2018

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CAPTAIN WILLIAM B. HOOKER: 
FLORIDA CATTLE KING

By Kyle S. VanLandingham

In June of 1860, a group of pioneer residents on an expedition of Peas Creek, noticed a cattle crossing:

At 7 o’clock we came to what seemed to be a crossing place for cattle. It had the appearance of being a kind of forceford, having two strings of log fences, made in funnel shape, widening from the river to the pine woods. And such a fence! The reader will know but little about it without further description. It was built of forks, and logs, log chains and trace chains! One of our party being an observing man, remarked, 'That looks like some of Capt. Hooker’s work.' Sure enough, on our return, we learned that it was one of his cattle fords. Capt. H. makes his mark wherever he goes, as well upon the earth and rivers and trees of South Florida, as upon his numerous stock of cattle.1

By the summer of 1860, William Brinton Hooker was the "cattle king of Florida," owner of over 10,000 head of open range beef cattle. If he had looked out from the piazza or porch of his 33-room home on Madison Street in Tampa and felt satisfied with his accomplishments, Hooker could be excused. For over forty years he had played a prominent role in the pioneer life of south Georgia and Florida.2

William B. Hooker was born May 3, 1800, in Montgomery (now Tattnall) County,
Georgia, the eldest child of Stephen and Elizabeth (Brinton) Hooker. Members of the Hooker family had settled in Georgia before the American Revolution. He grew up in a Methodist household in Tattnall County, a coastal wiregrass community about 60 miles west of Savannah. Stephen, the father, was a farmer who on occasion experienced financial difficulties. In 1816, he was forced to acquire a liquor license from the Inferior Court to operate a tavern and thus supplement the family’s income. How all this squared with Mrs. Hooker’s strong Methodist leanings is not known.  

In 1819, Bill received his first public office, ensign in the militia, and three years later he served as coroner of Tattnall County. Still unmarried in 1824, he joined his parents and six brothers and sisters in a move to Appling County in south Georgia. In August of that year the Inferior Court appointed Hooker sheriff. In December 1824, Ware County was created from Appling, with the county seat at Waresboro, now a small community a few miles west of present-day Waycross. Bill Hooker became captain of the 451st militia district at Waresboro in 1827 and thus first earned the title he was to carry the rest of his life. He was also elected Ware County’s second sheriff in 1828. Perhaps the major event in his law-enforcement career occurred in 1829 when Hooker was commended by Gov. John Forsyth for capturing a band of white rustlers. John McDonald and the Stafford brothers and one Tucker had killed Indian Billy of Ware County and stolen his horses. McDonald and the Staffords were apprehended and the stolen horses were retaken. A reward was then offered for Tucker who had fled over into Florida.  

Bill also had time to father an illegitimate child, Winford Henderson, July 10, 1827. But he accepted responsibility for his daughter by taking her into his home and rearing her. He also had her legitimized by the Georgia legislature with her name changed to Winford Hooker.  

Bill’s younger brother, James Tarpley Hooker, moved over into Florida about 1828 and by 1830 the remainder of the family settled along the Suwannee River in Hamilton County. On August 1, 1830, at the age of 30, William B. Hooker was married to Mary Amanda Hair, the daughter of William Hair. The following year, in
Hamilton County, Bill registered the brand WH for his cattle. He was soon appointed a justice of the peace and began accumulating property, eventually owning 489 acres of land near Upper Mineral Springs, known today as White Springs. He established a ferry on the Suwannee River, and his plantation became known as "Hooker's Ferry." Hooker also purchased 15 shares of stock in the newly formed Union Bank of Florida according to a list of 1833-35 shareholders. Mary had been a Baptist before her marriage to Bill Hooker but she soon joined the Methodists. The family ties to Methodism were further strengthened by the marriage of Bill’s sister Mary to Levi Pearce and Nancy to Benjamin Moody. Pearce became a Methodist preacher and Moody was a lifelong pillar of the church.⁶

In December of 1835, when war with the Indians was imminent, William B. Hooker joined Capt. John McLemore’s company as third lieutenant. The company was composed mostly of Hamilton and Columbia Countymen. McLemore was initially headquartered at Fort Jennings, or Suwannee Old Town. By late December 1835, the captain and about 250 refugees abandoned the area and moved to Newnansville. Left in charge at Fort Jennings was Lt. William B. Hooker and a tiny detachment.⁷ On January 17, 1836, Hooker was crossing his men and horses over the Suwannee, near Old Town. The Tallahassee Floridian reported that Hooker finding the opposite bank in possession of about 30 Indians, crossed over with nine men to attack them. As he landed, two of his men were shot down—one with nine balls, the other with five. With his remaining men, he boldly charged the enemy. While thus engaged, . . . he was left with no alternative but victory or death. After a close and deadly contest of some minutes, the savages were routed with severe loss.⁸

In the fall of 1836, Hooker was serving as third lieutenant in Capt. William Reed's company of Florida Mounted Militia. He participated in the Battle of Wahoo Swamp...
on November 21, 1836, and Lt. Col. Mills cited Hooker along with Capt. Reed and a fellow lieutenant for "correct and soldier-like conduct. . . ."\(^9\) Col. Benjamin K. Pierce praised Hooker and several others for "behav\[ing\] throughout the day with great energy and bravery."\(^10\) In the spring of 1838, Hooker organized his own company and served as its captain during three and one half months service. But the war was winding down at that time although the end did not occur until 1842.\(^11\)

In October 1838, elections were held for the upcoming territorial constitutional convention at St. Joseph. Hamilton County was entitled to two delegates and Joseph Watts took that prize in the first election. However, there was a tie for second place between William B. Hooker and Appleton Rosseter. A second election was held and Hooker was the victor. The convention met on December 3, 1838 and in a 27-26 vote with Hooker in the majority, Judge Robert Raymond Reid was elected President of the convention. Hooker was appointed to the Committee on the Right of Suffrage and Qualification of Officers. He joined fellow Democrats when he consistently took an anti-bank position in his floor votes. However, he voted against a proposal for ad valorem taxation of lands. But he was in the majority when he voted against a proposal that would have required a belief in God as a requirement for holding public office. Hooker returned to Hamilton County in early 1839 and the following year he was appointed Justice of the Peace by the new territorial governor, Robert R. Reid.\(^12\)

Though not a wealthy planter, Hooker, by 1840, owned six slaves, a substantial amount of land and was a leader in the county's politics and government. He also purchased...
a section of land in Columbia County at the site of Ichetucknee Springs. Financial reverses soon followed and by 1841, in the midst of a territory-wide depression, Hooker was forced to supplement his income by teaching school. The Armed Occupation Act of 1842 proved to be Hooker’s salvation, but his departure from Hamilton County the following year was not a graceful one. In January 1843, he offered for sale his lands in Hamilton and Columbia counties. At the same time, he transferred the 489 acres in Hamilton to his brother John, in trust for his children. Creditors were pursuing Hooker but he asserted that the land transfer was for the sole purpose of complying with the terms of the Armed Occupation Act. At any rate, the Hamilton county property was eventually sold in 1845 at a sheriff’s sale.13

