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A. Curtis Wilgus

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THE SECESSION MOVEMENT IN
FLORIDA, 1850-1861

By DOROTHY DODD

PART II

FROM the very inception of the Republican party Florida radicals had watched its progress with alarm. In his message to the legislature, November 14, 1854, Governor Broome had recounted the grievances of the South, not the least of which was the existence in non-slaveholding states of "fanatical organizations" that had elected a House of Representatives "purely and wickedly sectional in its character" on a platform of restoration of the Missouri Compromise line, repeal of the Fugitive Slave act, and admission of no more slave states into the Union. "In view of all this," he had said, "the South is calm and unmoved. She is prepared to abide by the Union, made by the Constitution, with equal rights under it. Beyond this, she will be forced to act upon the sentiment, 'A union of the South for the protection of the South.'"⁵⁴ The possibility of Fremont's election in 1856 had been the occasion for threats of secession. Broome had seen in his defeat only a respite from Republican ascendancy. The South "should let fanaticism know that she has made her last submission to unconstitutional exactions," he had told the legislature in his message of November 24. "Her watchword should be read of all men, 'Equality in the Union, or independence out of it.'"⁵⁵ And now, in his message of November 22, 1858, Governor Perry, in view of "the

⁵⁴ Florida House *Journal*, 1854, 29-30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1856, 36.

largely increasing strength and influence of the abolition element," recommended a thorough reorganization of the state militia. "He would be a false sentinel," Perry said, "who, under the present aspect of affairs, would cry peace."⁵⁶ Perry repeated this recommendation the next year, and excitement incident to the John Brown raid secured passage of a measure such as he desired.

Indeed, the John Brown episode and publication of Helper's *Impeding Crisis of the South* with the sanction of northern congressmen gave new force to enunciation of political doctrines that had been common enough during the last ten years. Governor Perry had also recommended in his 1859 message that Florida declare herself unmistakably in favor of withdrawal from the Union in the contingency of Republican success in the approaching presidential election.⁵⁷ Acting upon this advice, the legislature adopted resolutions authorizing the governor, in the event of the election of a Republican president, to cooperate with any or all of the slaveholding states for the maintenance of their rights, and to convene the legislature in extraordinary session, should the necessity occur.⁵⁸ Opposition to these resolutions was so weak as to have been negligible.

During the spring of 1860 reorganization of the militia vied with politics for space in Florida papers. Volunteer companies were organized, young ladies presented them with flags sewed by their own fair hands, and elections of militia officers were held in every community. At the same time county meetings passed resolutions condemning, explicitly or implicitly, Stephen A. Douglas and his squatter

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1858, 27.

⁵⁷ Florida Senate *Journal*, 1859, 35-36.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

sovereignty "heresy." There is reason to believe that Douglas had been the choice of the state until his Freeport debate with Lincoln, but now, of the entire Florida press, only the Jacksonville *Republican* favored his nomination.⁵⁹ The Democratic convention which met in Tallahassee, April 9, to appoint delegates to the Charleston convention adopted resolutions condemning the Douglas doctrine of slavery in the territories, but expressed no preference for candidates.⁶⁰ When the Florida delegation withdrew from the convention, the action met with general approbation at home. Indeed, some radicals hailed the split in the party as the signal for immediate secession. A Democratic meeting in Nassau county, presided over by former Governor Broome, unanimously called upon the state convention to send delegates to the Richmond convention, "unless indeed it should be deemed advisable for the State of Florida, immediately to dissolve her connection with the present confederacy, without waiting for the action of her sister States of the South."⁶¹ And the editor of the Fernandina *East Floridian*, seeing dismemberment of the Union as only a matter of time, believed that "the South is as well prepared for that grave issue now,⁶² as she will be one or ten years hence." One fire-eater advertised for recruits for a cavalry company whose services would be offered to the first southern state to secede from "a Union which exists only in name," while the Sumter county grand jury declared in its presentment that the questions of social progress which underlay the political strife between North and South would have

⁵⁹ Fernandina *East Floridian*, Feb. 16, 1860.

⁶⁰ Tallahassee *Floridian*, April 14, 1860. Delegates to the convention were T. J. Eppes, B. F. Wardlaw, John Milton, C. E. Dyke, James B. Owens and G. L. Bowne,

⁶¹ Fernandina *East Floridian*, May 10, 1860.

⁶² May 10, 1860.

to be solved by war, for "where logic is powerless, the dominion of lead begins."⁶³

Only one or two persons publicly expressed disapproval of the action at Charleston. E. C. Cabell wrote from St. Louis, Missouri, whither he and his family had removed early in 1860, that the Florida delegates were wrong in seceding and that others should be appointed to represent Florida in the Baltimore convention. He declared that disruption of the Democratic party was mainly the work of politicians desiring to promote their own ends, and that if the break were persisted in it would certainly defeat the Democratic nominee and insure election of the Black Republican candidate.⁶⁴ According to his son, C. W. Yulee, David L. Yulee also was opposed to withdrawal of southern delegations from the convention. The Florida senator had long been a friend, personally and politically, of Douglas, and had come to feel that the West would never join with the East in aggressive abolition legislation.⁶⁵ He publicly advised against sending a delegation to the Richmond convention because a purely Southern party convention would only weaken the South, and against sending one to Baltimore because, having once left the convention, Florida delegates could not with dignity return. He would, however, support the nominee of the Baltimore convention, if nominated by a two-thirds vote, because he did not think it advisable to dissolve the Democratic party.⁶⁶ Yulee seems to have supported Douglas until after the

⁶³ Ibid., May 17, 1860.

⁶⁴ Cabell to Joseph Clisby, May 18, 1860. Tallahassee *Floridian*, June 9, 1860. Cabell seems to have become a Democrat, for he supported Douglas in Missouri.

⁶⁵ C. Wickliffe Yulee, "Senator Yulee," in *Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, II, No. 1, 38.

⁶⁶ Yulee to C. E. Dyke, May 26, 1860. Tallahassee *Floridian*, June 9, 1860.

latter's Norfolk speech in which he denied the right of secession. The Floridian then supported Breckinridge as the only candidate who declared his recognition of that right.⁶⁷

In spite of Yulee's protest, the Democratic state convention, which met in Quincy, June 4, took the radical position and appointed delegates to the Richmond convention. John Milton, of Jackson county, was nominated for governor and R. B. Hilton, of Leon county, for congressman. Milton, a member of the seceding Charleston, delegation, had long been a wheelhorse of the state's Democracy. He had campaigned vigorously as a Cass elector in 1848, when on every stump he had stoutly misinterpreted Cass' famous Nicholson letter, which contained the germ of the doctrine of popular sovereignty against which he was to revolt twelve years later. Hilton was a lawyer who for several years in the early fifties had been co-editor with Charles E. Dyke of the Tallahassee Floridian and who had opposed "submission" to the Compromise in 1850.

The threat to the Union implicit in the national political situation gave Florida old-line Whigs and Americans common ground with conservatives all over the country, and they rallied to support the Constitutional Union party. Several West Florida counties appointed delegates to the convention which met in Baltimore May 9, and twenty-two counties were represented in the state convention at Quincy, June 27, over which former Governor Thomas Brown presided. The Quincy convention adopted resolutions endorsing Bell and Everett and declaring that extreme measures should be resorted to only if the Supreme Court should uphold the constitutionality of any future anti-slavery legislation by

⁶⁷ Yulee to W. H. Babcock, Oct. 18, 1860. *National Intelligencer*, Nov. 6, 1860.

Congress. Colonel Edward Hopkins, of Duval county, was nominated for governor and B. F. Allen, of Leon county, editor of the Tallahassee *Sentinel*, for congressman.⁶⁸

Constitutional Union men declared that disunion was the issue of the campaign. Some Democratic papers sought to laugh off the charge of disunionism while others, less politic or more bold, declared that if Breckinridge were defeated by Lincoln they would advocate "with all the force God has given us the immediate formation of a separate confederacy of the cotton States."⁶⁹ Several prominent Democrats declared that they would not hold office under a Black Republican. Allen, knowing such a course could only lead to disruption of the Union, when asked if Florida men should accept office under Lincoln, replied that election of the Republican would not be sufficient cause to dissolve the Union.⁷⁰ The election gave Milton a majority of 1,742, four times that of Perry over his Know-Nothing opponent in 1856, while Hilton's majority was 1,550. This result was interpreted by Governor Perry as conclusive evidence of Florida's readiness to secede should Lincoln be elected. Governor William H. Gist, of South Carolina, approached him and other southern governors on the subject early in October with the design of arranging for concerted action on the part of the South. Perry replied that Florida would follow the lead of any single cotton state which might secede.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., July 11, 1860.

