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"The Naples of America": Pensacola during the Civil War and Reconstruction

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

“THE NAPLES OF AMERICA,” PENSACOLA DURING
THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

By

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For My Mother
Thanks for everything throughout the years

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ABSTRACT

This thesis covers two critical time periods of the history of Pensacola, Florida. The first examines the Civil War and the second covers Reconstruction. The study begins with the Union's occupation of Fort Pickens located on Santa Rosa Island and evaluates the North's strategy in occupying the position. To illustrate the fort's strengths, the thesis provides accounts of the battle of Santa Rosa Island and the following artillery duels. Because of its limited importance during the war, neither side placed much emphasis on Pensacola. As a result, the city was not the site of a major engagement. In 1862, the Confederates abandoned the city and the Union quickly took over, but limited manpower prevented an adequate occupation forcing the federals to remain within the safety of their installations until the end of the war.

Pensacola had an easier transition to the post war nation, because of two major factors, the military and the timber industry. The federal government kept enough personnel to properly man the forts and Navy Yard, and as a result the soldiers' presence prevented lawlessness and ensured the enforcement of the Reconstruction Acts. While other areas of the South endured poverty due to the failure of cotton crops, Pensacola's economy grew as the demand for lumber increased. West Florida's vast longleaf pine forests provided an almost unlimited supply of timber, and the region's sawmills flourished. This provided a large number of wage paying jobs that kept Pensacola's residents out of poverty. Along with providing employment, the timber industry boosted the shipping traffic entering and leaving the city's port.

The city also faced other issues that affected its events between 1861 and 1877 such as yellow fever, railroads, and the possibility of annexation to Alabama. Each of these aspects influenced the development of Pensacola and its residents. Yellow fever prevented the city from becoming a haven for tourists seeking a healthier climate, and the lack of a railroad connection with Tallahassee prompted Alabama to propose annexation. The combination of these factors along with the military and timber industry gave Pensacola a unique situation during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most desolate drives in America is the stretch of Interstate 10 between Tallahassee and Pensacola. Miles and miles pass with nothing except trees and the occasional farm. After traveling west across the Panhandle, one will start to see hints of civilization as they drive through Milton and Pace, and eventually the scenery turns into a small metropolis as they enter Pensacola. Today, this small port city seems like the far side of Florida; the area that tourists pass by with hardly a thought as they continue towards Walt Disney World or Key West. However, this was not the case during the nineteenth century when Florida's population did not extend any further south after Gainesville. Pensacola boasted a flourishing port and timber industry that made the area one of the most prosperous in the state. During the Civil War and Reconstruction, the city became even more important as the North and South faced off for control of the bay and as Alabama and Florida bargained and negotiated over its annexation. If just some of these events had different outcomes, they may have drastically affected the course of American history. Perhaps Democratic nominee Al Gore may have won the Presidency in 2000 if Alabama had annexed West Florida which today boasts heavy Republican majorities. While these possibilities could produce endless debates, they signify that events involving Pensacola had the potential to direct the course of United States history.

The Civil War and Reconstruction eras in Florida have received little attention from historians when compared with states such as Georgia, Mississippi, and Virginia. In 1913, William Watson Davis produced the first significant work on the subject, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*. This study provides a thorough account of the events between 1860 and 1877, however the author provided numerous opportunities for revisionist scholars. In the

early 1900's, Professor William A. Dunning of Columbia University gave several lectures on Reconstruction and attracted a large following. Most of the works produced by the “Dunning school” examine state histories, and Davis falls directly in this category. This school of thought portrays carpetbaggers and Radical Republicans as wretched characters only looking to take advantage of the South. In their treatments of free blacks, the Dunning school made them appear as inherently inferior to whites and as an unruly class of people. Davis follows this pattern and portrays Florida during Reconstruction as a state tormented by Republicans and freedmen. In his treatment of the violence in Jackson County, he highlights incidents of blacks terrorizing whites and depicts the freedmen as corruptly ruling the area. While revisionists have produced new interpretations that make Davis seem highly biased, he produced the first significant study that laid out the research for succeeding historians to build upon.¹

When dealing with the Civil War in Florida, historians have produced works that mostly describe the political and military events and connects them to national history. Since Davis, John E. Johns has written the most significant book on the subject, *Florida during the Civil War* (1963). Up to this date, no scholar has produced a work that covers the state as a whole during this period. Because of the events involving Pensacola’s forts and Navy Yard, historians have devoted more attention to West Florida than almost any other part of the state. One of the first to focus solely on the city was Edwin C. Bearss who produced numerous articles on the subject. In his largest, “Civil War Operations In and Around Pensacola” (1957), he discussed the Fort Pickens Truce, the battle of Santa Rosa Island, and the artillery duels in November 1861. While Bearss provides thorough accounts, he does not connect the events with the rest of the war. In 2000, George F. Pearce produced the most complete work on the subject, *Pensacola during the Civil War: A Thorn in the Side of the Confederacy*. This book provides a thorough account of the war in West Florida and connects the events with the rest of the Confederacy. Pearce argues that the city had a significant role in the conflict and that Pensacola added a strategic advantage to the side that possessed it. The author does not attempt to revise Johns’ *Florida during the Civil War*

¹William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (1913; reprint, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1964), VII-X, 571-573; Fletcher M. Green, introduction to *The Civil War and Reconstruction of Florida*, by William Watson Davis, XXII-XXX.

but desires to add another “building block” to broaden the history.²

For the United States, probably no other subject generates as much controversy as Reconstruction, and historians have produced different interpretations over the past ninety years. Until the 1960's, the Dunning school largely went unchallenged except for the work W.E.B. DuBois who was an African American scholar. In 1935, DuBois wrote *Black Reconstruction* which defended the freedmen and highlighted their achievements after emancipation. In some ways, DuBois was excessive in his interpretations, because he leaned toward Marxist philosophy. While scholars continued to agree with the Dunning school, DuBois provided a counter argument that influenced later revisionists.³

Until the 1960's, Davis' *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* was the principle work on the state for the post war period. However as the Civil Rights movement gained strength, scholars began to question Davis' conclusions and new interpretations emerged. The two most notable works are *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (1965) by Joe M. Richardson and *Nor Is It Over Yet* (1974) by Jerrell H. Shofner. In the first work, Richardson provides a detailed account of free blacks in Florida society and includes accounts of their education, employment, religion, and politics. This interpretation is almost a polar opposite of Davis', because it offers a more favorable depiction of freedmen and a harsher view towards conservative whites. Instead of portraying blacks and carpetbaggers as tormenting the South, Richardson highlights the obstinacy of ex-Confederates in accepting Reconstruction and blames them for much of the difficulties endured by the state. In the second work *Nor Is It Over Yet*, Shofner provides an overall account of Florida during Reconstruction. Working at the same time as Richardson (both scholars received their PhD's from the Florida State University in 1963), he uses roughly the same interpretations about free blacks as his colleague. Instead of focusing solely on the state's freedmen, Shofner examines all aspects of Florida including economics and

²Johns, John E., *Florida during the Civil War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1963), 1-3; Edwin C. Bearss, “Civil War Operations In and Around Pensacola,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36, part 1 (July 1957-April 1958), 125-127; George F. Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War: A Thorn in the Side of the Confederacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), XI-XII.

³W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 3-16; Green, introduction to *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, XXVII-XXIX.

politics to provide a complete revision of Davis' work. *Nor Is It Over Yet* covers Florida's government, railroads, industries, development, and lawlessness as well as the Freedmen's Bureau and black adjustment to emancipation. To this date, the works of Richardson and Shofner stand as the authorities of Florida during Reconstruction.⁴

In 1988, Eric Foner produced the most modern interpretation of post Civil War America, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. This single volume provides analytical accounts of politics, economics, and society in the United States. Foner attempts to combine the best aspects of the Dunning school with the findings of modern scholarship to provide the strongest history of the period to date. His major focus is on free blacks and how their emancipation influenced Southern society, and he builds on more modern interpretations for this aspect. From the Dunning school, he uses its "broad interpretive framework" to create a comprehensive account. For current historians, Foner's volume stands as the authority on Reconstruction.⁵

Unlike the Civil War, scholars have not devoted much attention to Reconstruction in Pensacola. While this study provides accounts of both periods, it emphasizes the city between 1865 and 1877. Since historians have already produced several works on the Civil War period, the study avoids a basic account of the events and provides new interpretations. For the year 1861, it analyzes why the Union chose to hold Fort Pickens and how that affected the North's overall strategy for defeating the South. After the rebels abandoned Pensacola in 1862, the city fell under federal control. Between the takeover and 1865, the study focuses mostly on the progress made by free blacks and evaluates why the city failed to gain an early start on Reconstruction.

In dealing with the post war period, the study examines events in Pensacola and why the city had an easier transition to Reconstruction. While many scholars do not believe that the period ended in 1877 (including this one), the study concludes with the election of President

⁴Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tallahassee: The Florida State University, 1965), 1-12; Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), V-VIII.

⁵Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1988), XX-XXV.

Rutherford B. Hayes and the Compromise of 1877. The chapters on Reconstruction emphasize two critical factors, a continuous military presence and the timber industry. These two elements provided employment and enhanced the economy. With a stable market and soldiers to keep the peace, freedmen and Republicans endured far less hardship than their contemporaries in other parts of Florida. This study argues that the military and timber industry were the elements that made Pensacola one of the safest and most prosperous communities in the state at a time when poverty and lawlessness swept the South.

While the Army and lumber companies were the major factors in Pensacola during Reconstruction, other elements shaped the city's future such as the Freedmen's Bureau, yellow fever, and the attempted annexation to Alabama. Each of these forced changes from which society suffered and benefitted. Without the bureau, Pensacola's freedmen would not have had any protection under the law and little opportunity for self-improvement. Recurring yellow fever epidemics caused the city to enact strict public health measures and damaged the area's appeal to tourists. While outbreaks resulted in misery for Pensacola, the annexation issue only offered gain. If Florida ceded the Panhandle to Alabama, the city could prosper even more, and if not politicians in Tallahassee would have to construct a railroad connecting Pensacola with the capital. These elements indeed affected the city, however they were not the significant factors that made Reconstruction in Pensacola a relatively peaceful time.

While this study highlights factors contributing to a prosperous West Florida, it does point out difficulties that paralleled those in the state's other counties such as racial violence, discrimination, and political tension. These problems occurred in Pensacola on a much smaller scale but served to prove that the city still dealt with the same issues as the rest of the South. By examining as many aspects as possible, this study attempts to provide the most comprehensive account of Pensacola that covers its people, politics, industries, and progress.

CHAPTER 1
THE OUTBREAK OF WAR: THE UNION’S POSSESSION
OF FORT PICKENS AND THE BATTLE OF SANTA ROSA ISLAND

Throughout the year of 1861, Union and Confederate forces faced off and fought over the control of Pensacola Bay. Their actions revolved around the control of one position, a fort that stood on the western tip of Santa Rosa Island. The two sides negotiated a truce and later fought a battle in their efforts to keep or to gain possession of Fort Pickens. The ordeal started with the Union taking control of the installation, and they never lost it. Because of its position on a narrow island that looked on both the mouth of the bay and the Gulf of Mexico, the North used Fort Pickens in its strategy to defend the federal property in Pensacola Bay and later as a means to assist in blockading the port. The advantages of controlling the fort emerged as a small company of men chose the site to maintain a Northern presence. The importance continued to grow as the Civil War escalated, and the Union sent more ships and men to secure the installation. At the battle of Santa Rosa Island, the fort’s position proved its strategic advantages against an attack by the Confederates. The holding of Fort Pickens started with a junior officer refusing to surrender federal property, and it evolved into the North using it to help successfully blockade a Southern port throughout the Civil War.

Before looking at Fort Pickens itself and the events surrounding it, the value of Pensacola Bay needs to be examined. In 1860, Pensacola boasted the largest population of any Florida city with a total of 2,876. Out of that number, 957 were slaves.¹ The community provided

¹Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860 Compiled from the Returns of the Eighth Census*, prepared by the Department of the Interior (Washington D.C., 1864), 54.

commercial and travel opportunities with its control of the Alabama-Florida Railroad. This line started at Pensacola and ended at the railroad hub Montgomery. From that city, one could ship or travel to almost any major city in the South such as Richmond, Virginia.² With the combination of the port and the railroad, Pensacola had the ability to distribute goods throughout the South.

The United States military realized the commercial and strategic importance of Pensacola's port and devoted bases and equipment to it. The government had constructed a navy yard that served to build and service ships. To defend the yard, it built three forts to protect the mouth of the bay. Two of the forts occupied positions on the mainland, and the other resided on the western tip of Santa Rosa Island.³ Together, the three installations formed a triangle around the mouth of the bay that no unfriendly ship could pass through without coming under fire.

The largest of the three installations, Fort Pickens, occupied the position on Santa Rosa Island. Its facilities gave it the best shooting angles and advantages for defense along with direct access of the Gulf of Mexico. The island itself was just a narrow strip of sand with a few patches of trees. This provided Fort Pickens with views of the Gulf, the mouth of the bay, and the bay itself. The limited width of the island also made it more difficult for land based troops to attack.⁴

The other two fortifications, Forts Barrancas and McRee, rested on the mainland. Neither one matched Fort Pickens' advantage in location. Fort Barrancas sat behind the mouth of the bay and acted as the tip of the triangle. Fort McRee stood on the opposite side of Fort Pickens and looked directly east out towards the bay's entrance. Both installations faced the water and were mostly landlocked which made them highly vulnerable to a siege if an enemy army attacked from the rear.⁵

In the last months of 1860, the United States military in Pensacola thought very little on

²James P. Jones, Jr., ed. "Lincoln's Courier: John L. Worden's Mission to Fort Pickens," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 41 (1962-1963): 148.

³George F. Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War: A Thorn in the Side of the Confederacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 2.

⁴Lt. Adam Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, House, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies during the War of the Rebellion*, ser. I, vol. I, 52nd Cong., 1880, 334-335. (hereafter cited as *Official Records*).

⁵Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 2-3.

the strategic values of each fortification. The nation was at peace, and nothing threatened Pensacola Bay. The Army stationed all their men at Fort Barrancas and left the two other installations unmanned.⁶ They probably did this to stay close to the Navy Yard and the city of Pensacola. The Army still kept the unoccupied forts ready for action. According to Captain William Maynadier's January 1861 ordinance report, Fort Pickens had 201 artillery pieces and 12,712 pounds of gunpowder; and Fort McRee had 125 cannon and 19,298 pounds of powder.⁷

The quiet times in Pensacola Bay did not last. In November 1860, Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election which created a rebellious uproar in the South. The first state to withdraw from the Union was South Carolina. Six others including Florida quickly followed their example. On January 3, 1861, Florida began its hearing over secession. The convention delegates' decision came a week later, and Florida followed Mississippi and South Carolina as the third state to secede.⁸ Along with leaving the Union, the Florida government ordered the seizure of the federal military installations within the state.⁹ This turn of events suddenly placed the Union soldiers in Pensacola in a precarious position.

At Fort Barrancas during the first few days of January, the officer in command, First Lieutenant Adam Slemmer, was aware that his position was in jeopardy. He led a small garrison of forty-six men and had heard rumors that the Florida governor, Madison Perry, wanted state troops to capture the forts and the Navy Yard. The lieutenant arranged to hold his position by assigning guards to keep watch at night and transferred some of his gunpowder from the vulnerable Spanish battery out by the beach to a more secure magazine inside the fort. Lt. Slemmer also ordered that the drawbridge leading into the fort be raised at night. He apparently made some good decisions, because on the night of January 8 twenty unidentified men approached the fort. Before an attack occurred, the sergeant of the guard spotted them and

⁶Lt. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 334.

⁷Capt. Maynadier to John Holt, Washington, D.C., 3 January 1861, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 349-350.

⁸Florida Legislature, *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: Dyke and Carlyle, 1861), 3, 36.

⁹ Andrew Moore to William Brooks, Montgomery, 8 January 1861, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 444.

sounded the alarm. The unknown band disappeared into the darkness.¹⁰ The incident did not jeopardize the Union hold of Fort Barrancas, but it was a warning that federal troops faced hostility from the South.

On the morning of January 9, U.S. Army Headquarters sent orders, probably by telegraph, to Lt. Slemmer commanding him to hold the forts in Pensacola Bay. Upon reading the message, he knew that they wanted the impossible. His garrison of forty-six soldiers could not occupy and successfully defend all three forts. That day, Lt. Slemmer and his executive officer, Second Lieutenant Jeremiah Gilman, discussed their options with Commodore James Armstrong who commanded the Navy Yard. The officers agreed to abandon the mainland forts in favor of holding Fort Pickens. They chose moving the garrison to Santa Rosa Island for several reasons. In his report, Lt. Slemmer stated that “We decided that with our limited means of defense we could hold but one fort, and that should be Fort Pickens, as it commanded completely the harbor and the forts, and also the navy yard, and, in case of necessity, could be more readily reinforced.”¹¹ When the three officers decided to transfer the troops from Fort Barrancas to Santa Rosa Island, they thought that they were doing so simply to better defend federal property. They did not realize that they had made a positive step in blockading Pensacola Bay.

On January 10, Lt. Slemmer’s men, Company G of the First Artillery, moved to Fort Pickens. In comparison to Fort Barrancas, the facility was in a poor state of readiness. None of the large naval guns sat in their mounts, and the installation did not have enough embrasures to block all of the openings. From the moment of their arrival, Company G worked to ready Fort Pickens for action.¹² Despite the dilapidated conditions, Lt. Slemmer’s men fared better than the naval personnel on the mainland. The Navy Yard lacked any strong fortifications which left it vulnerable to attack, and its staff numbered about seventy.¹³ On January 12, approximately 500 soldiers from Florida and Alabama under the command of Colonels William Chase and Tennent

¹⁰Lt. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 334.

¹¹Lt. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 335.

¹²Lt. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 337.

¹³Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 22.

Lomax approached the Navy Yard and requested its surrender. Grossly outnumbered, Commodore Armstrong relinquished his installation to the rebels. The two Union vessels stationed there, the *U.S.S. Wyandotte* and the *Storeship Supply*, raised their anchors and sailed to a position about five miles away from Santa Rosa Island.¹⁴ With the fall of the Navy Yard, the Union lost its last occupied position on the mainland; and all that stood between Southern dominance of Pensacola Bay was a poorly equipped fort.

