12-1-1988

War Comes to Tampa Bay: The Civil War Diary of Robert Watson

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In the early days of the Civil War, Florida felt little effect of the conflict waging to the north, but this soon changed. On April 16, 1861, just six days after the surrender of Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a naval blockade of the Confederacy. The intent was not to invade, but rather to hold key positions along the coast, break up supply routes and generally disrupt the Confederate economy. The Union blockade was at first ridiculed by the South, but by the end of 1861 the acquisition of 200 ships by the U.S. Navy made the blockading fleet large enough to be divided into four commands and sufficient to extend along the entire Confederate coastline from the Potomac River to the Mexican border. As men from around the South enlisted in volunteer companies to fight, others became blockade runners, risking their vessels and their lives to supply these soldiers with food, arms and clothing. Civilians also began to feel the realities of war as everyday items became increasingly hard to get. Due to the blockade, a simple cup of coffee soon became a luxury.

The U.S. ships that patrolled Florida’s gulf coast belonged to the East Gulf Blockade Squadron, headquartered at Key West and responsible for the waters between Cape Canaveral and Pensacola. At Tampa Bay the Federals established a base of operations on Egmont Key and
posted a twenty-four-hour watch from the lighthouse. Small, swift boats from the blockading barks, the *U.S.S. Kingfisher* and the *U.S.S. Ethan Allen* sat poised to intercept any Confederate vessel spotted sailing in the Bay. Expeditions from the Union gunboats conducted numerous forays designed to cripple Confederate operations, destroy salt works and capture utilitarian vessels for U.S. service.

Florida’s vulnerable shoreline was a source of concern to Governor John Milton. Although the entire coast could not be defended, Milton proposed that signal posts be established at main points. He suggested that signal stations be under the charge of a new coast guard, composed of men in boats with oars and sails and with each boat armed with a four-pounder cannon, muskets or rifles and cutlasses. The governor also called for the placement of large calibre guns at shore batteries for use by artillermen at the most important points along the Florida coast. Between these points, small bodies of infantry were to be stationed. Expressmen on horseback were to carry intelligence from the coast guard to warn of any approach of the enemy. Governor Milton organized his Florida Volunteer Coast Guard and called it into the service of the State of Florida and of the Confederate States by Special Order No. 2, on November 27, 1861.

The defense of Tampa Bay followed Governor Milton’s outline. Two companies of infantry, Companies D and E of the 4th Florida Regiment, drilled on the parade ground of Fort Brooke in Tampa. Units from the Volunteer Coast Guard manned signal stations at Pinellas Point, Maximo Point, Gadsden Point and Shaw's Point. Captain William Turner's Independent Horse Company provided cavalrmen to ride express between these posts. Finally, artillery batteries were manned at Fort Brooke, Spanish Town and Shaw's Point to guard against enemy assaults.

This was the situation at Tampa Bay when Robert Watson, a twenty-six-year-old Bahamian-born carpenter arrived in December 1861. Watson, a resident of Key West at the outbreak of the Civil War, was only one of many Floridians displaced by the war, but he assured a place in history by keeping a daily journal as the war carried him from Key West to the Tampa area, where he remained for six months. From there, he went on to fight in the battles of Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge, before making his way to the final surrender at Appomatox.

With Key West in Union hands, Robert Watson had fled the island in the company of three friends on September 27, 1861. Explaining his flight, Watson wrote in his diary that he left, “Owing to the political affairs of the country and the Federal troops having possession of this place, and as it is rather unsafe for a southern man to live here.” He first took a schooner to the Bahama Islands, after which he worked his way to Jacksonville on a leaky boat, arriving on November 15. Several days later on a train ride to Lake City, Watson met two Key Westers, Henry Mulrennan and Walter Maloney, who were en route to Tallahassee. Mulrennan convinced Watson and several of his Key West friends, Olivevus Marcus, Alfred Lowe and William Sawyer, to enlist in Mulrennan’s company of the Volunteer Coast Guard, which was stationed at Tampa Bay. The group of volunteers then reported to Cedar Keys, where, on December 13, 1861, they were sworn into the service of the State of Florida and the Confederate States.

Robert Watson’s original journal is apparently either lost or in unknown private hands, but a transcript, made in 1939, is available at the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Park. The
The Tampa Bay area in 1861.

Map by Ronald N. Prouty.
the following excerpt from the diary contains the complete text of all entries made during Watson’s stay in the Tampa Bay area. The unedited entries provide a rare glimpse of life around Tampa Bay during the first year of the Civil War.

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Dec. 13 ... Lt. Mulrennan took us before Judge Steele [in Cedar Keys] and we were sworn into the service of the State of Florida and of the Confederate States of America.

He came to our quarters this evening and told all hands that whoever was willing to join the Coast Guard must be ready by 12 o’clock the next day but I am sorry to say that not one of the party would join, they wished to go to Key West.

Dec. 14 Left Cedar Keys in the sloop Ocaola [Osceola] for Clear Water Harbor at 4 o’clock PM and arrived at 3 o’clock PM 15th inst. Called on Gus Archer, Dick Mars, John Lowe and some more Key West unfortunates. They were all very glad to see us and treated us like brothers.

Dec. 16 Walked five miles out in the country to get a cart to take our baggage to Tampa.

Saw the owner of the cart who promised to take us through next day but that he would have to take our things to his place that night in order to make an early start in the morning. Went on board, packed up our baggage, put them in the cart and walked back to his house after bidding our friends good bye. We slept at his house.

Dec. 18 Turned out at 4 o’clock AM, got breakfast and started for Tampa, a distance of 35 miles, arrived at Tampa at 5 o’clock ahead of the party, for on the road I met a Methodist minister who, seeing that I was very tired very kindly took me through in his buggy, the rest of the party arrived about one hour later. We went to the house occupied by the members of the Coast Guard and took our quarters with them. Found that Lt. Maloney and twelve men were on a cruise down the bay in the sloop Cate Dale, they arrived today and we reported ourselves to him. He told us that he would send us to Point Panellas in a few days, that point being our station for the present. Called on Messrs. Crusoe, Jandrill, Kemp and other Key Westers who are living in Tampa.

Dec. 21 Took our things on board of one of our boats, a 14 oar boat and started at 9
o’clock AM for Point Panellas where we arrived at 4¼ o’clock.

Dec. 22  Lt. Maloney and myself left this place at 3 o’clock PM for Tampa but we had not gone but a few miles when it fell a dead calm and we had to pull for Gadson’s Point, a distance of 15 miles. When we got there we anchored the boat and laid down on the oars and tried to get a nap but it was such an uncomfortable bed that we could not get any sleep and about an hour later, 11 o’clock PM, a light breeze sprung up and we got under way and arrived at 1 o’clock AM.

Dec. 23  Began a clothes chest for my trunk is use up.

Dec. 24  Launched our second boat and had a jolly time of it. Mr. Post requested Lt. Maloney to name her Mollie Post which was done. He brought down a lot of whisky and we launched the boat with Mr. Crusoe and little Mollie Post in her. When the boat was in the water Mr. Crusoe gave us a short but very appropriate speech after which we all took a drink, and after supper went serenading and got gloriously tight on egg nogg.

Dec. 25  Took dinner with Mr. [George V.] Rickards and a splendid dinner it was. We spent a very agreeable day at his house and at night he had some of the best egg nogg I ever drank.

Dec. 27  All hands left today in our boat for our station where we arrived at 4 o’clock PM.

Dec. 29  Mr. [Robert, B.] Smith began drilling us today for the first time and the most of the party went through the facings very well.

Dec. 30  Sunday, washing clothes and making wash tubs out of whiskey barrels.
Dec. 31  The guard at the point reported a boat coming up the coast. We manned the boat and went after her, she proved to be a friend. Went back and drilled. Worked nearly all day building palmetto shanties. Some of the camp hunting and fishing, oystering, clamming & etc. & etc. Thus ends the old year 1861 and may the year 1862 be a more peaceable and happy year to us all and may the Southern States prosper in all its undertaking, gain its independence and be a prosperous, happy and powerful nation, and may we all return to our happy homes and firesides is my prayer. Amen. R. Watson. Point Pinellas Station January 1st

Private John T. Lowe shown in a militia uniform, or “battle shirt,” that was the typical garb of early Confederate volunteers and is the only evidence of the Coast Guard’s uniform. The photograph may have been taken in Tampa, where Lowe enlisted in 1862.