⁶⁹ St. Augustine *Examiner*, Oct. 13, 1860, quoted in N. Y. Herald, Oct. 24, 1860.

⁷⁰ Fernandina *East Floridian*, Sept. 20, 1860.

⁷¹ Both letters are in John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: a History*, II, 306, 313.

The presidential campaign called out a record poll in Florida; 2,000 more votes were cast in November than had been in October or in any previous election. Though the state press was overwhelmingly Democratic,⁷² Bell and Everett ran well. It was said that they received the votes of most of the Douglas Democrats.⁷³ Certainly Douglas polled only 376 votes. The Breckinridge vote was 8,543, as against 5,437 for Bell, or a majority of 1,369 over Bell and Douglas combined. Three-fourths of the extraordinary vote proved to have been cast for Breckinridge. It cannot be asserted, however, that every vote for Breckinridge was a vote for secession, though it seems safe to assume that a vote for Bell or Douglas was a vote for the Union under the Constitution. Of twenty-nine counties which gave Breckinridge a majority, six sent firm cooperationist delegations to the secession convention and three sent delegations which wavered between cooperation and immediate secession. The nineteenth senatorial district, containing four counties which together gave a large Breckinridge majority, also sent a cooperationist delegate to the convention.

Reaction to the election was immediate. Public meetings were held in county after county and resolutions were adopted declaring that the election of Lincoln ought not to be submitted to, calling on all federal officers to resign, and recommending that a

⁷² The Quincy *Republic* classified the press as follows: For Breckinridge and Lane : Pensacola Tribune, Marianna *Patriot*, Apalachicola *Times*, Quincy *Republic*, Tallahassee *Floridian*, Monticello *Family Friend*, Madison *Messenger*, Newnansville *Dispatch*, Ocala *Home Companion*, Lake City *Herald*, Jacksonville *Standard*, Cedar Keys *Telegraph*, Fernandina *East Floridian*, Tampa *Peninsular*, St. Augustine *Examiner*, Key West *Key of the Gulf*. For Bell and Everett: Pensacola *Gazette*, Milton *Courier*, Marianna *Enterprise*, Tallahassee *Sentinel*, Lake City *Press*. For Douglas and Johnson (doubtful) : Jacksonville *Mirror*. Fernandina *East Floridian*, July 26, 1860.

⁷³ *N. Y. Herald*, Nov. 5, 1860.

convention be called to take Florida out of the Union immediately. At a meeting held at Madison Court-house, November 12, recruits were sought for a company of minute men and eighty-three men signed up. The company was organized and officers elected before the meeting adjourned.⁷⁴ Citizens meeting at Waldo, November 8, had pledged themselves "boldly to march to the assistance of the first State that may secede" and, in token of their sincerity, had resolved on the next day to burn Abe Lincoln in effigy.⁷⁵ Governor Perry declared for immediate and separate state action, as did Governor-elect Milton and Congressman-elect Hilton. The Democratic press almost unanimously urged immediate secession and called upon Perry to convene the legislature, as authorized by the resolutions of the previous year. There was little to be gained by such action, however, for the legislature was to convene in regular session in the last week of November.

Awaiting the legislature, when it did convene, was a letter from Yulee in which he declared that, upon the secession of Florida at any time before the expiration of his term, March 4, 1861, he would "promptly and joyously" return home to support the state to which his allegiance was due.⁷⁶ Until the writing of this letter Yulee's action had been conservative. Only a month earlier he had written that it was "most desirable" to preserve the Union, even with much sacrifice; he hoped that this could be done by new guarantees of southern rights in the form of constitutional amendments.⁷⁷ During the period of his involuntary retirement from the Senate he had

⁷⁴ Tallahassee *Floridian*, Nov. 24, 1860.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Fla. Senate *Journ.*, 1860, 16.

⁷⁷ Yulee to W. H. Babcock, Oct. 18, 1860. *National Intelligencer*, Nov. 6, 1860.

become interested in a plan for building a railroad across the Florida peninsula. This had been done by 1860 and Yulee was president of the road, which ran from Fernandina to Cedar Keys. C. W. Yulee suggests that his father's economic interests made him averse to secession.⁷⁸ To this it might be replied, as the *New York Times* charged, that the "railroad class" wanted secession for financial reasons, hoping thereby to slough off a heavy bonded indebtedness to northern capitalists.⁷⁹ Neither position is susceptible of proof with the evidence at hand. Yulee wrote after the war, under conditions not conducive to absolute candor, that he neither advised nor stimulated secession, though he approved the act as a social and political necessity after he had despaired of a solution through action of a constitutional convention.⁸⁰ This statement is confirmed by S. S. Cox, who says that "the Senators from Florida were never regarded, however they seemed, as favorable to the secession movement," and that neither Mallory nor Yulee "exerted any considerable influence at Washington in the direction of disunion during the winter of 1860-'61."⁸¹ Yet Yulee's letter, though perfectly consistent with his long-held belief in state sovereignty and his conception of a senator as the ambassador of a sovereign state, was tantamount at that time to an entirely gratuitous blessing on the secession movement.

The legislature did not need encouragement from Yulee. Governor Perry's entire message was de-

⁷⁸ *Fla. Hist. Soc. Quart.*, II, No. 1, 37.

⁷⁹ Cited in W. W. Davis, "The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida," Columbia University *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, LIII, 66.

⁸⁰ Yulee's application for amnesty to Andrew Johnson, June 24, 1865. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series II, Vol. VIII, 669-70. (Cited hereafter as *O. R.*)

⁸¹ *S. S. Cox, Three Decades of Federal Legislation, 72.*

voted to an argument for immediate secession. To await some overt act of unconstitutional power on the part of the North, he said, was only to court the fate of Santo Domingo.⁸² A bill calling a constitutional convention to meet January 3 in Tallahassee was introduced simultaneously in both houses. It was rushed through without an adverse vote and signed by Governor Perry on November 30, the fourth day of the session. Sentiment in favor of secession was not so unanimous as this vote would indicate. Motions in both House and Senate to defer the convention until January 17 failed by votes of 31 to 16 and 12 to 7, respectively. The conservative vote in the Senate came from six members of the "Opposition" into which the old-line Whig element had degenerated and one Democrat, while two of the "Opposition" voted with the Democratic majority. In the House, seven Democrats voted with eight of the "Opposition" for delayed action, while one of the "Opposition" voted with the radicals. A motion in the Senate to table the bill failed without a record vote, while a resolution proposing popular ratification of the convention's action was defeated, 12 to 4. If the vote opposing precipitate action can be taken as a measure of anti-secession sentiment, conservatives constituted one-third of the legislature.

Before adjourning the legislature appropriated \$100,000 for the purchase of arms and munitions. Perry left at once for South Carolina to arrange for the purchase and to confer with secessionist leaders from all over the South who had gathered to witness the Palmetto State's exit from the Union.

Governor Perry had designated December 22 as the day for the election of members of the conven-

⁸² Fla. Senate *Journ.*, 1860, 10-14.

tion. In the short campaign that preceded the election the issue was immediate secession as against cooperation, which meant delay until other southern states, especially Alabama and Georgia, had acted. General R. K. Call, a personal friend of Jackson who had been thrown into the Whig camp by a quarrel with Van Buren, seems to have been the only person to have voiced disapproval of secession under any and all circumstances. In a pamphlet addressed to the people he stated that secession was nothing short of treason. The disunion movement in Florida was not the result of Lincoln's election, he said, but the work of the state's leading politicians, who had long hated the Union.⁸³ The secession of South Carolina came two days before the election and must have contributed greatly in certain sections to the success of the immediate secessionists. As the election returns are not available, results can only be estimated. Judging from the way in which they cast their votes in the convention, twenty-five of the sixty-nine members were firm cooperationists and five wavered between cooperation and immediate action. On this basis, the cooperationists comprised from 36 to 43 per cent of the convention. If it could be assumed that the vote on December 22 was as heavy as that in the presidential election, an estimate might be made of the shift of votes from radical to conservative positions on the basis of counties which gave Breckinridge majorities and yet sent cooperationist delegations to the convention. A minimum shift of nine per cent is indicated, though the validity of the estimate is open to question.