During the night of January 12, the rebels sent three men to Santa Rosa Island to demand the surrender of Fort Pickens. Lieutenants Slemmer and Gilman met them and asked their intentions. One of the three, Captain Victor Randolph, informed the Union officers that they “have been sent to demand a peaceable surrender of this fort by the governors of Florida and Alabama.” Both governors had an interest in seizing the federal installations, and they each sent troops to Pensacola Bay. Lt. Slemmer told the rebels that he was following the orders of the United States government and that he could not allow the loss of federal property. The three men returned to the mainland without any further incident.¹⁵

The South made no attempt to attack Fort Pickens in the days following the surrender of the Navy Yard. On January 15, Confederate officer Col. William Chase visited Santa Rosa Island to present Lt. Slemmer with a message. The letter stated that Col. Chase had the “full powers from the governor of Florida to take possession of the forts and navy yard.” It continued by requesting a peaceful surrender of Fort Pickens and expressed a desire to avoid bloodshed. The colonel also stated that he had “between eight and nine hundred men” ready for action. Lt. Slemmer continued to follow his orders to defend the federal property and refused to relinquish his command. In his response, he further stated that the Union men would hold out “until such a force is brought against us as to render it impossible to defend.”¹⁶ That statement ensured a standoff between the federal and Southern forces. Both commanding officers had orders to secure Fort Pickens, and neither one wanted to fail in their duty.

Col. Chase had an adequate number of men to take the fort by storm, but he did not

¹⁴*New York Times*, 24 January 1861, p.2

¹⁵Lt. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 337.

¹⁶Lt. Slemmer, Fort Pickens, 5 February 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 337-339.

attempt to launch an assault. Neither the Union nor the Confederacy had declared war, and capturing Fort Pickens would have caused numerous casualties. Between the naval vessels and the artillery, the South stood to lose too many men. The Confederate government also took steps to prevent a battle. On January 18, nine Southern leaders wrote to Governor Perry stating that “The possession of the fort is not worth one drop of blood to us.” Amongst those that signed the letter were Jefferson Davis, John Slidell, and Stephen Mallory. The Confederate government wanted to avoid a military conflict at least until Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office, because they did not want the blame for war to fall on the Democrats.¹⁷ They had other reasons as well. The Confederate government had not fully organized, and the South had not given up hope for leaving the United States peacefully. Pensacola Bay was important, but other ports remained free of Union forces that allowed them to operate without interference. A small federal garrison holding Fort Pickens was not a sufficient reason for starting a major conflict.

Once the Southern states started seceding, they moved quickly to secure the federal military installations within their borders. The Union managed to hold on to just four, Fort Sumter, Fort Pickens, Fort Jefferson, and Fort Taylor (Forts Jefferson and Taylor occupied positions in the Florida Keys). Northerners looked to these possessions as historian James McPherson calls them, “symbol(s) of national sovereignty.” Because of its position in a large Confederate port, Fort Sumter received the most attention.¹⁸ The United States government knew the value of morale and strategy in keeping these forts. On January 23, the U.S. Army ordered Captain Israel Vogdes to take his men, Company A of the First Artillery, to Pensacola Bay by means of the *U.S.S. Brooklyn*. The Army also made it clear that he must only act on the defensive, because the Union did not want to assume the blame for starting a war.¹⁹

The South expressed disdain over the North sending reinforcements. Stephen R. Mallory, the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, wrote Washington stating that the South desired “to keep

¹⁷Andrew Moore to William Brooks, Montgomery, 28 January 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 445-446.

¹⁸James M. McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 263.

¹⁹Adjutant T. J. Haines to Capt. Israel Vogdes, Norfolk, 23 January 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 353.

the peace, and if the present status be preserved we will guarantee that no attack will be made upon it (Fort Pickens), but if reinforcements be attempted, resistance and a bloody conflict seem inevitable.” The Union agreed to a truce in order to prevent a battle. They still sent the troops, but Capt. Vogdes’ men had to remain aboard the *U.S.S. Brooklyn*.²⁰ The Union gained the most from the agreement. They sent men to Pensacola Bay and had an assurance that the South would not attack Fort Pickens.

Along with the Army’s reinforcements, the Union sent two other naval warships, the *U.S.S. Sabine* and the *U.S.S. St. Louis*, to protect Fort Pickens. Both ships sailed under Captain Henry Adams who assumed command of the U.S. fleet at Pensacola Bay.²¹ The North ordered them there with the intent to strengthen its defenses. The ships’ presence not only added to the defense of Santa Rosa Island but kept Southern ships from freely sailing in and out of the harbor. By ensuring the safety of federal property, the North also had committed enough resources to blockade Pensacola Bay.

Both sides honored the truce until April, 1861. In March, the Confederate government saw the value of securing the port and decided to allocate more resources and men to Pensacola Bay. They ordered a new commander, Brigadier General Braxton Bragg, to take charge and gave him an extra 5,000 men to strengthen his position. The South still honored the truce by ordering Bragg to act defensively.²² Once he took command, Gen. Bragg began expanding the Confederate lines by building several batteries along the mainland coast. These added to the guns of Forts Barrancas and McRee. In a letter to Washington, Lt. Slemmer commented on the improved state of the Confederate soldiers, the presence of new batteries, and Fort Barrancas being “fully armed;” and his statements made an impression on his superiors. The Union command feared that these extra Southern forces jeopardized their possession of Fort Pickens and decided to send more reinforcements to Pensacola Bay. On April 1, they ordered Colonel Harvey Brown to take command of the U.S. Army in Florida and sent four companies with him.

²⁰Stephen Mallory to John Slidell, Pensacola, 28 January 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 354; Joseph Holt to Lt. Slemmer, Washington, D.C., 29 January 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 355-356.

²¹Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 41.

²²George Deas to Gen. Braxton Bragg, Montgomery, 14 March 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 449.

As with Capt. Vogdes, the Army told him to act on the defensive.²³

The Union placed the truce in jeopardy by sending these additional soldiers. Col. Brown's orders instructed him to not remain on board his ship but to land on Santa Rosa Island and make Fort Pickens his headquarters, but the colonel arrived with his men after the peace ended. The cause did not originate from a conflict or disagreement between Gen. Bragg and Lt. Slemmer but from the visit of a naval courier. On April 6, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles sent Lieutenant John Worden to Pensacola Bay with dispatches for Capt. Henry A. Adams who commanded the U.S. naval fleet. Lt. Worden arrived at the city on April 10. He had destroyed the orders on the train out of fear that he might get arrested because of the number of Confederate troops on board. Once arriving in Pensacola, his identity as a Union officer became apparent, and the Southerners ordered him to see Gen. Bragg. Lt. Worden stated his intentions of delivering an oral message to Capt. Adams, and the general allowed him to sail out to the fleet. While on the mainland, the courier overheard some rebel soldiers discussing a possible attack on Fort Pickens. On April 12, Lt. Worden relayed what he had heard to Capt. Adams, and the naval commander decided to land Capt. Vogdes' reinforcements that night. What orders the Navy Department issued did not supersede the importance of Fort Pickens' security. Lt. Worden did not state what they said in his memoirs.²⁴

When Capt. Vogdes and his men landed on Santa Rosa Island, the truce officially ended; but the South did not attempt any offensive action. Despite the impressions of the Union officers, the Confederates did not have that strong a force. Their army suffered from limited equipment and artillery.²⁵ On April 16, Col. Brown arrived with his men and started them working to strengthen Fort Pickens defenses. With the new reinforcements, the Union imposed a strong obstacle in the way of Southern control of the bay.

The Union forces' mission of defending federal property in a rebellious state changed on

²³Lt. Slemmer to Asst. Adjutant General George Hartsuff, Fort Pickens, 30 March 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 365; Gen. Winfield Scott to Col. Harvey Brown, Washington, D.C., 1 April 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 365-366.

²⁴Jones, "Lincoln's Courier," 148-149.

²⁵William H. Russell, *My Diary, North and South*, vol. 1 (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1863), 307-308.

April 19 when President Lincoln declared a naval blockade of all Southern ports.²⁶ That statement compounded the situation for those serving in Pensacola Bay. Not only did they have to maintain their control of Santa Rosa Island but they also had to prevent any enemy ship from entering the bay. If they lost Fort Pickens, the Confederates could easily drive off the Union ships guarding the bay's entrance.

The end of April had both sides in roughly the same position as January. The Union forces occupied Fort Pickens and controlled the mouth of the bay. The South dominated the mainland with their possession of Fort Barrancas, Fort McRee, and the Navy Yard. The difference was that the two sides had sent reinforcements and had constructed several batteries to reinforce their positions.²⁷ These conditions persisted over the next five months as both forces entered into a standoff period. This occurred for a couple of reasons. First, Col. Brown was ordered to act on the defensive; and second, Gen. Bragg did not have the means for an effective assault.

During the first month of the stalemate, a reporter from the *London Times*, William Russell, visited Pensacola Bay and gave a fair opinion of both the Union and the Confederate positions. His ship, the *Diana*, arrived at the Northern fleet on May 15. Russell arranged with Capt. Adams to visit the mainland and Santa Rosa Island. His status as a British citizen made it easy for him to go back and forth between the lines, since both sides emphasized keeping good relations with Great Britain. Upon his arrival at the Southern lines, Gen. Bragg welcomed and dined with him that evening before giving a guided tour of the fortifications the next morning. Russell's description of the Confederate lines revealed that the South's position was truly weak. The reporter noted that the rebels barely had enough ammunition for a single day's fight and that the cannon shot was poorly made. He further commented on the Southern soldiers' appearances by describing them as "great long bearded fellows in flannel shirts and slouched hats, uniformless in all save brightly burnished arms and resolute purpose." After touring the works,

²⁶McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 313.

²⁷Lt. Slemmer to Asst. Adjutant General George Hartsuff, Fort Pickens, 30 March 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. I, 365.

Russell concluded that the Union could easily wreck Gen. Bragg's works.²⁸

The reporter's visit to Santa Rosa Island left a stronger impression on him. At first, he did not think too much of Fort Pickens. Russell felt that the east wall facing the island was not strong enough to repel a heavy assault, but his opinions shifted when he entered the fort and saw the Union soldiers hard at work preparing defenses. The reporter noted their professional appearance and cleanliness which the rebels lacked. While on Santa Rosa Island, Col. Brown gave him a tour and explained his thoughts on the Confederate lines. Russell kept silent on what he had seen on the mainland as a part of the agreement to tour both sides. The colonel pointed towards smoke coming from the navy yard and commented that the Southerners were "casting shot and shell there as fast as they can." But, Col. Brown felt that if the Confederates opened fire that he could demolish the yard.²⁹ William Russell's account of his visit to Pensacola Bay gave a neutral perspective on the conditions of both sides. The reporter left on May 16 to continue his travels along the Southern coast.

When Fort Sumter fell in April, the focus of the conflict shifted from defending federal property to suppressing the rebellion, but the U.S. government still valued Fort Pickens, because it played a part in blockading a Southern port. During the summer months, Pensacola Bay was largely ignored while events in Virginia stepped into the spotlight. On July 21, 1861, Union and Confederate forces fought the first major battle of the war at Bull Run. The South won a decisive victory by forcing the North out of Virginia, but the battle did not mark the end of the war as both sides had hoped. The Union remained steadfast in its goal to suppress the rebellion, and the South felt more determined with their boosted morale. The battle of Bull Run brought two new certainties, the war was not going to end in a matter of months and that it was going to cost the lives of thousands of men.³⁰ Initially, the South's victory did not have an impact on Pensacola Bay, but as time went by, the Confederates became more willing to sacrifice lives to capture Santa Rosa Island.

The South brought the standoff to an end during the first week of September 1861. Gen.

²⁸Russell, *My Diary*, 307-308.

²⁹Russell, *My Diary*, 313-315.

³⁰McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 349-350.

Bragg ordered his forces to outfit the Navy Yard's dry dock with cannon. Once completed, the rebels could float it in the bay and use it as a gun platform. Whether Bragg actually planned to use this to assault Fort Pickens is not known, but Col. Brown considered it an "act of hostility." Without consulting Washington, he ordered a detachment of soldiers to burn the dock. During the night of September 2, Union troops sneaked over to the mainland and set it ablaze.³¹

By destroying the dry dock, Col. Brown ended the quiet stalemate between the two sides and ushered in a new series of conflicts. He determined that the actions on September 2 effectively ended the peaceful standoff, and the colonel decided further to harm the Southern forces. The Confederate schooner *Judah* resided within Pensacola Bay, and it boasted five guns which gave it the ability to run the blockade. Col. Brown feared that the South might order it to make an attempt to leave the bay, and he ordered his forces to destroy the ship. On September 13, Union forces successfully burned the vessel. Not stopping with the destruction of the *Judah*, the North also attacked the Navy Yard and disabled its only cannon. Col. Brown lost three men killed and seven wounded as a result of the assault. The colonel felt assured that the South would open fire on Fort Pickens to retaliate, but Gen. Bragg ordered no such actions.³²

The destruction of the dry dock and the *Judah* convinced the Confederates that the Union was willing to take offensive action. In the first week of October, rumors convinced Gen. Bragg that the Union "contemplated opening fire on us very soon." Based on the first two incidents, the Confederate commander had good reason to believe the rumors, and he planned an attack to weaken the Union forces on Santa Rosa Island. Gen. Bragg ordered his men to sail there and to disable the North's batteries that occupied positions just east of Fort Pickens.³³

The Confederates launched their assault during the very early hours of October 9. They landed 1,000 men commanded by Brigadier General Richard Anderson on Santa Rosa Island approximately four miles from Fort Pickens.³⁴ Once organized, the rebels marched a short

³¹Col. Brown to Lt. Col. E. D. Townsend, Fort Pickens, 3 September 1861, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 665.

³²Col. Brown, Fort Pickens, 14 September 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 437.

³³Gen. Bragg, Pensacola, 10 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 458.

³⁴Gen. Bragg, Pensacola, 10 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 458.

distance towards the encampment of the Sixth New York Volunteers and made a surprise attack. The regiment's commanding officer, Colonel William Wilson, attempted to fight off the Southerners, but his force of 250 were outnumbered and not well organized. As tents started to catch fire, the New Yorkers saw the large number of oncoming Confederates and retreated towards the beach. Col. Wilson and about sixty others from the regiment fought a delaying action to slow the rebel advance, but the Southerners managed to overrun the New Yorkers' camp. Gen. Anderson had the advantage at this point but failed to exploit it. He allowed his men to pillage and further destroy the encampment instead of pushing the advance against the Union batteries.³⁵

The personnel of Fort Pickens quickly became aware of the Confederate attack. Col. Wilson had dispatched a messenger to Col. Brown just as the fighting had started, and the Union organized a counterattack. Col. Brown ordered Maj. Israel Vogdes to take two companies to reinforce the Sixth New York. The soldiers marched past the two Union batteries which were the South's primary target and picked up some strength as some of Col. Wilson's men rallied behind the reinforcements. Maj. Vogdes decided to split his force and sent the beleaguered New Yorkers to occupy the right flank. As they left, the New York soldiers disappeared from sight. The reinforcements continued moving along the beach when suddenly men approached them from the right and the rear. Maj. Vogdes rode his horse forward to them acting under the impression that they were the Sixth New York and did not return. Moments later, a Confederate officer approached the Northerners and announced that they had captured the major. The Union troops opened fire, and the South responded again with greater numbers causing the North to fall back.³⁶

Daylight began to break through the night sky as the battle continued. At Fort Pickens, Col. Brown received a report that Maj. Vogdes and his men could not be found. The colonel dispatched another two companies commanded by Major Lewis Arnold to strengthen the lines. This group found what once had been Maj. Vogdes' men now led by Captain John Hildt. With

³⁵Col. William Wilson, Camp Brown, Santa Rosa Island, 11 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 446-447.

³⁶Capt. John Hildt, Fort Pickens, 10 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 448-449.

more Union soldiers in the fight, the Confederates gave up their attempt to disable the batteries and retreated. The North pursued the rebels in the hopes of catching them at a vulnerable moment while they boarded their boats. Maj. Arnold split his men, and the two groups chased after the Southerners. One of the two Union forces arrived just in time to spot a barge filled with Confederate troops that had run aground, and they opened fire at the stationary target. Just as the rebels freed themselves, the second group arrived and started firing at the Southerners as they drifted towards the mainland.³⁷

With the last of the Confederate boats retreating, the battle of Santa Rosa Island came to a close. Both sides took light casualties with the North losing fourteen men killed, twenty-nine wounded, and another fourteen missing; the South did not fare as well with eighteen killed, thirty-nine wounded, and thirty missing.³⁸ The battle did more than just secure the Union possession of Fort Pickens; it displayed its strategic importance by showing its defenses at work. The South had made very little progress in breaking through the North's lines. This was partially due to Gen. Anderson's delay, but the island's narrowness allowed the Union better to concentrate its reinforcements. Fort Pickens' distance from the mainland also made it difficult for the Southerners to send reinforcements to strengthen their attack. The Union took no immediate offensive action against the rebels after the battle, and the Confederates remained in their positions along the mainland. The battle of Santa Rosa Island did not bring a decisive end to the face-off in Pensacola Bay, but it showed Fort Pickens' strategic importance in action.

The role of Fort Pickens had changed drastically since January from a strategic position that defended federal property to playing a part in the blockade of Pensacola Bay. At first, the Union's possession of the fort provided it with a strong position while the rebels seized the various works and installations owned by the federal government. As the war escalated, the fort took on a different role when President Lincoln declared a blockade of all Southern ports, and the early decision to occupy Fort Pickens for its advantageous position proved wise with the Confederate defeat in the battle of Santa Rosa Island. Without Fort Pickens, the Union would not

³⁷Maj. Lewis Arnold, Fort Pickens, 10 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 445; Capt. James Robertson, Battery Lincoln, 10 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 451.

³⁸Col. Brown, Fort Pickens, 11 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 441; Gen. Richard Anderson, Pensacola, 23 October 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. VI, 462.

have had a land position in Pensacola Bay, and the South would have had another safe haven for blockade runners and shipping. By holding the fort, the Union not only secured its property but also shut down the commerce of a city that had the ability to distribute goods throughout the Confederacy.

CHAPTER 2
RECONSTRUCTION STARTED AND HALTED: THE FEDERALS IN
PENSACOLA, NOVEMBER 1861-APRIL 1865

After the Confederate repulse at Santa Rosa Island on October 9, 1861, the standoff between the Union and rebel forces continued, but as the months dragged on the priority of driving the Union forces from Santa Rosa Island diminished. Northern victories in Tennessee created a higher demand for Southern troops, and the Confederate War Department ordered men away from Pensacola. During May 1862, the last rebel soldiers abandoned the city leaving it open to the Union which quickly took over. With a federal presence in Pensacola, the city could have become one of the first Southern communities to begin reconstruction, however, the North gave little attention to the town and looked mainly towards the forts and Navy Yard. For the duration of the war, Pensacola stood in a state of decay and became a refuge for Confederate deserters and contrabands. The South abandoned the port because of the growing intensity of the Civil War, and the North devoted its resources to Pensacola's military installations because of their strategic importance. The city itself offered little of value to either side and fell into a state of neglect.

