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ST. JOSEPH, AN EPISODE OF THE ECONOMIC
AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF FLORIDA*

By JAMES OWEN KNAUSS

PART I

[No subject within the wide range of Florida's history has stirred a greater interest than St. Joseph. Because of its quick rise to importance, its still more rapid decline, and the double tragedy of its extinction, an aspect of romance has settled upon the dead town, heightened through tradition and a haze of unreality engendered by the lack of definite records of its life. Dr. Knauss, searching out and bringing together these scanty records, gives us a light, for the first time, to penetrate that mist. - Ed.]

Florida has a number of places within her borders that were once the sites of flourishing settlements of which nothing remains at the present time except overgrown ruins. None of the others that flourished since the beginning of the American occupation equal in human interest and historical importance the town of St. Joseph, located on the bay of the same name, a short distance west of the Apalachicola River. Here there occurred one of the most stirring fights made by man in a courageous but futile effort to surmount overwhelming natural and human obstacles. A study of the struggle reveals many important events in the state's history. Here the first steam locomotive in Florida was operated ; probably the first (surely the second) railroad of the region led to the town ; the first and only constitutional convention in territorial days was held here; and the first important reportorial work by Florida journalists was done in connection with this meet-

*This article is reprinted from an early issue of the *Quarterly* (vol. V. no. 4, April, 1927) because it is still the one comprehensive account of the town, and because that issue was exhausted at once and has been in greater demand since than any other. Part II appeared in the following number (July, 1927) of which larger number were printed, and copies may be obtained from the editor or the librarian of the Society. *Ed.*

ing. In addition to these pioneer events, a consideration of the town's history sheds light on the economic conditions of the Apalachicola region (extending into Georgia and Alabama) in the late thirties and early forties of the nineteenth century, on the financial outlook of the territory during this period, and on the political problems engaging the attention of the inhabitants. It would, therefore, seem well worthwhile to attempt to sketch the circumstances surrounding the growth and decline of St. Joseph.

The real history of the town may be said to begin on March 17, 1835, when the Supreme Court of the United States gave a unanimous decision in the case of *Colin Mitchell et al. v. the United States*.¹ This case was concerned with the question of the ownership of 1,250,000 acres "of land in Middle Florida. A commercial house, Panton, Leslie and Co., starting activities in Florida when England had possession of the territory between 1763 and 1784, had later obtained permission of the Spanish government to purchase this large tract of land from the Indians in order to indemnify the company for losses suffered. This transaction with the natives was completed by a series of treaties between 1804 and 1811. When Florida became territory of the United States, the question of the legality of these purchases arose. After litigation extending over a period of seven years, first in the Superior Court of Middle Florida and then in the Supreme Court of the United States, a decision was made, as stated

1. 9 Peters 711-762. It of interest to note that this was the last case which the greatest of all the Chief Justices, John Marshall, helped to decide, and that the last words written by him in his official capacity were those refusing the plea of the Attorney General for continuation of the case.

of a rival town on St. Joseph's Bay," some twenty-eight miles to the northwest. Since Apalachicola was at the extreme western limit of the Forbes Purchase,⁶ the new settlement would not be within the jurisdiction of the hated 'company. It was, however, located in such close proximity to the river that the enthusiastic malcontents believed they could divert the stream's commerce and thus ruin the old town.

The project was one that might have made reasonable men in more normal times hesitate. It was not only a question of erecting a new town, with wharves and other trading facilities, but means of easy and cheap transportation had to be devised between the river and the bay. A bayou, called Lake Wimico, extended from the river to within a distance of eight miles from the proposed city. This lake, it was believed, would furnish an easy passage for steamers, after some dredging had been done. The intervening land could be crossed either by canal or by railroad. In addition to these obstacles there also seemed some doubt whether the bay 'was deep enough for ocean steamers. However, the promoters were undaunted, and began the most remarkable undertaking that Florida had seen

5. The bay had been the scene of earlier settlements. At least one fort had been erected there by the French. (See Roberts: *An Account of the First Discovery and Natural History of Florida*, London, 1763, p. 12.) According to G. M. West: *Old St. Jo*, St. Andrews, Florida, 1922, p. 4, the earliest interment in the St. Joseph cemetery was in 1831, the date found on one of the few remaining gravestones. This may prove that there was a straggling village here before 1835 or it may simply mean a removal of these bones from some other place (let us say Apalachicola!) and a reinterment at St. Joseph.

