Capt. James D. Green, South Florida Unionist

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By SPESSARD STONE

Capt. James D. Green, a pioneer settler of Hillsborough and Manatee counties, was a controversial figure in the Civil War and Reconstruction era in South Florida.

James Dopson Green was born October 6, 1823 in Anderson County, South Carolina and migrated in March 1837 to Florida. During the Second Seminole War, he served from April 11, 1839 to April 11, 1840 in the company of Capt. R.D. Bradley and was mustered out as a corporal at Fort Jackson, Middle Florida.

By December 1841 Green was living in Hillsborough County, Fla. At Fort Brooke on January 30, 1843, under the Armed Occupation Act, he applied for 160 acres "on the north bank of the Manatee (sic) River about nine miles from its mouth...", which was granted, and there he homesteaded. In the first statewide election on May 26, 1845, James D. Green voted at precinct #2, Manatee.

On July 11, 1849 he married Eliza Whidden, born June 4, 1827, daughter of Willoughby and Eliza (Pennington) Whidden. The Greens were living in the Simmons Hammock (Seffner) settlement in 1850.

Green early expressed an interest in politics. On May 24, 1851 he was selected as a Justice of the peace, qualified June 20, 1851, but resigned on September 3, 1852. In April 1854, he was appointed postmaster of Itchepuckesassa (Plant City).

An opportunity to found a town had earlier been lost when the Readding Blount family moved to near (now) Bartow in October 1851. Green sold to Riley Blount 160 acres he had owned since 1850, the land of which constituted a part of the site of the future Bartow.

Resettling in the northwestern portion of present-day Hardee County in the area which in 1855 became Manatee County, Green's home site in 1856 became known as Fort Green when twenty families "forted-up" there for protection during the Third Seminole War. Green served from January 3 to August 20, 1856 in Capt.
William B. Hooker's Company, and was mustered out as 1st sergeant at Fort Meade. He also served in Capt. John Parker's Co. in late 1856.\textsuperscript{13}

Green and Matthew P. Lyons, also of Fort Green, in a series of letters privately, to military officials, and publicly, via the Tampa newspaper the Florida Peninsular, requested protection and provisions for the families at Fort Green. When aid received was deemed inadequate, the two pressed their case. In June 1856, Lyons charged Capt. William B. Hooker of Tampa, commander of militia forces in the area, with using a detachment to gather his cattle and drive them to sale. In a July investigation, which failed to sustain Lyons, Green, a witness for Lyons, took an ambiguous stand, but leaned towards Lyons.\textsuperscript{14}

On December 27, 1856, Green wrote: "I have been informed that, not long since, a gentleman, with a lot of negroes, was passing through Manatee, and that an efficient guard was sent for their protection. This kind of management proves to me that the officials must consider that there is a danger ... The people have asked, begged, demanded-in fact, they have done everything that has suggested itself to their minds to get protection for their women and children, and all to no effect ... We are still at Ft. Green, and hope to be able to hold our position."

On January 31, 1857, Francis A. Page, Assistant Adjutant General based at Ft. Brooke, wrote to Capt. Pleasanton at Fort Myers: "I am sorry however that the General has concluded to establish detachments at Fort Green and Manatee-for several reasons. Last year a detachment was placed at Ft. Green and it gave more trouble to supply of than any other post on the frontier. It was broken up by Col. Monroe and the people have abandoned the place but I suppose wish now to occupy it in order to attend their cattle interest and have a guard to brand and mark them ... There is only a few individuals interested in the place and the principal man who wants a guard there is Green himself, formerly a sergeant in Hooker's Company of volunteers, who is a good for nothing trifling disorganizer among the volunteers."\textsuperscript{16}

Green became the spokesman for his fellow Cracker farmers. He was elected as one of three county justices of the peace for a two-year term on June 16, 1855 and qualified on July 27, 1855.\textsuperscript{17} On October 5, 1857, he was elected for a two-year term as sheriff of Manatee County. His actions drew strong opposition from the coastal slave-holding sugar planters, merchants and large cattle ranchers who used their incumbency to largely invalidate the fall of 1859 election, by denying Green and his allies, Fabricus Reynolds, and John W. Whidden (his brother-in-law), from assuming their posts, respectively, as county commissioner, probate judge, and sheriff.\textsuperscript{18} On November 9, 1863, Green was elected as a justice of the peace and qualified February 1, 1864.\textsuperscript{19}