In the meantime, the Union victory at the battle of Santa Rosa Island displayed Colonel Harvey Brown's preparedness for defense but did not weaken the Confederate forces enough to prevent them from launching a second attack. General Braxton Bragg's soldiers maintained firm holds on Forts Barrancas and McRee, the Navy Yard, and the mainland batteries. For the remainder of October and most of November, Col. Brown acted on the defensive as originally ordered when he took command in April. The Confederates continued to man the mainland

defenses, but they did not attempt another assault on Fort Pickens.¹

Col. Brown wanted to take offensive action against the rebels for the attack on October 9, but he held off because of “imperious circumstances over which (he) had no control.” The colonel did not specify exactly what prevented him from attacking the Confederates. He stated that he could not ignore “an insult so gross to the flag of (his) country” and decided to take “appropriate” action for it. In reality, Col. Brown had few options in executing a counterattack. The federals could not invade the mainland because of the size of the Southern lines and also due to a loss of cover from the Navy’s fleet. The Union also believed that the Confederates outnumbered the Union soldiers on Santa Rosa Island by six to one. The federals had 1,300 men and estimated the rebels’ strength at 8,000. With a landing out of the question, Col. Brown planned an all out artillery barrage involving Fort Pickens, the batteries on the island, and the Navy. The colonel knew that a bombardment would not drive Gen. Bragg’s soldiers from Pensacola, but it could succeed in “punishing” them for attacking his positions.²

On November 22, 1861, the Union forces on Santa Rosa Island along with the warships *U.S.S. Niagra* and *U.S.S. Richmond* started a bombardment against the Confederate positions. The guns opened fire around 10:00 AM with the Navy concentrating on Fort McRee and the island batteries concentrating on the Navy Yard. Fort Pickens directed its fire against various Confederate positions along the shore but focused most of its guns on Forts McRee and Barrancas and the Navy Yard. To increase the potential damage of each shot, the Union heated their shells in order to cause fires and to explode magazines.³

The first shots landed in and around the Navy Yard. The commander of the Union batteries, Major Lewis Arnold, targeted two ships anchored at the installation’s wharf. The rebel soldiers manning the yard’s shore batteries retreated towards safety while the two ships, *Neaffie* and *Time*, began to sail towards Pensacola. Neither of these Confederate ships posed any threat to the federal positions, because the rebels used them to haul supplies across the bay. Maj.

¹Gen. Winfield Scott to Col. Harvey Brown, Washington D.C., 1 April 1861, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 365-366; Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 469.

²Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 469.

³Maj. Lewis Arnold, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 473-474.

Arnold's batteries succeeded in disabling *Time*, but *Neaffie* managed to escape with minor damage due to its small size.⁴

Immediately following the barrage against the Navy Yard, Union forces turned all of its guns against the Confederate batteries and forts. The primary target of the warships, *U.S.S. Niagra* and *U.S.S. Richmond*, and the guns on Santa Rosa Island was Fort McRee. The ships, commanded by Flag Officer William McKean, entered the bay and took up the closest position possible to the rebel fort that allowed them the best shooting angle and depth. The Union selected to focus most of its ordinance on this fort because it stood opposite of Fort Pickens and presented an obstacle for the Navy.⁵

A garrison of troops from Georgia and Mississippi commanded by Colonel John Villepigue occupied Fort McRee and faced the Union's assault. The federals' artillery bombarded the installation with harsh results. Throughout November 22 the garrison had to put out fires caused by heated shot and repair what damage they could. The holes in the wall and the burning woodwork nearly drove the rebels out of Fort McRee, but the largest threat was the Union hitting a magazine. The fort's powder stores "laid bare" to the federal fire and would instantly destroy the structure if hit. Col. Villepigue and his men stayed in the crumbling Fort McRee and gave a "heroic defense."⁶

The Union and Confederates dueled until nightfall. By the end of the day, the federals succeeded in knocking Fort McRee out of action along with a nearby battery. The Navy inflicted the majority of the damage on the installation and also received heavy fire from the rebels forcing *U.S.S. Richmond* to withdraw. With the exception of Fort McRee, the Confederates suffered very little under the constant barrage. The Union fared even better with their batteries and Fort Pickens sustaining only slight damage. Col. Brown attributed this to the work of Army engineer Major Zealous Tower who designed the Santa Rosa Island defenses during the

⁴Maj. Lewis Arnold, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 473-474.

⁵Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 469.

⁶Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 4 December 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 490; Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg to Adjutant General C.S. Army, Braxton Bragg Papers, John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida.

summer.⁷

On the morning of November 23, the Union once again opened fire on the Confederate positions. This time Col. Brown had to rely on Fort Pickens and his batteries, because the Navy could not take up an effective position due to a change of the bay's depth. The federals targeted the Navy Yard, Fort Barrancas, and the Confederate batteries along the shore. Col. Brown did not train his guns again on Fort McRee which kept silent throughout the day. The Union hoped to start fires in the Navy Yard and in any other wooden Confederate structure. The hot shot failed to ignite much in the yard because the structures were built with brick. The federal guns caused fires elsewhere especially in civilian buildings that stood close to the rebel batteries. In Warrington, fire spread to a church along with a large portion of the village. Col. Brown also noted several fires burning in Woolsey which was right behind the Navy Yard. During the bombardment, the Confederates evacuated the two towns and no civilians were lost in the fires. Late in the day, several Union shots hit the rebel hospital (also evacuated). Gen. Bragg considered this a "barbarous act" especially since the yellow flag still flew over the structure. Col. Brown and Maj. Arnold made no notes about hitting or targeting the hospital. Most likely, the damage came from stray shots intended for the Confederate batteries.⁸

The bombardment concluded at dusk, and neither side renewed the conflict the next day, November 24. The second day's fighting ended with little damage for the Union. Fort Pickens suffered a hit that destroyed a gun and killed a man, and the Confederates scored several near misses. One shot struck directly near a group of federal soldiers without wounding a single one. Overall, the Union escaped the bombardments virtually unscathed. Col. Brown reported his losses as one killed and six wounded, and the Confederates failed to weaken any of the North's positions.⁹

⁷Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 4 December 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 490; Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 469-470.

⁸Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 470; Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 4 December 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 491; Maj. Lewis Arnold, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 474-475.

⁹Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 470; Maj. Lewis Arnold, Fort Pickens, 25 November 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 473.

The rebels did not come off so fortunately losing seven men killed and 32 wounded, and the Union succeeded in doing considerable harm to their lines. The Confederates' biggest loss was Fort McRee which still stood but could offer little support in another engagement. The Navy Yard suffered serious damage with several buildings burned and others smashed by artillery. Fort Barrancas survived the battle with minor damage, and the rebel batteries also evaded serious damage. Although the Union did not drive the Confederates from their lines, they further demonstrated Fort Pickens' strategic value in dominating the bay. The federals also saw the rebels' lack of supplies. During the engagement, the Confederates fired 1,000 shots while the Union expended 5,000 rounds of ordinance. Col. Brown's bombardment weakened Gen. Bragg's positions and further reinforced the security of Santa Rosa Island by giving the Confederates a bitter taste of what would happen if they launched another assault.¹⁰

After the heavy bombardments of November 22 and 23, the stalemate between the opposing forces continued. At this point, the Union had the edge after demonstrating their artillery's destructive ability in a firefight. Gen. Bragg felt threatened when he learned that the North had landed another 1,000 troops on Santa Rosa Island and feared that Col. Brown would start another bombardment. The Confederate general had much larger problems facing him in December; the volunteer regiments stationed at Pensacola were about to finish serving their enlistments. Gen. Bragg solved part of the problem by ordering the First Alabama Volunteers to serve two years instead of one. In return, he gave the entire regiment thirty day furloughs.¹¹

Fighting between the two sides started again on New Year's Day, 1862. Col. Brown spotted the first vessel to approach the Navy Yard since the November bombardments, and he ordered his gunners to open fire. This barrage did not last nearly as long and focused primarily on the yard. The Confederates returned fire but caused minimal damage because of a lack of leadership. Gen. Bragg was in Mobile, and Gen. Richard Anderson was intoxicated. The Union ceased fire after seeing several fires breakout in the Navy Yard. Unlike the previous

¹⁰Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 4 December 1861, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 490-491.

¹¹Don C. Seitz, *Braxton Bragg: General of the Confederacy* (Columbia: The State Company, 1924), 71-72; Edward Y. McMorries, *History of the First Regiment, Alabama Volunteer Infantry, C.S.A.* (Montgomery: The Brown Printing Company, 1904), 32-33.

bombardments, this one did not change the status of either side's lines.¹²

For the duration of January, the Union and Confederates continued to face off against each other across the bay. Neither Col. Brown nor Gen. Bragg ordered a renewal of the attacks, yet the commanding officers made decisions that affected the course of events. After the New Year's Day artillery duel, Gen. Bragg requested a more capable and trustworthy second in command, since his duties frequently kept him away from Pensacola. Confederate Army headquarters responded and sent Brigadier General Samuel Jones who arrived on January 27 to oversee the troops in West Florida. At the same time, Gen. Bragg still faced the problem of expiring enlistments. This threatened to weaken the Confederate lines further than before since the First Alabama's furlough did not end until February. The Pensacola *Daily Observer* published editorials requesting that soldiers re-enlist and stated that "the Yankees are basing their hopes of success on the weakness of our (C.S.A.'s) armies."¹³

While the rebels maintained a solid grip on Forts Barrancas and McRee, they did not have the same results elsewhere in the South. On February 6, Union forces under Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant seized Fort Henry located on the banks of the Tennessee River. Ten days later on February 16, his army received the surrender of Fort Donelson just a short distance away on the Cumberland River. The Union gained more than just the capture of two rebel forts; they took 14,623 prisoners and created a solid foothold in the Confederacy. With the North invading Tennessee and parts of the Mississippi River, the South had little choice except to fight a major battle. The rebel hopes rested in General Albert Sidney Johnston who lacked a sufficient force to fight the Union armies. To gather more soldiers, he made his headquarters at Corinth, Mississippi and called for reinforcements from across the South.¹⁴

Because of the impending Union threat, the Confederate War Department decided to

¹²Col. Harvey Brown, Fort Pickens, 2 January 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 495-496; Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 3 January 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 497-498.

¹³Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 3 January 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 497-498; Seitz, *Braxton Bragg*, 79; *Pensacola Daily Observer*, 1 February 1862.

¹⁴James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 244-247; Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1952), 149-150, 159-161.

severely weaken the forces along the Gulf Coast. Its plan allowed for Mobile to remain open with strong garrisons in the bay's fortresses, but the War Department deemed Pensacola too costly to defend and issued orders for its abandonment on February 18. All of the soldiers occupying Forts Barrancas and McRee, the Navy Yard, and the shore batteries were ordered to leave for Tennessee to join Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston's forces. The War Department refused to leave a small amount of troops to defend the area, because the Union could easily defeat them.¹⁵

Abandoning Pensacola involved much more than just transferring the soldiers. The Confederates had large amounts of artillery and supplies that could later prove valuable in other areas of the war. They also had to deal with the Alabama-Florida Railroad. If the line fell into Union hands, the North could rush an army straight into Montgomery. The rebels had to execute their orders swiftly and cautiously to help the forces in Tennessee and to prevent Pensacola's installations from benefitting the North.¹⁶

The task of abandoning Pensacola was assigned to Gen. Samuel Jones who acted under Gen. Bragg's orders. To prevent the Union from discovering the evacuation, the Confederates removed the guns during the night. Upon their return to Florida, the soldiers in the First Alabama immediately went to work in transferring the artillery in Fort Barrancas. Having to abandon their lines came as a surprise to the regiment especially because they came prepared to stay for a lengthy period of time. Students who had enlisted brought text books hoping that they could resume their studies while holding Pensacola. Indeed, the Union victories at Forts Henry and Donelson ruined the Confederacy's sense of security, and units suddenly found themselves leaving their positions open to the North.¹⁷

On February 28, Gen. Bragg relinquished command of West Florida to Gen. Jones and remained in Mobile for three days before leaving to assist Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard in West

¹⁵Judah P. Benjamin to Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Richmond, 18 February 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 828.

¹⁶Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg to Brig. Gen. Samuel Jones, Mobile, 27 February 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 835-836.

¹⁷Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg to Brig. Gen. Samuel Jones, Mobile, 27 February 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 835; McMorries, *History of the First Regiment*, 81-82.

Tennessee on March 1. Before his departure, Gen. Bragg decided to divert some of Pensacola's guns and soldiers to the defense of the Mississippi River. Gen. Jones's orders gave him until March 10 to complete the evacuation. If he could not remove everything of value, the general was to destroy the remaining artillery and send his soldiers to Gen. Bragg.¹⁸

During the first week of March, the evacuation proceeded as ordered. Most of the Confederate soldiers dismounted the heavy guns in Fort Barrancas and the coastal batteries while others such as the First Alabama Volunteers left Pensacola. The rebels did not hurry in carrying out their orders, because Gen. Jones had misgivings about the War Department's decision to abandon the city. He believed that the Union lacked a sufficient force to capture the area and that a small garrison with some smooth-bore cannons could keep the North on Santa Rosa Island. On March 6, Gen. Jones asked Gen. Bragg to cancel the evacuation deadline and allow for 350 soldiers under Colonel Thomas Jones to remain. These troops would maintain a Confederate presence and would destroy the last weapons if the Union launched an "overwhelming attack."¹⁹

Gen. Bragg authorized Col. Jones to stay in Pensacola until "all the public property (was) removed" and ordered Gen. Jones to leave Pensacola and take command at Mobile. On March 13, the responsibility of keeping the Union from seizing whatever war materials remained fell to Col. Jones. During the first two weeks of March, the Confederates succeeded in transporting guns and soldiers safely from Pensacola to Corinth and Tennessee. The city's civilian population panicked when they realized that the military was leaving the area open to the Yankees and fled north. While the Confederates evacuated, the Union continued to occupy Fort Pickens and did not attempt to storm the mainland. After two weeks, the once formidable Southern defenses around Pensacola Bay turned into an unarmed area ready for destruction manned by just a handful of soldiers.²⁰

The Confederates chose the right time to evacuate; the Union lacked sufficient ships and

¹⁸Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg to Brig. Gen. Samuel Jones, Mobile, 28 February 1862 and 1 March 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 836-837.

¹⁹McMorries, *History of the First Regiment*, 82; Brig. Gen. Samuel Jones to Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Pensacola, 6 March 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 840-841.

²⁰Brig. Gen. Samuel Jones to Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, Mobile, 15 March 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 856-857.

morale to attack Pensacola. The soldiers on Santa Rosa Island suffered from a lack of adequate food, and there was a change in commanding officers. After ten months of holding Fort Pickens, Col. Harvey Brown requested a transfer and relinquished command to newly promoted Brig. Gen. Lewis Arnold on February 22. Without adequate naval support, the Union's position on Santa Rosa Island became defensive again, and the federals could do little more than observe the Confederate lines.²¹

Between March and April, the rebels under Col. Jones continued to hold Pensacola. They prepared their lines to look ready for a Union assault but could not defend them if attacked. In other areas of the South, the North succeeded in delivering crushing defeats to the Confederacy. On April 6, Gen. Albert S. Johnston's Confederate army attacked the encamped forces of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee. At the moment, the Union forces were divided with Gen. Don Carlos Buell's soldiers several miles away. Gen. Johnston hoped to destroy one part of the North's army and then the other. For two days the opposing armies fought one of the bloodiest battles in the Civil War, and in the end the Confederates withdrew. Three weeks later on April 29, the Union handed the South another crippling defeat by taking New Orleans. These two battles caused a crisis in the Confederate West and placed Pensacola in an even more precarious position, because the federals had proven themselves in enemy territory and were attacking the weakened Gulf Coast.²²

With the fall of New Orleans and reports of U.S. Navy ships accumulating outside Mobile Bay, Col. Jones decided that he could no longer safely hold Pensacola. On May 7, the colonel issued the order to abandon the area, and the Confederate troops spent the next day removing anything that could prove useful to the Union. Along with evacuating the equipment, Col. Jones ordered the destruction of the remaining public property which included Forts Barrancas and McRee and the Navy Yard. The rebels also had to destroy the Alabama-Florida Railroad and the telegraph lines leading into Pensacola. To assist in the demolition and to shadow the infantry's retreat, Alabama dispatched three cavalry companies.²³

²¹Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 147-148.

²²McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 247-250, 253-254.

²³Col. Thomas M. Jones, Mobile, 14 May 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 660.

On the night of May 9, the Confederate soldiers slipped away from Pensacola and left the cavalry to set fire to the buildings. At 11:30 pm, Col. Jones flashed a blue light from the marine hospital which signaled the start of the destruction. Immediately, the Confederate line from Fort McRee to the Navy Yard erupted in flames. The retreating rebels also burned the Barrancas barracks and marine hospital before moving to Pensacola. At the city, the cavalry had to destroy an oil factory and quartermaster's storehouses before they started work on the railroad and telegraph cables. Any ship that could prove useful to the Union was also burned; this included a steamer and several small ships. By morning, Col. Jones had reunited with his men several miles north of Pensacola and on May 11 started the march to Mobile. He left behind a small detachment of Florida volunteers to complete the destruction of the railroad.²⁴

During the night of May 9, the Union forces on Santa Rosa Island observed the fires set by the rebels and started a light artillery barrage to discourage further destruction. The next morning, Gen. Arnold dispatched the *U.S.S. Maria A. Wood* to accept the formal surrender of Pensacola and made preparations to occupy the mainland. When the ship landed, the mayor quickly turned over the city. To further help Gen. Arnold, the *U.S.S. Harriet Lane*, commanded by Commodore David Porter, arrived on May 10 and began immediately transporting soldiers from Santa Rosa Island to the former Confederate lines. When the first Union soldiers set foot on the mainland, a group of runaway slaves greeted them with smiles and somersaults. No one from the city or county authorities welcomed their arrival.²⁵

The Union forces arrived on shore well after the fires had stopped, and they went about evaluating the damage. The Confederates had done most of their work well; Fort McRee stood in complete ruins and the marine hospital was ashes. To the Union's good fortune the fires barely damaged Fort Barrancas and its barracks, and by the evening of May 10 the Stars and Stripes once again flew over its walls after sixteen months of Confederate occupation. The federals did not find the Navy Yard in good condition. Commodore Porter described the installation as a "ruin" but stated that the surviving facilities could function temporarily until repairs were made.

²⁴Col. Thomas M. Jones, Mobile, 14 May 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 660-662.

²⁵Brig. Gen. Lewis Arnold, Pensacola, 10 May 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 658; Acting Master Anthony Chase, schooner *Maria A. Wood*, 10 May 1862, abstract log, *Official Records Navy*, ser. 1, vol. 18, 481; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1953), 54.