While the radical movement in Florida was gaining a momentum that placed it beyond conservative control, Hawkins in Washington was reflecting the

⁸³ Cited in Davis, "Civil War and Reconstruction," 50.

opinion of the immediate secessionists. When he was appointed to serve on the Committee of Thirty-three to consider federal relations he refused to take part in its deliberations. Stating that he had no confidence in congressional legislation as a means of restoring harmony, he declared that the time for compromise had passed.⁸⁴ A few days later he joined other southern members of Congress in a letter to their constituents declaring that all hope of relief for the South through constitutional action was exhausted. Speedy secession of all slaveholding states and the formation of a southern confederacy were recommended.⁸⁵

Neither Mallory nor Yulee signed the letter, though a newspaper report said that Yulee would do so. By this time Yulee seems to have accepted unreservedly the idea of secession as an imminent fact. What may have been in his mind is suggested by a newspaper statement that he had announced openly that Florida would secede for the purpose of returning after obtaining new guarantees.⁸⁶ C. W. Yulee says that his father's memoranda show that he had several possible results of secession in mind. His real desire was that the South, by presenting a united front, might bring the North to concede constitutional guarantees under which the Union might be restored. Failing this, he thought of a defensive and commercial league between the Union and the new confederacy, in which the West and South might

⁸⁴ *Cong. Globe, 36 Cong., 2 Sess., 36-37*. D. L. Dumond, in his recent monograph, *The Secession Movement, 1860-1861*, 156-57, shows that the Committee of Thirty-three was composed mainly of Republicans opposed to conciliation who "converted it into a graveyard for every proposal of compromise" introduced into the House. Dumond intimates that Hawkins' refusal to serve was due to the belief that the Republicans never would accede to measures of conciliation.

⁸⁵ N. Y. Herald, Dec. 14, 1860.

⁸⁶ N. Y. *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 15, 1861.

unite on the basis of their common interest in the Mississippi river.⁸⁷ Whatever the springs of his action might have been, his words and deeds thenceforth were those of a resolute secessionist.

Mallory's failure to sign the letter must be attributed to an utter lack of sympathy with its tone and purpose. There is little evidence as to his opinions and actions, but what there is indicates that he was sincerely opposed to secession. He had been able, in 1858, to look forward with equanimity to Republican political control. He had said then that if he thought such control would mean infringement of southern rights, he would exert every effort of which he was capable to induce the South to leave the Union at once. It were folly for a man, when he saw his doom ahead of him, to wait hour after hour until the stern reality was upon him. The fate of the Union, he had said, rested upon the constitutional action of the Republican party.⁸⁸ And the implication was that he thought its actions would be constitutional. Writing in 1865, he said that though he had believed in secession as a right resulting from state sovereignty, his conservatism made him regard it as only another name for revolution. He never believed that there would be bloodshed and he expected compromise and conciliation even after the secession of South Carolina.⁸⁹ His political associates during the trying days in December were such sincere advocates of conciliation as Crittenden, Pugh and Vallandigham.⁹⁰ It was not until January, when the secession of Florida was only a matter of hours, that Mallory was found cooperating with

⁸⁷ *Fla. Hist. Soc. Quart.*, II, No. 2, 3.

⁸⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., 1138-40.

⁸⁹ Mallory to Zachariah Chandler, July 2, 1865. O. R., Series II, Vol. VIII, 737.

⁹⁰ N. Y. *Herald*, Dec. 24, 1860.

those southern senators who desired secession or had come to regard it as inevitable. He and Yulee took part in a caucus of senators, January 5, 1861, in which resolutions were adopted advising secession of all southern states and formation of a southern confederacy by action of a convention to meet in Montgomery not later than February 15. The senators asked the states to instruct them if they should remain in Congress until March 4 for the purpose of defeating legislation hostile to the seceding states.⁹¹

Though hoping that secession could be effected peaceably, the Florida senators acted with the possibility of war in mind. They sought, with some degree of success, to ascertain the strength of the garrisons and the amount of arms and munitions at the several forts and arsenals in Florida and, on January 5, Yulee wrote Joseph Finegan, a member of the Florida convention, that the immediately important thing was occupation of the Florida forts.⁹² Governor Perry had already arrived at the same conclusion and obtained unofficial consent of the convention for such action at an informal conference, January 4.⁹³ The arsenal at Chattahoochee and Fort Marion at St. Augustine were seized by state troops even before passage of the secession ordinance.⁹⁴ The Federals were in sufficient force at Pensacola to offer resistance, and the political situation made unwise what military considerations would have dictated. As Mallory wired Perry and Chase, January 16, Davis did not think that the Pensacola forts were worth one drop of blood under the circumstances then existing.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. I, 443.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 442.

⁹³ Edmund Ruffin *Diary*, Jan. 4, 1861. Ms. in Library of Congress.

⁹⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. I, 332-33.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. LII, Pt. 2, 9.

Pursuant to Governor Perry's call the convention had assembled January 3 in the state capital. The little town was so thronged with politicians from neighboring states as well as Florida that the two hotels could not accommodate them, and the old Virginian fire-eater, Edmund Ruffin, was constrained to accept the hospitality of Major John Beard. Ruffin was an ardent secessionist who had come to Tallahassee for the pleasure of seeing Florida withdraw from the Union and his diary reflects the hopes and fears of the immediate secessionists. The election had been close enough to make an immediate secessionist majority doubtful when the convention met. But powerful factors were operating in favor of the immediate secessionists. Out-of-state politicians, including E. C. Bullock and L. W. Spratt, official commissioners from Alabama and South Carolina respectively to Florida, constituted a strong secession lobby. The churches seem to have favored secession and the state administration was in the hands of immediate secessionists. Organization of the convention showed that they also controlled its machinery.

John C. McGehee, of Madison county, a locality settled largely by South Carolinians, was elected president. McGehee was born in Abbeville, South Carolina, in 1801, and moved to Florida thirty years later.⁹⁶ A pious Christian as well as a large slaveholder, he was convinced of the moral righteousness of slavery and this sentiment found expression in radical political affiliations. In 1848, as a member of the Democratic convention, he joined with W. L. Yancy in insisting, unsuccessfully, upon incorporation of the doctrine of non-intervention into the platform. He accepted election as a delegate to the

⁹⁶ *Fla. Hist. Soc. Quart.*, IV, 186 ff.

adjourned session of the Nashville convention in November, 1850, and the next year was instrumental in the organization of a Southern Rights Association in his county. In an address before that body, June 7, 1851, he had declared the right of secession to be "not only clear beyond the possibility of a doubt but the duty absolute and unavoidable."⁹⁷ His brief remarks in accepting the presidency of the convention showed that the passing years had not made him more conservative.

Organization of the convention was not effected until Saturday, January 5, the intervening day having been devoted to a day of fasting and humiliation in compliance with a proclamation of President Buchanan. This action greatly disgusted Ruffin, who saw the proclamation as "a rebuke & censure of the seceding states, & of their cause, & of the very action which this Convention is assembled to consummate."⁹⁸ The service, which Ruffin refused to attend, would have delighted him, for the rector of St. John's church preached a strong disunion sermon in favor of immediate secession. Francis H. Rutledge, Episcopal bishop of Florida, absented himself from the service for the same reason as Ruffin. Rutledge, a South Carolinian by birth, held that he had already seceded with his native state, but he was so anxious for Florida to follow her that on January 7 he transmitted to the convention a promise to pay \$500 to the State of Florida to be used in defraying the expenses of government, "whenever by ordinance she shall be declared an independent republic."⁹⁹ These Episcopal ministers were not alone among clergymen in their advocacy

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, V., No. 2, 78.

⁹⁸ Edmund Ruffin *Diary*, Jan. 3, 1861.

⁹⁹ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida*, 1861. Reprint, 1928. 22.

of secession. The Florida Baptist state convention, in session at Monticello during the latter part of December, had adopted a resolution expressing "their cordial sympathy with, and hearty approbation of those who are determined to maintain the integrity of the Southern States, even by a disruption of all existing political ties."¹⁰⁰

McQueen McIntosh, of Apalachicola, who had resigned his federal judgeship upon the election of Lincoln, on January 5 introduced a resolution declaring the constitutional right of secession and stating that "in the opinion of this Convention, the existing causes are such as to compel the State of Florida to proceed to exercise that right."¹⁰¹ The resolution was adopted January 7 by a vote of 62 to 5 after an effort to insert an amendment delaying the proposed action had been defeated 43 to 24. A committee consisting of eight immediate secessionists and five cooperationists was thereupon appointed to prepare an ordinance for consideration by the convention. Two days later the committee submitted a secession ordinance accompanied by a report in favor of immediate secession. The cooperationists neither signed this report nor submitted one of their own, but they did not consent to immediate secession without a struggle. George T. Ward, of Leon county, and Jackson Morton, of Santa Rosa county, both former Whigs, led the opposition in an effort to amend the ordinance to defer action until after Georgia and Alabama had seceded and to require popular ratification of the measure. The first proposal was defeated 39 to 30, while the second one went down, 41 to 26.¹⁰² When it was shown that immediate action could not be blocked, most of the co-

¹⁰⁰ Tallahassee *Floridian*, Dec. 22, 1860.

