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TAYLOR COUNTY HISTORY AND CIVIL WAR DESERTERS

by W. T. CASH

When Florida seceded from the Union, Taylor county was four years old, it having been created from Madison county on December 23, 1856. As a functioning political unit its age was at least six months less, for the members of its first board of county commissioners were not qualified until March 27, 1857, and its first judge of probate, one of whose duties was to preside at board meetings, was not commissioned until July 4, following.

Where was the first board meeting held? The act creating the county states "that until the necessary buildings may be erected for holding the Court ¹ at the County Site of Taylor County, the courts of said County shall be held at the house of Daniel Bryant," ² but with the information at hand this house cannot be located.

The first commissioners' meeting may have been held October 2, 1857. At any rate on that date the board bought forty acres of land from the Internal Improvement Board for county site purposes for \$75.00 and soon afterward ³ erected a log courthouse on it. This was the beginning of the present town of Perry, which probably got its name from the governor just coming into office—Madison S. Perry. However, when the first post office at the county seat was established in 1869 it was called "Rose Head." The name was changed to Perry early in 1875, but Florida maps had carried both names for at least six years.

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1. Although the principal courts held were circuit and justice of the peace courts, the county commissioners at times functioned as a court.
 2. Bryant's name was on the Madison taxroll before the creation of Taylor and those of Taylor for 1858 and 1859. No land was assessed to him in Madison, and on the Taylor rolls mentioned there was no separation of land and improvements making it impossible to say whether a taxpayer owned land or not. Such evidence as we have indicates that Bryant, like many other earlier settlers, occupied land he did not own.
 3. The exact date cannot be ascertained, but it was probably during 1858.

County's Rank in Population and Wealth

At the time of its first census (1860), six counties had fewer inhabitants than Taylor's 1,384. They were Dade 83, Brevard 246, Manatee 854, Orange 987, Volusia 1,158, and Hernando 1,200. Only three, however, had less taxable wealth: Dade \$15,000,⁴ Brevard \$100,240, and Holmes \$217,623. Less than one-fourth of Taylor's total assessment of \$289,476 was the \$64,400 valuation of its 116 slaves.⁵

The county's poor showing in population and wealth was because of its late settlement. There were at least three reasons why early Florida immigrants did not go to this area. Most of the land was hard to clear and to outward appearances poorer than that to the north and west. There was dread of the Indians because the numerous swamps furnished them good hiding-places. The St. Augustine-Pensacola Road ran several miles north of the present northern boundary and the main routes traveled by settlers moving farther inland entered Florida far to the northeast.

A Probable Settlement of the Spanish Period

There is good reason to believe there was a mission⁶ at or near the Thomas Mill shoals on the lower Fenholloway river during the first Spanish period and that Thomas Mill Hammock, a fertile tract of land about one and three-fourths miles to the southwest, was cultivated by the Spaniards or by Indians⁷ under Spanish supervision.

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4. The writer has been unable to find a Dade taxroll for 1860, but the state census of 1855 gives a valuation of \$15,001. It must have been less in 1860 for between 1855 and then its population decreased from 97 to 83.
 5. The U. S. census figures are 125, but this may have been taken at a different time from that when the assessor's roll was prepared.
 6. The name was "Ivitachuco" (it also has other spellings). It is mentioned by Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* (Atlanta, 1902) and shown on the map facing p. 456 of John Gilmary Shea, *The Catholic Church in Colonial Days* (New York, 1886).
 7. Many Indians occupied the hammock during the Florida War, 1835-42 (see *Niles' Register*, LVIII, 243.)

The Thomas Mills

The Spaniards at some time during their first occupation opened a road from St. Augustine to Apalachee by way of the Alachua district, crossing the Suwannee river some miles above the present Old Town, the Steinhatchee at the falls, and the Fenholloway at or near the Thomas Mill shoals. William Bartram mentions this road ⁸ in his *Travels* (London, 1794) :

“Next day, early in the morning, we crossed the river [the Suwannee], landing on the other shore opposite the town⁹ . . . After crossing, we struck off from the river into the forests sometimes falling into, and keeping for a time, the ancient Spanish high road to Pensacola now almost obliterated.”