Photograph from Kinfolks.
1862, Fort Buckley. New Years day, all hands in good health and spirits, working on the palmetto shanties, but who can tell where we will be next New Years day? The day ended as usual, with a drill.

Jan. 2 I was on guard on the point all day watching the blockading bark [the U.S.S. Ethan Allen] got back to camp too late to drill.

Jan. 3 While drilling this afternoon, the guard from the three miles distant from the camp, reported a boat coming along the coast. One boat was manned and went after her. She proved to be a boat from Clearwater Harbor, Gus Archer on her. Mr. Smith fired one shot at her which brought her to, got some soft soap from them as we were out of soap.

Jan. 4 Some of us fishing, others hunting. Drilled after dinner. A boat was reported coming toward the bayou where we are stationed. One boat was manned, all armed with muskets. Mr. Smith fired one shot across her bow. She proved to be the Cate Dale with Lt. Maloney and two recruits on board. No news of importance except an account of a battle
at Louisburg, 800 prisoners taken by our troops. After supper we all sat around the camp fire
playing music, singing, dancing, spinning yarns & etc until 10 o’clock PM when I went to bed.

Sunday 5 Began my morning devotions by washing ten pieces of clothes, on guard tonight,
everything quiet all night.

Jan. 6 Thirteen of us went to Maximore place to build. palmetto quarters. Arrived there
at 11 o’clock AM and commenced work. The mosquitoes were very thick in the
first part of the evening and it was very warm but about 11 o’clock it was so cold and damp that
we could not sleep. Our beds consisted of a few palmettos spread on the ground and a blanket
spread over them.

Jan. 7 Worked all day on the quarters, cutting poles, palmettos, and putting them
up. Dug a well which caved in as soon as it was dug. Got supper, stood guard and
all quiet through the night.

Jan. 8 Finished the house today. Cut and put on board a load of palmettos and pulled up
to our camp, a distance of five miles. Got home safe and finding the boys drilling.
Sent my trunk and all of my fine clothes up to Mr. Crusoe at Tampa. Mr. Smith and John Bothell
[Bethel] started for Tampa at 5½ PM, also Mr. Thomas Russell who had been detained by Lt.
Maloney, he had stopped at the station on his way to Clearwater Harbor but as he had no pass
from the comdg. officer at Tampa he was detained as a prisoner and sent to Tampa. No boat or
person is allowed to leave Tampa without a pass and our comdg. officer has orders to detain all
boats and persons without said pass.

Jan. 9 At roll call this morning Lt. Maloney told us that the following named persons
would be the crews of the boats, viz: in the Mollie Post, Saml. Ashby, Cox[swain]
Joseph Cole; John Allison; Chas. Chapman; J.E. Collins; Chas. Comb; Alfred Lowe; Marcus
Olieviers; Augustus Murilac; Chas. Miller; J.W. Talbut; William Sawyer; Robert Watson; J.D.
Sands; Peter Williams; G.W. Smith; Edward Dorsey; Cook. In the Mary Jane, Chas. Berry,
Cox[swain]; Jule Chabot; Benj. Albury; Thos. Bums; Thos. Butler; Jno. Bethel; Jas. Barnett;
G.W. Edward; William Franklin; R. Falley; Saml. Morgan; W.B. Joyselyn; Benj. Swain; G.V.
Rickards; John Morrison; Chas. Anderson cook. Went over in the Mollie Post to Marenda’s
place and cut and trimmed our 14 oars. Got a lot of mullets while over there and arrived at
camp at 4 o’clock PM, took dinner, cleaned guns & etc, after supper played music, sang a few
songs, smoked our pipes and turned in for the night.

Jan. 10 Nothing worthy of remark today except that some of the boys wounded a deer but
did not get it. Shot 1 rattlesnake and brought it to camp. At night caught a lot of
fish. Nothing to eat for supper but mush, all the rest of the provisions being out for several
days.

Jan. 11 Very foggy this morning, some of the boys have, gone hunting, others fishing,
clamming, oystering & etc. all of which came home empty handed except those
who went oystering. They brought in a fine lot of oysters. Provisions very scarce.
Jan. 12  Mr. Smith came from Tampa today bringing us the news that Lt. Mulrennan was
promoted to captain, also that there had been a battle fought at Beaufort and that
our army had defeated the Lincoln army and run them on board of their ships. Lt. Maloney went
up to Tampa today in the Cate Dale. Mr. S. brought us ten days provisions which was very
acceptable as we have had nothing to eat for the last four days but corn meal and whatever we
could catch in shape of game or fish, all of which had to be boiled for the want of grease. Slept
about four hours today, it being Sunday and having been on guard last night, all quiet during the
night.

Jan. 13  Commenced a palmetto house for the officers, cut the frame and put it up, also the
palmetto leaves were cut and brought to the frame. Some of us were playing
music, others were playing cards, dancing, singing, & etc in the evening when we were startled
by the report of a gun. All hands rushed for their arms and ammunition. Mr. Smith ordered the
boats to be manned which was done in a hurry. We pulled out of the bayou and discovered the
Cate Dale ashore on the bank. Lt. Maloney had fired the gun for assistance. We took a line from
her and pulled her off and towed her in to our quarters. Mr. Crusoe came down in her to pay us a
visit, they brought no news of importance. Went to bed at 9 o’clock PM feeling very tired and
sleepy for I had worked hard all day. Everything quiet through the night.

Jan. 14  Worked all day thatching the house. Nothing worthy of remark took place during
the day. In the afternoon we drilled and Mr. Smith and two men made
preparations to go on a cruise to Mullet Key to have a look at the blockading bark. They started
at 7 o’clock PM. I was on guard at night and felt very unwell owing to a bad cold. No excitement
through the night.

Jan. 15  Worked all day flooring the officer’s quarters which was finished by night. No
drill today owing to the absence of Mr. Smith who arrived from Mullet Key at 7
o’clock PM. He made no discoveries of importance. Mr. Crusoe killed a fine deer in the
forenoon. No excitement during the night.

Jan. 16  Washing and mending clothes, trimming oars and etc., drilled in the afternoon.
Was aroused from a sound sleep at 2½ o’clock AM by the beating of the drum.
Turned out taking my musket, revolver and ammunition and formed in line with the rest of the
men, all of us wondering what was up. Lt. Maloney called the roll after which he examined and
then informed us that we could go to bed again as he had alarmed us for the purpose of seeing
how quick we could be ready for action. I turned in again and had just fell asleep when the guard
gave the alarm that a boat was coming into the bayou. We all snatched our arms and were ready
in short order, then marched down to the beach. The boat proved to be from the sloop Cate Dale
who was lying outside of the bayou loaded with provisions for us. The boats were manned and
went out to her, took her load and carried it to camp. She left immediately for Tampa.

Jan. 17  Mr. Crusoe went with her. While drilling this afternoon the man at the lookout
reported a boat coming up along shore. The Mollie Post’s crew were ordered
away, we went out and overhauled the boat. She proved to be a friend sans [not] a ship standing
for the blockading bark. Started for the bayou when we saw the Mary Jane coming out towards
us. Laid on our oars and waited for her. She also spoke [saw?] the boat and then started for the
bayou. We waited until she was opposite to us and then gave way both crews doing their best.
Our boat struck three or four times on the bank and one of the bow oars broke but we beat her, it
being the first race that we have had. It was quite interesting and exciting. At roll call Mr. Smith
called for volunteers to man the Mollie Post. Nearly every man in the company volunteered,
myself among the number, but as it was my guard night I was not allowed to go. The boat was
manned and started for Boca Ceiga pass to look for a boat that was reported laying there. They
got back to camp at 1 o’clock PM not seeing anything of the boat. All quiet through the night.

Jan. 18 Not having anything to do in the forenoon I slept for about three hours. After
dinner went after and brought in a lot of fire wood. Mended some of my clothes
all of which were getting rather the worse for wear. At night played cards and went to bed. No
excitement through the night.