In January 1843, Bill Hooker filed an Armed Occupation Act application for 160 acres of previously unsurveyed land in Hillsborough County, Florida. Formerly known as the Marsh Place, it was located at Simmons Hammock or present-day Seffner. The “road from Tampa Bay to Pease Creek” ran through the north side of the tract. A permit followed in April 1843, and when the land was surveyed in the first quarter of that year the surveyor showed Hooker’s claim on his map. Less than a mile to the north were the Thomas and John Weeks claims which Hooker later purchased. Nearby to the east was a body of water that became known as Lake Hooker. About three miles east of his homestead was the tract of John Parker, who had married the widow of Hooker’s brother, Stephen. About six miles to the southeast was John Hooker’s claim. Also, within two miles to the south was the homestead of William Parker, who in 1844 married Bill Hooker’s daughter Winaford.14

Within a year of his arrival in Hillsborough County, Hooker was appointed a justice of the peace. In 1847, two years after Florida became a state, Bill was elected to the board of county commissioners. His younger brother John was elected sheriff in the same election. Capt. Hooker, now 47 years of age, began to concentrate his activities in four different areas: (1) building up a large herd of beef cattle; (2) pursuing other agricultural pursuits such as citrus growing and cotton raising; (3) large-scale land acquisitions; and (4) establishing himself and his family as a political power in Hillsborough County.

The county tax lists are a principal source for determining the size of cattle herds in pioneer Florida, although the figures are no doubt conservative estimates of cattle ownership. In 1847 William B. Hooker owned 600 head of cattle and in 1848, 800 head. By 1849, the figure had doubled to 1,675 and in 1850 he is listed with seven slaves and 2,000 head of cattle. The 1850 U.S. census included an agricultural schedule which states that Hooker had 600 milch cows, four working oxen and 1,900 "other cattle."
also owned 35 sheep and 150 swine. The total value of livestock was $13,355. Hooker listed himself as a planter on the census rolls but his primary activity was stock raising. Indeed he was the second largest cattle owner in the state, just behind Redding W. Parramore of Madison County who owned 2,606 head. Hooker's closest competitors in Hillsborough were William Hancock with 1,700 head and Jacob Summerlin with 652. In the early 1850s Summerlin also owned over 1,000 head in Orange County. Hooker's primary cattle brand was Heart H, which he registered in Hillsborough County on April 12, 1852.16

The primary market for beef in the early 1850s was Savannah, Georgia, and the drovers were "often gone for months on a drive to that City."17 By 1854, however, cattle were being shipped to the West Indies and Key West. County Commission minutes reveal that William B. Hooker held a lease on the market place or market house in 1855 and was at that time advertising the sale of beef in the local Florida Peninsular. He advised that from Feb. 1, 1855, only cash would be accepted. The 1855 tax lists show that Hooker's herd had grown to 4,500 head, the largest in the county. John Parker, Louis Lanier, Daniel Sloan, James Alderman and Hooker's younger brother, John, were all major stock owners. Captain Hooker was the county's fourth largest taxpayer, behind sugar planters Robert Gamble and J. A. Braden and entrepreneur James McKay. McKay, who opened the cattle trade with Cuba in 1858, was a close associate of Hooker's.18 In one early reference from McKay's account book dated December 14, 1855, Hooker acknowledged receipt of $405 from McKay "being in full for twenty seven steers shipped on board sch[ooner] John Roalef,..."19

Grady McWhiney, who has advocated a Celtic interpretation of Southern history, wrote that

the southern system of raising livestock on the open range was simple and easy. Aside from marking and branding their animals, Southerners had little more to do than round them up in the fall and either sell them to a buyer or drive them to market. One could even raise livestock without owning land....

The open range system of herding encouraged more than indifferent farming and a leisurely lifestyle.20
According to McWhiney it led to laziness. William B. Hooker was many things but he was not lazy. Nor, for that matter, was he a Celt.

By the mid-1850s Hooker’s cows ranged over present-day Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk, Highlands, Glades, Hendry and Charlotte counties. Hooker’s Prairie, located south of present-day Mulberry, appeared in records as early as 1849. Highlands Hammock, now a state park, was originally known as Hooker Hammock and he had cattle pens at a crossing on Fisheating Creek near present-day Venus. Cattle were shipped from Hooker’s Pens at a point on the north side of the lower Manatee River known today as Hooker’s Point. The other, more famous Hooker’s Point, which projects into Tampa Bay was also a shipping point for his cattle, as well as one of his properties.21

Capt. Hooker was a pioneer in the Florida citrus industry. In the year 1846 he planted an orange grove at the site of present-day Parrish, in Manatee County. “His plantings were all ‘seedlings’—budding and grafting were then unknown in the industry. That is to say, he developed his groves from the seeds of selected fruit.”22 Hooker eventually acquired over 1,000 acres of land near Fort Hamer and the Manatee River. He built a log home there and in 1853 he ventured into the growing of sea island cotton with William H. Johnson. Johnson was to cultivate 33 acres of cotton on Hooker’s farm and Hooker was to build a cotton gin, gin the crop and divide it equally with Johnson. Johnson claimed that Hooker failed to divide the crop with him and sued Hooker in Hillsborough circuit court in 1854. He prevailed but Hooker appealed to the state supreme court and won a reversal in 1856. Johnson sued again and won; this time the judgment was affirmed by the high court. But the litigation dragged on until 1861, with jury awards to Johnson of over $1,000; but by this time Johnson was dead.23

During the early 1850s, Hooker also purchased a large number of city lots in
William Brinton Hooker, 1800-1871

— Author’s Collection
Tampa, thus increasing his wealth. He was also a leader in the Tampa Methodist Church and in 1852 he joined the Hillsborough Masonic lodge. Benjamin Hagler, who became his son-in-law in 1851, succeeded Hooker’s brother John as sheriff in 1849 and remained in office until 1853. John Parker was elected to the county commission in 1849 for a two-year term. Thus Hooker’s position and power were enhanced by the presence of his relatives in high positions. Hooker and his wife Mary were concerned that their children marry well and live comfortably. They gave $2,000 a year to each son-in-law. Capt. Hooker was opposed to his daughter, Martha, marrying Benjamin Hagler, whom he considered an "old fogy" with an irritating speech impediment. He preferred that she marry her suitor, George G. Keen, from Columbia County. But Mrs. Hooker prevailed, believing Sheriff Hagler to be a wealthy match for her daughter. As it turned out, Martha married Hagler, but the marriage eventually ended in divorce. Indeed, neither John Henry Hollingsworth, who married Ann, William W. Stallings, who married Eliza Jane, nor Hagler were wealthy men. Only William Parker, who married Hooker’s daughter Winaford, was a man of any considerable wealth.24

All of William B. Hooker’s activities came to a halt in December 1855 when word reached Tampa of the Indian attack upon Lt. Hartsuff’s surveying party in southwest Florida. Tampa citizens immediately held a meeting at the courthouse on December 24. A visitor in Tampa wrote:

A list was ... presented for the signatures of those who felt disposed to fight for their country for all they held dear and sacred and for the removal of the Seminoles. Several rose up at once and with a steady step and solemn air marched up to the table and signed the paper. [Capt.] Hooker, Rev . . . . Lesley and Sherad Edwards were the first signers, all of whom were Indian fighters in the last war....25

The Billy Bowlegs or Third Seminole War was underway. Hooker quickly got to work and organized a company of mounted militia and marched to the frontier. A volunteer, stationed at Fort Meade, wrote to the Tampa Florida Peninsular on January 4, 1856:

On the arrival of Capt. Hooker on the 29th ult., he proceeded at once to seek proper locations for troops on the line of Peas Creek. Four points were selected, to wit: Fort Meade, Fort Hartsuff, about 25 miles south of Fort Meade, Fort Green, about 12 miles S.E. of the latter
Post, and Fort Hooker, 16 miles North of Fort Meade. Each station having 16 to 25 men; leaving a large party for general scouting. From these posts a detachment of, perhaps, two-thirds of the command make daily scouts up and down the Creek, or cross over as they may see proper. All the families on the South side of Peas Creek have abandoned their places and are now forted at the above Posts. The command of Captains Hooker and Leslie now amounts to 124 men, and made into two companies. Capt. Leslie commands the upper and Capt. Hooker lower Peas Creek. You may judge something of the spirit of Capt. Hooker, (who Is denominated by the troops as the Old War Horse,) from a portion of his orders to his Lieutenants at the several Posts. He says: — 'Should you discover Indians, or the trail of them, you will pursue them to the farthest extremity — sparing neither men or horses while on that duty.'