¹⁰¹ *Jour. of the Conv., 1861*, 14.

¹⁰² *Ibid., passim.*

operationists declared that they would vote for the ordinance because they felt keenly the political necessity for unanimity.¹⁰³ On January 10 the ordinance was passed by a vote of 62 to 7.

Refusal of the secessionists to allow submission of the ordinance to the people might be interpreted as indicative of a belief that it would be rejected. On the other hand, it could have meant that they considered haste more imperative than compliance with democratic forms. One Florida Unionist who made his way north in January, 1861, declared emphatically that a majority of the people were not in favor of immediate secession.¹⁰⁴ Another bit of evidence in support of this view was the action of G. W. Parkhill, of Leon county, who, in deference to the wishes of his constituents, offered a resolution to require popular ratification and, his duty done, thereafter voted with the immediate secessionists.¹⁰⁵ The delegation from Monroe and Dade counties, too, though elected as cooperationists,¹⁰⁶ acted as often with the immediate secessionists as with the conservatives. Though it cannot be said that a majority of the people was for cooperation, it is equally open to question to assume that a majority was for immediate secession.

Even if the exact proportion of cooperationists could be determined, there would still remain the question of exactly what they stood for. The counties in the West Florida panhandle, which is geographically a part of Alabama, were most keenly cooperationist. From this it could be argued simply that they felt it inexpedient to act without the support of their neighbors. On the other hand, the

¹⁰³ *O. R.*, Series IV, Vol. I, 53.

¹⁰⁴ *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 21, 1861.

¹⁰⁵ *N. Y. World*, Jan. 15, 1861.

¹⁰⁶ *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 9, 1861.

cooperationist delegates came mainly from counties which had been preponderantly Whig and conservative before the dissolution of that party. Both Ruffin and E. C. Bullock reported that no member of the convention declared in favor of submission to the Black Republicans.¹⁰⁷ That about half the cooperationists in that body were really opposed to secession in any form, however, is indicated by the vote when the previous question was moved to bring to a vote McIntosh's resolution committing Florida to secession. Thirteen delegates voted against the previous question.

Before passage of the ordinance the convention had adopted a resolution instructing the Florida members in Congress to remain there and to discharge all the duties of their offices until formally notified that Florida had withdrawn from the Union. Informal news of secession was not long in reaching Washington and Yulee immediately acknowledged "with pride" the full sovereignty of his state.¹⁰⁸ On January 15 he and Mallory notified Governor Perry that they had ceased to participate in the proceedings of the Senate and only awaited formal notification of Florida's action to withdraw.¹⁰⁹ Their withdrawal took place on January 21.

Yulee spoke first. He dwelt first on the circumstances that had led Florida to recall the powers delegated to the federal government and to assume the full exercise of all her sovereign rights. Then he dealt with the fact that the State of Florida had been formed from territory acquired by the United States from Spain. One of the conditions of the cession of

¹⁰⁷ Ruffin *Diary*, Jan. 9, 1861; Bullock to A. B. Moore, Jan. 15, 1861, O. R., Series IV, Vol. I, 54.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8. Hawkins, who seems to have left Washington early in January, took no formal leave of the House.

Spain, he said, was that the inhabitants of the territory should be admitted into the Union on terms of equality with citizens of the United States. In pursuance of this stipulation and of the established policy of the United States, the act admitting Florida had declared her to be a state and had admitted her into the Union on a footing equal in all respects with the original states. In seceding, Florida was but exercising the equal rights thus granted and acknowledged. He concluded his remarks by declaring his full approval of the act.

Mallory, too, insisted upon the full equality of Florida within the Union. Speaking with greater emotion than Yulee had, he made a moving plea for peace. Yet he expressed much of the confidence, even arrogance, that had brought the South to her present pass, when he said, "We seek not to war upon, or to conquer you ; and we know that you cannot conquer us." ¹¹⁰

The two men who thus presented Florida's valediction to the nation were playing their part in the consummation of an event which neither, at heart, had desired. Yulee, it is true, had helped sow the germs of secession in 1850, but he had receded from his original radical position and it is doubtful if he ever completely returned to it. No man who really desired secession would have supported Douglas in 1860. As regards his political theory, he was consistent throughout. He accepted the theory of state sovereignty, as did his colleagues, with all its implications. This may have accounted for his readiness after November, 1860, to go with the secessionists. Mallory, too, believed in the theoretical right of secession. He was probably more radical in 1850, however, than ever again, and even in that year he

¹¹⁰ Cong. Globe, 36 Cong., 2 Sess., 485-86.

was accounted a Unionist. Of the other members of the Florida delegation in Congress between 1850 and 1860, E. C. Cabell was always a Unionist and Jackson Morton, though he acted with the radicals in 1850, helped lead the fight for delayed action in the Florida convention in 1861. Only Maxwell and Hawkins reflected in their speech and actions the increase of radical sentiment at home. The pretext for radical speech and thought in Florida was found in the North, and frequently in Washington, but it cannot be said that members of the state's congressional delegation were responsible for the secession movement.

To locate the motivating force of that movement one must turn rather to local politics. As early as 1852 the radical Democrats captured control of their party, and dissolution of the Whig party, as a result of the slavery controversy, gave the Democratic party continuous control of the state administration. The press, too, subsisting as it did largely on political patronage, became more and more radical, and even the pulpit reflected the trend toward radicalism of those in authority. Thus, when the crisis came, the radicals controlled the machinery for action and the means of propaganda. Added to this was the fact that most of the conservatives felt that the South had been deprived of her rights and believed in the constitutional right of secession even though they doubted its wisdom. Many of the most conservative men had long held that there was a point beyond which secession was necessary. This belief greatly weakened the force of their protest in 1861. They were unfortunate, also, in their choice of cooperation as the basis of opposition to immediate secession, for it was evident by the time the convention met that the secession movement, steered by a well-organized, purposeful group of radicals, would

sweep the other cotton states out of the Union. Thus the conservative group, comprising certainly a large minority and possibly a majority of the people, was helpless to avert the disaster which impended.

EDMUND RUFFIN'S ACCOUNT OF THE FLORIDA SECESSION CONVEN- TION, 1861

The following account of the Florida secession convention is taken from the manuscript diary of Edmund Ruffin in the Library of Congress. Ruffin was perhaps the most eminent southern authority on agriculture in the twenty years preceding the Civil War and his experiments in soil fertility, described in his *Essays on Calcareous Manures* and in the columns of the *Farmers' Register* which he edited, brought an agricultural renaissance to his native Virginia. Ruffin early became convinced that the interests of the agricultural South demanded that she cut loose from the Industrial North and form a Southern Confederacy. So ardent were his emotions on the subject that, at the first signs of secession, he hastened to South Carolina to witness her secede and then travelled down to Tallahassee to be present when Florida should withdraw from the Union. To the pages of his meticulously kept diary he confided the fullest contemporary account that we have of the Florida secession convention. The old fire-eater contrived to be in Charleston later in the spring when war broke out and to him was given the privilege of firing the first shot at Fort Sumter. At the end of the war, rather than outlive his beloved Confederacy, he took his own life. He has been the subject of a recent biography by Avery Craven, *Edmund Ruffin, Southerner*, (Appleton, New York, 1932).

DOROTHY DODD.

Tallahassee.

THE DIARY

"Jan 3rd. Rose at 3 A. M. ¹ No pain or uneasiness last night, & slept well. ² Set out on the train at 5. A number of delegates to the Convention or legislature ³ along, to sundry of whom I was introduced. Also, Mr. Bullock, ⁴ the Commissioner sent by Ala. to Fla. -Reached Tallahassee at 12 M. Met Gov. Perry as soon as reaching the hotel, & soon after was shown by him a telegraphic dispatch from Gov. Brown of Ga. stating that, in consequence of the

¹ Ruffin had spent the night at Lake City.

² He had been suffering from neuralgia.

³ The legislature was to meet in adjourned session, January 7.