Jan. 19 Sunday. Inspection of arms at 8½ o’clock AM, my gun was pronounced to be in
the best order in the company. I forgot to mention that we had target shooting
yesterday, a great many of the company did not hit the target and I hit in the same place, my gun gave me an awful kick and I really thought that my jaw bone was broke. Every one of the guns kicked badly owing to there being too much powder in the cartridges. The best shot received for a prize two pounds of tobacco, the second best one pound and the third best half pound. I went to the oyster bar and ate my fill of oysters and brought home enough to fry for supper. At 7 o’clock PM volunteers were called for to man the Mollie Post to go to Boca Ceiga to try and capture a Yankee schooner boat that reported to be about that place. We started at 7 o’clock PM with fifteen men and Lt. Maloney in command. Arrived at Maximo place at 11 o’clock PM, took our things on shore and turned in. About 2 o’clock AM we were all aroused from sleep by Marcus who was on guard. He rushed into the shanty and sang out to us to hurry up and get our arms for the Yankees were upon us. We all jumped up, seized our arms, loaded them and rushed out into the open air expecting to see a large part of the enemy close at hand, but found that it was a false alarm. Marcus had seen four of our men coming out the woods and took them for the enemy. We made and drank some coffee, manned the boat and pulled for Boca Ceiga at which place we stopped at, at daylight, went on shore had a look at the bark, ate breakfast, smoked our pipes and was calculating to stay till next day when we saw a boat coming down the coast hailed and brought to. She proved to be a friend and informed us that the Yankees had taken Cedar Keys and burnt some of the place. The boat was manned and we left for camp at Point Pinellas for the Lt. said that he expected that we would be wanted in Tampa. We arrived at camp at 1 o’clock PM finding Capt. Mulrennan there. He was waiting for us to go to Tampa. All of our provisions had already gone, we got dinner and started for Tampa feeling very tired at which place we arrived at 8 o’clock PM all hands completely used up for we had pulled for twenty four hours on a steady drag, only taking time out to eat. We went to our old quarters, got a slight supper and turned in.

Jan. 21 Volunteers were called for to go over to Spanish Town to build batteries as the enemy was expected in a short time. Everyone volunteered willingly but all of us that had been on the last cruise of the Mollie Post were excused. They went over the river and nearly finished one battery, the rest of us went up to the barracks and took three small cannon and boated them over to our batteries or rather those that we were to build. It rained very hard all night and the house that we are staying in leaked badly.

Jan. 22 All hands at work on the batteries today. Had to knock off several times in consequence of rain but finished the one that was began yesterday and nearly finished another. Rained very heavy all night with a plenty of thunder and lightning but I managed to sleep very sound.

Jan. 23 Worked on the batteries all day. In the afternoon Capt. Mulrennan fired two shots at a target with one of the six pound guns, made very good shots. Moved over to Spanish Town today into very comfortable quarters with the exception of our having to sleep on the floor and fleas very bad. All quiet through the night.

Jan. 24 Nothing today it being rainy, in the afternoon we were drilled, several of our men sick but not seriously. No disturbance through the night.

Jan. 25 Nothing worthy of note took place today.
Jan. 26 Sunday. After breakfast Mr. Smith took a guard of eight men over to the Spanish smacksmen who had refused to work and were suspected of trying to escape in boats to Key West. They were removed from the house they occupied to one nearer to us. They were removed by Capt. Sheffield’s order, he being commanding officer in Tampa. A guard is set over them night and day, and they have to work eight hours every day. About 2 o’clock PM we were informed that the crew of the Olive Branch was coming up the river, the schooner having been taken by the Yankees. I went down to our battery and waited until they landed but was very sorry and disappointed to learn that my friend Canfield was taken prisoner by the d--d black republicans. Five of her crew escaped in a boat but Canfield would not leave the schr as he though[t] that there was no chance of escape in the boat. The five that arrived here took quarters with us.

Jan. 26 [sic] Went over to the magazine and got a lot of ammunition for our cannons and muskets, took them to the boat and carried them over to our side of the river, but just as we began to land it we were called back by the Ordinance Sergeant who told us that we could have but half of what we had in the boat. I went up after Capt. Mulrennan and told him about it. He was very angry about it and told us to land the whole of it and said that Capt. Sheffield could take his ammunition and go to the devil with it for he would have nothing more to do with it. We landed it and went home to our quarters.

Jan. 28 Capt. Mulrennan took Alfred Lowe and myself over the river to make cartridges. We worked all day and made quite a large number. The sloop Cate Dale came up from Point Pinellas late in the evening bringing our clothes, for I forgot to mention that we left all our clothes there when we came up, our boats being too small and crowded to bring them with us when we came.

Jan. 29 Worked all day on the cartridges. Two of the schooner Olive Branch's crew joined our company today, the other three Capt. Mulrennan sent to Cedar Keys in a boat belonging to us, the boat is to bring arms, ammunition and provisions for us. Nothing more worthy of note today.

Jan. 30 At roll call this morning Mr. Smith informed us that there would be an election this day for one 1st., one 2nd and one 3rd Lt. and that our company would hereafter be known as the Key West Avengers. After roll call there was great disputing about who should be run for the above named officers. Nearly all of the company were in favor of not giving W.C. Maloney a vote for any office as he is not liked by many on account of his actions towards the company, and also for the following expressions that he made at Point Pinellas. He said that we could not be treated like white men but must be treated like niggers, he made this remark to Mr. Smith and several of us heard him but while the boys were electioneering and writing tickets some one went over and told Capt. Mulrennan about it. He came over immediately in a great passion and told us that he did not care a d--d who was elected for 1st Lt. for he should appoint Walter Maloney over him. We all knew that it was out of his power to do so and Mr. Smith would have been unanimously elected for that office, but he came over and called the company together and told them that he had heard about the feelings of the company and he wished for his sake that they would not run him for that office as it would make hard feeling between him and the other officers should he be elected and requested that all who were
in favor of letting thing go on smoothly and not run him for the office to shoulder arms. But not a
gun was raised. He then begged them not to persist in running him and made quite a nice speech
but his feeling overcame towards the last so that he could scarcely speak. He said in his remarks
that he did not want any office on account of pay for he had money enough, he only desired to be
of service to his suffering country. He thanked them all for their good opinion and kind feelings
ward him and etc. and wound up by requesting them again not to run him as he could not think
of accepting the office. The men then to please him very reluctantly shouldered their arms. He
thanked them and told them to break ranks. The election was then postponed until next day at 2
o’clock PM. I was not at camp at the time Mr. Smith was there speaking to the men as I was over
the river making cartrdges, but I was told all about it at supper.

Jan. 31 I am on guard today, came home in time for the election, 30 out of 50 votes were
given to W. C. Maloney for 1st Lt. 20 of the men did not vote for him but as there
was no opposition he was elected. Mr. Smith was elected 2nd Lt. unanimously. Samuel Ashby
was elected 3rd Lt. Nothing more of note except that I was on guard four hours at night.

Feb. 1 Drilled this morning, slept about hours in the forenoon as I had but little sleep last
night. The following appointments were made by Capt. Mulrennan: Chas. Berry
Tim Buckley; Robert Watson and John Allison for masters mates and Joseph Cole; Jule Chabot;
John Bothell and Saml Morgan for cox[s]wains. I received an invitation from some ladies in
Tampa to call over and spend the evening. I accepted the invitation and went over after supper.
Was introduced to several of the fair sex and passed a very pleasant evening, got back to our
quarters about 10 o’clock PM and turned in.

Feb. 2 Sunday. Inspection of arms by Capt. Mulrennan. Our arms pronounced to be in
good order. I am on duty today as officer of the day. 30 volunteers were called for
to go on an expedition to Manatee to look after the Yankees that are reported to be in that
place. Our boats were launched and put in the stream. We are to start tomorrow, I go with them.
Nothing more today.

Feb. 3 Great preparations this morning getting the boats ready and packing our dunnage.
Left Tampa at 2 o’clock PM. Capt. Mulrennan in the Mary Jane. Lt. Ashby in the
Mollie Post and Lt. Maloney in the sloop Cate Dale. I am in the Mollie Post and we beat the
Mary Jane so bad that we had to anchor at Gadson’s Point and wait for her. When she came up
with us Capt. Mulrennan told us to proceed to our old quarters at Point Pinellas at which place
we arrived at 9 o’clock PM which was over an hour ahead of the Mary Jane. We built a fire, ate
some bread and drank water and was perfectly satisfied after taking a smoke we turned in
keeping no guard as the Cate is lying at the mouth of the bayou.

