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RICHARD KEITH CALL, FLORIDA TERRITORIAL LEADER

by SIDNEY WALTER MARTIN

One of the most colorful figures involved in the destiny of the Territory of Florida was Virginia-born Richard Keith Call. He was an Indian fighter, served two terms as governor, and left behind him an impressive political career. Most of his early years were spent in Kentucky; and the recollection of a happy childhood in that state often caused him to return for visits after his permanent home had been established in Florida. He spent several years in a military academy in Tennessee, but with the outbreak of the War of 1812, the restless and impetuous youth left the academy to join an expedition to hunt down a hostile band of Creek Indians who had murdered a family on the Tennessee river. The Indians were not found, and Call returned to his studies at the academy. But the attraction of military life got the better of him, and he left school again, permanently this time, and joined a volunteer company under General Andrew Jackson to serve against the Creek Indians.¹

Call served faithfully in Jackson's army as a third lieutenant throughout the Indian campaign which ended with the battle of Horse Shoe Bend and a victory for the whites. During the campaign every one of Call's company, fearing death from the Indians or starvation, deserted and went home. The loyalty which prompted the young lieutenant to remain and fight in the ranks despite the desertion

NOTE: This paper, which was read before the last annual meeting of the Florida Historical Society, is, in substance, a chapter of the author's dissertation, "The Formative Period of Florida History," hence it relates to only a part of Call's career.—Ed.

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1. Caroline Mays Brevard, "Richard Keith Call," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, I (July, 1908), 5.

of his entire company, won for him a place of esteem with Jackson. This was the beginning of a warm friendship between the two men, and of a military and political career which took the young soldier to the Territory of Florida. He was given a commission in the regular army, and after the War of 1812 promoted to the rank of captain. Call was with General Jackson in the first Indian campaign which the General made into Florida against the Seminoles, and he was with him again when Jackson was sent to the Territory to become its provisional governor.²

Arriving in Pensacola, Call became so enthralled over the Spanish town that he decided to make his home there. He resigned his commission in the army and took up the practice of law, but his friendship with Jackson continued. After Jackson left Florida and returned to his home at the Hermitage in Tennessee, an intimate correspondence was carried on for several years between him and Call. The following letter, written by Jackson to Call on November 15, 1821, indicates the intimacy of the two men.

I had the pleasure last evening of receiving your two letters of the 14th ult [in those letters Call had thanked Jackson for all he had done for him]. Nothing can afford Mrs. Jackson and myself more pleasure than in hearing from you often, and particularly that you are well, and doing well. Your gratitude expressed of my friendship towards you, shews the godlike virtue of a heart susceptible [*sic*] of friendship. Believe me when I first met you in the field, your youthful appearance, your manly and soldier like deportment, attracted my attention, and when mutiny and desertion pervaded my

2. C. M. Brevard, "Richard Keith Call," *loc. cit.*, 6-7.

camp, when situated in the howling wilderness with the savage yell it was your soldier like and honorable conduct . . . that drew my particular attention to you . . .³

Jackson as governor was anxious to appoint Call to a high position in the Territory, but the appointive power was taken from him by President Monroe, much to Jackson's disgust. Mrs. Jackson wrote that

There never was a man more disappointed than the General has been. In the first place he has not the power to appoint one of his friends, which I thought was in part the reason of his coming [to Florida]. But far has it exceeded every calculation; it has almost taken his life. Captain Call says it is equal to the Seminole Campaign . . .⁴

Call became so prominent as a lawyer in Pensacola that his many friends endeavoured to get him to announce his candidacy for the Territory's delegate in Congress in 1822, but Call felt that he was not strong enough to make a successful race and declined to run. Jackson congratulated him upon the decision not to make the race, saying that after he had become better situated financially, he might launch out upon a political career. "Recollect as long as you are rendering important service to your country you will be extolled," said Jackson, "but should these services reduce you to want, then you will find, that your greatest eulogist will desert you . . ."⁵

3. Jackson to Call, November 15, 1821, Jackson Papers. These papers are located in the manuscript division of the Library of Congress.