On March 7, 1864, Green, his draft exemption repealed, left his Fort Green home and went to Fort Myers where he volunteered for the Second Florida Cavalry, United States Army.\textsuperscript{20}

Union Capt. Henry A. Crane, formerly of Tampa, on April 2, 1864 in recommending a commission for him, described James D. Green as having: "the dash & daring necessary for a leader in this peculiar kind of warfare which is different from almost any other-nothing but skulking Guerrillas to encounter."\textsuperscript{21}
On April 15, 1865, Green recalled: "On arriving at Fort Myers Florida-I found a party of 48 men commanded by Captain Crane that had been enlisted under the name of the 2nd Florida Cavalry... I offered my service to assist in recruiting the Regiment which was accepted by Capt. Crane-he furnished me 20 men and without delay I proceeded to the interior and in 10 days I returned with 30 recruits (sic) to Fort Myers-this was reported to General Woodbury and he recommended me for the position of 1st Lieut. and a Commission was issued."

"My recruites (sic) was (sic) enlisted and armed and I immediately made an other (sic) raid with 50 men. I met engaged and repulsed a force of 150 Rebels-Captured quite a number of horses and recruited 34 men and returned to Fort Myers on the 13th day after my departure. Capt. Crane advised me to go to Head Qtrs., Key West and report in person to General Woodbury which I did, whereupon the Genl. recommended that a Captains Commission be issued which was complied with."23

On March 21, 1864, Lt. Green and Lt. William McCullough of Co. A, 2nd Florida Cavalry, formerly of Fort Meade, had led their men to seize supplies at the Tillis' homestead and a neighboring farm where Confederate Thomas Underhill was slain. A second raid on April 7, 1864 had resulted in a skirmish at Bowlegs Creek, with two casualties, Henry A. Prine and James Lanier. Next came Lts. Green and McCullough's participation in the May 6-7, 1864 Union occupation of Tampa. A third raid to Fort Meade resulted in the burning of the fort's buildings on the night of May 18, 1864.24 On May 26, 1864, Lt. Green received a provisional commission as Capt. of the 2nd Florida.25

In late 1864 Capt. Green's military service abruptly ended with arrest and confinement after he and Lt. McCullough made charges against officers, including, Capt. J.W. Childs, during whose command Green charged occurred "gross corruption and immorality ... mock marriages were celebrated, gambling encouraged, beef cattel (sic) driven in and sold for the benefit of the officers, the Refugees deprived of their rations, and supplied with unwholesome flour"; the quartermaster of the post Capt. Ames "kept a harlot in the commissary, sold hides for his own benefit and shared in the fraud of the Ration Department;" the surgeon of the post Dr. Carroll "neglected the Refugee families in their sickness nor would allow other doctors to attend them."26

Capt. Green and Lt. McCullough were placed under arrest; the former for fifty days, the latter forty days. After agreeing to a compromise, Lt. McCullough was released and returned to command. After a board hearing failed to resolve Green's case, General Newton (who had succeeded General Woodbury), after he learned that Green had only a provisional commission and had never been mustered, ordered the revocation of Green's commission, which was done. General Newton further ordered that Capt. Doyle of the 110th New York Regt. relieve Capt. Childs of the command of Fort Myers and gave him instructions to arrange a compromise between Green and Childs, but Green, wanting an official investigation, refused.27

At Cedar Keys on April 15, 1865, he appealed to the President and the Secretary of War. In June 1865, statements were secured from five officers in answer to Capt. Green's appeal for redress of grievances. Capt. Henry A. Crane, one of the five and the man who had recommended Green for
his commission charged that Green was a disloyal man and a traitor, with all representing Green to be a man of bad character. Nevertheless, Capt. Green was successful for on March 27, 1866 and March 13, 1872 the War Department approved his service as 1st Lieutenant, Company B, 2nd Florida Cavalry to date May 1 to 26, 1864, and as Captain, Company B, May 26, 1864 to February 3, 1865 and March 26, 1865 to April 12, 1865.28

Following the Civil War, Capt. Green, now a member of the Republican Party, became a powerful political leader in Manatee County, with his influence reaching into surrounding counties, Tallahassee, and even Washington, D. C.