Feb. 4 After breakfast this morning we fired off our guns and cleaned them. All hands
had a good sleep through the day and after an early supper loaded our guns, put
our things in the boats and started for Manatee at 7 o’clock PM after building a large fire at the
camp. The wind being very light we had to tow the Cate Dale all the way to Manatee, a distance
of 14 miles. Camped three miles below the settlement in open air with a heavy dew all night.

Feb. 5 Started for the settlement at daylight at which place we arrived at 7½ o’clock AM.
In passing the guns out of the Mary Jane one of the guns accidentally went off, one of the buckshots went into Tom Butler’s foot. It struck one of his toes breaking it all to pieces and passing up into his foot. All hands in good health and anxious for fight. Got breakfast at 12½ o’clock PM. Sent Tom Butler up to Tampa in the Cate Dale to have his wound dressed for we have no doctor with us. I walked out to Capt. Dick Roberts a distance of 14 miles. He and family in good health and spirits. Spent a few hours very agreeably with them and got back to camp at 11 o’clock PM.

Feb. 6 After breakfast we went over to the sugar plantation. I drank a lot of cane beer which was very nice but it did not agree with me. After dinner we started for Shaw’s Point taking 25 men belonging to Turners Horse Company with us. We fixed our quarters, got supper, set the guard and turned in, the mosquitos and fleas in abundance.

Feb. 7 The Cate Dale arrived this morning bringing us the news that there had been a fight at Cedar Keys but no particulars as to the result, also that Tom Butler was out of danger, also that Capt. Sheffield had tried to take our cannon the day after we left but Lt. Smith would not allow him to do so, nothing more today.

Feb. 8 One of our men has been missing since yesterday. After breakfast I went into the woods and cut a mast for our boats having carried ours in coming down to this place. Ended the evening by singing songs, telling stories & etc. The fleas were so savage that I could not sleep.

Feb. 9 Nothing worthy of remark took place today. I am on guard tonight and tomorrow. I did not get a wink of sleep all night on account of the fleas. Dark and stormy all night with lots of rain the blowing very hard. All of us in hopes that the blockading barque would go on shore but she did not.

Feb. 10 On guard today. Continued raining until 12 o’clock PM. The Mollie Post’s crew with Capt. Mulrennan went up to the sugar plantation and brought us at the camp a barrel of cane beer. They were all pretty merry owing to the strength of the beer that they had drank in large quantities at the mill. All went well through the night.

Feb. 11 The horse company are all growling and dissatisfied, they don’t want to stand guard. I hope they will go away soon for they are the laziest, dirtiest and lousiest set of men that I ever saw. Our boat went up the river after beef but did not get any, it not being ready for use.

Feb. 12 Went fishing this morning, caught a few nice sheephead. After breakfast the horse company went away, thank fortune. I think that we will go to Tampa soon, for the fleas are awful.

Feb. 13 I went to mother Jose’s place this morning after beef Started at 3 o’clock AM and got there before daylight. The distance is six miles. Got 287 lbs. of beef and got back to camp about 8½ o’clock. After breakfast as I sat on my bed smoking my pipe and looking at Bill Talburt, his pistol, a Colt’s revolver, went off. The ball passing through his hip
but luckily only going through the flesh without striking the bone or chords, I acted doctor. The three volunteers that came with us for a cruise, viz: John McRay, William Ferris and Tom Coward went up to the Manatee hotel to stay until we are ready to go to Tampa. I think that they do this to avoid going on guard for they thought that when they came here they could play the gentlemen but Capt. Mulrennan makes them do the same as we all have to do. We are to leave for Tampa tomorrow night, so says the capt. I am on guard tonight and never shut my eyes the whole night on account of the cussed fleas.

Feb. 14  Got breakfast at 6 o’clock this morning took all of our things in the boats and went up to the settlement. We stopped at mother Joe’s and she treated Capt. Mulrennan and myself to a glass of whiskey which is the first liquor that I have tasted for two months. Left for Tampa at 4 o’clock PM, we had an exciting race between the Mary Jane and the Mollie Post, the latter having a boat in tow, but the Mollie Post beat her. We raced for 16 miles without slackening up any. All hands drenched in perspiration. We arrived at camp at 12½ o’clock AM when we all turned in.

Feb. 15  All hands in good health. Great blowing between the two boat crews, each party swearing that their boat can beat the other. General cleaning of arms all day. Nothing more today.

Feb. 16  Sunday. After breakfast this morning instead of inspection of arms Lt. Smith told us that the Confederate States wanted us to join their service for one year or the
war. He delivered quite a nice speech which had the effect of getting us all to join. Capt. Mulrennan received a letter from my brother George a few days ago. I am much disappointed that I did not receive one from him for he knows that I am here. He states that all the trees on Key West are to be cut down and that all the principle houses in the place are to be occupied by the soldiers. I am on guard today and tonight. No excitement through the day or night.

Feb. 17  The Capt. told me that he wanted me together with Mr. Russell and Rickards to build tables, benches, bunks & etc. so that the men can be made comfortable. We went to the saw mill and picked out some lumber and ordered more to be sawed. Nothing more worthy of remark today.

Feb. 18  Twenty-five men started this morning for Manatee under Lt. Smith and Ashby. They took with them twenty five of Sheffield’s company. We brought our lumber across the river in boats and backed it up to our quarters. Picked out a lot of tools and ground and put them in order, made saw horses & etc. All ready to go to work tomorrow. Our company is to be divided in messes of twelve men in different houses, which will be much better than all hands living together.

Feb. 19  Ten men started for Bayport after a small schooner belonging to the state of Florida with orders to bring her to this place. Worked all day making tables. I received 40 cents per day extra and am excused from guard or any other duty.

Feb. 20  Worked all day and in the evening I received an invitation from a young lady to come over and spend the evening and to bring my flutina. I accepted the invitation and went. Passed a very pleasant evening and got back to camp at 11 o’clock. While over there I heard that the enemy had been at Clearwater and taken our boats that had been left there for safe keeping. The people at that place offered no resistance whatevr. Shame on them, for three or four men could have killed the whole party, the enemy being in a boat and they in a thick wood within gunshot.

Feb. 21  While at roll call this morning one of the men that started for Bayport came to camp bringing information that the enemy had been at Papy’s bayou and that a man named John Whitehurst and his wife had gone off with them to the blockading barque. This man had long been suspected of being on friendly terms with the enemy, but no proof could be brought against him until now. I spent the evening with Mr. Rickards and family.

Feb. 22  Capt. Mulrennan and ten men went to the place lately occupied by Whitehurst for he is expected to be back after his things, and if they come there will be a chance for a fight. There is only eight men left here at present and should the enemy come we would have to take to the woods for safety.

Feb. 23  Sunday. Truly this is a cosmopolitan company, it is composed of Yankees, Crackers, Conchs, Englishmen, Spaniards, Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, Poles, Irishmen, Swedes, Chinese, Portuguese, Brazilians, 1 Rock Scorpion Cruso; but all are good southern men. There are also Scotchmen, Welshmen and some half Indians, surely this is the greatest mixture of nations for a small company that I ever heard of.
Feb. 24 There has been nothing worthy of note since last date except many rumors of battles fought won and lost. Our company returned to camp. Stayed two days then went on another cruise leaving only seven of us in camp. I have been at work on the bunks & etc. Up to yesterday when we got out of lumber and as there is a report that Tampa is to be evacuated I would not get any more until Capt. Mulrennan comes back. Mr. Smith is expected today from Tallahassee where he has been on business for the company. The mustering officer was here and said that he had no orders to muster us in as a boat company, but as a company of heavy artillery. We would muster in as such, therefore Mr. Smith went to Tallahassee to see what can be done. We are willing to enlist for the war as a coast guard or in the navy and Capt. Mulrennan and Mr. Smith backs up in the determination of not entering as a foot company. They both say that we must stick together and if the worst comes we will fight on our own hook. I am now in mess of twelve men. We pay two dollars each a month for servant hire, they cook and wash for us and keep our house in order. At present Charley Berry and I are the only two present, the balance are on a cruise. The Yankees have taken Fernandina about a week ago. Just heard by mail that Jacksonville and St. Augustine are in the hands of the enemy consequently I have lost all of my tools worth $300.00, a serious loss for me for I was in hopes that I would save them and should My life be spared, to start business after the war was over.