6. The land belonging to the tract bought by Panton, Leslie and Co. from the Indians was called the Forbes Purchase, because the name of the company was changed to John Forbes and Co. after the decease of Panton, John Forbes now becoming the senior member of the firm.

above, by the latter tribunal in favor of the successors of Panton, Leslie and Co.

In the fourteen years of American sovereignty over Florida before the case was finally adjudicated, immigrants had settled in the disputed area, apparently without paying any attention to the claims of the company. The chief settlement in the contested district was Apalachicola, of whose history prior to 1835 very little is known.² Its location at the mouth of the Apalachicola River seemed to insure a great future for the infant town, since the stream appeared destined to become the main commercial outlet for the rich cotton district of western Georgia and eastern Alabama. The enthusiastic settlers probably dreamed of a city that would rival New Orleans. In May, 1833, a newspaper, *The Advertiser*, sure sign of a boom in those days, was started by R. Dinsmore Westcott.³ Commerce increased so rapidly that forty thousand bales of cotton were shipped from the harbor in 1835⁴ and numerous steamers plied up and down the river.

The bustling, thriving, and optimistic Apalachicolians were not inclined to pay tribute to the people to whom the United States Supreme Court had allotted the land. They looked about for a way to escape supporting the Apalachicola Land Co., an organization started by the successors of Panton, Leslie and Co., and yet not lose the profitable trade of the region. Somebody suggested the founding

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2. We know that a settlement was there in 1826, since 500 bales of cotton were exported from St. Andrews Bay and Apalachicola during the season ending Sept. 30, 1826. (See *Pensacola Gazette*, October 27, 1826).
 3. See James O. Knauss: *Territorial Florida Journalism*, DeLand, 1926, pp. 29, 109. It is unfortunate that not a single copy of this paper can be located. *The Advertiser* would give many details about the origin of St. Joseph.
 4. *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 10, 1836.

up to that time, or was destined to see for many years to come.

Even before the decision of the Supreme Court was given, the Lake Wimico and St. Joseph Canal Co. had been incorporated by the Legislative Council of Florida to connect the lake with the bay.⁷ Now the work was rapidly pushed. In May, 1835, parties were dispatched to explore the lake, and naturally their reports were very favorable. Another party began sounding the channel of the bay. At about the same time surveyors' started to lay out the new town, which was to be called St. Joseph. The plan of the place provided for wide streets, "in order to give a free circulation to the sea-breezes", which would make it healthy and salubrious.⁸ The streets were laid out at right angles and had such characteristic names as Bay, Commerce, Palmetto, Magnolia, Washington and Columbus.¹⁰

On June 13 the subscription books of the canal company were opened at Apalachicola, and in a few minutes the entire stock was taken. It is significant that the Apalachicolians held three-eighths of the stock, the merchants of Columbus, Georgia, another three-eighths, while remaining quarters was bought by Tallahasseeans.¹¹ This shows clearly the chief interests backing the project. In addition to the discontented residents of the old town, the support of the commercial powers of western Georgia was a potent factor in the development of St. Joseph. We can readily imagine why they were interested.

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7. 1835 Acts,
 8. According to one account, the site of the city was chosen by a Capt. Gottsborough.
 9. All this information is found in an article in the *Pensacola Gazette* of June 20, 1835, copied from *The Advertiser of Apalachicola*.
 10. West, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
 11. *Jacksonville Courier*, July 2, 1835, quoting the Tallahassee *Floridian*.

Their investments in Apalachicola were threatened by the decision of the Federal tribunal, and hence their feelings were similar to those of the residents of that city. The purchase of one quarter of the stock by persons in Tallahassee proves that the venture was also a child of the economic conditions then prevailing over the entire country. This was one of the recurring periods of intensive speculation and overdevelopment, which economists now recognize as one of the phases of a business cycle. Everywhere there was a wild orgy of real estate development, aided by cheap paper money issued by banks with enormous capitals. The chief financial institution of Florida was the Union Bank, with headquarters at Tallahassee. With its large apparent assets, any project which interested its stockholders was bound to be a success, even if temporary and fictitious.¹² The interest of the banks in St. Joseph is often brought to light. Thus in 1836 it was claimed that the Presidents of the Union Bank of Florida, of the Bank of Columbus, and of the Commercial Bank of Apalachicola, and the ex-President of the Bank of Marianna, were financially interested in the town.¹³ In the same year Ben Chaires, a banker and planter of Tallahassee, was president of the Lake Wimico and St. Joseph Canal and Railroad Co.¹⁴ This close connection between the banks and the town must always be remembered by those who wish to understand its history.

