the Second Illinois Cavalry. He married a woman from Illinois and eventually settled down as a teacher in Milwaukee where he joined the E. B. Wolcott post of the Grand Army of the Republic, the largest Union veteran’s organization. Richardson’s

²⁷⁶ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 33.

²⁷⁷ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 41.

²⁷⁸ Richardson, *How I Reached the Union Lines*, 41.

postwar story illuminates how Southern Union service had a strong effect on some Southerners when they attempted to return to their homes and continue their lives. For some, the safety and community that they knew in the antebellum years had disintegrated. For others, this loss of connection and the desire to better their lives, resulted in Southern veterans leaving their home, family, and community. In making this move, Richardson also capitalized on the wartime bonds that he made with other Union soldiers to help his transition. Overall, while Richardson's experiences were not shared by all in the regiment, they exemplify the type of post-war conflicts that Southern Union soldiers from the First Florida Cavalry had to navigate in the defeated South.

While some like Richardson abandoned their native homes, others like Lyman Rowley, utilized their Union soldier background to propel them forward into the public sphere. Rowley capitalized on Union occupation in Pensacola early in the war before serving in the First Florida Cavalry and continued to do so in the postwar period. Rowley served as a delegate to the State Constitution Convention from Escambia County in 1868. After the regiment mustered out, Rowley stayed in the Pensacola region where he worked as printer, farmer, and merchant. From 1870 to 1875 Rowley published *The Florida Weekly Express*, a newspaper based in Pensacola. Embracing his Union service, Rowley served as the Provisional Commander of Florida Grand Army of the Republic department from 1880 to 1883. Throughout his life, Rowley benefited from his Union military service emerging as a prominent figure in Florida government and the state's Union veteran's organization.

Not all who served in the regiment abandoned their homes or entered public service after the war's conclusion. Many stayed in the same communities they lived in during the Antebellum

period for the rest of their lives, attempting to return to their normal lives. While some experienced a desire to escape the South, many joined the regiment because it benefited their families and communities. After the war, many soldiers desired to just continue with their lives and leave the conflicts of the war in the past.

Union service may not have affected the lives of many southern soldiers to the extent of Richardson and Rowley's experiences, but service in the First Florida Cavalry did alter many veterans' lives in smaller ways. It helped create a sense of community for many during the post-war period. Some soldiers remained close after the war and moved into neighborhoods and communities with fellow veterans of the First Florida Cavalry. For example, some men from the Company D even moved to Texas together as a group.²⁷⁹

The physical repercussions of their service also kept First Florida Cavalry soldiers in a social network. Many of the regiment's veterans wrote letters on behalf of each other for invalid and widow pensions. These letters documented the soldiers' personal connections during their service and corroborated the veteran or widow's claim for financial compensation for wartime injuries or death.

These pension applications kept many First Florida Cavalry veterans in contact and provided many men and their families with needed financial benefit. These pensions provided them or their families with an income in a poor and rural region of the Deep South. Some families lived for many years after the war on the income provided by their family members' service. In this way, the financial benefits that drove hundreds of enlistees to the Union army in

²⁷⁹ in pension of Lemuel Carter, Company D, CWPF, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington DC.

1864 continued to aid many soldiers and their families for decades after they mustered out from Tallahassee.

Overall, the First Florida Cavalry enlisted over six hundred and fifty Southerners, but they represent a much larger Southern population who fought in the Union Army. Southerners enlisted in Union regiments in every state in the Deep South and together they worked to accomplish the Union goal of disrupting the Confederacy from the inside, while taking men away from the Confederacy and helping to better their own conditions during the chaos of war. Their act of defiance both brought the Union closer to their goal of reunion and eroded Confederate control within their borders. These men were not cowards, but instead that they were men disaffected from the Confederate state in search of a way to provide and protect their families.

The Union Army was able to better provide for Southerners and their families than the Confederacy, leading Confederate enlisted men and Southern civilians to break from the Confederacy and look toward the Union occupying force in Pensacola for support.²⁸⁰ The Union Army and Alexander Asboth's understanding of these conditions in the region and their ability to capitalize off of it both bolstered their position and continued to undermine the Confederate authority in the area. The Confederacy could not protect their homes and provide financially for their families, but the Union Army could. While the Confederate government and military were aware of the deserters and dissenters, they did not have the manpower or authority to quell the dissent, further undermining their authority in the region. Their inability to control the region

²⁸⁰ Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter*, 290.

paired with the Union Army's activity in the region promoting and expanding their influence continuing to undermine Confederate authority.

