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Composition and printing completed by Ralard Printers, Inc. - 30904 State Road 52 *
San Antonio, FL 33576 - (800) 393-2800

Cover: Program for the 3rd Annual Tampa Bay Regatta, billed as "Tampa's Premier Sporting Event." The event was held in March of 1927 on the "Davis Islands Marine Speedway ... Under the auspices of the Tampa Board of Trade, the Tampa Boat and Anglers Club and the Davis Island Yacht Club."
-Collection of Frank R. North

The Sunland Tribune is the official annual publication of The Tampa Historical Society, distributed to members each year. Non-members may receive limited edition issues by contacting the Society at 259-1111.

Individuals interested in contributing manuscripts for consideration should send them to the headquarters no later than July I of each calendar year. The Sunland Tribune Editor will review, accept or reject articles and will return all photographs and materials not selected for publication. All manuscripts should be double spaced typed pages and should include endnotes, and, in addition, captions for all photographs submitted. 3-1/2" disks will be the only media allowed. Any popular word processing program will be accepted. The Tampa Historical Society and the Editor of the Sunland Tribune accept no responsibility for statements made or opinions held by authors.
The President’s Report

It has been an honor to serve as President of the Tampa Historical Society in 1996 and 1997. This year, in January, we placed a monument at Oaklawn Cemetery in honor of the four unknown U.S. soldiers at Ft. Brooke who were recently reburied at Oaklawn. The memorial service was impressive and well attended.

In March we held our second Spring Festival at the Knight House.

The Oaklawn Ramble at Historic Oaklawn and St. Louis Cemeteries took place April 13 and was one of the best-attended ever. We dedicated two granite markers, both of which were funded by the Society. One honors the sea captains and mariners buried at Oaklawn and the other pays tribute to the nineteenth century yellow fever victims buried in the cemetery.

In May, two historical markers were installed. One was placed at Bungalow Terrace neighborhood in Hyde Park and was funded by THS. The other marker, partially funded by THS, was dedicated at the site of the Confederate Monument in front of the Hillsborough County Courthouse.

This is my seventh and last issue as Editor of the Sunland Tribune. I’ve enjoyed serving in this capacity and I’m proud of each edition from 1991 to 1997.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle S. VanLandingham,
President
“TO FAITHFULLY DISCHARGE MY DUTY”:
THE LIFE AND CAREER OF PERRY GREEN WALL

By KYLE S. VanLANDINGHAM

Perry Green Wall’s long and productive life began at the "Fork," near the junction of the Ocmulgee and Oconee Rivers in the southern portion of Montgomery County, Georgia. The only child of John Wall, Jr., and Susannah (Whitehurst) Wall, he was born November 2, 1809. Perry’s father soon died and he and his mother lived for a time in the home of her father, Simon Whitehurst. Later, Susannah married Shadrack Sutton and had six more children. About 1817, the Suttons moved to Irwin County, Georgia, where they are shown on the 1820 census. By 1826 they had moved on to Hamilton County, Florida, where Susannah’s brother, John Whitehurst, also settled.¹

In January 1828, Shadrack Sutton was appointed Sheriff of Hamilton County. Perry Wall, soon after his twenty-first birthday, married Nancy Ann Hunter, November 18, 1830. Her father, William Marion Hunter, was a prominent settler who later served as county commissioner and member of the territorial Legislative Council.²

Perry and his wife lived at present day Jasper and in early 1835 he purchased two tracts in Sections 5 and 19, Township 1 North, Range 14, East, consisting of 120 acres, and an 80 acre tract in Section 24, Township 1, North, Range 13, East. He voted in elections in 1833 and 1835 in the Courthouse 2nd Precinct.³

The Second Seminole War broke out in December 1835 and Perry G. Wall served two enlistments. He was mustered into Capt. George W. Smith’s Company of the 2nd Regiment, 2nd Brigade, Florida Mounted Volunteers, at Fort Read, January 16, 1837, as a private. Also serving in this unit was his stepfather, Shadrack Sutton. The company mustered out at Fort Gilliland,
December 18, 1837. Perry served again in Smith's company from March 22, 1838 until September 23, 1838. The war veteran made his first foray into the political arena when he ran unsuccessfully for the post of Clerk of Court, losing to John G. Smith. But two years later, in 1840, Perry ran again, this time unopposed. He was reelected without opposition in 1842 and 1843. He was still clerk in April 1845 but did not seek reelection that October. The last reference to Perry Wall as Clerk of the Circuit Court in Hamilton County is dated October 18, 1845.

Perry Wall was a member of Concord Baptist Church which he joined in 1835. The church was located in Tiger Swamp about one and one-half miles south of present-day Highway 41. He was a stockholder in the Union Bank of Florida and was an original purchaser of a lot in the Town of Jasper, which was incorporated in 1840. When the U. S. Census was taken in 1840, Perry G. Wall served as an enumerator in the capacity of assistant to the Marshal of the Middle District of the Territory of Florida. On February 28, 1845, Nancy Hunter Wall died, leaving Perry with seven children, all under the age of 11.

It was time to move on. Hernando County had been established in 1843 but the following year its name was changed to Benton, in honor of Sen. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. The Annutalagga Hammock, northwest of present-day Brooksville, was described as "the largest and most compact body of rich land to be found in Florida," extending 14 miles in length and from four to seven miles in width. It was here that Perry G. Wall started a new phase of his life. He settled at Spring Hill, about four miles west of present-day Brooksville. Other original settlers there were Peter W. Law, Malcolm C. Peterson, John E Bassett and William Garrison. Perry also took a new wife, 35-year old Barbara R. Balsden, daughter of Josiah Baisden, on December 11, 1845, in a triple wedding ceremony performed by a circuit riding preacher. Barbara's sister Rosa married Malcolm Peterson and her sister Frances married John Bassett. Martha Baisden, another sister, was already the wife of Peter W Law. In December 1846, Perry began purchasing land, 40 acres in Section 24, Township 22 South, Range 18 East, at Spring Hill. By 1850, according to the tax rolls, he had 370 acres and 18 slaves.

Perry G. Wall became Judge of Probate of Benton County in 1848. In this capacity, he also served as ex officio chairman of the Board of County Commissioners. In the May 1849 election, he received 38 votes to 18 for E. J. Knight and five for Isaac Garrison. However, in 1851, Wall was defeated by Knight, 59-55. Perry may have made some enemies as a result of the election the previous year for the office of State Assemblyman. Wall and the two others on the canvassing board certified Joel L. Lockhart as winner over Robert D. Bradley by a vote of 46 to 45. Four other votes for Bradley were thrown out because in that precinct only two inspectors were present instead of the three required. But a month later, in November 1850, Perry changed his mind. Writing to Bradley, he said that his original view was that the canvassers had the right and the duty to exclude returns "not strictly in conformity with the election law."
I now believe that where there is any fraud or illegality in an election it is a matter for the contestants to prove as prescribed and be referred to the proper tribunal for decision as to the rights of the parties, I make no hesitancy in making this confession to you, my only motto being to faithfully discharge my duty at any and all times so far as I am enabled to understand it.12

Bradley was certified the winner of the election. One of the legislature’s accomplishments in 1850-51 was to change the name of the county back to Hernando.13

Perry continued to purchase land. The 1851 tax rolls show him owing 672 acres. The previous year’s U. S. Census describes him as planter with $2000 worth of real estate and 16 slaves.14 On October 18, 1851, he wrote to Capt. William B. Hooker who lived in neighboring Hillsborough County. He tried to convince Hooker to settle in the area and offered him his 700 acre tract.

This tract contains a little over seven hundred acres all in the Annuteliga Hammock in one body except the settlement just one mile south where I now reside on which there is a good many good buildings, such as dwelling houses, cotton house, corn houses, and Negro houses, and about one hundred acres of cleared land, most of which was Hammock. There is probably 20 acres of the tract in the Annutalega Hammock which is pine land, the settlement tract contains 168 acres, the balance of 500 acres is all Hammock. This entire tract of land as above described is now offered for five thousand and two hundred dollars. There has not been such a bargain sold in this County in 2 years past, and I expect I shall sell to Col. Wm. Y. Bailey when he comes down about the 1st Dec. if I don’t get another chance, but he owns so much unoccupied lands here that I desire to sell to an actual settler. Suppose you come to see those lands. My reasons for wanting to sell is that I own another tract one and a half miles south to which I am going to remove.15

Mary (Wall) Frierson and her 6-month old son Taylor Frierson, 1853
-Courtesy Ann McGinn Huddart
But Hooker did not buy the land and by 1853 Wall was listed as owning 1057 acres.¹⁶

The August 31, 1854 issue of the Jacksonville Florida Republican carried a story about the plantations of Hernando County:

We conversed last evening with one of our enterprising merchants, who has sojourned the last month among the planters of Hernando County, examining with an experienced eye, the late improvements, crops, &c. It is really cheering to hear his glowing description of the cotton, corn, cane and rice fields, &c., which came under his observation. Several gentlemen he names residing at or near Spring Hill, whom he describes as owning model plantations, viz: Captain Thomas E. Ellis, Captain Frederick Lykes, Judge Wall, William Hope, Major Garrison, C. Higginbotham, and a host of others, whose names we have forgotten.

He states that the cotton stalks on the plantation of Mr. Higginbotham are grown to such a height as to require topping, and well filled with bolls of a very superior staple, and the cotton generally will far exceed in quality any previous years. The corn, sugar, cane, rice &c. have never been equaled.

On the beautiful plantation of Major Garrison, he describes a grove or orchard of 200 Banana trees, and says they are so heavily laden with fruit, as to require propping to contain them.¹⁷

An important family alliance was forged in 1848 when Perry’s eldest daughter, Mary Matilda married Aaron Taylor Frierson, a prominent Hernando County planter. In 1852, daughter Julia Ann became the wife of Tampa merchant Christopher L. Friebel.¹⁸

Perry Wall reentered the political arena in 1855, winning election as probate judge, over William Iredell Turner, 106 to 80. That was the year that the American or Know Nothing Party reached its peak of power in Florida and Turner was the Know Nothing candidate.¹⁹ Perry reconfirmed his allegiance to the Democratic party in a letter to the Tampa Florida Peninsular, August 22, 1856. Writing from Bay Port he said:
I find that my name has been placed as an Elector for Hernando County, on the Know Nothing or American Ticket, by the late Know Nothing Convention, held in Tallahassee. It surprised me to have my name placed on that ticket. I have been a member of the Democratic party all my life, and see no reason why I should abandon those principles. I think any southern man or Floridian can be perfectly satisfied with the platform of the Cincinnati Convention. I never joined the Know Nothing Party, or had any affiliation with them, nor never expect to. I, therefore, wish to place myself before my friend in my proper (?) party.\textsuperscript{20}

Perry Wall was reelected probate judge in 1857, 1859 and 1861.\textsuperscript{21}

He continued to be active in the Baptist Church, and was one of the earliest members of the Union Baptist Church at Pierceville, in April 1856. Pierceville, previously Melendez, was named in honor of President Franklin Pierce and was located about four miles east of Spring Hill. In October 1856, land was donated on a hilltop northeast of Pierceville for a county seat site. It was named Brooksville, after South Carolina Rep. Preston Brooks who had gained fame in 1856 for caning abolitionist Sen. Charles Sumner on the floor of the U. S. Senate.\textsuperscript{22}

The Billy Bowlegs or Third Seminole War broke out in December 1855 and Hernando County was not immune from Indian attack.\textsuperscript{23} On May 14, 1856, Capt. Robert D. Bradley’s homestead was raided and two of his children killed. Indian signs were reported throughout the area. A committee of five, including Perry G. Wall, wrote from Spring Hill to Gen. Jesse Carter at Tampa on May 31, 1856:

From the fact of so much sign having been seen almost simultaneously in so many different directions and within so short a time, we conceive that we need not be considered ‘alarmists’ if we apprehend that the Indians are concentrating their forces for a murderous attack and, although no outrage has been committed among us since the sad tragedy at Captain Bradley’s, yet the short respite may only be the ominous calm which forebodes a fearful storm.
We therefore, having been appointed a Committee of Citizens of this neighborhood, to report, we therefore most respectfully ask that you will, at the earliest practicable moment, send to our relief a force sufficient to protect us from the cruel barbarities of this insidious foe, or, at least, to aid us in protecting our lives and property, provided you have the direction or control of such force, and, if not, that you exert your influence to obtain it from the officer commanding the troops in Florida; for we are fully persuaded, from the indications here and the reports from other places, that there are now more Indians on this side of the Hillsborough River than there are beyond it.  

Actually, there were no further Indian attacks in Hernando County.

The eldest son, William Washington Wall, entered the mercantile business in Brooksville in 1858. The firm of Hope and Wall, consisting of Billy, as he was always known, father Perry and Samuel E. Hope, opened a general store which remained in operation for several years. John Perry Wall, the second son, aspired to practice law, but Perry considered medicine more "congenial and profitable," so John went off to the Medical College of South Carolina, where he graduated in 1858.

By 1860 Perry Green Wall was a wealthy man. He owned 24 slaves valued at $12,500, 1,860 acres of land worth $10,000, eight horses, 150 head of cattle and held $3400 in notes. Storm clouds were gathering over the national horizon that year and in November Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected president. The Tampa Florida Peninsular was a major drumbeater for immediate secession. Rumors were rampant throughout the South. In early January, 1861, there was a report that northern privateers or marauders was being organized to raid the Florida coastline and kidnap slaves:

In confirmation of the above, we publish the following letter from the Hon. Perry G. Wall, of Hernando county, dated "Brooksville, Fla., Jan. 11, 1861:

Ed. Peninsular - Sir: - I furnish you the following extract of a letter, just

Sarah (Wall) Clark, Widow of Edward A. Clarke

-Courtesy Ann McGinn Huddart
received by me from New York. I vouch for the credibility and veracity of my correspondent:

"A marauding band is being organized for the avowed purpose of making a descent on Florida to rob and plunder."

Perry Wall has been described as a Unionist who opposed secession. Nevertheless, he continued to serve as probate judge of Hernando County after Florida seceded from the Union in January 186. He was reelected to his final term in the October 1861 elections. From March 29 until May 17, 1862, he served in Capt. J. H. Breaker's Old Guards, Mounted Rangers, along with son-in-law, Aaron T Frierson, Samuel Pearce, Francis Ederington and Malcolm C. Peterson.

David Hunter Wall, Perry's third son, joined the Confederate army in July 1861 at Brooksville as a private in Capt. Saxon's Hernando County Wildcats, which became Company C, 3rd Florida Infantry. David was promoted second Lieutenant the following year but died in service at LaGrange, Georgia, May 30, 1864. William W. Wall, enlisted in Capt. Samuel E. Hope's Company C, 9th Florida Infantry at Bayport, June 21, 1862, but was discharged the same day after hiring a substitute. However, he did join Capt. Leroy G. Lesley's cow cavalry company later during the war and succeeded Lesley as captain shortly before the war's end. Dr. John P. Wall volunteered as a surgeon and was assigned to Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond. Records show that he was Assistant Surgeon on the 9th Florida Infantry in 1863. Perry's son by his second marriage, Joseph Baisden Wall, served in the 2nd Florida Reserves during the latter part of the war.

Christopher Friebele, a son-in-law, and Edward A. Clarke, who had married Perry's daughter Sarah in 1860, were engaged in blockade running during the Civil War. They formed a partnership with another brother-in-law, Maj. Aaron T Frierson, S. G. Frierson and Samuel A. Swann. The group started operations in January 1863 after purchase of the sloop Elias Beckwith. Another vessel, the Maria, was purchased in March. Cotton was shipped to Havana and goods such as linen, muslin, hairpins, starch, shirt buttons, combs and quinine were brought back to anxious buyers in Florida. Perry Wall was apparently a silent partner in the blockade running operations.

Perry was succeeded as probate judge by Samuel J. Pearce who was elected in the fall of 1863. Judge Wall remained in office, however, until his successor qualified on February 1, 1864. One of his last official acts was a letter to Gov. Milton, dated January 12, 1864. The letter is very revealing, because it illustrates the serious state of affairs in west central Florida at this time, and also because it reveals Perry's state of mind at this stage of the conflict. He was clearly disenchanted with the conduct of the war. The letter is printed in its entirety:

Sir: At a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of this county on the 9th instant, for the purpose of considering the necessities and means of supplying the indigent families of soldiers in this county, it was ascertained that the supply of corn within the limits of the
county is nearly exhausted, and that there can be very little or no corn purchased anywhere between here and Gainesville; whether from actual scarcity or an indisposition to sell I don't know, but it is generally supposed it is from the latter cause. On the suggestion of General J. M. Taylor, who said that he had heard Your Excellency say that corn would be sent down to Archer from Middle Florida for soldiers' families if it became necessary for the support of those families, I was verbally instructed by the Board of Commissioners to communicate their necessities to Your Excellency, and ask if 1,000 bushels of corn could be had in that way, in the event that we cannot procure it otherwise. Their situation will be deplorable in the extreme if corn cannot be had beyond the limits of the county, as in consequence of a bad crop season the past year there was not more than one-third of an average crop raised in the county.

Another matter which I would direct the attention of Your Excellency to is the fact that the cattle drivers under the orders of Captain McKay, commissary of this department, have stripped the county of every beef steer that they can find, from two years old and upward, and are now taking the cows, many of which have been known to have calves, in less than fifteen miles’ drive. This is cutting off the only supply of meat we had for soldiers’ families, as the supply of pork from various causes - mainly for want of corn to fatten it - is unusually short - so much so that the most fortunate of us will be on less than half allowance. Whatever the exigencies of the case may be, I consider it an outrage upon a community having in their midst as many suffering families as we have to take the cows, the only dependence for milk and beef for the future. In many cases the cows of poor families of soldiers in the Army are taken, as I have been informed. Does the order to those commissaries authorize them to take the milch cows from the people against their will or consent? If so, the country is certainly ruined and a general famine will be the result. Already the soldiers’ families are becoming clamorous for meat and are killing people’s cows wherever they can get hold of them. It does seem to me that this wholesale taking the beef-cattle and milch cows of the country should be stopped, for by taking the cows it certainly cuts off the
means of any future supply of beef, saying nothing of cutting off the supply of milk. If we have arrived at that point where it has become actually necessary to impress all the cows in the country, which are so necessary to the support of any country, then I say, God help us, for starvation must be inevitable. Will your Excellency do us the favor to write me in answer to these several points?

With great respect I have the honor to be, Your Excellency’s obedient servant,

PG. Wall, Judge of Probate

The new judge, Samuel Pearce, resigned March 14 and went to Fort Myers to join the newly formed Union 2nd Florida Cavalry.

Sheriff and Tax Collector J. L. Peterson writing to the State Comptroller, May 28, 1864, described the deteriorating conditions in Hernando:

In consequence of the operations of the enemy in this county and in South Florida every man who could use a musket was placed in service. A good deal of time has been lost in scouting after the enemy and in running Negroes from their reach.... My fellow citizens thinking it of more importance to defend the country than to assess taxes which could not be collected if the country fell under the controle of the enemy. This county has been partially under the controle of the enemy in so far as all as all persons who did not flee up the country had to take up arms in its defense. An attack is expected here in Brooksville Thursday next and preparations are being made to repel it. We will fight them though they out number us three to one with what success re mains to be seen ...

The attack did not come until July. Soldiers of the Union 2nd Florida Cavalry and the 2nd U. S. Colored Troops landed at Anclote Key on July 8. Christopher Friebele and Edward Clarke were acting as Confederate pickets and were captured at that time. Both were sent as prisoners to Cedar Key and Friebele stated that he was later confined at Ship Island, Louisiana. The Union troops marched northeast to within a mile of Brooksville and then turned west to rendezvous at Bayport with other Union forces. Along the way, they raided the plantations of David Hope, William B. Hooker (who had moved to Hernando in 1862), Thomas C. Ellis, Leroy G. Lesley and Aaron T. Frierson.

An incident which occurred in early 1865, shortly before Gen. Johnston’s surrender in April, further embittered Perry Wall toward his Confederate neighbors. Under the provisions of the Tithe Act, he had delivered to Receiver William M. Garrison 425 pounds of sugar and 90 gallons of syrup. The war ended and Garrison and his friends, with the permission of Cow Cavalry Col. Munnerlyn, appropriated the goods for their own use.

By the summer of 1865, Perry Green Wall was clearly identified as a Union Man. A correspondent for the New York Times, wrote on September 12, that Judge Wall, a "true Union M[a]n" was a
candidate in the October election for delegate to the upcoming state constitutional convention. His opponent was former business partner and Confederate captain, Samuel E. Hope. Wall was not only a Union Man, but a "Negro suffrage man" as well. He lost the election to Hope.

But Perry was to play a prominent role in Hernando County Reconstruction. On November 2, 1865, apparently after a meeting in Tallahassee with Col. T W. Osborn, Wall was appointed agent for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in Hernando County. He was directed "to proceed at once to systematize the affairs of the county in so far as the Bureau has jurisdiction; and, especially so far as it is in his control, induce the Freedmen to make contracts for labor with the planters and other parties wishing to employ them." The order was signed by Col. Thomas W. Osborn, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau in Florida. Writing to Wall three days later, Osborn furnished a letter of introduction to Col. George E Thompson and William H. Gleason who were traveling throughout the southern portion of the state on bureau business. He also advised Wall that he had turned over the affairs of the Bureau to the probate judges in each county. Closing the letter, Osborn wrote: "Accept my thanks for your kindness in assisting us and an expression of my gratification in finding you so firmly interested in the cause of the freedmen and the country."

Writing from Brooksville on December 8, Wall outlined his actions as agent:

After arriving home, I was within two or three days, taken down very sick, from which I did not recover sufficiently to go out, for about three weeks, as soon however as I was able to do so, I proceeded to make known to the colored people of this county, my agency in the Bureau and such system for hiring out labor for the incoming year, as I deemed most promotive of their interest. The Colored people here pretty generally seemed very much pleased with me as their agent, and disposed to be governed by my instructions, which was that in order to insure employment and a competency for next year, they must and especially those with families - make contracts with the planters having farms, either for stated wages or as a share of the crop...

On the presumption that I am superceded as agent by the Judge of Probate of this county, I will proceed no further in the duties thereof at least until I shall hear from you.

In March 1866, Lt. William G. Vance, sub-assistant commissioner for the Bureau, was in Brooksville. He reported that he had visited Judge Wall "to have him accept the civil agency for the county which after some hesitation he did." Almost immediately after his appointment, Perry was involved in controversy. Acting at Vance's direction, and in his capacity as civil agent, he performed a marriage ceremony for a black couple who had lived together for many years as man and wife. This violated an act of the state General Assembly and he was brought up on charges before the county criminal court. Fearing that Wall might be
subjected to a whipping or the pillory, Gen. Foster ordered the commanding officer at Tampa to send a force of ten men to Brooksville to keep order. If Wall, who was described as a "sound and truly loyal man," was sentenced to corporal punishment, he was to be taken to Tampa for protection. The trial was postponed to June and Vance wrote to Osborne on May 25:

They have got a very poor opinion of the Judge [Wall] here and say he was a good secessionist as any of them till the War ended when he took sides with the Unionists. But from what I have seen of him he appears a good Union Man. The people in this section of the country are strongly opposed to those men who have been Unionists or in our army and every little chance they can get they bring them before the court, and punish them with very heavy fines while men of their own opinions go free after committing more grievous offences. . . . 47

The troops were sent to Brooksville and at the trial Wall was convicted and fined one dollar. Vance, who was present at the trial, believed that a harsher sentence was averted only by the presence of the troops. 48

In August 1866, a Union Convention was held in Tallahassee for the purpose of selecting delegates to the upcoming Southern Loyalists Convention in Philadelphia. Perry G. Wall was in attendance at the Tallahassee meeting and was listed along with C. R. Mobley, Samuel J. Pearce and several others as members of the National Representative Executive Committee. 49 Perry also attended to his business affairs in Hernando County. In October 1866, he wrote to his son-in-law, Friebele, reminding him of a gin band for his cotton gin that Friebele was to obtain in New York. The following March, William W. Wall paid off the remaining amount owed to obtain clear title to his general store in Brooksville. Notes and drafts in the amount of $1650 were sent to Friebele to be paid to Wall & Co., a Key West firm owned by one W. H. Wall, who was no relation to the family. "And we want to hear nothing further from you so far as owning us is concerned," Billy stated in the letter to his brother-in-law. The Walls had joined in partnership with Francis H. Ederington, Hernando County planter, who died in 1866. The firm of Ederington and Wall continued through the remainder of the decade. 50

Perry Wall was forced to relinquish his position as special agent for the Freedmen's Bureau in August 1867 because he was unable to take the "test oath," also known as the Ironclad oath, which was required of all Federal officers. The oath disqualified from Federal service those persons who had supported the rebellion. As a former county officer who had taken an oath to support the U. S. Constitution and later engaged in rebellion, Perry was also disqualified from holding Federal or state office under the 14th Amendment which was ratified in 1868. But when Congress passed its first act in 1868 removing disabilities from former Confederates, Perry Wall was one of 14 Florida men whose right to hold office was restored. 51

An interesting incident regarding Wall's Unionism and public reaction to it
occurred in the summer of 1867. The Tampa Florida Peninsular, staunchly Democratic, reported that Judge Wall was in Tampa enroute to Tallahassee to attend a Union Convention there. In the next issue, the editor published an "Apologetic" note. Noting that this report had "given offence to the friends of the Judge in this place," the paper reminded its readers that it had been informed that Wall had been appointed a delegate from Hernando County and "we considered it no derogation at all, to his well-earned character, as a high-toned Christian gentleman, and citizen of undoubted integrity, to mention the fact." The editor went on to say that there "is not a citizen in South Fla., we would more regret to misrepresent than that of Judge Wall, as there are none whom we esteem more highly as a true Christian gentleman, and of more stern integrity of life, both as a public man and private citizen." The paper noted that if it was incorrect in its report, the proceedings of the convention would "correct our mistake." The Peninsular’s tone seemed mildly sarcastic, yet it was not wise to offend Judge Wall or his friends. His sons-in-law, Clark and Friebele, were wealthy Tampa merchants and advertised regularly in the paper.52

Florida was readmitted to full participation in the Union in 1868 and Harrison Reed became the state’s first Republican governor. In August 1869, Hernando County Judge and Unionist Samuel J. Pearce wrote to Gov. Reed recommending the appointment of William W. Wall as county commissioner, describing him as "one of the best financiers we have.53 Wall obtained the appointment and became president of the board. County Judge Henry Rountree, a Reed loyalist and stalwart Republican, wrote to the governor in March 1870:

Before your late Impeachment trial, I presume S. J. Pearce then County Judge of Hernando, was considered your friend and supporter; he was privileged to enjoy your confidence and esteem.

Whilst thus looked on by yourself, he was really working against you and against the Republican party in Hernando County.

Through S. J. Pearce’s recommendation, one W. W. Wall, a strong Democrat was appointed County Commissioner, and Wall’s relative and partner in business J. G. McKeown as Justice of the Peace, whilst another family relative was appointed Tax Collector, Wm. L. Frierson, who three, are as good strong Opponents of your Excellency’s as are to be found in the county or State of Florida. The Tax Collector "Frierson" has appointed County Commissioner "Wall" his Deputy Collector, the Tax Book has been at Walls store, who having on hand some Hundreds if not Thousands of Dollars of Scrip, could and did pay the Taxes of many in Scrip that likely he had obtained in trade for Twenty five cents on the Dollar.

W. W. Wall is President of the Board of Co Com his father Perry G. Wall is Treasurer of Hernando County; or in other words W. W. Wall is the one controlling power and influence of this whole county, who I do not suppose would lift a
finger to help or save your administration.

When working out the list of voters from which to select Grand Jurors and Petit Jurors he "Wall" would not have any colored names put on; and out of three hundred names only Three colored men’s names were to be found, illustrating "Wall’s" democratic proclivities.

I have no office to seek for myself, but I do believe such a concentration of power &c in one man, in a County is antagonistic to its good.

Then I most respectfully request Wall’s removal as County Commissioner, and recommend in his place Frederick Lykes, a high-toned gentleman honest and upright, who I believe would be a very good and efficient Commissioner;…

Reed responded by removing Wall and made the other appointments recommended by Rountree. But the Walls were already moving their center of operations to Tampa.

On January 13, 1870, Democratic State Sen. John A. Henderson and Democratic State Rep. Charles Moore of Hillsborough recommended to Gov. Reed the appointment of "Perry G. Wall, Esq. of Tampa, as a suitable person for the office of County Judge of Hillsborough County, vice Edward 0. Plumb resigned." Wall was confirmed by the Senate on January 26 and took office on March 13. The Tampa Florida Peninsular reacted warmly to Wall’s appointment:

Gov. Reed has appointed the Hon. Perry G. Wall, Judge of the County Court for Hillsborough County. This is an excellent appointment and it will, we feel assured, give universal satisfaction. - Judge Wall has filled with fidelity many important offices in this State, and whilst he presides as Judge of the County Court he will do so intelligently, impartially and independently.

The local Republican County Committee, chaired by Judge James T Magbee, was not pleased with the appointment of Wall. Magbee in early 1870 had been impeached by the House, was awaiting trial and was thus temporarily out of office. He retained influence, but was opposed by other Tampa Republican leaders C. R. Mobley and Matthew P. Lyons. Magbee’s committee asserted that Wall did not reside in the county and wanted E J. Gould named to the post of county judge. Despite his loyalty to Reed, Magbee's wishes were not honored.

Magbee had reason to dislike the Wall family. One of the impeachment charges against him involved his alleged improper purchase and use of goods and supplies obtained from the firm of Ederington and Wall in Brooksville.

Perry G. Wall had purchased the old Thomas P. Kennedy place in downtown Tampa on Washington Street, between Water and Tampa in 1868, although he did not move to Tampa until 1870. William W. "Billy" Wall moved to Tampa in 1870 and opened a general store on the corner of Washington and Marion Streets. The second son, Dr. Wall, moved to Tampa in January 1871. Joseph B. Wall, Perry's son by his second marriage, attended the University of Virginia, and was admitted to the bar
in Brooksville in 1869, but moved to Tampa in 1872. In 1874 he was appointed State Attorney by Republican governor O. B. Hart.\(^6^0\)

As county judge, Perry also served as ex officio probate judge and also as a justice of the peace. He and his son, Dr. Wall, had their initiation into the printing business when Republican C. R. Mobley acquired the *Florida Peninsular* in late 1871. Mobley turned it into a Republican newspaper and hired William P Neeld who in turn retained the Judge and Doctor as editors. Publication continued only a few months until the paper went bust in the spring of 1872.\(^6^1\)

Judge Wall continued in office until April 26, 1873 when he tendered his resignation to Gov. Ossian B. Hart. On March 10, 1873, Perry had received the lucrative appointment of Postmaster at Tampa from President Ulysses S. Grant. He served as postmaster until January 22, 1877 when he was replaced by Robert B. Thomas.\(^6^2\)

Tragedy struck the family in 1878 with the death of 43-year old Billy Wall. But his general store continued in a later incarnation, the Knight and Wall Company, which was established in 1884, under the name of Clarke and Knight. Henry Laurens Knight, a son-in-law of William W. Wall, and his brother-in-law, Perry G. Wall, II, formed the company. E. A. Clarke was 17-year old Perry’s guardian and from the resources of the estate he financed Perry as a partner in the business. The name was changed to Knight and Wall in 1888 after Clarke’s death.\(^6^3\)

Dr. John R Wall continued in the medical profession and was a pioneer in the research and cure for yellow fever. He was among the first to assert that yellow fever was carried by the mosquito and for this he was ridiculed by many in his profession. By 1877 he was editor of the new weekly, the *Tampa Sunland Tribune*, and later became publisher. He served as Mayor of Tampa from 1878 to 1880.\(^6^4\)

Joseph Baisden Wall prospered as a lawyer, entered politics and by 1886 was President of the State Senate. Hot tempered, he and his nephew-in-law, James E. Lipscomb, got into an altercation with the retired Judge Magbee in 1878. Offended by what they considered a derogatory comment Magbee had published in his Republican newspaper, the *Tampa Guardian*, about the late William W. Wall, they pulled Magbee out of his buggy and gave him a thorough caning. In March 1882, Joseph Wall was a leader of a lynch mob which hanged in front of the county courthouse a white itinerant sailor. Wall was in court that day, left the building and reportedly tied the "hangman’s knot," because no one else in the crowd knew how. He was disbarred from Federal practice by Judge Locke but continued to practice in the state courts. Indeed, five years later, he was elected first president of the State Bar Association.\(^6^5\)

Now in retirement, Perry G. Wall suffered the loss of his wife, Barbara, on May 30, 1883. Her body was returned to the old home place at Spring Hill and she was buried in the Lykes Cemetery. Perry did not remain a widower for long and on December 4, 1883, he married Sarah Watlington of Key West, the 47-year old daughter of Francis and
Emilene Watlington. Perry and Sarah entered into a antenuptial agreement prior to the marriage.66

Perry and Sarah lived at their home in Tampa, occasionally visiting Key West and spending some time at the resort of Rocky Point, on Old Tampa Bay, west of downtown Tampa.67

At 4 o’clock on the afternoon of July 8, 1897, at the home of his daughter, Mrs. C. L. Friebele, on Franklin Street, Perry Green Wall died, after an illness of several weeks duration. He was 87 years old. His will named his two younger sons, Joseph and Charles, as executors, he having outlived his three older sons. The inventory revealed personal property worth almost $34,000. His obituary in the Tampa Times estimated a total estate value of $85,000. Funeral services were held in the First Baptist Church and burial took place at Oaklawn Cemetery.68 The Tampa Tribune noted:

Judge Wall was a man who had well-nigh outlived three generations; he was not, therefore, altogether, of our time; but the exactness with which he conducted his business transactions showed that he was not so much behind the times as might have been supposed; while the absolute justice and righteousness of his dealings with his fellow-men, indicated that he was several generations in advance of the times.69

Not surprisingly, neither of his obituaries in the two Tampa newspapers mentioned his service with the Freedmen’s Bureau.70

Perry Green Wall was described by one contemporary as “a small man of very pleasant address,”71 and by another as “hardy and of cheerful disposition.”72 But he was much more than that. His long life covered almost the entire period of pioneer life in nineteenth century Florida. He served honorably in various offices and his service as Freedmen’s Bureau agent reveals a man willing to stand by his principles in spite of the disapproval of contemporaries. He was also skillful and shrewd, as witnessed by his subsequent high esteem in the community. Being wealthy and having powerful relatives and friends also helped.