The war cry is 'Hartsuff,' and countersign 'No Compromise.'

The whole corps is subsisted entirely from the personal resources of Capt. Hooker, who is ever active in procuring supplies; he having purchased all the surplus produce in the country. If any one ever deserved the thanks of our citizens it is him—sparing no expense in carrying out their wishes. His advice to the settlers on this side the line is, keep to your plantations, for I will keep the Indians back at all hazards. Many, very many, would have abandoned their homes, had he not given them protection.
In a letter to Gov. James Broome on January 3, 1856, Hooker wrote:

Your Excellency, I am getting old now, former wars begin to have their effect on me; yet, while I can sit in my saddle, or find a penny in my purse, all — yes, all — shall be devoted to rid our state of this curse. I feel that I want to see my beloved state free, before I close my eyes in eternal sleep; that my children, at least, may sit under their own vine and fig tree, unmolested, and none to make them afraid. This is my only wish.27

In February, Hooker’s company was mustered into Federal service at Fort Meade. Hooker was headquartered at Fort Meade and a detachment under Lt. John Parker was stationed at Fort Green in Manatee County.28 The post at Fort Green soon became a problem. It proved more difficult "to supply . . . than any other post on the frontier."29 Chronic malcontent Matthew P. Lyons, probably in league with his friend Sergeant James D. Green of Hooker’s company, criticized the army command and

Hooker’s signature appears on this receipt dated March 4, 1867.

— Lesley Family Collection, Courtesy University of South Florida Special Collections

"The attention of the traveling public, and all visitors to Tampa, are invited to the card of Capt. W. B. Hooker, found in to-day’s paper. To luxuriate in the midst of a beautiful Orange Grove, is, of itself, exquisite; but doubly so, when attended with all the other necessary pleasure producing auxiliaries."

— Tampa Florida Peninsular, August 17, 1867
Capt. Hooker in letters which were published in the Tampa newspaper, the *Florida Peninsular*. Lyons complained that the troops at Fort Green were lacking in ammunition for their weapons and food for their horses.\(^{30}\)

On June 14, 1856, Indians attacked the Willoughby Tillis place near Fort Meade. Lt. Alderman Carlton and six men rushed from Fort Meade to offer relief to the besieged family. In the attack, Carlton and two other men were killed, including Hooker's son-in-law, William Parker, and three wounded, including another son-in-law, John Henry Hollingsworth. Only three men of the seven-man force were from Hooker's company. Lt. Streaty Parker of Lesley's company with 18 men, pursued the Indians after the battle and engaged them on the banks of Peas Creek, south of Fort Meade on June 16. Two volunteers were killed and three were wounded. Three men from Hooker's company participated in the second battle. At least five Seminoles were killed although as many as 20 may have died in the three-day affair.\(^{31}\)

In his official report, printed July 5, in the *Florida Peninsular*, Capt. Hooker explained that he marched a detachment "Into the woods in search of Indians as I supposed they would attack isolated homes of settlers on the full of the moon,..."\(^{32}\) After scouting down the Alafia River and noticing Indian signs, it was thought the Indians had headed south to Manatee. After moving to that place and finding all quiet, the troops proceeded back to Horse Creek where the Indians were known to obtain supplies of potatoes. They camped on the night of June 15 and sent two men to Fort Green to ascertain the situation...
there. About midnight they returned with word of the attack on the Tillis place. Hooker and his men arrived at Brooker's place on the east side of Peas Creek about 2 p.m. on June 16 where the wounded men from the battle of that day had been carried. Hooker consolidated his force and immediately went in pursuit of the retreating Seminoles, south into the swamps along Peas Creek. By the next day, "[s]everal of the men were sick, vomiting violently and their clothes were badly torn, exposing their flesh to insects and weather." The following morning, June 18, Hooker sent out a detachment to continued hunting the Indians and then returned with the sick and disabled to Fort Meade.

Matthew P. Lyons in a letter to Col. Monroe at Ft. Brooke, dated July 7, accused Hooker of leaving Fort Meade and Fort Green without military protection and taking his men on a beef scout to round up his cattle. Lyons, who was not serving in any of the military units, charged Hooker with neglect of duty. He referred Lt. John Parker and Sgt. James D. Green to Monroe for proof of the charges. The charges were printed in the Florida Peninsular and following their publication the Assistant Adjutant General at Fort Brooke directed Hooker to provide Lyons' letter to Parker and Green for verification or denial. Green equivocated, saying he could not "say the Charges is true as opinion has nothing to do with the matter. neither Can I exonerate the captain as the report is Common amongst the members of the Company Commanded by Captain Hooker." Parker, however, defended Hooker, saying "I ... believe the charges false and will not sustain them." Hooker appeared to have the last word when he printed a notice in the Florida Peninsular of August 16:

Mr. Editor—An editorial having appeared in your paper, a few weeks since, relative to a communication from Matthew P. Lyons, making charges of "serious nature" against (as I presume every one is aware) myself, I feel it to be my duty to state a few facts. Col. Monroe furnished me with a copy of said serious charges, an investigation of the matter was commenced, and not one charge was sustained. I now pronounce Matthew P. Lyons a liar, who has attempted, by traducing my character, to advance the interests of his friend.

Four days later, with their six-month enlistment having expired, Hooker and his entire company were honorably discharged from the United States service. Several revisionist historians in recent years have criticized Hooker's actions, asserting that had the post at Fort Meade been at "full strength the Indians might have been defeated or even wiped out." But all through the first half of 1856 detachments of troops were constantly sent on scout to follow up rumors and reports of Indian parties in the woods. Federal and state authorities
ordered troops from Peas Creek south to join the regulars and in early June of 1856, some of Hooker’s men, along with soldiers from other companies, had been ordered to look for Indians in Hernando County. If Hooker had remained holed up at Fort Meade he probably would have been criticized for that. Instead, he chose to lead his men along the trails and into the swamps in search of the hostile Indians. That was, after all, an important part of his job.39

As a final postscript to the 1856 controversy, a letter from Francis A. Page, Assistant Adjutant General at Fort Brooke, to Capt. Pleasanton, dated January 31, 1857, is instructive. In arguing against re-establishing a guard at Fort Green, Page wrote:

There is only a few individuals interested in the place and the principal man who wants a guard there is [James D.] Green himself formerly of Hooker’s company of volunteers, who is a good for nothing trifling disorganizer among the volunteers.40

After his military service was over, William B. Hooker plunged into political activities at Tampa. He helped establish the Tampa Democratic Club and served as third vice president. He was foreman of the grand jury during the fall 1856 term of circuit court and by 1857 had moved with his family into Tampa.41

Hooker’s membership certificate in the Washington National Monument Society

Hooker’s wife, Mary, was one of the "collecting agents" in Tampa for the Ladies Washington National Monument Society.