Sometime prior to 1840 (probably during the first Spanish period) mills were erected at the Thomas Mill shoals at a point where the Fenholloway is separated by an island into two parts, the right or western stream usually having an approximately two foot fall, except in times of high water.

The mills are mentioned in Colonel William Bailey's report of his campaign in 1840, part of which is given in the statements below:

“These two encampments [Indian camps] were about two miles south of the Jackson trail, and between the foot-log on the Econfeenee and Thomas's Old Mills on the Fenholloway.” ¹⁰

Who was the owner of the Thomas mills and when were they operated? The writer does not know, but there is a possible clue : During at least part of the decade 1680-1690 Don Tomas Mendez Marquez ¹¹ was the owner of an hacienda in the Alachua district and large herds of cattle, which we have reason to believe ranged on both sides of

8. *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, etc.*, London, 1792, p. 230.

9. Tallahaschte, a Seminole town on the east bank of the Suwannee river, thought to be at what is now called “New Clay Landing.”

10. Andrew Welch, *Oceola Nikkanochee* (London, 1841), p. 227.

11. Tomas's home was probably near the Suwannee river in the present Gilchrist county.

the Suwannee. Tomas's wealth was doubtless known to thirty-five French pirates who in 1682 were active along the West coast of Florida, for in June they sailed up the Suwannee river to his hacienda, capturing him and his family and offering to release them for a ransom of money and 150 head of cattle. The pirates were soon surprised by a band of Timucua Indians who rescued Tomas and his household.¹²

Could this Tomas have been the owner of the fields Bartram found in 1774 in the Old Town Hammock¹³ and of the Thomas¹⁴ mills on the lower Fenholloway?

Certainly the Thomas (or Tomas) who owned the mills must have been a person of more than ordinary importance for his name is still applied to at least two islands (Thomas' island and Thomas Mill island), a creek (Thomas' run), and a good-sized hammock (Thomas Mill hammock.)¹⁵

James H. Sloan, a deputy surveyor working under the Surveyor General of Florida in 1847, made a survey of township 5, south, range 6, east, in which the Thomas mills were located, showing what he calls "Thomas Mill road" entering the township from the southwest corner of section 33 of township 4, south, range 6 east, thence through section 5 of township 5, south, range 6 east, thence in a slightly southwesterly direction to the middle of the west side of section 8, same township and range, thence southeastwardly through the same section to the mill site on the Fenholloway river. Notation is made on the plat book, in the Commissioner of Agriculture's office, from whence this information was obtained, that one David Thomas had surveyed the exterior lines of this township in 1825.

If, as the writer believes, the wealthy Spaniard Don Tomas was the owner of the mill, the mill road shown on the plat book must have run about thirty miles to the San Pedro fields shown on the Stuart-Purcell map of

12. See Mark F. Boyd, "The Fortifications at San Marcos de Apalache," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XV (July 1936), 5.

13. Bartram, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

14. Tomas in Spanish is Thomas in English.

15. Called "Thomas' hammock" in *Niles Register*, LVIII (June 20, 1840), 243.

1778 giving the route from Pensacola to St. Augustine. Joseph Purcell, who prepared the map, states that the San Pedro fields must have once been in a large and flourishing Spanish settlement. The fields were in the vicinity of the present Mosley Hall, and were a few miles west or southwest of the San Pedro mission, itself about eight or nine miles west of the Suwannee river.¹⁶

Andrew Jackson in Taylor County

During Jackson's campaign in Florida to punish the Seminoles, one of his subordinate commanders, the half-breed Creek General William McIntosh, had a fight with the Indians led by Peter McQueen, near the Natural Bridge on the Econfina, April 12, 1818. General McIntosh, in giving an account of the battle wrote, "I heard of Peter McQueen being near the road we were traveling, and I took my warriors and went and fought him . . . When we first began to fight them they were in a bad swamp, and fought us there for about an hour, when they ran and we followed them three miles. They fought us in all about three hours. We killed thirty-seven of them and took ninety-eight women and children and six men prisoners, and about seven hundred head of cattle, and a number of horses, with a good many hogs and some corn. We lost three killed, and have five wounded."¹⁷

This was apparently the only fight the American forces under Jackson had within the present Taylor county.