In 1908, when Morgan Street on the west side of Oaklawn Cemetery was widened, Perry was reburied at Woodlawn Cemetery.73 His sarcophagus-like monument is solid and impressive, but also compact and not ostentatious. It exemplifies the man it honors.74

ENDNOTES

1 Affidavit of Perry G. Wall, Aug. 13, 1889, in Widow’s Pension Application of Jincey Fletcher Whitchurst, War of 1812, National Archives. The Fork area was in Montgomery County until 1801 when Tattnall County was formed but was returned to Montgomery in 1812. See Robert Davis, Jr., A History of Montgomery County, Georgia to 1918 (Roswell, GA, 1992), 1-3, 27-36. Several sources give Liberty County, Georgia as Wall’s place of birth. See Tampa Tribune, July 9, 1897; Tampa Weekly Times, July 15, 1897, handwritten copy transcribed by Theodore Lesley, copy in possession of author; Charles E. Harrison, Genealogical Records of the Pioneers of Tampa and Some Who Came After Them (Tampa, 1915), 24; Folks Huxford, comp. Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, 7 vols. (Waycross, GA, 1967), V, 490-491; Karl H. Grismer, Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida (St.


3 Alvie L. Davidson, comp., Florida Land: Records of the Tallahassee and Newnansville General Land Office 1825-1892 (Bowie, MD, 1989), 228; Hamilton County Election Returns, 1833, 1835, Territorial and Statehood Election Returns, Record Group 151, Series 21, Box 16, Folders 11, 13, Fla. State Archives.

4 Florida Department of Military Affairs, Special Archives Publication No. 75, Florida Militia Master Rolls, Seminole Indian Mars, Vol. 9 (St. Augustine, n.d.) 9: 75-83.

5 Hamilton County Election Returns, 1838, 1840, 1842, 1843, 1845, Box M, Folders 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, FSA; Hamilton County Deed Book C, 124.

6 Hinton, Early History of Hamilton County, 33, 40; U. S. Original Census Schedules, 6th Census, 1840, Hamilton County, FL; Huxford, Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, V, 490.

7 Hernando County Election Returns, 1855, Box 17, Folder 28, FSA; Jacksonville Florida News, Oct. 13, 1855.

8 Ibid., 44.

9 Ibid., 14; James H. Jones, "Law Family: Active in Hernando County undated newspaper article provided by Ann McGinn Huddard; Huxford, Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, V, 490-491; Davidson, Florida Land, 278; Benton County Tax Book, 1850, Microcopy at Florida State Library, Tallahassee. The Tampa Times article, "Work Begun by Perry Wall," published in 1934, states that Wall first established himself in Benton County "in a solidly-built blockhouse near Brooksville on the site of Chinsegut Hill, the Raymond Robbins home. During the frequent uprisings and Indian raid, the rude log fort was a haven for white settlers and it was later a stop on the stage coach line operated between Tampa and Gainesville by Capt. James McKay." This story was repeated in McKay's "Perry G. Wall" Tampa Tribune article in 1956. James Ingram, in his article "John Perry Wall: A Man For All Seasons," Sunland Tribune 2 (October 1975), 940, greatly embellishes the story. Incorrectly, and with no proof offered, he stated that the Walls built their "estate," the mansion still standing on what is today known as Chinsegut Hill. Actually, the mansion was built on land owned by Byrd Pearson in 1849 and the property later was owned and occupied by Frank Ederington. The property later became known as "Chinsegut Hill." See Stanaback, A History of Hernando County, 295-296. Perry's son Joseph Baisden Wall married Ederington's daughter, Precious, and she is buried in the cemetery on the mansion grounds. Also, the Ederingtons were business partners with the Walls in the 1860s.

10 Benton County Election Returns, 1848, 1849, Box 3, Folder 10, FSA; Historical Records Survey, Roster of State and County Officers Commissioned by the Governor of Florida (Jacksonville, 1941), 49.

11 Benton County Election Returns, 1850, Box; FSA; Hernando County Election Returns, 1851, Box 17, Folder 24 FSA.

12 Benton County Election Returns, 1850, Box 3 FSA.


14 Hernando County Tax Book, 1851; U. S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census, 1850, Benton County, FL (Population and Slave Schedules).

15 Perry G. Wall to Wm. B. Hooker, Oct. 18, 1851, original letter in possession of J. Edgar Wall, III.

16 Hernando County Tax Book, 1853.

17 Jacksonville Florida Republican, Aug. 31, 1854.
18 Family Group Sheet, provided by Marianne Ellis Bradley; Ft. Myers Press, June 30, 1887; Huxford, Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, V 490.

19 Hernando County Election Returns, 1855, Box 17, Folder 28, FSA; Jacksonville Florida News, Oct. 13, 1855.

20 Perry Florida Peninsular; Sept. 6, 1856. Perry Wall bought 3 lots on the corner of Main and High Streets in Bay Port in 1856 from John Parsons. See Hernando County Deed Book A, 159. D. B. McKay in "Then and Now," in his Pioneer Florida Page in the Tampa Tribune, Aug. 19, 1856, wrote "Judge Perry G. Wall.... in 1856 wrote from Spring Hill, Hernando County, where he was then residing to Capt. W. B. Hooker about land transactions in which they jointly were interested, and incidentally mentioned that he had an offer from a building contractor to erect a new home containing 10 rooms with a wide hall through the center and a wide veranda on three sides for $500 ... ."

21 Hernando County Election Returns, 1857, 1859, 1861, Box 17, Folders 30, 32, 34, FSA.

22 "First Baptist Church, Brooksville, Florida, Record Book 1856-1920," copy provided by Ann McGinn Huddart; Stanaback; History of Hernando County, 22-26.

23 Stanaback, History of Hernando County, 26.


26 Hernando County Tax Book, 1860.

27 Tampa Florida Peninsular Jan. 12, 1861.

28 D. B. McKay, "Perry G. Wall"; Hernando County Election Returns, 1861; David W. Hartman and David Cole’s, Biographical Rosters of Florida’s Confederate and Union Soldiers: 1861-1865 5 vols. (Wilmington, NC, 1995) VI 2103.


30 Grismer, Tampa, 142444.

31 Roster of State and County Officers, 139.


33 Roster of State and County Officials, 139; Hartman and Cole, Biographical Rosters, V, 1802.

34 J. L. Peterson to Walter Gwynn, May 28, 1864, Office of the Comptroller, Incoming Correspondence, 1845-1906, RG 350, Ser. 554, FSA.


39 John L. Purviance to David L. Yulee, March 6, 1866, David L. Yulee Papers, Box #7, [Corr. 18624866], Folder Jan.-March, 1866, P. K. Yonge Library of Fla. History.

40 Ibid., Hernando County Election Returns, 1865, Box 17, Folder 38, FSA.

41 Special Order No. 7, by Col. T W. Osborn, Nov. 21, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Asst. Commissioner and Superintendent, Special Orders and Circulars, Sept. 13, 1865-Dec. 30, 1868; RG 105, National


43 Perry G. Wall to Col. T W. Osborn, Dec. 8, 1865, Asst. Comm., Letters Received, Freedmen's Bureau Papers.

44 Lt. Wm. G. Vance to Col. T W. Osborn, March 31, 1866, Asst. Comm., Letters Received, Freedmen's Bureau Papers.


46 E. C. Woodruff to Commander's Office, Tampa, Apr. 22, 1866, John G. Foster Letterbook.

47 Lt. Wm. G. Vance to Col. T W. Osborn, May 25, 1866, Asst. Comm., Letters Received, Freedmen's Bureau Papers.

48 Shoffner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 96-97.


50 Perry G. Wall to C. L. Friebele, Oct. 25, 1866; Wm. W. Wall to C. L. Friebele, March 29, 1867, originals in possession of J. Edgar Wall, III; Jefferson B. Browne, Key West.- The Old and [lie New (St. Augustine, 1912, facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1973), 12, 94, 113, 125, 174-175, 220; Francis Ederington Tombstone, Chinsegut Hill, FL.; Ederington and Wall to R. H. Gamble, Nov. 9,1868, RG350, Ser. 554, Box 4, FSA.

51 Perry G. Wall to Lt. Gen Howard (?), Dec. t3, 1867, Asst. Comm., Letters Received, Oct. 1866-jan. 1869, Freedmen's Bureau Papers; Perry had received his appointment as Civil Agent with a $100 per month salary on Aug. 31, 1866, effective Aug. 1, 1866. Rembert W. Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation (1967), 100-101; Tallahassee Semi-Weekly Floridian, Sept. 6, 1867; An Act for the Removal of Certain Disabilities for the Persons therein named, 15, U.S. Statutes at Large, July 20, 1868, 386-389.

52 Tampa *Florida Peninsular*, July 20, 1867.

53 Samuel J. Pearce to Gov. Harrison Reed, Aug. 14, 1869, Correspondence of Governors, 18574888, M. Perry, Milton, Walker and Reed, County Appointments and Recommendations, 1868-72, Hernando Hillsborough and Holmes Counties, RG 101, Ser. 577, Box 2, FSA.

54 Henry Rountree to Gov. Harrison Reed, March 21, 1870, RG 101, Ser. 577, Box 2, FSA.

55 H. Reed, Governor, Hernando County, "Changes made," April 9, 1870, RG 101, Ser. 577, Box 2, FSA. In 1869 Perry was Superintendent of Public Instruction for Hernando County. See Stanaback, *History of Hernando County*.

56 Charles Moore and John A. Henderson to Gov. Harrison Reed, Jan. 13, 1870, RG 101, Ser. 577, Box 2 FSA.

57 J. H. Bull to Gov. Harrison Reed, Jan. 26, 1870, Legislative Reports of Senate Action on Nominees, 1868-71, RG 101, Ser. 577, Box 4, FSA; Office of the Secretary of State, RG 151, Ser. 259, v. 28, FSA.

58 Tampa *Florida Peninsular*, Jan. 26, 1870.


66 Barbara Baisden Wall Tombstone, Lykes Cemetery, Old Spring Hill, FL; Family Group Sheets provided by Ann McGinn Huddart.


68 *Tampa Tribune*, July 9, 10 1897; *Tampa Weekly Times*, July 15, 1897; Probate File of Perry G. Wall, Hillsborough County, FL. In his will, Perry noted the "dissolute life" of his grandson, John Perry Wall, Jr., the son of Dr. Wall, who had died in 1895. He ordered the disinherition of John Perry, Jr., unless he abstained from intoxicating liquors for five years and was freed, either by "death or divorce" from his wife. In July 1902, the executors reported that John Perry, Jr. had substantially complied with the conditions and was now leading a sober and industrious life. But he had other problems, and was reputedly a cocame addict. He ended his life with a "bullet through his brain," Aug. 27, 1922. *Tampa Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1922; Grismer, *Tampa*, 330. His half brother, Charles McKay Wall, became Tampa's notorious "gambling czar" and was murdered in 1955. See Frank Aldulno, "The Damnest Town This Side of Hell: Tampa, 1920-29 (Part 1)" *Sunland Tribune* 16 (November 1990), 1445.

69 *Tampa Tribune*, July 10, 1897.

70 *Tampa Weekly Times*, July 15, 1897; *Tampa Tribune*, July 9, 10, 1897.


72 McKay, "Perry G. Wall."

73 Sexton's Records of Interments, 1908, Woodlawn Cemetery, City of Tampa Archives; Tampa City Council Minute Book VIII, 76, Nov. 17, 1908, City of Tampa Archives.

74 "A Handsome Monument," *Tampa Tribune*, Aug. 7, 1898. Described as 6'6" long; 6' high; and 4'10" in width and weighing 9 tons, it was moved to Woodlawn after Perry's re-interment there. Sarah Watlington Wall died Jan. 3, 1900 in Key West and was buried in the city cemetery there. Ocala *The Florida Baptist Witness*, March 7, 1900. See tombstone at Woodlawn.

The author would like to thank Ann McGinn Huddart, J. Edgar Wall, III, Marianne Ellis Bradley and Canter Brown, Jr, for their assistance.
Florida’s history texts have not been kind to Madison Starke Perry, fourth governor of the State. Little is known about him, his letter-books have not survived and he has not been the study of any academic tome. When he has been noticed, it is for his strident call for secession or the settlement of the boundary dispute with the State of Georgia. Even in the standard versions of the Florida Handbook, he receives little attention for his career in the legislature or his accomplishments in other fields. Those who have taken notice of Perry have usually been writing on the careers of his political enemies, thus he often appears short-sighted, radical or a virulent "fire-eater" bent on the destruction of the Union. It is, therefore, time to take a new and more complete look into the career of Madison Starke Perry. The only significant work done on the governor has been a brief "Chronology of the Life and Career of Madison Starke Perry..." by Donald J. Ivey, currently the curator of collections at the Pinellas Historical Museum, Heritage Park in Largo, Florida. With his able assistance, we can report on some of the findings regarding the early life of this controversial, yet neglected figure, of Florida history. He was born in the year of 1814, although the exact date has gone unrecorded. It is believed that his father, Benjamin Perry, Jr., a Revolutionary War veteran, who died before he was born, and he was reared by his mother, Mary Starke Perry, until he was sent off to the Franklin Academy in Lancaster, South Carolina, not far from where he was born. His mother remarried, to one William Dixon, but the date is not recorded in the Perry family history and the relationship between possible step-father and son remains a matter of speculation. All of the Perrys of South Carolina were strong Presbyterians and the future governor’s sister, Wilmoth, who married her second cousin, John Perry, was one of the founders of the Liberty Hill Presbyterian Church. While attending the Franklin Academy, in Lancaster County, South Carolina, he was known affectionately as "Stark". Perry appears to have been noted early as a leader, although not always for his positive attributes. Dr. J. Marion Sims, later famous as the "Father of Gynecology," tells the story of the usual school days’ prank of placing a pin on the teacher’s seat, in which his classmate, Madison Starke Perry, was considered the prime suspect. Perry, as the story goes, did not give in to the fierce look and "sardonic smile" of the teacher, and steadfastly maintained, "No sir, I did not; and moreover I don’t know who did put it there," even though he was the last student questioned. The good doctor, somewhat shamefacedly, admits in his memoir that he was one of the guilty parties and Perry was not. He matriculated from the Franklin Academy and entered the College of South Carolina in 1830. There he made a name for himself while in the Euphradian Society, as a debator and orator. The Society was a student organization for the promotion of debating, literature and public speaking, and
Perry appears to have been a leader during his student days. He was also known, reports Ivey, for being "censored for improprieties on many occasions." For reasons unknown at the present time, Perry appears to have left the college in the summer of 1831. It is quite likely that he returned to his family's property in Lancaster County and became a farmer.

The next known notice of his life comes with his marriage to Martha Peay Starke, whom Ivey correctly believes was a cousin of the future governor. Five years later, their first child was born, Madison Starke Perry, Jr. Two more years pass and the Perry family decided to move to the new state of Florida, settling on land near the present town of Rochelle, in Alachua County. Within a very short time of this move, Sarah J. Perry was born in their new home and Perry becomes permanently attached to his new state.

Perry's fortunes were relatively good in his new home. The 1850 Census shows that he was 37 years of age, had a wife, Martha, not Mary, and two children. Also living with the household was a lady named Mary L. Abbott, who was also from South Carolina and may have been a relative of the family. His occupation is listed as "farmer". His property was estimated to have been worth about $1,500, which would indicate moderate wealth. Although comfortable, this does not compare with the wealth of Bennett Dell ($20,000) or Thomas Prevatt and Henry Bauknight (each with $10,000). Within the next decade, his fortunes were to rise to the point where his property was estimated to have been worth $30,000 and his personal estate nearly $36,000. He would also own, as of the 1860 Census, 33 slaves. Perry's prosperity is evident in these figures.

Arriving in Florida in 1847, Perry's political fortunes also rose rapidly, being elected to the Florida Senate in the election of 1849. What Perry stood for has been the subject of some minor debate, however, he is almost universally regarded as part of the "South Carolina school" which also include John C. McGehee and James Broome; the former the leader of the secessionist convention and the latter Florida's third governor, both of whom, like Perry, were from South Carolina. This group believed in the states' rights theories of John C. Calhoun and held it as a matter of principle that each state, as an independent member of the confederation, had the right to secede from the Union if it believed that its prerogatives and constitutional rights were being violated. They also looked to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolves as a source of their belief concerning the relationship of each individual state to the Union as a whole.

When one looks at the census for Alachua and Marion counties in 1850 and 1860, one of the striking features is the large number of people from South Carolina and Georgia, who obviously held similar theories of government to Perry and Broome. Both of these counties, is should be borne in mind, outnumbered Leon and some of the other northern tier counties in white, voting population, a basic fact often overlooked by some commentators on the Florida secessionist movement.

Because of the small size of the Florida Senate, Perry served on a number of committees, including Taxation and Revenue, State of the Commonwealth, Claims and Accounts, Agriculture, Militia and Corporations. After Governor Thomas Brown presented his State of the State address, Perry moved into committee, those portions of the governor's program that were agreed upon as suitable for legislative action. His first personal actions came on
behalf of individuals who had claims against the State, and as an active member of the Claims committee, this could be expected. But the big question of this session was what to do with State lands, especially since the Federal government had passed the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act of 1850, which promised to give title to millions of acres to the State of Florida. In a special message to the General Assembly, Governor Brown noted this act and stated his position: "The terms of the act making this grant declare, 'That the proceeds of said lands, whether from sale or direct appropriation, shall be applied exclusively, so far as necessary, to the purpose of reclaiming said lands, by means of levees and drains aforesaid.' To comply with this condition, some provision," Brown declared, "should be made for a scientific reconnoisance of these lands. Indeed, it may with truth be said that no reasonable estimation can be formed of the value of the grant, until such reconnoisance shall have been made." He thereupon made the recommendation for the appointment of a competent engineer, geologist, to be in charge of such a venture.  

This amendatory act, is also objectionable, in that it repeals the 9th section of the original charter, which provides that the stockholders shall be severally and individually liable to the amount of stock held by them respectively:’ giving thereby the entire benefit of the speculation to the corporators, should the scheme prove successful, but depriving honest citizens, who might become creditors of the company for labor or supplies, of their only chance for security, should the scheme prove a failure.  

It should be noticed that in vetoing the bill, he did not say the entire project was improper, only the way in which the power and rewards were to be distributed. In light of the future differences between this railroad, and its leadership, namely David Levy Yulee, and Madison Starke Perry, it is most interesting to see that on January 3, 1851, when the Senate voted to override Brown’s veto, Madison Starke Perry voting with the majority, thus re-incorporating the railroad, which soon changed its name to the Florida Railroad.  

On the subject of internal improvements, generally, it should be noted that during this session of the Senate, Perry did not vote against any of the major proposals, which being contemplated, directly violated this provision of the State’s constitution. What also grated the Governor’s sensibility was that three of the directors of the corporation were not citizens of the State of Florida, and had no interest in her people or their welfare. Also, the charter was vague on the subject of stock sales or subscriptions, which, Brown believed, needed to be regulated in the interest of the people. Finally, Brown questioned the propriety of giving so much power to so few people, and not holding them accountable.

Another question regarding lands revolved around the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Railroad venture, which was to build a railroad across the State of Florida from somewhere on the Atlantic coast to somewhere on the Gulf coast. The railroad, itself, had been chartered in the previous session of the legislature, however, in 1850, there appeared an amendment to the charter which Governor Brown thought to be dangerous. Brown noted, in his rejection letter, that the constitution of the State of Florida stated specifically, "That perpetuities and monopolies are contrary to the genius of a free State, and ought not to be allowed." The charter and the amendment thereto, then
included the incorporation of the Wacissa and Ocilla Navigation Company, numerous plank road companies and the establishment of certain ferry boats across Florida’s multitude of streams and rivers. Perry, clearly, was not opposed to the concept of State chartering or funding of internal improvements.

The most notable role played by Perry in this session was as chairman of the Committee on Taxation and Revenue. The collection of taxes on the Florida frontier had been a vexing problem since the Territorial days. The State never received all of the money that was due by law, and little could be done on the local level to procure these funds, so necessary to the functioning of the State. Perry and his committee tried valiantly to wrestle with this problem. The bill filed to correct these problems was referred to as, "An Act relating to the duties of Tax Assessors and Tax Collectors, and for other purposes," which had first passed the legislature on January 9, 1849. The committee reported its substitute for this bill on December 21, 1850. What was proposed was the specific setting of times for the assessing of the taxes, with books open to the public for inspection, the collection of these taxes, the setting of the time limits for hearings in front of the County Commissioners, in case of over-charges and insolvencies, and the time limit for the settling of accounts with the Comptroller's office and payment to the Treasurer. A further House amendment was added referring to movable property and the taxing thereof beginning at the next assessment period, which was concurred in by the Senate. All the work trying to get this bill in workable form failed to impress the other Senators and the bill did not become law. However, many reforms of the taxing system did pass through this committee, including acts to fix the compensation of Tax Assessors, require the County Commissioners to examine and certify the assessments, and defining the terms of office for Tax Assessors and Collectors. Throughout the session, Perry did his job well, attended almost every meeting and cast his vote on almost every issue.

Perry did not serve as Senator in the next session of the legislature, convened in 1852, but he did make one appearance in Tallahassee at that session. In this case, he argued strongly, and apparently successfully, for the moving of the county seat of Alachua County from Newnansville to Gainesville. This location made the county seat more accessible to citizens of the southern part of the county, especially Micanopy, Spring Grove and other settlements.

Madison Starke Perry next served in the Florida Senate in 1855, and filed, on the second day of the session, a bill for the draining of Orange Lake. This was a logical extension of the law passed in the previous session entitled, "An Act to authorize the Drainage of Alachua Savannah [Chapter 614, Laws of Florida]. Perry was a "commissioner" for the corporation which had the rights to drain this land, with the power to assess adjacent land owners up to $35,000 to help cover the cost of such drainage. The concept was to drain the water from the Alachua Savannah through the River Styx and into Orange Lake and thence, out to the Ocklawaha via an improvement of Orange Creek. All of the land exposed by this venture was assumed to be very rich and fertile, therefore, profitable for sale or farming. Also tied into these "improvements" was the creation of the "Palatka and Micanopy Plank Road Company," which was also incorporated in this 1855 session. Again, Perry, along with David Levy Yulee, William D. Mosely,
Elias Bauknight, William A. Forward, and others served as one of the incorporators. The whole scheme of improvement, now takes a more definite shape. Drain the land, sell or use it, and ship the produce out on the plank road. With the power to tax and possible land grants from the State, the costs to these investors would be relatively small and the whole area would benefit from the improvements of the land and transportation.  

As in his earlier stint in the Senate, he had numerous committee assignments which included, State of the Commonwealth, Corporations, Judiciary, Federal Relations, and, again, Taxation and Revenue. One additional select committee needs mention here, because of its general importance, was Census and Apportionment. Among his other actions in this session included a petition from the president and secretary of the East Florida Seminary related to funding and the organization of the school. But, again, the most important bill in the legislature that year was the legislation that organized the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. This important board was established in January of 1855 under the "Act to provide for and encourage a liberal system of Internal Improvements in the State." This act was to be supplemented by "An Act to facilitate the construction of the various lines of Rail Roads ..." which, in essence, meant the Florida Railroad and the others established in earlier sessions. The main feature of this act was to reduce the number of miles of railroad completed from twenty to ten before the railroad could receive lands under the Internal Improvements Act. It also allowed "other competent engineers" to inspect the line for proper construction and funneled all details through the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, which was a revised and improved version of the old Internal Improvement Fund board which had proved to be too unwieldy and politically controversial.  

Reports on Internal Improvements, especially the attempt to allow towns along the proposed routes to subscribe stock in the new roads, were frequently filed by the busy Internal Improvements Committee. In almost every instance, Perry voted for the proposed improvements or the amendments to their charters.  

Senator Perry did try to have the constitution of the State amended so as to make the sessions of the legislature annual instead of biennial. After seeing this bill indefinitely postponed after the second reading, he later saw the House of Representatives fail to agree to such a proposal. Thus, his attempt to make the legislature more responsive failed to get much support.  

Because some historians have reported that the one of the major accomplishments of Perry's governorship was the final resolution of the Florida/Georgia boundary, it would be well to recognize that this item appeared before almost every legislature from 1848 to 1860. The line was imperfectly run, which was known by nearly everyone, because of the attempt to retrace the boundary allegedly run by Andrew Ellicott in 1798-99. The first two runnings of the line, by McNeill and Watson, proved unsatisfactory when errors were discovered in their lines, leaving jogs and hiatuses in their wake. Governor Broome had selected Benjamin E Whitner, Jr. to run the said line and had placed his father, Benjamin E Whitner, Sr. in the role of Commissioner. The son received his compensation, however the father did not. In 1855, Broome asked the legislature to correct this oversight. He was not successful. However, the line was not completed at the end of the session and Whitner had to work further with Georgia's designee, Mr. Orr, to get the final line in
proper shape. Although the two States and the Federal Government were in agreement during Perry’s governorship, the final settlement of the issue did not take place until 1885, when the last legal arguments were heard in front of the Supreme Court of the United States. Perry’s actual role in the settlement of the issue consisted of exchanging correspondence with the Governor of Georgia and Florida’s congressional delegation. Although an important part of the Perry administration, it hardly ranks as one of its great accomplishments. In the 1855 Session, Perry listened to Broome’s plea for just compensation for the venerable Whitner and, on December 8th, he did vote to have the Governor appoint a commissioner to work with one from Georgia to finalize the line.

As noted earlier, Perry did get his bill passed to allow the drainage of Orange Lake. This was not the only local bill that he persuaded his colleagues to agree to. He also guided through the process, resolutions relative to the aid of the "Micanopy and Pilatka Plank Road Company" whereby the Federal government was asked to give up part of the Palatka Military Reserve lands to said company. Additionally, he helped the legislature see its way clear to pass a resolution regarding the establishment of a mail route through Newriansville. He introduced and oversaw the passage of a Senate Resolution which requested the governor to furnish arms and equipment for a volunteer unit of cavalry, under the command of Tillman Ingram, at Micanopy. Whether the governor complied with this resolution or not is not know at this time, nor is the reason for its passage at that late date.

What can be said about Madison Starke Perry’s legislative career? Fundamentally, he was a strong proponent of internal improvements, sometimes, apparently, for his own personal benefit. He tried to take care of his local constituents’ needs and wants, often filing bills on their behalf. His interest in taxation and revenue put him in a position of some power relative to other senators. His attempts at reform of the laws or the constitution did not measure up to his expectations, however, in proposing them, he paved the way for later reform, especially in regards to tax collectors and tax assessors. Like most legislators in a frontier state, he had some success and some failure, but, and this is the important matter, because of his legislative career and the contacts he made or forged, he smoothed his own path to the governorship.

The machinations behind the nomination of Madison Starke Perry for the Democratic candidate for governor of Florida are unknown at this time, as little of the convention proceedings were reported in the press of the day. However, like all things political, the deals must have been made before the credentials committee reviewed each delegate’s pass. What is known is simple and direct. Perry’s name was put into nomination by Fred L. Villepigue, of Leon County, and opposed by M. A. Long, of Leon County and Dillon Jordan, of Escambia County. As the Tallahassee Floridian & Journal reported it; "After several unsuccessful balloting under the two thirds rule, the names of Messrs Long and Jordan were withdrawn, when the Hon. MADISON STARKE PERRY received the unanimous vote of the Convention. ..." Long was made a Presidential Elector for Middle Florida and Jordan was compensated by being named a Delegate to the National Convention. On its editorial page, the Floridian & Journal had the following to say about its candidate:
The high characters of the nominees of the Convention are known to many, if not most of the citizens of the State. Col. Perry, the candidate presented for the gubernatorial Chair, is a native of South Carolina, residing in Florida since 1847, and is a noble specimen of the intelligent Southern planter, well informed touching the institutions and history of our government. He does not belong to that tribe of the genus homo who "watch the tide of opinion and fish at the flood," but has ever been, and ever will be honest and unfaultering in his devotion to the great principles of our party; and his political friends will have reason to admire his bold and fearless advocacy of right, and a determined will to do his duty without fear, favor, or affection. In a word, he possesses all the qualifications to make an excellent administrative officer, where he shall have been placed, as he will be if he lives, in the Executive chair of Florida.26

With such a ringing endorsement from most of the Democratic press of the State, Perry was on his way to the governorship.

Yet, there were many problems facing the State and nation before he made his way to Tallahassee as governor of Florida. One of the most important was the continued problem of the Indians in South Florida. By the time the convention had met, the first shots had been fired in the Third Seminole War and troops throughout the State were on the move. Many areas, including Micanopy, were holding public meetings to urge the Federal government to put an end, once and for all, to this nagging presence. On May 26, 1856, the Micanopy meeting was called and passed a number of resolutions urging the expulsion of the Seminoles and censoring the Federal government for, "the tardy and inefficient movements of the General Government in providing the requisite means for defending our State against the evils of a savage warfare and in expelling from her borders, a race of beings who are wholly devoid of every sense of moral obligations. The residents also urged Governor Broome to enlist state troops to do what the Federal Government would not, and offered to raise a company of armed volunteers for the effort. The meeting was chaired by G. W. Means and A. W. Coog served as Secretary.27 Concern was statewide and Perry must have felt the necessity of trying to bring the war to a quick conclusion.

However, it was the problems stirring in the nation that received most of the attention of Floridians and candidate Perry. Uppermost in everybodies’ mind was the growth of abolitionist sentiment in the North, the rising fortunes of the new Republican Party and the state of the Union should the Republican Party take power in the near future. Perry was under no illusions as to his position. As a native of South Carolina and a student of the teachings of John C. Calhoun, if the matter came to living under a "Black Republican" regime or secession, there was really no choice. The enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, the expansion of Slavery into the new Territories, the Dred Scott Decision, all hammered home the problems of the nation seeking to find some solution short of war.

During the campaign for governor, the national issues took the lead over state or local matters. The last two weeks of July 1856 saw Perry and his Democratic Colleague, Judge George B. Hawkins, the candidate for Congress, canvass the Eastern and Southern portions of the State, picking
up valuable support. In his home county, Perry was greeted with the following resolution of the Democratic caucus: "That the democracy of Alachua County, are proud to place so able and so true a man as Madison S. Perry before the people of Florida for the office of governor." His address to the Alachua democrats returned the favor. Yet, canvassing in the summer heat and across the notoriously poor roads of Florida took its toll on Perry and by August 16, the Floridian & Journal was reporting that ill health had forced the candidate to remain home and recover from his "precarious" health. All throughout the campaign, Perry and Hawkins hit on the national issues, particularly the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the fact that the Fillmore administration had abandoned the South. Because David S. Walker, the Know-Nothing candidate for governor, allegedly contradicted the Fillmore position, yet had the onus of bearing the same party into the election in Florida, this position, according to the newspapers, was questionable. Politically it was like a dead weight upon Walker's shoulders. David Walker also had to face charges of land speculation from his position of Register of State Lands and this, too, crippled his campaign. However, Walker's good showing, despite the odds, made it clear the Madison Starke Perry was not a land-slide winner. The final margin, as reported in Tallahassee; Perry 5,887, Walker 5,562, a narrow margin of 325.

The mood of the times was well reflected in the 1857 July 4th celebration in Micanopy. The opening declaration was read by T C. Webb and the formal Oration by J. J. McDaniel and these were followed by the toasts. Dr. J. A. Stewart toasted the governor-elect, "M. S. Perry, Gov. elect of Florida: An honest and fearless patriot, he is worthy of his country's honors." J. J. McDaniel, however, reflected on the origins of many in the audience: "South Carolina: The good old Mother State that has given so many of her enterprising sons and fair daughters to Florida, who has adopted them as her own." Jason Hemingway sounded a different note: "Southern Institutions: Let us bow down to their shrines and devoutly cherish their holy alters." Dr. Stewart, offering a second toast, stated: "The political fellowship of the South: A consummation devoutly wished for." No matter how good the mutton, the fresh fish, squashes, cucumbers, melons, etc. nor how well the Micanopy band played that day could cover the political feelings of the party goers while they sat down at their 200 foot long table.

As the Indian war wore down in Southern Florida, the news elsewhere was not as good. One of the main reasons for this was the conflict that now arose between two former friends and political allies, Madison Starke Perry and Senator David Levy Yulee. The cause of the disagreement was the route of the Florida Railroad, of which Yulee was the president. Yulee, after acquiring most of old Fernandina and land around Cedar Key, decided to construct the line straight between those two points, instead of building it from Fernandina to Tampa, as originally contemplated, with a "branch" to Cedar Key. Yulee's reasoning for this move was that this was the more direct for mail, transhipment of goods and it went through some of the best cotton lands in the state, whereas Tampa, although recoginzed as a superior port, was less direct, the route required numerous bridges and trestles, and the land along it was less desirable than that of the Cedar Key route. However, Perry felt quite differently about this decision. For his part, he saw the new route as a betrayal of promises to the leaders of Middle Florida and Tampa. The act had specifically stipulated that the line would run from
Fernandina to Tampa, hopefully through the major settlements of Middle Florida, i.e. Micanopy, Ocala, and Gainesville. Personally, it meant possible financial ruin for the schemes of developing the area around Orange Lake, Ocala, and the draining of the Alachua Savannah, and the creation of the plank road company, for which he had worked so hard, pushing them through the legislature and creating interest among investors.33

Yulee and Perry had been close political allies until the break. Perry had helped to fight against the rise of the power of the Know-Nothings and had written to Yulee, on August 11, 1856, urging him to come south to canvass the State to put a stop to, "Westcott and some others whom you would not suspect."34 Ten days later, Perry wrote to Joseph Finegan, the contractor for the railroad, that he was returning the "Articles of Incorporation" but could not send in his subscription at that time because of a recent land purchase and low cotton prices. He also promised Finegan that there would be a good turn out for Maxwell in Micanopy and that Governor James Broome would stump the State for the regular ticket. Perry also noted that he hoped that Yulee would, "put shoulder to the wheel with us," in defeating the opposition. Finally, with an eye toward the "Impending crisis", he informed the future general that he hoped to, "have a working majority of States Rights men in the Legislature."35 As if to over-emphasize the point, as late as December 9, 1856, Perry was giving Yulee the inside information as to the results of the Democratic Caucus for U. S. Senator, in which Stephen Mallory defeated William W. Loring by a 20 to 18 vote.36 Earlier correspondence found in the Yulee Papers indicates a social realtionship between the two politicians, wherein Perry is found sending a basket of home-grown peaches to Mrs. Yulee and wishing for her continued good health. All of these evidences of friendship and political alliance fell by the way when it came to the power of the newly elected governor verses the might of the U. S. Senator and President of the Florida Railroad.

The main issue given as the cause of the break was the route of the Florida Railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Key. Yulee had long considered the latter port as the most likely route for the railroad, with an extension to Tampa at a later date. As early as August 22, 1849, he had written the Surveyor General asking for the distances and surveys between the St. Marys River and "Way Key on the Gulph of Mexico, in a direct line."37 The Senator had engineered the passage of an act to survey for a route across the State of Florida for a possible canal, although this was simply a cover for the railroad route. He had even gone to the expense of hiring the same engineer away from the Topographical Engineers, M. L. Smith, to do the work of expanding on the route and sounding the harbor at Cedar Key. All of this preliminary work was done between 1853 and the publication of the Smith report in 1855.38

It is clear that, by 1854, Cedar Key was the primary Gulf Coast terminous for the railroad, with Tampa as the secondary port. One of the primary reasons for this decision was the potential connection with the upper Gulf ports, such as Mobile and New Orleans. This connection would also bring, as Yulee well knew, a lucrative mail contract which would help pay for the expenses of constructing the road and be a continuing source of income for many years to come. Also, the route was relatively well-known from the engineering stand point and was the most direct route possible to an established port. Tampa, on the other
hand, would require, by its more “remote” location, a much more elaborate survey and present many more engineering difficulties.