12. For banking in Florida, see Caroline Mays Brevard: *A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times*, edited by James Alexander Robertson, DeLand, 1924, Vol. I, pp. 202-227.

13. *Apalachicola Gazette*, May 4, 1836. This authority may be doubtful as the did everything to discredit the St. Joseph undertaking.

14. *St. Joseph Times*, October 24, 1838, in an advertisement dated August 13, 1836. The words "and Railroad" had been added by the Legislative Council, 1836 Acts, p. 8.

The next steps taken by the promoters were tire construction of a railroad from Lake Wimico to the bay, and the erection of terminal facilities at both ends. Towards the close of October, or at the very beginning of November, 1835, it was reported that one hundred carpenters and two hundred laborers were employed on the railroad and that two or three hundred more were daily expected from the north.¹⁵ The exact date of the completion of the railroad is not known, but in an advertisement dated August 13, 1836, it was announced that the storage houses and wharf on Lake Wimico were completed, that those on the bay were almost finished, and that the railroad with passenger and freight cars, and two improved Baldwin locomotives were ready for work.¹⁶ It may be that the road had been completed in the spring, and that mule power had been used as a means of locomotion at first, but it is improbable that much business had been done, as the advertisement specifically stated that the directors of the company had refrained until then "from fixing a date for the completion of the works of the company."

The formal opening of the new road probably occurred on Monday, September 5, 1836, for the newspapers of Florida and Georgia give an account of the events of that day thus -¹⁷

LOCOMOTIVES IN Monday, the 5th inst., a Locomotive drawing a train of twelve cars containing upwards of 300 passengers passed over the railroad, connecting the flourishing town of St. Joseph with the Apalachicola River. The trip, a distance of eight miles, was performed in the short

15. *Pensacola Gazette*, November 14, 1835, in an article from *The Advertiser*.

16. *St. Joseph Times*, October 24, 1838.

17. *Georgian of Savannah*, September 24, 1836, taken from the *Floridian of Tallahassee* of September 17.

space of twenty-five minutes. The engineer is confident, from the superiority of the road and engine, that the route can be accomplished in eight minutes.¹⁸

While the railroad was being completed, the promoters were not idle in other directions. The shoals at the mouth of Lake Wimico were removed and the channel widened.¹⁹ The sale of the lots of the new town was announced for December 14, 1835.²⁰ The settlement was incorporated by an act of the Legislative Council of 1836. This provided for the establishment of a free school, for the support of the port, for the regulation of taverns, markets and quarantine, in addition to prescribing the form of government.²¹ The Bank of St. Joseph, with a capital of \$1,000,000, and the St. Joseph Insurance Co., with a capital of the same amount, were also incorporated by this session of the council.²² It must be added, however, that both of these enactments were annulled in July, 1836, by the United States Congress.²³

The necessity for advertising for the successful development of the new enterprise was not forgotten. The home office of the publicity department was apparently *The Advertiser* of Apalachicola, still in the hands of R. Dinsmore Westcott. In November, 1835, he issued the first number of the *St. Jos-*

18. Whether this road or the one from Tallahassee to St. Marks was the first one in Florida is not known, although Brevard, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 176, gives precedence to the St. Marks venture. This seems to be made without sufficient proof. There is no doubt whatsoever which road employed the first steam locomotive. The locomotive at St. Joseph antedated by more than a year the first one at Tallahassee, which began operations either in November or December, 1837. (See *Floridian*, December 30, 1837).

19. *St. Joseph Times*, October 24, 1835.

20. *Pensacola Gazette*, October 21, 1835.

21. 1836 Acts, p. 25.

22. 1836 Acts, p. 49 and p. 57, respectively.