Mar. 16 Sunday. Recvd information that the enemy had shelled and burnt the dwelling and out houses of Mr. Abel Maranda. Our Capt. gave us orders to get ready to go to Manatee tomorrow. We took one six pounder and put it on board of the sloop Cate Dale and landed the other on the opposite side of the river. We are to wait until the mail arrives as Lt. Smith is expected in the stage.

Mar. 17 After getting everything on board today, the order to go to Manatee was countermanded. Everything had to be taken on shore and all hands ordered to start immediately for Manatee and bring up all of our company stationed there. No news by the mail and Lt. Smith did not come or write. Started from the wharf at 4 o’clock PM and it being nearly calm all night did not get to Shaw’s Point until 4 o’clock AM. When we were near that point we saw three boats pulling with all speed for us. Got our guns ready for action but they proved to be our boats. Got to the settlement at 8 o’clock.

Mar. 18 Went out in the country and called on Mr. Bill Lowe and family and Capt. Richard Roberts and family all well. Took dinner with Capt. Roberts and went back to camp. Started for Tampa at 5 PM. Stopped at Point Pinellas and landed Chas. Berry and five men to signalize when the enemy comes in sight. Stopped at Gadson’s Point and landed Joseph Cole and 5 men for the same purpose.

Mar. 19 Arrived at Tampa at 6 o’clock AM. After breakfast turned in and had a nap for I had not slept any for two nights. In the afternoon was informed that 30 volunteers wanted to go on a scout at Point Pinellas. The Yankees had been at Miranda’s place and burnt everything that he had, his clothing and wife’s nieces and children’s clothes, and chased him through the woods, fired twice at him but he escaped unhurt. I returned to go but it blowed too hard to start.

Mar. 20 Blowed and rained all day. No excitement.
Mar. 21  Started at 1 o’clock PM in the Cate Dale with a good breeze. Stopped at Gadson’s Point about sundown and went on shore and got supper with the men stationed there. After supper it rained and blew pretty hard and continued squally all night. I got no sleep, having no place to sleep clear of the wet.

Mar. 22  Squalls and head winds all day.

Mar. 23  Very rough, but started for Point Pinellas. The sloop came very near capsizing several times but managed to get to our destination at sunset. Camped in the woods and slept first rate although it rained through the night.

Mar. 24  After breakfast we went over to a shanty about three miles distant where we are to be stationed for the present. Dug a lot of sweet potatoes, cooked and ate supper and turned in.

Mar. 25  After breakfast this morning Jerry Weatherford who had charge of some men on Point Pinellas came over and informed us that Wm. Talbot, John Singleton and John Baker had stolen a boat and run away taking their arms and all the provisions that they had in the camp. I was never more surprised in my life. Over a dozen of us volunteered immediately to go in pursuit of them. We repaired a small boat belonging to Mr. Coons and five of us started in the afternoon, the boat leaking very badly. It is useless to mention all the little incidents that took place as we went along the coast wading the boat over oyster bars, having no chance to sleep, our clothes wet all the time, very little to eat & etc.

Mar. 27  We stopped at Point-a-Rassa this day. Stayed until next morning but could see nothing of the runaways and our provisions nearly out came to the conclusion that we had better go back. We therefore started after breakfast and stopped at Henry Brown’s place in the afternoon. He has got a splendid place, beautiful lemon and orange groves, thousands of lemons rotting on the ground. He gave us some potatoes, pumpkins and lemons after which we proceeded homewards. We arrived at our camp at Point Pinellas on the 2nd of Apl. and found that the boat company was broken up and that we were to be formed into Guerrilla-companies. Capt. Mulrennan to have charge of one company and Capt.

Apr. 2  Smith another, the company to umber thirty four rank and file. There were only eight men left at the camp. The rest of the men had gone to Tampa.

Apr. 3  Seven men came from Tampa today. We are all to be at Tampa on the 10th. Capt. Mulrennan has gone to Tallahassee to draw our pay & etc. We went hunting but got nothing.

Apr. 4  Twelve of us went on a cruise visiting the places of the tonies that had gone to the blockade. Got a lot of corn and some salt & a few old chairs & etc. at Frank Gerard’s place. At Grinder’s place we killed two hogs and visited two more of the traitors places.

Apr. 5  Got back to camp on the 5th all well.
Apr. 6  Shot a fine large steer, it was the best beef that I have seen for some time. Made soup of the head and it is a positive fact that there was sixty gallons of soup made and drank this day and there is twenty of us. Besides there was about fifteen pounds of steak and 1½ bushels of potatoes cooked and ate during the day. Passed the evening at Mr. Coons house. He and wife and eldest daughter are highly educated and I wonder at their burying themselves in the pine woods of Florida when they have lived all their lives in the best of society.

Apr. 7  Nothing worthy of remark today.

Apr. 8  Saw a schooner going to the blockade.

Apr. 9  Took our things over to the bayou and got ready to start in the morning.

Apr. 10  Started this morning for Tampa with Mrs. Miranda and son, Miss Alice Curry and brother on board. It being calm had to pull all the way. Arrived at 2 o’clock PM. Heard that Charley Collins had married Mrs. Black the night before. In the evening a lot of us went over to his house and gave him a serenade with tin pans & etc. he came out with his fiddle and struck up also. We then stopped the noise and he and Woods played several very nice tunes together, after which we went to the officers quarters, took an old fellow that belongs to our company named Pratt that was living with a negro woman that cooked for the officers and rode him on a rail down to the wharf and threw him overboard. We then gave him a lecture, told him what it was done for and that if he was caught doing the like again that we would give him thirty nine lashes, after which we went to our different quarters and turned in.

Apr. 13  Nothing worthy of remark took place during the last two days except that I joined Capt. Mulrennan’s company. Capt. Smith wanted me to join his company and offered to make me first masters mate and quartermaster of his company but I preferred being with Mulrennan. At 11 o’clock AM the alarm was given that the enemy was in sight and coming up the bay. We all took our arms and ran down to the ditches all hands anxious for a fight. A large schooner was coming towards the town and after keeping us waiting for over an hour came to anchor behind an island two miles from town. Picket guards were set at all the different roads leading to this place for we are of opinion that the Yankees have landed men below us and came in the schooner to draw our attention while they march up in our rear. A boat was seen coming from her and two of our boats were manned and went out to her. She had a flag of truce and demanded the surrender of Tampa. Major Thomas told them that he would not surrender it. The Yankee officer then gave him twenty four hours to take the women and children out of the town as they would attack the place at the end of that time. Our men gave three cheers at the prospect of having a fight which made the men in the Yankee boat look down in the mouth as they expected to see us all look frightened and ready to surrender. Capt. Smith told us to take all of our clothing and carry them up the river as the enemy might come too strong for us and should we have to retreat it would be impossible to carry anything with us. A strong picket guard on all day and night. I am at work making cartridges tonight.

Apr. 14  No sign of the enemy but there is a bright lookout for them.

Apr. 15  Election of officers today. Samuel Ashby was unanimously elected Lt. of Smith’s
company. Chas. Berry was elected Lt. protem in Mulrennan’s company. In the afternoon the Cate Dale that had started for Old Tampa in the morning was seen coming back. A little after dark two boats were manned and we went after thinking that they may be in distress, and such was the case for on coming up to them they told us that a boat with English flag had chased them. We both took them in town and took her up town. When we got back we were informed that two men had arrived from Manatee stating that they had ran away from Key West. About one hour later a boat was seen coming up. We went down to our battery, hailed and brought her to. She proved to be from Key West with four men that ran away from that place. A guard was set over them all night but they were liberated in the morning.

Apr. 16 On guard today and night, no excitement.

Apr. 20 Nothing worth of remark from last date except drilling twice a day. Inspection of arms this morning. I am on guard today and night.

Apr. 24 Recvd letters from Capt. Mulrennan this morning informing us that he had accepted the appointment of assistant quartermaster general with the rank of major, also that our boat company was mustered out of the service since the fifth of March and that we were expected to join a heavy artillery company. He advises us to form ourselves into the artillery service, if not we will be pressed into some infantry company. He says that if the company insists on his being their Capt. he will resign his commission and be with us. The company was then formed into line and all that wished to be in the artillery company requested to step forward two paces. Nearly all of us stepped forward and I think that in a day or two they will all join. He informed us also that he had permission to go to Key West with a flag of truce to get the families of the men in this company to come over here. I trust that he will go as I can then get some news from home for I have not received a line from them since I left home.