4. Mrs. Jackson to a friend in Richard Keith Call's journal, 247. The journal is located in the library of the Florida Historical Society in St. Augustine.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 254.

Call's popularity grew fast, and by 1823 he was considered a brilliant lawyer and one of the foremost in Pensacola. Honors came to him in rapid succession in that year. In January, President Monroe appointed him brigadier-general of the militia of West Florida. Jackson, who was always ready to promote the interest of his young friend, had suggested the appointment. Call was also made a member of the Pensacola Municipal Board, and a delegate to the Legislative Council which sat that year in St. Augustine.⁶

During the summer of 1823 Call, for the third time, was requested to become a candidate for Congress; this time he gave his consent. The election was a complete triumph for Call, who polled 100% of the votes in Escambia county, and a large majority of all the votes in West Florida. His popularity had not spread to East Florida, for there he received only six votes, but J. M. Hernandez, Alexander Hamilton, and H. Bethune, the other three candidates, split the vote in such a way that Call received a majority of the total number of votes in the Territory.⁷ This victory brought further advancement and recognition and was the beginning of his political career.⁸

As a delegate from a territory, Call had no vote in Congress but he attended its sessions faithfully, and worked hard for his adopted Florida. His main interest was in internal improvements, and he was successful in securing appropriations for the construction of roads, lighthouses, bridges, and canals in the Territory. He was also responsible for an appropriation of \$100,000 for the construction of a navy yard and depot somewhere on the west coast

6. Daisy Parker, "R. K. Call, Whig Leader," *Tallahassee Historical Society Annual*, IV (1939), 13.

7. *Pensacola Floridian*, June 14, 1823.

8. *Niles' Weekly Register*, XXIV, 336.

of Florida. The yard was finally established at Pensacola. Call had the assistance of Andrew Jackson and John H. Eaton in securing these appropriations.⁹ Jackson had on many previous occasions befriended Call, and his influence combined with that of Eaton proved most effective to the newly elected Florida delegate at this time.

But bitter opposition developed in Congress against the Jackson-Eaton-Call group of Florida benefactors. The opposition claimed that Florida was getting more than her proportionate share of the Federal appropriations. This feeling was strongly expressed by John Randolph of Virginia who opposed all assistance to Florida, and declared the Territory worthless.¹⁰ But Congressional interest in Florida was maintained throughout the Territorial period, and Florida continued to be favored with Federal appropriations.

Call was married to Mary Letitia Kirkman on July 15, 1824, at the Hermitage near Nashville, and the young couple found much pleasure in the company of the General and Mrs. Jackson. Mrs. Call returned to Washington with her husband, but their tenure there was very short, as Colonel Joseph M. White was elected to Congress from Florida in 1825.¹¹

Upon his return to Florida in 1825, Call moved to Tallahassee, and became interested in the economic development of that section. He bought a large tract of land on Lake Jackson, a few miles north of the city, and was later appointed receiver of public lands for Middle Florida. This office gave him the opportunity of becoming a speculator in lands, and an investor in many projects connected with the development of the Territory. The

9. Call journal, 261.

10. *Ibid.*, 266.

11. *Ibid.*, 270.

income from his land sales netted him a handsome sum from year to year, but he never made a show of his money. He lived a plain life, enjoying the profits from his labors in a very modest way.¹²

Through the years the friendship between Call and Jackson became more mature as their political ties strengthened. The ambitious young politician never passed up an opportunity of letting the old General know how much he thought of him. When Call announced to him the birth of his first child in September, 1825, he lamented the fact that it was not a boy, for, he said, it would have been named for "my dearest and best friend— Andrew Jackson."¹³

By nature a politician, Call continued to manifest an interest in politics while living at his plantation on Lake Jackson, and took issue with some of the leading figures in Florida over matters pertaining to the Territory. He engaged in a bitter controversy with the editor of the *East Florida Herald* over the conduct of Judge Joseph L. Smith of St. Augustine. The affair was none of Call's immediate concern, but he publicly lambasted the *East Florida Herald's* position. The editor replied: "We take more than great pleasure to tell the General we reciprocate the feelings." The editor of the *Pensacola Gazette*, who had prior to this time been friendly to Call, joined the *Herald*, and Call soon found himself one of the most criticised men in the Territory. But he continued to have many political friends despite the opposition he had created in East and West Florida.¹⁴

When Jackson was elected President of the United States in 1828, Call felt certain that he would receive a political appointment from his old friend.