In the Navy Yard, the Confederates had destroyed all of the wooden structures and tossed its last few guns into a water filled slip near the wharf, but they failed to demolish the armory, stone wharves, and storehouse. They also left various items such as chains and harbor buoys lying on the grounds. While heavily damaged, the Union could still use the Navy Yard for limited tasks and storage.²⁶

After securing Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard, Gen. Arnold on March 12 marched 1,000 soldiers into downtown Pensacola to take “military possession” of the city. The troops formed orderly lines in the plaza and watched the American flag rise up the staff. The federal troops did not witness this event alone, several local citizens and Mayor John Brosenham observed the official Union occupation. Some of the civilians responded with cheers, and Gen. Arnold believed that the mayor would act loyally towards the Union. Since most of the citizens faithful to the Confederacy fled with the Southern forces, these remaining people most likely did not support secession.²⁷

With the majority of the civilian population gone, the Union soldiers took advantage of the desolate city. Gen. Arnold relocated his headquarters from Fort Barrancas to the mayor’s office in town hall and took up residence in the home of Confederate Col. William Chase. The commander of the Sixth New York Volunteers, Col. William Wilson lived in the lavish house of the South’s secretary of the navy, Stephen Mallory. The soldiers either camped in various areas around Pensacola or in vacated buildings. When compared to the conditions on Santa Rosa Island, the federal forces were in paradise. In the hurry to abandon the city, many of the residents left behind their furniture and home luxuries allowing the Union troops “as fine quarters as they could wish for.”²⁸

Despite having a firm hold on the city and military installations, problems continued to beleaguer Gen. Arnold’s command. Many civilians were in poverty because they could pay only in worthless Confederate paper money, and rebel deserters constantly surrendered to the picket

²⁶Brig. Gen. Lewis Arnold, Pensacola, 10 May 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 658-659; Commodore David Porter, Pensacola, 2 June 1862, report, *Official Records Navy*, ser. 1, vol. 18, 481-482.

²⁷Brig. Gen. Lewis Arnold, Pensacola, 15 May 1862, report, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 659.

²⁸*New York Times*, 6 June 1862.

lines seeking sanctuary. To further compound problems the Confederates had not fully abandoned West Florida, and several companies of cavalry (armed only with knives and shotguns) harassed the Union lines. To counter this nuisance, Gen. Arnold ordered the construction of a light fortification along the heights just outside of Pensacola. In June, the Sixth New York completed Fort McClellan which covered the land approach to the city with seven artillery pieces. With the exception of holding Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard, the Union's presence on the mainland became benevolent as they distributed rations to those drifting into Pensacola for aid.²⁹

Despite the handful of Confederates scurrying about West Florida, the atmosphere around Pensacola was calm and orderly. The Union soldiers' duties did not go too far beyond scouting, manning the pickets, and drilling. Occasionally, the federals came across a company or two of rebel cavalry and a skirmish ensued. One such incident occurred on June 14 when a portion of the Sixth New York sailed the short distance to Milton and ambushed a group of Confederates hiding in a barn house. Other duties involved assisting the refugees and citizens. The civilians relied on the Army to provide a clergyman because the original ministers had fled before the Union occupation, and the military surgeons also had to provide the destitute with healthcare.³⁰

For the remainder of 1862, the Union's situation remained static at Pensacola. Refugees and runaway slaves continued to flock to the town, and the federal troops persisted in maintaining a line of defense and fought the occasional skirmish. In September, command of the Department of West Florida changed hands when Gen. Arnold transferred to New Orleans, but his replacement, Col. Wilson, held the office for only one month. In October, Brigadier General Neal Dow assumed command and brought with him his temperance sentiments, but the soldiers adjusted with little protest. On November 14, the Seventh Vermont Volunteers commanded by Colonel William Holbrook arrived to reinforce Pensacola. Upon arrival, the colonel noted the pleasant climate and lack of malaria which was rampant along the Mississippi River and

²⁹*Ibid*; Gouverneur Morris, *History of a Volunteer Regiment* (New York: Veteran Volunteer Publishing Co., 1891), 75.

³⁰Morris, *History of a Volunteer Regiment*, 76-82.

commented on the looting committed by the Union soldiers. Apparently, the scouting parties sent into northern Escambia County and neighboring Santa Rosa County pillaged the local townships. The theft was not limited to enlisted men and junior officers; Gen. Dow himself had acquired a “large and interesting collection” of pianos and furniture. Despite the bands of rebels and the capture of personal property, Pensacola was poised to enter 1863 as a city ready to rejoin the Union.³¹

President Abraham Lincoln used the Confederate defeat at Antietam Creek, Maryland on September 17, 1862 to announce the Emancipation Proclamation which declared all slaves in the states of rebellion to be free effective January 1, 1863. While not having any immediate or dramatic effects on Pensacola, the proclamation changed the status of the slaves that had sought refuge in the city from property to freedmen.³² Between the start of the war and 1863, the Union forces in West Florida gradually gave sanctuary to the runaways. During the first three months of 1860, the troops at Fort Pickens returned slaves to their owners on the mainland, but this practice changed once the war had started. By May, 1862, the federals were regularly allowing runaways safety within their lines. With the Emancipation Proclamation, Pensacola officially had a free black population.³³

With the Union providing a safe haven, the freedmen began to enjoy some of the privileges that liberty granted. Often, they were unwilling to perform tasks that they had done as slaves and were occasionally obstinate with federal soldiers, but they pursued loftier goals such as getting an education. On March 1, Captain David D. Hoag attended a Sunday school class at a freedmen church led by Rev. Diossy and started teaching the students to read and write. The school was rather small with between thirty and forty pupils of all ages. Capt. Hoag instructed four year old boys as well as old women and commented on how quickly they learned. The captain taught the students to read the Bible, because he believed that one of slavery’s worst

³¹Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 175; Morris, *History of a Volunteer Regiment*, 80; William C. Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Service of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the Seventh Regiment of Vermont Volunteers, from 1862 to 1866* (New York: American Bank Note, 1882), 117-119.

³²In 1860, Pensacola had a slave population of 957.

³³Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 1-3; Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 168-170.

crimes was denying them the word of God.³⁴

With the start of a freedmen's school and the Union assisting former slaves, Pensacola got an early start on Reconstruction, but events in March changed the city's course and confirmed that the Union needed the area mainly for the military installations. To Gen. Neal Dow, defending the lines around Pensacola Bay was a top priority, and he constantly ordered drills along with the construction of extra fortifications. To further ready his troops for a sudden Confederate assault, Gen. Dow had his men fight "sham battles" against each other. Before leaving Pensacola in January, he instructed Col. Holbrook always to stand vigilant and to "never let yourselves to be surprised." His replacement, Colonel Isaac Dyer, maintained the picket lines and kept the city in good order until March 15 when the steamer *Eastern Queen* entered Pensacola Bay.³⁵

The ship carried orders from the Department of the Gulf commanding Col. Dyer to retreat from Pensacola and relocate to the Navy Yard and Fort Barrancas. This order did not come as a result of an imminent Confederate attack but as a means to make Pensacola Bay more defensible. The bay and city required too many soldiers to maintain the picket lines, and a smaller defensive perimeter provided better security with fewer men. At that time, the Union's war effort demanded as many troops as possible for mounting the capture of Vicksburg and defeating Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The federals still needed Pensacola's military installations but holding the city was not a necessity. By abandoning Pensacola, the Union ended the progress made in socially advancing the city for the post-war era.³⁶

For a week following the arrival of the *Eastern Queen*, Col. Dyer and his troops transferred their goods and equipment to Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard. The order to abandon Pensacola disgruntled men such as Capt. Hoag who felt that he was moving from "good" conditions to harsher ones. If just the Union soldiers left the city, the evacuation would

³⁴Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 168-169; J.C. Hoag, comp., *Life and Letters of Capt. David D. Hoag Who Fell in the Siege of Port Hudson, June 14, 1863* (New York: Carter, Tower and Company, 1866), 48-49.

³⁵Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Service*, 124; Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 185; Hoag, *Life and Letters of Capt. David D. Hoag*, 60.

³⁶Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Service*, 126; Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 185.

have been quicker; but along with the troops, all of the refugees and freedmen moved to the new lines. Capt. Hoag estimated the number of civilians at between 2,000 to 3,000. Between the smaller perimeter and extra people, the Union soldiers faced cramped conditions, and they sent some of the troops to Santa Rosa Island. By March 22, the federals had completed the evacuation, and Pensacola turned into a ghost town with only a single permanent resident, the Spanish Consul Francisco Moreno. Col. Dyer established his flag at Fort Barrancas, and the dilapidated Navy Yard became the headquarters and supply station for the Gulf West Blockading Squadron. With Fort Pickens, Fort Barrancas, and the Navy Yard in Union hands, the North controlled Pensacola Bay but could do little to inhibit Confederate excursions into West Florida.³⁷

During the summer of 1863, a new enemy just as threatening, if not more so, attacked Pensacola. The mysterious disease yellow fever struck the bay's population and instilled a new terror in West Florida. In the nineteenth century, scientists did not know that mosquitoes transmitted the disease, and they could do little to explain the reasons for an epidemic. The trouble began on August 25 when the store ship *Relief* arrived at Pensacola Bay and reported several cases of illness. The Navy's surgeon stationed at the yard, Dr. B.F. Gibbs, went aboard the vessel to evaluate the situation and to offer assistance to the ship's medical officer. Dr. Gibbs documented thirty cases and transferred seventeen of the more seriously ill men to the Navy Yard's hospital. At first, the doctor believed that typhus had stricken the crew but a few days later discovered the symptoms of yellow fever. With an immediate threat to public health, the Navy quarantined the *Relief* and sent it to a secure position six miles away from the yard. Seven victims, including the medical officer, died on board during the quarantine. The patients at the hospital fared better with only one out of seventeen dying, but the disease still loomed over the mainland.³⁸

On September 1, two cases occurred on the merchant vessel, *Myrover*, with one proving fatal. The *Myrover* had no contact with the *Relief* or any of its personnel, and Dr. Gibbs could

³⁷Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Service*, 126; Hoag, *Life and Letters of Capt. David D. Hoag*, 61-62.

³⁸George F. Pearce, "Torment of Pestilence: Yellow Fever Epidemics in Pensacola," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 56 (1978): 448; B.F. Gibbs, "Account of the Epidemic of Yellow Fever which visited Pensacola Navy Yard in the Summer and Autumn of 1863," *American Journal of Medical Science* 51 (April, 1866): 340-342.

not provide an explanation for the new victims. Almost simultaneously, sailors aboard the bomb-flotilla ships, which had arrived from the Mississippi River, started showing symptoms, and officials quickly quarantined the vessels. Dr. Gibbs did not document the exact number of victims for the bomb-flotilla but stated that each vessel “lost heavily.” The Navy now faced an epidemic in the harbor and immediately ordered all ships to be quarantined with their crews encamped on the mainland at a safe distance from the yard and Fort Barrancas.³⁹

The epidemic at first seemed localized to the vessels in quarantine, but on September 22 a new case emerged within the Navy Yard itself. Dr. Gibbs had no explanation for this especially since the hospital had received a full cleaning and newly painted walls to prevent the spread of the disease. The victim died on September 23 and twenty-five men, four of whom died, became ill during the following week. All of the cases occurred in the Navy Yard and the civilian villages. The Army managed to avoid the fever, because the soldiers encamped on a “high sand bluff” and generally avoided contact with the afflicted areas. The Army enforced the quarantine of the civilian villages to prevent the spread of the disease. By September 29, the epidemic had ended after a cold front, which no doubt took a heavy toll on the local mosquito population, passed through Pensacola Bay.⁴⁰

Dr. Gibbs attributed the cause of the epidemic to rotten supplies in the store ship *Relief* which had been decaying for over a year, and he believed that humans then transmitted the disease to the mainland. To treat yellow fever he used calomel and jalap for the initial symptoms and quinia sulphur in the advanced stages. Dr. Gibbs’ scientific explanation for the epidemic provided the basis for the actions taken and the quarantines placed on the ships and villages. The Navy’s actions to terminate the spread of the disease were in vain, and the cold weather most likely put an end to the epidemic.⁴¹

The yellow fever epidemic had virtually no effect on the military status of the Navy Yard and Fort Barrancas. The Union maintained the ability to defend the area, and the Confederates made no attempt to recapture it. Nevertheless, the epidemic still affected the area by creating a

³⁹Gibbs, “Account of the Epidemic of Yellow Fever,” 342.

⁴⁰Gibbs, “Account of the Epidemic of Yellow Fever,” 342-343.

⁴¹Gibbs, “Account of the Epidemic of Yellow Fever,” 346.

public health scare and temporarily handicapping the Navy Yard's operations. In later years, these unexplained epidemics wreaked havoc on the city and caused several evacuations of the area. The epidemic in 1863 showed what the fever caused on a small scale.

In September 1863, Col. Holbrook became involved in an almost international affair. The colonel suspected that Spanish Consul Francisco Moreno, who continued to live within Pensacola, was giving information about the Union's positions to the Confederates. On September 7, Col. Holbrook decided to investigate Moreno and dispatched Captain Mahlon Young with a handful of soldiers to observe the Spanish Consul. That evening, Capt. Young and his troops occupied one of the old fortifications constructed when the Union occupied the city and waited for any sign of wrongful activity. The next morning the federals spotted eight rebels on horseback riding for Moreno's house. After the Confederates entered, Capt. Young's forces surrounded the building and captured the "astonished rebels" without resistance. This event confirmed Col. Holbrook's suspicions about the Spanish Consul, but the fight had not ended. Because the Confederates were captured on grounds where the Spanish flag flew, Moreno argued that they had arrived under a flag of truce and were immune to the Union. Col. Holbrook disagreed and refused to release the prisoners even after the Confederates at Mobile protested the action and stated that the Union had violated the "rules of civilized warfare." The incident faded away with the rebel's complaints, and the Spanish ambassador in Washington did not issue any protests. After failing to negotiate the release of their prisoners, the Confederates stayed away from Moreno's residence.⁴²

For the rest of the Civil War, Pensacola remained relatively quiet with only minor skirmishes between North and South. The Navy Yard stayed active and prepared the ironclads, *U.S.S. Manhattan* and *U.S.S. Tecumseh*, for Admiral David Farragut's attack on Mobile Bay in August 1864, but with that exception, Pensacola stayed in the background and continued to serve as headquarters for the Army in West Florida and the Gulf West Blockading Squadron. In the first months of 1865, the Union had 13,000 soldiers stationed there under the command of Brigadier General Alexander Asboth, and they kept a firm control of the area.⁴³

⁴²Holbrook, *A Narrative of the Service*, 129-131.

⁴³Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 214-215, 237.

The Eastern Theater of the Civil War concluded on April 9, 1865, when Gen. Robert E. Lee's vanquished Army of Northern Virginia surrendered to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Later that month on April 26, the Confederate forces under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston capitulated to the army of Gen. William T. Sherman. With organized resistance over, the defeated South had no choice but to accept the rule of the Union, and the defeated rebels trickled back to what was once their land of plenty. Like so many other Southern cities, Pensacola was a dilapidated and overgrown version compared to its condition in 1860. The Alabama-Florida Railroad was in ruins, and the city's port and lumber mills had not been used since the Confederates abandoned the area in 1862. Moreover, Pensacola now had a large free black population which had to adjust to a new life in a society that still wanted slavery. The Civil War had ended, but even more turbulent times were ahead for Pensacola and the rest of the South.⁴⁴

⁴⁴McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 519-520; Pearce, *Pensacola during the Civil War*, 239.

CHAPTER 3
AN EASY ADJUSTMENT TO THE POST WAR NATION:
PENSACOLA BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870

With the Civil War concluded Pensacola along with the rest of the vanquished Confederacy faced a trying period, but it retained many of its pre war characteristics. Forts Pickens and Barrancas, and the Navy Yard still functioned with a strong federal presence and a need for civilian labor. Along with the military, the rebuilding effort continued to demand fresh timber, and West Florida was ideal for the industry because of the abundance of longleaf pines. The lumber mills offered employment at a time when the plantation system was in shambles, but the timber industry required transportation to make it profitable. The port of Pensacola provided some, but the area needed railroads that connected with the rest of the South. Along with economic recovery, Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties had to deal with the original population returning to the area after leaving in 1862 and a sizeable number of freedmen. Like the rest of the South, these two elements created a combustible combination when mixed together. To make matters worse, the white population had to deal with the advent of Republican rule which was merely an inconvenience until 1867 when the U.S. Congress instituted its own plan for Reconstruction. Between 1865 and 1870, Pensacola adjusted to the Post Civil War Era with less hardship than many areas of the South because of a strong military presence and the lucrative timber industry.

In 1865, events in Washington D.C. decided the fate of Pensacola and the defeated Confederacy. Since 1863, President Abraham Lincoln had planned on a lenient treatment for the rebellious states after the war. His Ten Percent Plan allowed for Southern states to rejoin the Union if ten percent of the population eligible to vote in 1860 took an oath of loyalty and created a new state constitution. Congress opposed this plan and passed the Wade-Davis Bill in 1864

which called for fifty percent of eligible voters in 1860 to take a more stringent “iron clad” oath before starting a new state government. Using his great political skills, President Lincoln disposed of the legislation by using the pocket veto in order to prevent a congressional override.¹

On April 14, 1865, a bullet fired by John Wilkes Booth ended the life of President Lincoln leaving the fate of the South in the hands of Vice President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee who desired to continue his predecessor’s plans of Reconstruction. Johnson issued his plan in May which offered nothing in the way of rights for the freedmen and left the fate of the South in control of the whites. This plan began to backfire almost as soon as it was implemented. The former Confederate states attempted to gain an upper hand in their Reconstruction and had no intention of giving the freedmen a fair chance in politics. In Florida, Provisional Governor William Marvin announced during the state constitutional convention of October 1865 that “it does not appear to me that the public good of the State, or of the nation at large, would be promoted by conferring at the present time upon the freedmen the elective franchise.” The governor also added that the Negroes had “no desire to possess this privilege.” The Florida Constitution of 1865 denied the vote to the freedmen.²

After writing a new constitution, Florida held elections for the governor and state legislature. On November 29, the eligible voters chose David S. Walker as governor and W.W.J. Kelley from Pensacola as lieutenant governor. Walker, an experienced politician, had served in the state senate before the war and held an appointed office during the conflict. With a new government dominated by former Confederates, Florida began to take advantage of the generous terms of Reconstruction. In December 1865, the state legislature followed the pattern of the rest of the South and began to pass “black codes.” This series of laws essentially created a new form of slavery by denying basic freedoms to the freedmen and enacting overly harsh punishments for petty offenses. Such rules forbade blacks from owning firearms, marrying between the races, testifying against whites in court, vagrancy, and other similar offenses. Punishments ranged from fines and imprisonment to involuntary servitude and even death. The black codes succeeded in

¹David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1995) 471-472, 510. The Ironclad Oath required that a Southerner state that they had never willfully assisted the Confederacy.