Apr. 25 The company went into election for officers this morning and the following is the result. R.B. Smith Capt., W.C. Maloney 1st Lt. Saml. B. Ashby 2nd Lt., and John A. Bethel 2nd Lt. At 4 o’clock PM twelve of us went over in a boat and brought over Major Thomas and his lady. The major mustered us into the Confederate service after which the company gave three cheers for the major. We then pulled him and his lady up and down the river for which he thanked us.

Apr. 26 Raining all the morning. Drilled in the afternoon.

Apr. 27 Inspection of arms.

Apr. 28 Commenced drilling with the bayonet on the Zouave drill. I forgot to mention that the following appointments were made on the 25th: 1st Sgt. Chas. H. Berry; 2nd do Robert Watson; 3rd do Joseph Cole; 4th do John Allison; 5th do Jules Chabet; 1st Corporal Saml. Morgan; 2nd do Wm. Sawyer; 3rd do Augustus Merrilac; 4th do Rogino Phalez.

Apr. 29 Drill as usual morning and afternoon. Took several ladies out in two of our boats and had a race after which Mrs. McKay sent us two and a half gallons of wine which was very nice.
Apr. 30  Drilled and Major Thomas inspected our arms, quarters & etc. pronounced all to be in good order.

May 1  By the request of several of the company Mr. Crusoe drew up the following petition: Fort Brooks/Tampa, Fla. May 1st 1862/ To/ The Hon. Stephen R. Mallory/ Director of the Navy/ Confederate States of America/ Sir/ The undersigned Marines, Citizens of Key West, Fla. would respectfully represent that they have been in the service of the State of Florida as Coast Guards since the month of December last, that lately they have reorganized and are now members of Captain Robert B. Smith’s Company 7th Regt. Florida Volunteers regularly mustered into the service of the Confederate States for three years or the war and stationed at Tampa, Fla.

That they are sincerely anxious to render good and efficient service to their Country and are satisfied that the Army is not the proper place for them, that they have been informed that Seamen in the Army can be transferred to the Navy, and therefore make this their application, and pray to be transferred to a Gun Boat or other vessel of war where they may have a chance to meet the enemy and strike for their Country’s cause/ Very respectfully/ Your obt servts/ Names: Robert Watson, Seaman Carpenter/ Chas. H. Berry/ Joseph E. Cole/ Jules A. Chabot/ Samuel Morgan/ Jas. Barnett/ A.B. Low/ J.P. Williamson, Seaman Carpenter/ Wm. Sawyer/ Chas. H. Chapman/ John B. Sands/ John Duprey/ Geo. V. Rickards, Seaman Carpenter/ M.A. Olivier/ J.A. Moss/ Edward Dorey/ Joseph Fagan/ Manl. Moretideoca/ Thos. Burns/ Rofino Fales/ Wm. D. Curry/ Jacob Weatherford/ Francisco Dees/ Wm. Joseylin/ Jas. Leavitt.

May 5  This petition was sent last night and Capt. Smith is dreadfully put out at it; he says that we want to break up the company, but we assured him that such was not our intention but that we wished to enter the navy and would do so if we could get a chance.

May 6  Several letters came from Key West this morning but I received none nor can I learn one word about my mother or brothers. They must have left Key West or forgotten me, probably it is for the best.

May 7  I am on guard today and night.

May 8  A soldier in Capt. Magee’s company died yesterday and all of the military in this place, our company among the number, went to his funeral.

May 9  About 11 o’clock PM we were aroused from sleep by the beating of the drum, we all hurried up to headquarters with our arms and learned that the enemy had been at Clearwater Harbor and taken several prisoners, and one man Scott Whitehurst, had gone voluntarily with them. They said that they would be back in a few days, consequently twenty of our company went there to meet them. They started at 1 o’clock AM.
May 10 Sunday. On guard today and night. Major Mulrennan arrived this morning. He comes to sell all state property and to pay off our company, he is a welcome visitor as we are sadly in need of money.

May 11 I and all of the company was paid off today, up to the 5th of March. From that date we are to be paid by the Confederate States. Mulrennan charged us all 5 percent for paying us off which has caused a great deal of hard feelings, for to make the best of it, it is very mean and shabby of him to exact it from us.

May 12 At 10 o’clock PM just as I was going to bed the drum beat to quarters, we all hastened with our arms & etc and learned that twenty of us were to go to Clearwater Harbor. We volunteered cheerfully as there was a prospect of a fight. We started at 12 o’clock with twenty of our company and twenty four of Gette’s company. We pulled the whole way to Old Tampa, distance of forty miles.

May 13 We arrived at 11 o’clock AM all hands tired, sleepy and out of humor for we had pulled without a spell from the soldiers who were too green and lazy to help us. We cooked and ate dinner and walked over to Clearwater. We arrived there at 3 o’clock PM, ate supper with our men that were stationed there and then walked six miles further to a place that was thought the enemy would land at. Had to wade one creek and sleep in an old shanty on a dirty floor full of fleas and no blanket to cover us for we had left them at Old Tampa. Kept guard all night but nothing happened.

May 14 After an early breakfast we started for the settlement, Lowes Landing, Anona, and on the road we met a horseman with the intelligence that the Yankees were at Archer’s place (Bill Fletcher Meares [of] Largo talked to them) and were getting the sloop Osceola off. We hurried up and when we got to the settlement the Capt. halted us and sent ten men as a scout to see if the enemy was there. After waiting two or three hours, all hands getting impatient, the order was given by Lt. Henderson to march to the place that the Yankees were supposed to be at. We had got about three miles on the road when we were met by Capt. Smith on horseback. He informed us that the enemy had got to Osceola off and were on their way to Clearwater, so we turned back in double quick and when we got to where we started from we saw them coming, but when they were opposite us they went about and beat it out of the pass. We were all greatly disappointed for I never saw men so eager for a fight in my life. We kept a strict guard all night but they did not come.

May 15 At 10 o’clock AM we left for Archer’s place under Lt. Ashby, Capt. Smith having gone to Tampa, Lt. Henderson and his command staying at Clearwater. We arrived at our destination and stopped at Bob Whitehurst’s house, of one of the Tories. We found plenty of everything to eat such as green corn, peas, cabbages, honey & etc, hogs, cows & etc. We lived high. Kept a strict guard.

May 16 Guard day and night. Archer, Lowe, Mears and Anderson moving their things to Clearwater, from there to be taken to old Tampa and we are to carry them and their families to Tampa for they are afraid to stay on their places as the Yankees have threatened to take them prisoners. Two scouts were sent out and they reported that the enemy had been at a
place owned by one of the Tories and had dug potatoes and robbed six bee gums. They could not have left more than two hours before the scouts got there. They found a letter in the house directed to Major Thomas. The letter contained two letters for Frank Phillips. Shortly after, a horseman came from Clearwater with the information that Lt. Maloney had arrived at that place and that Mr. Jas. McRay & sons had arrived at Tampa. They were sent in a smack with a flag of truce. They have been prisoners at Key West for some time. Mr. McRay stated that three barges with 90 men had left the blockade for Clearwater to take that place and our company that they heard was there. We went up to Clearwater in the afternoon together with the families of Archer Lowe and others.

May 17 Started for Old Tampa on foot at which place we arrived at 12 M, got into our boats and left for Tampa at which place we arrived at 8 PM and learned that the company [E of Captain McGehee] belonging to the 4th Reg. were to leave for Jacksonville the next day and that we are to move into their quarters.

May 18 Went over and had a look at the quarters and of all the dirty houses that I ever saw they beat all, hog pens are cleaner. Concluded to wait till next day to clean them out.

May 19 Cleaned and whitewashed the quarters today and a nice job we had.

May 20 Moved over today but we would rather stay on the other side of the river.

May 23 On guard today and night. All quiet.

May 24 Received a letter from my brother George stating that all the family was in good health, also that my aunt Mrs. McKenzie died.

May 26 A Rag of truce was sent to the blockade today to see if they would give up some negroes that had ran away from their owners and are on board of the barque. I wrote my mother by this opportunity.

May 27 I am on guard today and night. Rained all day and night. About 12 o’clock at night the boat from the blockade arrived. They did not succeed in getting the negroes but our letters will be sent to Key West by first opportunity.