⁴ E. C. Bullock.

seizure of Fort Sumter by the federal troops, he had ordered the U. S. forts at the mouth of the Savannah river, which are without garrisons, to be occupied by Ga. militia. This will be an important move, which I trust will serve to commit Ga to secession. The Convention met here, & adjourned previous to permanent organization, to the 5th. The reason-some 15 members not arrived, & tomorrow is the appointed fast day. The delay was also deemed requisite to better know the real strength of the two parties who respectively go for immediate & separate secession, & for delay & co-operation with the other southern states. It is feared that the former party is not certainly the strongest at present.-There was such a crowd at the hotel that I could not there (nor at any other,) get a comfortable room. So at night I accepted an invitation (one of several) from Mr. Beard,⁵ a former slight acquaintance, to take my quarters at his house, & went there by dark.-I was very sorry that there should be any need for the adjournment of the Convention---& in addition was displeased with one of the reasons---being respect for the religious services of tomorrow. The keeping this day for fasting & humiliation, is by a recommendatory proclamation of the President of the U. S., on account of the political dangers & disasters now impending & to be produced, not by northern abolitionism, but by the spirit of resistance & disunion of the southern states. The very appointment of the day & service is a rebuke & censure of the seceding states, & of their cause, & of the very action which this Convention is assembled to consummate. And yet, the first & immediate action of the Convention is to adjourn over the fast day, in respect to its objects.

⁵ John Beard, who was a member of the convention from Leon county. Though a disunionist in 1850, Beard acted with the cooperationists.

"Jan 4th. I would not attend the religious services of the day-though I heard from some who did, that the minister of the Episcopal Church preached a strong disunion sermon, in favor of the immediate secession of this state. I afterwards heard that the bishop of that church, ⁶ who resides here, would not attend the service, because viewing the matter somewhat as I did.-Mr. Spratt, ⁷ commissioner of S. C. to Fla. arrived today from Charleston. He informed me that Fort Sumter was blockaded by the several batteries of S. C., & guarded on the water, so that no supplies could be introduced except by force. -A telegram from the war department at Washington to Pensacola was intercepted, or its contents made known, yesterday at Atlanta, Ga. & made known this morning to the Governor of Fla. It directed the reinforcement of the previous garrisons of the two forts at Pensacola, & the destruction of lbs. 5000 of gunpowder which was unprotected by any garrison in the U. S. Arsenal on the Apalachicola. There was an informal & confidential meeting of the members of the Convention with the Governor on this subject--& I have reason to believe that he was indirectly authorized to occupy the other fort at St. Augustine, & an arsenal that are not garrisoned.-From after breakfast to dark I was generally at the principal hotel, talking with various members of the Convention & others on the current events, & on secession. Many seem to attach value to my presence, & pay much respect to my arguments.-Received a letter from Edmund. ⁸ -After dark, returned to Mr. Beard's. Several gentlemen called on me today here, in my absence, & two at the hotel. After tea, Bishop Rutledge came in to visit the family. I

⁶ Francis H. Rutledge.

⁷ L. S. Spratt.

⁸ Ruffin's son.

was very much pleased with the venerable old minister, & with his ardent & active patriotic sentiments. He is a native of S. Ca., & said he had himself already seceded, with his native state, & in advance of Florida. We had agreeable conversation on this & various subjects until he left at 9 o'clock, & I retired to my apartment to write these entries, & to read the N. Y. Tribune, the chief abolition newspaper.-I have learned that, when the Convention met yesterday, it was estimated that there was barely a majority of one of those who had been elected as immediate & separate secessionists-all the others being for delayed secession, or for waiting for the previous action, or co-operation, of the adjoining stronger states. It was supposed that a little delay (by the adjournment,) & conference among the members would serve to increase the majority greatly. The subsequent action of the Governor of Ga. in occupying Fort Pulaski, by committing that state, will further strengthen the party & the feeling here for immediate secession."

"5th. My birthday-67 years old. ⁹ The Convention met at 12 M. After the organization, & election of all the officers, on motion I was invited to occupy a seat in the hall, & after the recess, I was conducted to the chair assigned for me by two members deputed for the purpose. I could have preferred a less ceremonious introduction, but could not avoid it. But independent of the high compliment, I was glad to thus obtain a seat where I can hear the debates, which my deafness would prevent if outside of the bar of the hall. The proceedings of the evening session gave indications of discord, & there was great want of the exercise & knowledge of parliamentary law, & much violation of order & decorum

⁹ Ruffin was born January 5, 1794, at Coggin's Point, Prince George county, Virginia. He died June 18, 1865.

by the audience. After the adjournment, was invited & went to sup at Col. Williams' ¹⁰ house. Spent there a pleasant evening with several other guests, & especially with Judge Finley, ¹¹ a very intelligent & agreeable gentleman, a member of the Convention. After returning, heard from Mr. Beard that the fort at Mobile had been occupied by order of the Governor of Ala. I heard it whispered that similar orders had been issued here, as to the U. S. arsenal on the Apalachicola. As we have not yet heard that the powder there is destroyed, as ordered by the telegram from Washington, I trust that the orders were not only examined at Atlanta, but their further passage stopped.

"Jan 6th. Sunday. No mail, & no telegraphic news, though, as frequently, false rumors of reports of hostilities at Charleston.-At the Episcopal church.-Went, by invitation, to dine with Mr. Houston, ¹² at his residence, a mile from the town. Afternoon, went to visit (& to return the call of,) my old acquaintance Col. Ro. Gamble, who resides here, & who is now more than 80 years old. Returned to Mr. Beard's to tea. Read news papers, & as part of one, a sermon lately preached in Brooklyn by the Rev. Mr. Vandyke, which is an admirable argument against & exposition of the errors & evils of abolitionism.

"7th. The Convention met at 10 A. M. & I took my assigned seat. The commissioners of Ala. & S. C. Messrs. Bullock & Spratt, were first introduced, & invited to address the Convention. Mr. Bullock

¹⁰ R. C. Williams.

¹¹ J. J. Finley, of Jackson county, judge of the western circuit of Florida, was not a member of the convention, though he administered the oath of office to the officers of that body.

¹² Col. Edward Houston, president of the Tallahassee railroad company.

spoke for about three-quarters of an hour, & delivered a most eloquent speech, in favor of immediate & separate secession, & of the union of the southern states. Mr. Spratt followed, reading the documents of S. C. sent by him to this Convention, & following with a logical & able argument. When he had closed, to my great astonishment, (when I understood it,) Mr. Pelot,¹³ a member of ability, moved that I should be invited to address the Convention-which was carried, without dissent. I was not attending to what was said, deeming it the routine business, & with my deafness, did not know what motion was made, or voted upon, until informed by the President of the wish of the Convention. I immediately rose, & though greatly embarrassed by the novel & unlooked-for requisition, I proceeded to speak-disclaiming all authority or right to speak for Va but declaring the great importance of the early action of Fla. to hasten the secession of Va. & all the border states, which (excepting of Missouri & Delaware, I predicted would be accomplished by the 4th of March, provided Fla. & the adjoining states moved as soon as their severally meeting in Conventions permitted. I spoke earnestly, & but for a short time, & seemed to have pleased my auditors. Next, the resolution introduced on the 5th.¹⁴ was taken up & discussed, & before 1 P. M.¹⁵ was passed with but 5 dissenting votes-As follows : Whereas, All hope of the preservation of the Federal Union, upon terms consistent with the safety & honor of the slaveholding states, has been finally dissipated by the recent indications of the strength of the anti-slavery senti-

¹³ John C. Pelot, of Alachua county, had acted as temporary chairman of the convention.

¹⁴ The resolution introduced by McQueen McIntosh, of Franklin county, which committed Florida to immediate secession.

¹⁵ This was not passed until the afternoon session. *Jour. of the Conv.,-1861*, 21.

ment of the free States-Therefore, *Be it resolved by the people of Florida in Convention assembled*, That, as it is the undoubted right of the several states of the Federal Union, known as the United States of America, to withdraw from the said Union at such time & for such cause or causes as in the opinion of the people of each state, acting in their sovereign capacity, may be just and proper, in the opinion of this convention, the existing causes are such as to compel the State of Florida to proceed to exercise this right.' The passage of this resolution was followed by another to appoint a committee to draw up a form of Ordinance of Secession. These two measures are equivalent to a declaration of secession, but at an uncertain though early time. This pledge being secured, the enactment of independence may be postponed until Ala. & Miss. (whose conventions meet today,) or even Ga. next week, shall act. Still many are for speedy definite decision. Supposing that I shall witness nothing more, for some days to come, I now think of leaving to morrow, to go to witness the session of the Ala. Convention at Montgomery. If not going so soon, I shall probably be too late to be present at the act of secession there. I sent on the report of the action of the Convention, by magnetic telegraph, to the Examiner, Richmond -& trust that the annunciation was published there in an hour after the action of the Convention. This is the day for the called meeting of the legislature¹⁶ -so that I trust my communication will have the more effect.-Heard from the Governor that he had received a dispatch stating that the elections in Ga. so far gave 170 immediate secessionists to 80 co-operationists. The remaining counties will not probably materially alter this proportion-& even if all were to go against immediate secession, they cannot

¹⁶ The legislature of Virginia.

reverse the majority. So Ga. is certain for secession.-A confidential telegraphic dispatch received today by the Governor from the U. S. Senators of Fla., & communicated in secret session to the Convention, informed that body that the policy of the federal administration was military coercion on S. C. & urged the Convention to secede forthwith.¹⁷ -In the evening, with Dr. G. T. Maxwell of Savannah, who introduced himself to me. I had been desirous of meeting & knowing him, to learn from himself, as I now sought & effected, the account of a late daring and also amusing adventure in which he had been one of the principal actors, the capturing of the U. S. armed revenue cutter in the Savannah river, as a prelude to the occupation of Fort Pulaski. With Dr. Maxwell's consent, I took notes of the affair, & wrote an account of it before going to bed. The act however was unauthorized, & went beyond the Governor's designed policy of occupying and retaining the forts. So as soon as the captors offered to him the charge of the vessel, he ordered it to be restored to the previous U. S. commander.