James D. Green represented Manatee County in the October 1865 state constitutional convention and in the State Assembly (House of Representatives) in the sessions of 1865 (he resigned in the summer of 1866 and was succeeded in October by his brother-in-law John W. Whidden, a former Confederate officer), 1868, 1869, and 1870.29 From Pine Level, to which he had moved and in 1866 had helped to make the county seat, the Unionist Green exercised a powerful sway in South Florida by recommending county office holders to the governor, who, under the constitution, held the power of appointment. He was further an agent of the Freedmen’s Bureau.30

On November 3, 1868, the Legislature met in convention at Tallahassee to appoint the presidential electors, which were given to Ulysses S. Grant. Representative Green was named as the messenger to carry the results to Washington, D. C.31

Green’s most radical act while serving as Manatee’s Representative was his efforts to impeach Governor Harrison Reed. In the special legislative session in November 1868, H.S. Harmon (black), James D. Green, and Marcellus L. Stearns were appointed a committee to prepare and report articles of impeachment against the governor. The ensuing resolution was reported to the Senate as though the governor had been impeached, and Lt. Governor William H. Gleason, an opponent of the governor, opportunistically interpreted it to mean he was governor. Governor Reed, however, outmaneuvered his enemies and successfully had Gleason removed from office as he had not been a citizen of the state for two years as required by the Constitution.32

On January 21, 1870, Representative Green introduced a resolution authorizing a committee of five to be appointed to inquire in to the acts and doings of Governor Reed. The resolution was adopted and Green, George P. Raney, John Simpson, H.H. Forward, and William B. White were appointed the committee by Marcellus L. Stearns, Speaker of the Assembly. On February 4, 1870, with White dissenting, the committee, of which Green was chairman, recommended Governor Reed be impeached, the charges mainly being allegations of personal and public financial irregularities.33

The Assembly, however, rejected Green’s report by a 29-21 vote and adopted the minority report against impeachment by a vote of 27-22. After the investigation closed, Green called at the executive office and informed the governor of the report in his favor. Governor Reed and Green, afterwards, reached a mutually advantageous political truce.34

On July 11, 1870 at Pine Level, Green was nominated as an Independent candidate for state senator to succeed Henry A. Crane, his former commander. After he in August
supported the candidacy of black state senator Josiah Walls of Alachua County for Congress, the conservative backlash doomed Green at the polls in November. Via appointment, he served in other offices, i.e., as a federal deputy marshal, county commissioner, county sheriff, and postmaster of Pine Level.\(^{35}\)

When John F. Bartholf, the Republican clerk of court of Manatee County, submitted his resignation in late August 1876, Capt. Green in his swan song proposed to his friend, Republican Governor Marcellus L. Stearns, also the party's nominee for governor, that his 24-year-old son Andrew Green be appointed clerk. Named clerk in October, Andrew, acting in accord with his father's directives, refused to post bond for the issuance of his commission, leaving no legal clerk for elections in November, which the Democrats were favored to win handily.\(^{36}\)

Manatee Democratic leaders proceeded anyway with the November 7 election, sweeping the county with 289 votes for Samuel J. Tilden for president and 288 votes for George F. Drew for governor. Green, seeing the handwriting on the wall, had urged Republicans to boycott the election, and only 26 voted for Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes and Florida gubernatorial nominee Marcellus L. Stearns. Initially, Governor Stearns, by a 400-majority that excluded Manatee as the election was invalidated, was declared to have carried Florida, as well as, Hayes by more than 900. Democrats, however, appealed, and, after much legal maneuvering, the Manatee votes (with other contested) were counted for Drew, but were excluded for Tilden, which gave Florida a split ticket of Republican Hayes for president and Democratic Drew for governor. Drew's margin of victory was only 195 votes.\(^{37}\) The brokered election of 1876 ended, not only Capt. Green and the Republicans' state influence, but more significantly, Reconstruction and the civil rights movement for nearly a century.