— Author’s Collection
Hooker decided to quit the cattle business and in two conveyances dated December 25, 1857 and January 1, 1858, he conveyed his 1,000 acres in Manatee County and his 6,000 head of cattle branded Heart H, with twelve to twenty thousand pounds of seed cotton to his son Jasper and son-in-law, Benjamin Hagler, for $35,095. Ten annual payments were set up with interest at 6% per annum. Hooker also leased his ten slaves in Manatee County to the partners. However, the arrangement was not successful and by September 1858, they were offering the cattle, land and orange grove for sale. Hooker and Hagler dissolved the partnership in July 1859. Capt. Hooker was compelled to reenter the cattle business and take over control of his extensive herd.42

In 1858 Hooker was elected to the Tampa City Council and often served as Mayor pro tem in place of Mayor Madison Post. Although not directly linked to the regulator or vigilante movement in the spring and summer of that year, Hooker had close friends and associates who were Regulators, including Mayor Post.43

Bill and Mary Hooker’s eleventh and last child, Flora Ella, was born in 1853. One daughter Georgianna Florida, died in 1854 when only four years of age and their daughter Julia Loretta died of typhoid fever in 1857. The yellow fever epidemic which hit Tampa in the fall of 1858 may have been responsible for the deaths of their daughter Eliza Jane Stallings and two of her children. Interested in the education of their children, the Hookers sent two of their daughters, Mary and Meroba to the Southern Masonic Female College in Covington, Ga., in the late 1850s to complete their education. Both daughters married well. On May 1, 1860, Mary became the wife of the rising young Hernando Countian, Samuel E. Hope. Later that year, on Sept. 20, Meroba married Florida Peninsular editor, Simon Turman, Jr. Hope ran an unsuccessful race for the state senate in 1860 and was opposed by the wily lawyer, James T Magbee. Ironically, Turman became embroiled in a feud with Hope and threw his support to Magbee.44

By 1858 Tampa Bay residents had grown disenchanted with David Levy Yulee and his Florida Railroad. Realizing that he had no intention of completing the line to Tampa, William B. Hooker, Samuel B. Todd, James McKay and others were instrumental in the establishment of the Florida Peninsular Railroad in 1859. Hooker was the second largest stockholder with 755 shares and also served on the original board of directors. The only construction, however, was a graded right of way from Waldo to Ocala. The Civil War cut short any further development.45

The Florida Peninsular of May 21, 1859 included a story on the magnificent and extensive building of Capt. Wm. B. Hooker—recently erected in our City, and now in course of completion. This is a large building—two stories in height, and contains 33 or 34 rooms, with passages, piazzas, etc., to correspond. It is constructed in a substantial and workman-like manner, and, when finished, will present a handsome as well as formidable appearance. What the original design of Capt. Hooker was, we are not aware; we know, however, that his building will prove an ornament to Tampa and a monument to the public spirit of the projector. Being conveniently located and arranged for an hotel, it will answer for that purpose, but in its construction, is pre-eminently adapted for a family boarding house. The plan is admirable, every room being well ventilated and all
the requisites for comfort supplied with good taste. Portable partitions will constitute the divisions on the lower floor; hence, the whole compass of the building can be easily thrown into one large room. When we discovered this arrangement the conclusion was irresistible that the Capt. had in view the enjoyment of Young America as well as his own comfort, and we involuntarily asked ourselves, What a glorious place for 4th of July festivities! a camp meeting! or, a Dance!"46

The hand-sawed timber which was used to construct the building was shipped to Tampa from Pensacola. Located at the northwest corner of Madison and East Streets, the building was almost 69 feet in length and 38 feet wide. Nails were scarce in those days, so the timbers were cut to fit one piece into another, fastened by wooden dowels. Some of the supports were nearly a yard wide and supporting uprights were three by sixes.47

By the summer of 1860, Capt. Hooker, once again a stock drover, was involved in driving his cattle in Manatee County from the backwoods to his pens at the mouth of the Manatee River. Jasper Hooker was still agent for his father when the 1860 census was taken. Capt. Hooker owned 9,000 head in Manatee County valued at $48,750. The more conservative county tax list gave 8,060 head as the total. At any rate, only Moses Barber of New River County, credited with owning 10,200 head, surpassed Hooker. But Capt. Hooker was still considered by his contemporaries to be the Cattle King of Florida. The 1860 census for Hillsborough County shows Hooker owner of $17,660 in real estate and $6565 in personal property. He had eight slaves in Hillsborough and in Manatee he owned nine with his son Jasper as agent. He did not ignore Manatee County politics. The young county, which had been carved out of the southern portion of Hillsborough in 1855, was experiencing political conflict between the settlers in the eastern Peace River section and the more settled and wealthier Manatee section. In the fall of 1859, Hooker’s brother-in-law, William Calvin Hair, was elected to the county commission. He had only been in the county about a year and his election to the board was certainly helpful to Hooker. Former sheriff, tax assessor and collector James D. Green was also elected to the board. Hooker and Green had crossed swords during the Third Seminole War and his presence on the board could not have been welcomed by Hooker. Green was eventually barred from taking his seat because of alleged irregularities in the handling of his accounts as sheriff and tax collector. Ironically, Jasper Hooker, the captain’s son, who had been the next-highest vote recipient in the 1859 election, assumed the office of county commissioner.48

By the fall of 1860, he decided to retire and sell his entire herd. He ran the following notice in the Florida Peninsular on October 13, 1860:

NOTICE TO STOCK GATHERERS. Having sold my entire Stock of Cattle this day, notice is hereby given, to all persons interested, of the fact, and also to forewarn all Stock-gatherers or other persons against killing, driving, or in any way interfering with said stock or any portion of it — except when done for the benefit of the stock.