"Jan. 8th. The celebration of the battle of New Orleans, interrupted the proceedings of the Convention after 12 M. Sundry speeches, from distinguished members or strangers, & among them one from Mr. Bullock, which I would like to have heard, but did not go to the hall, for fear that I should be called upon, & I would especially object to speak before ladies, who made up a large part of the audience. The telegraphic wires out of order all day.

"9th.-Telegrams made public, & announced to the Convention at different times of its session, announced that the 'Star of the West,' a California sea steamer, had brought troops for the Federal Govern-

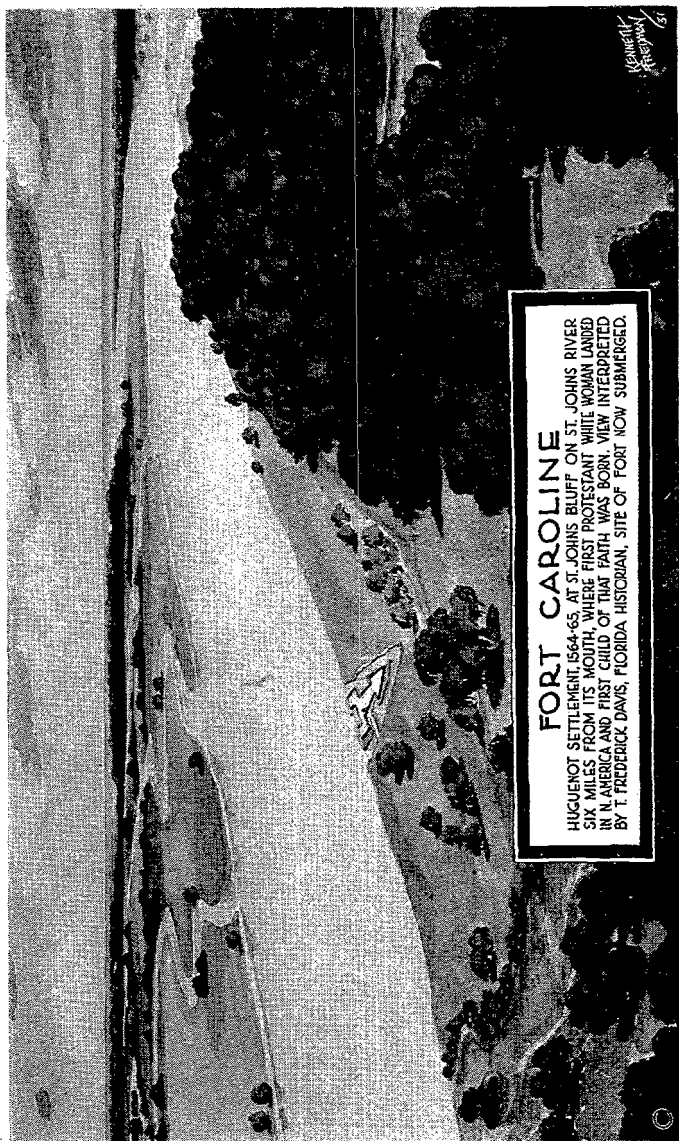
¹⁷ This dispatch was the result of a caucus of southern senators held January 5. See O. R., Series I, Vol. I, 443.

ment to Charleston harbor, & attempted to reinforce Fort Sumter, but had been repulsed & driven back by cannonading from the Carolinian batteries. This sent by Gov. Pickens. No other details. Another dispatch from New Orleans stated that troops had been embarked at Boston to reinforce the federal forts on the coast of Florida, & especially that at Key West. I was informed confidentially that Gov. Perry had yesterday given authority to Major Chase, of Pensacola, to capture the forts there, if he could attempt it with assurance of success. These forts have military garrisons, though not strong ones, & might be reinforced by men from two ships of war lying in the harbor. As nothing has been since heard, I fear that the attempt has been frustrated, or judged to be hopeless.-My previous bad cold in the head has had a new accession latterly, & with it a troublesome cough, which disturbed me last night. On this account, I deem it improper to go on to Montgomery, Ala. as I had designed, which journey would require 100 miles of stage-coach travelling, & through a whole night. Besides, if waiting to witness the consummation of secession here, I should probably be too late for that of Ala.-A long & earnest debate today, & the opposition members, (for delay, or co-operative [sic] secession-none being avowed for submission, or union-) tried every scheme to prevent the victory of the separate and immediate secessionists. It was nearly dark when the final vote on the main question was about to be put, when the majority yielded to the wishes of the minority, & adjourned to tomorrow 10 A. M. when the question will be decided. It is certain now that immediate secession will be enacted-& it is hoped that this postponement will serve to much increase the already sure majority. I have arranged to set out tomorrow afternoon for Charleston, S. C.

-Went again to see Col. Gamble & his family, and to make my excuses for not going last night to a party at his house last night [sic], to which I was invited & was expected. Some half dozen ladies there when I called, & among them the widow of Achille Murat, oldest son of the former King of Naples. This lady is daughter of Byrd Willis, formerly of Fredericksburg, Va.-The fort at St. Augustine is in possession of a volunteer garrison, under Capt. Gibbs, of that town, who requested & obtained the authority of Gov. Perry to occupy it.

"Jan. 10th. Telegram that the Convention of Miss. declared secession yesterday. The Convention here met at 11, & after hearing four or five tedious speeches from members who had steadily opposed, but now designed to vote for the action which they still argued against, the vote was taken, & resulted in the enactment of secession & independence of Florida, by 62 ayes to 7 noes. I immediately telegraphed the result to Gov. Pickens at Charleston, & to the Editors of the Enquirer at Richmond. The charge most extortionate. The message was of minimum length, (three words each, though counted as much as ten-) & for the two, I paid \$6.30, for transmission.* My departure had been arranged for 4 P. M. by taking leave of my hospitable & very agreeable host & family this morning. Set out on the train for Monticello, & there (after 6 P. M.) took a stage coach to Quitman, 27 miles, which is the present terminus of the Albany Rail Road to Savannah.-"

"*Two out of three dispatches I sent were never received."



FORT CAROLINE

HUCQUENOT SETTLEMENT 1564-65 AT ST. JOHNS RIVER BLUFF ON ST. JOHNS RIVER SIX MILES FROM ITS MOUTH WHERE FIRST PROTESTANT WHITE WOMAN LANDED IN N. AMERICA AND FIRST CHILD OF THAT FAITH WAS BORN. VIEW INTERPRETTED BY T. FREDERICK DAVIS, FLORIDA HISTORIAN. SITE OF FORT NOW SUBMERGED.

Original painting is at the Jacksonville Public Library.

FORT CAROLINE

By T. FREDERICK DAVIS

IN 1562, Jean Ribault, seeking a location in the new world for a colony of Huguenots from France, discovered the St. Johns River.¹ He went ashore on Batten Island at the mouth of the river, where he and his party united in a prayer of thanksgiving for the safe journey across the sea. This seems to have been the first service of the Protestant faith in North America. Leaving a marker of possession at the mouth of the river, on the south side, Ribault sailed northward along the coast. Near Port Royal, South Carolina, he left a small party of men and set sail for France to bring over the colony. Upon his arrival he found civil war raging and a delay of two years was experienced in sending the colonists to America. In the meantime, the men at Port Royal abandoned the post and most of them eventually returned to France.

The expedition sailed under the command of Rene de Laudonniere, who, like Ribault, was an ardent Huguenot. Arriving at the St. Johns River in June, 1564, Laudonniere examined several locations for the colony and selected a site in a little plain formed by the westerly slope of St. Johns Bluff, on the south side of the St. Johns River six miles from its mouth. Ground was broken for the fort June 30, 1564. They named the colony Fort Caroline, in honor of Charles IX, king of France, who at that time was only fourteen years of age, the actual ruler of France being the famous Catherine de Medici.