23. Brevard, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 220-221.

eph Telegraph, although he probably still had his publication office in Apalachicola. Soon afterwards the two papers were merged, if indeed the old journal was not permanently suspended before the new one appeared. Sometime before March 10, 1836, the *Telegraph* was moved to St. Joseph.²⁴ Westcott and his superiors were extremely energetic in advertising the town, and, it must be admitted, their rival, the Apalachicola Land Co., was just as industrious in decrying it, with the result that every Florida newspaper of the period and many in the adjacent states were filled with material relating to the enterprise. So many communications poured in on the editor of the *Floridian* of Tallahassee that he gave notice that he would publish no articles about Apalachicola and St. Joseph except as paid advertisements.²⁵ Before the end of July, 1836, Westcott was superseded by Peter W. Gautier, Jr., a man whose name was destined to become so closely allied with St. Joseph in the popular mind, that whenever people spoke of the one they also thought of the other.²⁶

Gautier was the son of Peter W. Gautier, a Methodist Episcopal minister of Georgia, who had settled on St. Andrews Bay in 1827. Later the family moved to Marianna, where the son practiced law and became active in politics. At the same time he conducted a hotel at that place. In March, 1836, we find him proprietor of the City Hotel in Apalachicola. What induced him to become editor of the *Telegraph* is not known, but he was undoubtedly the right man for the place. He was the best stylist among the newspaper men of the territory; he was keen, shrewd and decidedly not over-scrupulous.

24. *Apalachicola Gazette* March 10, 1836.

25. *Floridian*, March 19, 1836.

26. Practically all of the material on the newspapers and the editors is obtained from Knauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30, 31, 32, 76, 77, 111, 113.

His paper, the name of which he changed to the *St. Joseph Times* in November, 1836, became the most quoted sheet in Florida, chiefly because of his wit and cleverness.

A description of living conditions in St. Joseph at the height of the boom has come down to us. R. J. Moses, the secretary of the railroad, wrote an account of his experiences²⁷ when he tried to secure living accommodations in the town in 1837 or 1838. After he had unsuccessfully attempted to rent a house for six hundred dollars a year, he had one made to order at Charleston, South Carolina, for three hundred dollars. However, wages were so high in St. Joseph that the final cost of the house after erection was four thousand dollars.

When men of prominence and influence engage in a costly undertaking and enter into such bitter rivalries as did the Apalachicola Land Co. and the promoters of St. Joseph, the scene of action will almost inevitably be at times transferred to the political arena. The "Saints" as they were popularly called, immediately attempted to retard the development of the old town through legislative enactment. With the representative, E. J. Wood,²⁸ of Franklin County, which at that time included in its boundaries the two towns, taking the lead, a bill was rushed through the Legislative Council of 1836, removing the county seat from Apalachicola to St. Joseph.²⁹ This was undoubtedly a case of "cast-

27. A copy of a part of this journal is in the possession of J. C. Yonge, Pensacola. According to internal evidence, the original was written more than thirty years later, after the Civil War. It must accordingly be handled with caution as historical source material.

28. Wood was one of the leaders of the St. Joseph project. He was a director of the Lake Wimico and St. Joseph Canal and Railroad Co., one of the incorporators of the St. Joseph Insurance Co., and of the St. Bank. He built Convention Hall in which the Constitutional Convention met in December, 1838. (See *Apalachicola Gazette*, December 5, 1838).

29. 1836 Acts, p. 1.

iron nerve" on the part of the Saints, for the construction of their town had hardly begun at the time when the law was approved on January 17, 1836. But alas! sometimes fortune does not favor the bold ; the national Congress annulled the law. Probably the chief cause of this annulment was the activity of Joseph M. White, the territorial delegate to Congress who was interested in the Apalachicola Land Co., being one of the trustees appointed to sell its lands. ³⁰ White did everything in his power to thwart the growth of St. Joseph. ³¹ His activity in this direction may have been one of the causes of his retirement in 1837 from the position of territorial delegate, an office that he had held for twelve years. His successor, Charles Downing, was less hostile to the town. ³²

The attempt of 1836 was not the last one to remove the seat of county government from Apalachicola. The bill was reenacted in 1837 with the following caustic preamble : "Whereas the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida at the last session upon a petition of the inhabitants of Franklin County enacted and declared the city of St. Joseph to be the public site of said County, and whereas, the said Act has been annulled by the Congress of the United States, contrary to usage and the local rights of the people of Florida ; and whereas a large majority of the citizens of Franklin County at a recent election have expressed by vote their preference as to the location of the

30. *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 17, 1836.