12. Lula Keith Appleyard, "Plantation Life in Middle Florida," (Unpublished M. A. thesis, F.S.C.W., 1940), 33.

13. Call to Jackson, September 23, 1825, Jackson Papers.

14. *East Florida Herald*, October 25, 1825.

Call's interest and enthusiasm were at fever's pitch throughout the presidential campaign and, though the people in Florida had no voice in the election, Call aroused much concern over the outcome in the Territory.

After Jackson's inauguration he gave his friend a complimentary appointment in 1829; one that required much tact and diplomacy, but one of short tenure. Call was sent to Cuba as a special agent to secure from the Spanish authorities the archives pertaining to Florida, which had never been yielded by the Royal Government of Spain. While there, Call was entertained in the highest Cuban society.¹⁵ His mission was unsuccessful, as were all the other similiar ones; but doubtless this had nothing to do with his receiving no further honors from the President. His political ambitions had been whetted and he was naturally disappointed by his forced return to private life in Tallahassee.

In 1833 the opposition to Joseph M. White as Territorial delegate rallied and asked Call to become a candidate for that office. He accepted; but White, who had held the office for six years had made many friends, and Call's attempt to win the election was futile. He was a-gain sorely disappointed, and wrote to Jackson that the "nullification element" defeated him.¹⁶ The question of nullification had not reached Florida in any great proportions, however, and probably played little part in the election. The people of Florida were simply not ready to exchange Joseph M. White for Richard Keith Call.

The next few years of Call's, life were filled with bereavement and anguish. He lost five daughters, his only son, and his wife by death. Furthermore

15. Call journal, 282.

16. *Ibid.*, 283.

the Indians of Florida began a series of raids. Duty called, and in 1835 Call again became actively engaged in military life at the age of thirty-five.¹⁷

A few years prior to this Call had organized a band of volunteers for protection against and to overawe the Indians. The red men had begun to get restless and Call had sensed this need. With the outbreak of depredations Call and several hundred mounted volunteers marched to Fort Drane on the Withlacoochee river, where they were joined by General Clinch with his contingent of the U. S. Army. A battle ensued on December 31, 1835, known as the battle of Withlacoochee, the first organized battle of the Seminole war. Osceola, the shrewd Indian chieftain, had heard that the white army was attempting to corner him in the swampy lands along the river and defeat him decisively before he could escape to more favorable territory. He had only 250 warriors with him in the swamp, but he decided to intercept the white army as it attempted to cross the river to the southeast bank where he and his warriors were situated. Realizing that he was many times outnumbered, Osceola arranged his men in ambush at the ford of the river where he expected the whites to cross. But General Clinch, who knew Indian tactics, ferried his men across the river some distance north of the ford, and surprised the waiting Indians by an attack on their flank. Here on the south side of the river, in the thick hammock and scrub land, a fierce battle raged for several hours. Finally the Indians withdrew to safety in the thick swamp lands farther south. The battle was fought without the aid of General Call's volunteers, for very few of them crossed over and took part. Some accounts are that 460 volunteers under Call were spectators of

17. *Ibid.*, 284.

the battle from across the river, and that only 27 crossed to join Clinch. Call was bitterly criticised by the Army and by his opponents in Florida for not rendering Clinch more aid and was accused of ordering his men to stay on the safe side of the river.¹⁸

Call and his volunteers retired to their homes and Call spent the next few years trying to explain his action in the battle. Clinch and others of the regular army were very bitter toward Call, but no official criticism was registered with the War Department since he commanded only a band of volunteers. After this incident the volunteers were never held in much respect by the regular army. The newspapers took up the story and made life miserable for Call. His friends and fellow-volunteers took his side of the argument of course, and most of the volunteers vowed that they could not possibly have crossed the river at the particular point where the battle was fought. In 1837, while the controversy still raged, N. P. Hunter wrote to Call as follows:

In reply to your question whether you gave an order prohibiting the men from crossing and joining in the fight, I must say that I heard no such order, and if one had been given, I must have heard it, as I was near you the greater part of the time, until Genl. Read came to the opposite bank of the river and called to you, "Come over, or they were all [will be] lost." I heard you frequently order and encourage the men to cross over to support those who were

18. Sprague, *Florida War*, 92 ff. For light on this controversy see this *Quarterly* the issue of October 1940 (XIX, 128-139). There, Samuel E. Cobb of the staff of The National Archives has brought together and edited a number of contemporaneous documents from the Archives and from other sources. These documents are upon both sides of the issue. Sprague was an officer of the U. S. Army. *Ed.*

engaged on the opposite side . . . But this was found utterly impossible and abandoned. The bank was so precipitate that a horse after taking a few steps would plunge into swimming water, and carry himself and rider almost under, wetting arms and ammunition . . . The reason assigned by Genl. Clinch why the volunteers did not cross over the river and join in the fight, namely, that they were prevented from doing so by your order . . . I know to be extremely erroneous, and the main reason . . . was the utter impossibility of crossing the river with the means provided.¹⁹

Despite severe criticism and censure by the people and the newspapers over the Withlacoochee affair, Call, remained in the front ranks of political and military life in the Territory. His banner year in public life was 1836. Andrew Jackson was still President of the United States and, while he had been tardy in placing Call in any permanent high ranking office, he had not forgotten his friend. Much to the displeasure of Call's many enemies, Jackson appointed him governor of Florida on March 16, 1836.²⁰ Call wanted the governorship but hated to relinquish his position as brigadier-general to his successor, Leigh Read.

Hardly had Call become acquainted with his new duties before he again turned his attention to the Indian hostilities. Feeling that the armed forces needed his leadership, he yearned for the battlefield. Before being appointed to the governorship, Call wrote to Jackson: "I would be highly gratified to command the army and believe I could soon bring the war to a close."²¹ After all his greatest desire

19. Call journal, 317-348.

20. Jackson to Call, March 16, 1836, Florida Territorial Papers.
Located in the National Archives.

21. Call journal, 354.

was to be an outstanding military leader, and he kept the matter constantly before the President. He all but begged Jackson to give him command of the Florida army. One of his letters reads, "Nothing have I so much desired as to have the direction of the Florida War . . . The sooner I am placed in command, the sooner I shall be prepared for the field . . ." ²² Finally in May, 1836, less than two months after he was appointed governor, Call received the following message from the War Department:

Should General Scott leave or have left the Territory, and should Genl. Clinch not continue in office, you are then authorized to assume command of the Regular forces and militia serving in Florida, and to employ the same in the best manner for the defence of the country, and the speedy subjugation of the Indians. ²³

Governor Call, meanwhile, had been making elaborate plans for a summer campaign against the Indians, which he hoped would end the war. He was, therefore, deeply gratified and overjoyed with the word that he was to take command of all the Florida forces in case Scott and Clinch left. Both of these generals had become disheartened with the prosecution of the war, and were on the verge of leaving the Territory when Call received his order. Scott left immediately, and Clinch, who was at that time in St. Marys, Georgia, resigned his command on June 18, 1836. ²⁴ Call assumed command at once, since he had already been ordered to do so by Secre-

22. R. K. Call War Department correspondence, June 1, 1836, Call collection in Florida Historical Society library.

23. Cass to Call, May 25, 1836, War Department Military Book. Located in the National Archives.

24. Clinch to Cass, June 18, 1836, Secretary of War Document Files. National Archives.

tary of War Lewis Cass.²⁵ Call's joy knew no bounds. He was not only governor of Florida but also commander of the Florida forces.

