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***Blockaders, Refugees, and Contraband: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861-1865* by George E. Buker**

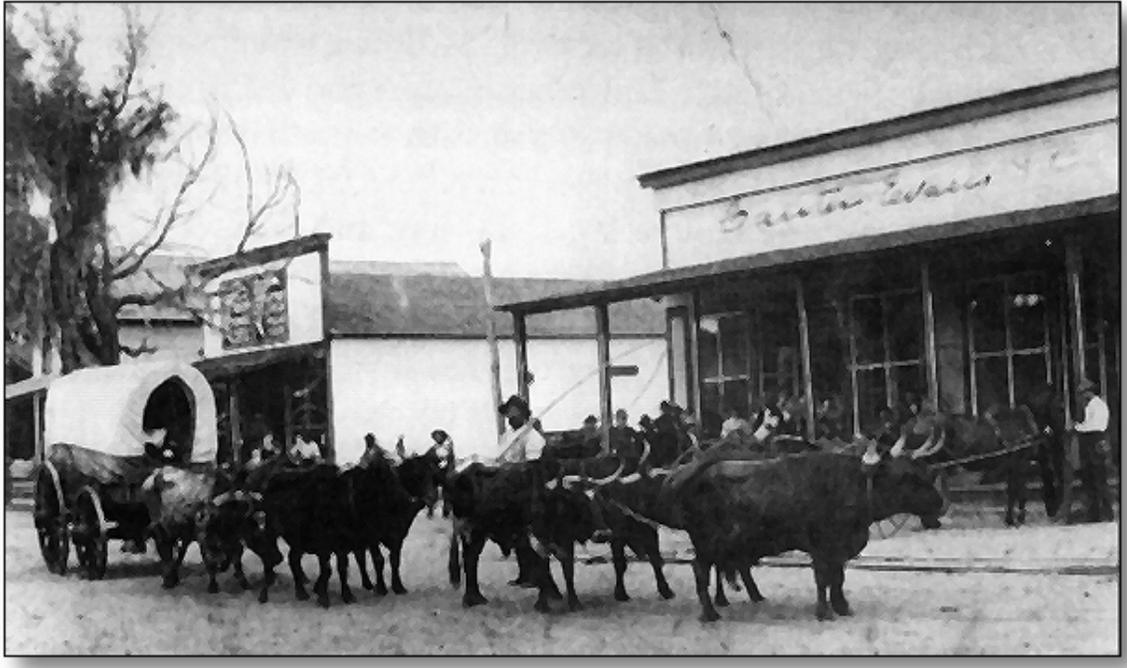
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Fort Meade's Main Street before the fire of June 1894.

Photograph from *Fort Meade*.

well-written, lively, entertaining, and beautifully illustrated. Meticulously drawn maps, town grids, and informative appendixes grace the volume. Brown's research in newspapers and in local, state, and federal documents is exhaustive. This work, taken together with his excellent *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Orlando, 1992), establishes him as a leading scholar of peninsular Florida, and indeed nineteenth-century Florida.

James M. Denham

Blockaders, Refugees, and Contraband: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861-1865. By George E. Buker. Tuscaloosa, Alabama. 1993. University of Alabama Press. ix, 235 pp. Maps. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Cloth. \$29.95.

In the early years of the Civil War the Union determined to neutralize Confederate activities in Florida primarily through a naval blockade. That duty eventually fell to southern squadrons of the U.S. Navy charged with sealing off Florida's 1,400 miles of irregular coastline. The Union Navy's strategy proved effective, with the notable exception of some successful clandestine "runners" in such west coast ports as Charlotte Harbor. In this East Gulf area, as George Buker points out in this useful work, the nature of warfare engendered by deep and persistent divided loyalties turned the west coast of Florida, particularly the southernmost region, into a bloody and complex civil war within a war.

Buker does yeoman duty in tracing the inner dynamics of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron (EGBS) as it grew and adapted to the exigencies of war on Florida's west coast. His work

weaves a complicated subject of military personnel, vessels, and personalities into an interesting narrative of national war and local reactions to it. Beginning with a discussion of the background to secession, the author paints in broad, and sometimes fine, strokes the relevant naval strategy caused by and resulting in divided loyalties in west Florida. In the process, he introduces readers to a wide range of recognizable actions, such as the critical significance of beef running and the seemingly interminable role of Tampa's nefarious runner, James McKay, as well as the lesser-known actions of Southerner-turned Union commander, Henry A. Crane, and the role of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) in "peculiarizing" the war in the southern reaches of the peninsula.

What results from all this is an intriguing story of soldiers, sailors, and civilians in the East Gulf region, a story that is structurally similar and dissimilar from most other theaters of the war. With its fiercely divided loyalty, concerns for refugees, critical supply operations (e.g. beef cattle), and contraband (e.g. slaves), the west coast of Florida presented the unusual – some might argue unique – opportunity for the Union Navy to promote a localized inner-civil war within the larger conflict. Buker captures well the essence of his story when he states, "The militant effort of the blockaders, refugees, and contraband provided Confederate Florida with one of its most effective foes during the war" (182).

Certainly, all blockading squadrons created and maintained contact with Union sympathizers, guerrillas, and other disaffected Southerners during the Civil War; yet Buker demonstrates that the EGBS might have achieved singular success on the west coast of Florida in turning these "refugees and contraband" into Union allies. In this regard, Buker's work thrusts Florida, specifically the East Gulf region, into the center of the ever-growing body of literature analyzing the incredibly diverse impact of the American Civil War.

Careful readers will derive much of value from this story. But they may also come away a bit perplexed about the author's organization strategy, which involves chapters switching abruptly from military units and strategy to mini biographies of selected Unionists such as Henry A. Crane and deserters like William W. Strickland. Devotees of the subject may wonder further why Buker did not rely more heavily on the ground-breaking and yet unsurpassed works of Rodney E. Dillon, specifically his 384-page master's thesis and two-volume doctoral dissertation on the nature of the struggle in southwest Florida. Yet these are passing criticisms that should not detract from Buker's contribution to understanding the complex nature of the inner Civil War in west Florida, a subject that is increasingly drawing more critical appraisal.

Irvin D. Solomon

Lynchings: Extralegal Violence in Florida during the 1930s. By Walter T. Howard. Sellingsgrove, Pennsylvania. 1995. Susquehanna University Press. 207 pp. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Cloth. \$35.00.

In the southern tales *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Intruder in the Dust*, a local white female turns back an overwrought lynch mob to save the life of a black man. The fifteen victims of vigilante justice in Florida during the 1930s never knew such improbable heroics. In fact, just as the South was stepping back from its long and torrid romance with lynch law, Florida was ever more the