31. See, for instance, his long letter to a gentleman in New York, published in the *Apalachicola Gazette* of March 10, 1836, and another one in the same paper of March 31, 1836.

32. See his letter in the *St. Augustine News* of May, 1840, in which he urges the U. S. Congress to appropriate money for the erection of and courthouse at St. Joseph.

county seat.³³ The United States Congress apparently remained obdurate, and Apalachicola continued to be the seat of government for Franklin County.

The next political move was the annual election of a delegate to the Legislative Council of the territory. St. Joseph proposed Peter W. Gautier, Jr., while the opponents put up Hiram Manley.³⁴ The former, well-known and popular, was elected, much to the consternation of the supporters of the old town.³⁵ However, during the next session of the Council he displayed as much wisdom as shrewdness. The two important bills passed by the body which related to St. Joseph were in all probability sponsored by him. The first one provided for the formation of a new county, to be known as Calhoun, from portions of Franklin, Washington and Jackson counties. St. Joseph was chosen as the county seat. It was probably the wisest thing that could be done under the circumstances and was so recognized by the Apalachicolians, whose public spokesman, the *Apalachicola Gazette*, commented thus: "The Legislative Council will thus be free (if their powers should prove equal to the task), to legislate their city into something like nominal im-

33. 1837 *Acts*, p. 3. The part of this article relating to the political game may, in its emphasis on the role played by the leading individuals, not do justice to the influence of public opinion. This undoubtedly in favor of St. Joseph at first. In 1836, E. J. Wood declared that four-fifths of the enfranchised inhabitants of Franklin County had voted for him, after he had openly pledged himself in favor of St. Joseph. (See *Apalachicola Gazette*, April 9, 1836.) On the other hand, the loyal citizens of Apalachicola drew up in 1836 a petition beseeching the Legislative Council not to remove the seat of government,—a petition that did not arrive in Tallahassee until the bill had been approved. (See *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 10, 1836.)

34. *Apalachicola Gazette*, October 4, 1837.

35. *Apalachicola Gazette*, November 11, 1837.

portance, without running foul of our rights and interests." ³⁶

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

The other law mentioned above designated St. Joseph as the meeting place of the convention that was to draw up a constitution for Florida. ³⁷ This may be considered the greatest political triumph ever won by the Saints. In the passage of the bill, Gautier's hand appeared more than once. The opposing *Gazette* quoted a letter from him in the issue of February 7, saying that the bill was now up for the third reading. On the 19th, after the law had passed, the same paper declared, "Says Fizzy ³⁸ to Peter, scratch my back and I'll tickle your elbow." Since the proposition suited the fancy of both parties, Peter scratched the bank and Fizzy tickled the town. Honors did not come singly to Gautier, for almost coincidentally he was appointed by the United States Government, Marshal of the Western District of Florida. ³⁹

After St. Joseph had been chosen as the convention town, the promoters and inhabitants began to make active preparations for the reception of the notables. E. J. Wood had charge of the erection of a building in which it was hoped that the meetings would be held, ⁴⁰ although the edifice of the Methodist Episcopal Church was also available. ⁴¹ Wood's place, which was called Convention Hall, had its

36. *Apalachicola Gazette*, January 27, 1838.

37. *Apalachicola Gazette*, February 19, 1838.

38. Probably Richard Fitzpatrick, member of the Council from Dade County.

39. *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 5, 1838. He had clerk of the U. S. District of Middle Florida in 1836. (See *Apalachicola Gazette*, July 27, 1836.)

40. See note 28.

41. See *Journal of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates to form a Constitution for the People of Florida, held at St. Joseph, December, 1838*. (Hereafter to be referred to, as *Journal*), St. Joseph, 1839, p. 12.

interior walls hung with portraits of famous statesmen,-that of Washington being placed above the chair of the presiding officer, and those of contemporary living statesmen on the side walls.⁴² The energetic Gautier, sensing the importance of the occasion and realizing the money value of complete reports of the convention, made thorough preparations to secure full accounts of the proceedings. He engaged another man to assist him in taking notes while the Convention was in session.⁴³ This was the first real reportorial work of any magnitude attempted in Florida. The portions of these reports that are still in existence form a valuable part of our knowledge of the convention.⁴⁴