May 30 I am on the sick list today having taken medicine last night, in fact I have not felt well for some time but could not make up my mind to take medicine until now.

June 10 Our ration of beef was cut down from 1¼ lbs to 1 lb per day and pork from ¾ lb to ½ lb which caused a deal of hard feeling and dissatisfaction among us all, but as it is an order from the Secretary of War we have to submit.

June 14 Received orders to get ready to march for Tennessee within ten days. All of Gette’s company got furloughs and left for home immediately and many of our men did the same. I remain in camp.
Jun 22  The schr Rosa Lee, formerly the Eliza Fisk, sailed for Havana today. I and many of our company wrote letters and sent them by her.

Jun 24  Several of us went masquerading and had quite a nice time although it was rather warm.

Jun 27  Left Tampa today at 9 AM. The ladies in large number turned out and saw us off. There was quite a waiving of hdkfs and many tears shed but I am satisfied that none were for me for I have no female acquaintances in the place. We crossed the river, gave three cheers and proceeded on our way & stopped at the 13 mile run for the night, ate supper, had some music & dancing in spite of our being tired for the road is soft sand and tiresome to walk....

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EPILOGUE

After the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard reorganized as Company K of the 7th Florida Infantry regiment, it proceeded to Tennessee to join the Western Army of the Confederacy. As a member of Company K, Robert Watson took part in the battles of Perryville and Chicamauga, the siege of Chattanooga and the assault on Missionary Ridge, before his company was transferred to the Confederate States Navy. On March 9, 1864, Watson and several others from his company joined the crew of the Confederate ram Savannah, on which he served until that ship was blown up by the Confederates to avoid capture. The crew marched to Charleston, South Carolina, and then to the defenses of Wilmington, North Carolina. Watson was at Fort Fisher during its bombardment, when his detachment was withdrawn to Fort Buchanan. He served in the defenses around Richmond, Virginia, until it was evacuated by the Confederates. A member of Admiral Semes’ naval brigade, Watson was with General Robert E. Lee’s army in its last march, and he was finally captured near Appomatox, on April 8, 1865, the day before the army surrendered.  

Watson was paroled on April 14, but he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Union. Denied transportation home, he found a friend in Washington, D.C., and was there when President Lincoln was assassinated. Watson then borrowed enough money to make his way to New York, where he found another friend who loaned him money for passage to Havana. At that point, Watson’s journal ends. However, he ultimately returned to his home in Key West and married in 1868. On April 6,1911, he died in Key West at the age of seventy-five.

Editors’ Note: For information on “living history programs” that reenact activities recorded in Robert Watson’s diary, see the “Announcements” section of this issue.


3  Florida Board of State Institutions, Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian, Civil, Spanish-American Wars (Live Oak, Florida: Democrat Book, 1903), 48-49.
4 Watson Diary, September 27, 1861, transcript at Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Park, Georgia.

5 Ibid., October 12, 15, 23, November 2, 15, 20, December 7, 1861.

6 Lieutenant Henry Mulrennan had organized the Coast Guard company on November 27, 1861, and he commanded it until April 22, 1862, when it was mustered into Confederate States’ service as Company K, 7th Florida Regiment. He then resigned and shortly thereafter fled the country by running the blockade to Cuba. Soldiers of Florida, 49.

7 John Thomas Lowe, a native of the Bahama Islands, worked as a mariner in Key West at the beginning of the Civil War. Fleeing his home in Key West because it was under Union control, Lowe had come to the Tampa Bay area. In April 1862, he enlisted at Tampa in Company K, 7th Regiment. In 1864 he transferred to the Confederate navy and served with Robert Watson on the ram Savannah. After the war he resumed his seafaring life and resided at Anona in the Tampa Bay area. William Curry Harllee, Kinfolks: A Genealogical and Biographical Record of Harllee, Fulmore, Curry, Kemp, Bethel Robertson and Dickey Families, 3 vols (New Orleans: Searcy & Pfaff, 1934-37), vol. 2, 1938, 1948-49.

8 Tampa traces its beginnings to the establishment of a U.S. Army fort by Colonel George Mercer Brooke in 1824. Fort Brooke was established to protect the settlers of the Tampa Bay area from Seminole Indians. The village that grew up along side the fort was first known as “Tampa Bay,” but in 1855, the state legislature incorporated the city of Tampa. By 1860, the city had a population of 900. Anthony P. Pizzo, Tampa Town, 1824-1886: Cracker Village with a Latin Accent (Miami: Hurricane House, 1968), 1-3, 57.

9 According to Governor John Milton's specifications for coastal defense at the outbreak of the Civil War, the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard was described as “seamen in boats of about thirty five feet length, manned with a number of men necessary to manage them with oars and sails and the men of each boat armed with a four pounder [cannon], Muskets or Enfield rifles and Cutlasses.” Milton to Benjamin, October ?, 1861.

10 Walter C. Maloney appears on the 1860 census as a twenty-one-year-old, Florida-born sailmaker, living at Key West. He enlisted in Florida's Volunteer Coast Guard upon its formation in November 1861. Elected first lieutenant on January 31, 1862, he later was mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Infantry Regiment. He resigned on October 26, 1864, to join the Washington Siege Artillery stationed near Adams Run, South Carolina. 1860 Manuscript Census, Monroe County, Florida; Soldiers of Florida, 49, 185.

11 The largest of the three vessels utilized by Florida's Volunteer Coast Guard at Tampa Bay, the sloop Cate Dale (or “Kate Dale”) transported the officers as well as the six-pounder cannon and provisions between the signal stations. The Mary Jane and Mollie Post were fourteen-oar, single-sail-rigged boats of approximately thirty feet, and each was probably mounted with a four-pounder cannon in its bow. After her service with the Coast Guard ended in June 1862, the Cate Dale continued to serve the Confederacy at Tampa Bay as a blockade runner. She was eventually captured by the U.S.S. Sunflower in Sarasota Bay in March 1864, when she was headed for Havana with seven bales of cotton. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927), vol. 17, 673.

12 This may refer to Madison Post, a prominent Tampan who had served as mayor and who had several daughters. Karl H. Grismer, Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida (St. Petersburg, Florida: St. Petersburg Publishing Co., 1950), 324.

13 George V. Rickards enlisted in the Coast Guard on December 24, 1861, as a private. Mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Regiment in April 1862, he died at Camp Chase prison camp on April 17, 1865. Soldiers of Florida, 49, 186.

14 Listed on the 1860 census as a twenty-four-year-old, Florida-born farmer and resident of Lafayette County, Robert B. Smith enlisted in the Coast Guard on December 1, 1861. Elected first lieutenant on January 30, 1862, he was later elected captain of Company K, 7th Florida Regiment, at its reorganization on April 25, 1862. 1860 Manuscript Census, Lafayette County, Florida; Soldiers of Florida, 49, 185; Robert B. Smith Military Record, War...
Department Collection of Confederate Records [hereafter Confederate Records], Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

15 Point Pinellas was one of four coastal defense signal stations manned by members of the Coast Guard to warn of the approach of vessels in the U.S. Navy’s blockade. The Maximo Point station could spot an approach from the north through Boca Ceiga pass while the guard at Point Pinellas commanded a view of the main channels into Tampa Bay. Signals were relayed by lighting a bonfire which could be seen by a third station at Gadsden’s Point on the interbay peninsula (the location of today's MacDill Air Force Base) which would in turn relay the warning to Fort Brooke in Tampa. A fourth station was located at the mouth of the Manatee River at Shaw’s Point for the purpose of warning Manatee Village. “Fort Buckley” was the formal name of the main camp of the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard, located three miles north of Point Pinellas at Big Bayou.

16 Built in 1859 at Boston, the *U.S.S. Ethan Allen* was a wood sailing vessel, classified as “a fourth-class bark.” Purchased by the U.S. Navy in August 1861 and commissioned on October 3, 1861, the *Ethan Allen* was immediately assigned to the Union’s East Gulf Coast Blockading Squadron which patrolled the Gulf of Mexico. The ship ultimately captured eight prizes and destroyed extensive salt works along Florida’s gulf coast. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (Washington, D.C.: Navy Department, 1968), vol. 3, 371; *Records of Union and Confederate Navies*, vol. 1, 222.

17 These “muskets” were a smoothbore weapon, such as the U.S. model of 1842, as indicated by the usage of “buck and ball” ammunition. Watson Diary, February 5, 1862.