²Donald, *Lincoln*, 597-598; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 538-540; John Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida* (1888, reprint; Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1964), 13-15.

keeping the freedmen in a “position distinctly inferior to the white.”³

After the Civil War, the federal government had to deal with three million newly freed blacks living in a devastated land. To assist in reuniting separated families, preventing starvation, and making sure that Negroes received fair treatment in negotiating labor contracts, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in 1865. This organization led by Major General Oliver Otis Howard dispatched agents to all areas of the South to aid in the blacks’ adjustment to freedom. Bureau agents issued rations, started hospitals, and organized courts as well as administered loyalty oaths and processed land claims. The organization also assisted destitute whites. In Florida, Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn oversaw operations for the bureau and administered to all areas of the state.⁴

Pensacola did not have a typical Reconstruction, because timber rather than plantations surrounded the area. Also, the city lacked a railroad connection to Tallahassee which cut off West Florida from the other half of the state. Nevertheless, Pensacola went through several trials with the Freedmen’s Bureau and the military having to maintain the peace. Blacks that had flocked to the city during the war needed employment, and the original white population wanted to take up their old lands and carry on as if nothing had happened. Fortunately, the longleaf pine forests were ready to supply the timber industry, and the federal government decided to keep a strong garrison at Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard. Unlike the rest of Florida, Pensacola had the means to swiftly rebuild its economy and escape poverty with the military there to prevent open hostilities against the loyalist government.⁵

The Civil War left Pensacola in a thoroughly dilapidated condition. In May 1865, much of the city stood in ruins with many buildings in ashes. Former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory’s home was in shambles as were the houses of other rebels that had left in

³Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), 46-47; Joe M. Richardson, “Florida Black Codes,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (1969), 374-375.

⁴Joe M. Richardson, “An Evaluation of the Freedmen’s Bureau in Florida,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 41 (1962-1963), 223-225.

⁵Clay H. Armstrong, *History of Escambia County*, (St. Augustine: The Record Company Printers, 1930), 114-115.

1862. Grass and weeds covered the streets, and the wooden sidewalks were in serious need of repair. The lumber mills that occupied the area were burned wrecks, because Gen. Braxton Bragg ordered their destruction before the 1862 evacuation. The Alabama-Florida Railroad was useless due to the Confederate removal of the iron track during the abandonment. The only buildings that remained in good order were the United States Customs House and the post office.⁶

Brigadier General Alexander Asboth continued to command the Union forces stationed at Pensacola which amounted to four regiments, one composed of black troops. However, his authority in 1865 limited his powers to the Army, and he could exert only moderate influence on the civilian population that had started to take “preliminary steps for the reorganization of the civil government.” The Navy personnel stationed at the yard still had to deal with the damage to the facility that the Confederates had inflicted. After three years of Union possession, the sailors and marines had restored the yard just enough to perform necessary tasks for the Gulf West Blockading Squadron. Much work remained undone in order to return the installation to its condition in 1860.⁷

On May 24, 1865, the citizens of Pensacola and West Florida met in the city to create a new local post war government. Most of the people were freedmen who had lived within the Union lines during the conflict and now wanted to rule themselves. General Asboth observed the convention but did not attempt to take control of it. He believed that the meeting lacked sufficient leadership and requested advice from the West Mississippi Division. General Asboth received orders to stay out of the city’s civil affairs and was advised that keeping order and fairness at the convention fell to Florida’s provost marshal. Former Captain Joseph D. Wolfe of the Twenty-Fifth United States Colored Infantry presided at the meeting. Documents do not reveal what sort of government the current populace formed, but it did not last with the advent of Presidential Reconstruction and the passing of the Florida Black Codes. This government just

⁶*New York Times*, 5 August 1865.

⁷*New York Times*, 5 August 1865; Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth, Fort Barrancas, 23 May 1865, Special Orders No. 126, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, 889.

like others to come fell victim to the turbulent times of the Post Civil War Era.⁸

Restoring Pensacola involved much more than establishing a new government and rebuilding the town. The population needed food and jobs, and the people could not easily obtain these necessities immediately following the war. Fortunately, the Freedmen's Bureau established its West Florida district headquarters in Pensacola which oversaw Escambia, Santa Rosa, Walton, Washington, and Holmes Counties. In 1865, General Truman Seymour, the Union commander at the battle of Olustee, served as the assistant commissioner for West Florida. In Pensacola the bureau dispersed rations, supervised labor, established schools, and cared for the infirm.⁹

Besides providing for the destitute, the Freedmen's Bureau accepted the task of classifying land as either abandoned or owned. Because most of the landowners fled in 1862, the vast majority of property in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties fell under the abandoned category. This presented a problem for those returning to the area that owned land. At first, the United States Treasury Department assumed responsibility of abandoned property, but it lacked the means to properly care for it. With Southerners demanding the return of their land, the Freedmen's Bureau took the burden, because its agents could deal with restoration claims along with other civil affairs.¹⁰

As the summer and fall of 1865 passed, Pensacola's original population trickled back to the city. Those that owned property could not just return and carry on as if the war had never occurred. Before the bureau examined restoration claims, it made certain that the applicant had taken an "amnesty oath" of allegiance to the United States and swore that he had never willfully supported or taken up arms in favor of the Confederacy. The Army bore the responsibility of distributing "amnesty oaths" and printed approximately 1,158 forms according to the number of

⁸Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth to Lt. Col. C.T. Christensen, Fort Barrancas, 21 May 1865, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, 867; Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth, Fort Barrancas, 23 May 1865, Special Orders No. 126, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, 889; Armstrong, *History of Escambia County*, 114.

⁹William J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, "Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands," National Archives, RG 105, Florida (hereafter cited as BRFAL); Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 10-11.

¹⁰Treasury Department, Washington D.C., 6 March 1866, BRFAL.

voters from Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties in the 1860 election. In order to participate in politics and file land claims, Southerners had to swear their unwavering allegiance to the Union. Of course under Presidential Reconstruction, these oaths meant very little and many former Confederates signed them and regained some of their status.¹¹

Property claims ranged from applicants requesting the return of a plot of land or even machinery that they had left behind. Gabriel Bertrand applied from his new home in Mobile where he had fled from the Union in 1862 and provided adequate proof of ownership and loyalty. Another case involved a citizen who had left Pensacola for Alabama. Former resident John Campbell owned a city lot but had abandoned it when the Confederates gave up the city. Like Bertrand, Campbell had taken an oath of loyalty to the Union and denied assisting the rebellion. One of the more unusual claims involved an engine and boilers which the Union confiscated from a lumber mill during the war. The applicant, Henry Hyer, learned that the federals sent his machinery to Washington D.C. as abandoned property, and he had to write to the Bureau of Yards and Docks to get it returned. When dealing with these claims, the Freedmen's Bureau did not cause any major impediments to applicants as long as they proved that they were loyal citizens.¹²

This lenient method of property restoration fell under Lincoln and Johnson's plan for Reconstruction and was opposed by some of the Radical Republicans in Congress who thought rebel property should be permanently confiscated. Under these lenient conditions, Pensacola's former population managed to start anew just as if they had not followed their Southern brethren to Alabama in 1862. Even former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory returned to his home in Pensacola after being released from Fort Pulaski in late 1865.¹³

The Freedmen's Bureau began to set up schools for the former slaves, because a basic

¹¹Brig. Gen. John Newton to Commanding Officer Sub District West Florida, Tallahassee, 28 August 1865, *Military Dispatches, Headquarters, District of Middle Florida, August 10, 1865-September 25, 1865* (Jacksonville: Historical Records Survey, Works Progress Administration State Office, 1938), 38; Gabriel Bertrand, Pensacola, 21 August 1865, Proclamation Oath, BRFAL; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 185.

¹²Gabriel Bertrand to Commissioner of Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Pensacola, 21 August 1865, BRFAL; John Campbell to Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard, Pensacola, 28 September 1865, BRFAL; Henry Hyer to Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Pensacola, 30 June 1865, BRFAL.

¹³Foner, *Reconstruction*, 230-231; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 35, 42.

education could help them in negotiating labor contracts and to better function in society. Teachers moved from the North and often endured hostile communities to fulfill this mission. The bureau established several schools in Pensacola and provided funds for others. Establishing a school was no simple task. Teachers could not rely on the state governments for aid, and their pupils had no means to make up the capital. Often the Freedmen's Bureau contributed a building and provided furnishings necessary to start a school. The case of William Fiske who opened a school in Pensacola on April 23, 1866 is an example. At first, he had only five students which quickly grew to twenty-eight, and the room the bureau provided was inadequate. To keep the school going, he charged his pupils a monthly fee of \$1.50, but he often made other arrangements with the students unable to pay. In May 1866, Fiske asked the bureau to build a larger structure and in return promised that he could double the number of students in attendance. The Freedmen's Bureau succeeded in maintaining an adequate number of schools to provide for Escambia County's black population of about 2,500.¹⁴

While the bureau issued rations, assessed land claims, and established schools, its main purpose was to keep the peace between the former rebels and freedmen. In 1866, the black codes made it easy for discontented whites to suppress their former slaves, and often the Freedmen's Bureau had to correct the injustices. In Escambia County, blacks and loyal whites made few complaints of oppression; but in the more rural areas of Santa Rosa and Walton Counties where there were fewer federal soldiers, more trouble arose. At Milton, Jefferson Gillem, a local black resident, reported that the city marshal assaulted him by throwing a brick through the window which struck his chest. Before leaving, the marshal stormed the residence and "threatened to kill Gillem if he did not quit the place." When the victim asked the Santa Rosa County Court for justice, it simply dismissed his complaint. The bureau could not allow civil officials to oppress citizens and ordered an investigation of the incident. There were no reports of beatings by law enforcement officials in Pensacola, but oppression occurred as the result of the black codes. After the Civil War a group of blacks founded the First Baptist Colored Church of Pensacola and paid \$1,500 to build a sanctuary. The congregation elected all black deacons and ministers. This

¹⁴William Fiske to Capt. F. Cole, Pensacola, 18 May 1866, BRFAL; W.J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, BRFAL.

action offended the white city government which took control of the church using the Florida black codes as its basis. Initially, the local bureau agent interfered and refused to hand over the keys, but the discontented whites tricked a deacon into giving them up. The new church leaders quickly shutdown services and closed the freedmen's school that operated out of the building.¹⁵

Despite some cases of oppression against white Republicans and blacks, the Freedmen's Bureau was generally successful in keeping the peace in Pensacola and Escambia County. People filed few complaints with the bureau office, and agents reported peaceful conditions. The principle factor that kept Pensacola quiet was the military. With several regiments and ships stationed at Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard, the armed forces could easily put down any uprising and keep the peace. The Freedmen's Bureau and the Army made Escambia County a relatively safe area when compared with other parts of Florida and the South.¹⁶

Between 1865 and 1867, all of the former Confederate states passed their own version of the black codes to keep freedmen subordinate to whites. Northern Republicans were outraged with these injustices and believed that Presidential Reconstruction was a failure. When Congress met in 1867, the Radical Republicans in both houses decided to create new laws for the South which prevented former rebels from running the state governments and enfranchised the freedmen. This party faction led by Representative Thaddeus Stevens and Senator Charles Sumner intended to bring civil equality to blacks and to prevent the South from attempting to reinstate slavery in any form. Their efforts resulted in the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 which abolished the current state constitutions and created new requirements for readmission to the Union such as ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment that guaranteed civil rights and United States citizenship to any person born in the country. President Andrew Johnson vetoed the bill and attached a scathing letter for the Radicals. The Republicans held the necessary majorities in both houses to override the President, and they passed the act during the first week of March 1867.¹⁷

The Reconstruction Acts divided the South into five military districts. Florida fell with

¹⁵Truman Seymour to Capt. F. Cole, Pensacola, 9 May 1866, BRFAL; Rev. E.G. Ciscero to Col. A.L. Zularsky, Pensacola, 3 August 1866, BRFAL.

¹⁶Truman Seymour to Assistant Adjutant General of Florida, Pensacola, 24 November 1866, BRFAL.

¹⁷Foner, *Reconstruction*, 275-277; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 564-566.

Georgia in the Third District commanded by Major General John Pope, and Colonel John T. Sprague handled the affairs of the state. Brigadier General (brevet) Truman Seymour succeeded Gen. Asboth as commander in Pensacola and took over the city government. The city faced numerous problems including civil rights and disenfranchised rebels, but the summer of 1867 witnessed the arrival of a yellow fever epidemic. This old scourge caused more chaos and damage to Pensacola than the events in Washington D.C. and Tallahassee.¹⁸

The 1867 epidemic had a much greater impact than the one in 1863 because of the larger population and increased commerce. During the spring months, public authorities attempted to keep the fever out of Pensacola. They established a quarantine station in May and forced ships with sick crew members to stay out of the port. None of these measures succeeded, because the medical field treated yellow fever as an infectious disease spread by human contact. The general fear and chaos that disrupted the city arose from these ideas. The yellow fever epidemic of 1867 did more than cause a public health problem; it forced Pensacola and parts of Escambia County to evacuate and basically halted Reconstruction in West Florida. Whites and blacks alike briefly forgot about politics in favor of their own health.¹⁹

The epidemic hit unexpectedly in the final days of June when the British steamer *Fair Wind* arrived at the Pensacola quarantine station. The ship passed the initial inspection, and the health officers reported her as “remarkably clean, well ventilated, and well appointed.” While quarantined, one of the vessel’s crew died suddenly of “consumption,” but the station saw no threat to public health and allowed the *Fair Wind* to sail on to Pensacola. During the next few weeks, the ship’s crew began to show symptoms and three crewmen died. The military ordered the vessel back into quarantine on July 20 to no avail, since other ships in the harbor started reporting cases of disease. The city traced the fever’s arrival to the *Fair Wind*, because she had sailed from Jamaica which had reported a “malignant epidemic.” Regardless of where the scourge came from, Pensacola faced problems that made the Reconstruction Acts look like

¹⁸Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 177, 61; J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Memorial of Henry Sanford Gansevoort* (Boston: Franklin Press, Rand, Avery, and Co., 1875), 72, 245.

¹⁹Author Unknown, “Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic at the Naval Station, Pensacola, Florida, A.D. 1867,” *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, XVIII, March 14, 1868, 227.

trivial issues.²⁰

Up to that point, the fever had limited itself to the ships' crews and left the mainland unaffected. That changed on July 24 when the merchant vessel *Texan* arrived from New Orleans which was beleaguered by the disease. The Pensacola quarantine station certified the ship as healthy and allowed it to dock, but soon after one of the *Texan*'s crew fell ill. Within days, people began reporting cases of yellow fever, and by August 9 two victims had died. The city officials traced the disease to the *Texan*'s sick crew member and declared that the scourge had taken hold of Pensacola.²¹

With new cases occurring daily, the city and military took precautions to limit the disease. Gen. Seymour ordered the soldiers at Fort Barrancas to transfer to Fort Pickens, and Pensacola's doctors recommended that the population evacuate to Alabama. Not willing to abandon his command, Gen. Seymour and a handful of troops stayed on the mainland to occupy the barracks. The Navy Yard also quarantined itself and prohibited any outside communication. While many of the area's residents fled, people still remained in the numerous towns of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties to wait out the epidemic.²²

The number of cases in Warrington and Woolsey was unknown, but the disease claimed twenty-four lives and infected the towns' two doctors. On the other side of the bay at Milton, people fared better and avoided the epidemic. In Pensacola and the Navy Yard, yellow fever ran rampant causing the majority of marines and numerous citizens to fall ill. The Army's safe haven at Santa Rosa Island succeeded in avoiding a massive outbreak amongst the soldiers but did not escape unscathed. On August 14, a lieutenant died at Fort Pickens which created fear that the fever had crossed the bay. After several days of worry, Col. Henry S. Gansevoort, who commanded the evacuated troops, decided that the threat had passed. At this point, the healthy portion of Pensacola's residents had fled leaving the city in a semi-abandoned state with only the

²⁰Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 227; Pearce, "Yellow Fever Epidemics in Pensacola," 456-457.

²¹Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 227.

²²J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 242-243; Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228.

ill to care for it.²³

For Gen. Seymour and his handful of men staying at the Barrancas barracks, the epidemic turned into a siege. The soldiers occupied the third floor and isolated themselves from the civilian population. On August 23, an Army transport from New Orleans landed several people, and one of them took ill at the barracks. The victim died that night at the hospital. This death created another scare for the Army, but the isolated troops did not report any new cases of yellow fever. With the majority of its personnel on Santa Rosa Island, the Army fared well during the epidemic and saw few victims.²⁴

While Gen. Seymour's command evaded the scourge, the men at the Navy Yard suffered greatly during the summer of 1867. Most of the marines contracted the disease and at one time only twenty out of one hundred reported for duty. The epidemic ravaged the installation to the point where the Navy suspended all operations and closed the facility until the disease passed. Race also played a role during the crisis at the yard. During August and early September, some of the officers wrote Washington D.C. asking that the white soldiers be replaced with Negro troops. The requests did not originate from wanting to protect the lives of whites by using blacks as a sort of biological "cannon fodder" but to lessen the number of victims.²⁵ During the epidemic, not one reported case of yellow fever among blacks resulted in death. The officers felt that Negro troops could run the Navy Yard and that the fever would not have as devastating an effect. Officials in Washington D.C. did not feel the same way, and they turned down the requests.²⁶

During the epidemic, the Freedmen's Bureau continued to aid the destitute whose numbers grew rapidly in those summer months. The organization issued rations mostly to blacks

²³Pearce, "Yellow Fever Epidemics in Pensacola," 456-457; Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228; J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 244-245.

²⁴Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228.

²⁵During Reconstruction physicians observed that the mortality rate for yellow fever in blacks was only a quarter of the number of white deaths. From Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. Kiple, "Black Yellow Fever Immunities, Innate and Acquired, as Revealed in the American South," *Journal of Social Science History* 1 (1997): 427.

²⁶J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 245, 251-252; Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228.

and poor whites of Warrington who depended on the Navy Yard for their livelihood. With the facility closed, the people had to turn to the bureau for aid. Throughout the summer, local agents only had to worry about assisting the needy and avoiding yellow fever. Racial tension eased as the disease pounded the area, and the bureau received no complaints of violence or intimidation in Escambia County.²⁷

The arrival of fall and cooler weather announced the departure of yellow fever from Pensacola. As the epidemic ended, the town's population gradually returned and resumed their lives. The exact number of fatalities cannot be determined but somewhere between 150 and 200 is a fair estimate. The onslaught of the disease brought a temporary halt to the process of Reconstruction; schools shut down, local government functioned on a minimal level, and commerce stopped temporarily. Just as other cities do after a disaster Pensacola returned to life, and the dominant issues in politics once again took center stage as Florida prepared to re-enter the Union.²⁸

With the yellow fever epidemic over, problems of racial tension and labor returned to Pensacola. The Freedmen's Bureau, which had assisted those affected by disease, resumed its role of protecting the rights of blacks. The Negro population faced fewer problems in 1867, and Gen. Seymour attributed this mostly to the presence of the military. The general believed that the city magistrates would not enforce the Civil Rights Act and would allow oppression if the troops were withdrawn. Whether or not Gen. Seymour's concerns were credible the Army had a positive effect on the city's morale, and the freedmen enjoyed a secure environment. Between the fall of 1867 and the summer of 1868, Pensacola was consistently peaceful. The bureau received very few reports of injustices, and the military ensured swift enforcement of violations. Other parts of West Florida were not so fortunate, trouble still plagued areas where the Army had little influence such as Santa Rosa and Walton Counties. In Pensacola, the presence of troops kept the white population in order.²⁹

²⁷Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 1 October 1867, BRFAL; Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL.

²⁸J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 252.