Florida War Operations in Taylor County

During parts of the years 1838 and 1839, while the Florida War of 1835-42 was in progress, General Zachary Taylor commanded troops in this area. Writing from Tampa Bay, July 20, 1839, he said:

"I reached the Istenhachee [the present Steinhat-

16. See Mark F. Boyd, "A Map of the Road from Pensacola to St. Augustine, 1778," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XVII (July 1938), 15-23.

17. James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York, 1861, 3 vols.), II, p. 456.

chee] river . . . on the 18th December, [1838] and found four companies 6th infantry under Major Noel, who had been actively employed in opening roads, erecting defenses, store houses, & c. . . .

"I put him into immediate motion, together with the troops who accompanied me, to examine the swamps and hammocks of the Istenhachee, Econfinny, and Finihallo-away . . . On the 30th a large camp, supposed to contain one hundred and twenty people, was discovered in a large hammock between the Econfinny and Finihalloaway. This was surprised, and all the effects taken from it; such, however, was the dense cover of the enemy that nothing more decisive was accomplished."¹⁸

That General Taylor, who resigned his command in May, 1840, did not fully clear the area he described in his report of June 20, 1839 is shown by the following item taken from *Niles' Register* of June 20, 1840:

"We learn from the *Floridian* (Tallahassee) that Col. Bailey, with a battalion of Florida volunteers, has returned from a scouting expedition in fine health and spirits. They found no Indians till passing the Econfena, three towns were discovered, in Thomas' [Thomas Mill] hammock and destroyed; one of them had seventeen lodges. It is supposed that the Indians inhabiting them must have numbered about one hundred. They fled on being discovered, and were pursued in vain, owing to the denseness of the swamps. Capt. Hall shot one who was nearly white. He was a chief, and it is conjectured is the same fellow so often noticed in the attacks on frontier families. He was fairly run down before he was shot. The party had been pursued for several miles, but our troops were unable to come up with them. Considerable plunder was taken. The Indian killed had 60 or 70 bullets in his pouch. The troops started on the 16th for Deadman's bay."

General Zachary Taylor reported that he found four companies of the 6th Infantry under Major Noel, who had been actively employed in opening roads and con-

18. John T. Sprague, *The Florida War* (New York, 1848) p. 223.

structing defenses. The forts they built ¹⁹ were on the Econfina, Fenholloway and Steinhatchee rivers. In a letter from the United States War Department the following information concerning these forts is given : ²⁰

Fort Andrew-On left bank of Fenholloway; erected March 2, 1839 ; abandoned June 6, 1840.

Fort Frank Brook-Near mouth of the Steinhatchee ; erected Nov., 1838 ; abandoned June, 1840.

Fort Mitchell-On left bank of south branch of Fenholloway ; erected Feb. 2, 1840 ; abandoned May 28, 1840.

Fort Hulbert-Seventeen miles northwest of Fort Frank Brook and on or near the Fenholloway river ; erected Feb. 2, 1840; abandoned June 13, 1840.

Fort Pleasant-On Econfina about two miles down from present town of Shady Grove. Erection and abandonment dates not given.

Twenty-four persons stationed at these forts during their occupation died of disease or were killed, twenty being at Fort Pleasant and four at Fort Andrew. Two at Fort Pleasant were killed by Indians and one at Fort Andrew died from wounds received. One at Fort Andrew was shot by a guard. All others died of disease.

Early American Interest in Area

Settlement was on the way, for in 1836 the Legislative Council passed the following act:

"The Fenholloway River in Madison County, is hereby declared, and is hereafter, to be recognized as a navigable stream up to the mouth of Rocky Creek.

Littleton Myrick, Samuel B. Richardson, and Neil Campbell, shall be, and they are hereby, appointed commissioners, who, or a majority of them, shall have full power and authority to direct and superintend the opening and removing any obstruction in said river; and they are hereby declared to have full power and authority to do and perform all acts and doings that shall become necessary to effect the same.