W. B. HOOKER49

The transaction was finalized on January 1, 1861 when Hooker sold his 10,000 head to James McKay for $40,000. Actually, McKay was acting as agent for rising cattleman Jacob Summerlin and he transferred the herd to Summerlin on May
31, 1861. This sale made Sumnerlin the new cattle king of Florida. The Manatee tax lists reveal the impact of this transaction for in 1860 Sumnerlin owned 3,500 head and in 1861 he had 10,300 head of cattle.\textsuperscript{50}

Capt. Hooker now helped to coordinate the secession movement in Hillsborough County. A mass meeting was held at Alafia on Nov. 24, 1860 and the General Assembly was urged to call a convention to take Florida out of the Union. Capt. Hooker, his wife and son Jasper attended the meeting and signed the petition calling for a state convention to consider the matter. The Civil War began in April 1861 and later that month a militia company for home defense known as "The Silver Grays," was established. It was made up of those citizens who were not subject by law for militia duty. Most were older gentlemen, and William B. Hooker was among their number. In November of that year Hooker, Alfonso DeLaunay and Madison Post served on a committee to meet with Fort Brooke commander Major Bowen to assist him in providing supplies and equipment for the garrison. Many Tampans soon refugeed inland, especially after the Union ship bombardments in the spring of 1862. By May 1862, Capt. Hooker and his family had moved to Hernando County, where he purchased over 1,100 acres of land, and set up his plantation about two miles west of Brooksville. Hooker, the planter, raised cotton and corn and cultivated peaches, grapes, plums, mulberry and banana orchards. With 20 slaves in 1863 he was the fifth largest taxpayer in the county.\textsuperscript{51}

William Jasper Hooker, the captain’s first son, enlisted May 10, 1862, in Capt. Gettis’ Company, 7th Fla. Infantry. However, the same day, he replaced himself with a substitute, William E. Sweat. Samuel E. Hope, a son-in-law, enlisted June 21, 1862 as captain of the Brooksville Guards, which became Co. C, 9th Fla. Infantry. Simon Turman, Jr., another son-in-law, joined Co. E, 7th Fla. Infantry, a unit known as the South Florida Bulldogs, May 14, 1862. He rose to the rank of first lieutenant on Nov. 20, 1863 and was wounded in the lungs at Resaca, Ga., May 14, 1864. He died eight days later on May 22 and was buried in Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery. Capt. Hooker’s younger son, James Newton, served late in the war in Capt. Leroy G. Lesley’s Co. C, Fla. Cow Cavalry.\textsuperscript{52}

Mary Amanda, the captain’s wife of nearly 33 years, died January 2, 1863, a victim of cancer. Rev. Leroy G. Lesley, who was also a Methodist minister and who lived on a nearby plantation, wrote the following in her obituary:

For the last 15 months she had been an example of patient suffering which few are called to endure. Her disease was cancer. Great as were her sufferings, she could always say "the Lord’s will, not mine be done." She was a good woman, always ready to make sacrifices for the benefit of others. In her death, the church and the poor have lost one of their best friends, and the way worn travelling preacher one of their best homes greatly impaired, and her husband, children and servants have met an irreparable loss.\textsuperscript{53}

In March 1864, in Marion County, Hooker married Nancy Josephine (McCreight) Cathcart, a widow from Ocala with seven children. Her first husband, William M. Cathcart, enlisted in Co. G, 7th Fla. Infantry, May 10, 1862 and died of disease at Camp Lee, May 23, 1862.\textsuperscript{54}

The Hooker plantation was not immune from Union attacks for in July 1864, Federal
forces landed at the Anclote River and marched northeast to the vicinity of Brooksville.

From David Hope’s plantation we marched to Mr. William Hooker’s three miles distant, the Capt. being absent carrying his negro property out of reach of the yankees as we were termed. Mrs. Hooker saved the sacking of her effects by furnishing Capt. Bartholf and his officers of the colored troops with dinner and a change of shirts, the refugees and their officers refusing to accept anything but melons which we found in abundance on the farm.55

Union Lt. William McCullough who wrote the above account, elaborated further:

... the officers in command promised Capt. Wm. Hooker's family protection if they would give them breakfast and a shirt each. This the ladies promised to do, and did it in good faith, but on the eve of taking up the line of march, the negro troops were pillaging in the out houses. At length the order for marching came, and Capt. Bartholf being somewhat in the rear of the command, ran thru a patch of gourd vines, and as was getting over the fence, discovered his negro troops picking up goods of some kind, and went back, took up his armful of lady's wear, cleared the fence, mounted his horse, and rode to the front with his arms full of lady's dresses, underskirts, chemises, like a true and gallant officer of the government, and army of the U.S., and commanding on this raid. I being left behind to see the last man leave, about the time the last man got over the fence, one of the ladys saw her shawl, and requested the man to give it to her, and seeing he refused, asked me to get it for her which I did, remarking to the man that we were not at war with women and children, that by kind acts we would gain many friends to the Union cause.56

When the war ended in 1865, Hooker, because his wealth was greater than $20,000, was among those required under President Johnson’s reconstruction plan to personally petition the president if he wished to obtain a pardon. Hooker took the amnesty oath on September 19 and applied for the pardon October 10. It was granted on November 9, 1865.57

In the spring of 1866, Capt. Hooker and his family returned to Tampa, to their home on Madison Street. The new Mrs. Hooker, who had operated a hotel in Ocala with her first husband, may have convinced the captain to turn the mansion into a hotel. Hooker was in debt and facing creditors, so the decision to become an innkeeper was a wise one.58 In April 1866, Hooker announced the opening of the Orange Grove Hotel:

This house, having just been renovated, and refitted, is now ready for the reception of boarders. Regular and day boarders will find this a comfortable and convenient house, and every attention will be paid to the wants of travellers. The table will be filled with the best the market affords, and the charge will be reasonable.

The climate, the sea breeze, fish, oysters &c., makes this a place of resort, for health and pleasure. Stables are attached to the premises where horses, will be well attended to., Proprietor59

Hooker also began to sell off his property. On July 16, 1866, he sold the Fort Hamer tract, over 500 acres consisting of a log house, orange grove and other
improvements to Charles A. Turner, son of Maj. William I. Turner, for $1,000. Maj. Turner named the place Oak Hill and later it became the center of the small town of Parrish. Hooker also began selling off many of his town lots in Tampa. A judgment in favor of William B., John A., and James E. Henderson was entered against Hooker and Benjamin Hagler in the fall term of circuit court in 1866. Block 52 of the Town of Tampa, the Orange Grove Hotel property, was sold at public sale, March 4, 1867, to satisfy the judgment. In an apparently pre-arranged agreement, son-in-law Sam Hope bought the property for $2,555. The Henderson’s received the $720.74 due them and Hooker was reimbursed the balance of $1,834.26. In August 1867, Hooker managed to protect his Orange Grove Hotel property from creditors by means of a trust deed from son-in-law Sam Hope, naming Hooker as trustee of the property for the benefit of Hooker’s children and heirs. At the spring term of circuit court in 1867, three judgments were entered against him. Perry G. Wall, executor of the John Eubanks estate, won a judgment of $715.50 in an assumpsit action. Kennedy and Darling and J. R. Fulmore also obtained judgments against Hooker. A sheriff’s sale was ordered for December 2, 1867 to sell of much of his Hillsborough County property, including that at Simmons Hammock. Hooker, however, still had a trick up his sleeve. He petitioned Maj. Richard Comba, commander of the U.S. occupation troops at Fort Brooke, for a postponement of the sale of his property. Comba received approval from his superiors and ordered a postponement of six months, until June 2, 1868. On August 17, 1867, he put up his Hernando County plantation for sale and announced an auction on November 2. But the land did not sell and in March 1869 it was finally sold at a sheriff’s sale in Hernando County to satisfy the earlier judgment in favor of Perry G. Wall.60

Capt. Hooker tried to remain active in local affairs, attending Democratic and railroad meetings. However, his health was declining and for a time he drank heavily, no doubt saddened by the financial reverses of the post-war years. He and his wife Nancy separated in early 1869, when she released her dower rights in his estate in exchange for notes in the amount of $2,400. Later that year, he turned over management of the hotel to his daughter Meroba and his son-in-law, Henry L. Crane. In December of 1870 the local newspaper reported that Hooker had been seriously ill and was staying at Live Oak. His will, dated December 5, 1870, left modest bequests to his children and two of his orphaned grandchildren. He left all of his books and the secretary in which they were kept to his son, James N. Hooker. Finally, he named his son James and his “trusty and well tried and worthy friend and son in law Henry L. Crane” as executors.61