There is no doubt of Call's sincerity and of his honest efforts to rid Florida of the Indian menace. The continued depredations aroused within him a fiery passion to avenge each hostile act committed by the Seminoles. He convinced the War Department that a summer campaign would result in a successful termination of the war, and he was given the authority to raise several thousand volunteers in Florida.²⁶ In addition, the Governor called upon Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and other Southern States to send volunteers to Florida's aid.²⁷

But Call's summer campaign plans met with every hindrance imaginable. His enemies in Washington opposed him, and the many jealousies and hard feelings that existed in Florida were obstacles thrown in his way. His volunteers became dissatisfied because he could not secure their pay, and Call had to resort to a draft to raise men for the defense of their own homes. The Tennessee volunteers, on whom he had relied so heavily for the summer campaign, did not arrive until the middle of September, and that delay caused further embarrassments. General Call's ability came in for criticism when the post at Micanopy was abandoned to the Indians in the late summer of 1836. Micanopy was only ten miles from the all-important post of Ft. Drane, and after the loss of the outer defense, the place soon fell into the possession of the Indians.²⁸

The belated summer campaign got under way on September 19, when General Call marched with the

25. *Florida Herald*, July 2, 1836.

26. Cass to Call, June 18, 1836, War Department Military Book.

Also *Florida Herald*, July 9, 1836.

27. *National Intelligencer*, August 2, 1836.

28. Call journal, 386-388.

Tennessee brigade from Tallahassee to "Suwannee" or Old Town. From there they marched to Ft. Drane and reoccupied that important post.²⁹ After a short stay there, and a number of skirmishes with the Indians, Call and his brigade pushed on towards the Withlacoochee river, where he hoped that contact with the Indians could be made. Meanwhile General Leigh Read had been sent to establish a supply depot near a proposed place of encampment on the river, but when Call arrived at the given point with his soldiers they found no such station. After searching in vain for Read and the food supplies which he was supposed to bring, Call commanded the brigade to return to Fort Drane on October 17, for food and other provisions were almost exhausted. The incident was embarrassing for Call, for he was responsible for the expedition into the Withlacoochee swamp. The Withlacoochee swamp had been the scene of his earlier defeat, and the retreat to Fort Drane, despite the dire need of supplies, was certain to give rise to further adverse talk. More in fault that Call, however, was Read, who failed to establish the food depot at the right time.³⁰

The futile expedition was ill-timed and badly planned, and was condemned by the authorities in Washington. Some officials felt that the Indians could easily have been defeated had Call pushed on into the swamp at that particular time.³¹ Probably for the first time in his life, Andrew Jackson angrily criticised Call's action. He is reported to have said that he wished the Indians would murder every man in Florida., so that the women might get new husbands and raise children equal to the defence of their Territory.³² Call was mortified and

29. Letter book, September 23, 1836, Call collection.

30. Call journal, 393-394.

31. *Ibid.*, 404.

32. *Ibid.*, 405.

disappointed, so much so that he became ill and weary of the task assigned to him. The command was promptly taken from Call, and given to General Thomas S. Jesup. Benjamin F. Butler, Secretary of War *ad interim*, wrote Jesup on November 4, saying that the "retrograde movements of Governor Call . . . have for a time suspended offensive operations." Butler referred to the feeble state of Call's health, and explained that the campaign against the Indians would require the "promptitude and energy which the crisis demands. The President has therefore determined to commit to you the command of the army serving in Florida, and the general direction of the war against the Seminoles . . ."³³

Call's removal from command of the army came as an insult rather than a punishment, and resulted in a heated correspondence with the War Department, of which Joel R. Poinsett was Secretary. For a matter of record, Poinsett wrote to Call for the full details of his abandoned campaign, but the Governor lost his temper and overlooked entirely the reason for the inquiry. He treated it as a censure for presumed misconduct, and refused to cooperate in giving the details. Since he refused to communicate directly with either Poinsett or the President, there was more reason than ever to believe that he was at fault.³⁴ Call's pride was deeply injured by his removal and his sullen actions were a result of that fact alone. Realizing that Call was a very sensitive person, and that his recent actions were not those of a normal person, President Jackson attempted to arbitrate matters

33. Butler to Jesup, November 4, 1836, War Department Military Book.

34. Compiled correspondence between Call and War Department, November, 1836, through January, 1837, War Department Military Book.