The concept of going direct to Cedar Key was not lost on Yulee's supporters, including Tampa's Jesse Carter. Carter had expressed concern for the Tampa-first idea and had hoped he had secured Yulee's assurances that this would come to fruition. When it became apparent that the Florida Railroad was not going to come to Tampa first, a near revolt among Tampa Democrats hit the pages of the newspapers. Carter's friendship with Yulee and his political support of Yulee's candidacy for the U. S. Senate, based upon what he conceived of as promises by Yulee to support the Tampa-first proposal, became an embarrassment for the popular General. By the middle of 1859, Carter felt forced to publish some of the 1854 correspondence between himself and members of the Board of Directors for the Florida Railroad, including Yulee. Each of these letters contain hedges concerning the planned route, but all mention Tampa as the primary point of concern. Indeed, the chief rival to Tampa, if one reads each published piece carefully, was not Cedar Key, but Charlotte Harbor. However, anticipating the storm over the "trunk" verses the "branch" that was to be the heart of most of the arguments against the railroad's decision to go first through to Cedar Key, Yulee noted: "The difference between a branch and a road is the difference between tweedle dee and tweedle dum. I would as soon have one part of the road called a branch as the other." Either the Tampa, Charlotte Harbor or Cedar Key route, apparently, would have suited the directors of the line. One point becomes crystal clear in almost every letter, if the local governments (city or county) would offer certain inducements, in addition to the State and Federal grants, the line's route would be influenced by the amount and type of such favors. This was not to be a privately financed venture.

The question concerning the routes available to the line was of paramount importance to each community. The charter of the company initially read from a port on the Atlantic to a point on the Gulf, with no specification. Political reality forced the issue with the passage of the Internal Improvements Act of 1855, which specifically stated that Tampa would be that point. Yulee, writing to Governor James Broome, the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (hereafter Trustees), accepted the new provision in a cautiously worded manner: "I beg leave to say that they [the board of directors] propose to construct a road from Amelia Island in the direction of Tampa as far as a point proper for divergence to Cedar Key, and from said diverging point to Cedar Key by way of extension, and that if the amendment to the Charter of the Company now pending in the General Assembly is granted, they will also construct the balance of the road from the diverging point to Tampa." Local pressure in Tampa, however, did not accept the Senator's agreement and forced a frustrated response from him.

Gentlemen. Doubts having been expressed as to the sufficiency of the notices heretofore given, and as the efficacy of the terms of the first sect. of the act of Decr. 1855 amending the charter of the Fla. R.R. Co., in placing the part of the route between Cedar Key and Tampa junction, within the provisions of the Internal Improvement Act without any special notice, I do hereby and now, to put at rest any future doubts, formally notify the trustees of the
full acceptance by the Florida Railroad Company of the provisions of the act of January 6, 1855 entitled "An act to provide for and encourage a liberal system of Internal Improvement" for that part of the route designated in their amended charter, which lies between Tampa & the point of junction with the Cedar Key extension, or in other words for all that part of the route covered by their charter, which may not be regarded by the Trustees to be included in the effect of the notice filed by them of the date March 6, 1855.41

Yulee, even invited the editor of the Peninsular to meet with him to discuss the actions of the company noting, "It being our Interest & desire to see a road built through to Tampa, which your people also desire."42 Of course, this did not end the debate in public or private. Throughout the period 1856 to 1859, the debate raged on in the papers of the State, particularly after Governor Perry refused to sign the bonds promised the company for completion of specified amounts of work.

Early on, the debate in the papers and the meetings held in various localities had been dismissed as local political talk. In May of 1855, Yulee wrote to Finegan: "Don't be concerned at the Tampa movement. It is a Know Nothing concern. It may effervesce still further, & spread to other counties. So much the better...at the right moment we will go before them. Being confident of Right. We need have no fears. The further they go the better. Meanwhile the News could be spreading good thoughts."43 But the agitation against the railroad did not go away and the campaign to get a railroad to Tampa picked up momentum as time passed.

One of the major problems facing the railroad was in its method of financing its construction. The State, through the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, had agreed to underwrite the construction by the issuance of a series of bonds which could be sold by the railroad or exchanged for other acceptable bonds. The company, in order to receive this payment, had to construct a specified number of miles of railroad before the Trustees would allow the issuance of more bonds to back the building of more of the line. This construction would have to be inspected by the State Engineer who, in turn, would certify to the Trustees that the construction was up to specifications, enough iron was on hand to build more of the road, land had been cleared and the right-of-way graded and drained. Once the Trustees received the engineer's certification, the governor, acting as the chief executive officer of the Trustees would, along with the State Treasurer, sign the bonds and release the funds for further work.

The Florida Railroad, also had engaged in the sale of bonds prior to the revamped State structure. As the railroad progressed, these earlier bonds came due and put extra pressure on the railroad to find other funding or force the Trustees to issue more bonds at a faster rate by constructing more line. For Perry, and other critics of the line, this arrangement looked as if the railroad was building its line and paying off its earlier debt with State funds, while not meeting the specifications for construction and holding local communities and counties hostage, by requiring subscriptions, before the line would be built in those areas.

Even prior to Perry's rise to the governor's office, Yulee and the railroad had problems getting the Trustees to get the bonds issued and the funds allotted. Writing in July of 1856, Yulee notified Governor Broome that some of the earlier bonds were due and that
the railroad’s credit was endangered by the slow response coming from Tallahassee. The success of the work was dependent upon the timely paying of the debts and, he insisted: "... the less the companies lose upon these bonds, the better is the fund secured against loss." This implies that some companies had already lost money on the venture and were looking to Yulee to help cut their losses. In this same letter, the Senator complained about the unequal treatment his rail road received from the Trustees as compared with the Tallahassee Railroad Company, who also had bonds under written by the Trustees, a point he had made earlier that year in another letter.44

One of the main causes of these requests and letters was the relatively high price paid for the construction of the bridge across the Nassua River, which cost the company nearly $100,000. The contracting company for this construction was that of Joseph Finegan, a major investor in the Florida Railroad Company and, later, a member of the Board of Directors.45 These high costs and the problems of getting iron and cross-ties on time, plagued the early construction of the railroad.

Perry, was mild in his inaugural address to the State, noting the "gratifying" progress of the railroads in general. However, he did give a carefully worded warning to his fellow citizens declaring that they must take, "constant care to have the trust faithfully executed for the benefit of the system and the advancement of the interest of the State." Perry had obviously sent signals to the parties concerned that he would be scrupulous in carrying out his duties, as he perceived them, as governor, especially regarding the paying of the interest on the bonds issued by the Florida Railroad Company. In February of 1857, David S. Walker wrote to Yulee that the State did have the funds on hand to pay the interest on the Florida Railroad bonds, including a personal note for $3,000 given by Walker himself. Walker further noted to the Senator that Perry had, "manifested the proper interest" in this issue, and had sent Henry Wells to Washington D.C. to (hell) the State collect funds due the State from the Federal government.46 Perry was becoming suspicious of the financing of the railroad and in his message to the General Assembly, in early 1858, he noted that there was some evidence of improper certification of the railroad’s construction and progress by the State engineer, Francis L. Dancy. He further attacked the railroad for failing to build the road according to its new charter by not beginning the construction of the section of road from Bellamy Station (Waldo) to Tampa Bay. The governor went so far as to threaten the chartering of another railroad to build this route if the present one would not live up to its legal and moral obligation. In his final sniping at the railroad, he questioned the ability of the harbor at Cedar Key to handle ships of ocean-going proportions, noting the significant lack of depth of the main channel, which admitted vessels drawing only ten feet of water at low tide, two and a half feet too shallow for the average ocean-going vessel of the day.47 These damning statements fed the political fire of the day and brought into question the relationship between government officials and the railroad.

The problems with the harbor at Cedar Key had been recognized by most for a long time prior to Perry’s 1858 address, and his threat of another line being chartered was to be expected, however, the charge that the State engineer had fraudulently certified statements with the aim of aiding the owners of the railroad was to bring the problem of influence into the open air of public scrutiny. Francis L. Dancy was not only the State engineer, but had, in March of 1857,
sought and received Perry’s endorsement for the position of Surveyor General of Florida. He was also the chairman of the Democratic party in St. Johns County and was a very capable politician. Dancy’s vast experience as a surveyor and engineer in the U. S. Army, had helped him to win a large following in St. Augustine and earn enough money to purchase an attractive piece of land along the St. Johns River, north of Palatka, which became one of the show-places of the state in the post-war era. This attack on his reputation and honor, like the Congressional investigation into his construction of the sea wall in St. Augustine, was one of the low points in his life. The fact that he had materially assisted the railroad company, as part of his State engineer’s post, prior to these charges also was played against him, even though he conceived it, correctly, as part of his duties.

When Yulee received wind of the charges against Dancy, he immediately wrote to the Trustees asking for evidence of such charges. On February 19, 1858, he stated:

Although I was not at the time in Florida, I venture assurances to the Board that the Certificate had a substantial foundation, and that no improper purpose entered into any act connected with the transaction. The sufficient proof of this is to be found in the fact that the iron for which the bonds were issued was in the State & had been actually laid upon the road to which the Certificate related, or if not laid entirely, only not so, because the chains were exhausted before quite reaching the 80 mile station, a contingency I am lead to anticipate from my last advices.

Yulee had not yet been in contact with Finegan and learned the next day, after writing the Trustees, that his suppositions were not correct. Finegan notified Yulee that:

The thirty additional miles for which the Certificate was given, if not Entirely completed, was so near that it was considered with the force then Employed on the road; that it would be Entirely so before the bonds could be issued by the Trustees. The Bonds were needed to deposite for Iron to go on rapidly with track laying, which Enabled the road during the crisis to keep up the prestige of success it had Established in the public mind. Mr. Dancy was Exceedingly rigid as he has always been, in his Examination of the work and he felt assured from the large force Employed that if there was any inconsiderable portion of the thirty miles not then completed, that it would be Entirely finished before the Certificate could be presented to the Trustees.

Yulee attempted to regroup immediately and fired off a letter to the Trustees which put a new twist on the story. Acknowledging the letter from Finegan, Yulee reported:

I infer from what he says that in the first shock of the great financial storm which had been gathering all last summer and burst into fury on the ___ day of ___, the exigency of the times required rapid movements in financial arrangements to sustain the works and prevent their suspension, and that in as much as the trustees were sometimes absent from the seat of government so that
considerable delay might be expected in obtaining signatures, the certifying officer may have certified with reference to what would be on the reasonably certain state of the work when the certificate would be acted upon. This is a possible state of the case. 51

This was a notable hedging on the part of the president of the railroad, who was, at that moment, experiencing agony over the problems of the bond sales which had been severely prejudiced by Perry's refusal to sign these instruments. 52

By mid-April, Dancy had yet to be informed of Perry's charges, presumably because he was in the field inspecting the work of his deputy surveyors. 53 Yulee personally felt that his associate and ally would be vindicated and wrote to the Trustees stating such. 54

On May 1, 1858, Dancy wrote to the Trustees in answer to these serious charges.

The rumor has reached me as to the effect, "That when upon the 18th August 1857, I certified that the Florida Rail Road had been continuously graded thirty miles of their track from the 50 to the 80 mile post, and delivered crossties for the Same. I granted a false and fraudulent certificate, and combined with that company to defraud the Internal Improvement Fund." ... I do not feel myself guilty of any such offences, and am very willing that the entire facts of the case Should be made public, and to abide by the verdict which you or the public at large may pass upon my conduct. ... This certificate was necessary in order to procure the guarantee of the Internal Improvement fund upon certain bonds of the company to be Issued for the purchase of the Iron to be laid that thirty miles and according to my construction of the Law, meant neither more or less that the work was so far progressed upon that section that the Bonds could with propriety be issued, and that the fund would not be called upon to pay interest upon bonds issued in payment for iron which there was no road prepared to receive it. At the exact date of my certificate there was perhaps as much as five miles out of the whole thirty which was not exactly in a condition to receive the Iron, but there was at the time upon these places a very large force, which could not fail to do so within a month, and certainly before it was possible for the track laying force to reach the spot where the grade was defective. ... 55

Dancy further explained that he did not consider it a fraud on the Trustees to certify the work prior to its actual completion because other parts of the construction, such as placing the culverts or other structures, usually takes place after the line has passed them. He did not think that the literal letter of the law could have been seriously followed without harming the interests of the State, Trustees and the company. Perry, in his criticism of Dancy and the company, relied heavily upon the reports of engineer John Bradford, who investigated the construction of the railroad for the Trustees.

Bradford's report of June 1, 1858, in the midst of the controversy, found that although Dancy had certified the thirty mile stretch of the road, in actuality, "... five (5) miles and twelve-hundred-and-six (1206) feet (5 1/4 miles nearly) to be laid." The job,
as certified by Dancy, had as yet to be completed. Additionally he found that the expense of the bridge crossing the Nassau River, and the bonds issued as a result, $100,000 of them, had not been nearly as expensive to build. His description was: "The trestle across Amelia Marsh is a very simple and cheap structure and has not the strength which it should have, ..." He estimated that the entire number of bridges, constructed so inexpensively, could have been built for $50,000, or half of the cost of the one bridge. Yulee responded in typical fashion and attacked Bradford's report as interpreting too much into the literal meaning of the law verses the actual spirit of it. Yulee also wrote to the Trustees with an attached letter from Captain M. L. Smith which reads very curiously.

In reply to Mr. Bradford’s expressed confidence that all the structures for the first 50 miles could have been built for 50,000 dollars, I will merely state that the money actually paid out by the Contractors for structures to cross the Amelia River and marsh and the head waters of Nassau River in order to get to the west of that stream, a distance of less than thirty miles, exceeds by many thousands the amount stated.

The letter leaves begging the question as to how close to $100,000 did those works actually cost? What ever the actual costs of the bridges and method of certification by Dancy, the whole affair cast many doubts upon the operation of the railroad and gave Perry, and his many supporters, ammunition in their fight against the railroad's directors, especially David L. Yulee.

The newspapers of the State had their own personal wars concerning this controversy, and the organs of both sides took their shots. This was especially true after Perry blasted the railroad in his address to the Trustees in June of 1859. In this controversial message, Perry stated that he believed that the Florida Railroad was operating in semi-secrecy, that the company had been selling bonds and stock certificates prior to receiving full title to the lands they were supposed to be selling along the route (mostly to pay off the initial bond holders) and, Perry stated that the State paid the company a full one-hundred dollars for its shares of company stock and received few returns, whereas the other holders of company stocks and bonds received nearly thirty-four dollars profit per share. Perry, as he stated his duty, was acting as the guardian of the State's interest as its elected first officer. He also reminded everyone: "Railroads are useful, but State credit is a pearl above all price. It is easily tarnished and to be kept without blemish, should be carefully guarded."

Of course, this broadside did not go unanswered by those favoring the railroad, including its recognized organ, the Fernandina East Floridian, which stated: "We honestly believe, that a bad man has accidentally obtained the position of our Chief Magistrate. We believe that in the position he occupies, he is doing much damage and will do more, unless exposed; which we think we are able to do."

The remainder of the press that supported the Florida Railroad, and this includes much of
the official Democratic Party press in the State, echoed these sentiments. The whole affair was sordid and brought no glory to either side.

However, one "benefit" from the controversy did come out of the smoke, that was the chartering and founding of the Florida Peninsular Railroad. The citizens of Tampa, Ocala and Micanopy became tired of waiting for the Florida Railroad to fulfill what it presumed were promises made to the inhabitants of those towns. In 1858, the movement began to get the results desired. In the attacks on the Florida Railroad, many of the authors of the missives proposed taking matters into their own hands and promoting a railroad from the junction point to Tampa Bay. Under the leadership of William B. Hooker, James McKay, Simon Turman and many others, the Tampa Bay contingent tried to rally local support for the proposed road. In late March of 1858, a meeting was to be held in Micanopy, under the sponsorship of George Leitner, however, the meeting was transferred to Ocala, where the Tampa delegates caught up with the directors of the "Alachua & Ocala Railroad Company." the meeting soon became seed-bed for the Peninsular Railroad, with each delegate pledging to purchase shares at $100 each. As reported: "The undersigned do hereby agree to take a number of shares of $100 each set opposite our names, respectively, for the purpose of constructing a Rail-Road from a suitable point of divergence for the Cedar Keys branch, via Micanopy and Ocala to Tampa." The Idea was, originally to become coequal shareholders with the Florida Railroad and have that company do the work, expending all funds subscribed on the Tampa route, however, If the Florida Railroad should refuse to go along with this plan, a separate road would be constructed using the funds subscribed as the base capital.63 On June 19, 1858, the Florida Peninsular, reported the founding of the Florida Peninsula Railroad. As the announcement read:

We are happy to be able to announce the fact, that a company under the above name, was organized in our town on the 17th inst., by the citizens of our county sided by a delegation from Micanopy, consisting of Dr. Geo. B. Payne and Col. George Leitner. ... At a subsequent metting of the Directors, Dr. S. B. Todd, was elected President of the Company, and Col. 0. B. Hart, Secretary. From the President we learn that liberal cash subscriptions have already been obtained. This movement is the very thing we needed, and we hardly rejoice in it. ... It must and will succeed, and is highly favored by our sterling patriot, Gov. Perry, whose suggestion we desire to carry out, if the people interested will but do their duty.64

This was not exactly what the principle officers of the Florida Railroad hoped for or expected. Indeed, on February 4, 1858, Finegan had written to Yulee advising a go-slow mode in negotiating with Perry concerning the signing of the bonds. "I would not write to Govr. Perry," he counselled, "until we see what we can do with our negotiations. He seems determined on an issue with us. The Ocala Movement will relieve us very much."65 The following day, Yulee wrote to R. S. Stoughton of Micanopy, that he had heard that the citizens there had subscribed enough to build the road to that destination, but that others had informed him that this was not so. Yulee warned Mr. Stoughton that the stockholders of his railroad were not inclined toward Micanopy and that any balking at subscriptions would endanger their hopes of
getting the road to that town. This approach appears to have caused many in Micanopy to look towards their colleagues in Tampa for assistance. The final result being the creation of the Peninsular Railroad.

After years of argument, postponements and stalls, the citizens of Tampa could look forward to having a railroad reach them. However, because of circumstances beyond anyone’s control, this dream was not to happen. By the time actual surveys of the route began and more money was raised, the national crisis was upon them and the road was not constructed. Yulee, even with Governor Perry’s active resistance, did get his railroad built, to Cedar Key, but only had one short year of profitable operation before the War Between the States eliminated his enterprise. The bonds issued, and reluctantly signed by Governor Perry, became the anchor around the neck for Florida’s development after the war, when Frances Vose, a New York bond broker of the House of Vose and Livingston, who had invested in the Florida Railroad prior to the war, and purchased many outstanding bonds immediately after it, at pennies on the dollar, sued the Trustees and effectively halted railroad construction until the famed Disston Purchase balled the Trustees out of bankruptcy. Thus, it would appear, that in the end, no one won in the conflict between Yulee and Perry, least of all Tampa Bay.

ENDNOTES

1 “The Perrys of South Carolina and Florida.” Typescript. Page 124. The author would like to thank Ms. Alyce Tincher and Ms. Faye Perry Melton for their assistance in obtaining this source.

2 Rebecca Starr. "Who Were Those Perrys Anyway?" Unpublished researched presented at the Perry Reunion in 1983. Copy provided to the author, who here wishes to express his deep appreciation, to Mr. J. C. "Robbie" Robertson, of Gainesville, Florida, who has been associated with the Alachua County Historical Society and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, Madison Starke Perry Camp, for many years.

3 J. Marlon Sims, The Story of My Life, 74-78. This portion of Dr. Sims memoir was, again, provided by Mr. J. C. Robertson. I do not, at this time, have the date or place of publication of the memoir.

4 Donald J. Ivey, "Chronology of the Life and Career of Madison Starke Perry, Fourth Governor of the State of Florida, 1814-1865." 1. Student Paper used with the author’s kind permission. Mr. Ivey readily recognizes the limitations of his work and plans to expand the research at a later date. However, after a computer search of the Library of Congress holdings and those of the University Microfilms catalogue, his paper is the only citation to appear, which makes this brief chronology all the more important to researchers. His bibliography is very clear and complete given the paucity of source material available.

5 “Roll of Students of South Carolina College: 1805-1905,” Columbia, South Carolina, 1906, 14. Madison Starke Perry, of Lancaster, County, appears as a sophomore in the class of 1831, but no further notice of him is given.

6 Ivey. 1-2.

7 1850 Florida Census: Alachua County. (Jacksonville, 1973), 11, 26, 34. Caution should be used with these printed sources, in this case, Perry is referenced as “Madison L. Perry.” Transcription is always less desirable than the actual document, except when the latter is unreadable.

8 Ivey, 5. Ivey has distilled these figures from the actual census rolls microfilmed at the National Archives and not from a transcribed version.


11 Ibid., 189-91.

12 Ibid., 212.

13 Ibid., 145-46.

14 Ibid., 145-46, 207.


16 Ivey, 2.


18 See, Laws of Florida, Chapter 614 (No. 5), (Tallahassee, 1855), 31-32. Also see, Joe Knetsch, "Orange Lake: Enchantment, Development, and Near Demise." Marlon County Historical Society, May 20, 1989, 6-7. (Unpublished) Copies of this paper are at the P.K. Yonge Library at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, the Marlon County Historical Society's holdings in Ocala or the State Library of Florida, Tallahassee, Florida.


21 See, Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the General Assembly of the State of Florida at Its Adjourned Session (Tallahassee, 1855). A general reading of the bills proposed and the voting on them is recorded here.

22 Ibid., 131 and 143.

23 See, Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of Florida at Its Ninth Session (Tallahassee, 1858), 31-33. Perry noted in his State of the State address, that he had good cooperation from both governors of Georgia with whom he had corresponded and expensive litigation had been precluded. The final legal suit was instigated after the War Between the States.


26 Tallahassee Floridian & Journal, April 26, 1856. 1-3.

27 Ibid., June 7, 1856. 2.

28 Ibid., July 19, 1856. 1.

29 Ibid., August 16, 1856. 2.

30 Ibid., August 2, 1856. 2. This is too limited a sample of the newspapers of the day, however, it accurately reflects the feeling of most of the Democratic papers in the State. As the overwhelming number of newspapers in Florida were Democratic organs, the mood of their readers is well represented here.

31 Tallahassee Floridian & Journal, October 25, 1856. 2.

32 Ibid., July 25, 1857. 1.

33 For a more complete discussion of this problem, see, Joe Knetsch, "The Day the Railroad Didn't Come to Micanopy," Micanopy Historical Society, Micanopy, Florida, March 9, 1996. Copies of this paper, unpublished at this date, are on file at the Micanopy Historical Society Archive, P. K. Yonge Library at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, the State Library of Florida, in Tallahassee, Florida, and at the Matheson Historical Museum, Gainesville, Florida.


35 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of August 21, 1856, Perry to Finegan.

36 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of December 9, 1856, Perry to Yulee.

38 See, Joe Knetsch, "The Day the Railroad Didn't Come to Micanopy," Micanopy Historical Society, March 9, 1996. (Unpublished) Copies of this paper are on file at the P. K. Yonge Library at the University of Florida, the University of South Florida (Special Collections), the Micanopy Historical Society, the Matheson House Museum in Gainesville, Florida, and the State Library of Florida, (Florida Room) Tallahassee, Florida.

39 Tampa Florida Peninsular, June 19, 1859. This edition contains six letters in this correspondence and each deserves careful reading. If Carter was misled, as it appears from this limited correspondence, it was done with intention.

40 "Florida Railroad: Applications for Engineers..." Old File Box, Land Records and Title Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee, Florida. Letter of March 6, 1855, Yulee to Broome. Hereafter, Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, date of letter and correspondents.

41 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of December 6, 1856, Yulee to Trustees.

42 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Undated draft of letter. It is unclear whether or not this letter was actually sent. The file has only the draft.

43 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of May 2, 1855, Yulee to Finegan.

44 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of July 22, 1856, Yulee to Broome. Also, see letter of March 28, 1856, Yulee to Broome.

45 See, Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of January 15, 1856, George W Call to Broome, Call was the Secretary of the Railroad Company.

46 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of February 17, 1857, Walker to Yulee. Henry Wells is little known outside of surveying circles. He was a U. S. Deputy Surveyor in Florida and came with the recommendations of almost the entire legislative delegation from Florida. Along with Arthur M. Randolph, he was the first selection agent for the Swamp and Overflowed Lands in Florida. His reputation as a surveyor is very good.

47 Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of Florida at its Ninth Session (Tallahassee, 1858), 121.

48 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of March 31, 1857, Perry to Dancy. The two men had met in Alligator [Lake City] and discussed his appointment to the Surveyor General's post. Perry made only one stipulation, he would support Dancy only if "Mr. E." declined to take the post. Mr. E was George Fairbanks, a member of the Board of Directors of the Florida Railroad Company and one of the political leaders of East Florida.

49 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of February 19, 1858, Yulee to the Trustees.

50 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of February 21, 1858, Finegan to Yulee.

51 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of February 20, 1858, Yulee to Trustees.

52 See, Florida Railroad Papers, DEII, Letter of March 21, 1858, Finegan to Yulee. This letter clearly explains the difficulty Finegan had in getting investors to purchase the road's bonds because of the problems raised by Perry's actions. The questioning by the governor meant, to potential purchasers, that the railroad charter may be in danger. Therefore, these potential buyers of bonds were very reluctant to enter into the venture. Finegan was working in Charleston, South Carolina at the time, but his fears were probably justified in New York and elsewhere. This was toward the middle of the so-called "Panic of 1857".

53 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of April 6, 1858, Yulee to M. D. Papy, State Treasurer and a member of the Trustees.

54 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of April 14, 1858, Yulee to Papy.

55 Florida Railroad Papers, DEII, Letter of May 1, 1858, Dancy to Trustees.

56 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter/report of June 1, 1858, Bradford to the Trustees. Bradford also reported shoddy work on many levels of the
construction, including culverts, drainage and embankments.

57 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of July 27, 1858, Yulee to Trustees. This response reads like a lawyer's brief and has the feel of cross-examination.

58 Florida Railroad Papers, DEP, Letter of July 20, 1858, Smith to Yulee. Attached to letter of Yulee to Papy.

59 Tampa Florida Peninsular, June 8, 1859. The front page is dedicated to Perry's address.

60 Ibid.

61 Fernandina East Floridian. August 18, 1859. The author would like to thank Kyle VanLandingham for providing him with good copies of this hard to find paper.

62 Ibid.

63 Tampa Florida Peninsular, March 20, 1858.

64 Ibid., June 19, 1858.

65 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of February 4, 1858, Finegan to Yulee.

66 Yulee Papers, Reel Number 2, Letter of February 5, 1858, Yulee to R. S. Stoughton.
REV. CAPT. LEROY G. LESLEY: TAMPA’S FIGHTING PARSON

By SPESSARD STONE

Leroy G. Lesley, a pioneer settler of Tampa, was a minister, soldier, cattleman and civic leader, who travelled down the center of the road never pulling out for anyone.

Leroy Gilliland Lesley was born May 11, 1807 in Abbeville District, South Carolina. He was a son of John Harris and Mary (Gilliland) Lesly, a pious couple who observed morning and evening prayers and the Sabbath. His grandfather William Lesly, of the Scottish clan of Leslie, had colonized in South Carolina, where he was a Revolutionary War soldier, master of a 1,000-acre plantation, and served as district surveyor. Ann (Caldwell) Lesly, his grandmother, was aunt of John Caldwell Calhoun, who developed the states’ right doctrine. Thus Leroy was reared by a God-fearing, don’t tread on me family, whose traits would mold his character.¹

Leroy, accompanied by his younger brother, James Thomas Lesley, in 1829 moved to Madison County, Florida. Leroy settled eight miles from Madison where he became a planter. In Madison County on May 1, 1834, he married Indianna Chiles Livingston, born April 27, 1809, Abbeville District, South Carolina. Indianna's parents, Thomas and Nancy (Chiles) Livingston, had both died when she was a child, and she had lived with her brothers, Thomas, William and Madison C. Livingston, large land and slave holders of Madison County. Her dowry included several Negro families.²

During the Second Seminole War, Leroy served several enlistments in militia companies. First he enrolled as a private in Capt. Livingston's Company, Florida Mounted Militia, on December 10, 1835 and served to February 25, 1836. Then he enrolled December 20, 1836 at Fort Palmetto as sergeant in Capt. Livingston's Mounted Company, 1st Regiment (Warren’s) Florida Militia and was mustered out with his company and honorably discharged June 5, 1837 at Fort Palmetto. Finally, as a private he served in Capt. Livingston's Company (1st Service), Taylor's Battalion, Middle Florida Mounted Volunteers, from February 12, 1838 at San Pedro to August 14, 1838 at Ft. Jackson.³
Feeling a call to the ministry, Leroy undertook an intense course of study, which upon completion, he was ordained by Bishop Capers as a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South at the third annual conference, convened in Quincy in 1847. His first circuit was in North Florida and South Georgia. In 1848 Rev. Lesley was assigned to the Hillsborough Mission for 1849.4

Shortly after the hurricane of September 23-24, 1848, Rev. Lesley and family, consisting of wife Indianna and their children, John T, Emory L. and Mary C., arrived in Tampa. His circuit included Hillsborough and Sumter counties, then a much larger territory than the present counties. A Methodist mission awaited him as in 1846 Rev. John C. Ley "had called together the few members we had in Tampa-seventeen in number-in a small house belonging to the United States garrison and organized them into a church." In 1849 Rev. Lesley with the aid of the Tampa church established a church in Manatee. In 1851 county commissioners deeded to L. G. Lesley, Dr. E Branch, W. B. Hooker, Alderman Carlton and C. A. Ramsey, trustees for the First Methodist Church of Tampa, Lot 3 of Block 14 of the survey of 1847. The construction of a small white chapel on the northeast corner of Lafayette and Morgan streets, under Rev. Lesley's supervision, began late in 1851-52, and was completed in 1853. Heretofore, the congregation had met in such diverse places as private homes, the courthouse, and a hotel, the Palmer House. The falling health of his wife led the Rev. Lesley at the end of 1850 to retire from the active ministry; however, he continued to serve as a supply pastor.5
In July 1849 the slaying by a small band of rogue Indians of a settler at Fort Pierce and Capt. George Payne and Dempsey Whidden at the Kennedy-Darling store near now Bowling Green, fueled by rumors of Indian depredations, led to a panic-seized citizenry, fearing another war. General David E. Twiggs in late August assumed command, entered into negotiations with Indian leaders which resolved the crisis while undertaking defensive measures, which included building a chain of forts across the state. Leroy was appointed army wagon master, with initially in November less than 15 mule teams of wagons manned by Negro drivers, expanded in four months to 200, to haul supplies from Fort Brooke to inland posts.6

With peace restored, Leroy returned to his farm on the edge of Tampa. He was enumerated in the 1850 census, at which time he held in bondage seven slaves (2 males & 5 females). Neighbors included the families of: James McKay, William T Brown, B. G. Hagler (sheriff), and James T Magbee. A cattleman, he on July 8, 1851 registered his mark and brand: pail handle in each ear, LG. On the same day he registered for his son, John T., pail handle in one ear, pail handle & hole in other, LG, and for son, Emory L., pail handle in one ear, LG. In 1853 L. G. Lesley possessed eight slaves and 160 acres. The failure in 1855 of the mercantile firm of Freeman & McDonald, whose store was located at the corner of Tampa and Jackson streets, led to a five-year employment as the 7 creditors’ receiver and liquidator.7

Originally a Whig, Leroy in 1855 became a member of the Know-Nothings, or American Party. At Tampa on September 15, 1855, when the American Party held its convention, Leroy was chosen as chairman. The party, however, never was an electoral success in Hillsborough County and in 1857 did not even field a state of candidates.8

Following the outbreak of the Third Seminole War on December 20, 1855, Leroy organized his own company, Capt. Leroy G. Lesley’s Company, Florida Mounted Volunteers. Leroy arrived at Fort Meade on December 26, 1855 and was, as Capt. William B. Hooker, from his arrival in active service scouting for Indians up and down Pease Creek (Peace River), extending his operations towards the Kissimmee. By January 4, 1856 the commands of Captains Hooker and Lesley, then numbering 124 men, had been made into two companies, with Capt. Lesley commanding the upper Pease Creek and Capt. Hooker the lower. By January 12, 1856 Governor James Broome had tentatively accepted into state service six volunteer companies, including Lesley’s Company. Lesley’s lieutenants were: Streety Parker, Francis A. Hendry, and Henry A. Crane. At least eighty-three enlisted men served in his company, including his sons, John T Lesley and Emory L. Lesley. Emory, a bugler, was killed by the accidental discharge of a rifle on June 1, 1857.9

Lesley’s Company on March 23, 1856 arrived at Fort Winder, but was soon after dispatched to the Manatee settlement. Detachments were sent to protect settlers in the region and scout for Indians. Following the Indian attack on the Braden plantation in which seven slaves and other provisions were stolen on March 31, 1856, volunteers under Lt. Henry A. Crane of Capt. Lesley’s Co. and Lt. John Addison tracked the perpetrators to the Big Charlie Apopka Creek where ensued a battle on April 3 that resulted in the deaths of at least two Indians, followed by their scalplings. When on April 15 John Carney of now Bloomingdale was slain, Capt. Lesley personally led a de-
attachement to track the killers, but due to an eighteen-hour headstart was unsuccessful.  

Capt. Lesley, no sunshine soldier, stayed the course of the war. Resolutely enduring hardship and threats to his well-being from the country, he traversed the prairies, palmettos, hammocks, streams, sawgrass, and swamps of Southwest Florida scouting for Indians. Herewith follows summaries of some of those expeditions:

On October 20, 1856 Capt. Lesley crossed Peas Creek (Peace River) with fifty-eight head of beef cattle, of which he and his then twenty-eight men delivered nineteen, five days later to Fort Denaud and the balance to Fort Myers the following day. They then began a search for Indians. After crossing Fisheating Creek on October 29, they found an Indian camp that had been used to raise hogs and two days later came upon an abandoned Indian town of thirty or more houses which had been home for at perhaps one hundred Indians. They returned to Alafia on November 4. In November 1856, while differing with Capt. Sparkman on the necessity of a guard at Thomas Sumneralls' plantation at Fort Green, he observed: "If we are to protect the frontier population and stock Peas Creek or the head waters of Horse Creek should be the proper point. Between Peas Creek and Kissimme is doubtless 8 or 10 thousand head of cattle... that Indians have not or do not occupy any portion of our State North of Peas Creek."  