First Florida Cavalry enlistees joined in the Union army due to a combined motivation of family loyalty, financial gain, and varying levels of Unionism. However, that enlistment would not have been possible without the efforts of a general eager to reenter the fight on the Southern periphery of the Civil War. The eccentric Brigadier General Alexander Asboth, with his large angled mustache, his collection of dogs and horses, and his deep Hungarian accent successfully formed the First Florida Cavalry. Asboth's goals combined with Southerner's needs and loyalties created the First Florida Cavalry. Their commitment to the regiment's cause shows both through their prominent role in Union raids in the region and through their low desertion during the fighting months of the war. These men were committed to their regiment, their leadership, and their Union. While many soldiers did later abandon their regiment, the impact of that desertion on the Union cause and the role of the regiment in the region is minimal. Additionally, roughly half later returned to the regiment to continue their service in the Union Army until the regiment mustered out in November 1865. While some see this as a flawed regiment, this study demonstrated that desertion reflected enlistees understanding of their loyalties. They were, first and foremost, loyal to those in their families, but they also felt a strong bond of loyalty to the First Florida Cavalry and the Union Army.

Not only were they loyal to the Union army, but they helped to improve its fighting abilities as well. The Union Army in Pensacola improved significantly with the help of the First Florida Cavalry. With Southerners help, the Union army transformed from being unable to defend the city of Pensacola two miles north of their station at Fort Barrancas, to actively

imposing its authority throughout the region and defeating several Confederate forces while continuing to undermine Confederate control.

This regiment of southern refugees formed by a foreign refugee represents one example of the divisions that existed in the American South before, during, and after the Civil War. While all shared a Southern regional identity, how they acted upon that identity and how they understood their loyalties varied for each Southerner. For hundreds in the Panhandle and Southern Alabama region, this meant rejecting the Confederate government and supporting the Union with all the benefits and challenges that came with this opposition. The same mentality existed in communities throughout the Deep South.

REFERENCES

Archival Sources

Newspapers

Key of the Gulf (Key West, FL)
The New York Times (New York, NY)
The Floridian and Journal (Tallahassee, FL)
St. Johns Mirror (Jacksonville, FL)
West Florida News (Marianna, FL)

Civil War Pension Applications

Ira J. Ward
Zachariah Cutts
James J Jay
Celestine Ward

Southern Claims Commission

Alexander Bodiford Estate, Crenshaw Co., AL, Claim 17530

Published Material

Civil War Correspondence of Florida's Governor John Milton. Edited by M. Edward Hughes. M. Edward Hughes, 2015.

Holbrook, William C. *A Narrative of the Services of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the 7th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers (Veterans) from 1862 – 1866*. New York: American Bank Note Company, 1882.

Minnesota Population Center. *National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.

Richardson, Wade H. *How I Reached the Union Lines*. Milwaukee: E. B. Wolcott G.A.R. post, 1905.

Bibliography

Abrahamson, James L. *The Men of Secession and Civil War 1859-1861*. Delaware, Scholarly Resources Inc, 2000.

Adams, John A. *Warrior at Heart: Governor John Milton, King Cotton, and Rebel Florida, 1860-1865*. Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2015.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Ed., 1985.

“Asboth, Alexander Sandor,” In *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. Edited by James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, 1. New York: D, Appleton and Company, 1888

Ash, Stephen V. *Firebrand of Liberty: The Story of Two Black Regiments That Changed the*

- Course of the Civil War*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2008.
- Auge, Moses. *Lives of the Eminent Dead and Biographical Notices of Prominent Living Citizens of Montgomery County, PA*. Norristown, PA: Moses Auge, 1879.
- Baggett, James Alex. *Homegrown Yankees: Tennessee's Union Cavalry in the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009.
- Bearss, Edwin C. *Fort Barrancas Gulf Islands National Seashore, Florida*. Denver: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1983.
- Beyer W. F. and O. F. Keydel, Editors. *Deeds of Valor From Records in the Archives of the United States Government*. Detroit: The Perrien-Keydel Company, 1907.
- Bona, Gábor. "Armed Forces of the Hungarian War of Independence." In *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848 – 1849: A Military History*. Edited by Gábor Bona. Translated by Nóra Arató. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Bona, Gábor. "Relation and the Hungarian Military Exiles." In *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848 – 1849: A Military History*. Edited by Gábor Bona. Translated by Nóra Arató. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Boyd, Mark F. "The Battle of Marianna." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 29. N.4 (1951): 225-242.
- Browning, Judkin. *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Buker, George E. *Blockaders, Refugees, & Contrabands: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861 - 1865* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993).
- Bunn, Mike. "Battle of Fort Blakely." In *Encyclopedia of Alabama*.
- Bynum, Victoria E. *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Coleman, James C. *Fort McRee, The Castle Built on Sand*. Pensacola: Pensacola Historical Society, 1988.
- Coles, David James. "Far From the Fields of Glory: Military Operations in Florida During the Civil War, 1864-1865," PhD Dissertation, Florida State University, 1996.
- Cox, Dale. *The Battle of Marianna, Florida*. Fort Smith Arkansas: Dale A. Cox, 2007.
- Curenton, Mark. *Tories and Deserters: The First Florida Federal Cavalry*. Laurel Hill, FL.: M. Curenton, 1988.
- Current, Richard. *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Davis, William Watson. *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1964.
- Degler, Carl N. *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.
- Dew, Charles B. *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016.
- Dibble, Ernest F. *Ante-Bellum Pensacola and the Military Presence*. Pensacola, Pensacola Bicentennial Series, Pensacola News-Journal, 1974.
- Doherty, Herbert J. *Richard Keith Call: Southern Unionist*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961.
- Domby, Adam. "War Within the States: Loyalty, Dissent, and Conflict in Southern Piedmont