The end came six months later in the early morning hours of June 11, 1871. That afternoon at 4p.m., members of Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, Free and Accepted Masons, met in special session at the lodge building. They then marched in procession to the Hooker residence where the funeral service was performed by the chaplain. Then the lodge members and others accompanied the body to the grave yard where final Masonic honors were granted to Capt. Hooker. Today, an impressive stone obelisk marks his grave in Oaklawn Cemetery where he rests along with Tampa’s other pioneers.62

His obituary in the Florida Peninsular spoke of Hooker’s many accomplishments and praised his generosity:
In prosperity Capt. Hooker was a friend to the destitute, and in adversity he would divide the last dollar he had with those whom he thought needed it more than himself.63

The Royal Arch Mason chapter of which Hooker was a member, published a lengthy memorial resolution:

Our companion, William B. Hooker. . . . was "marked" on the 23d, and "presided" on the 25th, February, and was "received and acknowledged" on the 5th, and "exalted" on the 9th of March, A. D. 1861; and he thus became a member of Tampa Royal Arch Chapter, No. 17, of Free and Accepted Masons of Florida.

His death, although he had arrived at the good age of three score years and ten, was not induced directly by the wear and tear of wasting years, but by a destructive disease, past the skill of medical science to arrest....

Our departed companion was not unknown as a patriot, as a defender of civil and religious liberty, and as an influential citizen. Being the head of a numerous family of blood relations and collateral affinities by marriage, he was a power for good in the county of his residence. For the numerous dependents of his own household, he provided bountifully, and his home was ever open to the stranger and none, however poor, ever left it hungry or naked. He was in the main a good man, though by no means perfect. Let us remember and imitate his virtues and let his faults, whatever they were, be buried out of sight with his mortal remains in the grave. Let us, beloved companions, look back over the past of our own lives and see what little good we have to boast of, and be wise while we have the opportunity.64

Tampa historians C. E. Harrison and D. B. McKay did not know William B. Hooker personally but they did know his children and many of his contemporaries. Harrison, writing in 1915, described Hooker as "a man of much individuality and strong convictions, possessing in an eminent degree the power of initiative."65 McKay echoed Harrison's statements and lauded Hooker as an early advocate of good roads who laid out and cleared the first road from central Hillsborough County to the Manatee River.66

Clearly, William B. Hooker was an impressive figure in the early growth and development of Florida. As a blazer of trails, citrus grower, soldier and framer of the state's first constitution, he deserves to be remembered. But most of all, as a founder of Florida's beef cattle industry, Hooker left his mark on the pioneer history of Florida.

A shorter version of this paper was delivered at the "Florida Cattle Frontier Symposium," November 1995.

The author is a great-great-great grandson of William B. Hooker

1 Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 14, 1860.
2 Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 200-201; Tampa Florida Peninsular, May 21, 1859
3 William B. Hooker Family Bible, typescript at Polk County Historical Library, Bartow, FL; Family Record of Stephen Hooker, Stephen C. Hooker, and William B. Hooker, copy in possession of author; Folks Huxford, comp., Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, 7 vols. (Pearson, GA, 1957), III, 143-145; IV, 144-145; Charleston, SC, Southern Christian Advocate, Oct. 7, 1853; Tattnall Co., GA, Inferior Court Minutes, 1805-1816, 68; Superior Court Minutes, 1805-1823. Huxford was in error in Vol. IV, 144, when he stated that Stephen Hooker (father of Win.
B.), was the son of Stephen and Martha Swain Hooker. The elder Stephen was dead by 1767 and the younger Stephen was born in 1769. The Martha Hooker in Vol. IV, 144, was Martha Jones Hooker, widow of Nathan Hooker, a colonial settler of Georgia. Nathan may have been the father of the younger Stephen. Nathan's brother, William Hooker, III, of Dobbs Co., North Carolina, also could have been Stephen's father. There were also two other brothers, James and John, who also could qualify. Recent research indicates that William Hooker, III, was the younger Stephen's father. Revolutionary War Records of Georgia, II, 276; Bertie and Tyrell Co., NC Wills; Hooker family notes and files in possession of author. Wm. B. Hooker's name first appears on a public document in Bulloch Co., GA, in a receipt dated Aug. 2, 1808 from John Sikes for $40 in notes from "William Brinton Hooker," for a sorrel mare. Hooker was only eight years old at the time so it is possible that the horse was put in his name to shield his father from possible creditors. Bulloch County, GA, Deed Book "AA" 1806-1813, 178.


7 McLemore's Company, Compiled Service Records of Volunteers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Florida during the Florida Indian War, 1835-1858, record group 95, National Archives, Microcopy M-1086; Jacksonville Courier, Dec. 31, 1835.

8 Tallahassee Floridian, Jan. 30, 1836; A slightly different version appeared in the Jacksonville Courier, Jan. 28, 1836.

9 Reed's Company, Record of Events, Combined Service Records, Indian War.


11 Capt. Hooker's company was in service from April to July, 1838, but there is no muster roll on file. See Bounty Land Application of Wm. B. Hooker, Warrant No. 23,365, Act of 1850, National Archives. Hooker also served in the companies of Capt. Law in 1836, Capt. Niblack, Jan.-June, 1837, and as a first lieutenant in Capt. Robert Brown's company, June-Dec. 1837. Law's, Niblack's and Brown's Companies, Compiled Service Records. From Sept. to Dec. 1840, Hooker provided "wagon hire" to the U. S. Government and was allowed $369 in payment. Quartermaster Records, RG 92, OB 362, National Archives.

12 Hamilton County Election Returns, Oct. 8, Nov. 7, 1838; Fla. Centennial Commission, Florida Becomes a State (Tallahassee, 1945), 48, 133, 146, 208-210,
13 U.S. Original Census Schedules, 6th Census, 1840, Hamilton Co., FL (Population and Slave Schedules); St. Augustine Herald and Southern Democrat, Jan. 23, 1843; Hamilton County Orders of Court, 1841, Old File No. 135; Hamilton County, Deed Book C, 140-145, 200-201, 361-362. Passed by Congress in 1842, the Armed Occupation Act opened up much of central Florida to settlement. A single man or head of family could receive 160 acres if he could bear arms, build a house and live on the land five years and cultivate five acres. Excluded from the act were persons owning 160 or more acres of land. See Canter Brown, Jr., Florida’s Peace River Frontier (Orlando, 1991), 66. Hooker’s 489 acre tract in Hamilton Co. was made up of four parcels. The first was purchased Sept. 24, 1833 and the last three were purchased (2) Feb. 6, and (t) March 7, 1837. The tract was located in Sections 4, 8 and 9, Township 2 South, Range 16 East. A patent for the first parcel was issued Oct. 20, 1835 and the last three patents were issued Sept. 20, 1839. The Ichetucknee tract in Columbia Co. was purchased in 1837 but the patent was not issued until July 10, 1844. Historical Records and State Archives Surveys, Works Progress Administration, Alphabetical List of Tallahassee and Newnansville Land Office Receiver’s Receipts, 4 vols., I, H-28; U.S. Tract Book Vol. 3, Newnansville, Range 15 East and U.S. Tract Book Vol. 4, Newnansville, Range 16 East, Fla. Dept. of Environmental Protection; Patent 4420, Vol. 10:364, Patent 6750, Vol. 15:120, Patent 6751, Vol. 15:121; Patent 6849, Vol. 15:207, and Patent 121, Vol. 1:15, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, Arlington, VA. Hooker also bought property in Section 34, Township 4 South, Range 17 East in Columbia Co., Feb. 10, 1838. The patent was issued July 10, 1844. Tract Book for Township 4 South, Range 17 East, Fla. Dept. of Environmental Protection. For more on Hooker’s legal problems in Hamilton Co., see Hamilton County, Criminal-Common Law Docket 1839 1845; Middle District of Florida, Superior Court Minutes (book is titled in front as Hamilton County Tax Deed Book A; and Hamilton County, Circuit Court Minutes 1844-1854.