immediately before leaving the presidency. In January, 1837, he explained through the War Department that "it was originally designed and so made known to you Call at an early day, that the command should be taken by General Jesup on his arrival in Florida." He further explained that he was anxious for Call's health, and felt that a rest was, for his own benefit.³⁵ Call's stubbornness still prevailed, and he insisted upon a court of inquiry but the President thought that was unnecessary. Because he valued Call's friendship, Jackson regretted that the unpleasantness had occurred, but the temperamental governor nursed the grievance, and finally let it, carry him from the ranks of the Democratic party, though he denied his break with the party.³⁶ When Martin Van Buren succeeded Jackson in 1837, the controversy reached a new peak of intensity. Governor Call exposed Van Buren's lukewarm interest in the Florida War, and the incompetence, as he called it, of Poinsett, the Secretary of War. It was not surprising that Call became an enemy of the Van Buren Administration and a target of much criticism from Washington.³⁷ Finally in 1839, Van Buren asked Call to relinquish his duties as governor of the Territory, although he had been assured of another three-year appointment. The President gave as his reasons for rescinding the appointment, first, that Call had taken too active a part in national politics; second, that many citizens of Florida had asked for his removal; and third, that his ridiculous course in the war called for his removal from public life.³⁸

35. Jackson to Call. January 14, 1837, War Department Military Book.

36. Daisy Parker, "R. K. Call, Whig Leader," *loc. cit.*, 12.

37. R. K. Call War Department correspondence, January 17, 1838, Call collection.

38. Correspondence included in Reid to Secretary of State, December 10, 1840, State Department Miscellaneous Letters. National Archives.

Call became exceedingly bitter towards Van Buren and the Democratic administration, and in the coming presidential election gave his whole-hearted support to William Henry Harrison, candidate of the Whig party. Floridians watched with interest the rising popularity of the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider" candidate despite their inability to vote in the election. Call spent three months in the Northern states during the summer of 1840 making political speeches against Van Buren.³⁹ He could not forget the treatment he had received from the President and his cabinet. He continued to call himself a Democrat but others looked upon him as a Whig; Call's future career in politics in Florida was thereby ruined. Shortly after the election, Call wrote:

I am a democrat, such as democrats were under the administration of Mr. Madison, but I have adopted none of the heresies of modern democracy, especially those of Florida. I am no disorganizer of the moral formation of society, I am no repudiator of the public faith. I am no believer that the baptism in this newly revealed democracy, redeems from all moral and political sin . . .⁴⁰

Call received very little support from the people of the Territory in his campaign for the Whigs. The *Pensacola Gazette* exclaimed after the election was over: "The election for President is all over but the shouting, and for our part we feel very little inclined to take part in this."⁴¹ As was expected, much of Call's popularity was gone, but the Whigs in Florida boosted him as the leading Territorial

39. E. C. Long, "History of Florida," 150. This is an unpublished manuscript found in the Call collection in the Florida Historical Society library.

40. E. C. Long, "History of Florida," 154.

41. *Pensacola Gazette*, November 21, 1840.

citizen.⁴² He realized that he was finished with the Democrats in Florida, and it was only in that party that one might have political success.

Meanwhile Robert Raymond Reid, judge of the East Florida district, was appointed Call's successor. The new governor, a South Carolinian by birth who had moved to Georgia, received the appointment through the influence of Joel R. Poinsett. Reid was heartily welcomed by the Democrats of the Territory who, by 1839, were thoroughly disgruntled and dissatisfied with the conduct of Call. Reid followed a more conciliatory course toward the national administration, hence he received more cooperation from Washington; but the Indian problem was no nearer being solved by Reid than by Call. In fact, Reid showed such poor judgment about the war and methods of defense that he was rebuked by many of his so-called followers. Tallahassee citizens became angry when he took soldiers out of action against the Indians and stationed them in the city. They charged that he did this in order to create a military despotism in the capital city.⁴³ Many newspapers throughout the South condemned Reid, among the most critical was the *St. Augustine News*.⁴⁴ Reid explained to the Secretary of War that disorders in the form of lawlessness among the people in Tallahassee had become so violent that it was necessary to retain part of the militia in the city in order to maintain peace.⁴⁵

After his inauguration as President of the United States in March 1841, Harrison began to displace Democratic office holders with members of his own party. Party favoritism, as was expected, reached

42. Daisy Parker, "R. K. Call, Whig Leader," *loc. cit.*, 17-18.

43. Citizens of Tallahassee to the President, August 5, 1840, State Department Miscellaneous Letters.

44. *St. Augustine News*, July 17, 1840.