On January 19, 1857 Capt. Lesley led his men on a scout from Alafia to Fort Meade. Crossing Aldermans Ford, they traversed Manatee County but found no signs of Indians. On January 24 they reached the mouth of the Miakka; then five days later, near Fort Ogden, they found an old Indian town but no Indian signs. Passing "Joshs Creek," Capt. Lesley noted it as "the ground where Lt. Crane attacked the enemy last year, the bones still there as a warning to other robbers." On January 31 they reached Fort Meade. Capt. Lesley concluded, "My opinion is from the abundance of Game throughout my entire route that the Indians do not cross Peas Creek, or if so, only as spies, or single ones..."  

A scout from April 10-29, 1857 commenced at Fort Meade, then proceeded along the south prong of the Alafia River into eastern Manatee County to the Miakka River, then returned via Horse Creek, to the east side of Peas Creek where near the mouth of Charlie Apopka Creek a one or two-year-old Indian cow pen was found, then to Troublesome Creek and Fort Hartsuff where exploration of a nearby hammock found "some 2 Jugs & much sign of Indians though nothing less than a year old." Capt. Lesley concluded, "I have no hesitation in making the assertion that there are no Indians within the district assigned me."  

The Indians had sought refugee in the Big Cypress and were there pursued. On December 16, 1857, Capt. Sparkman, with the companies of Capts. Lesley and Carter, left Fort Meade and arrived on Christmas Day at Camp Rogers, near the Big Cypress, where nearby in November Capt. C. L. Stephens had briefly fought the Indians. In early January 1858 Lesley, now under Major Dozier, discovered the Indians had fled easterly after burning their town. He also reported seeing seven vacated settlements. On January 11 Capt. Simeon L. Sparkman, with the companies of Lesley, Carter and Bullock, proceeded into the Big Cypress where, after dividing into three divisions with Capt. Lesley on the right and Lt. Sparkman on the left, the latter came upon an Indian when firing commenced, with the Indian wounded and taken prisoner. The captive informed Capt. Sparkman that Sam
Jones, Assinwah and other chiefs were encamped nearby with thirty-five warriors. Trailing the elusive foe, they found their island camp, but no Indians. Continuing the pursuit, Capt. Lesley was fired on by an Indian who fled, but gave warning to his comrades who would fire from 300 or 400 yards and run off, the depth of the water and mud allowing them to evade capture. Reluctantly, it was decided to end the pursuit, but they had found a field of 20-25 acres of potatoes (which they dug 40 or 50 bushels) and beans, and in a hammock they destroyed nearly 100 bushels of corn and 10 or 12 of rice, leaving the Indians destitute of supplies. In mid-June Capt. Lesley, with twenty-six men, commanded the post at Fort Myers and remained on duty at Fort Myers although the war had been declared ended May 8, 1858 and his official record listed his service ending May 17, 1858.14

The discovery of the Indians’ sanctuary in the Big Cypress forced them to negotiate peace. In March 1858 Seminole leaders accepted peace terms and on May 4, 1858 thirty-eight warriors, including probably all of the bands of Billy Bowlegs, Assinwah, and Sam Jones, plus eighty-five women and children, departed from Fort Myers aboard the Grey Cloud. A stopover at Egmont Key took aboard over forty more Indians to exile in the west.15

A family story related Capt. Lesley’s narrow escape from death at the hands of Billy Bowlegs:

After the surrender of the Indian Chieftain, Billy Bowlegs, and while he was quartered near Tampa before he and his men were sent away he told this tale to G. grandfather, Capt. L. G. Lesley. After a hot pursuit of a band of Indians headed by Bowlegs, G. grandfather and his men thought they had the warriors surrounded in a Bayhead. The men dismounted and searched thoroughly the heavy brush but discovered not one of the wiry savages. Bowlegs told with great enjoyment how he outwitted grandfather, an officer in the U. S. Army, by hiding under a log that Capt. Lesley stood on to see over into a clump of palmettoes. He confessed openly that he would have shot him there if it would not have given away his hiding place to the other soldiers.16

Another family yarn of the war is apropos:

Great grandfather Lesley used to tell this tale on himself of how small his legs were. During the Indian war, 1855-58, he, with some of his soldiers while out on scout, stopped at a small stream to drink and refresh their horses, and fill their canteens. When Capt. Lesley (several of the older generation said that was the way all the people spoke of him, same as his son) came near the water a moccasin lying on the bank struck at him and missed. It struck the second time, missed and missed again the third time. G. grandfather remarked that a snake that could not hits its mark in two tries was not worth living, and picked up a stick and killed it.17

On April 30, 1860 Indianna Lesley died and was buried in Oaklawn Cemetery, Tampa. On May 5, 1861 Leroy married Lucy Jane Sandwich, born April 18, 1825, Lincoln County, Georgia.18 L. G. "Lesly" and daughter, Mary, were enumerated in the 1860 census of Hillsborough County, dated July 5. His son John T, "cattle drover," and wife were neighbors as were the families of
0. B. Hart, H. A. Crane, William S. Spencer (sheriff). Leroy in 1860 was taxed on 320 acres, valued at $1,000; 13 horses, asses, and mules, assessed at $925; with the bulk of his estate embodied in eleven slaves appraised at $5,500. Preparatory to removing from the county, Leroy engaged in several transactions. On October 22, 1860 Leroy G. and John T Lesley sold 1,800 head of cattle, marked SV and H, or Hooker brand turned upside down, for $2,000 to James McKay. In December 1860 L. G. Lesly advertised that on January 1, 1861 he would sell to the highest bidder his improvements in the City of Tampa, house and kitchen furniture, three head of horses, and 680 acres of land, with terms made known on day of sale. In April 1861 Leroy sold for $1,000 to William B. Hooker fractional section no. 1, of Section 24, containing 6.95 acres, and the fifth fractional part, containing 53 acres, and the sixth fractional part, containing 75 acres of section 13, township 29 South, Range 18 East, together with fractional part no. 5 of Section 18, township 29 South, Range 18 East, which was his home place on the east side of East Street, Tampa, the same being a portion of the late U. S. Military reserve near Fort Brooke.19

Thereafter, Leroy moved to a plantation known as the Ellis’ place, a few miles south of Brooksville in Hernando County. On July 5, 1861 he had purchased from Theophilus and Elizabeth Higginbotham for $1,000 200 acres, i.e., the NE 1/4 of Section t6, and the SW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Section 15 in Township 23 South, Range t9 East. In 1862 he was taxed on 11 slaves and 200 acres.

In December 1863, he and his neighbor David Hope, were engaged in the production of salt, twenty-five miles southwest of Brooksville. "Hope, Leslie & Ryals" advertised salt for $10 per bushel and that they'd give $5.00 per bushel for corn, or give one bushel of salt for two of corn. On January 16, 1864 "Hope & Leslie" gave notice that they would sell their stock of 800 head of cattle, more or less, for $20,000; also for $8,000 their salt works, producing 10 to 15 bushels per day. In 1864 L. G. Lesley was taxed on 200 acres, valued at $500, with $500 in improvements, 10 slaves assessed at $10,000, for which he paid $71.84 in county taxes and $35.92 in state taxes. In 1866 he was taxed on 200 acres.20

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Leroy had readily given his allegiance to the South. In Hernando County in 1863 he raised his own company, Captain L. G. Lesley’s Company, Col. C. J. Munnerlyn’s Battalion. Numbering about 112 men, including officers W. W. Wall, John Parsons, Anderson Mayo, David Hope, and John Knight, the company was based at Brooksville and gathered and drove beef cattle north to supply the Confederate Army. They further acted as a home guard unit, engaged in picket work and general guard duty, and kept watch on the Federal blockade runners. Capt. Lesley had also been ordered by Gen. Finegan to arrest all deserters and send them to their respective commands and assist confiscatory and conscript officers in carrying out their orders. John T Lesley in command of some 135 men, Company B, 1st Battalion Florida Special Cavalry, C. S. A., acted in a similar capacity at now Plant City.21

While on scout on the Hillsborough River about July 5, 1864, Capt. Leroy G. Lesley and six men, including Lt. John Knight and R. G. Bradley, discovered in the pine woods a camp of Federal soldiers. Hearing Lesley’s approach, the seven men fled to the edge of a swamp and attempted to defend themselves, but their guns misfired. Lt. Knight then shot one of the men, identified
only as Duncan. Capt. Lesley, accompanied by Bradley, approached Duncan, who was lying in the muck. Duncan requested that he be taken out of the water. After a coarse denunciation of Duncan, Capt. Lesley set his foot upon Duncan’s head and sank it beneath the surface of the water. Lesley’s reaction, thereafter, is disputed. It would appear though that Bradley prevented Duncan’s death by beseeching, “Oh, Captain don’t drown him.” Lesley then removed his foot from Duncan’s head, and possessing some medical skills, he then removed the ball and sent Duncan to his mother’s home.22

Meanwhile on July 1, 1864, 120 men of the Union 2nd Florida and 120 men of the 2nd U. S. Colored Troops, under the command of Capt. J. W. Childs, embarked from Fort Myers, Florida for Bayport. Landing at Anclote Keys, they on July 7 encountered pickets, and skirmishing commenced. The Federals, occasionally skirmishing with Capt. Lesley’s troops, proceeded into the interior where they halted one mile from Brooksville. On July 10, the U. S. forces raided the plantations of prominent Confederates David Hope, Aaron T Frierson, William B. Hooker, and Leroy G. Lesley. Later that evening Capt. John T Lesley was wounded by friendly fire. USA Lt. William McCullough observed:

It was now about 10 at night, and everything fixed for a fight if the enemy dared to show themselves. The party that was on the road proved to be the old Capt. Lesley, as we learned from some ladies who came in to see their sons we had taken the second morning after landing at Anclote Keys. Young [Lesley], the old Captain’s son came up, and his father taken him for one of the yankees, fired into him wounding his own son...

On July 11 the Union invaders reached Bayport. They then returned safely to Fort Myers.23

In February 1865, Major William Footman led the companies of Francis A. Hendry, John T Lesley, and Leroy G. Lesley to an illadvised attack on Fort Myers. Beset by a rain-soaked country, the expedition managed to capture eight men outside the fort and kill a black sergeant, but a demand for surrender was rejected and after a brief skirmish on February 20 the Confederates withdrew. Leroy succinctly noted:

On the trip to Fort Myers, Major Footman in command. Carried one big gun and four big, fine horses. Lot of trouble encountered getting down. Arrived at night. Think Billy Wall wanted to surprise them in an immediate attack. Footman refused saying, 'It would be a fair fight or no fight at all. Every man will be given a fair chance for his life.' Next morning a flag of truce exchanged and a demand for surrender. Federals replies, 'surrender when you make us.’ He backed it all up. On return trip all gave out and the tremendous cannon waggon was abandoned at the flat ford on 6 mile Creek.24

On April 2, 1865 President Jefferson Davis and party escaped from Richmond. On April 9 General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox and General Joseph E. Johnston, whom Davis had urged to continue the war, followed suit on April 26 at Hillsboro, North Carolina. On May 3 the entourage reached Abbeville, South Carolina where Davis was finally forced to admit, "All is indeed lost." On May 10 President and Mrs. Davis were captured near Irwinsville, Georgia.25
Judah P, Benjamin, Secretary of State, had previously on May 3 separated from the Davis party. According to Theodore Lesley, at Abbeville the Secretary had met members of the family, who directed him to their kinsmen in Florida, including Thomas G. Livingston who met Benjamin in Georgia, escorted him into Florida, and directed him to his uncle, Leroy G. Lesley. Theodore Lesley continued:

Armed with letters of instruction to Florida citizens Secretary Benjamin... crossed the Suwannee River on May 14th at Moseley's Ferry, twenty-five miles east of Madison ... Under the name now of Charles Howard, Mr. Benjamin... made his way southward as rapidly as possible and arrived in Brooksville some four days later...

Upon confronting Captain Lesley Benjamin made himself known and produced letters from his South Carolina relatives introducing a Charles Howard and bespeaking Lesley's aid to the bearer in his travels through Florida.

... Captain Lesley immediately sent for his son, Major John T Lesley, then at his home in Tampa. Upon his arrival at Brooksville it was decided that without further delay the Secretary must set out for the Florida coast near Manatee where a boat would be provided to commence the recommended journey to Cuba. Here, or later at Manatee, Benjamin objected to the Cuban destination with the reason that he had little confidence of finding protection there under the weak Spanish government, and preferred chancing it at one of the British islands of the Bahamas, a government that had unofficially professed friendship for the Confederacy.

... Captain Lesley guided his companion through Hernando and into Hillsborough County .. Late in the afternoon of the second day they arrived at the Alafia River. Here they were met by Colonel William I. Turner, of 'Oak Hill,' now Parrish, Florida, who had received an advance message from Captain Lesley to meet them there.

Introductions were made and the invitation to spend the night at his home was accepted. Next morning leaving Benjamin behind Captain Lesley went on to Manatee alone to see if the route was safe for travel, and finding it so he returned to Oak Hill that night. The following day, a bright morning in the first week of June, he and Benjamin resumed their journey. Late in the afternoon of that same day they arrived at their destination and rode through the gates of the Gamble estate...

Here resided Archibald McNeil ... Captain Lesley, with the Secretary's permission, revealed his identity... Major John T Lesley had made an hurried trip in advance for the purpose of setting the stage for quick action ... Captain Lesley crossed the river in search of Captain Frederick Tresca, another sea captain of long experience in the Gulf and Atlantic waters ... Captain Tresca advised him that he could undertake such a trip, if a boat was available, and could depart at once. He, thereupon, returned with Captain Lesley to the Gamble Mansion and there met
Secretary Benjamin and offered him his aid...

... Some years later when Benjamin began to enjoy the great success he enjoyed at the British Bar ... Captain Lesley wrote him congratulating him on his new life. Benjamin graciously replied in a short note of thanks. He, also, sent at this time a bolt of silk cloth to Mrs. Lesley for a dress, complete with buttons, thread, trimmings and needles.”

In February 1866, the U. S. Army opened an investigation and charged L. G. Lesley as follows:

Charge 1st. Treason "Specification 1st. In this the said L. G. Lesley late captain in the Rebel Service and now a Minister of the Gospel residing in Hernando County, Florida, did on the 8th day of October 1865 while on the stand in the course of his remarks to the audience assembled at a Camp Meeting in Polk County, Florida, assert that Jas. D. Green late Captain of the 2nd Regt. Florida Cavalry, U. S. Forces committed a Heinous Sin in destroying Rebel Property while on a raid in Hernando County Florida.

Specification 2nd. In this L. G. Lesley aforesaid did endeavor by his Harranguing to Inculcate on the minds of the Congregation -- that Officers who discharged their duty in putting down the Rebellion is guilty of a Sin in so doing and requires his Special Prayer for there Redemption. At the same time endeavoring to Imbitter the minds of his hearers against the officers and Soldiers of the United States Army.

All in the above Charge at the time and place above mentioned.

Charge 2nd. Inhuman Treatment to a United States Soldier. "Specification. In this L. G. Lesley late Captain in the Rebel Service now a Minister of the Gospel residing in Hernando County Fla. did in the month of July 1864 fall in with aUnited States Soldier who was on leave of absence from his command, fireing upon said soldier without ordering said Soldier to Surrender - a ball taking effect in the body of said soldier causing him the said Soldier, to fall into the Water by which he was Standing, the said Soldier calling out, for the Lords Sake to help me or I shall drown. Whereupon the aforesaid Capt. Lesley walked to where the wounded soldier was lying and remarked, help you, you infernal Tory Sone of bitch (or words to that effect) at the same time setting his foot upon the said soldier's head and sinking it beneath the surface of the water.

All this in Hernando County Florida, on or about the 5th day of July 1864.

Capt. Lesley gave himself up, and entered a plea of not guilty, with the exception of the words, "At the same time setting his foot upon said soldiers head and sinking it beneath the surface of the water." He was then allowed to return to Brooksville while the investigation continued. The first charge concerned free speech and apparently wasn't pursued as earnestly as the second. However, the second charge involved the attempt to kill a wounded enemy soldier, a violation of the laws of war and humanity. To resolve this, excerpts follow from the testimonies of R. G. Bradley, John Knight,
and of Capt. Lesley himself. Bradley stated in part:

We routed these fellows about 1/4 mile from Swamp where they run into. There they made a stand and tried to fight us. They popped a cap at Knight as soon as they done that Knight jumped off his horse and runs into the swamp and shot Duncan. When that was done he called to Capt. Lesley and says come in Capt. I have got one down. Me and Capt. Lesley went in together where Duncan was lying. Says Duncan to us take me out of the water. Capt. Lesley says I will do it, sir, and put the toe of his boot on the top of his head and mashed him under. I asked him what he done that for and he said to wash the mud off his face and to keep him from fainting. We then carried Duncan to his Mothers. Capt. Lesley dressed and cut his ball out of him. He then prescribed for him and then we went back to Brooksville…

Lt. Knight averred:

I know Duncan. I shot him myself. The circumstances are these: These fellows we found in the edge of the swamp and they had their guns presented to us. When we come up, they popped some caps at us but their guns wouldn't go off. I jumped down off my horse and went into the Swamp to get behind a tree to protect myself. After I got into the swamp I saw one and I shot him. It was Duncan I shot. Capt. Lesley was not there at the time. I hollered out to him, dont know what I said and he and Bradley come into the swamp together and went to where Duncan was lying. I can't tell you what he did. I couldn't see him. I was loading my gun at the time and the bushes was very thick and I was looking out to see that I don't get shot myself. After that Capt. Lesley, Mr. Bradley and myself helped tote him to his Mothers. When I first went up to Duncan after he was shot Capt. Lesley was standing holding three guns in his hands, and Bradley was holding Duncan up out of the water. All that I heard Capt. Lesley say to Duncan was that he asked him whose company he belonged to.

Capt. Lesley testified:

When I got sixty or eighty rods around the swamp I fired a gun. Soon after I heard someone crying for mercy asking someone to take him out of the water or they would drown.' I made for him as fast as I could. Mr. Bradley with me. When we got there, the man was lying in the muck resting his body on his hands or elbows, I forget which. There was no part of him out of the water but his Knees and apart of his head. I walked up to him and put my knee at the back of his head to support it. I either heard from him or young Knight, who he was. He commenced by upbraiding us for our treatment of him, said that he never would have hurt any of us. Said he could have shot us if he had wanted to have done so. Said that he had quit Green's Co. and never intended to return, that he wanted to get into my Company for a long time but was suffered to go to Brooksville. It was then that I gave him the his [?] and said to him could have been construed to be abusive language...
About that time I had three guns in my hand. His head was covered with black mud and he seemed to be in a sinking condition. Not having a hand to spare, I placed my toe on his head and pushed his head under the water. Mr. Bradley Seeing me do this took me by the leg and says, 'Oh Captain dont drown him.' I told him 'no' I had no such intention. I then had him carried out of the Swamp superintending it my self I had him put on a quilt and carefully carried to his house. I washed him, extracted the ball, put clean clothes on him, and left him as comfortable as the circumstances should admit. He pledging himself he would come to Brooksville and join my company if he ever got well. I would further state that during the four years of the war and____ [?]_______[?] that I have lived in the Indian wars of this country, that I have never shot a man or shot at him to kill or scare him. As to the language I used to the young man it was pretty strong but not as strong as the language of the Specification. I was very much excited and do not recollect my exact words... 31

On March 4, 1866 it was concluded the evidence against L. G. Lesley was an offense not sufficiently strong to warrant his being brought before a military commission for a trial; therefore, Capt. Franklin D. Harding, 99th USCT, Comdg. Post of Tampa, was ordered to stop all proceedings against Lesley. James D. Green later complained that he had not been allowed to give testimony and alleged that Capt. Harding had a conflict of interest as he was an intimate friend of Capt. Lesley's son. Further, Green charged: "The conduct of Lesly was an outrage at which some of his own followers are indignant, besides the evidence against him is strong & the charge can be sustained if the matter is soon tried by the proper tribunal." The case was not reopened. 32

Leroy and family moved to a plantation on the Alafia River, near Peru (now Riverview) in Hillsborough County where he soon became involved in community affairs. In 1866 he successfully petitioned the county commissioners for permission to operate a ferry at his place across the Alafia. Rev. Lesley organized the Methodists in the area into a society, and a modest building, used also as a schoolhouse, was erected known as Lesley's Chapel, facing the river. Leroy, not only found himself acting as a spiritual advisor, but also at times as a physician, dentist, and deputy sheriff. 33

During Reconstruction, Leroy embraced the Democratic Party. At the Democratic County Convention on August 1, 1868, he in a speech stated that he was perhaps the oldest man in the Convention, being sixty odd years of age, yet the youngest Democrat. He said he had almost been taught to hate the name of Democracy and had never voted a Democratic ticket, but that for the future he intended to set with the great Democratic party. His reasons for belonging to the party was that it was endeavoring to restore himself and his friends to their legitimate rights as citizens of the United States and that the Radical party was endeavoring to do the reverse. Leroy served the Democratic Party as chairman and was on the Executive Committee for many years. The party succeeded in 1876 in ousting the Republicans and ending Reconstruction. Leroy was that same year elected Tax Assesor of the county and served to 1880 and to him fell the duty of rectifying the Reconstruction assessment lists. 34
Lucy Jane (Sandwich) Lesley died October 18, 1879. Capt. Leroy G. Lesley was taken very ill on the night of September 2t, 1882 at the home of his son, Capt. John T Lesley, in Tampa and was confined to his bed until he died on October 31, 1882. They are buried in Oaklawn Cemetery. Upon his death he was eulogized by many: "Capt. Leroy G. Lesley, one of the oldest, most respected and highly esteemed citizens of Hillsborough county... He died full of years and honors and will be sincerely mourned by a large circle of relatives and friends. A good man and true has been called to his Master. May he rest in peace.” By his church he was esteemed:

... our honored father in Israel and brother in Christ, the Rev. Leroy G. Lesley, whose long and unaltering devotion to the Church, won for him the confidence and affection of his brethren and illustrated in the view of the world, the power and worth of Christianity; and, whereas, we realize that in this grievous chastening, the Methodist Church in this circuit and county, has been deprived of one of its chief pillars, and this Quarterly Conference of one of its most faithful and efficient members, and society at large, of a useful citizen, whose heart was always open to the calls of Christ, and whose hand was every obedient to the commands of duty... 

D. B. McKay, seventy-seven years after Lesley's death, judged him "...a venerable father in Israel and the faithful servant of Caesar. Yet as a leader he was absolutely unreasonable with those who could not hold with his views on politics, culture and religion. Domineering, arrogant and demanding, all qualities of the time and breeding that produced him, yet he balanced these attributes with strict fairness, honesty and loyalty.”

A family story revealed Capt. Lesley's character:

When L. G. Lesley used to visit them from his plantation on the Alafia River, the boys used to ride with him out the old road that went down Nebraska Ave. Not far out was an old pond which in rainy weather was pretty full of water and covered the road bed. When returning home one day, the old gentleman started through the Pond. On the other side, at an equal distance, was approaching a Pond. On the other side, at an equal distance, was approaching a wagon drawn by two mules and fully loaded. The two keep approaching, neither one seemed to be noticing the other, so the grandson asked his sire if he saw the wagon, and if he wasn't going to pull out and let him by. The gruff reply was, 'No, let him pull out.' So the two keep coming until the head of g. grandfather's mare touched the mules when both were forced to stop. The driver hollowed and asked him, 'Why don't you turn out for me.' G's reply was, 'Why don't you turn out for me young man.' The answer was in equal spirit, 'because I'm heavily loaded and am not going to risk getting stuck. You can either pull to one side, or I'll sit here all night. I'm close to town and not in a hurry to get there.' "G. Grandfather quietly sat there and looked at him for a minute, and then nonchalantly pulled his horse to one side, circled the wagon, and continued on his journey.
Father said he was like that all the time. Would travel down the center of the road never pulling out for anyone.  

Rev. Lesley and his (1) wife, Indianna Chiles (Livingston), Lesley had children #1-3, while he and his (2) wife, Lucy Jane (Sandwich) Lesley, had child #4 as follows:

1. John Thomas Lesley, born May 12, 1835; died July 13, 1913; married on August 26, 1858, Margaret Adeline (Brown) Tucker, daughter of William T and Elizabeth (Townsend) Brown, widow of William W. Tucker.

2. Emory Livingston Lesley, born April 2, 1837; died June 1, 1857.

3. Mary Camillus Lesley, born October 4, 1845; died July 2, 1929; married (1) on July 28, 1866 William Henry Brown, son of William T and Elizabeth (Townsend) Brown; (2) Urban Sinclair Bird, January 17, 1883.


ENDNOTES

The author wishes to thank Kyle VanLandingham for his research assistance.

1 Theodore Lesley, typescript untitled biography of LeRoy G. Lesley, 1, Lesley family private collection; Theodore Lesley, "Family Group Sheet," Lesley Family Collection, University of South Florida Special Collections; D. B. McKay, Pioneer Florida, 3 vols. (Tampa, 1959), II, 353. The spelling of the family surname appears variously as Lesly, Leslie and Lesley; hereafter, it will be Lesley unless cited otherwise. The Rev. Lesley's first name was written "LeRoy" by Theodore Lesley, but all other records have "Leroy." It is noteworthy that the Leslie Clan of Scotland was famous for producing soldiers of fortune. See Neil Grant, Scottish Clans & Tartans (1987), 143.

2 Theodore Lesley, biography, 1; McKay, 354; Rowland H. Rerick, Memoirs of Florida, 2 vols., (1902), II, 591-592.

3 E. T Conley to Theodore Lesley, War Department, Washington, D.C., December 6, 1935; McKay, 355.

4 Theodore Lesley, biography, 1; John C. Ley, Fifty-Two Years in Florida (Nashville, Tenn., 1899), 69. Ley spelled his name "Leslie."

5 Theodore Lesley, biography, 1, 2; McKay, 354; Ley, 153; Elizabeth Chase, The Pioneer Churches of Florida, (1976), 33, 62. John T Lesley in an affidavit in behalf of John Whidden (1839-1926) on June 4, 1910 stated, The Whidden men were frontier men and here before I was and I came in 1849." See pension application of John Whidden, National Archives. See also Rerick, II, 591-592, which has 1849 for the move. 1848 and 1849 are cited by Theodore Lesley. See also Donald J. Ivey, "John L Lesley: "Tampa's Pioneer Renaissance Man," Sunland Tribune 21 (November 1995), 4, 15. Ivey cited 1848 due to a school attendance record of son John T A throat ailment is also given for the Rev. Lesley's retirement. See McKay, 354. Ley, p. 68, wrote, "July 26 [1846] To-day I preached at Tampa, opened the doors of the church, and organized a society, the first ever organized in this place. Dr. J. Roberts was appointed class leader." Ley, p 75, at the 7th session of the church on January 9, 1851 noted enigmatically that L. G. Lesley "located." The Rev. Lesley was described by McKay as, "Six foot two, red-headed, and as slender as his stipend;" however, a family story by Capt. Lesley makes reference to how small his legs were, thus calling into question a height of 6'2. See Theodore Lesley Composition Book, Lesley Family Collection, University of South Florida Special Collections.

6 Canter Brown, Jr., Florida's Peace River Frontier (Orlando, 1991), 82 90; McKay, 355.

7 McKay, 355; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census 1850, Hillsborough County, Florida; Harvey L. Wells, "Slave Owners-1850 Census- Hillsborough County;" "Hillsborough County: Early Marks & Brands," South Florida Pioneers 7 (Jan. 1976), 23; Tax Book, 1853 Hillsborough County; Theodore Lesley, biography, 3. See also Karl H. Grismer, Tampa.- A History of the City of Tampa and the
Tampa Bay Region of Florida (1950), 325, in which William T Brown is listed as coming to Hillsborough County in 1854; in fact, as stated, he and his wife Elizabeth and children were listed in the 1850 census of Hillsborough County.

8 Tampa Florida Peninsular September 29, 1855; Theodore Lesley, biography, 4. For more on the party, see Spessard Stone, "The Know-Nothings of Hillsborough County," Sunland Tribune 19 (November 1993), 3-8.

9 James W. Covington, The Billy Bowlegs Mar 18-55-18,58 The Final Stand of the Seminoles Against The Whites (1982), 1, 2, 37; Sol diers of Florida, (1903), 19-20; Conley to Lesley; L. G. Lesly to Col. Monroe, January 19, 1856, Letters Received, Registers of Letters Received, and Letters Received by Headquarters, Troops in Florida, and Headquarters, Dept. of Florida, 1850-1858, Roll 4, National Archives; McKay, 355; Grismer, 323; Rerick, II, 591-592; Kyle VanLandingham, "Captain William B. Hooker: Florida Cattle King," Sunland Tribune 22 (November 1996), 6. Capt. Hooker arrived at Fort Meade on December 29, 1855. On January 19 Lesley contemplated a week or more scouting for Indians (none yet found) "operating near the mouth of the creek [Pease Creek] on the south side, - thence examine Charley Apopka Lake & its vicinity-then to the Kissimme, by way of Fort Bassinger _ [?]." Emory L. Lesley served from August 20, 1856 to February 19, 1857 and from February 24, 1857 to June 1, 1857 when he died at Tampa.

10 Covington, 42-45; Brown, 111-112.


13 Lesly to Hazzard, April 30, 1857.

14 Lesly to Major Francis N. Page, Jan. 4, 1858, Roll 10; S. L. Sparkman to Col. S. St. George Rogers, Jan. 20, 1858, Roll 10; Lesly to?, June 15, 1858; record group 393, NA; Covington, 80; Conley to Lesley. The January 1858 expedition had resulted separately in the finding of an abandoned sick six or seven year-old child and a sick woman, mother of the child, was also found. The woman identified herself as the wife of Assinwah. Left behind, she "...gave up the child cheerfully, said when she felt well she would come in and bring in the rest of her children. The child died the third night after we got it...".

15 Covington, 78-79.

16 Theodore Lesley, Theodore Lesley Composition Book, University of South Florida Special Collections.

17 Ibid.

18 Theodore Lesley, "Family Group Sheet."

19 U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census 1860, Hillsborough County, Florida; Tax Book, 1860 Hillsborough County; Tampa Florida Peninsular, December 8, 1860; Hillsborough County Deed Book C.

20 Theodore Lesley, biography, p. 3; Hernando County, Deed Book 1, 509-510; Hernando County Tax Books 1862, 1864, 1866; Gainesville Cotton States, March 19 & April 16, 1864.

21 Conley to Lesley; McKay, 356; partial list of Captain L. G. Lesley's Company, collection of Kyle VanLandingham; Joe A. Akerman, Jr., Florida Cowman, A History of Florida Cattle Raising, (Kissimmee 1976), 93-94; "L.G. Lesley," Compiled Service Records... Confederate... Series 982, Roll # 14 [1st Batt., Spec. Cav., Fla.], microfilm, N.A. John T Lesley had previously served as captain of Co. K, 4th Fla., and as major of the 4th, resigning February 28, 1863. See Ivey, 4-5.

22 "L.G. Lesley," Compiled Service Records ... Confederate... Series 982, Roll # 14 [1st Batt., Spec. Cav., Fla.], microfilm, N.A.; David W. Hartman and David Coles, Biographical Rosters of Florida Confederate and Union Soldiers 1861-1865, 6 vols. (1995) III, 971, & V, 1799. The identity of Duncan is uncertain, but he was, probably, either Benjamin E Duncan or Bryant Duncan. Benjamin E Duncan (b. 1835?) and Bryant Duncan (b. 1845?) both enlisted July 24, 1863 at Brooksville in Company I, Ninth Florida Infantry, CSA, and both deserted April 1, 1864 from Fort Dade. Both then enlisted at Fort Myers in Company B, Second Florida Cavalry, USA. Benjamin E Duncan, b. 1839 [?] Tw1ggs Co., Ga., a refugee from the Confederacy, was appointed corporal August 13, 1864, and died of diarrhea February 2, 1865 at Fort Myers. Bryant was dropped after June 1864. A family history by Clyde S. Stephens, Stephens Ancestors and Pioneer Relatives (July 1982), 51, has that Benjamin Franklin Duncan
served as stated, and on August 23, 1862 [?] in Hernando Co. had married Charity Ann Stephens (1844-1926), who after the war settled near now Ona, Fla. What happened to Bryant Duncan after June 1864 is undetermined.

23 Samuel Proctor, editor, Florida A Hundred Years Ago, 1963, Ju-64-2; Theodore Lesley, biography, 3; Kyle VanLandingham, editor, "My National Troubles, Civil War Papers of William McCullough," Sunland Tribune 20 (November 1994), 62, 63, 66, 84, 85; Donald J. Ivey, "John T Lesley: Tampa's Pioneer Renaissance Man," Sunland Tribune 20 (November 1995) 8-9. It is noteworthy how the accounts of a Confederate descendant and Union officer vary in regard the saving of the Lesley home. Theodore Lesley related, "Upon reaching Captain Lesley's the troops immediately overran the estate. To the martial airs, played on the piano by one of them, the others ransacked the house. The trail to the hammock, where were hidden most of the valuables, was discovered by the soldiers and by them all was destroyed. They returned to the yard, where the barns and outhouses were burned, and the home itself saved only by the courageous action of Mrs. Lesley, and daughter, who through her herculean efforts, extinguished every flame that was set to their dwelling." Lt. McCullough noted in his diary: "... we ... marched thence to Capt. Lesley's, the officer we had fought the day before, this place was sacked, the corn crib, wagons, and wagonhouse burned to the ground, the dwelling house being spared by the family left with it. The lady met us with a flag of truce and begged us to spare her. Capt. Banthofth [Bartholf] thought best to do so, but allowed the blacks to pillage." [Italics inserted by author.] Capt. John T Lesley sustained a permanent injury to his left arm, but apparently continued on active duty. But see Hartman and Coles, II, 694. Lt. David Hope of Capt. Leroy G. Lesley's Company is believed to have been the soldier who wounded Capt. John T Lesley. On May 7, 1865 from Brooksville, Leroy wrote his son. I have heard it said that some of your old Company have been heard to say, That if they ever got a chance, they would have Satisfaction out of Hope for Shooting you; The later part I contradicte... " See Lesley to Lesley, May 7, 1865.

24 Brown, 173-174; "Diary of L. G. Lesley," Collection of Theodore Lesley, but now lost. The quote is from notes taken by Vernon Peeples. "Major Footman was a Dutchman. Heavy set with dark complexion. Very pompous, had to stand around when he came up. A savage fellow," see Theodore Lesley Composition Book. Lesley was succeeded as captain before the war ended by W. W. Wall, see Hartman and Coles, V.


26 Theodore Lesley to C. W. Schaffer, March 1, 1957; Rodney H. Kite-Powell, II, "The Escape of Judah P. Benjamin," Sunland Tribune (November 1996), 63-67. See Mr. Kite-Powell's article for a more thorough analysis of Benjamin's escape, including the McKay family's "more complex and less believable explanation of Benjamin's voyage to Manatee." See also Proctor, Ju-65-4, for this 1865 reference: "June 23 - Judah P Benjamin, former Confederate Secretary of State, has been hiding the last several days in the home of Major Robert Gamble on the Manatee River, is leaving the area today, and hopes to make it safely to the Bahamas. Benjamin occupied the home upon the invitation of Captain Archibald McNeill, deputy commissary agent of the Manatee section under Confederate Captain James McKay. McNeill is also being sought by the Federals. Captain Frederick Tresca, who occupies a home near Manatee and who gained much knowledge of the coast before the war while piloting his freight sloop Margaret Ann from Cedar Keys to Key West and who also ran the blockade to Nassau, has agreed to take Mr. Benjamin to the Bahamas. The Reverend Ezechiel Glazer, a member of Florida's Secession Convention of 1861, is transporting Benjamin overland to a point on Sarasota Bay. There he will be met by Captain Tresca and H. A. McLeod in the small yawl The Blonde."