The voters of Calhoun County also showed a wise interest in the approaching event by electing as delegates two men who in prestige and ability ranked among the foremost in the gathering of the territory's representatives. One was William P. Duval, a native of Virginia, who had come to the territory in 1821 as first judge of East Florida,⁴⁵ and had been governor from 1822 to 1834. In a thorough knowledge of Florida's problems and needs, he was the outstanding figure of the convention. The other member from Calhoun was Richard C. Allen. He had been closely associated with St. Joseph almost from its beginning, having been one of the directors of the Lake Wimico and St. Joseph Canal and Railroad Company as early as 1836.⁴⁶ At the time of his death in 1841, he was judge of the United States Court, District of Apalachicola.⁴⁷

42. *St. Joseph Times*, March 23, 1839.

43. *Floridian* of Tallahassee, December 15, 1838.

44. Most of Gautier's reports that are preserved are found in Knauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-226.

45. Brevard, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 72.

46. *St. Joseph Times*, October 24, 1838.

47. *Star of Florida*, of Tallahassee, August 18, 1841.

We can imagine the tense excitement of the Saints as Monday, December 3, the day set for the opening of the convention, approached. When the delegations from East and Middle Florida arrived on the steamer *New Castle* from St. Marks, either late on Saturday or some time on Sunday,⁴⁸ the residents of the town knew that the long awaited day was at hand. When the meeting was called to order at twelve o'clock noon on December 3, forty-six members were present⁴⁹ out of a total of fifty-six.⁵⁰ After a temporary organization had been perfected, one of the residents of St. Joseph, the Rev. Peter W. Gautier, opened the convention with prayer. Little work was done on the first day, except to examine the credentials of the members. Then the convention adjourned until the next day, thus giving the delegates and the inhabitants a further opportunity to get acquainted.⁵¹

The Saints learned to know some of the most influential men in the history of American Florida prior to 1870. There were present at least two, probably three, future governors of Florida: Robert Raymond Reid, at the time of the convention United States Judge of the East District of Florida and within a year destined to succeed Richard K. Call as territorial governor ; William Marvin of Key West, who more than twenty-five years later was chosen provisional governor at the close of the Civil War; and Thomas Brown of Leon County, probably

48. The *New Castle* left St. Marks with the delegations on Saturday (see *Floridian*, December 8, 1838), but whether the steamer entered St. Joseph Bay or Lake Wimico is not known.

49. *Apalachicola Gazette*, December 5, 1838.

50. *Journal*, p. 4. This number includes the delegates from Hillsborough Co., from which no returns had been received.

51. This article will discuss the famous convention from one angle only, namely, the viewpoint of the residents of St. Joseph. It is the second most notable political gathering in Florida's history, the Convention of 1861 alone being more important.

the same man who was governor of the state from 1849 to 1853. The first three United States Senators from Florida were members of the convention: James D. Westcott, Jr., David Levy Yulee,⁵² and Jackson Morton. The last mentioned was destined to be chosen as a delegate to a convention historically much more important than any gathering ever held in Florida, the famous convention held in Montgomery, Alabama, in February, 1861, which drew up the provisional constitution of the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis to the presidency of the Confederacy.⁵³ Five of them sat in the Secession Convention which declared the state no longer a member of the Union, in January, 1861: John McGehee, who became president of the Secession Convention,⁵⁴ George T. Ward, Samuel B. Stephens, Jackson Morton, and James G. Cooper. E. Carrington Cabell became a Florida representative in the United States Congress. At least five members of the future Supreme Court of the state were members of the St. Joseph Constitutional Convention: Walker Anderson, Benjamin D. Wright, Thomas Baltzell, Leslie A. Thompson, and Albert G. Semmes. The first three became chief justices. Not only were the future political and judicial leaders of the state at this gathering, but the two greatest newspaper editors of territorial Florida were delegates: Benjamin D. Wright, the able editor and publisher of the *Pensacola Gazette*, and Cosam Emir Bartlett, the clever and kindly leader of the *Apalachicola Gazette*, who was no stranger in St. Joseph, and who was respected if not liked there. Another able editor, Joshua Knowles of the *Florida Watchman* of Tallahassee, was chosen secretary of the