14 Armed Occupation Act Files of Wm. B. Hooker, John Parker, John I. Hooker, and William Parker, record group 49, National Archives; Original Survey of Township 29 South, Range 20 East, Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection; Family Record of Stephen Hooker, etc.; Hillsborough County, Deed Book B, 80-81, 387-389; Indian War Pension Application for children of Wm. Parker, No. 26,582; National Archives. In Florida’s “first statewide election,” May 26, 1845, William B. Hooker and John Hooker voted at Wacahootie in Marion County. Brian E. Michaels, Florida Voters in Their First Statewide Election (1987), 70-71. The patent for Hooker’s Armed Occupation Act land was dated August 1, 1849. AOA file of W. B. Hooker.


16 Hillsborough County Tax Books, 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850, Florida State Library; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census, 1850, (Agricultural Schedules); Orange County Tax Books 1851, 1852, 1854, Florida State Library; Hillsborough County Record of Marks and Brands, 13-14. The ear marks registered were swallow fork and under bit in each ear and for his children swallow fork and under keel in one ear and under keel in the other.


18 Tallahassee Floridian and Journal, July 1, 1854; Hillsborough County Tax Book, 1855, Florida State Library.

19 James McKay Account Book, Misc. MS 59, University of South Florida Special Collections, Tampa.

20 Grady McWhiney, Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1988), 67, 78.


23 Manatee County, Copy Deed Record A, 72-73; Hillsborough County, (Circuit Court Minute Book 1, 1846-1854, 402; Minute Book 2, 1854-1866, 8, 24, 76, 78, 187, 243, 280, 348-349, 366-368, 382, 393, 436, 575, 636, 686; Hooker v. Johnson, 6 Fla. 730, 8 Fla. 453; 10 Fla. 198; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census, 1860, Manatee County, FL (Mortality Schedule).

24 Hillsborough County, Deed Book A and B, numerous entries; Hillsborough County, Marriage Record A, 6; Family Record of Stephen Hooker, etc.; Historical Records Survey, Roster of State and Local Officers Commissioned by the Governor of Florida, 1845-1868 (Jacksonville, 1941), 142; Hillsborough County, Commission Minute Book A, 1846-1863, 18, 44; Jacksonville *News*, Feb. 12, 1848; Hillsborough County, Deed Book A, 349; Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, F.&A.M., Minute Book 1852-1857, 29, 32-34; Lake City *Florida Index*, Feb. 16, March 23, 1900. Canter Brown, Jr., and James M. Denham have compiled Keen's columns in the *Florida Index* and plan to have them published. Kyle S. VanLandingham, "John Henry Hollingsworth: 1822-1893," *South Florida Pioneers* 6 (October 1975), 5-7; Wm. B. Hooker Family Bible; *Tampa Florida Peninsular*; Jan. 9, 1858.


28 *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, Feb. 16, March 1, April 5, 12, 1856.

29 Francis A. Page to A. Pleasanton, Jan. 31, 1857, Letters Sent, Registers of Letters Received, and Letters Received by Headquarters, Troops in Florida, and Headquarters, Dept. of Florida, 1850-1858, record group 393, National Archives, hereafter, M-1084, NA.

30 *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, March 8, April 5, 12, 1856, Brown, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, 110, 112.


32 *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, July 5, 1856.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Matthew P. Lyons to Col. Monroe, July 7, 1856, Page to Hooker, July 14, 1856, James D. Green to Monroe, July 30, 1856, Statement of John Parker, July 28, 1856, M-1084, NA.

36 *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, Aug. 16, 1856.

37 Roll of Capt. Wm. B. Hooker's Company, Compiled Service Records, NA.


40 Page to Pleasanton, Jan. 31, 1857.

41 *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, Sept. 13, Nov. 1, 1856.

42 Manatee County, Copy Deed Record A, 72-73; Hillsborough County, Deed Book B, 781-783; *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, Sept. 25, 1858, July 16, 1859. The names of Hooker's ten slaves mentioned in the 1858 deed were Will, Dolly (his wife), Richard, Joshua, Frank, Solomon, Henry, William, Florence and Amanda. In Jan. 1842, in Hamilton Co., he mortgaged four slaves as security for a $526 loan from Redin W. Parramore. The four were Will, 24; Dolly, 19; Peter, 4; and Nancy 2. In 1853 he used three of these slaves, Nancy, Dick and Josh in his farming operations at his plantation in the Manatee
section. In Hillsborough County, Hooker mortgaged six slaves: Parrish, 39; Lucky (Suky?), his wife, 32; Charles, 16; George, 15; Connor, 3; and Doctor, 2, to Wm. W. Tucker in 1853. Finally, on July 29, 1860 Hooker's "servants" Paris, George and Sooky became members of the First Baptist Church of Tampa.

Hillsborough County, Deed Book B, 132, 782; Hamilton County, Deed Book B, 732; Hooker V. Johnson, 6 Fla. 730, 733 (1856); Tampa Tribune, Sept. 20, 1953.


46 Tampa Florida Peninsular; May 21, 1859.


49 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Oct. 13, 1860.

50 Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 200-201; Manatee County, Tax Books, 1860, 1861.

51 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Dec. 1, 1860, May 4, 1861, Aug. 17, 1867; Kyle S. VanLandingham, "The Union Occupation of Tampa: May 6-7, 1864," Sunland Tribune 19 (November, 193), 9; McKay General Store Account Book, 388, May 7, 1862, University of South Florida Special Collections, Tampa; Hernando County, Tax Book, 1863; Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens and Business Firms, MC 346, R-463, National Archives. This file also reveals that Hooker received $48 reimbursement for furnishing "6 days hire for one four mule Team with forage Inclusive @ $8.00 ... per day." The team was used by Capt. Samuel Hope's Brooksville Guards when they transferred from Bay Port to Tampa.