27 "L.G. Lesley," Compiled Service Records ... Confederate... Series 982, Roll # 14 [1st Batt., Spec. Cav., Fla.], microfilm. N.A. Witnesses to the first charge were N. H. DeCoster, 1st Lt., 2nd USC Inf. and Sergeant Reuben Carlton and Private A. Carlton, both of Co. B, 2nd Fla. Cav. R. J. Bradley was the witness for the second charge.

28 Ibid. Lt. John Knight also surrendered and stayed in Tampa while awaiting the outcome of the case against him. On Feb. 28, 1866 it was concluded by Capt. Franklin D. Harding, Capt. 99th USCT. "In the case of Citizen John Knight I will not trouble you with it as I am of the opinion (after a careful examination of all parties concerned) that it will amount to nothing." He also added of a prominent Tampa citizen, "In the case of Jas. McKay I have examined no witnesses and will do so as soon as possible." See Harding to Maj. Wentworth, ibid.
Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Theodore Lesley, biography, 5; McKay, 356; Garnet K. Tien, "A History of the Methodist Church at Riverview," 1959. Tien cited 1866 as the founding of Lesley's Chapel, where in 1866 Rev. Lesley "...Moved his family into the log cabin church Benjamin E Moody had reared, and promptly set about collecting funds with which to build another. In this he was ably assisted by William B. Moody, Benjamin's oldest son ... [who] gave land beside the river for a building in which to worship God ... the commodious new church was named Lesley's Chapel. It stood near the ferry across the Alafia which L. G. Lesley operated and which was a main connecting link between Tampa and the south Florida coast. It is thought to have been completed in 1870 and pastored by Rev. Lesley with the help of Rev. A. M. Samford for the first ten years of its life. In 1880 - it became part of the Methodist Episcopal Conference and had a circuit riding preacher appointed it." Tien listed Rev. Urban S. Bird as pastor in 1884. The 1894 discovery of pebble phosphate in the Alafia River led to a town named Riverview and a new church (blown down five years later in a windstorm) which was supplanted by the 1900-constructed Riverview Methodist Church, which preserved the wooden benches for the choir from Lesley Chapel at the time the building was sold.

Tampa Florida Peninsular, August 8, 1868; Theodore Lesley, biography, 4-5; McKay, 356.

Lesley, "Family Group Sheet": Tampa Sunland Tribune, November 2, 1882.

Tampa Sunland Tribune, November 2 & December 20, 1882. The former was his obituary; the latter was "Tribute of Respect Passed By The 4th Quarterly Conference, Oak Hill Circuit, Tampa District, Fla. Conference."

McKay, 356.

Theodore Lesley Composition Book, USF. But he did pull out on this occasion.
JAMES GETTIS: TAMPA PIONEER
LAWYER

By KYLE S. VanLANDINGHAM

A 32-year old lawyer arrived in Tampa in 1848. Born in Pennsylvania, May 4, 1816, James Gettis "never spoke of his family, for personal reasons known only to himself, even when directly questioned about them." He had practiced law in his home state but friends believed that "disagreement with his family, over the issues that led to the War Between the States," prompted his removal to Florida.

The first recorded session of circuit court in Hillsborough County occurred in April 1846, although an earlier term was held in the fall of 1845, though no records remain. Georgia-born James T Magbee, Tampa's first practicing attorney, was admitted to the bar in April 1846 and not until October 24, 1848 was another Tampan admitted to practice. On that date, James Gettis was examined by attorneys Magbee and Thomas E King and found qualified to practice law in the courts of Florida. The court minutes show that Circuit Judge Joseph B. Lancaster granted his approval to the admission of Gettis.

On August 10, 1850, James Gettis was initiated an Entered Apprentice in Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, Free and Accepted Masons and was raised a Master Mason on September 17, 1850. For the remainder of his life, Gettis remained a loyal and active Freemason.

Though northern-born, James Gettis soon earned his bona fides as a Southerner. He owned no slaves but strongly supported the institution. Throughout 1850, and afterwards, the issue of expansion of slavery into the western territories was of paramount importance to Southerners. In April of that year, community leaders in Tampa met to express support for the rights of the slave states under the constitution and their "Just right and fair equality in the acquisition and distribution of the public domain..." James Gettis was one of six delegates chosen to represent Hillsborough at the upcoming Ocala convention which met and sent delegates to the Southern Convention in June.
Gettis began to prosper in his law practice, reporting income of $500 in 1851, $800 in 1853, $500 in 1854 and $800 in 1855. He built a law office on the west side of Franklin Street, between Whiting and Washington in 1855. The small wooden building was located in the middle of the block and cost $1200. In 1852, Gettis was elected by the state General Assembly as Solicitor or prosecuting attorney for the Southern Judicial Circuit but apparently never served. During the early days of statehood, the Florida Supreme Court held session at various towns across the state. In March 1852, the High Court met for the first time at Tampa. In a letter dated March 10, 1852, to the Tallahassee *Floridian & Journal*, a correspondent wrote from Tampa:

> The Supreme Court of our state closed its first term here on the 6th, the docket contained four cases, one of which was dismissed, one confirmed and two reversed. The judges composing the Supreme Court are eminently qualified for their high judicial duties -- they are doubtless commensurate to the highest anticipation of the people.

Their social intercourse during their short stay won the esteem of our community, and at the close of the term, we could not consent to a separation without a demonstration of our high regard. Accordingly an invitation to partake in an old style backwoods dinner was, on the 8th, addressed to them by a number of citizens, which was accepted, and the next day named as the time most convenient to them.

Notwithstanding the short time in which to prepare, at 4 o'clock P.M., on the 9th instant, we sat down to a sumptuous repast prepared by our worthy citizen, M. Shannahan, and his inestimable lady (our thanks to them) served at the house of our friend, Dr. S. B. Todd, who also merits our thanks.

The following order was observed at table, viz:

Chief Justice Anderson at the right of the President (James Gettis, Esq.), Associate Justices Semmes at the right of the secretary (J. Carter) and Thompson at the right of John Conrad, chairman of the committee of arrangements. After doing ample justice to fine Turkeys, Ducks, Ham, Pies, etc., the cloth was removed and then came the 'sparkling vintage' and cake in profusion. The President having given the order to 'charge glasses' the popping and cracking of the cork ... ensued... On the call of the President the following regular toasts were announced viz:

The United States -- The observance of domestic tranquility and friendly foreign intercourse is the surest guarantee to national distinction and greatness.
The Constitution - The production of inspired minds. Mat it be perpetuated through all times.


Florida -- An infant in the family of states. May she soon arrive at maturity by the development of her innumerable resources.

The Supreme Court of Florida - the final arbiter of the rights of her citizens. Filled with judges eminently qualified for their high stations, and enjoying the confidence of her people, its future usefulness will prove commensurate with the expectation of the state.

The sentiment being drunk, Chief Justice Anderson arose and responded in a style evidently happy, and with that dignity, ease and eloquence peculiar to himself. He resumed his seat amidst applause. Associate Justices Thompson and Semmes each proposed sentiments suited to the occasion, prefaced with appropriate and eloquent remarks, which were received and responded to by Col. J. T. Magbee and the president...

The gentlemen present all proposed sentiments which were drunk with responses and cheers. Chief Justice Anderson proposed, as a closing sentiment, 'The hospitality of Tampa,' which being drunk, after a brief response, the company retired, well pleased with the social entertainments of the evening. About 8 P.M. the judges were waited upon to the wharf, and after a cordial farewell, they embarked upon a small vessel for St. Marks.

On this occasion the champagne produced no 'real pain' - its charm could only produce a commendable dyne of merriment, and all separated as straight as a bee line, and highly gratified at the social intercourse of the day.

One of the Company.

The two most important local issues of interest to Hillsborough County during the decade of the 1850s were the railroad and the removal of the Indians. At a meeting at the Courthouse in Tampa on December 15, 1851, community leaders John Darting, Jesse Carter, M. C. Brown, James Gettis, Thomas P. Kennedy, S. B. Todd and others addressed both matters. A cross-state railroad with its southern terminus at "Ballast Point" on Tampa Bay was endorsed and a resolution was adopted calling for removal of the Seminoles from the State of Florida.

In 1853, the Florida Railroad, promoted by David Levy Yulee was chartered. It was to run from the Fernandina area to "some point, bay, arm or tributary of the Gulf of Mexico in South Florida." Tampa citizens held a railroad convention in 1853 with James Gettis prominently involved.

Hillsborough Democrats met at Alafia, August 1, 1854, and nominated Gen. Jesse Carter, boarding house proprietor and mail contractor, and "intimate personal and political friend" of David L. Yulee. Carter assured the voters that the Florida Railroad was indeed going to be built to Tampa but not everyone believed him. County Commissioner Christopher Q. Crawford, an "anti-Yulee Democrat," was brought
forward in opposition. Carter complained that he was canvassing against a "corrupt faction claiming to be 'democrats' in coalition with a portion of the Whig party, aided by a rotten contemptible press." He identified his opponents as the "[Tampa] Herald, Magbee, Gettis, Darling and several other kindred spirits." A "Know Nothing Society" was organized and actively opposed Carter upon the grounds of his friendship with the foreign-born Yulee. Nevertheless, Carter won by an impressive margin and went on to the Assembly session in 1854. With Carter's "vote and influence" Yulee was returned to the Senate. The legislature approved the Internal Improvement Act which included support for a rail line "from Amelia Island, on the Atlantic, to the waters of Tampa Bay in South Florida, with an extension to Cedar Key." On June 9, 1856, James Gettis, along with 11 other Tampa Bay area residents, wrote to the president and directors of the Florida Railroad Company. They asked for a "candid statement" of the company's intentions regarding construction of the railroad south of the "point of divergence" to Cedar Key; in other words, the main line to Tampa. If the company was not interested in pursuing the line to Tampa, then the question of a separate railroad company was raised. Replying, for the railroad, George W. Call, secretary, responded that it did not wish to be relieved of its responsibility to build the "main line" south and intended to do so once the line to Cedar Key was completed, by July 1857. Hillsborough County Democrats held their convention August 25, 1856 at Tampa. James Gettis and Francis M. Durrance were placed in nomination for State Assemblyman. Durrance withdrew and Gettis was nominated by unanimous vote. In his letter of acceptance, Gettis wrote:

... In relation to our Indian War [the Third Seminole War had broken out in Dec. 1855] I shall be in favor of, and urge more ample frontier protection to those of our citizens, who have been, for over six months, broken up, and compelled to move from their homes to protect themselves from a savage foe, and also for the immediate payment of the Volunteers, and those who have, by the force of circumstances, been compelled to leave their homes, and protect themselves, families, and neighborhood against the miscreant foe now occupying the Peninsular of
our State. Upon all questions of State policy, I shall hold myself in readiness to obey the instructions of my constituents, and in the absence of such instructions, I will pursue such course as may present itself to my mind, for the interest of the people of Hillsborough County, and for the interest of the State at large.20

In the October election, Gettis defeated Joseph B. Lane by a vote of 302 to 143.21

In April 1856, Henry Laurens Mitchell, who had read law in Gettis’ office, was admitted to the bar and the two of them formed the partnership of Gettis and Mitchell. Another law student of Gettis’ was John Alexander Henderson. John’s father, Andrew, had died in 1852, leaving four sons. The mother remarried to a man whom the boys did not like, so Gettis took the three younger sons, John, James Fletcher and Wesley P, and raised them. As Gettis was a lifelong bachelor, the Hendersons were as close to family as he ever had during his years in Florida.22

Gettis remained active in local politics and in 1858 was nominated for a second term in the State House. At the Democratic county convention at Alafia on August 28, Gettis and Simon Turman, Jr., were placed in nomination. Gettis received 15 votes to 10 for Turman who then withdrew and Gettis was declared unanimously nominated. Turman, in his local paper, the Florida Peninsular, lauded “Col. Gettis” as the leader "of the van of Democracy against the K[now]. N[othin]. hosts" in the well contested battles of ’56”23 In October, Gettis defeated Silas McClelland by a vote of 190 to 10.24

At the 1858-59 House session Gettis shepherded through the act creating the Florida Peninsular Railroad. By 1858 it had become apparent that Yulee’s Florida Railroad was no closer to coming to Tampa than it had been several years earlier. Construction on the "branch" line to Cedar Key was still underway and local citizens began organizing the Florida Peninsula Railroad in the summer of 1858. After the charter was approved in early 1859, the stockholders met at Brooksville in June for their first meeting. James Gettis was the fourth largest shareholder with 317 shares and was also elected to the Board of Directors along with George W. Means, Madison Starke Perry, William B. Hooker and seven others.25

Writing from Tampa, May 12, 1858, Gettis announced his resignation from the General Assembly. He cited his "delicate health and the inclemency of the weather during the winter session at Tallahassee..."26 But Gettis was prevailed upon to reconsider and by the following month he was active in railroad
matters. In August he addressed the students at Mrs. Porter’s Female Academy upon the completion of their examinations.27

The General Assembly met in adjourned session in Tallahassee on November 28, 1859. With John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry and the publication of Hinton Helper’s *Impending Crisis*, the South was feeling more and more defensive. There was great concern and fear that a Republican might be elected president in 1860. James Gettis was one of five chosen to sit on a Joint Select Committee to address the matter. A scathing report was issued condemning the "treasonable designs" of the Republican party:

In view of these momentous truths, and the present threatening aspect existing between the North and the South, your Committee cannot repress deep anxiety and serious apprehensions for the safety of the Union. Nevertheless, we recognize but one course which is left to the South. We therefore recommend the passage of the following resolutions:

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Florida in General Assembly convened*, That, in view of our national affairs, the time for argument has passed, the time for action arrived, and that Florida, as one of the Southern States, abides the destiny of her sisters, extends her warmest assurance and co-operation in any course their united wisdom may devise.

*Resolved*, That in the event of the election of a President by a Northern party, opposed to slavery as it exists in the Southern States, it will be the duty of the Southern States to prevent his inauguration or to take some measures in common to protect themselves, and, as one of the Southern States, Florida hereby pledges herself to do her duty.

*Resolved*, That, to give effect to this assured cooperation, the Governor be and he is hereby authorized, upon the call of any of our sister slave-holding States, and particularly of those bordering on the free States, to take any and all steps necessary for the maintenance of their rights, and to convene the legislature in extraordinary session should the necessity occur.

*Resolved*, That the Governor be requested to forward a copy of this report and these resolutions to our Senators and Representative in Congress, as also to the Governors of the several States of the United States.28

The resolutions were unanimously adopted.29

Gettis and Mitchell continued to prosper through 1860. Frequently, Gettis appeared on behalf of clients before the Florida Supreme Court when it held its annual sessions in Tampa. One circuit court case turned out to be quite disruptive. Gettis represented Edward Tattnall Kendrick in a chancery suit against Thomas P Kennedy and Micajah C. Brown. The case dragged on for several years, from 1855 to 1860 when Kendrick finally received a judgment for $3380. By that time, Kennedy and Brown were dead. During the time the case was pending a dispute arose between Gettis and Kendrick with the latter accusing Gettis of taking a bribe from Kennedy. Both Gettis and Kendrick were Masons and charges were brought in the lodge against Kendrick.
for slander against Gettis. Kendrick was declared not guilty in a Masonic trial but Gettis had the last word. In 1861 Kendrick was charged for being a blasphemer and a "habitual liar." He didn't show up in lodge to answer the charges and was unanimously expelled for contempt on June 15, 1861. Gettis, along with Henry L. Mitchell, William B. Hooker and John Darling, were among the ten witnesses against Kendrick.30

The *Florida Peninsular* gushed in its praise of Gettis in January 1860:

…that untiring, indefatigable "fugleman" - Representative of the County and people of Hillsborough - - Notary Public -- Solicitor in Chancery -- Attorney at Law -- Alderman of the City of Tampa, and Prince of good fellow -- James Gettis, Aid de Camp to His Excellency Madison S. Perry; and therefore entitled to the rank of "Col."31

And if Gettis had wished to travel to Key West, he could ride on Capt. James McKay's steamer the *James Gettis*.32

Storm clouds were gathering on the national horizon in the fall of 1860. With Republican Abraham Lincoln's election in November, secession fever spread throughout the South. Hillsborough Countians gathered in a mass meeting at the Alafia on November 24, 1860. Those present at the meeting took the position that Lincoln's election "determines the fact the powers of the government have passed into the hands of a section only of this Union, and of a section implicitly hostile to our interests and institutions." The General Assembly was urged to "promptly call a convention to sever our connection with the present government"33. Signing the petition were 76 men and 26 women. Among the signers were: H. L. Mitchell, John Darling, H. A. Crane, J. T Lesley, J. A. Henderson, Wm. B. Hooker, Simon Turman, James Gettis and Wm. I. Turner. Among the women were Matilda McKay, wife of James McKay and Mrs. Catherine S. Hart, the wife of Tampa's most prominent Unionist, Ossian B. Hart. Federal officeholders H. V Snell, Madison Post, Alfonso DeLaunay, and Jesse Carter also pledged their support. Another such meeting was held at Tampa with about 400 present.34

A state convention was called for January 3, 1860 and James Gettis was elected delegate from the 20th Senatorial District which included Hillsborough, Manatee, Hernando and Levy counties. Gettis was one of eight members of the Select Committee on Ordinances which submitted a report on January 9, justifying secession and calling for immediate withdrawal from the Union. Amendments offered by moderates to make the ordinance of secession subject to voter approval, postpone the matter until January 18, or have it not take affect until Georgia and Alabama also seceded were defeated. A strong and sizeable minority of the delegates opposed taking immediate action. James Gettis and Hillsborough County delegate Simon Turman, Jr., however, consistently voted with the majority for immediate secession. The following day, January 10, the remaining opposition all but evaporated and the delegates voted Florida out of the Union, 62-7.35

In March 1862, Gettis organized a troop of soldiers, primarily from Hillsborough County, which became Company B, 7th Florida Infantry. Serving as second lieutenant was his law student John A. Henderson.36 By late June the company had marched off to war but Gettis' departure was delayed. On June 30 - July 1, Tampa was bombarded by a Federal gunboat. Capt. John
W. Pearson, the Confederate commander at Ft. Brooke reported:

I am proud to say that my men behaved handsomely on the occasion, though some of them had never before fired a cannon. I had them drilled in ten minutes so they were as old veterans, and I would here mention the name of Captain Gettis in the highest terms. He took command of one of the batteries manned by a green squad of my men who had never fired a cannon before, his own company having, left a few days previous for Tennessee. Captain Gettis acted with that cool firmness which characterizes the man in all his various spheres at the bar and legislative councils; and I would also mark here that the citizens behaved handsomely, showing loyalty to the backbone.37

Capt. Gettis' career in the field was brief. He resigned his commission April 17, 1863 due to ill health. Much of the time he had been "hospitalized or on furlough because of incipient phthisis and chronic diarrhea."38 Back home in Tampa, in March 1863, shortly before his discharge, he helped Capt. John Darling organize the Tampa City Guards and was offered a commission as first lieutenant, despite his poor health.39

When Union troops occupied Tampa in May 6-7, 1864, Gettis was residing at the Florida House Hotel, operated by Reason Duke, on Lafayette Street (now Kennedy Blvd.). The cash property of several prominent citizens was confiscated and Gettis was briefly detained though shortly afterwards paroled. According to one account, "Colonel John Darling and Captain James Gettis were left with nothing but what they had on."40

The war ended in 1865 and Tampa was described as "a hard looking place."41 Union troops moved in on May 27. Under President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction plan, a constitutional convention was held at Tallahassee in October 1865 and James Gettis was elected Hillsborough County delegate, defeating Unionist Tampa lawyer Ossian B. Hart. At the convention, the Ordinance of Secession was annulled and slavery was declared to be "destroyed" in Florida. Gettis was in the majority which supported additional language stating that slavery "had been destroyed by the Government of the United States."42 Even more conservative verbiage which would have declared that slavery's "re-establishment [was] prohibited by the President of the same,"43 was defeated by a 30-7 vote. An unrepentant secessionist, Gettis voted with the minority. The new constitution limited suffrage, political office and jury duty to white males. Elections were held in November and Gettis was chosen Judge of the Southern Judicial Circuit.44

Col. George E Thompson, Inspector for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned lands, took a tour of central and south Florida in December 1865 and January 1866. On New Year's Day, 1866, he was in Tampa aboard Capt. James McKay's steamer the Governor Marvin.

On board the Steamer we found Judge Gettis of Tampa, the Judge of the Circuit Court. Elected thereto by the people for his ability and rebellious proclivities he is a thin cadaverous looking man and if Phrenology has any foundation in reason, is more cunning than profound. He is an instance of what great change the Southern climate and the institutions of the South have wrought in Northern men from time
immemorial. He insists that a man necessarily becomes enervated in the Southern country in the course of two or three years residence and soon becomes assimilated to those around him in manner and habits. I could not help thinking while he was talking in that strain, that he intended it as a justification of himself quite as much as it really was a libel upon nature. He sings the old song 'The Nigger won't' but excuses the white man by libeling nature.45

In April 1866, Judge Gettis convened a circuit court in Hillsborough County for the first time in three and one-half years.46 Union men who had suffered during the war complained that they were unable to find attorneys to represent them in the local courts. James A. Jones, John W Platt and James W Jackson wrote to Freedmen's Bureau agent, C. R. Mobley, in September 1866:

According to the instruction we received from Captain James D. Green and yourself civil agents for Loyal Citizens of Manatee and Hillsborough Counties we went to Tampa a short time since for the purpose of entering suits against our rebel neighbors for our rights in the civil courts of this state. Captain Green recommended Judge Allen for our attorney and you recommended Honorable John A. Henderson some of us having applied to Judge Allen we soon decided that he was a poor chance as he wanted an unreasonable fee and it strictly in advance [and] we know Judge Allen to have been a leading Rebel [and] we are apprised of the fact that he is an open enemy of the Union party consequently we would have nothing to do with him, we then went to the Honorable John A. Henderson believing at the same time that he would do us justice, but he also refused to aid us in obtaining our rights, he said that if he was to prosecute cases for the Union party that he would consider that he had sold himself away from his party now sir according to instructions received from Captain Green and you to whom we look for our rights we have applied to the lawyers to aid us there are no lawyers in the county who are able to compete with Allen and Henderson in short the lawyers are all implicated in the taking of our property it is impossible for us to get our rights in the courts of this state...47

Military reconstruction began in the spring of 1867 with passage of the First and Second Reconstruction Acts by Congress. Florida became part of a military district and began the task of establishing a government satisfactory to Congress. Elections were scheduled for November 1867, and persons who had held Federal or state office before the war and later engaged in rebellion were among those not allowed to participate. Voters were to elect delegates to a constitutional convention and to decide "whether a convention should be held at all."48

In the meantime, Judge James Gettis' circuit court remained a source of controversy. On August 30, 1867, Unionist agitator Matthew P. Lyons presented a petition of "qualified registered voters" to Major Richard Comba, commander of U. S. forces at Tampa. The petition sought the removal from office of Judge Gettis. Asserting that there was no need for any more sessions of circuit court until after the framing of the new
Major Comba sent the petition on to District Headquarters and added "from my personal knowledge of Mr. Gettis and his court I do not hesitate to state my opinion that union men would not obtain equal justice in the Circuit Court of this district." However, Comba believed it inadvisable to "suspend the Circuit Court for an indefinite period." But Gettis' court, like those throughout the South, was subject to the authority of the Federal military. One example occurred in early December 1867, when Comba requested and received permission from his superiors to postpone a sale of some of William B. Hooker's property. The sale was to satisfy a judgment against Hooker in Gettis' court.

Gettis' health, which had always been uncertain, now continued to decline rapidly. He made out a brief will on December 14, 1867, leaving everything to 24-year old James Fletcher Henderson, junior partner with his brother John in the firm of Henderson and Henderson. In his will, witnessed by John Darling, he said that he did not expect to live much longer due to "the nature of my disease." James Gettis died that same day at midnight, December 14.

The following day members of the Hillsborough Masonic Lodge met for the funeral. They marched to the Methodist Church where Baptist minister, Mason and
lawyer Sam C. Craft led them in prayer. The "Masonic funeral dirge was sung" and the procession continued to Oaklawn Cemetery where Gettis was buried with full Masonic honors.56

The Tribute of Respect, issued by the Masonic lodge said Gettis' whole life "Illustrated the Golden Rule."

By nature he was endowed with a reflective mind and a discriminative judgment; but his physical structure was comparatively feeble - hence, his natural mental powers were continually improved by study and reflection, which embraced the whole range of science and philosophy as well as the more common concerns of every day life....

His frank and genial disposition toward his fellow men, made access to him easy for every individual; and there are very few persons in the Southern Judicial Circuit of Florida, either in or out of this order, who have not, at one time or another, had the benefit of his judicious and friendly counsels, and this, frequently, directly against his own interest as a Lawyer.57

The Gainesville States editorialized:

But he is gone - another sorrow has fallen upon a people already tottering beneath the heavy burdens of accumulated misfortune, another strong and manly spirit that might have aided to guide the vessel of State through the perils of the storm, is lost and it must flounder on amid the billows and tempest, without the aid of one stout heart to which it never turned in vain for solace and assistance.58

Finally, his former law partner, Henry L. Mitchell, now editor of the Tampa Florida Peninsular, wrote:

From the period of Judge Gettis’ first coming among us he identified himself with the interests of the state, and its prosperity was the great aim of his life. Called repeatedly to fill important political positions, he acquitted himself with honor in every sphere. He believed in the constitutionality of secession, and held the high doctrine of state sovereignty, hence was foremost in the memorable convention of 1861. Forthwith he supported his actions by repairing to the front to defend the principle he cherished. When the end came he accepted the result to abide by it faithfully, and heartily applied himself to restore the government of our fathers, as it was. [emphasis added]

In private, his charities were liberal, his conduct regular, and his example a path wherein we should proudly follow. A great light has been extinguished, but its radiance still exists. We have his memory and his deeds to incite us to emulate his life and his death.59

James Gettis remains an enigmatic figure. Was he gay? His background was mysterious, he never married, he surrounded himself with young men and one of his close associates was John Darling, another life-long bachelor. Northern-born, he went out of his way to become a real Southerner, a true secessionist. He supported slavery yet owned no slaves. His health was feeble, but he courageously manned a cannon and organized troops for war. He was unforgiving towards Unionists and thus
earned their hatred. But to former secessionists and Confederates, he was a hero. The epitaph on his tombstone in Oaklawn Cemetery reads:

Here lies James Gettis, born May 4, 1816, died December 14, 1867. An exemplary Mason, a learned lawyer, an incorruptible judge, an honored man, self-made, to idleness a rebuke. Reader, know thyself and improve the lesson taught thee by the dead.60

ENDNOTES

1  James Gettis Tombstone, Oaklawn Cemetery, Tampa, FL; Hillsborough County Circuit Court Minute Book 1, 1846-1854, 70.

2 Theodore Lesley, "Judge James Gettis," Tampa Tribune, Sept. 7, 1952. Lesley's article, published in D. B. McKay's Pioneer Florida page, gives Gettis' birthday at May 1, 1816. However, when quoting the tombstone, he gives the birthdate as May 4, 1806. Obviously, the 1806 is a typographical error.


6 U. S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census, 1860, Hillsborough County, Florida (Population and Slave Schedules); Hillsborough County Tax Book 1849, 1850, 1853, 1854, 1855, 1860, 1863, microcopy at Fla. State Library, Tallahassee. In 1860 Gettis was listed as agent for free black Mills Holloman and in 1863 was listed as his guardian.

7 Jacksonville Florida Republican, May 9, 1850.

8 Ibid.

9 Hillsborough Court Tax Book, 1851, 1853, 1854, 1855; Lesley, "Judge James Gettis," Tampa Tribune, March 26, 1950; Florida House Journal (1852), 31, 388; Hillsborough County Circuit Court Minute Book 1, 1846-1854, 323, 351.

10 Tallahassee Floridian and Journal, March 10, 1852.

11 Jacksonville Florida Republican, Jan. 2, 1852.

12 Laws of Florida (1852-53), 31-38; Jacksonville Florida Republican, May 5, 1853.

13 Karl H. Grismer, Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida (St. Petersburg, 1950), 116-120; Tampa Tribune, June 3, 1951; Tampa Florida Peninsular; Jan. 8, 1859.

14 Tampa Florida Peninsular; Jan. 8, 1859; Historical Records Survey, State and County Officers Commissioned by the Governor of Florida 1845-68 (Jacksonville, 1941), 142.


16 Ibid., Oct. 6, 1854.

17 Ibid.; Tampa Florida Peninsular; Jan. 8, 1859.

18 Laws of Florida (1854), 9-19.

19 Fernandina East Floridian, Sept. 15, 1859.

20 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Aug. 30, 1856.

21 Territorial and Statehood Election Returns, RG 15O, Ser. 21, Box 18, Folder 21, Florida State Archives.


23 Tampa Florida Peninsular; Sept. 4, 1858.

24 Election Returns, Box 11, Folder 23, FSA.
25 Florida House Journal (1858), 98, 105, 136-140, 154; Tampa Florida Peninsular, June 19, 1858, July 2, 16, 1859.

26 Tampa Florida Peninsular, May 21, 1859.

27 Ibid., July 30, Aug. 13, 1859.


29 Ibid., 207-208.

30 McKay v. Friebele, 8 Fla. 21; McKay v. Bellow, 8 Fla. 131; Parker, et al v. Hendry, 8 Fla. 53; Hooker v. Johnson, 8 Fla. 453; Hillsborough County Circuit Court Minute Book 2, 1854-1866, 119, 178, 385, 500; Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, E & A.M. Minute Book 1857-1864,102, 122, 169-171.

31 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Jan. 14, 1860.

32 Ibid., March 24, 1860.

33 Ibid., Dec. 1, 1860.

34 Ibid.

35 Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida Begun and Held at the Capitol in the City of Tallahassee, on Thursday, January 3, A. D. 1861 (Tallahassee, 1861), 3, 6, 25-32.


38 Hartman and Coles, Biographical Roaster, II, 694.

39 Ibid.


41 "Reminiscences of Capt. James McKay, Jr.," Sunland Tribune (November 1991), 86.


47 Ibid., 21.

48 Ibid., 22; Jerrell H. Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet:- Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877 (Gainesville, 1974), 163464.

49 Petition of Hillsborough County Voters to Major Richard Comba, August 30, 1867, RG 393, Part 1, Dept. and Dist. of Fla., 1865-1869, Letters Received, Book 5, National Archives.

50 Major Richard Comba to District Headquarters, September 6, 1867, in Ibid., above.

51 Ibid.


53 Tampa Florida Peninsular July 6, 1867, July 4, 1868; Notes of John T Lesley, transcribed by Theodore Lesley, in collection of author.

54 Hillsborough County Commission Minute Book 1863-1871, Nov. 25, 1867.

55 Hillsborough County Old Wills Book, 77.

56 Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, E & A.M. Minute Book 1867-1873, 2629. Lodge minutes reveal that Gettis was also a member of Tampa Chapter No. 17, Royal Arch Masons and Lamienus Encampment No. 13, (Knights Templar?).

57 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Jan. 4, 1868.
58 Ibid.

59 Tampa Florida Peninsular Dec. 21, 1867.

Gettis is buried in what is today known as the Henderson Family Plot. Nearby are James Fletcher and William B. Henderson. His tombstone is very weathered and the date of birth -- 4 -- is almost illegible and looks like a 1. A veteran’s marker was installed in 1997 and gives his birthdate as May 1, 1816. Mrs. Patricia (Henderson) Levy has James Gettis’ original Bible which has the notation that it was purchased in 1849 for 75¢.
Egmont Key Lighthouse, ca. 1862 -Florida State Archives

Egmont Key, located in the mouth of Tampa Bay, has had a long military presence, beginning with the Spanish several centuries ago. Under orders from Don Blas of Barreda, the highest ranking naval officer in Cuba, in April of 1757 Francisco Maria Cell, pilot of the Royal Spanish Fleet, surveyed Tampa Bay, beginning with Egmont Key. Celi labeled the key the "Isla de San Blas y Barreda," but the island was renamed shortly thereafter. In his logbook, the Spanish navigator wrote:

Midday of the 13th to the 14th, Thursday noon [April 13-14, 1757]. The sky continues clear, the horizons hazy, and the wind favorable. The xebec was anchored in the aforementioned position, and it was the order of my captain that we remain there until I examine and draw a sketch of the entrances and channels of this bay. At 8:00 A.M., Thursday, I went with the longboat to the isle of San Blas y Barreda [Egmont Key], and in the name of God and the Most Holy Mother, began to measure said island of San Blas. Starting from the southernmost point, I took the following measurements with a rope marked in Castillian yards...

Celi went on to list the twenty measurements taken by rope and a sextant which he finished on April 15. After exploring the rest of Tampa Bay, Cell
returned to Egmont Key on Friday, May 6, 1757:

Dawn came with the same clear horizons and sky, smooth sea, and fair wind from the WNW. At 5:00 A.M. the following men went in the longboat to the island of San Blas (Egmont Key): Don Lino Morillo, Chaplain Don Agustín Fogasa, the accountant, and I [Celil, to erect on the south point of this island the Most Holy Cross, which was consecrated and set upright in this position. (Which was where I began to sketch and to measure for the chart of this great Bay of Tampa, newly called San Fernando.) The xebec saluted it with five salvos and dipped the flag at the stern.  

Celi left Tampa Bay, never to return, but in 1763, Egmont Key received another visitor, George Gauld. As a British surveyor, Gauld renamed Celi’s "Isla de San Blas y Barreda" to Egmont Key, in honor of the Second Earl of Egmont. Despite being christened other names, Gauld’s "Egmont Key" weathered the test of time, retaining this name to the present. Bernard Romans, Deputy Surveyor of East Florida, in 1769, referred to Egmont Key as Castor Key, but this name did not stay with the island. Other explorers, both Spanish and British visited Tampa Bay throughout the 18th Century, encountering the key. Even Cuban fishermen settled in the area, catching fish in and around the bay and selling the catch in Cuba.  