It shall not be lawful to erect any bridge or other impediment across said river, or to make any obstruction therein, by which the free navigation thereof may be obstructed; and all such bridges, impediments, or obstructions, are hereby declared common nuisances, and may be proceeded against and removed as such ; and if any person

19. In so far as the present Taylor County is concerned.

20. The exact words of the letter are not quoted. The writer's intent is to clarify the meaning for the reader.

or persons, shall raise, create, or build, any such bridge, impediment, or obstruction, he or they shall be liable to double the damages sustained by any person or persons by reason thereof, and shall also be liable to indictment for a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars: *Provided, however,* this act shall not prevent the erection of any bridge, or other works, which shall not obstruct the free navigation of said river for boats laden with cotton or other produce."²¹

Had not the Seminole War intervened, there is little question but the settlement of the present Taylor county would have begun ten years earlier than it did. One man, Simeon A. Smith, acquired approximately 2,000 acres of land some six miles south of the present Hampton Springs in 1839. He may have been one of the soldiers under General Taylor there, as this was about the time the general's campaign ended. Although Smith possibly had his eye on the excellent timber tracts on Okefinokee creek, he seems to have let it go for taxes, for his name does not appear on any Taylor county tax rolls.

First Settlers

It can be stated, however, that actual settlers began moving in before the end of 1844. Although no entries are listed for that year, it was often the case that settlers lived on land several years prior to buying it. Sometimes after moving into an area they either wanted time to pick and choose, or it was difficult to get money for the necessary entry fees.

The first land entry by an actual settler may have been that of Mary Sever²² who on June 16, 1845, bought a good-sized tract just west of the present site of Eridu, and south of the present Madison county line.

All the early land entries, except that of Simeon A. Smith, who was certainly not a settler, were just south of the present northern Taylor county line, in township 2, south, ranges 6 and 7 east. Between the Mary Sever

21. Leslie A. Thompson, *Digest of the Statute Law of the State of Florida* (Boston, 1847), p. 517.

22. Mary Sever may have never lived on the land, but William H. Sever, doubtless a close relative, entered land about three miles to the east, which he is known to have occupied, a little more than two years later.

entry and 1850, Silas Overstreet, Bryant Sheffield, Cornelius English and Mary Overstreet, entered land in township 2, range 6, and James Wallace and William H. Sever in township 2, range 7.

Some settlers who moved into the present Taylor county by or soon after 1850, but did not acquire land until years later if ever, were Nathan Smart, John W. Mixson, John E. Jenkins, Sr., John H. O'Steen, Henry Donaldson,²³ E. F. Ezell, John M. Towles, Robert M. Hendry, Richard Harrison, Green B. Hill, Boyett D. Poppell, James J. Mixson, Starling Parker, Henry F. Smart, Gabriel Harden, Savage Strickland, Joshua J. Adams,²⁴ Rice Mathis, Francis Roundtree, Daniel Bryant, Green B. Harrell, W. C. Carlton, J. R. Mott, C. L. Powell, Darling Sapp, Alexander Ezell, Robert Henderson, Redden English, Allen Coker, W. R. Whiddon, Z. O. Lovett, John Catlett, W. N. Johnson, W. M. Townsend, Wyche Fulford, H. T. Brannen, William R. Bevan, James M. Faulkner, J. H. Ellison, J. A. J. Collins and Calvin Davis.

A Private School Contract

That at least some of these settlers were interested in educating their children is shown by the following contract made in 1850, between John W. Mixson and four settlers who desired a school.

ARTICLE OF AGREEMENT

Entered Into this day Between John W. Mixson on the first part and we the Under Assigned on the second part Which Will Shew that we the subscribers on the second part do Agree to pay Said Mixson one Dollar per Month per Scholar for two Months payable. Viz In Corn pork or Bacon at Cash price, And its fairly Understood this school Continues At the Same House²⁵ the time Specified Above and that Said Mixson Faithfully Teaches Such Branches As Reading Writing and Arithmetic The time Specified Above According to Law and to Commerce Forthwith After the close of the present Quarter Which Will be on or

23. A grandson is now a clerk in the Perry post office.

24. Thomas B. Adams, a Jacksonville lawyer, is a grandson.

25. This probably meant that a school then being taught there was to be continued.

Before the 25th of Oct. 1850 Monday following to Commence Subscribed.