45. Reid to Poinsett, August 12, 1840, Joel R. Poinsett papers. Located in the Library of Congress.

into the Territory of Florida, and Richard Keith Call was re-appointed governor within a few days after the presidential inauguration took place. Reid's short and unsuccessful term came to an abrupt close.⁴⁶ Call's re-appointment was none too popular in the Territory; although his Whig friends and followers received the news with much pleasure. Benjamin A. Putnam wrote to the Governor as follows:

Your friends were all much gratified by the intelligence of your re-instatement to the office of Governor from which you had been so rudely removed by a corrupt and wicked party. The same evening after the information was received we got out a cannon [in St. Augustine] and fired a glorious salute of about 50 rounds, continued at intervals through the night . . .⁴⁷

No man ever worked harder to reinstate himself in the good graces of a people than did Call among the Floridians, but all to no avail. The political wave on which he rode to the governorship in 1841 was not popular in Florida, for the Whigs constituted a minority of the voters. And Call further alienated himself from the Democrats by his close alliance with Benjamin Putnam, who violently opposed that party's policy in the Territory. When David Levy, whom Putnam called "that little Jew politician,"⁴⁸ won the congressional election in 1841 from Charles Downing, Call's chances for a cooperative term dwindled rapidly. Another thing which hurt Call's second administration was the

46. *National Intelligencer*, August 17, 1841. Reid lived only a few months after he left office. He became ill of conjunctive fever and died on July 1, 1841, at his home, Blackwood, seven miles from Tallahassee. W. T. Cash, *Story of Florida II*, 624.

47. Putnam to Call, March 26, 1841, Call collection.

48. *Ibid.*

death of President Harrison, only a few weeks after the inauguration.

Vice-President Tyler, who succeeded to the presidency, followed a policy more favorable to the Democratic party than to the Whigs, despite his earlier affiliation with the latter group. With the Democratic party in power everywhere about him, Call received little cooperation from Washington or from his people in the Territory.

Among the issues with which Call had to deal between 1841 and 1844 were Indian troubles, banks, and the question of statehood. He solved none of them, although he strove conscientiously to do so. His messages to the Legislative Council in 1842, 1843, and 1844 were filled with earnest pleas for cooperation among the political factions in the Territory.⁴⁹ But Call was never again effective or influential with the people of Florida. He was succeeded in 1844 by John Branch. After a year of inactivity, Call ran for the office of governor on the Whig ticket in the newly created State of Florida. In 1845, but was defeated by William D. Moseley, a Democrat.⁵⁰

Call played an important role in the development of Territorial Florida, but he lost in the game of politics. From the beginning, he showed little aptitude as a politician. He gained most of his political offices through his friendship with Andrew Jackson, but lost his Democratic standing through his hostility to Martin Van Buren. Call had many close personal friends, yet many bitter enemies. His disposition was such that after having formed a dislike for a man, there was never any reconciliation. And having broken with the Democratic

49. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the Territory of Florida*, 4 Session (1842), 8; *ibid.*, 5 Session (1843), 13; *ibid.*, 6 Session (1844), 7.

50. *Pensacola Gazette*, July 5, 1845.

party, he was forced to affiliate with the minority Whigs, hence he no longer had a chance for success at the polls.

Call was virtually inactive in politics the remainder of his life. When the slavery controversy between the North and the South became bitter he aligned himself with the Unionists, and tried to save Florida from secession although he was a slave holder. He died on September 14, 1862.⁵¹

51. Daisy Parker, "R. K. Call, Whig Leader," *loc. cit.*, 25.