The Spanish, British, and Cubans were not the only nationalities parading across Egmont Key. When the United States took over Florida in the 19th Century, they also joined the foray. While the Spanish and British had only briefly visited and surveyed Tampa Bay during their respective reigns over Florida, the Americans saw the area with a different eye. In 1824, George A. McCall, who accompanied Col. Brooke's forces in the establishment of Fort Brooke, visited the island. In his letters back home, McCall described the key in detail:

We first visited Egmont on the south of the channel. The growth is live-oak, red cedar, and the palmetto or cabbage tree, whose shafts were some of them about forty or fifty feet in height. These trees were sparsely scattered over the island, except near the center, where the live-oak and cedar form quite a "hummock" or thick wood. We found "sign" of deer, though none were seen; but the gray
pelican, several species of gulls, and great numbers of [fish] crows were observed. I was at once struck with the manners and the voice of the crows, which appeared to me to be quite distinct from those our Northern bird, and its size seemed less.7

McCall was the first among a long line of U.S. Armed Forces personnel on the island.

Once the military obtained a foothold in Tampa Bay, Egmont Key’s importance grew as the area became more settled. By the t830s, ship traffic increased, creating a need for a lighthouse on Egmont.8 Tampa Bay’s experience paralleled that of the rest of the state where shipping activity expanded when the United States acquired it in 1821. Yet, the wheels of government tend to turn slowly and Congress finally approved construction of the lighthouse on March 3, 1847. President James K. Polk, on August 24, 1847, set aside fifteen acres of land on the north end of the island as a lighthouse reservation. Less than a year later, in May 1848, Francis A. Gibbons of Baltimore finished constructing the forty-foot tall lighthouse and keeper’s dwelling at a cost of $7,050. In September 1848, the island was devastated by one of the worst hurricanes to strike the west coast of Florida. The maelstrom covered the island in six feet of water, nearly toppling the lighthouse.9 John A. Bethell, a survivor of the hurricane, described the impact of the storm on Egmont:

The gale that destroyed everything in its track along the West Coast in 1848, among other things, washed down the lighthouse on Egmont Key. When the lightkeeper, Marvel Edwards, saw that the tide was going to overflow the island and that it was already two feet deep around the dwelling, he placed his family in his boat and waded with it to the middle of the isle and secured it to the palmettos until the gale was over.

The tide rose so high that it went over the window sills of the old brick dwelling that was built at the same time that the lighthouse was, and has been the home for every lightkeeper from that to the present time. The dwelling when first built was of one story with a cellar and cistern underneath. When he new lighthouse was built another story was added to the dwelling.10

This and subsequent storms in 1848 and 1852 forced Congress, in 1856, to allocate $16,000 to erect another lighthouse on Egmont.11

Before the construction of the second lighthouse, a soon to be significant Civil War general visited the island, Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee. In March of t849, Lee plus three U.S. Army Engineers surveyed the island, along with Mullet Key, suggesting the continued use of Egmont for military purposes:12

In a military point of view, this large and spacious bay [Tampa Bay] of greater capacity than any on the coast of Florida, of easy access, and having as much water over the bar of its principal entrance, as Pensacola, is diminished in value, in consequence of the many and width of its entrances which renders it difficult to defend. In itself it has but little trade and commerce, and it would be difficult to state the period, when it would be likely to be of sufficient importance to authorize the
expenditure necessary for its complete defense. Yet its position intermediate between Cay West and Pensacola, the only points on the Gulf where vessels of a certain draught, could look for safety, added to its advantages as a harbor, may hereafter render it advisable, if not to close it against an enemy’s fleet, at least to erect a work on the north end of Egmont island, which in addition to interrupting the passage of the main entrance, would give some protection under its guns to our own vessels, and with the aid of war steamers stationed in the Gulf, secure the advantage of the harbor to ourselves and wrest them from an enemy.

The survey of this part of the coast will correctly establish the relative position of the islands and channels, now imperfectly known, and show how the defense of the harbor can best be effected. With this view and preparatory to the completion of the surveys, the board have recommended certain islands at the mouth of the harbor reserved for military purposes.\textsuperscript{13}

Recommendations such as this one sealed the key’s fate, denying private development while securing the future military presence on the island.

During the delay between Congressional funding of the new lighthouse in 1856 and its subsequent construction in 1858, Egmont Key served as a prison camp. Nearing the end of the Third Seminole War (1856-1858), a.k.a. the Billy Bowlegs War, Seminole Indians were imprisoned on the island while awaiting ships to transfer them from Florida.
to "Indian Territory" west of the Mississippi. In late July 1857, a military and civilian contingent from Tampa visited the island, selecting a site to build the prison:

Col. Loomis [of Fort Brooke] and several other gentlemen landed. The site for building a house for the accommodation of the Indians above mentioned, was selected, and lumber, to be used in its construction, rafted ashore. Capt. Treska, of the light house, very kindly furnished us with a quantity melons, and, at 2 o'clock, anchor was weighed and we were homeward bound.

John Bethell related the Native Americans' experience on Egmont during the war:

During the Seminole War of 1856-7, while mate on one of the Government steamers, the "Texas Ranger," then plying between Tampa and Fort Myers for the purpose of transporting troops and munitions of war, I had a very good opportunity of seeing quite a number of the braves, their squaws and little papooses, captured or surrendered, that were being shipped on our boat as prisoners of war from Fort Myers to Egmont Key, which was their prison until sent West to the reservation. All the prisoners were well guarded while on the boat, and on arrival at Egmont they were turned over to the commandant of the post for safekeeping; and they were safe when once on the island, for no boats were allowed to be kept there and none to land, day or night, under any conditions whatever.

The Indians were very quiet and orderly while prisoners on the boat, but just as soon as they landed and met their relatives all order and quite was turned into war whoops, weeping, dancing and yelling like wild beasts.

A local historian calculated as many as 300 captives were interred on the island. Before the last group of prisoners were sent west in 1858, the government completed the new lighthouse.

With nary a minutes rest, the island became entangled in another devastating conflict, the Civil War. Early on the key served as a base for Confederate blockade runners escaping to the Caribbean to either sell Southern made products/raw materials (e.g., cotton and tobacco) or to pick up hard to get luxury items (e.g., coffee and tea) or desperately needed war supplies (e.g., guns).

Egmont's occupation by Confederates was short lived. In July 1861 Union Naval forces captured the key and used it as a base of operation for the East Gulf Blockading Squadron, building many structures near the lighthouse. The lighthouse served the Union as a watchtower, locating ships trying to sneak into or out of the harbor. According to Niel E. Hurley, author of Keepers of Florida Lighthouses: 1820-1939, George V Richards was the lighthouse keeper from March 7, 1860, to December 30, 1861, during which time he removed the lens and fled the island to prevent further Union use of the apparatus. Other lighthouses throughout Florida experienced the same fate at the Confederates' hands. As a prison camp, Confederate prisoners were kept on the key, along with escaped slaves and Union sympathizers. Supposedly, nearly 200 escaped slaves resided on the island in 1863, awaiting transportation to friendlier parts.

In 1864, a cemetery for Union and
Confederate soldiers was established, interring at least 13 men between 1864 and 1865, remaining in use until 1909 when the bodies were removed to national cemeteries in Florida and Georgia.\textsuperscript{22}

Throughout the war, Egmont Key served as a staging ground for attacks against the city of Tampa, residents in present day Pinellas County, and the burning of blockade runners’ ships.\textsuperscript{23} In January 1864, the ship U.S.S. James L. Davis, was stationed at Egmont Key, performing blockade duty for eight months.\textsuperscript{24} During its stay, the ship participated in several Union assaults on Tampa and the surrounding countryside.

Four months into its tour, on May 6, 1864, the Davis took part in a joint army-navy invasion of Tampa. Members of the Second Florida Cavalry and the Second United States Colored Infantry along with 54 sailors sacked the town, killing or wounding several Confederates, capturing artillery pieces, mail, and money.\textsuperscript{25} Unbeknownst to the invasion party, the lighthouse lens was hidden in downtown Tampa. After conquering the town, federal troops discovered the lens, yet failed to find other parts essential to the operation of the beacon.\textsuperscript{26} The lighthouse was not back in operation until June 2, 1866.\textsuperscript{27}

In May of 1887, Key West was ravaged by yellow fever. Two months later the government established a U.S. Marine Hospital Service on Egmont Key for refugees from the stricken area. This was possible because on November 17, 1882, Egmont Key along with Mullet Key were set aside as U.S. Military reservations. On July 11, 1887, twenty people were reported at the hospital, and by August this number grew to thirty. James Gardener was assistant keeper of the lighthouse from February 20, 1886, until June 28, 1887. He left for another post as the hospital was being erected on Egmont, escaping not a day too soon.\textsuperscript{29} During that anxious August only one death occurred among the thirty patients, but sadly some hospital personnel contracted yellow fever while attending to the patients.\textsuperscript{30} On August 18, 1887, Thomas Cassidy became the new assistant keeper, despite the yellow fever cases on the island.\textsuperscript{31} Cities throughout Florida, including Jacksonville and Tampa suffered great losses due to yellow fever. By the winter of 1888, the state was clear of the epidemic, yet the hospital remained in operation until 1901.\textsuperscript{32}

Ten years after the yellow fever scourge, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the U.S. Military began erecting forts on Egmont Key and Mullet Key to counteract a possible Spanish invasion.\textsuperscript{33} At the turn of the century, the military named the post on Egmont “Fort Dade” in memory of Major Francis L. Dade, killed in battle in December 1835, the beginning of the Second Seminole War.\textsuperscript{34} Both the north and south ends of Egmont received coastal artillery units, along with Mullet Key, and a thousand tent U.S. Marine Hospital was put into action, serving the wounded troops returning from Cuba and the health needs of men stationed in Tampa.\textsuperscript{35}

Despite having the lens, finding a lighthouse keeper loyal to the federal government was a difficult task. William S. Spencer became the keeper on February 28, 1866, but refused to take an oath of allegiance to the United States government; consequently, he was dismissed and replaced by William T Coons on July 11, 1866. Coons held the position for ten years living on the island with his wife and two sons. Between 1866 and 1898, the lightkeeper, his assistant, and their families were the principal residents on the island.\textsuperscript{28}
While Egmont and Mullet Keys became a beehive of war time activity, Tampa received the brunt of military turmoil. Because of its proximity to Cuba, its port, and the recently constructed rail line, Tampa became the embarkation point for much of the military force heading to Cuba. War was declared on April 24, 1898, and by early May troops began trickling in. By the end of the month a tidal wave of more than 30,000 soldiers flooded the city, encamped across the local landscape including Port Tampa, Tampa Heights, Palmetto Beach, Fort Brooke, De Soto Park, and Lakeland. Even Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders rode through town on their way to the Caribbean island. On June 7 orders came for 16,000 of the troops to ship out for Cuba. Tampa’s lack of preparedness for this onslaught - from an inadequate one-track railroad line leading from the city to the port to the inability to load more than two ships at a time at the port (a total of 36 ships had to be loaded) - hampered the invasion force and frustrated construction at the mouth of Tampa Bay.

The Spanish armada never attacked Tampa, and the war ended shortly after the U.S. invaded Cuba. Despite this, work continued on Egmont. As early as March 1898, nearly a month before war was declared, the military developed plans to fortify the key. By the end of June, the War Department finished construction of two siege gun batteries, made of wood and sand, on the southwest end of the island. The military developed docks and rail lines to facilitate construction. Egmont sprouted into a town during the early days of the 20th century. Between 1899 and 1916 over seventy buildings, predominately wood frame, were constructed at a cost of $494,427. The early batteries were replaced by more permanent gun emplacements, totaling five in 1906.

Batteries Burchsted and John Page supplanted the siege guns during the first decade of the new century. Consisting of two six inch caliber 1898 guns and one 1898 three inch caliber gun (added in 1901), the Army utilized Burchsted until the end of World War I. Declared obsolete on the last day of 1919, the six inch guns were left to
rot. Four months later, the three inch guns received the same fate. In 1980, the six inch guns were transferred to Fort DeSoto Park. Next door to battery Burchsted and begun on October 1903, battery John Page was finished in April 1904. Constructed of Portland cement and sand, the battery received its two three inch caliber guns in 1910. Named after Captain John Page, killed in action in 1846, at Palo Alto, Texas, the battery only remained in operation for nine years, deactivated in 1919, and the guns eventually removed in 1923.38

On the northwest end of the key, Battery McIntosh the southernmost of the three northern gun emplacements - begun in October 1898 and finished in April 1900, was furnished with two eight inch caliber 1888-M1 guns. Constructed of Portland cement and sand, the battery lasted until the 1920s when the guns were removed. The government started construction on Battery Mellon, the northernmost battery, in October 1900 and finished in March 1901, but the battery remained silent until 1904 when three inch R.E guns were installed. Mellon remained in operation until 1920 when the military declared the guns unsafe. Sandwich between these two gun emplacements, battery Guy Howard was begun on the northwest end of the island on July 1903, made of Portland cement and sand, and completed on August 1904. The military installed two six inch caliber guns in 1906, and the battery functioned until 1917, when the guns were removed for use on the European front. This battery was named in honor of Major Guy Howard, killed in the Philippines on October 22, 1899.39

As the defenses of the island became larger and more complex, the number of people stationed at Fort Dade increased. By 1899, excluding the gun batteries, the fort contained twelve buildings, including a hospital, barracks, and officers’ quarters. In 1900, Fort Dade’s population passed the 150 mark. Most of the people on the island were young white men in their 20s or 30s, but five African American women, four African American men, and ten white females also resided on the key. Reflective of the rest of the country, Egmont is living and eating quarters for blacks and whites were segregated. Children as young as three and personnel in their 50s also called Egmont home. Seventy privates constituted the largest occupation on Egmont, but civilian as well as officers also labored for the government. Fourteen people, the second largest occupation, were listed as having no job. Both women and children filled this category. Carpenters come in third with twelve. Sergeants comprised the fourth largest group, totaling eight. After this, from one to three people made up the remaining professions, ranging from musician to lighthouse keeper. By the 1910s, Egmont’s population grew to nearly 300 people, forming a small town with a school, movie theater, tennis courts, hospital, brick paved roads (installed in 1909), electricity, and telephone service.40

Besides lighthouse and military personnel, members of the Tampa Bay Pilots Association lived on the island. Prior to the formation of the Pilots Association in 1886, ships entering into the bay stopped at the lighthouse to obtain maps of the harbor, returning the guides on the way out. Before 1912, pilots stayed at the lighthouse keeper’s home, waiting for ships to arrive. On February 17, 1912, probably to the relief of the lighthouse keeper, the federal government permitted the Tampa Bay Pilot Association to lease several acres of land on the southeast side of Egmont to maintain a lookout for ships and homes for the pilots. Once spotted, the pilots would sail out to the ship and guide the vessel to the port. On
March 8, 1928, for $3,850 Hillsborough County purchased the 5.5 acres on which the pilots resided, securing the continued presence of the association on Egmont Key.  

In spite of the picture perfect setting of the key, with two story houses surrounded by green lawns and cooled by the ocean breezes, everything did not go smoothly. Blood-thirsty mosquitoes infested the island, making life miserable for many non-Florida natives. While dodging mosquito air raid attacks, people also fretted over assaults by rattlesnakes. Furthermore, the grinding wheels of the military tested the patience of many. The island did not provide fertile ground for growing food or other necessities, consequently, nearly everything had to be shipped in at great expense, including vegetables, milk, and livestock feed.

Because of the variety of people and their occupations, not all of whom worked for the Army but were in one way or another impacted by it, they had a differing array of experiences on Egmont. In 1907, the Army and Militia Coast-Defense held joint exercises at Fort Dade and Fort DeSoto. In reviews of the exercises, the men generally received positive critiques, shedding light on conditions in the camps and the work conducted:

During the encampment frequent inspections were made by the district sanitary officer, the militia surgeon, the post surgeon, and by myself [Capt. J.C. Johnson, Coast Artillery Corps, commanding Fort Dade, Fla.]. While it took constant hammering to produce the results obtained, in general these camps were kept the cleanest and most sanitary and were the freest from flies of any I have ever seen.

First Lieutenant Lewis Turtle of the Coast Artillery Corps at Fort Dade provided a slightly different picture of camp life:

It was most difficult to get any fatigue work out of the militia. They even considered it a great hardship to haul their own meat and ice. In policing up at the end of camp they displayed an utter, absolute, and unqualified lack of discipline, burning up rubbish at places the use of which was specifically prohibited—by both written and repeated verbal orders—for such purposes. This defiance of authority took place in the presence and seemingly with the consent of the militia officers.

Turtle went on to describe military exercises the men performed:

Due to the efforts of Capt. J.C. Johnson, Coast Artillery Corps, some blank ammunition provided for the exercises was expended at a time when a big excursion was at the fort. During this firing the guns and range tower were manned by militiamen whose visiting friends took marked interest in the occurrences at the battery. The militiamen were greatly elated by the chance to show their proficiency. Doubtless they had feared that only the infantry supports would get a chance to show off before their friends. Such exhibits as this tend to greatly increase the interest of the public in artillery work and to give greater esprit de corps to the artillery soldier.

Detailing a very different experience, Mrs. Virgil Braddock was born on the eve of World War I in Egmont’s hospital, delivered
by an Army doctor. Despite having electricity on the island beginning in 1911, Mrs. Braddock’s father, Merill Bethel, who was assistant lighthouse keeper on Egmont from 1915 to 1918, still carried kerosene in five-gallon containers up to the top of the lighthouse to fuel the lamp. Other duties included the polishing of the glass and brass on the lamp. For entertainment, Mrs. Braddock stated:

No television, no radio. One of my parents’ main sources of amusement was to fish and hunt shells around the island. They’d put me in one of the wooden boxes the kerosene cans came in, put the box in dad’s little boat and go around the island. On weekends, dad would make a little money taking soldiers to town in the boat.

Mrs. Roberta Cole reminisced about her days on the island as a young girl during the early part of the twentieth century when she stated:

The Moore family on the island looked forward to every new day, at Fort Dade. Marion Bates and I agree, as she lived there as a child. We agree that everyone was busy and happy and loved Egmont. There were so many hobbles. The ladies did handwork and shared intricate patterns for needlecraft, and all of the nice little embroideries and so on. I tried as a child to take up the basics, and 25 years later, I finally finished a small afghan. While the daughters collected paper-dolls, the ladies collected recipes.... My education was mostly by osmosis, all the newspapers, magazines and the junior classics. Sunday School was a vital learning experience. We had Panama hats which we wore everywhere. We’d take the narrow wooden sidewalk where I learned to ride a bicycle on planks this wide. And we would go the length of the engineering property, to connect with the cement sidewalk, a concrete road which took us past sergeants’ row to the auditorium and the center of the island.

In 1917, while local families bought victory bonds, men joined the military to fight in Europe, and Tampa’s shipbuilding industry boomed, Egmont Key became a training center for National Guard Coast Artillery units. The key’s population nearly doubled to 600 due to the artillery units and anti-submarine mine crews stationed at Fort Dade, resulting in the construction of several buildings, including barracks, mess halls, and officers quarters. This buildup occurred in response to fears of possible attacks on Tampa Bay. Despite this, the military began to slowly strip the fort of its guns, removing them to the European front.

After the first World War, the military considered Fort Dade as well as Fort DeSoto, on Mullet Key, obsolete. This resulted from the advancement of technology which allowed battleships to bombard the islands while out of range of the forts’ guns. Furthermore, the military viewed mobile artillery as a more viable option than the stationary guns in defense operations. Consequently, by 1920, the population of the island shrank to 294 personnel, ranging in age from one to seventy-six. While young white men were still the majority of residents on the island, nineteen African American men, six African American women, and sixty-two white women also lived there. The Coast Artillery employed the largest number of people, totaling more than 130. As in 1900, "none"
was the second sizable group, with seventy-five people. Small in comparison to the first two, nineteen laborers lived on Egmont, followed by seven people in the medical department and an equal number in Quartermaster Corps. The remaining professions dwindled in size, ranging from cook to mechanic. A year later, on August 31, 1921, the fort was inactivated, with the eventual transfer of all personnel to Key West, except an 18-person care taking unit. On May 25, 1923, the crew was removed; consequently, the lighthouse became the focal point of the island, with Sergeant Fagan serving as the sole caretaker for the entire key.50

The ebb and flow of military forces through Fort Dade was typical of other bases in Florida. As the country entered into conflicts, bases were either built or upgraded, readied for any aggressive act and overflowing with fresh recruits and seasoned warriors. The United States Naval Station at Key West and Fort Jefferson on Garden Key, Dry Tortugas shared in Fort Dade’s boom and bust experiences. While both predate Fort Dade, they also suffered from becoming obsolete before completion or shortly afterwards. Furthermore, because all three, plus Fort DeSoto, were coastal defense stations, nature took its toll on their physical remains. Yet, despite these similarities, Fort Dade and Fort DeSoto are unique, stemming out of a specific time and historical experience: the United States’ conflict with Spain in 1898 and the eventual colonization of parts of the Caribbean and Asia.51

Even after abandonment, Fort Dade refused to die. Through the 1920s and into the 1930s the Coast Guard utilized Egmont Key as a firing range, providing some excitement for the caretaker several months out of the year. Coast Guardsmen from all over the South convened on the island to practice shooting their rifles, handguns, and machine guns. Additionally, during these exercises, destroyers practiced target shooting ten miles off of Egmont’s coast. During this time, in 1931, the Coast Guard wrestled partial control of the island away from the War Department and spent the next several years attempting to obtain absolute command, especially the former Fort Dade lands. Before the end of the decade, the Treasury Department obtained ownership of much of the key. In November of 1933, the War Department removed the caretaker of Fort Dade, leaving the Coast Guard, the lighthouse keeper, and the pilots in care of the island. By 1937, Egmont Key was rated as the best firing range in the South. Unfortunately, while the country was reeling from economic depression, fires destroyed many of Egmont’s buildings and left carcasses of others. Between 1935 and 1936, fire attacked the island four times. In response, the Coast Guard requested and received permission to level to the ground many of those structures remaining on the island, as they presented fire hazards. Compounding the problem, Egmont Key suffered at the hands of hurricanes during this same period, further damaging the already fragile material remains of the island. Consequently, considerable sections of Fort Dade were destroyed before the outbreak of World War II even with continued use by the Coast Guard.52

For much of the nation, World War II served as a boon to its economy. With the creation of new bases and the subsequent influx of military personnel and their paychecks into local economies, cities such as Tampa were able to pull themselves out of the soup lines of the Great Depression. While war time restrictions limited what people could buy, workers spent what they could and socked away the rest, waiting for better days. On the
eve of World War II, in July 1939, Tampa received notice of the impending construction of MacDill Army Air Field. Millions of dollars were spent and thousands of people were employed constructing the base. By May of 1940, less than a year after the military announced the construction of MacDill, over 1,000 military personnel were stationed at the base even though it was not finished. This number grew to over 25,000 during the height of the war. The military also opened Drew Army Air Field (located at present day Tampa International Airport), further increasing the military presence in the local economy. Paralleling the military increase, Tampa’s shipbuilding industry pushed into high gear once the war started, employing nearly 16,000 people in round the clock shifts.53

War seems to bring out the best in Egmont, and during the Second World War, the island experienced a rebirth. The War Department took control of much of the island, clearing roads, refurbishing the few remaining buildings, and erecting new structures during the early days of the conflict. The key became a harbor patrol station, protecting the bay from possible attack with over 150 Coast Guard, Army, and Navy men stationed on the island. The Navy operated the harbor patrol, the Army participated in the Coast Artillery, and the Coast Guard maintained the lighthouse and the radio station. Additionally, any ships entering the bay had to deposit all munitions on the island, picking up the stockpiles on their way out. Military personnel were once again brought to the key for shooting and amphibious warfare practice.54 As with previous conflicts, Tampa Bay was never attacked by the enemy during World War II. However, Mullet Key, the former site of Fort DeSoto, became a bombing and shooting range for American planes from MacDill field. Captain John Birdsall, who was stationed on Egmont during the war, stated that Mullet Key provided much excitement and work for the personnel on Egmont Key:

The Air Force had a skip bomb range on Mullet Key and a bombing range. On Passage Key they had a bombing range and B17’s and P40’s and that type airplane were flying and strafing, they had a range on Mullet Key also for the P40s. They shot live ammunition and they shot across the main channel. So whenever a ship went by they would put up a red panel on the range and cease firing. Well sometimes they didn’t cease firing and it got hazardous. Many times as they shot the target the bullets would ricochet off the water and they had to peel off the left or right hard after they shot the targets or they would run into their ricochets. Many of them did run into their own ricochets and they had liquid cooled engines and it would shoot a hole through their radiators. We would watch them and pretty soon the steam would come out of their engine and the engine would cease and they would circle around out there and land by us and we would rescue the pilots. As soon as the plane stopped it would sink so they’d jump out. So, we would go over and pick the boys up. We made many rescues like that. The old P40’s wouldn’t float very long. Sometimes they would skid them up on the beach and the Coast Guard personnel and the Navy too, if we could find one of those planes abandoned, they had good clocks in them and all kinds of stuff we would like to get.55
As the war drew to a close, so did the revitalization of Egmont. The Coast Guard continued to operate the lighthouse and the pilots still guided ships into the bay, but the once booming Fort Dade deteriorated further. During the 1940s the lighthouse was modernized by removing the pedestal and lantern which housed the kerosene lamp and Fresnel lens, replacing them with "a pair of DCB 35 airport beacons with 200,000 candle power and a nominal range of 28 miles," and reducing the height of the structure to 70 feet. Instead of making the arduous climb up and down the stairs daily to light the old system, after the renovations one of the Coast Guard personnel manning the island went into a shed next to the lighthouse an hour before sundown and flipped a switch, leaving the light to burn until 8 o’clock the next morning. Furthermore, a radio beacon for ships as well as airplanes was placed on the key.56

Prior to 1974 ownership of the island was split between the War Department, Hillsborough County, the Coast Guard, and the Treasury Department. On July 10, 1974, Egmont Key was designated a National Wildlife Refuge, with most of the island - except the Coast Guard’s holdings on the northern end of the island and the pilots association land on the southeast - transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Four years later, on December 11, 1978, Egmont Key was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.57

Despite electrifying the light, the keeper’s duties had not changed drastically from the nineteenth century. In 1987, the four member Coast Guard crew served in pairs of two on the island for two weeks each, mowing the grass, changing the bulbs in the DCB 35 airport lights, repairing and painting the buildings, and servicing the radio beacon.58 On September 30, 1989, the lighthouse became fully automated, a process which began throughout the country in the 1960s. Consequently, the Coast Guard transferred the crew that operated the beacon but still maintained ownership of the structure.59 In the same year, the State of Florida took over management of the key, making it a state park.60

Though never having been attacked, Fort Dade has not fared well with the ravages of time, fire, wind, rain, ocean tides, vandalism, and neglect. Surprisingly little remains of the base and its extensive defensive and garrison structures. With the invasion of foliage and the leveling of nearly every structure, one is hard pressed to imagine what the island looked like during its heyday in the 1910s. The lighthouse station, while suffering early troubles, constitutes the most prominent historical structures on the island. Next, the pilots association five acres dotted with wooden structures on masonry piers comes in a close second. Finally, individual structures from Fort Dade stand as lonely reminders to the area’s rich military past.

While totally submerged - the ocean reclaimed them during the 1980s - Batteries Burchsted and John Page on the south end of the island are still visible from the air. In 1995, hurricanes Erin and Opal pelted Battery Guy Howard, resulting in the near collapse of the structure. Currently, the ocean is carrying away the foundation, consequently, the gun emplacement will suffer the same fate as Burchsted and John Page. Of the non-submerged structures, one of the most visible and still highly utilized is the road network established in 1909. A lengthy one mile brick stretch from the lighthouse reservation to the pilots association’s land has been extensively weeded by park officials and private citizens, keeping it free from hefty overgrowth. In 1994, a group of Eckered College students and other
volunteers cleared away much of the invasive and destructive vegetation that engulfed Battery Mellon. Where once a jungle like growth was the only thing visible, the battery is now obvious to the naked eye. Battery McIntosh, while suffering from the effects of time, storms, vandals, and vegetation, has survived with rust destroying a substantial amount of the metal construction materials. Much of the rest of the fort has been reduced to masonry piers and a scattering of roof and wall remains. Both the quartermaster store house and the guard house, built in 1910 and 1911 respectively, stand roofless, naked to future troubles.\textsuperscript{61}

Confronting the continued demise of the island's historic remains and employed by the State of Florida as the manager of Egmont Key, Robert Baker began working on the island in October of 1989. He replaced the Coast Guard personnel, and, currently, Mr. Baker and his wife are the sole full time residents on the island. Even the Pilots Association members do not live on the key permanently, using the homes for weekend getaways or overnight work. Several other park personnel toil along side Mr. Baker, but they reside on the mainland, commuting by boat to work everyday. While the staff of the park operate on a shoestring budget, they are helped by the "Egmont Key Alliance" community support organization. Formed by a group of volunteers in the early 1990s, the alliance has been instrumental in public awareness campaigns educating the people about the fragile ecological and historical presence on the island. Additionally, the alliance has invested hundreds of hours in stabilizing many of the historic remains scattered across the key, battling vegetation, storms, the ocean, and vandalism. At the same time, the group has established and continues to add to an archive of primary and secondary documents related to the lighthouse and Fort Dade. Future plans for the island include the possible establishment of a museum in a refurbished Guard House.\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{ENDNOTES}

\textsuperscript{1} The research for this paper was conducted as part of the author's duties while employed at the Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board. The funding for the research was provided by the Historic Resources Review Board and resulted in a Hillsborough County landmark proposal. This work would never have seen the light of day were it not for the untiring contributions of Robert Baker, Egmont key Park Ranger; Richard Johnson, President of Egmont Key Alliance; and Teresa Maio, Historic Sites Specialist for the Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board.


\textsuperscript{3} John D. Ware, in his article "Tampa Bay in 1757: Francisco Maria Cell's Journal and Logbook, Part I," \textit{Florida Historical Quarterly}, \textbf{50} (2) (October 1971), 169 translated and reprinted Cell's experience on the island.

\textsuperscript{4} Stafford, 15; Ware (1968), 13. John Ware notes that Cell's measurements accurately described the island as it was in the mid-1960s, over two hundred years later. See Ware, (1968), 13, footnote 26.

\textsuperscript{5} John D. Ware, "Tampa Bay in 1757: Francisco maria Cell's Journal and Logbook, Part II," \textit{Florida Historical Quarterly}, \textbf{50} (3) (January 1972), 272.


10 Bethell, 46-47.

11 Cherlain, 26; A *Compilation of Historical Datea: Egmont Key, United States Lighthouse Service, Fort Dade, Coast Guard Light Station Egmont Key* (Manuscript on file State Library of Florida, Tallahassee, Florida, n.d.), 11, 13; Grismer, 113; Holland, 131; Stafford, 18.


14 Covington, 129; McCarthy, 94.


16 Bethell, 49.

17 “Egmont Key,” *Tampa Florida Peninsular*: May 8, 1858 reprinted in *Sunland Tribune* 17 (November 1992), 101; Stafford, 22.

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19 Dave Capra, “The Confederate States Lighthouse Bureau: A Portrait in Blue and Gray,” *The Keeper’s Log* 8 (2) (Winter 1992): 8; Niel E. Hurley, *Keepers of Florida Lighthouses: 1820-1939*, (U.S.A., 1990), 61. Hurley lists Rickard’s name first by Richards and then by Rickard because the name was spelled differently between several Sources. I have chosen the Rickard’s spelling to remain consistent with Dave Capra’s spelling of the name.


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Hurley, 61.


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45 United States War Department, Office of the Chief of Staff, (1908), 233.


47 Bothwell.

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THE “YELLOW PERIL” IN TAMPA
1941-1945

By SCOTT ROHRER

In the preface to his thought provoking book War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War, John Dower advised that "we can never hope to understand the nature of World War II in Asia, or international and interracial conflict in general, if we fall to work constantly at correcting and recreating the historical memory."1 While Dower's excellent work provides an important starting point, his study was, by design, a general survey of attitudes toward the Japanese during World War II and the Allied occupation of Japan which followed.2 Focusing on the most vitriolic race rhetoric of the war years, Dower made no room for a number of variables, including the very plausible argument that racial hatreds associated with the Asian-Axis enemy were more or less important, depending on such factors as the timing vis-á-vis key developments of the war, or whether one lived in the West (with its significant Japanese-American population), or elsewhere, or whether one resided in an urban or rural area. The essay that follows is an attempt to flesh out those nuances with regard to one relatively small geographic area--West Central Florida.

In December 1941, Webb's Cafeteria in St. Petersburg was serving complete turkey dinners for forty-five cents. Area merchants advertised holiday gifts starting at under one dollar. Local theaters offered such titles as A Dispatch from Reuters, and Spawn of the North, and one of the most significant safety concerns for Tampa Bay area residents involved "cows at large" on the highways.3

Of the ninety first generation Japanese (Issei) and sixty four second or third generation Japanese Americans (Nisei and Sansei) living in the state, barely ten made their homes in the Bay area. Statewide, most of this small number lived along the southeast Atlantic coast, between Palm Beach and southern Dade County. This placed them in close proximity to the small Yamato Agricultural Colony, which, though nearly forty years old, had never become a destination of choice for expatriate Japanese in the way that Hawaii or California had. The populations of Japanese (and other) immigrants and their progeny were both so infinitesimal and so concentrated, in fact, that of sixty seven counties in the state of Florida, fifty two registered ten or fewer members of "other races" (all of those not
considered either white or black) in their 1940 census reports. This dearth of Japanese neighbors may partially explain why the Japanese were not consistently perceived and portrayed in the local press with a greater degree of animus. Unlike Americans in combat in the Pacific Theater, and those residing west of the Rocky Mountains, it was very unlikely that a resident of West Central Florida would ever see a Japanese person. This may have served to stunt development of more hardened anti-Japanese attitudes.

In the days immediately after Pearl Harbor, South Florida (where the majority of the state’s small Japanese population resided) and some of the more rural areas of the state reacted with vicious enmity. In Cocoa, for example, placards imploring the reader to "Slap the Jap" were tacked up all over town. In Boca Raton, a group of Bahamian Blacks (aliens themselves!) had to be dissuaded from destroying crops at the Yamato Colony by local law enforcement officers. In Ft. Lauderdale and Winter Haven, newspaper editors spewed exterminationist rhetoric, while in Panama City, a "noted expert" explained to her audience that "Nips are not human." Gadsden County businessmen went so far as to offer a $100 bounty to the first local lad to "kill a Jap soldier." However, in nearby Tallahassee, editorials in the wake of the bombing referred to the attack as "cowardly," but focused much more attention on the way that it "united the nation as nothing else could have done." This was much closer to the paradigm for contemporary journalistic content in the Tampa Bay region.

Often, though not always, local editors criticized the behavior of the Japanese, without criticizing the Japanese people or culture collectively. According to recent scholarship, the universal contemporary perception held that the "Japanese people were, uncommonly treacherous and savage." The Japanese were so portrayed in the local media at times, but this was far from universal. On many occasions, not only in 1941 but on the annual commemorations of the beginning of the war for the United States, the act of attacking Pearl Harbor was referred to as "treacherous," "savage," or "barbaric," but these labels were not attached to the Japanese people themselves, or to their culture. This might seem like so much semantic hair-splitting, were it not for the existence of direct cultural criticisms elsewhere-or at other times-in the same newspapers. For example, shortly after Pearl Harbor, a sports columnist for the *Tampa Tribune*, characterized the Japanese as exemplifying "treachery," "cruelty," and "brutality," and readers were warned that they "must realize now that they must wage an all-out effort to crush the foul monsters who are directing the Axis forces in this battle." Whether this signifies the greater martial fervor of sports fans, or simply a more animated opinion held by a specific writer is difficult to discern, but the above quote is also noteworthy because it contains one of the few references to the Japanese as "monsters," and because for all of its vitriol, in the end it separates the Axis leaders from those that they led.