The fort was in the shape of a triangle with the apex pointing south. Two sides were in the form of

¹ Modern place names are used in this paper.

a battlement nine feet high, composed of sod and earth, probably supported by logs. The north, or river side, was in the form of a bastion built of planks and timber. The fort was at the river's edge. Along two sides was a ditch into which the water of the river was let to form the moat. The gate and bridge were on the west side. The colonists lived in huts within the enclosure, though later some apparently built shacks outside.

At first all went well at Fort Caroline. Then sickness developed and inactivity resulted, due, we believe now, to malaria. A natural consequence of these circumstances was discouragement, and within a year abandonment of the colony had been decided upon. Just at that time John Hawkins, the English sea-rover, unexpectedly appeared at the mouth of the river. Hawkins furnished Laudonniere with necessary articles of food and clothing and gave him a ship in exchange for the cannon at Fort Caroline, then sailed away. About three weeks afterward the colonists were on the verge of sailing, when Ribault, with a fully equipped reinforcement, including men, women and children, dropped anchor at the mouth of the St. Johns.

The Spaniards had already heard of the French settlement in Florida. They claimed the country by right of discovery, and not without justice when we remember that the only authentic record² known to us indicates that Ponce de Leon, in 1513, had landed on the coast not more than 18 miles from where Fort Caroline was situated and had claimed the country for Spain. Urged by the united motives of nationalism and a desire to carry to America the religious strife prevailing in Europe, where Roman Catholic

² The Herrera record: See translation of the original account in Florida *Historical Society Quarterly* of July, 1932, and map in April, 1933, issue of the same publication.

fought Protestant and Protestant fought Roman Catholic, the Spaniard Pedro Menendez organized an expedition under a charter from the king of Spain, the purpose of which was to drive the Huguenots from Florida. It is a peculiar relation of events that Menendez came in sight of the Florida coast on the same day that Ribault appeared off the mouth of the St. Johns River with the relief expedition, and the same day, too, that Laudonniere was hoisting sail for the abandonment of Fort Caroline, August 28, 1565.

Menendez sailed along the coast seeking the French colony and at Anastasia Island he learned of its location from the Indians. With five ships he sailed up the coast to reconnoiter and discovered four French ships anchored off St. Johns bar. It was night and he anchored near them. The French, suspecting trouble, cut the cables and sailed for the open sea, with Menendez in pursuit. They outsailed the Spaniards and Menendez returned to Anastasia Island, unloaded his supplies and made preparations for fortifying the place. This was the beginning of St. Augustine. The French vessels returned to their former anchorage off St. Johns bar.

Ribault and Menendez at once made their plans to attack each other. Ribault's plan was to attack the Spaniards by sea. Every able-bodied fighting man was ordered aboard and the fleet sailed southward. Off St. Augustine they discovered the Spaniards and prepared to attack, but following a lull the wind freshened to a gale and Ribault's vessels were driven down the coast.

Menendez marched toward Fort Caroline and with 400 men arrived back of St. Johns Bluff about sundown on September 19th, where he camped at the pond shown at the right in the illustration and which is still there. The weather was stormy and it rained

in torrents. The Spaniards were drenched and their powder was wet and useless. At a council of officers they debated the question of attacking Fort Caroline. Menendez alone favored attack, the others suggesting an abandonment of the entire enterprise. By argument and persuasion, Menendez finally convinced them, and before dawn of September 20, 1565, the columns moved forward to the high ground overlooking the fort.

Fort Caroline was sleeping. On account of the stormy weather, the sentries had been withdrawn and the usual precautions suspended. Laudonniere, who had been sick, did not go with the fleet. The others at the fort were principally old men, men unskilled in arms, and women and children, about 240 in all.³

The Spaniards had no trouble in entering the fort, when an indiscriminate slaughter commenced. As soon as Menendez reached the fort he directed in a loud voice that no woman, nor boy under fifteen years of age, should be killed, by which 70 were saved. Laudonniere and others escaped over the walls ; after terrible hardships in the marshes, they reached the mouth of the river, boarded two small French vessels and sailed for France, where they arrived in time. Several escaped to the Indians and were protected by them. In round numbers, 140 people, including two Englishmen, who had been left at the fort by Hawkins, were slain at Fort Caroline by the Spaniards, who did not lose a man. Menendez left a garrison at Fort Caroline, which he renamed San Mateo, and returned to St. Augustine.

Ribault's fleet was wrecked along the coast below St. Augustine. Nearly all of the Frenchmen reached the shore in safety, where they seem to have col-

³ For Laudonniere's and other French accounts see Hakluyt's translations.

lected in separate parties and attempted to march back to Fort Caroline, which they did not know had been captured. The Indians soon carried news to Menendez that a party of Frenchmen was at Matanzas Inlet and he went there to meet them. There were 208 in this party. Menendez spared eight of them and put the rest to the knife, though one of the latter revived and returned to his comrades down the coast. Several days later reports reached Menendez that another party of Frenchmen was at the same place. Ribault was with them. The former procedure was repeated here—some 150 surrendered and all were killed except sixteen. The sands of Matanzas were now soaked with the life-blood of 333 Huguenots, including Ribault and some of his principal officers.

Some time afterward Menendez got word that another party of Frenchmen was building a fort farther down the coast. Sending down three boats to cooperate, he marched with 300 men to find it. Upon his approach all the Frenchmen fled to the woods. He sent them word to surrender and they would be kindly treated, whereupon 150 came in and 20 refused, saying they would rather be eaten by the Indians than surrender to the Spaniards. The account now becomes so confused that it is impossible to tell what happened. Menendez did not return directly to St. Augustine, but boarded a boat and sailed for Havana for supplies, carrying 20 Frenchmen along. No mention is made of the destiny of the others; they, too, may have been killed or possibly taken to St. Augustine as servants or slaves.

Assuming that the figures are fairly correct, having been recorded by Meras,⁴ brother-in-law of Men-

⁴ For a translation of the Meras memorial see *Pedro Menendez de Aviles*, by Jeannette Thurber Connor, Florida State Historical Society, 1923.

endez and an eye-witness to several of these events, and allowing say 30 to cover those unaccounted for, the Huguenot colony at Fort Caroline, including Ribault's reinforcement, numbered about 800, of which Menendez killed 471, at least.

Thus Spain retained her title to Florida ; but there came an echo. A fiery Frenchman named Gourgues organized a private expedition in France to wreak vengeance upon the Spaniards in Florida. With three ships and a small force he arrived at Easter time in 1568, captured and demolished the Spanish posts on the St. Johns, and with the aid of the Indians, killed or hanged every Spaniard that fell into his hands. This was the most spectacular affair in Florida's early history. Religion played no part in it, for Gourgues himself was a Roman Catholic.

About a month after Menendez captured Fort Caroline, he wrote his king that he still held the women and boys saved at that place. He also indicated that among the boys was one born at Fort Caroline.⁵ Here we have a record of the first white child of Protestant parentage born in North America-more than 20 years before the birth of Virginia Dare. The first Protestant white women in North America landed at Fort Caroline and there the first armed clash between white races in this country occurred.

The little vale in which Fort Caroline was situated has been largely washed away by the currents of the river, almost entirely during the lifetime of people now living. Prior to the 1880's there was practically no erosion at that point, but with the erection of the jetties at the mouth of the river strong river currents developed, which were deflected directly

⁵ Menendez to the King, Oct. 15, 1565: Averette translation in *The Unwritten History of Old St. Augustine*.

against the west slope of St. Johns Bluff. These ate the plain away until the government ripped the shore-line with stone to prevent further damage.

St. Johns Bluff today has an average elevation of more than 70 feet above tide-water. Its face is toward the mouth of the river and is very steep. There has been no erosion on that side. From this elevation one sees across the river the same general view that Laudonniere described when he said from here "a man may behold the meadows [marshes] divided asunder into isles and islets, interlacing one another-a place so pleasant that those who are melancholic would be enforced to change their humour."

Regarding the situation of Fort Caroline, contemporaneous French and Spanish records are in remarkable agreement. After a long personal study of the locality with these accounts in hand, together with the judgment of topographical engineers as to the original lay of the land, my conclusions are shown in the accompanying painting, which is believed to be an approximately correct interpretation of Fort Caroline and environs. My appreciation is due Kenneth Friedman, artist, for the fine art work.