- Communities, 1860 – 1876.” PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2016.
- Durrill, Wayne K. *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Eicher, John H and David J Eicher, *Civil War High Commands*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Erben, Henry. “Surrender of the Navy Yard at Pensacola, Florida January 12, 1861,” in *Personal Recollections of the War of the Rebellion: Addresses Delivered before the Commandery of the State of New York, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, vol. II, A. Noel Blakeman, ed. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1897.
- Crawford, Martin. *Ashe County’s Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.
- Freehling, William W. *The South Vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Gallagher, Gary W., and Alan T. Nolan. *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Gannon, Barbara A. *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Grimsley, Mark. *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861 – 1865*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Haines, Norman W. *Letters from Pensacola: The Civil War Years*. Pensacola: The Civil War Soldiers Museum, 1993,
- Hankin, David M. *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Hartman, David W. and David Coles. *Biographical Roster of Florida’s Confederate and Union Soldiers, 1861-1865*. Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995.
- Hearn, Chester G. *The Capture of New Orleans, 1862*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.
- Hearn, Chester G. *Mobile Bay and the Mobile Campaign: The Last Great Battles of the Civil War*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1993.
- Herman, Róbert. “Hungary’s Supreme War Leadership: Organization, Operations, and Personalities.” In *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848 – 1849: A Military History*. Edited by Gábor Bona. Translated by Nóra Arató. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Higginson, Thomas Wentworth. *Army Life in a Black Regiment*. Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co, 1870.
- Noe, Kenneth W. *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Noe, Kenneth W. and Shannon H. Wilson, editors. *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997.
- Mallard, Michael Shannon. “Faithful Found Among the Faithless”: Popular Opposition to the Confederacy in Civil War Mississippi.” Master’s thesis, Mississippi State University, 2002.
- Marsh, Sharon D. *The 1st Florida Cavalry Union Volunteers in the Civil War: The men and*

- Regimental History and what That Tells Us About the Area During the War.* Sharon D. Marsh, 2016.
- Martin, Bessie. *Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army: A Study of Sectionalism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.
- Marten, James. *Texas Divided: Loyalty and Dissent in the Lone Star State 1856-1874.* Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990.
- Mckenzie, Robert Tracy. "Oh! Ours Is a Deplorable Condition': The Economic Impact of the Civil war in Upper East Tennessee." in *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays*, edited by Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.
- McKinnon, John L. *History of Walton County.* Atlanta: The Byrd Printing Co., 1911.
- McPherson, James. *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Moore, Albert Burton. *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy.* New York: Macmillan, 1924.
- Myers, Barton. *Rebels Against the Confederacy: North Carolina's Unionists.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Noe, Kenneth W. *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Osterweis, Rollin G. *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900.* New York: Archon Books, 1973.
- Paludan, Philip Shaw. *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War.* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981.
- Pearce, George F. *Pensacola During the Civil War: A Thorn in the Side of the Confederacy.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.
- Pearce, George F. *The U.S. Navy in Pensacola: From Sailing Ships to Naval Aviation, 1825 – 1920.* Pensacola: University Presses of Florida, 1980.
- Potter, David M. "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa." *The American Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1962): 924 – 950.
- Reiger, John F. "Secession of Florida from the Union: A Minority Decision?" *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 46. No. 4 (1968) 358-368.
- Revels, Tracy J. *Florida's Civil War: Terrible Sacrifices.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2016.
- Schafer, Daniel L. *Thunder on the River: The Civil War in Northeast Florida.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010.
- Shea, William L. and Earl J. Hess. *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Smith, John David. *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002
- Spencer, Donald S. *Louis Kossuth and young America: a Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy 1848-1852.* Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1977.
- Stoney, Margaret M. *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004.
- Storey, Margaret M. "Southern Dissent" in *A Companion to The U.S. Civil War*, edited by Aaron

- Sheehan-Dean. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014.
- Sutherland, Daniel E. *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Sutherland Daniel E., editor. *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1999.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- Vasvary, Edmund. *Lincoln's Hungarian Heroes: The Participation of Hungarians in the Civil War*. Washington D.C.: The Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, 1939.
- Wagner, Margaret E., Gary W. Gallagher, and Paul Finkelman, editors. *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.
- Warner, Ezra J. *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1992.
- Weitz, Mark A. *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.
- Wilson, Charles Regan. *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1980.
- Winsboro, Irvin D.S., and William B. Mack, "Blue Water, Brown Water, and Confederate Disloyalty: The Peculiar and Personal Naval Conflict in South Florida During the Civil War." Vol. 90 *Florida Historical Quarterly* (2011): 34-60.
- Wooster, Ralph A. "The Florida Secession Convention." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 36. No 4. (1958) 373-385.
- Wooster, Ralph A. *The Secession Conventions of the South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962.
- Wynne, Nick and Joe Crankshaw, *Florida Civil War Blockades: Battling for the Coast*. New York: The History Press, 2011.