Other references to the Japanese as treacherous, barbaric, savage, or fanatic can be found, albeit with some effort. These are most noteworthy for their tendency to be concentrated after January 28, 1944-the date on which the American government released news of the "Bataan Death March." It may or may not be true that residents of the Tampa Bay Area were more willing to separate actors from acts, and leaders from...
followers, when they thought about the Japanese. It is almost certainly true that they did not think about the Japanese obsessively.10

Throughout the war, mention of America's Asian enemy in editorials, letters to the editor, or other public forums was quite rare, and these infrequent appearances generally appeared in the wake of news of significant developments on the battlefront. For example, on December 14, 1941, the op-ed pages of area newspapers dealt extensively with the newly declared war, but carried only one letter which mentioned the Japanese.11 On other occasions upon which one might expect the Japanese enemy to be at center stage, such as annual or semi-annual editorial commemorations of the attack on Pearl Harbor, he often played the classical role of a supporting character: creating a change in circumstance which facilitated character development in the protagonist.12 The six essays which won prizes in a 1942 high school essay contest also illustrate the secondary position that the Japanese held for area residents. While the subject of the essays was the nascent war, three do not mention the Japanese at all, two mention them only indirectly, none mention them more than once, and none mention them any earlier than the third paragraph.13

Further evidence of the relative place of the Pacific war in the local psyche is the order in which area newspapers presented daily capsule summaries of developments on the various fronts. These front page encapsulations were alternately headlined, "War in Brief," "World War Situation at a Glance," or "War Summary," but prior to the end of the war in Europe, they almost universally listed news from China or the Pacific last.14 Rare exceptions to this were again clustered around seminal and emotion-laden events, such as the release of news regarding the Bataan Death March.15

Yet another means of measuring what was important to their readership is found in the regular syndicated columns that area newspapers ran. Three that showed up in virtually every local paper were those by DeWitt MacKenzie, Raymond Clapper, and Ernie Pyle. Of these, only Clapper visited and reported from the Pacific theater before the outcome of the European war was a foregone conclusion. Though he died in the Pacific Theater, Pyle served in Europe for most of the conflict. MacKenzie, the only one of the three to survive the war, was representative in that his columns only rarely focused upon the Japanese. Once again, this focus usually came in the wake of news of watershed events in the Pacific Theater, and often, just as quickly as the Japanese became the columnist's principle subject, they completely disappeared again.16

Dower made great use of Pyle's observations. Pyle's sincere, homely, humanist style had helped him attain folk hero status by the time he began covering the Pacific Theater in February of 1945. That month, Pyle wrote, "In Europe ... our enemies ... were still people," while in the Pacific, "Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice." Dower used this quote to support points regarding common perceptions of the Japanese as subhuman, and regarding the media's contribution to the creation and maintenance of this attitude.18

However, later the same month, the columnist "humanized" the Asian enemy, describing him as prone to questionable decisions when subjected to the extended stresses of combat, and as being terribly
interested in self-preservation (as Americans were). Then, on February 26, 1945, Pyle wrote that:

As far as I can see, our men are no more afraid of the Japs than they are of the Germans. They are afraid of them as a modern soldier is afraid of his foe, but not because they are slippery or ratlike, but simply because they have weapons and fire them like good tough soldiers. And the Japs are human enough to be afraid of us in exactly the same way.

On some days, Pyle’s column could be used as evidence that the Japanese were perceived by contemporary opinion makers as subhuman, on others, it could be used to support the thesis that they were human, just like us. It was not consistent enough in its animus to be cited as a sure source of negative attitudes about the Japanese-in-Tampa Bay or elsewhere. This very inconsistency may have actually done more to reinforce the relatively ambivalent outlook toward America’s Asian enemy seemingly held by many Bay Area residents.

Perhaps the most telling evidence regarding the blasé manner in which some Bay Area residents viewed the Pacific War is the record of the "Avenge Pearl Harbor" naval recruitment campaign. This took place on the first weekend in June 1942, just six months after America’s war began, and (coincidentally) on the same weekend as this country’s first significant naval victory, at Midway Island. Nationwide, 12,326 "avengers" were sworn in to naval service on June 7, 1942, but only sixty three took the oath locally. Of these, in turn, thirty seven came from relatively distant Ft. Myers, with the remainder making up the entire complement of "avengers" from the Bay area proper. Barely a dozen hailed from the region’s three major metropolitan areas.

Also telling is the manner in which judicial procedures against Japanese living in the area were carried out. In 1991, another academic described, "a forgotten case against two Japanese men that tells of the fearful, crazed atmosphere that existed in the Bay area" after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The same case, viewed more broadly, tells a different story. At a time when it would have been politic to do otherwise, the judge in the case behaved fairly, ruling in favor of the prosecution on some important issues, in favor of the defense on others, and spending considerable time charging the jury to negate the influence of prejudice. Likewise, the defense attorney could have rolled over," allowing the case to be dispensed with quickly and quietly. He would not have been the first attorney to give less than enthusiastic representation in a matter in which he found the client repugnant on racial grounds. He did not, however. Like the judge, and like the aforementioned law enforcement officers in Boca Raton, he did his job. Including appeals, attorney William C. Pierce worked assiduously on this case from December 1941 until April 1945. Other incidents which brought members of the small local population of Japanese into the legal system during this period offer similar evidence of surprisingly fair play.

In subtle contrast to this, it seemed that (prior to release of news regarding the Bataan Death March) whenever local newspapers picked up stories of civil liberties transgressions elsewhere, the tone was one of slight, ironic amusement at the folly of another. For example, a Filipino in Watertown, New York was mistakenly arrested after a store manager reported him as a “suspicious Japanese.” The twin ironies
highlighted by the report were that the person in question happened to be the house servant of the commander of the local army camp, and that he had been in the police station thirty minutes prior to his arrest for the purpose of turning in scrap metal.\(^{24}\)

The item cited above is also noteworthy because the headline referred to the subject being mistaken for a "Japanese," as opposed to a "Jap" or a "Nip." With regard to wire service stories, the influence of the local journalistic community could be exercised in two ways: by editing or choosing not to run a story-in other words by what was left out; and by the headline written to accompany a story. For obvious reasons, astute analysis of decisions of the former type is virtually impossible at this late date, and will not be attempted here. Regarding the latter, however, ample evidence exists.

Historian Ronald Takaki observed that "the term 'Jap' was so commonplace it was even used unwittingly" in the first half of the twentieth century. He went on to describe the experience of a west coast Japanese, who would periodically encounter a Caucasian acquaintance who happened to be an attorney. This educated, presumably worldly individual would regularly, (but in an unmistakably "friendly way") greet the Japanese e"migre" by saying "Hello, Jap!," or "Hello, Mr. Jap!" because he did not view it as an epithet.\(^{25}\) The same presumption that the term carried no derogatory connotations is well illustrated by a Tampa Tribune headline from August of 1942 which read, "Marines Look For Name To Call the Japs."\(^{26}\) This was not unlike the custom of southern whites addressing blacks as "boy," or the universal contemporary practice by area newspapers of referring to blacks as "Negroes."\(^{27}\) There was no doubt a class or caste undertone, but there was not (necessarily) an intent to insult the individual at which the remark was directed. Across cultures, perceptions and intentions rarely correlate, but that ranges beyond the scope of this study.

Contemporary newspapers are replete with examples of Japanese being referred to as "Japs." This was not a sobriquet reserved for a war-time enemy, however. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, they were also commonly referred to as "Japs" in the regional press.\(^{28}\) Furthermore, persons of Japanese lineage were likely to be called "Japs" whether they were "theirs" (citizens of the Empire of Japan), or "ours" (Japanese resident aliens or Japanese Americans).\(^{29}\)

It is also worth noting that the terms "Jap" and "Japanese" were both in common use by the local headline writers of the period. In fact, throughout the war, it was not unusual to see both labels utilized on the same page, over different stories.\(^{30}\) On December 6, 1942, the St. Petersburg Times listed selected front page headlines from the first year of America's involvement in the war. "Japanese" appeared in these headlines with nearly the exact same frequency as "Japs."\(^{31}\) It was much less common for area journalists to use the term "Nips" in their headlines. When this designation appeared, however, it was often virtually side by side with other headlines employing the designations "Japs" or "Japanese." Moreover, while it was unusual, it was not unheard of to see all three appellations grace headlines on the same page.\(^{32}\)

What was truly unusual was to see the words "Jap" or "Nip" within the body of a newspaper story. This occurred most often either with syndicated columns, with stories written by local reporters, or in wire stories which included quoted references to the Japanese by American military personnel. For example, if a Marine home on furlough
recounted his experiences in the Pacific to an area reporter, the enemy almost invariably became "Japs," not only in quotes from the subject of the story, but in the journalist's contextual narrative, as well. In wire stories, on the other hand, the Asian enemy was almost invariably referred to as "Japanese" or (much less often) "Nipponese" -unless a source was being quoted. Nearly all of the exceptions to this rule were found between the end of January, 1944 and the end of the war. The former marked the date when Americans learned of atrocities committed against American soldiers on Bataan, and this may account for the marginal increase in the number of references to the Japanese as "Japs" within the body of wire service items. Whether use of this term was or was not intended as slur, the marked change in frequency does imply a lessened concern for linguistic courtesies on the part of the local and national media, after Bataan.

The more clearly pejorative terms "Nip" or "Nips" virtually never appeared within the body of a newspaper story. Extensive (though not quite comprehensive) scouring of the Bay area's newspaper record revealed only a few such instances. The earliest, a locally written caption accompanying an official government photo of a sinking Japanese submarine, appeared in April 1943, and labeled the wreckage as "a warning to other Nips." The second came on February 2, 1944, less than a week after publication of Japanese atrocities, written by a reporter for the Bradenton Herald. The third came ten months later, in a published letter that a local Army private had written to a friend. At the time he wrote, this soldier had been actively engaged in combat against the Japanese, and the reference was to an enemy in the act of attacking. Possibly coincidental, but nonetheless significant, was the letter's publication date: December 7, 1944 - the third anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The pendulum of vitriol tended to shift to the uglier extreme on these anniversaries.

Yet another measure of local values during this period of strife can be found by chronicling the tactics of the ongoing War Bond campaign. If an advertising campaign achieves success, the advertiser will probably not "change course in mid-stream," or resort to secondary appeals. As with most advertising, then and now, campaign organizers used emotional entreaties to solicit War Bond purchases. However, America's enemies were only prominent players in War Bond advertisements for about the first eighteen months of the conflict. Thereafter, there was a discernible shift in tactics. Virtually all War Bond advertisements after the summer of 1943 focused on appeals to buy bonds as a means of getting America's fighters home sooner (a theme throughout the period), and toward bonds as an investment in post-war prosperity. During the latter half of the conflict, War Bond appeals centering on the defeat of the Japanese enemy tended to be clustered around the anniversary of the beginning of hostilities, or to follow significant battle news, such as the Bataan announcements in late January, 1944, or VE day in May of 1945. In the first two cases, these latent returns to previously common tactics sought to press an emotional "hot button." In the third, readers were reminded that the end of the war in Europe did not mean the end of the war altogether.

Scholars have argued that, whereas America's European enemies might be perceived as "good" (German or Italian), or "bad" (Nazi or Fascist), there were only "bad" Japanese, (except, of course, those Japanese that were already dead). This has been called a propensity to view the
Japanese as being of a "singular mind," or being "photographic prints off the same negative," lacking independent identities, decision-making skills, and individual initiative. This kind attitude appeared in Bay area journalism on occasion, but it was far from the rule.40

Enemy soldiers and American citizens of Japanese extraction (Nisel and Sansei) were both likely to be branded as "Japs" in headlines.41 Also, while Japan's Axis partners were often identified with their ruling political party or with that party's leader, it was not uncommon to identify the Japanese collectively.42 However, it was much more common to portray Japan's general population separately from its military or political leaders. Enough incidents are documented in the record of the Japanese public being identified with interests distinctly different from those of their leaders-or being credited with the capability of disagreeing with or even being disappointed by their leaders-to ably undermine the argument made by Dower and others that the Japanese people were believed to possess no ability for individual action or thought.43

Historians have also noted a slightly different manifestation of this collective view of the Japanese: use of labels such as "the Jap" (a singular pronoun); "Jap horde"; or "Jap flood."44 References such as these can be found in the west central Florida record, with some effort, but they were much more infrequent than most current students of the subject would expect. Only one allusion to a "Jap flood" was found. This was an editorial cartoon picked up from a northern newspaper (the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) in February 1942. It portrayed Douglas MacArthur and another American serviceman sitting astride a sign which said "Bus Stop-Reinforcements" while all around them was water, labeled "JAP FLOOD."45

 Barely a handful of references to the Japanese using singular pronouns exist in the local press. One of these was in a "commemorative" editorial cartoon which appeared in the St. Petersburg Times on December 6, 1942, and two were in the Bradenton Herald's 1943 war anniversary supplement, (again demonstrating the propensity for war hates to peak on such anniversaries). In a rare letter to the editor which made mention of the Japanese, the writer collectivized both "the nazi and the Jap," again contrary to what modern historians might expect. Another case may have actually been a typographical error: a headline which read "Jap's Siberian Attack Delayed." It is reasonable to assume that the apostrophe should have been placed behind the "s," as was normally the case.46

The local chroniclers made even fewer references to "Jap Hordes." While there may have been more, the only such instances uncovered happened to be in editorials that appeared in the Tampa Daily Times. The first actually called Japanese troops in China "hordes of Japs." Close, but not quite the same singularization that Dower spoke of. The second was a commemorative editorial on December 7, 1943.47

Recent scholarship has also discussed a common tendency to portray the Japanese as animals (generally dogs, vermin, or simians, and often accompanied by the adjective "yellow," which had its own negative connotations), reptiles, or insects. The natural extension of this dehumanization was the "metaphor of the hunt," which acted as a "linguistic softening of the killing process."48

Throughout the majority of the Bay area's historical record, animal references are
almost non-existent. When and where they are found, the circumstances follow established patterns. The Bradenton Herald's 1943 war anniversary supplement (perhaps the most singularly venomous local publication of the war) described one stage of the enemy's metamorphosis during the first two years of the conflict as the period when "Tokyo became the head of an octopus," but then went on to describe Japanese soldiers in flawed, but very human terms. Another story, written about a local man by a Tampa Tribune reporter during the first summer of war, referred to the Japanese getting “their tentacles" on two Aleutian Islands. In a third instance, a series of quotes appearing in area newspapers the day after the nation was told about atrocities on Bataan included one mention of Japanese military leadership as rats, and another as "uncivilized pigs in the form of men." Several months later, an editorial cartoon appearing in several area papers depicted the "Jap Fleet" as a huge fish being reeled in by two American sailors in a row boat. (The bait that the fishermen were using was called "Philippine Invasion.").

Portrayals of the Japanese as vermin appeared more often than other animal references, but only slightly so. A letter to the editor of the Bradenton Herald early in the war called Japanese soldiers exercising authority over white people in the Philippines "yellow rats," who thought they were "supermen." A few months later, an "Orkin" advertisement stated that, "Maybe killing rats (four legged) will not win the war, but it can help...." On at least two occasions, local newspapers used the term "Jap-rat": once on the six month anniversary of the war's beginning; and once in the wake of news about Bataan. In the spring of 1944, an editorial cartoon depicted the US Fleet as a bulldog guarding several holes in the ground, with the caption "That Rat of a Jap Fleet Isn't So Dumb," and upon Japan's acceptance of American surrender terms, another cartoon showed a rodent yelping terms, as a huge foot stepped upon its tall, accompanied by the caption "And Thus ends the Tale of the Rapacious Rat." \(^{50}\)

As for hunting metaphors, they were exceedingly rare. In one example, a headline appearing in the spring of 1945 stated that "Tiger, Python, Elephants, and Japs are Flier's [sic] Prey." In another, an Associated Press story emanating from Chicago early in 1942 featured the headline "Jap Hunting License Idea is Spreading," but the secondary headline, "Bradenton Negroes Have Counterparts In Nippon Certificates" probably said as much or more about the state of local racial attitudes toward blacks. \(^{51}\)

Yet another series of stereotypes which help compose the "dehumanization model" were perceptions of the Japanese as supermen, monsters (powerful but subhuman), or "lesser men" (diminutive or deficient humans ). \(^{52}\) In the local record, examples of the two former varieties were extremely unusual. Examples of the latter type were legion.

Depictions of the Japanese as supermen disappeared from Bay area newspapers after Allied forces halted the Japanese military advance in the Pacific. One of the few uncovered was an April, 1942 editorial cartoon showing a behemoth Japanese batter being struck out by "relief pitcher" "Skinny" Wainwright. Another was also a cartoon, with a gargantuan Japanese soldier holding an equally oversize rolling pin (labeled "Jap Steam Roller") and bearing down on an East Indian engaged in passive resistance. \(^{53}\)

Monstrous Japanese were almost as rare, and almost as likely to be extinct after 1942. Like the Japanese supermen, the monsters
appeared most frequently in editorial cartoons, and tended to prey on East Indians or fellow Asians.\textsuperscript{54} They did make a brief reappearance, however, in a cartoon published five days after the news of Bataan which depicted a drooling man-beast in Japanese army fatigues holding a club labeled "Prison Camp Horrors" under the caption "A Throwback."\textsuperscript{55}

Presentation of the Japanese as "lesser men" began almost with the outbreak of hostilities, not only in editorial cartoons, but in headlines which reapplied such extant phrases as "little brown men," and in advertisements which told would-be purchasers who was to blame for shortages.\textsuperscript{56} As the war progressed and American prospects for victory blossomed, the Japanese represented in this manner became more beleaguered, more comical, and ever smaller.\textsuperscript{57}

While most historians made short work of this, on occasions the Japanese were portrayed as human, while Americans were not. Certain examples also point to other belligerents-both friend and foe-being depicted as animals. Representations of the United States via an eagle appeared more than once, as did portrayals of America’s might and men as bulldogs or "war dogs."\textsuperscript{58} Nearly as common, however, were presentations of other parties to the conflict as animals, such as the leaders of the Vichy French government as "three blind mice," swastika wearing wolves, or growling Russian bears.\textsuperscript{59}

Although representations of the Japanese may never have attained the intense, universal hatefulness in the Tampa Bay area that Dower found in his research (which, again, looked more at the national picture and the attitudes held by those in the military), at certain times, places, and situations they came closer than others. Some of these have already been addressed in part. One such situation was locally written news items. Sometimes these pieces told of the combat experiences of military personnel from the region who were home on furlough. Others, in a similar vein, were built around letters from the front which the recipients then presented for publication. The Clearwater Sun, which served a rather small town constituency at the time, was most likely to run this type of story.\textsuperscript{60} On occasion, however, editorials, columns, or surveys of servicemen and local residents regarding breaking war news reflected more intensely hateful attitudes.\textsuperscript{61} In each of these cases, the military angle probably predisposed the writer of the story to show increased martial fervor.

Similarly, War Bond advertisements-particularly those sponsored by local merchants and appearing in the more “small town” oriented dailies such as the Clearwater Sun and Bradenton Herald-could be extremely vitriolic.\textsuperscript{62} Also, on occasion, other advertisements used the ready-made emotional appeal of a nation thrust into an unwanted war with good effect.\textsuperscript{63}

The Plant City Courier represents an interesting case study. Serving by far the most rural constituency, it was also the only area newspaper surveyed which was not being published daily, during the period in question.\textsuperscript{64} As a byproduct of this, the Courier was a partial exception to the normal rules governing what one might find in Bay area newspapers. Coming out only twice a week until mid1944, and only weekly thereafter, the Courier’s editors probably felt that their readers could get more recent war news from other sources, such as radio, and so they rarely printed any of their own. With rare exceptions, the war
only appeared in the *Courier's* pages when there was a local angle to the story. A December 12, 1941 story about a "patriotic meeting" of 500 people made no mention of either Japan or other Axis nations, for example. Also, the first reference to the Bataan Death March was a single column-inch on February 1, 1944, naming a local man who was missing and thought to be among the victims. When other newspapers were carrying banner headlines trumpeting Doolittle's raid on Tokyo, or American naval success at Midway, the *Courier* gave top billing to the recent success of local baseball teams. When the *Courier* finally gave space on the front page to the biggest news of the war—peace—it got equal billing with the news that mole cricket bait would be available ten days hence.

One of the few things that the *Courier's* "war coverage" held in common with other area newspapers was an eagerness to highlight the fates of local men in combat. Thus, on those cases when the Japanese appeared, they were there simply as jailers or victims—antagonists in somebody else's story, a story in which their nationality was largely irrelevant.

To be successful, a newspaper must be responsive to the interests of its constituency. It must reflect what is important and significant to the community it serves. By this measure, what mattered to the residents of such "big cities" as Tampa and St. Petersburg may have been very different from what mattered in rural Plant City. An example of this is the way in which the *Courier's* coverage of one discrete local event varied from coverage of the same event in the more metropolitan *Tampa Tribune*.

In August of 1942, director Howard Hawks was filming a scene for the movie *Air Force* at a local military installation, Drew Field. Coverage in the *Tribune* focused on the technical aspects of creating a Hollywood-style illusion. Reporters made no mention of locals used as extras, other than to say that they were all men. When the *Courier* picked up this story a few days later, it focused entirely on these extras. Under the headline "Japs and Filipinos Quikly [sic] Supplied For Tampa Movie," it told of a resourceful Tampa civic leader who trucked in 200 Cubans from Ybor City in response to a late-night telephone call from Hawks, and how make-up artists turned these men into "the best synthetic Nips" Hawks had ever seen.

Another general and area-wide pattern which became apparent was the tendency for increased animus toward the Japanese on and around the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, this also showed changes over time. In 1942 and 1943, the tone of editorials and editorial cartoons in early December was almost universally punitive, with reference to the Japanese. By 1944, when Japan's fortunes were decidedly dimmer, the desire for punishment was still present, but there was sometimes an element of pity about the pending fate of the Japanese people, as well.

As examples of the former, a December 7, 1942 editorial cartoon appearing in the *Tampa Daily Times* and elsewhere depicted several bombers dropping their loads on a pile of rubble topped by a flag which had a swastika depicted inside a rising sun, all under the caption, "Many happy returns of the day." Another cartoon on the same occasion showed a close-up of two hands under the heading, "Our progress in Ju-Jitsu": the first hand, labeled "one year since Pearl Harbor" was grasping the wrist of the other, which represented "the Jap." The second hand was in the process of dropping a bloody knife, in response to
painful prompting. Surprisingly, however, the Japanese could also be a total non-presence on such anniversaries. The Clearwater Sun’s 1943 war anniversary supplement contained nine large War Bond advertisements. Not one of them mentioned the Japanese. Instead, the themes involved general patriotism, getting the GIs home, and easing their hardships. In a similarly surprising disappearing act, four Tampa Tribune editorials dealing with the war’s anniversary, all published on December 6, 1942, name the Japanese a total of only two times—once indirectly as "the enemy," and once as "Japs."68

In December of 1944, local editorials were quite vindictive, focusing mostly on the need to continue the relentless prosecution of the war on all fronts. However, commemorative editorial cartoons portrayed Japan’s leadership as a forlorn dunce, or the butt of a joke, or as one about to be consumed by a fire that he had set himself, but which was now burning out of control.69

The only genuine concentration of animalistic, monstrous, or insect-like portrayals of the Japanese came in the late January and early February of 1944 immediately following the news about what had happened on Bataan.73 However, while the sense of hate reflected in the local record remained elevated for the duration the war, it did fade somewhat from its immediate peak. By war’s end, local editorial cartoonists once again portrayed the Japanese as pitiful, comical, or helpless.74 Moreover, as nuclear fallout descended on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, another type of fallout occurred in the Bay area: in editorials, letters to the editor, and local reaction pieces, there was a marked tendency to separate Japanese leaders from those that they led, reserving war blames solely for the former.75 Though it was not universal by any means, this too runs counter to the current historical paradigm for American wartime perceptions of the Japanese.76

Throughout the war, attitudes of West Central Floridians toward the Japanese fluctuated. Key aspects of the dehumanization model, such as perceptions of the Japanese as being all of one mind, or as being monsters, animals, vermin, or supermen were rare. Others, such as stereotypes depicting the Japanese as lesser humans, or as comical figures, took hold by the end of 1942 and remained a fairly consistent presence for the duration of hostilities.

It would be too generous to state that this part of the country was somehow egalitarian enough to avoid allowing racism to be a part of the emotional baggage that it took to war. In fact, during World War II, Tampa was "Florida's most racially troubled city."77 These troubles almost universally were
between blacks and whites, though. Whereas the Bay area had a comparative plenty of black citizens, there was a downright paucity of Japanese residing in the region.\footnote{78} Also, while Americans on the west coast, or in major metropolitan centers, or in the Pacific Theater might have worried about a direct attack from the Japanese, in the Bay area, German submarines were the only immediate danger, and this danger was only clear and present for the first year of the war.\footnote{79} Most residents of the area had never and would never encounter a Japanese. Without any regular opportunity to focus it, any potential for the kind of all-consuming race-hate that other historians have detailed remained essentially dormant in the Tampa Bay area. America’s Asian enemy was certainly not depicted as noble or as worthy of emulation, but when he was present at all, he was usually quite human. Prone to folly, perhaps; flawed, definitely; but by and large, human, just like us.

\section*{ENDNOTES}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., ix-xi, 3-32.
\item St. Petersburg Times, 12/8/41; \textit{Tampa Daily Times}, 12/9/41; \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 121 t 0/4 1; \textit{St. Petersburg Times}, 12/7/4 1.
\item \textit{Tampa Daily Times}, 12/8/41; \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 12/9/41; George E. Pozzetta and Harry A. Kersey, Jr., "Yamato Colony: A Japanese Presence in South Florida, \textit{Tequesta} 36 (1976), 66-77; 16th Census of the US, 1940, \textit{Population, Vol II, Characteristics of the Population}, Table 4; Table 6; Table 10; Table 21; Table 25.
\item Dower, 33.
\item For example, see \textit{Bradenton Herald}, 12/8/41; \textit{St. Petersburg Times}, 12/15/41; \textit{St. Petersburg Times} 6/6/42; \textit{St. Petersburg Times} 12/6/42; \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 12/7/43.
\item \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 12/9/41.
\item For example, see \textit{Bradenton Herald}, 2/20/45; Ibid., 3/1/45; \textit{St. Petersburg Times}, 1/28-31/44; \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 1/29-31/45. For rare examples of these adjectives being attached directly to the Japanese people before the Bataan news broke, see \textit{Bradenton Herald} 4/19/42; or \textit{Tampa Daily Times}, 12/12/41.
\item Dower, 9,11,33.
\item \textit{Bradenton Herald}, 12/14/4 1.
\item As excellent examples of this, see \textit{Bradenton Herald} editorial, 6/7/42; \textit{St. Petersburg Times} letter to the editor, 6/8/42; \textit{Tampa Tribune} letter to the editor, 2/3/42; \textit{Tampa Tribune} editorial, 12/7/42; \textit{St. Petersburg Times} editorial, 12/7/43; \textit{Tampa Daily Times} editorial, 12/7/44.
\item \textit{St. Petersburg Times}, 4/5/42.
\item As examples, see \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 4/20/43; \textit{Ibid.}, 1/27/44; \textit{Clearwater Sun}, 1/30/44; \textit{Ibid.}, 4/18/44; \textit{Bradenton Herald}, 3/2/45.
\item For example, see \textit{Tampa Tribune}, 1/29/44-2/2/44; \textit{St. Petersburg Times}, 1/29/44-2/1/44; \textit{Bradenton Herald}, 1/29/44-2/2/44.
\item For example, Mackenzie and others wrote about the Japanese on 12/ 9/41 (see \textit{Tampa Tribune}, \textit{Tampa Daily Times}, Clearwater Sun, \textit{Bradenton Herald}, or \textit{St. Petersburg Times}); 6/4/-6/42; and 1/28-29/44; but in each case, the Japanese had disappeared by the next day. On other days, when one might expect the Japanese to be the focus of a column entitled “The War Today,” such as 12/7/43, they were a complete non-presence.
\item Dower, 78.
\item Ibid., 77-78.
\item \textit{St. Petersburg Times} and elsewhere, 2/24/45.
\item Ibid., 2/26/45.
\end{enumerate}
21 Tampa Tribune, 6/7/8/42; Clearwater Sun, 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 6/7-8/42.
22 Tampa Tribune, 6/2/91.
23 Tampa Daily Times, 7/28/41; Ibid., 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 2/19-20/42; Ibid., 10/6/42.
24 Bradenton Herald, 2/5/42. For other examples, see St. Petersburg Times, 2/19/45; Tampa Daily Times, 2/6/43; Tampa Tribune, 6/4/42; Ibid., 1/29/44.
26 Tampa Tribune, 8/5/42.
27 Gary Mormino, "Florida Slave Narratives," Florida Historical Quarterly 66 (April 1988), 407; for examples of the latter type, see Bradenton Herald, 4/21/42; Ibid., 4/15/45; Ibid., 8/12/45; Tampa Daily Times, 12/1/41; Ibid., 6/6/42; Ibid., 8/8/45; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Ibid., 11/28/43.
29 As examples, see Bradenton Herald, 12/7/42; Tampa Tribune, 6/4/42; Ibid., 12/7/42; Ibid., 1/29/44; Clearwater Sun, 10/31/44.
30 For example, Bradenton Herald, 10/6/43; Ibid., 4/2/45; St. Petersburg Times, 9/11/42; Ibid., 8/11/42; Tampa Daily Times, 2/19/42; Tampa Tribune, 2120142; Clearwater Sun, 12/7/41.
31 St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42.
32 For example, Bradenton Herald, 1/31/44; Ibid., 12/7/42; Ibid., 2/3/44; St. Petersburg Times 6/6/42; Tampa Daily Times, 2/2/44; Ibid., 4/5/44; Tampa Tribune, 8/12/45; Clearwater Sun, 10/30/44; Ibid., 5/12/45.
33 For examples of each type, see Bradenton Herald, 11/1/42; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Tampa Daily Times, 2/20/45.
34 For example, Bradenton Herald, 1/31/44; Ibid., 12/7/44; St. Petersburg Times, 4/26/45; Tampa Daily Times, 9/21/44; Ibid., 2/20/45; Clearwater Sun, 5/8/45.
35 St. Petersburg Times, 4/1/43; Bradenton Herald, 2/24/44; St. Petersburg Times, 12/7/44.
36 These advertisements tended to appear concurrently in most of the area dailies. For examples of the Japanese presence in War Bond ads, see Clearwater Sun, 12/7/42; Ibid., 5/2/43; Bradenton Herald, 11/1/42; Ibid., 1/3/43; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42.
37 For example, Bradenton Herald, 3/1/45; Ibid., 7/23/45; Clearwater Sun, 8/7/43; Ibid., 10/27/43; Ibid., 7/2/44; Ibid., 7/15/45.
38 As examples, see Bradenton Herald, 1/30/44; Ibid., 12/3/44; Clearwater Sun, 11/29/44; Ibid., 12/7/44; Ibid., 5/8/45.
39 Dower, 79.
40 Ibid., 17-20.
41 Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/42; Tampa Tribune, 6/4/42; Ibid., 12/9/42 Ibid., 1/29/44; Clearwater Sun, 10/30/44.
42 For example, Bradenton Herald, 6/9-10/42; Ibid., 12/1/44; Tampa Tribune, 4/19/42; Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/43.
43 Of the many examples, see especially Bradenton Herald, 2/9/43; Ibid., 8/13/45; St. Petersburg Times, 2/7/43; Ibid., 12/5/43; Ibid., 12/4/43; Tampa Daily Times, 12/12/41; Ibid., 2/19/42, Tampa Tribune, 12/7/42; Ibid., 7/11/45; Clearwater Sun, 3/30/42.
44 Dower, 17-20, 79-84, 118-46.
45 St. Petersburg Times, 2/15/42.
46 St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Bradenton Herald, 12/7/43; Tampa Tribune, 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 10/1/42.
47 Tampa Daily Times, 3/31/42; Ibid., 12/7/43.
48 Dower, 81-93, 161-62, 312.
49 Bradenton Herald, 12/7/43; Tampa Tribune, 8/9/42; St. Petersburg Times and elsewhere, 1/29/44; Clearwater Sun and elsewhere, t0/30/44.
50 Bradenton Herald, 2122142; Tampa Daily Times, 8/14/42; Plant City Courier 6/9/42; Tampa Tribune,
1/31/44; Tampa Daily Times and elsewhere, 4/7/44; Clearwater Sun and elsewhere, 8/14/45.

51 Bradenton Herald, 3/1/45; 2/19/42.

52 Dower, 94-117.

53 Bradenton Herald, 4/7/42, Tampa Tribune and elsewhere, 8/4/42.

54 Bradenton Herald, 2/1/44; Tampa Tribune and elsewhere, 4/6/42.

55 Tampa Daily Times, 2/2/44.

56 Tampa Tribune, 2/19/42; Ibid., 6/6/42; Tampa Daily Times, 4/23/42; Clearwater Sun, 6/8/42; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42.

57 Unlike the other aspects of Dower’s humanization model, there are myriad examples of this. The following are representative: Bradenton Herald, 10/6/43; Ibid., 4/30/44; St. Petersburg Times, 6/1/43; Ibid., 21221 45; Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/43; Ibid., 1/15/45; Tampa Tribune, 7/11/45; Clearwater Sun, 10/28/42; Ibid., 7/14/44; Ibid., 7/16/45.

58 St. Petersburg Times, 3/26/42; Tampa Tribune, 6/7/42; Tampa Daily Times, 4/7/44; beginning in Spring of 1945, headlines using phrases like “War Dogs,” or “Vicious War Dogs” to describe Americans fighting in the Pacific almost daily in St. Petersburg and Tampa papers.

59 As examples, see St. Petersburg Times, 8/10/45; Tampa Daily Times, 10/27/42; Ibid., 2/9/43; Tampa Tribune, 1/2/44; Ibid., 8/6/45.

60 For example, Tampa Daily Times, 9/23/44; Ibid., 12/7/44; Clearwater Sun, 12/8/42; Ibid., 1/3/43; Ibid., 10/28/43; Ibid., 1/30/44.

61 For example, Tampa Daily Times, 1/28/44; Ibid., 2/4/44; Tampa Tribune, 1/29/44; Ibid., 4/25/44; Ibid., 8/11/45; Bradenton Herald, 2/1/44.