**A LETTER OF JOHN INNERARITY TO
JOHN FORBES**
(Arrival of land speculators in Pensacola)

Pensa. [Pensacola] 24th May '17 [1817]

My Dear Sir

Your highly esteemed favor of the 28th February only reached me via N. Orleans on the 29th April.

If I have not been so regular in my correspondence as you have a right to expect, I trust that your goodness will more than excuse me when I state to you that I was for a long time without a single assistant save little Benito Caro, who cannot even copy a letter. Forstall was called to Orleans where he remained sometime-Skeate went to Mobile at my Brothers most urgent request, where he still remains.

The Militia Service became so extremely oppressive and degrading during the reign of Martial law as literally to drive the former away; we were constantly harassed by the Government in every shape & way ; and all this at a time when the clouds lowered thick and heavily around us ; when there -seemed no prospect of safety-our books, papers, property, negroes, my family to place in safety; a thousand things to do and none to aid me: in such a situation and under such circumstances, it would have required a mind that could "scowl defiance on the blasts of fate", a mind of more than mortal temper to have stood calm and collected; meet the crises with firmness, and prepare for a tempest that seem-

This letter is in continuation of the series of documents, survivals of the records of Panton, Leslie & Co. and its successor John Forbes & Co., the publication of which has been continuous in the Quarterly. They are in the possession of Mrs. John W. Greenslade who has transcribed them.

ed to blow from the four winds-Mine, I confess, became oppressed & sunk under the accumulated weight, yet I strove with all my might against the current which was overwhelming me, and am still striving indefatigably to bring up my lee way.

I have postponed until the last moment replying to that part of your important letter of the 16th Ulto. intimating your intention of withdrawing from this Concern at the end of June or December next.

The subject is of too deep interest for me to venture on singly, and I have awaited my Brothers answer. Your wishes of course, are sacred, and the slightest expression of them a law to us, whatever may be the consequences to us, or whatever sacrifices it may be necessary to make.

The more extended the term of your withdrawing your support, the more of course we will consider ourselves as favored-Our obligations to you in every way through a long series of years are at least equal to those due to a kind Patron and Parent, and our debt of gratitude more, far more than our utmost efforts can ever repay.

Nothing can be more equitable than the mode you propose for the valuation and division of the real property. I flatter myself that in the space of one year from hence that part of it in Pensacola can be disposed of to considerable advantage; as a somewhat eager inquiry has already commenced for Houses and Lots; more especially, Water Lots. This proceeds from the *confident* expectation of a very early change.

A Col. Walton of St. Stephen (formerly of Charleston) a Mr Fitz-Simmonds (a relation of a respectable family in the same City) and a Mr Carney, all men of Capital, have been for this fortnight on the look out for purchases, of which they have

made a few inconsiderable ones wherever they could find bargains. Every one in Town has in consequence given a nominal value to their property, and many who were lately eager to sell now hold back in the expectation that the value will soon be greatly enhanced.

These gentlemen will return in about a month; they are desirous of establishing themselves here this Fall, and will be followed by many others.

Pray what is the minimum you would advise me to take for the Whole of our premises? I wish to Heaven we could make one general sell off, and that our lot could be thrown at Matanzas near you; which is my Brother's earnest wish as well as my own, but it is a consummation rather devoutly to be wished than expected, while we have such a Mill stone about our necks-However, Nil desperandum est. If you can by dint of any possibility only fly with the utmost haste to P-a (or to the Seat of Wisdom) as my Brother recommends in the dispatches which accompany, I would fondly anticipate that the result would prove a great stride towards enabling us to shake off our connection with this Country, and transplanting ourselves somewhere on the banks of the Canimar-I should be extremely grieved if you viewed my former "request" of not drawing upon us at that time for silver, in the light of taking too much liberty. It was not so at least intended, but merely the information of our situation.

I pay due obedience to your caveat against any new speculations, and in this spirit, I not only decline addressing Mr M. on the subject of the shipment of Sugar & Coffee to my friend Greeve, but have directed him to place \$2000 say Two Thousand Dollars to your Cr & our debit out of present remises P Bru & Del Barco of flour, lumber, Bills &c.

You may rest assured that all that we can possibly spare with out entirely paralysing our little operations shall be consecrated to your claims on us. We neither have, or can have, any other views, -none so congenial to our wishes. You will not I trust deem it inconsistent with these Professions, if I simply lay before you the inclosed extract from Greeve's letter to me of the 13inst He is not perhaps richly endowed with the fair gifts of a highly polished Education ; but, amply with the nobler gifts of the heart. He has a clear head, sound judgment, firm integrity, and in him industry & punctuality are personified. Parden the warmth & verboseness of this introduction. . . .

Folch is playing a deep & dishonorable game. If he would honestly come forward & make fair proposals for discharging the Mortgage, he might then be met with a spirit of compassion & indulgence. But instead of this he attempts to dispute the Validity of the same and holds out threats (as P extract).

The truth is he wishes to get [illegible] negroes out of my hands and then laugh at me.

The Coulon family are very grateful for the friendly interest you take in their welfare & I believe they will adopt your advice of settling at Matanzas as soon as they can put things in a train, & sell their property here & at Orleans. They have about twenty slaves in all including women and children. The worthy young Guillemard is fully bent on so doing & has written to Orleans to sell their property-This done he says he can master a Capital of about \$10,000 (but I suppose only about 8 or \$9000 CASH even including their house here).

He had a strong desire of going to see you this trip & taking a view of the Country-He would in-

deed be an acquisition-He is ingenious in a high degree & nothing can exceed his industry. There is no vacuum in his life.

But my paper is exhausted & I presume your patience also.

I am, my Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servt

JOHN INNERARITY.

John Forbes Esqr.

BOOK REVIEW

True Relation of the Hardships suffered by Governor Fernado de Soto and certain Portuguese Gentlemen during the Discovery of the Province of Florida, now newly set forth by a Gentleman of Elvas. Translated and Edited by James Alexander Robertson. Volume I., Facsimile of the Original Portuguese of 1556. Volume II., Translation and Annotations. Publications of the Florida State Historical Society, Number 11, Volumes I and II. (DeLand: the Society, 1932, 1933, Pp., 22, clxxx and xxv, 487. \$50.00.)

No one else in this country is so capable of performing the task which Dr. Robertson has just consummated in this translation from the original Portuguese. All previous English translations have been in one way or another unsatisfactory. And if any one is skeptic enough to doubt the accuracy of this new product of Dr. Robertson's pen he has only to compare it with the original, a facsimile of which is to be found in volume I. For making the manuscript available in this form scholars in this country owe a great debt to the Florida State Historical Society.

This de luxe edition of the Gentleman of Elvas is one of the most beautiful examples of the art of bookmaking and typography in recent years. Volume I, besides containing a clear readable facsimile of the original manuscript found in the Lenox collection of the New York Public Library, includes a Foreword by the Committee on Publications of the Society, a Preface by the editor in which are mentioned earlier translations of this basic document for Florida history, a Table of Contents, and a list of members of the Society. Volume II contains the

English translation, together with a Preface in which the editor discusses the companions of de Soto and their hardships, a Table of Contents and list of illustrations, detailed notes, a very valuable bibliographical essay, and an exhaustive index which is characteristic of all of Dr. Robertson's books.

The romance of de Soto's expedition into Florida and the Mississippi valley is known to every school child. It is ever interesting and ever new. Only by persistence and patience were the Spaniards able to penetrate these regions, and de Soto and his companions deserve the greatest of praise. Particularly does the "Gentleman of Elvas" deserve a better fate than that which has hidden his identity behind a cloud of anonymity. Who this great chronicler was no one has yet been able to determine. Dr. Robertson however thinks that something may be found about him if the Portuguese archives of Torre do Tombo could be examined. How fortunate it would be if Dr. Robertson could be granted the assistance necessary to discover this historian's name.

A. CURTIS WILGUS.

The George Washington University.

TO THE MEMBERS

The annual meeting of the Florida Historical Society, for the election of officers and other business, will be held at its headquarters in the Willow Branch Library of the Jacksonville Public Library, Park and Cherry streets, on Tuesday, November 21, 1933, at eleven o'clock A.M. All members are urged to attend or to mail an appointment of proxy in the form below.

FRANCIS M. WILLIAMS, Secretary.
October 15, 1933.

I hereby constitute and appoint

in my place and stead to vote and act upon any and all questions arising at the meeting of the Florida Historical Society (or its adjourned meeting) to be held at Jacksonville, Florida, on Tuesday, November 21, 1933; hereby ratifying and confirming all votes and acts of my said proxy at said meetings.
(date) (signed)

Mail to Francis M. Williams
Secretary, Florida Historical Society
307 Peninsular Life Building
Jacksonville, Florida.