²⁹Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL.

Within the safety of Escambia County, blacks worked a variety of labor and sought education. Most freedmen found employment at the Navy Yard and the area's numerous lumber mills. Others worked menial jobs in Pensacola such as house servants, but a few owned businesses within the city. While blacks did not have to worry about employment, they did have to worry about their schools. The Freedmen's Bureau noted that most of the schools in Pensacola, Warrington, and Milton lacked adequate teachers and funds to provide a proper education. Out of those three cities, Pensacola's freedmen displayed the most knowledge and made a greater impression on the bureau agents. The most common problem reported was that extremely unqualified teachers led classes. The challenge of providing quality education to blacks persisted up to and beyond the dissolution of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1869 as people requested better teachers and newer buildings.³⁰

Despite the tougher conditions imposed on the South by the Reconstruction Acts, whites still managed to commit injustices against blacks. One case handled by the Freedmen's Bureau involved the firing of "colored citizens who had dared to exercise their freedom in voting for the candidates of their choice." The new idea of black suffrage caused businesses to manipulate elections by threatening the loss of employment if the Negroes voted for the wrong person. The bureau reacted by speaking to local black congregations and informing them of their rights. During the fall of 1867, agents primarily worked to establish equality between the races and considerably reduced the dispersing of rations. The need for workers in West Florida's lumber mills and the Navy Yard provided enough jobs for the region. Late 1867 and early 1868 were tranquil months for Pensacola and Escambia County, but the advent of creating a new state government with blacks actively participating ensured an end to the peaceful times.³¹

On January 20, 1868, Florida held a constitutional convention where Radical and Moderate Republicans determined the state's future. The military divided Florida into nineteen "election districts" for the selection of delegates. The first of these consisted of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties which sent three delegates, George W. Walker, George J. Alden, and

³⁰W.J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, BRFAL; Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL.

³¹W.J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, BRFAL; Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 178-180.

Lyman W. Rowley. The First District's participants played a minor role while people such as Charles H. Pearce, Thomas W. Osborn, and William J. Purman dominated the convention. At first the Radicals dominated the proceedings, but in a late night coup on February 10 the Moderates gained control. The bickering Republicans finally approved a constitution in April which guaranteed black suffrage and ratified the Fourteenth Amendment which would restore Florida to the Union. The convention also called for an election in May to vote in new civil officials. However, the constitution was not legal until the voters approved it. Until that time, Col. John T. Sprague continued to handle the state's affairs as military commander.³²

In May 1868, Florida's voters decided the fate of the new constitution and selected office holders simultaneously. The Moderate Republicans nominated Harrison Reed for governor and William Gleason for lieutenant governor. The Radicals had little chance of defeating the more numerous Moderates but put up Samuel Walker and William Christy for the state's top offices. The Democrats also nominated candidates but had no chance of defeating the split Republicans. With the Negro population eligible to vote and many whites disenfranchised, trouble was sure to plague this election. On May 12, Florida's freedmen cast ballots for the first time in state history ratifying the constitution and electing Harrison Reed as governor. Along with a new executive, the voters also chose a new legislature which met for the first time on June 9 and officially ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. After seven years of rebellion and chaos, Florida had permanently rejoined the United States of America.³³

The election caused disruptions throughout the entire state. In Tallahassee, wealthy planter Joseph John Williams was so frustrated with the number of freedmen at the polls that he started the Ku Klux Klan in Florida under the name of the Young Men's Democratic Club. Fortunately for Pensacola, a lack of transportation across the state kept the organized hate groups out of West Florida, but problems still persisted. Former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory and the editor of the Pensacola *Observer* William Kirk got into a pair of duels that local police stopped before either party fired a shot. The quarrel originated in a series of

³²Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida*, 49-52; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 177-187.

³³Ralph L. Peek, *Lawlessness and the Restoration of Order in Florida: 1868-1871* (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1964), 92; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 192.

editorial attacks printed in the city's newspapers. Since his release from prison, Mallory had become an outspoken proponent of Negro education and readily accepted the freedmen's right to vote. In one of his 1867 speeches, the former Confederate stated that since the "Negro was now entitled to vote, it was the interest of the State that he should be educated and enlightened, and made to comprehend the priceless value of the ballot." On May 7, 1868, Kirk initiated the first challenge to Mallory and was arrested for inciting a duel. After spending several days imprisoned in Fort Barrancas, Kirk again sought out the former secretary and the two met on election day. Fortunately, someone informed a local constable who arrived just as Kirk and Mallory were about to take aim. This high profile duel was not the only one in Pensacola during the week preceding the gubernatorial election. Citizens reported that police prevented several other confrontations. Besides the contests for honor, West Florida had a less tumultuous election than other regions of the state.³⁴

Florida during 1868 was a hotbed for lawlessness and violence. With the ratification of the new constitution and freedmen taking public office, whites began to rebel against the new society that they felt the Republicans had thrust upon them. On December 24, 1865, in the small town of Pulaski, Tennessee, several local citizens started the Ku Klux Klan. By 1868, the organization had spread across the South with a unified structure. The first hint of the Klan started in Florida after Governor Reed's election. Leon County residents led by Joseph John Williams started the Young Men's Democratic Club. This small group adopted the same charter that Klan chapters used but had no affiliation with the larger organization. Similar clubs started springing up in almost every Florida county from the Apalachicola River to Jacksonville. While several clubs stayed peaceful, others were ruthless such as Jackson County which had 153 murders between 1868 and 1871. Florida's Young Men's Democratic Clubs occasionally united to obstruct Republican rule. During September 1868, Governor Reed purchased a large quantity of arms and ammunition from New York which arrived at Jacksonville and were transported by train to Tallahassee. The weapons never arrived at their final destination. Club members from

³⁴House, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Committee to Enquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1870, no. 22, pt. 13, 227; William H. Davison, *Diary*, May 7, 12, 1868, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida; *St. Augustine Examiner*, 20 April 1867; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 192.

each county worked to board the train and tossed the cargo alongside the tracks. Pensacola avoided this kind of organized violence for several reasons, mostly because of the large military presence and the lack of a rail connection to Tallahassee. While Escambia County lacked a Young Men's Democratic Club, the area still had lawlessness in 1868.³⁵

Although Pensacola avoided organized violence, isolated incidents frequently occurred. In September 1868, an unidentified man shot a black police officer three times. The assailant would have killed him on the spot if another person had not intervened. Whether or not the wounded officer survived is a mystery, but the city's white population did not care if he recovered. William H. Davison, who worked for the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad Company, recorded in his diary that "Mr. Nigger will go back to Philadelphia where he belongs if he gets well." Such incidents did not intimidate Pensacola's black population from participating in activities. On July 4, 1868, Harrison Reed took the oath of office and became governor of Florida. Pensacola blacks celebrated the day in large numbers drinking and playing baseball at the town square. As in much of the vanquished Confederacy, fear and intimidation were constant companions of West Florida's blacks. On the day after the black policeman was shot, another black officer refused to arrest a white man and only did so when ordered by Captain George Wentworth. However without a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan or a Young Men's Democratic Club, Pensacola avoided the violence that plagued parts of North Florida after the Civil War.³⁶

In 1868, the United States faced a Presidential election that promised to cause conflict and upheaval in the country. Although Radical Republicans failed to impeach Andrew Johnson, Republicans at large were bent on bringing new leadership to Washington. Radicals reached a compromise with the Moderates and nominated Ulysses S. Grant who was enormously popular with the people. To challenge the Republicans, the Democrats nominated New York Governor Horatio Seymour. The struggling party faced an insurmountable task, because the Southern states with black enfranchisement often voted Republican and the Democrats lacked a popular candidate.³⁷

³⁵William P. Randel, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy* (New York: Chilton Books, 1965), 134-139.

³⁶William H. Davison, *Diary*, 4 July 1868, 26, 27 September 1868; Peek, *Lawlessness in Florida*, 93.

³⁷Foner, *Reconstruction*, 339-343.

During late summer and autumn 1868, the election dominated news and events in West Florida. Organizations frequently met, and editorials constantly attacked and promoted candidates. Because the Democrats ran on an anti-Reconstruction platform, whites and blacks divided over the candidates. The division was most evident in the local newspapers. Republican William Kirk edited the *Pensacola Observer* and the Democrats controlled the *West Florida Commercial*. Because the Republican party had the upper hand in Southern politics, the *Pensacola Observer* did not publish ravenous attacks against Democrats. The *West Florida Commercial* constantly printed malicious editorials against the Radicals and the deprivation of ex-Confederate voting rights.³⁸

From the Democrats' perspective, the Presidential election was a chance to end Radical Reconstruction and reinstate a state government similar to one before the Civil War. The *West Florida Commercial* frequently published editorials that attacked the "carpet-bag office holders" in Tallahassee. The newspaper took a harsher stance against local Radicals and stated that

Do they ever contemplate the pinching want and misery they have been the means of causing to this class of our people? When they swing their canes upon our streets with a hell-raky air, and puff their havanas in ladies' faces, and look into the sorrowful eye of some starving widow, does no still small voice whisper in their ear and say, 'thou hast done it?' Do they ever think of the supreme contempt and loathing with which they are regarded by the masses over whom they rule?

Such Editorials also turned the election into a struggle between the races by charging whites that supported the Republicans as people who had turned against their own color. The *West Florida Commercial* compared scalawags to venomous serpents that had betrayed their old friends and stated that they threatened the "manhood" of anyone who listened to them. Other editorials encouraged all eligible white residents to register for the vote to prevent the election of a black candidate. The Democrats' fiery articles only served to fuel the flames of resentment against Radical Reconstruction and the civil rights of the freedmen.³⁹

For the West Florida Republicans, winning the Presidency did not seem as important as winning local offices and seats in the state legislature and senate. However, national Republican

³⁸West Florida *Commercial*, 12 October 1868; *Pensacola Observer*, 19 October 1868.

³⁹West Florida *Commercial*, 12 October 1868, 26 November 1868.

victories gave them cause to celebrate. On October 14 after learning of several victories in other states, they held a torch light procession that started from the Navy Yard and traveled through the streets of Pensacola. The participants carried banners emblazoned with political mottoes and statements including one that equated progress with the construction of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad. The South voted heavily in favor of the Republican ticket in 1868 with the exceptions of Georgia and Louisiana where the Ku Klux Klan dominated civil affairs. While editorials promoted racial division, violence did not affect the election in Pensacola. The presence of federal soldiers and the peaceful assemblies of Republicans show that intimidation did not deter people from exercising their political rights.⁴⁰

On November 28, Pensacola's Republicans rejoiced in Grant's victory during a large celebration at the Navy Yard. Local officials present included the mayor, S.C. Cobb, Judge William Kirk who also edited the *Pensacola Observer*, and other politicians. The jubilant crowd cheered the arrival of a steamer that carried Pensacola's delegates and paraded through Warrington and Woolsey "stopping at each Republican's house and greeting it with three rousing cheers." Without proper law and order that other areas of Florida lacked, the Republicans could not have held such a celebration.⁴¹

After the Presidential election, Escambia County citizens voted for a new state senator. Despite appeals from the *West Florida Commercial* to overthrow the Reconstruction government, Republicans dominated Pensacola politics. S.C. Cobb headed the local party with the support of aldermen, the *Pensacola Observer*, and state representative Salvador T. Pons. After the Reconstruction Act of 1867 which disenfranchised numerous whites, Florida began to elect black public officials. These freedmen politicians included Secretary of State Jonathan C. Gibbs, Representative Charles H. Pearce, and Representative Josiah T. Walls. All three were forceful personalities in Florida politics and worked to maintain the progress achieved by Congress. While Representative Pons played a minor role in the legislature, his status as a black politician deserves merit. He served in the Florida house between 1868 and 1869 before returning to Pensacola politics where he served as an alderman and mayor. Republican

⁴⁰*Pensacola Observer*, 19 October 1868.

⁴¹*Pensacola Observer*, 1 December 1868.

dominance of both state and local offices in Escambia County gave the party a significant edge in the senatorial race.⁴²

The Republicans had two candidates running for the state senate in 1868. One of the two was George W. Wentworth who served as a colonel in the U.S. Army; the other was William Kirk. Because he did not have any promotions in the local newspapers, little is known about Wentworth's campaign. Kirk ran on a more moderate platform which catered more to Democrats than to his own party. He believed that the "colored man is capable of exercising his citizenship without aid." Kirk still supported the national policies of the Republicans except on the issue of race. On December 29, Escambia County elected George Wentworth as state senator, and he was sworn in at Tallahassee on January 9, 1869.⁴³

For Pensacola and the Southern states, the election of 1868 was a major crossroad. The nation could have voiced its disapproval of Reconstruction by electing a Democrat to the Presidency. Instead, the voters overwhelmingly approved of Grant based on a combination of his war record and Republican success. On the state and local level, Republican dominance equaled a secure environment. Pensacola residents not only voted but also publicly voiced their support for Grant without fear. This indicates that Escambia County was adjusting easier to Reconstruction than other parts of the South where lawlessness and intimidation manipulated politics.⁴⁴

After 1868, Pensacola elected numerous blacks to state and local offices and continued to do so until the late 1880's. In 1874, former state representative Salvador T. Pons became the city's only black mayor in the nineteenth century and also served as the city's clerk until 1880. During Reconstruction, freedmen were elected to the city council and the Escambia County commission. They also held other offices such as tax collector, justice of the peace, and superintendent of schools. The majority of Pensacola's black politicians were not professionals.

⁴²Pensacola *Observer*, 22 October 1868; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 172; Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Black Public Officials: 1867-1924* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 116.

⁴³Pensacola *Observer*, 15, 29 December 1868; Florida Senate, *A Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the State of Florida at the Second Session of the Legislature Begun and Held at the Capitol in the City of Tallahassee. January 5th A.D. 1869* (Tallahassee, 1869), 16.

⁴⁴McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 583-587.

Most found work as a laborer or a tradesman such as Richard Gagnet (Escambia County commissioner and tax assessor between 1873 and 1876) who was a tailor and John Pons (Escambia County commissioner and Pensacola councilman between 1868 and 1870) who worked as a barber.⁴⁵

Pensacola also elected several black politicians to the Florida legislature. Between 1868 and 1877, four freedmen served terms, Salvador T. Pons, Zebulon Elijah, Charles Rouse, and John Sunday, Jr. These men had careers that varied from day laborer to merchant and earned respect from some of the whites. Stephen Mallory commented that Salvador Pons was an “honest and fit representative of Escambia County.” Of the four legislators, none had any education outside of freedmen’s schools and apprentice training. With representation in state and local politics, Pensacola’s black community had a voice in their government.⁴⁶

The military presence was only one reason for Pensacola’s somewhat peaceful reconstruction. West Florida’s timber industry was another factor. Other areas of the state including Tallahassee had soldiers and still experienced more violence and intimidation than Pensacola. The difference between Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties and the rest of Florida was that longleaf pine forests covered one area and plantations dominated the other. Pensacola benefitted immensely from a national and international lumber trade. The city’s port provided companies with a huge outlet for shipping their product almost anywhere in the Atlantic and Gulf. With much of the South devastated by the Civil War, the demand for good timber and turpentine never ceased. Between the seemingly infinite source of trees and a steady market, West Florida’s lumber mills functioned year round providing whites and blacks alike with jobs. The rest of the state was not as fortunate because of a low demand for staple crops. Freedmen that were former slaves on plantations often returned when their quest for prosperity failed. Planters frequently used the sharecropping and crop lien systems to keep blacks in peonage. After several seasons, sharecroppers were heavily indebted to the plantation owner and could not legally abandon their obligations. Because of the flourishing lumber trade, West Florida avoided the same fate of the rural counties and had a productive labor force that eased the trials of

⁴⁵Brown, *Florida’s Black Public Officials*, 157-159, 91, 116.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 145-148, 116, 130.

Reconstruction.⁴⁷

As a port community, Pensacola heavily promoted the timber industry, and the city benefitted in several ways from the growing amount of customers. States along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts required fresh lumber for the construction of buildings or ships. Textile mills still needed cotton, but the Union blockade during the Civil War ruined much of the international trade. Because of a lack of railroads, Pensacola relied on ships to transport lumber and advertised the city's deep water port that provided easy access to large vessels. Local officials wanted the port to boom with merchant traffic and hoped that Pensacola would become known as the "Liverpool of the South." With the lumber companies bringing in more ships, commerce and other industries would find it profitable to operate out of the city.⁴⁸

West Florida's lumber mills were positioned throughout Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. The companies used the city mainly as a distribution point. After the Civil War, sawmills went up in Molino (located twenty miles north of Pensacola), Millview, Milton, and Bagdad. To transport timber, the mills utilized five local streams (Perdido, Escambia, Blackwater, Yellowwater, and Choctawhatchie), and they floated logs to various points along the bay. Not every sawmill relied on this method. In 1868, the Perdido Lumber Company began construction of a small railroad for the sole purpose of moving timber to Pensacola Bay. The completion of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad in 1874 led to an increase in the construction of lumber mills in Millview. Previously, companies relied on the streams to transport timber.⁴⁹

The largest local producer of freshly cut timber in 1868 was the Pensacola Lumber Company which owned mills in Molino. The business boasted that it could cut 60,000 feet of lumber daily and had offices in Boston and New York. Along with a broad domestic market, the company took foreign orders. Because of its size, the Pensacola Lumber Company was more than just a sawmill but a thriving town that supported its 400 employees. The residents lived in

⁴⁷Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 136-138; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 106-108; W.D. Chipley, *Pensacola: The Naples of America* (Pensacola: Publisher Unknown, 1877, Reprint, 1962, Pfeiffer Printing Co.), 20.

⁴⁸Pensacola *Observer*, 6 October 1868.

⁴⁹Pensacola *Observer*, 6 October 1868; Jeffrey A. Drobney, *Lumbermen and Log Sawyers: Life, Labor, and Culture in the North Florida Timber Industry, 1830-1930* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 28-29; Dudley Sady Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1965), 109-110.