18 This undoubtedly refers to the home of Antonio Maximo Hernandez. Born in St. Augustine, Florida, and settled at Tampa Bay as early as 1818, Maximo knew every passage and inlet of the bay and was an invaluable resource for the military officers at Fort Brooke. In 1843 he settled on lower Pinellas Peninsula, known then as “Fisherman’s Point,” where he established his fishing rancho. The tip of the peninsula was renamed “Maximo Point” in his honor. Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 1-3.

19 On the 1860 census of Monroe County, John Bethel appears as a thirty-six-year old school teacher, born in the Bahamas and living in Key West. After enlisting in the Volunteer Coast Guard on December 1, 1861, he was elected coxswain on February 1, 1862, and was later mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Regiment. He was promoted to second lieutenant in January 1863 and signed the roll as company commander in February 1863. He resigned on February 27, 1864, due to a disability, with the intention of joining the Confederate Navy, and he was captured by Union forces in August 1864. 1860 Manuscript Census, Monroe County, Florida; *Soldiers of Florida*, 49, 185; John Bethel Military Record, Confederate Records.

20 “Mareda’s place” refers to Abel Miranda’s house at Big Bayou on Pinellas Peninsula. Originally from St. Augustine, Miranda had settled at Tampa by 1850 and served as a lieutenant in Captain Richard Turner’s Volunteer Mounted Infantry during the Third Seminole War. Nicknamed “the Cat,” he was greatly feared by the Federals during the Civil War and was a notorious rebel agent, actively involved in guerilla operation around Tampa Bay. His was the only home at Tampa Bay destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War. Watson Diary, March 16, 1862; Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 66-67.


22 See note 18.

23 “Spanish Town” (near the mouth of the Hillsborough River) was the location of a battery of three six-pounder cannons, which formed part of the defensive fortifications for Fort Brooke. Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 65.

24 “Spanish Smacksmen” were Cuban fishermen.
William A. Sheffield was mustered into Company D, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment on September 7, 1861; he retired at reorganization of the regiment on May 10, 1862. Three companies of the 4th Florida Regiment were assigned at Tampa Bay between October 1861 and April 1862. John T. Lesley’s Company K was stationed at Shaw’s Point from October to December 1861, when it was ordered to Fernandina, Florida. Companies D and E were stationed at Fort Brooke and participated in operations with the Coast Guard until it was reorganized and sent with the remaining companies of the 4th Regiment to join General Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee in April 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 118, 124.


Located on the south bank of the river for which it is named, seven miles from the river’s mouth, historic Manatee Village now lies within the corporate limits of Bradenton, in the vicinity of 15th Street, East. It was first settled by Armed Occupationist Josiah Gates from Fort Brooke in 1842. Manatee became the county seat for newly created Manatee County in 1856. Four years later the village consisted of a hotel (Josiah Gates’ Inn), store, courthouse, blacksmith shop and church. The population of the county, which extended from the Hillsborough County line south to Charlotte Harbor and from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Okeechobee, numbered approximately 900, including almost 300 slaves. Lillian B. McDuffee, *The Lutes of Manatee* (Bradenton, Florida: Manatee County Historical Society, 1961), 44-66; Janet Snyder Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness: A Settlement History of Manatee River and Sarasota Bay, 1528-1885* (Tulsa: Caprine Press, 1983), 249; 1860 Manuscript Census, Manatee County, Florida.

This refers to smoothbore muskets, such as the U.S. model 1842, used by the company at that time.

A seaman born in London, England, Thomas Butler had enlisted in the Coast Guard on December 15, 1861. He was mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Regiment, on April 25, 1862, but he was discharged on July 7, 1862, in Tallahassee, for disability due to the accidental gunshot wound he had received on February 5, 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 49, 186.

A retired sea captain from Key West and an acquaintance of Watson, Richard Roberts was a blockade runner who operated locally with Captain Frederick Tresca. Harllee, *Kinfolks*, vol. 2, 1938; Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 240, 352.

Known then as the Cofield-Davis plantation and first established by Robert Gamble in 1844, this plantation consisted of thousands of acres and produced maximum yields of sugar and molasses. The plantation sugar mill was destroyed by Federal soldiers in August 1864. The mansion still stands as a Confederate memorial at the Gamble Plantation State Historic Site in Ellenton. Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 149-80; *Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, series 1, vol. 17, 741.

Located on the south bank of the Manatee River at its mouth on the site of today’s De Soto National Memorial, Shaw’s Point had an Indian mound twenty feet high and extending 150 yards along the shoreline. During the Civil War, Federal naval expedition reports described it as having a Confederate installation consisting of a “temporary barracks and a gun mounted on wheels on an Indian mound.” Captain John T. Lesley’s Company K, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment, was stationed there from October to December 1861. Thereafter, until June 1862, a detachment consisting of men from Company D, 4th Florida Regiment, and the Coast Guard manned the point on a rotational basis. *Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, series 3, vol. 17, 67-69; John T. Lesley Military Record, Confederate Records.

“Turners Horse Company” refers to Captain William Iredell Turner’s Independent Cavalry. Turner, of Oak Hill, Florida, had led a company of volunteers during the Third Seminole War from 1855 to 1858. During the Civil War, his independent horse company was composed mostly of men from Hillsborough County, and it operated locally until the company was disbanded and reorganized into other regiments in early 1862. At that time Turner accepted a commission as a major in the 8th Florida Infantry, but he had to resign shortly thereafter due to complications from an old wound received during the Seminole War. After the Civil War, Turner settled at Manatee River and...
established a store and a post office that he named “Braidentown,” which later became “Bradenton.” *Soldiers of Florida*, 186; *Matthews, Edge of Wilderness*, 309, 385.

34 Julia (“Madam Joe”) Atzeroth and her husband Joseph were immigrants from Bavaria who settled at Teo Rocio Bay (present-day Terra Ceia Island) in 1842. Their home was destroyed in the 1848 hurricane, after which they purchased an unfinished home on the north bank of the Manatee River (on the site of present-day Palmetto), where they built a store. Joseph Atzeroth enlisted in Company K on May 1, 1862, at the age of sixty-one. He was discharged for disability and old age on November 7, 1862, at Knoxville, Tennessee. Ollie Z. Fogarty, *They Called It Fogartyville* (Brooklyn: Theodore Gaus, 1972), 44; *Soldiers of Florida*, 186; Joseph Atzeroth Military Record, Confederate Records.

35 James W. Talbut (or Tolbert) deserted the company with John Singleton and John Baker in a boat from Pinellas Point on March 25, 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 49.

36 The residence-hotel, owned by Manatee’s first permanent white settler, Josiah Gates, was built in 1853 and located at the end of present-day 15th Street, East, on the banks of the Manatee River. The twenty-room hotel was considered the most commodious structure of the era, south of Jacksonville. McDuffee, *Lures of Manatee*, 69-70.

37 See note 34.

38 “Flutina” was a period term for a miniature flute.

39 See note 20.

40 “Point-a-Rassa” refers to Punta Rassa, a small community located at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River, near Fort Myers.

41 “Ditches” refers to the earthworks constructed along Tampa’s waterfront as part of the defenses of Fort Brooke. They extended from the mouth of the Hillsborough River to the Indian mound at the foot of Morgan Street. Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 65.

42 Formerly a Confederate privateer, the *Priscilla C. Ferguson* of Charleston, South Carolina, the “large schooner” referred to was a sailing vessel that had been captured on November 13, 1861, at Bahama Channel. Purchased from the Key West Prize Court by the U.S. Navy Department in February 1862, the ship had been renamed the U.S.S. *Beauregard* and outfitted with one thirty-pounder Parrott Rifle and two heavy twelve-pounder howitzers. Alphabetical list of naval vessels in *Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, series 2, vol. 1.

43 Matilda McKay was the wife of Captain James McKay, a leading Tampan who was an active blockade runner and Confederate agent. Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 66-69.

44 Except as noted in three instances, the profession given after each name was “Seaman.”

45 Thomas J. McGehee was captain of Company E, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 126.

46 James Gettis (or Gettes) was captain of Company B, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 173.

47 William B. Henderson was first lieutenant of Company B, 7th Florida Infantry Regiment. *Soldiers of Fortune*, 173.

48 Watson Diary, passim.

49 Harllee, *Kinfolks*, vol. 2, 1887.