62 For example, Clearwater Sun, 8/22/42; Ibid., 12/7/44; Bradenton Herald, 11/1/42; Ibid., 1/3/45; Ibid., 1/30/44.

63 These were less frequent, but examples are present in the Tampa Daily Times, 8/14/42 and Plant City Courier, 2/13/42.

64 The Courier had been published twice weekly until mid-1944 when shortages of paper and other supplies made many newspapers cut back. Some dailies eliminated feature sections, others eliminated Saturday issues. The biweekly Courier became a weekly newspaper for the duration of the war.

65 Plant City Courier 12/12/41; Ibid., 2/1/44; Ibid., 4/2/42; Ibid., 6/9/42; Ibid., 8/17/45.

66 For example, Plant City Courier 2/1/44; Ibid., 3/2/45; Ibid., 5/4/45; Ibid., 8/10/45.

67 Tampa Tribune, 8/6/42; Plant City Courier, 8/14/42.

68 Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/42; St. Petersburg Times, 12/6/42; Clearwater Sun, 12/7/43; Tampa Tribune, 12/6/42. For more examples, also see Bradenton Herald, 12/7/42; Clearwater Sun, 12/7/42.

69 Bradenton Herald, 12/7/44; Tampa Daily Times, 12/7/44; Tampa Tribune, 12/7/44; Clearwater Sun, 12/7/44.

70 For example, Bradenton Herald, 1/28/44-2/2/44; St. Petersburg Times, 1/28-44-2/2/44; Tampa Daily Times, 1/28-29/44, 1/31/44-12/4/44; Tampa Tribune, 1/28/44-2/2/44.

71 See above, and Dower, especially 94-117.

72 Bradenton Herald, 2/1/44.

73 For example, see Bradenton Herald, 1/30/44; Tampa Tribune, 1/29/44; Ibid., 1/31/44 (several instances); Tampa Daily Times, 1/28/44; Ibid., 2/1/44; Ibid., 2/4/44.

74 For example, Bradenton Herald, 8/10/45; Ibid., 8/13/45; Ibid., 8/16/45; St. Petersburg Times, 8/8-9/45; Tampa Daily Times, 8/9/45; Ibid., 8/15/45; Tampa Tribune, 8/15-16/45; Clearwater Sun, 8/9/45.

75 For example, Bradenton Herald, 8/9-10/45; Tampa Daily Times, 8/9/45; Tampa Tribune, 8/9/45; Ibid., 8/1/45; Ibid., 8/15-16/45.

76 Dower, 118-46.

77 Gary Mormino, “GI Joe Meets Jim Crow: Racial Violence and Reform in World War II Florida,” Florida Historical Quarterly 74 (July 1994), 31. For a listing of some of the racial incidents during the war, see 26-37.
78 16th US Census. Characteristics of the Population, Table 10; Tampa Daily Times, 12/8/41; Tampa Tribune, 12/9/41.

The lives and experiences of women at Tampa during the Civil War era have been neglected by the city’s chroniclers. Relatively few original accounts have become available since the Work Projects Administration’s Federal Writer’s Project interviewed a few survivors during the 1930s. Fortunately, several decades ago the late Dena E. Snodgrass of Jacksonville, a past president of the Florida and Jacksonville Historical Societies, purchased from a New Jersey dealer and preserved a small collection of the letters of Ossian B. and Catharine S. Hart. Among the collection’s contents were five letters written by Catharine Hart from Tampa. They carried dates of February 8, April 22, September 4, and November 30, 1860, and January 5, 1865.

Catharine Hart’s experiences in south Florida during the 1840s through 1865 involved trials and tragedy intertwined with romance and remarkable achievement. Born at Newark, New Jersey, in 1823, her family background was that of sea captains and middle class merchants. Then, in 1843 she married Ossian B. Hart, a young lawyer and second son of Jacksonville’s founder Isaiah D. Hart. They had made each other’s acquaintance when she sojourned for her health in Hart’s hometown in 1841.

The Hart marriage faced challenges from its inception. The young couple first attempted to pioneer the Fort Pierce area, but their home and groves were destroyed by the great hurricane of 1846. The Harts’ fortunes slowly rebounded after the couple relocated to Key West. While building a legal practice, Ossian also achieved legislative election as solicitor (district attorney) of the Southern Judicial Circuit in 1849 and served until 1853. He enjoyed Key West life, but Kate felt quite differently about the matter. As a fervent Presbyterian, she abhorred Key West’s easygoing ways, a situation that manifested itself eventually in prolonged health problems.

Relief arrived for Kate in early 1857. Late the previous year Ossian’s longtime mentor, Tampa mayor and former circuit judge Joseph B. Lancaster, died. Within months Ossian and Kate moved to the isolated village, where he assumed Lancaster’s law practice. After a short time in temporary quarters, they purchased a home on the northeast corner of Lafayette (now Kennedy) and Pierce Streets, a part of the block upon which the present Hillsborough County courthouse rests. Kate’s health immediately improved, and, as her letters demonstrate, she found happiness in Tampa. The Harts remained there through most of the trying Civil War years, a period during
which Ossian emerged as the region’s leading Unionist.

Catharine’s surviving Tampa letters record her activities and states of mind during the months before secession and just as the Civil War, which had become bitter in south Florida, was grinding to a halt. They illustrate a mood swing from optimism about Tampa and life generally through fears of the coming crisis to despair. In the process, they permit us a look at this northern-born woman’s sentiments regarding slavery, abolitionism, and the destruction of the Union, as well as Tampa’s remoteness, the daily life of a homemaker and slave mistress, and the heartache of families divided. The letters take on special significance because, in the Civil War’s aftermath, Catharine’s husband would found Florida’s Republican party, sit as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of Florida, and serve, beginning January 1873 until his death in March 1874, as the state’s first native-born governor.

The letters are presented below in their original form, with one major exception. Typically for an era when postage and paper were expensive, Catharine crowded each letter into a shorter space by writing it essentially as a single paragraph. For clarity, the text presented here has been paragraphed. The first four letters are addressed to Kate’s sister, Charlotte (or Lottie) Campbell. The final one was written for her widowed mother Deborah Conger Campbell, her sisters Lottie and Emma Campbell, and her brother Charles G. Campbell, all at Newark.

Two additional notes. First, Kate’s letters make numerous references to her friend Lou. She had met Louisa Browne in Key West during the mid-to-late 1840s. Lou married there to merchant John W. Porter, who also held office as Key West’s mayor. He died in late 1856, though, leaving her destitute. In the circumstances she soon moved with her children Hayden and Mary to Tampa. The three Porters lived with the Harts. Also, Jesse Carter employed Lou as teacher in his small school held in the Historical School House, now located on the campus of the University of Tampa and home to the DeSoto Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. Second, Kate utilizes certain words and terms that were in common use at Tampa when her letters were written but which modern readers may find offensive. While any such result is regretted, the words and terms remain in the text as presented here in order to maintain the credibility of the Hart letters as historical documents.

Tampa Feb. 8th 1860

Dearest Lottie:

Your last kind letter was received in due time after leaving your pen, but I have been on the qui vive of expectation for some time past; and was beginning to feel very uneasy lest some thing had happened to one of you. But your Letter dear Lottie came to my relief and again am I happy in the knowledge that all is well with you, and that you are enjoying yourselves so much in meeting your old friends, schoolmates, and relations, affords me pleasant reflections.

How much I wish I was with you, But tis useless to sigh for what is beyond our reach. He who is contented with what Providence bestows, possesses great and increasing wealth. I am sorry you decided not to pay me a visit,
although I know it would be expensive and fatigueing[,] still my heart would hope, against my better judgment, for what it so anxiously desired.

I have been talking to Ossian about my going home next summer, but he does not say much about it; I fear he thinks I had better stay at home. Our negrow woman Susannah expects to be confined in June or July and will need some one to take care of her. And then there is Lou and her children, if I were gone she would not think it exactly proper to stay here alone with Ossian, and if she left here she would find much trouble to get as comfortable a boarding house and as cheap as we have been doing. I would like very much indeed to meet you at Savannah and go on together, but I fear it cannot be and I have not seen Oby in so long a time and his wife and children never.6 I would enjoy it very much, and have enjoyed the anticipation, although I do not expect to realize my waking dreams.

And then here are my chickens ducks pigs horses; all daily requiring my care; and experience has proved that when the cats away the mice will play, and in the mean time who takes care of the house and yard. I can assure you in our southern homes, the mistress is a very important personage, although she does not actually labor with her own hands, still she must do the head work and her presence is necessary to the faithful performance thereof.

The various members of our household are all in good health at present, including horses cows pig (which by the way expects to be confined very soon) chickens and darkies. Lou has been suffering with a very severe cold in her head, but is better now; her school is in a flourishing condition and her prospects very flattering for the future.

I am very happy to inform you our town is improving some what. We have a literary club of which Ossian is president.7 We have also a glee club, composed of all the principal ladies and gents of the town.8 Lou and I are members and enjoy going very much, and[,] as the object of the society is the improvement of our vocal powers[,] we are more or less benefitted by it. We have also a new minister for the Methodist church; one in good health and quite intelligent and a tolerable good preacher,9 and in addition we have had some very interesting marriages and have several more on the tapis [under consideration], one to night; who knows but Tampa may yet win for herself a name.10 We have also an ice house nearly completed and we expect ere our warm weather commences to have it filled and ready to administer to our comfort in this sunny clime.11

Now Lottie dear dont think I want to censure you for I do not. I know you have with in your bosom as fond and loving affections for your kindred as any one living, and you love our Mother quite as well as any of us and you have her always with you, while I have been separated a great many years. Is it strange then that I should feel some disappointment on getting
a good long letter from one of the family circle, to find no eagerly looked for word from her who gave me birth, whome I have loved in my absence from her with a daughters affection, untill that love is a part of my existance. When you write tell me all and every thing about her. is she much changed since I saw her last, has she more wrinkles upon her brow, has care there stamped its unerring seal[J change is the certain doom of all things in nature, but a Mothers love that is Heven born and with stands the inroads of time absence and death itself.

Tell Ma I so often think of her and wish for her, while eating our nice vegetables on which we are now luxuriating. We have green peas in abundance cabbage turnips, new Irish potatoes carrots beets radishes onions and sweet potatoes all the year round, in great abundance. We raise them upon our own land and feed them freely to horses pigs cows and every thing that will eat them, particularly Little nigers. Tell Mama my flowers grow astonishingly, I have twenty or more rose cuttings sprouted, and a very pretty variety of other flowers such as pinks geraniums, crape myrtle, woodbine, honey suckel &c. And it is a very great source of pleasure to me to watch them unfold their leaves and expand into beautiful trees.

Flower culture is becoming a passion with me. I used to engage in it a few years back, more as a duty than a pleasure because I felt my health required exercise in the open air, and my mind occupations and diversion from its self, but now that my health is good, very much improved indeed, the incentive is not the same but the interest I take much deeper and more substantial; now I love to nurse watch and tend them because my heart is gratified by the silent homage they return me for my care, and in nursing them I am learning lessons of humility faith love dependence on Him who cloths the Lillies of the field.

I believe I have not written you since we made our visit to Key West. We had a very pleasant time indeed[;] all our old friends were very glad to see us, and loaded us with invitations to tea to spend the day and thus every moment of our time was taken up. We were there nearly a week, and did get through with all our calls and invitations. Lou also had a fine time, she and the children had many presents given them. We spent Christmas there, were very sea sick going over and coming back, and quite glad to get home again. We are only 24 hours going and the same coming back, a fine large steamer with good accomodations. I am very much attached to Tampa, like it better as time advances. I never before in all my married life felt so well content and happy in my house as I do now. I feel the force of that beautiful poetry every day of my life. Truly "There is no place like home, be it ever so humble."

I was very much interested in the description you gave of Sister Abbeyes family, and more particularly my little name sake, how much I want to see her, she must be a dear sweet little pet.
squease and a kiss for me. I wanted to send her something for Christmas and hoped to find something pretty at K[eyl W[est], but as the stores had all been burnt down I could not find any thing.¹⁴ give my love to Abby and all her family, and all our cousins, and I have not got room to say any thing more, do write me soon, tell Em I am looking for one from her every day.¹⁵ If she will write me I will answer immediately and tell you the ballance of what I want to say now. love to Oby and family and to your self and Em the same share of affection from your

Sister Kate

In the spring of 1860 Kate’s sisters Charlotte and Emma toured the southeast, including a visit to Macon, Georgia. On April 22, Kate wrote them there in response to a letter from Lottie dated twelve days previously.

Tampa April 22d 1860

Dear Sister Lottie

Your last very kind letter dated April 10, from Macon, informing me of your safe arrival among our friends and your first introduction to the sunny South is now before me. It rejoices me to hear you are all so well pleased with this our beautiful Southern home. I wish O so much you could visit Florida my adopted home[,] the birth place of him who is so dear to me, and whom you all admire and love; were I living in Jacksonville now, how easy you could come and see me; but a few weeks would not do for me. I want a whole winter if ever you do come.

I live hopeing I may some day realize my dream; I know Ma would enjoy the flowers and many other pleasant things peculiar to the south, now you and Em will have an opportunity to learn something of slavery by personal observation, and I want you to look all arround, with eyes wide open, and see if you can find any of the horrid bug bears pictured by the abolitionists of the north; take notes if you do, and give me the bennefit of your observations. I am glad you have come south although I feel badly, to know you are so near me and cannot have a visit from you, still you will be glad on your return home that you came, nd will have many pleasant recollections connected with your visit south, on reviewing your wandering....

Ossian has been quite unwell lately which is some thing so unusual for him I scarcely know what to make of it.¹⁶ he has been troubled with gravel, and is now under the Doc[tor's] care for it; has had several spells of very severe pain, which nothing relieves but morphine;--he sends heaps of love to you and Em and Ma, and says he will write to her soon....

Do dear Lottie write me soon again. I am so glad always to hear from either of you; you dont know the pleasure it gives. Mrs. P[orter] and children are all well and join me in much love to Ma[,] Em and your self and believe me ever your loving sister
By the late summer of 1860 Kate’s earlier optimism and sunny disposition had begun to wither. Her husband continued to ail as he pursued a prolonged business trip through Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. Meanwhile, hot summer weather and household cares drained her energy.

Tampa Sept 14th 1860

Dearest Lottie

Your kind letter, though long looked for, came at last and cheered my lonely anxious heart more than I can find words to express. Ossian is away from home, has been absent nearly two months, and when at Jacksonville was taken sick with Billious Fever, was quite sick[...] confined to his bed a week, but fortunately he was at his Father’s and had the best care and medical attention; but still he missed me; you know when one is sick there is no place like home, and this makes me feel very uneasy about him.

I expect him back on the 19th of this month by our New Orleans Steamer. he is now probably at Mobile, he has been taking quite a business tour, through Florida and then across the country to Alabama; he generally enjoys good health; he does not bear sickness with a good grace; but I hope all is now well with him, and permit him to return in safety to his home and thus fill the heart of his loving wife with gratitude to Him, who suffereth not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His notice....

I weigh one hundred and thirty and often find my flesh very much in my way and I often see my self growing so much like Ma in size and I imagine I look like her in the face; tis a comfort to hear Ma is so well contended and happy in the dear old spot she has for so many years looked upon as her home; tis natural and perhaps tis well. I am glad to hear her health is so good; And Abby and Obe have given up comeing on this summer, do you know Lottie I had made up my mind to come on and meet them, had they paid you a visit, but since they have decided not to come this season, unless sickness should compell me, I shall wait until next summer; then I hope to see you all and enjoy a reunion, and exchange of pleasant memories, and affectionate associations; very dear to my heart; from those my heart so fondly loves. Oh Lottie when I begin to think about you all, and the long time since I look[ed] upon your faces I get so home sick I feel I cannot wait another year, and then there are Charleys dear little children[;] I am all impatient to see them.

But situated as I am tis very difficult for me to leave home. Susannah has now a young baby about three months old and our family is large and our work is heavy and she would get a long badly with no head to manage for her; Negroes are very good to perform hard labor, but they have no management about them. Lou is now enjoying her vacation, will commence teaching again the
first of October, her health is very delicate. the children are well.

I have not been feeling well for the past month, and have thought that a trip north would benefit me very much, more than Docs advise or horse back exercise or anything else. were it only to stay a short time, and see you all and get a breath of your cool embracing air. our summer has been intensely hot. I have felt the heat more this summer than ever before, and I feel it has debilitated my system....

Sept 17th

Dear Lottie two days have passed since I wrote the first part of this letter, and now I have resumed my pen hoping I will be able to finish it before I lay it down. I have been thinking as the time is fast approaching when our merchants get their fall supply of goods, and in consequence vessels will be coming direct from New York to this place, a fine opportunity offers for me to get some things out which I want very much, and which you could so easily send me; one small keg of pickles; some ten or 12 lbs preserved peaches; a new bonnet-a barrel of first rate apples; if I could ascertain when the vessel would sail[,] where they lay[,] who are their agents[,] and all about it in time for you to purchase the things and get them on board, I would be glad to send on the money for you to get them, and could they come out to us fresh and good they would be such a treat we would enjoy eating them so much and think of you all at home. I do wish so much we lived nearer you all, so that we might more conveniently communicate our wants and wishes, and then we might exchange visits also, which would give me so much pleasure.

I have now a young lady friend of mine from Key West spending some time with us, and we are enjoyed it very much. her name is Emma Johnson[.] sister to Phely [Ophelia] Johnson[.] if you will refer back to some of Ossian’s funny productions you will find her name mentioned in connection with an old bonnet. this is her sister and a very clever girl she is.\(^\text{19}\) they both stayed with me a good deal when I was living in Key West.

I wish as much we were living in Jacksonville. there they have vessels out very often, and I see by the papers they are about establishing a line of Steam Ships to run between Jacksonville and New York which will be a great convenience. I cannot but hope some day we may be comfortably located at J. and then I shall have the pleasure of your society occasionally in the winter season; would it not be delightful; it would to me.

I had almost forgotten to tell you, Mrs Hart and daughter Julia, now a widow, Mrs Spear[.] is in New York.\(^\text{20}\) Mrs Hart is in very bad health, has gone on for the purpose of consulting a doctor she has been recommended to for her disease, which is cancer. She I know would be very much pleased to have you all call on her, and it would be a gratification to Ossian also; the Docs South say she cannot get well, but
Col Hart sent her on hopeing some thing might be done to prolong her life, if she cannot be cured. she has been a great sufferer for the past two or three years, and is an altered woman from what she was.21 She and her husband get along much better than they did; he says he would give all he is worth if she could be cured; I do not know her address. when Ossian returns I will get him to write you and give it, and if you can make it convenient to call, I will be much obliged to you....

Now Lottie dear dont you think this [is] time for me to stop scribling. I fear you will be tired reading if I am not tired writeing, do write me soon again please. I am so glad to get your letters, if they do make me home sick. I have not said all yet, but must close with love to all from your loving but unworthy Sister Kate.

War clouds loomed on the horizon when Catharine next penned a letter to Lottie Campbell. In early November Abraham Lincoln had been elected as the nation’s first Republican president, prompting calls for dissolution of the Union throughout the South. Uncertainty gripped the nation. South Carolinians maneuvered toward secession, and the nation’s leadership proved ineffective in resolving the crisis.

Tampa Nov. 30th 1860

Dear Sister Lottie

This morning before I was dressed I received your truly welcome letter. I was beginning to feel quite anxious, you had been silent so long; fearing ma or one of you were sick. I do get so anxious if I do not hear often from you; and had made up my mind this morning as I was getting out of bed to write to you by the next mail....

I hope to visit you next summer but we do not know what is before us. Secession now agitates the entire South; they are calling public meetings in our portion of Country; we had a very spirited one here last monday night, to which the Ladies were invited; and attended to[o], in large numbers.22 Lou and I went to hear what they could say; Ossian, as yet is not in favour of secession, but if Florida follows South Carolinas lead, which is very probable, we will go with her and share her fate. I do so much wish those Snarling bull dog Abolitionist[s] Horace Greely and Tom Bennet could be shut; they have done more and are doing more every day to exasperate the South than any thing else[.]

South Carolina seems to be in earnest; and I fear will act without mature deliberation; the others of the Cotton States advise waiting and let a convention decide what is to be done, which seems to me to be the best way to prevent premature measures; in opposition to our government. We feel badly on this subject, and fear for our country. Will there not a man be raised suited for the times, can we not hope for a Washington, a Webster or a Clay to open a way for us and pour oil upon the troubled waters, and save this Union still to be the admiration of the world; as they have done in years long past. Although we as Southerners Sympathize with the South, still we hope to see the difficulties settled without a
dissolution of the Union. I will send you our weekly paper that you may form an idea of how the people feel in our section of Country.

The first part of this I wrote two or three nights ago, by a dim light and feeling very tired. On looking at it today I feel ashamed to send it; and feel I ought to write it all over, but reflecting on your generous heart and the indulgence you have heretofore exercised towards me, and my limited time from household cares, I have gone on and must now throw it all before you and beg your clemency.

Like many others who have lived and died before me, I do everything in a big hurry. Lottie you can scarcely imagine how much I look like Ma, since I have been in better health, I have increased in flesh until I weigh 130 pounds and in size am almost as large as our Mother. My dresses are all tight and uncomfortable and I can’t make them fit like I used to. You wrote me some time since you were growing fleshy, but you can’t come up to me I know; Ossian weighs 230 lbs. Is he not a monster? but as his goodness corresponds with his size we can overlook the former in admiration of the latter. He is still at Key West and I miss him so much these cold nights, we are now having quite cold weather for us; and large wood fires feel comfortable.

You say Ma has some preserves for me. I am glad to hear it and stand in need of them, but how long will it be ere I have the pleasure of tasting them. Christmas is close at hand and we are all preparing a Christmas box. There are many things you could send me if it were not for the trouble of getting them on board of a vessel. There are frequently vessels from NY to Key West and we have Steamers running between here and Key West every week;-if you wish to send any thing to me, leave it at Benner & Deakes in N York to be sent by the first vessel to Key West, and they will soon be sent over here. Send me the preserves as soon as possible and ask Ma to either make me or buy a nice large fruit cake and send me. We seldom can get the materials here for making them and I think I would enjoy one from home very much, and if it could get here by Christmas or even New Years it would be very pleasant and we would enjoy it very much[.]

I will send you a 2.50 gold piece; if I can get it. I have plenty of bills but they will not pass with you now. and send me any thing else you choose, a box from home full of good things would be quite acceptable; a lb or 2 of broken candy for the children also would be nice, get any thing you think we would like and I will bear all expense; you speak of a bonnet, the bonnets they are wearing now are too ugly for me. Our merchants have brought several out and [they are] abom [abominable?]. Pokes they are called; and Pokes they are; I have been wearing mine over a year now, and shall wear it until next summer if I go home; if not I will send to Savannah or Charleston and get one.

Please Lottie send me as soon as possible the pattern of the Rabbit
made of Canton Flannel. I want to make some for Christmas, answer this very soon and sent the pattern....

Kate

The fears for her country that Kate expressed in her letter of November 30, 1860, proved well founded. On December 20 South Carolina seceded, followed on January 9, 1861, by Mississippi. The next day Florida acted, as well. Soon the nation had plunged into civil war. The worst of the conflict did not touch south Florida until early 1864. When it did, though, the region split, with pro-Union men taking up arms against those who sided with the Confederacy. The resulting violence divided families, destroyed property, and created lasting legacies of bitter resentment.

For most of the war, the Harts lived in Tampa, particularly during its last two years. As a leader of the area’s Unionists, Ossian endured hurtful trials. Catharine stood forthrightly by his side. Still, the war’s costs depressed her, sentiments that she expressed eloquently when an opportunity was afforded to her early in 1865 to contact her family in the North.

Tampa Jan 5th 1865

My dear Mother, Sisters & Brothers

A good opportunity offering I embrace it to write to you a few lines, and let you know we are still in the land of the living, and in the enjoyment of good health, and have not forgotten the many warm hearts beating for us far away, and we have been very anxious to hear from you all. I wrote you in my last to direct [mail] to me by way of Key West, but I have not received a line for many months, and cannot but feel anxious to hear from you, and know how you are getting along through these troublesome times. God grant you may all be well, and spared to each other. I hope Charley and Obey have not been compelled to go in the army. I know of course their love for the Union would naturally lead them to do so, but I know also, they are not fighting men, and such business would be repugnant to their natures.

I do so long to see you all once again; and to mingle with you all, as in days past, but when will that day come again; when will this unnatural war be over, when will peace and prosperity bless our distressed country again. This the fourth year has dawned upon us; and still the two sections of country stand in antagonism toward each other. Sometimes I am led to think God has forsaken us, and intends to let us destroy each other; wickedness of all kinds prevails, on the right hand and on the left-

We still have our home here, and enjoy its comforts much more than thousands. Ossian is in good health and home with us. he is engaged at the present in making salt, and supplying the necessities of the people; sends much love to them when you see them. and how is Luly and Jeannice and Charley and all the rest of the little ones, and how is Mary and her children, do write me soon. I want to hear from all but I want to see you all more, and write me how Ma bears her increasing years; and how Em and Lottie look, feel, and what their prospects are for
Kate S. Hart

The Harts remained at Tampa for only a short time following the Civil War’s end. By early 1866 they had relocated to Jacksonville where Ossian began building a legal practice, supplemented by work for the Freedmen’s Bureau. In 1867 he helped to found Florida’s Republican party. The next year he became an associate justice of the state supreme court, and in 1873 assumed the governorship. Ossian B. Hart died at his Jacksonville home, with his wife present, on March 18, 1874.27

During the post-Civil War era, Kate lived in their Jacksonville home, caring for her young ward Flora A. Henderson, the daughter of Tampa’s John A. Henderson. After Ossian’s death, she struggled financially. During 1883-1886 Kate served as postmistress at Kissimmee. Otherwise, she split her time between Jacksonville and Morristown, New Jersey, where her sisters Charlotte and Emma Campbell had settled. Catharine Hart died at Morristown on October 9, 1897. While noting that ”her life may be said to have been spent in doing good to others,” an obituary added, ”The early days of her marriage to Mr. Hart were filled with much romance, and they underwent many trials and hardships in the unsettled condition of the state.” It concluded, ”She has but been called to the reward that awaits her in another and better world.”28

ENDNOTES

1 See, for example, “Mrs. Anne Givens Harrison” in “Hillsborough County Personalities” (Jacksonville: Federal Writer’s Project, 1937). Probably the most-substantial woman’s account to become available subsequent to the 1930s has been Maria Louisa Daegenhardt Archer’s reminiscences, which are held in the collection of the Historical Association of Southern Florida, Miami. Portions of several of the available women’s reminiscences have been published in Kyle S. VanLandingham, ”The Union Occupation of Tampa, May 6-7, 1864,” Sunland Tribune 19 (November 1993), 9-16. For women’s experiences, generally, in the Tampa Bay area during the mid-1800s, see Doris Weatherford, A History of Women in Tampa (Tampa, 1991), and Canter Brown, Jr., Women on the Tampa Bay Frontier (Tampa, 1997).

2 The Ossian and Catharine Hart letters are contained in the Dena E. Snodgrass Collection, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. One Catharine Hart letter, written from Key West and dated November 29, 1852, described her experiences riding the Tampa-area judicial circuit with her lawyer husband. It was printed in Canter Brown, Jr., ”’Very Hard to Bear’; Florida’s Future First Lady Catharine Hart Travels the Southern Judicial Circuit in 1852,” Sunland Tribune 22 (November 1996), 87-91.

3 On Ossian and Catharine Hart’s story, see Canter Brown, Jr., Ossian Bingley Hart, Florida’s Loyalist Reconstruction Governor (Baton Rouge, 1997). Biographical details used in this article are contained there, with references to original and secondary sources.


5 Charlotte Thibon Campbell, born September 2, 1835; died January 19, 1912. Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Records, Newark, NJ.

6 Oby (sometimes Obe or Obey) was Kate’s brother, Joseph Obediah Campbell, who was two years her senior and lived in 1860 in New Jersey. Maxine Crowell Leonard, The Conger Family in America (Janesville, IA, 1972), 712.
Tampa's literary club was founded in December 1859. Fernandina East Floridian, January 5, 1860.

The Tampa Glee Club met on Monday evenings under the tutelage of young English musician J. A. Butterfield. Ibid., February 11, 18, 1860.

In early 1860 the Reverend Oscar A. Myers replaced an ailing John W. Timberlake as minister of Tampa's Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Timberlake, who had begun pastoring in Tampa during 1858, would die in Virginia on May 15, 1862. Myers, a Pensacola native, previously had served as Leon County's clerk of the circuit court and as private secretary to Governor William D. Moseley. He came to Tampa from the church at Fernandina. Tallahassee Floridian & Journal, December 26, 1857, January 14, 1860; Florida Genealogical Journal 19 (1983), 8; Tallahassee Florida Sentinel, February 8, 1853; Florida House Journal (1850), Appendix, 84.

At Tampa on February 8, 1860, William B. Henderson married Caroline Elizabeth Spencer. Tampa Florida Peninsular, February 11, 1860.


James McKay, Sr.,'s steamer James Gettis, formerly the Tampa, made a regular run from Tampa to Key West in early 1860. Tampa Florida Peninsular, March 24, 1860.

Kate's sister Abby H. Campbell Smith was born October 1, 1815, and died in 1904. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712.

Much of Key West's business district burned in May 1859. Tampa Florida Peninsular, May 28, 1859.

Emma Campbell, born November 16, 1830, died February 25, 1919. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712; Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Records, Newark, NJ.


Isaiah David Hart, Ossian's father, helped to found the town of Jacksonville in 1822. By 1860 he had become one of the leading planters and businessmen in Florida. T Frederick Davis, History of Jacksonville, Florida, and Vicinity 1513 to 1924 (reprint ed., Jacksonville, 1990), 53-56; 1860 population, slave, and agricultural censuses, Duval County, FL.

Kate's brother Charles G. Campbell was born February 8, 1825. He operated a glass, framing, and art business at Newark. Leonard, Conger Family in America, 712; Industries of New Jersey. Essex County including City of Newark (New York, 1882), 636.

According to Key West historian Jefferson B. Browne in 1912: "Mr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson lived for many years in a quaint old house on Whitehead, between Green and Caroline streets. They had three attractive daughters. Miss Emma married Dr. Sweet, Miss Louisa married Dr. Armstrong and Miss Ophella married Dr. Pickering, all of the United States marine hospital service. The family moved from Key West many years ago." Jefferson B. Brown, Key West, The Old and the New (reprint ed., Gainesville, 1973), 192.

O. B. Hart's mother Nancy Nelson Hart was born about 1800. She and Isaiah D. Hart married in 1818. Their daughter Julia arrived in 1834. On December 14, 1853, Julia married Dr. Algernon S. Speer of Orange County, with whom Ossian had served in the 1845 territorial house of representatives. A. S. Speer died in a steamboat explosion on Lake George in 1857. Hart Family Bibles (xerographic copies in State and Local History Collection, Hayden Burns Public Library, Jacksonville); Tallahassee Floridian & Journal, September 12, 1857; Brown, Ossian Bingley Hart.


Details of the November 26 secession meeting at Tampa are found in the December 1, 1860, issue of the Florida Peninsular.
O. B. Hart was attending the fall term of the Monroe County circuit court at the time this letter was written. Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*.


The reference is to Kate’s brothers Charles G. Campbell and Joseph Obediah Campbell.

Exactly whose children Kate refers to here is unclear. Mary was her sister Mary C. Campbell, who was born October 12, 1813. Leonard, *Conger Family in America*, 712.

Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*.

Ibid.; Jacksonville *Florida Times- Union & Citizen*, October 14, 1897.
Tampa Chapter 113 United Daughters of the Confederacy will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Saturday, May 31, 1997. The celebration will commence with a pilgrimage to our Father Ryan stained glass window at Sacred Heart Church, which our chapter donated in 1909. Following the service at Sacred Heart Church, we will be laying a wreath at the Confederate memorial Monument Hillsborough County Courthouse, which our chapter dedicated to the memory of the Confederate soldier and Southern citizens in 1911. Through the last 100 years our chapter has been proud to serve first our aged Confederate veterans, their widows, and orphans, then the veterans of all the recent wars, provide college scholarships, and assist in the war effort during both World Wars. Tampa 113 raised thousands of dollars for the Liberty bonds and War bonds, donated thousands of hours of volunteer service to the Red Cross, Veterans hospital, USO, mobile canteen and the convalescence center at MacDill Field. During the Depression era, our chapter provided milk and shoes for needy school children as well as books for the school libraries. Through the years the hundreds of members of Tampa 113 have included many of the first families of Tampa, the Lesley,
Lowery, McKay, Givens, Davis, Hesterly, Hankins, Harris, Savarese, Stokes, Jackson, (Mrs. M. H. Crane was a charter member and the great-great grand Aunt of Kyle S. VanLandingham, Esq., President of THS) were all represented. Mrs. Janice Givens McKay was quite a lady and is very much remembered by Tampa Chapter 113 as not only being the one who organized the chapter, but she also had the distinction of being the longest continuous member with 51 years in the chapter, and she served as chapter president from 1937 to 1939.

Mrs. Janice Givens McKay was the daughter of Captain Thomas Wilkes Givens, a veteran of the 2nd and 8th Florida Infantry Regiment, CSA. She grew up hearing of the sufferings and heroism of the Confederate soldiers and their families and wished to see their deeds of valor kept alive in the land they so nobly defended. The United Daughters of the Confederacy was organized in 1894 at Nashville, Tennessee and she knew she must start a chapter in Tampa. At first many of the leaders of Tampa told her to forget the idea of forming a chapter here, because there were so many Yankees here. She would not give up, and on June 3, 1897, 23 Southern ladies met in the old Palmetto Hotel on the corner of Florida Avenue and Polk Street and signed a charter for Tampa Chapter 113, UDC (currently in the possession of Mrs. Kristin M. Armitage, President of Tampa 113). Mrs. Janice Givens McKay lived long enough to see the fruits of her labor. We think she would still be proud of her chapter, as we continue in the proud tradition.
MEET THE AUTHORS

**KRIS ARMITAGE** is President of Tampa Chapter 113, United Daughters of the Confederacy.

**CANTER BROWN, JR.** is an award-winning author and is Historian in Residence at the Tampa Bay History Center.

**JOE KNETSCH** is with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and is a regular contributor to the Sunland Tribune and other Florida history journals.

**GEOFFREY MOHLMAN** is a graduate student at the University of South Florida and has done extensive research on the Egmont Key Light house.

**SCOTT ROHRER** received his M.A. from University of South Florida in 1997 and teaches American history at USF and Hillsborough Community College.

**SPESSARD STONE** is a regular contributor to the Sunland Tribune and has written several genealogical books and authored many articles on Florida history.

**KYLE VANLANDINGHAM** served as President of the Tampa Historical Society in 1996 and 1997 and was Editor of the Sunland Tribune from 1991 to 1997.
Tampa Historical Society wishes to express its sincere thanks to the following individuals and organizations who have generously contributed for the publication costs of this issue of the Sunland Tribune.

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Monuments honoring Sea Captains and Mariners and Victims of Yellow Fever epidemics were dedicated at the Oaklawn Ramble at historic Oaklawn and St. Louis Cemeteries, April 13, 1997.