Green continued to live in Pine Level where he farmed and continued to dabble in local affairs. In 1878 he startled the complacent Democrats when he attempted unsuccessfully to reclaim his old House seat. In his last hurrah in February 1880, he tried to revive the Republican Party with a mass meeting at Pine Level.\(^{38}\) In 1882, still arousing contention, signing himself as "Torpedo" and "Ex-Church Member," Green in articles to the Fort Ogden Herald alienated his fundamentalist neighbors when he, among other things, criticized a local minister, Rev. I.J. Sparkman.\(^{39}\) In 1885 he had a modest farm consisting of 70 acres, 1 horse, 2 oxen, and 615 cattle.\(^{40}\)

Capt. James Dopson Green died April 8, 1886 and was buried in Pine Level Campground Cemetery.\(^{41}\) Eliza W. Green died August 8, 1903.\(^{42}\)

Capt. and Mrs. Green had the following children:

1. George Green, born ca. 1850; died in 1860's.

2. Andrew Green, born March 25, 1852; died July 11, 1925, Miami Fla.; married on May 22, 1877; Martha E. Mizell.

3. Hugh Green, born ca. 1855; died in 1870's.

4. Mary Elizabeth Green, born ca. 1857.

5. Helen Jane Green, born ca. 1859.

6. Leroy Green, born ca. 1860; died in 1870's.
7. Karon Green, born ca. 1866; married on June 28, 1887, John W. Myers.

8. John Green, born ca. 1869; adopted.


10. Kate Green, born ca. 1873.

ENDNOTES

1 Savannah Morning News, April 22, 1886; Canter Brown, Jr., letter to author, March 12, 1989; Armed Occupation Act permit # 312, Department of Natural Resources (Tallahassee).

2 Bounty land warrant application of James D. Green, National Archives (Washington, D.C.).


4 Armed Occupation Act permit, op. cit.

5 Brian E. Michaels, Florida Voters In Their First Statewide Election May 26,1845 (Tallahassee, 1987), p. 52.

6 Affidavit of L.G. Lesley, pension application of Eliza Whidden, National Archives (Washington, D.C.).


8 U.S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census 1850, Hillsborough County, Florida.

9 Roster Of State And County Officers Commissioned By The Governor of Florida 1845-1868 (Jacksonville, Fla., 1941), p. 145.


15 Florida Peninsular, p. 3, col. 1, January 24, 1857.

16 Page to Pleasanton, January 31, 1857, U.S. Dept. of War, M-1084, roll #7, National Archives.

17 Roster, op. cit., p. 213.

18 Brown, op. cit., p. 130-132.

19 Roster, op. cit., p. 214.

20 Brown, op. cit., p. 162; Co. B records of James D. Green, National Archives.

21 Co. B records, op. cit.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid; Lt. A.C. Prety to Capt. S. Conant, July 31, 1865, "Military Dispatches, Head Quarters, District of Middle Florida; August 10, 1865 - Sept. 25, 1865," Copy prepared by Statewide Rare Books Project from Manuscript found in Florida State Library, WPA, (Tallahassee, 1940) p. 59.


30 Brown, op. cit., pp. 185, 187, 189, 190.


33 Wallace, op. cit., p. 89-91; Brown, op. cit., p. 201; Shofner, op. Cit., p. 211-212.

34 Wallace, op. cit., pp. 116-124; Brown, op. cit., p. 201.

35 Brown, op. cit., p. 203, 209, 210; Albert and Park *DeVane, De Vane's Early Florida History*, Volume 11 (Sebring, 1978).


39 *Bartow Informant*, October 7,1882, November 11, 1882.

40 1885 Agricultural Schedule of Manatee County.

41 Pension application of Eliza Green, op. cit.; Savannah Morning News, April 22,1886.

42 Pension application of Eliza Green, op. cit.

43 Censuses of 1860, 1870, 1880 Manatee County; Manatee and DeSoto counties marriage books; Canter Brown, Jr., letter to author, March 12,1989.