52. His name at this time was David Levy.

53. Brevard, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 51-52.

54. See the April and October numbers (1926) of the *Quarterly* for material on Judge McGehee.

Convention, but he was of course not a delegate. Later he became an eminent publisher, minister of the gospel, and public man in Georgia. All in all, it may be truthfully said that never before nor since have so many able men been gathered at one time in a Florida town, and that town not four years old.⁵⁵

The people of St. Joseph had ample opportunity to become acquainted with these celebrities, as the convention continued in session to January 11, - a duration three times as long as had been anticipated.⁵⁶ Though the proceedings ordinarily were of little interest to the populace, there were occasions when the attention of almost everybody was aroused. Their delegate, Duval, lost the chairmanship of the convention by one vote to Judge Reid,⁵⁷ but as a partial compensation for this disappointment he was made chairman of the committee on the executive department, and Allen of the committee on the judicial department.⁵⁸ Through all the sessions, these two men played very prominent parts. During the final days, when the outlook for the successful completion of the constitution was very dark, when the convention had come to an apparent stalemate over the adoption of the important Article XIII on "Banks and other Corporations" after long, tedious and acrimonious debates, then Allen saved the day by proposing on January 5 the fourteenth section of the article, which was immediately adopted by an overwhelming vote.⁵⁹ With the signing of the completed document on the afternoon of

55. Most of the information the subsequent activities of the delegates was obtained from the works of Brevard and Knauss, and from Rowland H. Rerick: *Memoirs of Florida*, Atlanta, 1902.

56. See *Journal*, p. 118, in the presiding officer's farewell address.

57. *Journal*, p. 6.

58. *Journal*, p. 12.

59. *Journal*, p. 86.

January 11, 1839, St. Joseph was assured of a prominent place in the annals of Florida.

It is unfortunate that we do not know how the inhabitants viewed this long stay of the delegates. Doubtless there were social events, but no record of them has come down to us. In fact, these events may have not been so numerous as one imagines, for the sessions were long and arduous, and beginning with the week of December 24, the convention took no holiday except Sundays. If the occasion may have been disappointing from a social standpoint, it must certainly have been a success for economic and advertising purposes. The merchants and printer undoubtedly profited. The latter, Peter W. Gautier, Jr., not only did the miscellaneous work, such as printing two hundred copies of the rules of order of the convention,⁶⁰ but also published one thousand copies of the Journal and five hundred copies of the constitution.⁶¹ This ranks St. Joseph with Pensacola and Tallahassee, the only three places where official territorial pamphlets and books were published.

No matter how eager the inhabitants of Calhoun County had been to have the convention meet in its borders, they were not satisfied with the results of the delegates' deliberations. This dissatisfaction was plainly manifested when the voters of St. Joseph in the election held in the following May cast but fifty votes in favor of the constitution and two hundred and thirty-three against the instrument—the largest adverse majority recorded.⁶² What were the causes of this overwhelming opposition cannot be determined. It may have been due to the fact that

60. *Journal*, p. 10.

61. *Journal*, p. 67.

62. *Quincy Sentinel* February 19, 1841. official report of Gov. Reid to the legislature. The territory as a whole, however, adopted the constitution by a very small majority.

the banks of the territory were not well protected by the constitution, or too well protected. Both of these apparently contradictory reasons were advanced by the opponents of the instrument. It seems probable that many of the Saints believed that the constitution did not safeguard the financial interests sufficiently, for we must remember that the future of the town was, in their opinion, to a large extent dependent upon the banks. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that the Apalachicola, who were not so closely connected with the banks, were almost evenly divided on the question of ratification.⁶³

After the convention, politics was not to any great extent used as a means to advance the interests of the town. It is true that Peter W. Gautier, Jr., after having been elected without opposition to the Florida House of Representatives in the fall of 1840,⁶⁴ was chosen speaker of that body in 1841.⁶⁵ This honor, however, was bestowed upon him, not to help St. Joseph, but to show the esteem in which he was held by his colleagues.

63. *Apalachicola Gazette*, May 11, 1839.

64. *The Commercial Advertiser*, October 17, 1840. This issue also declared that Gautier was "decidedly one of the most agreeable and correct writers in the Union. We add no more, for praise often spoils youths of promise."

65. *Pensacola Gazette*, January 16, 1841, *et al.*