Molino and depended on the managers for food and other essential items. By 1869, the owners deemed it necessary to have their own justice of the peace and applied to Gov. Harrison Reed to appoint one. While the Pensacola Lumber Company dominated the West Florida timber market, it was not the only sawmill. The industry had flourished before the Civil War, and the conflict caused many owners to abandon their companies. After the war, some reclaimed their mills and resumed production while new entrepreneurs took over the unclaimed facilities. In Blackwater, Simpson and Company dated back to 1820 and the founder's son ran its two mills when the war ended. However, the Escambia Mill, which was built in the 1850's, changed hands several times between 1865 and 1870.⁵⁰

The construction of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad provided early incentive for lumber companies to start building near Millview. One of the first sawmills there was built in 1868 and boasted a production capacity of 35,000 feet per day. As the railroad grew nearer to completion, other companies located in the area. Between 1868 and 1874, West Florida witnessed a shift in the positions of its sawmills. Transporting lumber to Pensacola by rail offered more advantages than floating it down streams. Despite the modernization, the Pensacola Lumber Company continued to function out of Molino and did not build new facilities at Millview.⁵¹

Working at sawmills provided freedmen and white laborers with daily wages and a constant flow of cash. Unlike sharecropping, workers could avoid debt and had money to spend which boosted Pensacola's economy, and they avoided the annual cycle of harvesting too little and having to rely on the landlord to finance the next year's crop. However, some of the labor was very dirty and hazardous. Late nineteenth century lumber mills generally used circular saws to cut timber sometimes resulting in lost appendages. Manufacturing turpentine posed fewer hazards but appealed only to the most desperate workers. To properly harvest resin from trees, a laborer cut small boxes at the base of the stump that allowed sap to drip. After several months,

⁵⁰Pensacola *Observer*, 6 October 1868; J.J. Maguire and Thomas A. Paine to Harrison Reed, 12 July 1869, Molino, Governor Harrison Reed Papers: Appointments and Resignations of Escambia County 1868-1872, Florida State Archives, R.A. Gray Building, Tallahassee, Florida, RG 101/S.577, Box 2, Fn. 2; Benjamin Robinson, *Historical Sketch of Pensacola* (Pensacola: Advance Gazette, 1882), 59-61, 63.

⁵¹Robinson, *Historical Sketch of Pensacola*, 59-61.

these boxes filled to the brim and “gummers” scooped up the contents. Gumming was the messiest job in the turpentine industry, because workers got covered in the very sticky resin. While most of Pensacola’s mills manufactured naval stores such as masts and planking, very few produced turpentine. Most laborers worked either in the forests cutting and moving timber or in the sawmills producing lumber.⁵²

The prosperous timber industry in West Florida provided steady employment that prevented constant poverty and indebtedness. With a wage labor system, workers could purchase goods at company stores or from businesses in cities. Between 1865 and 1870, the demand for fresh timber continued and West Florida’s economy grew. New mills were built and abandoned ones were reopened as the market increased. As long as other states and countries purchased lumber, Pensacola had a constant stream of ships and money entering the city. However, the following decade ushered in several changes to the economy and labor.

Without its port, Pensacola would have been an isolated city after the Civil War. Retreating Confederates destroyed the Alabama-Florida Railroad in 1862 leaving the city disconnected from the rest of the South. During the first years of Reconstruction, the line still remained a path of wooden ties overgrown by weeds and lacking iron rails. Despite the absence of a railroad, West Florida residents were able to travel to Southern cities by ship and then by train. In a time when people and freight began to move across the country with previously unheard of rapidity, a slow voyage along the Gulf Coast left Pensacola’s citizens and commerce at a disadvantage. The city needed to rebuild the Alabama-Florida Railroad and create lines that linked with Tallahassee and Mobile. Until 1868, the only ways to reach Pensacola were by roads and ships.⁵³

During the first year of the Civil War, the Alabama-Florida Railroad acted as Pensacola’s lifeline with the Confederacy. Gen. Braxton Bragg relied on it to bring supplies and reinforcements to his lines during the siege against the Union forces at Fort Pickens. To effectively cut off Pensacola, the South destroyed the line in 1862. Removing the rails worked, and the Union did not progress past the city limits. After the conflict, the city was still

⁵²Drobney, *Lumbermen and Log Sawyers*, 156-159.

⁵³*New York Times*, 5 August 1865; Johnson, “The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900,” 109.

disconnected from the rest of the South. The line ended at Pollard, Alabama but connected with another that expanded to Montgomery and Mobile. A connection to the latter city contributed little, because Mobile was another port city just fifty miles west of Pensacola. However, the link to Montgomery provided connections to the entire South and a direct route to Chicago. With a booming lumber industry, Pensacola required the rebuilding of the Alabama-Florida Railroad to ensure economic prosperity and to give its residents access to the Great Lake states and the West.⁵⁴

In July, 1868 the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad Company took over the project of rebuilding the city's connection to the rest of the country. The Florida legislature passed an act establishing its legitimacy and allotted the company \$300,000 in capital stock that could be increased to \$700,000 if necessary. The act further stated that investors could purchase stock for \$100 per share. Once people bought \$100,000 worth of stock, the company could purchase real estate and other property. Investors quickly purchased the minimal amount of stock, because the company was ready to begin construction in October. The legislature put pressure on the builders to complete the task by giving them just two years to finish. This was not an unreasonable amount of time, since the railroad was only fifty miles long and already had an established route.⁵⁵

Activity in Pensacola increased on October 12, 1868, as two ships arrived carrying the first shipment of iron. A week later on October 19, construction crews laid the first rails of the newly named Pensacola and Louisville Railroad. The city celebrated the reconstruction of their link to the North with ceremonies, speeches, and processions. At the construction site, a large steam locomotive with "Progress" and "Pensacola & Louisville Railroad" painted on the sides graced the scene, and in the city local officials such as W.W.J. Kelly made several speeches attended by an audience composed mostly of freedmen and other Republicans. At the time, the Presidential election of 1868 was approaching, and politicians did not waste opportunities to

⁵⁴Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 113-114; Chipley, *Pensacola: The Naples of America*, 21.

⁵⁵*Pensacola Observer*, 19 October 1868.

promote their cause.⁵⁶

Chicago eagerly awaited the railroad's completion, because the line would provide a closer connection to a Gulf port. Pensacola was situated directly south of Chicago, and the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad provided the shortest distance. With a close link to a large city, Pensacola's port could expect more traffic and freight. While most of Chicago's goods went to the East and West, some were destined for Caribbean markets, and ships would pick them up at Pensacola.⁵⁷ Construction crews completed the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad in 1869. Residents no longer had to rely on ships or roads to travel unless their destination was in Florida. With the rebuilding of the former Alabama-Florida Railroad, Pensacola was once again connected with the rest of the nation and one step closer to its condition before the Civil War.⁵⁸

Along with rebuilding Pensacola's major line, developers decided to link the city with the lumber community of Millview. Unlike the owners of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, the planners had no intention of creating a connection with a metropolitan area. Instead, they wanted to provide a swift means of transportation to Pensacola Bay for the area's sawmills. The line itself would not extend further than ten miles and would provide a link to Perdido Bay. The idea for the project was not new. It was discussed as far back as 1849. As with the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, the Florida legislature approved the company charter and gave it corporation status for twenty years, because "considerable progress" had been made to "facilitate the enterprise." The legislature also allotted \$100,000 of stock to the new Pensacola and Perdido Railroad Company.⁵⁹

Because Pensacola did not depend on the new railroad for commerce and transportation, construction proceeded very slowly. To oversee the company, the initial stockholders established a board of directors that met weekly and appointed executives, including a president, secretary, and treasurer. The railroad's president, Richard L. Campbell, assumed his position on September

⁵⁶Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 113; *Pensacola Observer*, 19 October 1868.

⁵⁷*Pensacola Observer*, 12 November 1868.

⁵⁸Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 114.

⁵⁹*Pensacola Observer*, 10 October 1868.

9, 1868, and accepted the task of purchasing iron rails and engines and other materials. The company hired engineer William H. Davison, originally from Boston with a degree in civil engineering from Harvard University to supervise construction.⁶⁰

Rain and a labor shortage impeded construction of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad. Davison frequently commented on how storms prevented any work on certain days and that he often had few or no workers. The engineer's daily routine consisted of working mornings in the office and laying track in the afternoon. When he had hired hands, they were usually freedmen, and Davison had harsh views of African Americans. He generally referred to them as "darkies" and viewed their training as "breaking them in." The engineer's racism was probably not the cause of the labor shortage, because most whites in the late nineteenth century saw blacks as inferior. The Pensacola and Perdido Railroad may not have had high enough wages to compete with the lumber mills.⁶¹

When compared to the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, construction of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad proceeded at a snail's pace. By 1870, crews had not come close to completing the ten mile line, and the company had to start mortgaging property to continue work. Whether or not the railroad was finished did not seriously affect West Florida's economy. Lumber mills could still easily transport timber to Pensacola Bay and the city stood to gain little. The Pensacola and Perdido Railroad was more of an extravagance designed to promote the growth of Millview which the company owned. The line offered Escambia County some benefits such as employment of local residents and incentive for new sawmills to build in West Florida. However, the railroad did not make a major contribution to the reconstruction of Pensacola, because it only added to an already established element of the city's economy.⁶²

With the completion of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, the city had a stronger

⁶⁰Pensacola and Perdido Railroad Company, "Minute Book of Directors and Stockholders Meetings: 1868-1895, Volume 49," McLaughlin Family Papers, John C. Pace Library Special Collections, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida, 3-8; William H. Davison, "Quarantine Station, Pensacola," P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, George A. Smathers Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 1.

⁶¹William H. Davison, *Diary*, 4 September 1868, 7 October 1868, 24 February 1868.

⁶²Pensacola and Perdido Railroad, "Minute Book of Directors and Stockholders Meetings," 12; Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 110.

connection with Alabama than Florida. Pensacola's commerce and residents could move about the Heart of Dixie more easily than their home state. Since 1857, the Florida legislature had evaluated building a railroad starting at Chattahoochee and ending in Mobile. This proposed line would provide a connection for Pensacola and Tallahassee and would link all of North Florida (including Jacksonville) with the Panhandle. Without a railroad, the only way to travel to the state capital was by taking a ship around the Florida Coast to St. Marks and then traveling twenty-five miles north by train. An overland journey proved too difficult with the lack of civilization and the numerous streams and rivers to cross. In January, 1869 the Florida legislature made the railroad a priority, because "it is essential to the unity, prosperity, and development of the state." Before the Civil War, the state sponsored a survey to establish a route and secured the necessary land grants. The legislature estimated the railroad's distance at 154 miles and expenses not to exceed \$2,500,000. All that the project needed was a company to start construction and some "friendly legislation."⁶³

Without a major railroad contact between Pensacola Bay and Marianna (the western most city connected to Tallahassee by rail) was limited. The Panhandle counties had few residents and relied mostly on the plantation system. In December 1868 the state established a mail line between the two cities. This route allowed a post rider to carry correspondence to the remote areas of North Florida. It did not make up for the lack of a railroad, but it connected Pensacola with other areas of the state.⁶⁴

A flourishing lumber trade and the construction of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad linked Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties more closely with Alabama than Florida. Pensacola's economy had closer ties with the neighboring state and could benefit if Florida ceded the Panhandle to Alabama. City residents realized that Montgomery could provide stronger support to the railroad system, and many supported the annexation. Pensacola had grown tired of waiting for Tallahassee to push construction of a line that stretched across the northern part of the state. As long as the port was in Florida, Alabama would not invest resources, because Pensacola's

⁶³Florida Senate, *A Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate*, 11; William H. Davison, *Diary*, 12 October 1868.

⁶⁴*Pensacola Observer*, 1 December 1868.

taxes did not go to the Heart of Dixie. The city's government and commerce knew that being in Florida stifled their prosperity, and they were eager to switch their loyalty from Tallahassee to Montgomery.⁶⁵

In December 1868 Alabama Governor William H. Smith initiated negotiations with Florida to annex the Panhandle and appointed a three man commission to visit Tallahassee. The three, J.L. Pennington, Charles A. Miller, and Andrew J. Walker, were authorized to seek the acquisition of all of West Florida past the Apalachicola River. Florida Governor Harrison Reed was favorable towards annexation and allowed J.L. Pennington to address the legislature before it decided on whether to appoint delegates. The Florida House voted in favor of ceding the Panhandle but stated that its decision was subject to the approval of the state's citizens and the United States Congress. The Alabama commission was ecstatic over these developments and informed Gov. Smith about their impending success.⁶⁶

In Pensacola, both conservatives and radicals celebrated the legislature's decision. An editorial in the pro Democratic *West Florida Commercial* stated that if "Alabama should fail in her wish of obtaining what is rightfully, naturally, geographically, and by the unanimous wish of all West Floridians hers alone, then we must believe that all hopes must end." In the Republican dominated *Pensacola Observer*, editors stressed the "necessity" of "opening the port of Pensacola to the interior." When facing issues of economic prosperity, both political factions united to do what they thought was best for West Florida.⁶⁷

For five months, the Alabama commission negotiated with Gov. Reed's appointed delegates, William J. Purman, E.C. Dyke, and N.C. Moragne. In May 1869, they reached a deal acceptable to both states and submitted it to the two legislatures. The proposed agreement ceded West Florida to Alabama in exchange for \$1,000,000 in bonds at eight percent interest that could be redeemed in thirty years. The rest of the deal involved the transition of governments, and Florida demanded that the current judges retain their offices until their terms expired and that the

⁶⁵*Pensacola Observer*, 24 December 1868; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207.

⁶⁶Hugh C. Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35 (1957), 221-222.

⁶⁷*West Florida Commercial*, 12 January 1869; *Pensacola Observer*, 24 December 1868.

annexed counties retain tax money reserved for internal improvements. Along with the court officers, Gov. Reed's delegation insisted that the Panhandle receive the same number of seats in the Alabama legislature as they had in Florida and that Montgomery build a railroad from Pensacola to Quincy (located twenty miles west of Tallahassee). Before the agreement became official, the U.S. Congress and a majority of West Florida residents had to approve it.⁶⁸

Florida had the advantage during the negotiations and the Alabama commission had to agree to a stiff price. In May, 1869 Gov. Reed seemed willing to cede part of his state, but Gov. Smith and several legislators questioned the deal. They felt that the price was too high despite gaining another deep water port and numerous waterways leading to the Gulf. Their concerns caused delays in finalizing the annexation, and these delays proved fatal to the agreement. In West Florida, the population overwhelmingly supported the deal with 1,162 votes in favor and 661 opposed. By June 1869 Gov. Reed and the rest of Florida's population began to have misgivings about annexation. The governor decided that his state did not want to sacrifice one fifth of its land and believed that ceding such a large area violated the Florida Constitution. He realized that the main issue was the lack of a railroad between Tallahassee and Pensacola, and he called for a special session that month to discuss building a line. With the government finally taking action, West Florida residents let the matter fade, and the proposed annexation was never approved.⁶⁹

Harrison Reed's actions appeased the dissatisfied residents of Pensacola, but the governor had to make the railroad a reality. As the years passed, no company took control of the project and West Florida remained cut off from the rest of the state. The annexation issue returned in 1873 after the area's citizens grew frustrated waiting for their railroad. Lacking a connection with the state capital and the East Coast caused dismay for Pensacola, because the city continued to reside in a state that did not take an interest in its prosperity or contributions. With a railroad to Montgomery, West Floridians had stronger ties both economically and

⁶⁸Commissioners on the Part of the State of Florida and Commissioners on the Part of the State of Alabama, "An Agreement," *Documents Accompanying the Governor's Annual Message, 1869*, (Tallahassee, 1869), 3-7.

⁶⁹Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," 224-226; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207-208.

socially with Alabama.⁷⁰

Between 1865 and 1870, Pensacola took giant strides in Reconstruction. The city changed for the better and was a relatively safe place for freedmen to make homes and start careers. Much of Pensacola's progress stemmed from two sources, the military and the timber industry. These two factors provided employment, order, and prosperity at a time when most of the South endured lawlessness and depression. Residents had jobs, and freedmen were not victims of organized violence. While Pensacola embraced Reconstruction quicker than other areas, the city faced its share of trials during the transition. The Freedmen's Bureau frequently had to deal with unfair treatment of blacks, and cases of racial violence occasionally occurred. However without a flourishing economy and strong military presence, Pensacola would likely have endured hardships similar to those of the rural counties. As 1870 arrived, the city faced both a brighter future and new challenges.

⁷⁰Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207.

CHAPTER 4
RENEWING PROSPERITY WITH A QUESTIONABLE FUTURE:
PENSACOLA BETWEEN 1870 AND 1877

Between 1870 and the end of Reconstruction in 1877, Pensacola attempted to strengthen its economy and to make itself the premier city of Florida. It failed in both goals. The panic of 1873 that afflicted the entire nation hindered Pensacola's economic progress, and the lack of a railroad connection to the Atlantic Coast combined with recurring yellow fever epidemics made the city unattractive to tourists. Despite the setbacks, Pensacola had already made excellent progress during Reconstruction. The freedmen had steady employment and did not live in constant fear of organized violence, and the Republicans continued to control local offices. During this seven year period, Pensacola continued to have stronger links with Alabama than with Florida. Governor Harrison Reed did not succeed in getting a company to connect West Florida with the rest of the state, and annexation returned again to the front of Pensacola's politics. Public health also became more of a problem because of the struggling tourist industry. Yellow fever epidemics began to occur more frequently, and efforts to prevent the disease were largely ineffective. However, Pensacola was better prepared for the Gilded Age than much of the South because of the city's strong economy and the efforts to make it a haven for tourists.

While Pensacola developed independently from the rest of Florida, the state had not changed a great deal since 1865. The economy was in poor condition, because the former planter class had lost their lands and the freedmen found themselves hopelessly in debt with the sharecropping system. During the first years of Reconstruction, Florida had not built any new railroads with the exception of the Pensacola and Louisville line. The state's other two rail systems originated in Jacksonville and connected Tallahassee, Fernandina, Lake City, Gainesville, and Cedar Key. South and Central Florida still remained an undeveloped frontier,

but settlements existed at Tampa, Fort Pierce, and Key West. The Homestead Act of 1866, designed mainly to provide land to freedmen, promoted the peninsula's growth. The act appealed mostly to freedmen who could no longer stand North Florida's lawlessness and poor economy. In the late 1860's, homesteaders gradually started to settle Central Florida and made their living through selling wild cattle. Cuba lacked enough beef to feed its population and relied on Florida to make up the difference. Homesteaders drove cattle to places such as Tampa and Punta Rassa and returned with large profits. While these men living on the frontier started developing the peninsula, Florida's greater population resided between Jacksonville and Marianna.¹

State politics were volatile. The legislature had turned against Harrison Reed and impeached him three times using false charges. The governor lacked the support of the Radicals and Conservative Democrats making him unpopular. In 1872, Reed's opponents succeeded in removing him from office with charges concerning his involvement with missing bonds from the Internal Improvement Fund used to pay off interest for Florida's two railroads. While these events caused major upheaval in Tallahassee, they barely affected Pensacola which largely remained out of Florida politics.²

With Harrison Reed removed from office, the state faced another gubernatorial election. Despite divisions, the Republicans maintained their grip on Florida politics. They nominated Ossian B. Hart who had remained loyal to the Union after Florida seceded in 1861 and had supported the Republican party after the war. During Presidential Reconstruction and state domination by ex-Confederates, he had no chance of holding public office, however his career started to rise after Congressional Reconstruction. In 1870, the Florida legislature appointed Hart to the U.S. Senate. This gave him fame and popularity with the state's Republicans, and they looked to him to lead the state's party. The Democrats nominated William D. Bloxham to run against the senator and hoped that they could reclaim Florida's government. In Pensacola, former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory endorsed the Democrat. With a vigorous grassroots campaign, Bloxham's supporters were confident of victory, but black leaders

¹Mark Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 308-309; Canter Brown, Jr., *Ossian Bingley Hart: Florida's Loyalist Reconstruction Governor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 1; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 136.

²Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 218-221; Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise*, 308-309.

such as Charles H. Pearce in Leon County garnered support for Hart. Several weeks passed after the election before the results were official, and Florida chose Ossian B. Hart as its next governor. Most Republican support came from North Florida counties, and Bloxham received most of his votes from West Florida. The gubernatorial campaign of 1872 was marked by little violence, and the Republicans earned a clean victory untainted with fraud.³

Along with choosing a new governor, Floridians cast their ballots in the Presidential contest and voted to give Ulysses S. Grant a second term. With the elections over, the nation returned to normal until September 1873 when a depression engulfed both the North and South. The financial panic was the result of over expansion of the nation's railroads. The crisis started with the inability of Jay Cooke and Company, a banking institution, to sell the bonds of the Northern Pacific Railroad. This incident caused a domino effect that ruined banks across America. In the South, agriculture suffered as prices of supplies rose and wages dropped. Farmers were helpless as their land values plummeted, and sharecroppers suddenly found themselves even more unable to pay their debts. The declining economy threatened West Florida's prosperity, because the timber industry relied on other regions to purchase lumber.⁴

Indeed, the Panic of 1873 struck a harsh blow to Pensacola's economy. The city suffered a sharp drop in the economy, and migrant workers, mostly from Canada, threatened the already perilous job security of local workers. Freedmen who feared losing their jobs attempted to drive out these seasonal employees and occasionally went on raids searching for them. Most Canadians found little work in the depressed timber industry. The mills suffered a lack of cash and began to lay off laborers causing local residents to search elsewhere for employment. Unlike the other counties in Florida that relied on agriculture, Pensacola's lumber trade quickly recovered. In 1874, people began moving to the city creating a housing shortage, and the harbor once again had large numbers of ships loading cargo. Prosperity had not yet returned to the city, but the area had improved considerably in comparison with the rest of the state.⁵

³Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 260-269; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 286.

⁴Foner, *Reconstruction*, 512-515.

⁵Lucius Ellsworth and Linda Ellsworth, *Pensacola: The Deep Water City* (Tulsa: Continental Heritage Press, 1982), 60-61; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 270, 272-273.

The panic caused more than just an economic depression. After four years, the Florida government still had not brought in a company to build a railroad between Pensacola and Tallahassee. With the city cut off from the rest of the state and no connection in sight, West Florida residents wanted to renew the annexation issue. In Alabama, Governor David P. Lewis agreed with them and believed that the area rightfully belonged to his state. He also felt that annexation could bring new prosperity to West Florida by giving vessels loaded with Caribbean imports a direct route to the Southern interior. Whether or not Gov. Lewis was right about improving the region's economy, he did not take into account that Pensacola already had a connection with the South's interior. Making West Florida part of Alabama would not change the city's status as a port. What Pensacola needed most to increase its prosperity was a railroad to Tallahassee. This would provide links to Jacksonville and other major cities along the East Coast.⁶

Gov. Hart agreed that West Florida belonged to Alabama, but his sickly condition prevented him from taking an active role in the process. However, he would allow annexation only if a majority of Florida voters supported it. Just as in 1869, the two states appointed delegations to discuss annexation, and the agreement was almost identical to the one passed four years earlier. For control of the Panhandle, Alabama would pay Florida \$1,000,000 in bonds that could later be redeemed with interest. Along with providing for the county governments, Montgomery also had to assume the area's debt. Gov. Lewis' challenge was not convincing Florida's government, but convincing her people.⁷

Attracting support for annexation in West Florida was not a problem, but convincing East Florida proved difficult. Gov. Lewis started working with William J. Purman and decided to grant some much needed financial support to Jacksonville's struggling newspaper, the *Triumph Weekly Union*. With a major paper supporting annexation, public support might sway in Montgomery's favor. To garner further support, Gov. Lewis made cash donations to Florida legislators and candidates to help their campaigns. A Pensacola delegation led by Colonel Blount conferred with Alabama's governor and established friendly connections in Jacksonville to

⁶Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," 228.

⁷Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 285-286; Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," 228-229.

enhance support.⁸

Despite the efforts to spread propaganda and to influence legislators, Alabama failed to annex the Panhandle. Floridians voted against ceding a large portion of their state even though they had little connection with it. The Panhandle offered several advantages to the state. Although Pensacola served Alabama more than its own state, the simple construction of a railroad could divert business and lumber to North Florida. Moreover, losing Pensacola would cost Florida a developed deep water port. While the state had Tampa Bay and the keys, these areas had minute populations and were anywhere from 100 to 250 miles from the nearest railroad. Constructing a line to Pensacola from Tallahassee involved a distance of 190 miles, but the connection would provide links with Marianna and the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad. Other Florida citizens did not want to cede the Panhandle simply as a matter of pride, because the area had been a part of the state and territory since the days of Hernando DeSoto. With annexation defeated a second time, the issue faded only to return as a suggestion in either state's legislature.⁹

In the meantime, after six years of construction crews finally completed the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad in 1874. In order to finish the line the company entered into an agreement with the firm of George W. Robinson which allowed Robinson to place twenty cars on the railroad in exchange for extending the line to Millview. In addition to finishing the project the firm had to allow the company use of its twenty cars in an emergency. The completion of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad linked the lumber companies at Millview with the port and ensured future development of the small community.¹⁰

Besides completing the railroad, Robinson bought several of Millview's lumber companies. He started his business venture by purchasing the McLane Mill which had a 35,000 feet per day capacity and employed thirty-one workers. In 1873, he built the New Mill which

⁸Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," 229-230.

⁹Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart*, 286-287; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207-208; Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," 231-232.

¹⁰Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 110; Pensacola and Perdido Railway Company, "Minute Book of Directors and Stockholders Meetings," 30-31.

produced 45,000 feet of lumber daily and had thirty-two employees. When construction ended on the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad in 1874, Robinson was planning to build his third mill that would produce more lumber than his other two combined with a daily production capacity of 100,000 feet and a crew of fifty workers. Between his mills and completing the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad, Robinson earned the reputation as the “king lumberman of West Florida.” Robinson was not the only lumber tycoon in Millview. In 1873, the Perdido Bay Lumber Company constructed a mill that dwarfed both of the king lumberman’s. Its facility produced up to 90,000 feet per day and employed eighty workers. With a railroad providing fast transportation to Pensacola, Millview continued to develop well after Reconstruction and into the Gilded Age with companies building new mills that produced more lumber and hired more employees.¹¹

Between 1865 and 1877, West Florida’s lumber mills frequently changed hands as businessmen sought after new opportunities. One of the largest changes in ownership involved the Pensacola Lumber Company purchased by Dana Sargent in 1875. Just like the previous owners, Sargent ran a successful business and frequently sent shipments exceeding 300,000 feet to cities such as Boston. With timber being a limited resource, the timber industry’s prosperity did not last. Eventually, the companies completely stripped West Florida of her longleaf pines, and the mills gradually went out of business. This was not uncommon, because other areas of the South rich in timber had the same problem. The loss of forests strongly influenced the federal government’s twentieth century conservation movement, and the resources of other states did not suffer the same fate.¹²

Between 1870 and 1877, Pensacola continued to have problems with public health. Although the area had not faced a yellow fever epidemic since 1867, city officials enforced sanitation and quarantine regulations. Pensacola’s first line of defense was a quarantine station at Deer Point located four miles from the port. This facility’s staff inspected every vessel’s crew and cargo for disease. Because of medical science’s ideas about yellow fever, station inspectors

¹¹Robinson, *Historical Sketch of Pensacola*, 59-61, 65.

¹²Deed for Pensacola Lumber Company, Dana Sargent Papers, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida; William J. Cronon, “Economic Gain and Environmental Loss: Lumber,” in *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 427.

searched for filth and eliminated it by fumigation with sulphurous acid gas. Until 1873, the quarantine station succeeded in keeping infected ships from docking at Pensacola's harbor.¹³

The arrival of the vessel, *Golden Dream*, during the summer of 1873 ended Pensacola's six year period without yellow fever. Although the disease did not appear on the mainland for two months after the infected ship's arrival, physicians attributed the illness to *Golden Dream*, because yellow fever ravaged the quarantine station while it was docked there. Once people in Pensacola were infected the disease spread rapidly. By the time of West Florida's first freeze, hundreds had contracted yellow fever and sixty-three had died. The epidemic was not limited to Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, because the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad transported the fever to Montgomery causing another outbreak. During the winter of 1873 and 1874, Pensacola's residents had a brief reprieve from the disease, but the next summer proved even more perilous.¹⁴

The 1874 epidemic struck Pensacola in August, but cases had been occurring at the quarantine station since May. Health officials believed that contaminated mail or laundry sent to the mainland started the outbreak, and they agreed that the disease arrived on the ship, *Virtuoso*. To fight the epidemic, physicians relied on sanitation and quarantines. They felt that these measures were effective, because cleaning the streets and removing open privies had eliminated cholera in New York City. Dr. J.R. Tryon commented that Pensacola had "very defective sanitary regulations" and poor drainage which contributed to the spread of yellow fever. Another local physician, George M. Sternberg, attributed the disease to a living organism and agreed with the germ theory that had gained strength in the 1870's, but he also agreed that filth harbored the illness. Once yellow fever had gained a foothold in Pensacola, health and military officials established quarantines. The Army and Navy assigned marines to guard a bridge preventing anyone from the city to enter Fort Barrancas, the barracks, and the Navy Yard. Montgomery also took precautions and prohibited the arrival of trains on the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad. While quarantines restricted the travel of Pensacola's residents, they did not keep them trapped

¹³George M. Sternberg, "Yellow Fever in Pensacola, Florida, in 1873, 1874, and 1875," *American Public Health Association Report* 11 (1875): 470-471; William H. Davison, "Quarantine Station, Pensacola," P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 9-11.

¹⁴Sternberg, "Yellow Fever in 1873, 1874, and 1875," 470-471.

in a disease infested city. After the first cases were reported, any citizen who had the means fled the area and took up residence in northern Escambia County and southern Alabama.¹⁵

The military quarantines worked until the end of September when soldiers reported four cases of yellow fever. Just as in 1867, the Army transferred its personnel to Fort Pickens and awaited cold weather. The physicians on Santa Rosa Island took extreme precautions and forbade contact with the mainland with the exception of a small boat to retrieve the mail which was fumigated before distribution. Fort Pickens' position protected the Union soldiers from yellow fever just as it had defended them from the Confederacy thirteen years earlier. During their stay on the island, not one case was reported.¹⁶

The epidemic of 1874 claimed 118 victims almost doubling the previous year's total. Once the disease ceased, residents gradually returned and business went back to normal. For a city that relied on the timber industry, yellow fever did not severely hinder the economy, because sawmills were outside of Pensacola. However, the quarantine station delayed shipping and prevented prompt deliveries. While epidemics did not cause sharp declines in business, they still hurt the city's economy by derailing the budding tourist industry.¹⁷

During the late nineteenth century, physicians prescribed warm and humid climates for patients suffering from consumption (tuberculosis). As a city along the Gulf Coast, Pensacola could serve as a haven for invalids and this meant the construction of new hotels and health resorts along with an increase in commerce. However, yellow fever epidemics restricted the city's tourist season to the winter months, because health seekers were not going to visit a town that posed further threats to their already serious condition.¹⁸

The arrival of W.D. Chipley in 1876 marked a turning point in Pensacola's

¹⁵J.R. Tryon, "Epidemic of Yellow Fever at the Navy Yard, Pensacola, Fla., during the Summer and Fall of 1874," *Sanitary and Medical Report, U.S. Navy, 1873-1874* (Washington, 1875): 452; Sternberg, "Yellow Fever in 1873, 1874, and 1875," 471-472.

¹⁶Sternberg, "Yellow Fever in 1873, 1874, and 1875," 474-475.

¹⁷Sternberg, "Yellow Fever in 1873, 1874, and 1875," 471; Chipley, *Pensacola: The Naples of America*, 8-9.

¹⁸Sheila M. Rothman, *Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 21-22.

Reconstruction. Although the city had prospered, improvements such as reforms to the railroads to attract the shipment of other goods besides lumber were needed. Chipley's first job in West Florida was managing the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, and the line had numerous problems. Most involved the partner lines that connected at Pollard and went to Montgomery and Mobile. The companies' high rates made shipping difficult. To solve the problem, Chipley merged his company with the larger Louisville and Nashville Railroad. By joining this larger line, he made shipping to Pensacola simpler and cheaper which brought more cargo through the port.¹⁹

Besides making Pensacola's railroad more efficient, Chipley made serious efforts to attract tourists. In 1877, he wrote *Pensacola: The Naples of America* which detailed the city's better qualities and argued that it was the ideal place for vacations and health. To illustrate the area's attractiveness, Chipley pointed out the warm climate, opportunities for fishing, and beautiful landscapes. He also highlighted Pensacola's shorter distance to New York City and Chicago when compared with the distance to Jacksonville, as well as the booming timber industry. While Chipley made an effort to promote the city, he failed to make tourism one of Pensacola's major industries. Between recurring yellow fever outbreaks and the rapid development of Florida's East Coast, a port city dependent on sawmills had little chance to compete against large resort communities designed especially for tourists. Despite his one failure, Chipley brought a new prosperity to Pensacola that strengthened and diversified its economy.²⁰

While West Florida steadily improved during the 1870's, the area still demanded a railroad to Tallahassee and Jacksonville. With this connection, Pensacola could finally maximize its potential for industry and commerce. In 1875, the Florida legislature approved of the West Florida and Mobile Railroad Company and granted it \$2,100,000 of capital. The executives envisioned great gains from this line. Not only would it connect all of Florida, it would continue through to New Orleans and Texas. While the company planned a massive project, they never

¹⁹Ellsworth and Ellsworth, *Pensacola: The Deep Water City*, 62-63.

²⁰Chipley, *Pensacola: The Naples of America*, 4,8-11,20; Ellsworth and Ellsworth, *Pensacola: The Deep Water City*, 62-63; Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise*, 37-38.

laid any track. By 1877, construction had not begun and the West Florida and Mobile Railroad Company either went bankrupt or was taken over by another firm. The Panhandle did not receive its highly coveted connection until 1883 after the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad Company completed construction linking West Florida with the rest of the state.²¹

The end of Reconstruction came after the Presidential election of 1876 when Republican Rutherford B. Hayes defeated the Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden. In three Southern states including Florida, the vote totals were too close to declare a winner, and Congress created an electoral commission composed of fifteen members. Each party had equal representation and the last member was agreed upon by both Republicans and Democrats. The commission selected Justice David Davis as the supposedly neutral member, but his home state of Illinois elected him as senator. With Davis out of the Supreme Court, he could no longer serve on the commission, and the Democrats expressed dissatisfaction that resulted in further indecision. To prevent the election of Hayes, Tilden's supporters threatened to walk out of Congress to halt the final counting of the electoral college votes. With Grant's second term about to end, the nation needed a President elect to succeed him. In February 1877, both parties reached an agreement that gave Hayes the Presidency but forced him to appoint at least one Democrat to the cabinet and remove the occupying troops from the South. While the Compromise of 1877 ended Reconstruction, the South had not yet come close to treating blacks with fairness, and the post war state governments did not have enough support to stand against ex-Confederates.²²

The election of 1876 caused little controversy in Pensacola. The polls opened and closed without violent incident, and white citizens believed that Tilden had won after election day. Engineer William H. Davison was happy after casting his vote for the Democrat, but the local Republicans were discouraged with the news. As the news arrived, residents gathered around the telegraph office and eagerly awaited reports. After several months, the Republicans became more hopeful and realized that their candidate had won. In the Compromise of 1877, Pensacola changed very little, because the troop removal did not include coastal fortifications or the closing

²¹West Florida and Mobile Rail Road Company, *Its Route, Connections, and Resources*, (New York: J.W. Pratt, Steam Book and Job Printing, 1875), 5, 3-4; Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 124-126.

²²Foner, *Reconstruction*, 579-581.

of the Navy Yard. Unlike other areas of the South, Escambia County continued to have a strong military presence, however Florida's government shifted back to the Democrats casting a grey shadow over what the area had accomplished since the end of the Civil War.²³

²³Davison, "Quarantine Station, Pensacola," 63-64; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 341-342.

CONCLUSION

Between 1861 and 1877, Pensacola went from Florida's most populous city to almost becoming a part of Alabama. From the moment that First Lieutenant Adam Slemmer withdrew his soldiers from Fort Barrancas, the city started on a course of events that nearly led to its ruin. By the end of the Civil War, Pensacola had turned into an abandoned, dilapidated town with almost no residents. The city's port and sawmills fell into a state of neglect, and the Alabama-Florida Railroad was in ruins. However, one of Pensacola's constants remained, the military. The continuous Army and Navy presence ensured peace and brought employment to a destitute economy. The city received further aid from the Freedmen's Bureau which gave free blacks aid and education and enforced the law. While the military and the bureau prevented uncontrolled violence against former slaves and Republicans, they did not restore Pensacola to its pre-war prosperity. The city's economy only recovered with the growth of the timber industry and the rebuilding of the Alabama-Florida Railroad. These two elements kept people employed and maintained a steady stream of commerce.

During the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, Pensacola became a forsaken town that regained its commercial importance. In 1862 the Confederates abandoned it in favor of strengthening their armies in Tennessee, and in 1863 the Union withdrew from the city because it offered little strategic value. Even as Pensacola regained its importance after the war, it was disconnected from the rest of Florida. Only the building of the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad in 1883 made the city an integral part of the state.

While Pensacola faced an easier transition to the post-war South when compared with much of the state, it endured hardships. The worst of these was yellow fever. Recurring

epidemics caused hundreds of deaths and frequently forced the population to abandon the city. Racial and political tension also proved troublesome as Democrats learned to accept former slaves as citizens and living under Republican rule. Unlike other Southern regions, these problems did not become rampant because of the military and growing economy.

The crucial elements in Pensacola's Reconstruction were the military and the timber industry. The bay's coastal fortifications and the Navy Yard required continuous garrisons and personnel that could be used to put down uprisings and to suppress lawlessness. During the war, the Army had the opportunity to make Pensacola one of the first Confederate cities that embraced emancipation, but strategy intervened causing the Union to fall back to its installations. Until 1866, the timber industry was just a pre-war memory, but the need for lumber and a seemingly infinite source of trees revitalized it. With companies paying wages instead of using the sharecropping system, local residents earned real money keeping the area's economy healthy. Between these two elements, Pensacola avoided the lawlessness and depression endured by so many other Southern cities.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Matthew Brackett was born in 1981 at Tallahassee. Two years later he and his family moved to Chicago and returned to Florida's capital city in 1987. After years of seeing Seminole tradition dominate at Doak Campbell Stadium, Matt Brackett entered Florida State University as an undergraduate in 2001 after completing his Associate of Arts at Tallahassee Community College. In 2003, he completed his Bachelor of Arts in history earning Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Later that same year, he started his graduate studies at Florida State and plans to earn a Ph.D.