52 David W. Hartman, comp., Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers: 1861-1865, 6 vols. (Wilmington, NC, 1995), I, 450, II, 732, III, 904, V, 2036; Dept. of War, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from the State of Florida, NA. Wm. Jasper Hooker was indicted at the spring term of Manatee Circuit Court in April 1866 for the murder of one Samuel G. B. Brewer. He killed Brewer, Jan. 15, 1864, after Brewer had treated Hooker's wife "shamefully." He admitted killing Brewer after Brewer had "advanced" towards him. There was no jail in Manatee so Sheriff Addison took Hooker to Hillsborough where he was released on a writ of habeas corpus and posted a bond for $1,000. His sureties were John Darling and Lewis Dishong. The justices of the peace were Robert Jackson and William Ashley. Circuit court was not held until spring 1866 when he was indicted. A capias was ordered when Hooker was "not found in the County." The case was continued through the fall term of 1867 when the records show "Marked Dismissed on the Docket." Hooker came under the general amnesty granted by Gov. Walker for acts against the peace of Florida which occurred during the Civil War. But Jasper had already left Florida and lived in Texas and Nebraska until July 1893, when he showed up in Florida to visit his brother James, after a 27-year absence. He eventually returned to Tampa, received an Indian War pension and died in Nov. 1904. State of Florida v. William J. Hooker, Murder, Manatee Co. Circuit Court Files; Manatee County, Circuit Court Minute Book 1, 15, 16, 21, 27, 30; unidentified newspaper, July N, 1893; Indian War Pension File of Wm. J. Hooker, NA.
53 Augusta, GA Southern Christian Advocate, Feb. 19, 1863. D. B. McKay, Pioneer Florida, 3 vols. (Tampa, 1959) II, 352-358. Mary Hooker was apparently unable to read or write most of her life. She signed her name with an X mark on a deed dated May 10, 1858. However, she did sign her actual name on a deed dated June 8, 1859, indicating she learned to read and write during this period. Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 1-2, Deed Book K, 71-72.

54 Marion County, Marriage License Book C, 14; Letter from George Wheeler to Kyle S. VanLandingham, Oct. 8, 1990; Hartman, Biographical Rosters, II, 745.


56 Ibid., 81. Hooker also owned salt works on Tampa Bay which were destroyed by the U.S. Navy June 2, 1864. The works were described as "very fine ones, consisting of four very large kettles and large furnace;" Edward VanSice, Acting Master, U.S.S. Sunflower, to Acting Rear Admiral T. Bailey, June 7, 1864, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols. (Washington, DC, 1894-1922), Ser. 1, XVII, 714-715.

57 Application of Pardon of Wm. B. Hooker, Case Files of Applications from Former Confederates for Presidential Pardons, 1865-1867, Amnesty Papers, record group 94, M-1003, National Archives; House Document No.116, 39th Congress, 2d session, (2 record group 94, M-1003, National Archives; Hernando County, Deed Book A, 160-167. In addition, Hooker also had property sold at an April 19, 1871 tax sale for delinquent 1868 and 1869 state and county taxes. However, his son James bought back the property for $161.20 at the sale. Hillsborough County, Deed Book D, 27. Also, Hooker and his wife Nancy faced foreclosure proceedings in 1866-67 in Marion Co., for property she had owned in Ocala. Marion County, Chancery Order Book A, 186-187; A-2, 8, 30-32.

58 Tampa, Florida Peninsular, April 28, 1866; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census, 1860, Marion Co., FL (Population Schedule). A story, apparently apocryphal, states that the second Mrs. Hooker’s (Cathcart) children, by her first marriage, were not congenial with Capt. Hooker’s children, so he had two sets of stairs built outside the house. The Cathcart children used the east stairs, the Hooker children the west, while the captain and his wife used the inner staircase. See Stetson Kennedy, Palmetto Country (New York, 1942), 222.

59 Tampa Florida Peninsular, April 28, 1866. Tampa Guide, compiled by the Writers Program of the Works Progress Administration, included a section on the Orange Grove Hotel. It is erroneously stated that the hotel was "removed from its original site in an orange grove to 806 Madison Street." This is incorrect. The building was constructed at 806 Madison Street and was never moved. Federal Works Agency, Works Progress Administration, Tampa Guide (1941), 37. The Tampa Florida Peninsular, Feb. 29, 1868, reported: "The Orange grown here is superior in size and flavor to the Cuba Orange. In fact most of the Tropical fruit flourish here. There is some very handsome trees in Tampa. Capt. Hooker, a[t] the Orange Grove Hotel, has beautiful trees and delicious fruit." The "Triumph," or "Early Triumph," grapefruit "originated as a seedling in the grounds of the Orange Grove Hotel in Tampa . . . is quite seedy . . . white-fleshed and of exceptionally high quality." It is described as a cultivar, "resembling grapefruit." Larry Jackson and Julian Sands, Fruit Crops Fact Sheet: Grapefruit, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida.

60 Manatee County, Deed Book D, 95; Interrogatories answered by James D. Haygood, Turner, et al. v. Hooker, et al, Bill to Reform and Rectify Deed, Manatee County Court Records, Feb. 25, 1885; Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 375-377, 380, 393, 422, 467-469, 485, 498-499, 485, etc.; Hillsborough County, Court Docket, 1861-1869, Fall Term 1866, Spring Term 1867; Receipt of Wm. B. Hooker, March 4, 1867, Lesley Collection, USF; Tampa Florida Peninsular, Oct. 12, 1867; Petition of Wm. B. Hooker and related correspondence, record group 393, Part 1, Dept. of Fl., 1865-1869, Letters Received, Box 5, National Archives; Hernando County, Deed Book A, 160-167. In addition, Hooker had also had property sold at an April 19, 1871 tax sale for delinquent 1868 and 1869 state and county taxes. However, his son James bought back the property for $161.20 at the sale. Hillsborough County, Deed Book D, 27. Also, Hooker and his wife Nancy faced foreclosure proceedings in 1866-67 in Marion Co., for property she had owned in Ocala. Marion County, Chancery Order Book A, 186-187; A-2, 8, 30-32.
in the Episcopal Church in 1871. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church was organized July 24, 1871 and Henry L. Crane was elected a warden and vestryman. Meroba was a prominent woman in Tampa during the late 1800s, active in the Ladies Memorial Society which cared for the town cemetery, and was a charter member of Tampa Chapter, No. 113, United Daughters of the Confederacy, in 1897. Tampa Florida Peninsular July 29, 1871; Tampa Sunland Tribune, Aug. 18, 1877; Charter of Tampa Chapter No. 113, U.D.C.

62 Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, F.&A.M., Minute Book Minute Book 1867-1873, 121-123.

63 Tampa Florida Peninsular, June 17, 1871. Hooker's obituary and the Masonic tribute states he was born May 2, 1800. His tombstone says May 10. However, his Family Bible gives May 3, 1800 as the date. His tombstone erroneously gives June 2, 1871 as the date of his death. However, the obituary, Masonic tribute and Masonic minutes correctly state that he died June 11. See Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 1, 1871 and Wm. B. Hooker Family Bible, also Family Record of Stephen Hooker, etc. Also, the original tombstone is incorrect in the date of his wife Mary's death as it states she died Oct. 10, 1863. Her Obituary correctly gives the date as Jan. 2, 1863. See August, GA Southern Christian Advocate, Feb. 19, 1863. Finally, she was born April 3, 1810, per the Family Bible, not March 3, 1810, as stated on the tombstone. A new stone, placed at the foot of the original obelisk monument, giving the correct dates, was donated by the author and dedicated at the Tampa Historical Society's Oaklawn Cemetery Ramble, April 14, 1996.

64 Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 1, 1871.

65 Charles E. Harrison, Genealogical Records of the Pioneers of Tampa and of Some Who Came After Them (Tampa, 1915), 110.

66 D. B. McKay, "The Hooker Family."