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## A Tallahassee Alarm of 1836, A letter of Captain William Chandler, U.S.N.

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A TALLAHASSEE ALARM OF 1836

Georgetown, D. C.

17th May, '86

My dear Cousin Julia,

. . . . . I suppose that, once in a while, you visit Tallahassee ; which I remember was, in '36 & '37, a very pleasant little city, of not many handsome, but substantial and comfortable houses of brick and frame, besides some churches ;-built round a knoll and surrounded by dense hammacks, through which diverged roads like the spokes of a wheel. But I remember more particularly its agreeable society, and the beauty of some of the young ladies.

During my first visit in the spring of '36 (then acting 2d Master of the frigate Constellation, and signal officer of the squadron) my dear brother Edward, (whom I had not seen since I first left home, in '26, for the Pacific) was living very near one of those hammacks ; and had sent his wife and child, at dusk, to the center of the "city", where a large number of cotton bales had been rolled, for a barricade, and protection of the women and children against an expected attack by Tiger-tail and his band of Seminoles, who had threatened to have a green corn dance in Tallahassee. There had been a sentinel posted at each road, on the edge of the hammacks, who was to fire his rifle (to be the signal of alarm) on the first discovery of an indian approaching. One of them, who had been a Midn. in the Navy, and was a brother of Mrs. Secy. Forsyth) being, it was said, rather "oblivious" and mistaking a hog for an indian on "all fours", discharged his rifle; about 10 o'clk which set the whole place in commotion.

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Note-This letter was written by William Chandler, Captain, United States Navy, to Julia J. Yonge.

My brother and I had been chatting-together in his parlor, and waiting events (without much dread of Tiger-tail to whom he had been kind) when he suddenly remarked "the indians are coming". Supposing he had plenty of arms in the house, upon my asking for them (having, myself, but a pair of single barreled pistols) I was rather amused when he could only muster an old flintlock musket and a rusty sword! It was not long, however, before the false alarm became known, and quiet restored, and a good laugh, instead of lamentation, all round ; but most of the people, I believe, remained behind the, cotton bales until daylight.

My next visit to Tallahassee was in the autumn of the same year, soon after the death of my brother, where I passed a few days ; and last in '37 ; when Com. Dallas (with his newly wedded wife) being in Tallahassee, had ordered the schooner Grampus (of which I was then acting 1st Lieut.) to bring the Marine guard of the Constellation from Pensacola to St. Marks, to assist in protecting Tallahassee against another threatened attack by indians! And after remaining there several days with my sister-in-law and niece (and in uniform, with epaulets, enjoying myself with the young ladies - particularly at the Fair that was being then held) the Grampus returned to Pensacola, without the Marine guard and its Lieut., but with the Com., his wife, wife's sister Mrs. Duvall, and two colored maids, to whom, except the Com., the little cabin (not near as large in area as my dining room) was given up by the Lieut. Codg. Peck ; who, with the Com. joined us in the equally small ward-room-already occupied by the Master, Dr. and Purser, besides myself! During the passage we had some squally weather, with some sea & much rain, at night; and the ladies being a good deal alarmed, they would every now and then, much to my amusement, poke

their heads thro' the passing-powder scuttles in the bulkhead between the cabin & wardroom, and almost in contact with the heads of the occupants of the wardroom cots and inquire if we thought there was 'any danger; whilst the Com. & Capt., too considerate to accept our cots, would every once in a while, roll off the mess lockers, their improvised bunks. *All together*, it was a jolly time.

When you write to me again tell me what kind of flowers you cultivate, for I have forgotten those of 44 (!) years ago, and only remember the beautiful shrubs, oleander and crape myrtle, and Magnolia grandiflora, whose delicious fragrance I enjoyed so much in camp, when on the "Survey." Dear old Pensacola with its pine barrens and glistening white sand beaches stretching far away on either side of a beautiful bay (once dotted by the half-dozen ships of our squadron) (and in the midst of which the trig little "Grampus", afterwards lost with all on board, was ever conspicuous) will always be associated in my memory with charming yet sad recollections. Of all the officers and civilians, I know of none now living; and but very few of the fair sex who made the place *attractive*. Mrs. Mallory is left to link the present with the past, but where are Pelita and Victoria?

. . . . .

Affectionately,  
W. C.