Truly yours Ever and Affectionate And Most truly Yours
John W. Mixson

Subscribed

Nathan Smart 3

John W. Mixson 3

Mary Rogers 5

27 Maria A. Jenkins 2

Harriet E. Parker 2

John E. Jenkins, Sr., a settler in the community where Mixson taught his school, hearing of the discovery of gold in California, in 1848 or 1849,²⁸ drove an ox-team the 3,000 intervening miles to the land of gold. After a four years absence he returned enough improved in financial condition to buy several hundred acres of land and erect a water mill on Rocky creek about four miles northwest of the present Perry. The nine-room frame house he soon afterward built on his land was undoubtedly of lumber sawed at his mill and was probably the only house in the county at the time not of log construction.

Early Communities

By 1855 there were settlements in the vicinities of Shady Grove, Pisgah, Thomas Mill Island, Oakland, Barker Hammock, Lake Bird, Blue Creek, Sunnyside and Carlton Spring.²⁹

Probably surpassing all the other communities was Pisgah, the settlement where John W. Mixson taught the school mentioned above. Near the schoolhouse, almost certainly the first ever built in the county, a well dug before the Civil War did duty for forty years or more and was still in service when the writer taught there in 1900.

26. From a photostat in the Florida State Library. The original contract is in possession of Mrs. W. H. Hines of Cross City, Fla.

27. Maria A. Jenkins was probably the wife of John E. Jenkins.

28. These dates are believed to be substantially correct. Information was received from an early settler and one or more descendants of such settlers.

29. Some of these communities have borne more than one name. For example, Sunnyside was afterward (and probably before) known as the "Vann" or "Big Muddy" settlement. The Thomas Mill Island community was a generation ago merely known as "the Island." It is now almost if not quite abandoned.

The first post office in Taylor county was located in this same Pisgah community. It was established May 6, 1854 and Nathan C. Smart, a signer of the Mixson school contract mentioned above, was made postmaster.³⁰

Taylor County Created

Further evidence of growth of this area is indicated by the introduction of a bill in the Florida House of Representatives, November 26, 1855, to organize the County of Taylor. The cause of the failure of this bill is unknown, but it may have been because many thought the area included within the proposed county was large enough for two.

On November 26, 1856, James W. McQueen, one of the representatives from Madison county, gave notice of intention at some future day to introduce a bill to organize two new counties out of the county of Madison. The House Journal of December 10, 1856 states that Mr. McQueen that day, pursuant to previous notice, introduced a bill to create and organize the counties of Lafayette and Taylor. After this was amended somewhat it unanimously passed December 17. The Senate passed the bill two days later with 14 votes for and three against. Governor Broome signed it December 23.

Although Taylor county had begun to function as a separate governmental unit and the place for a county seat had been chosen before the end of 1857, its first tax roll was not approved by the county commissioners until June 4, 1858. This roll showed 173 poll tax payers and 67 others³¹ with a total property valuation of \$279,152. The other rolls through 1861 give the following taxation figures:

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30. Smart, like many others of the time, had not made a land entry, but a few years later acquired a tract described as the north half of the northwest quarter of section 3, township 4, south, range 7, east. It is about 4 miles northwest of the present Perry.
31. Others included persons above 50 years of age, out-of-county persons owning property in Taylor and business firms.

Year	Polls	Others	Total	Total valuation exclusive of poll tax ³²
1858	169	86	240	\$292,167
1859	182	111	293	285,046
1860	177	118	295	289,476
1861	164	118	282	325,671

The increase of population from 1,384 in 1860 to 1,453 in 1870 shows that growth had reached a standstill. This was not caused by the war for Madison and numerous other counties which had greater economic losses than Taylor grew rapidly during the 1860-1870 decade. The railroad which was completed from Jacksonville to Tallahassee before the war was probably the main cause of population increase in north Florida.

Settlers' Names Perpetuated

Notwithstanding the emigration from Taylor county during the years before and following the Civil War, many had no intention of leaving. One will still find those bearing such early settlers' names as Albritton, Donaldson, Cox, Blue, Carlton, Hendry, Mixson, Mathis, Williams, Green, Parker, Poppell, Houck, Lundy, Ezell, Johnson, Willis, Woods, Davis, Rowell, Brannen, Towles, Deal, Strickland, Whiddon, Cruce, Gamble, Denmark and numerous others.

Some of these names and those of persons long gone are preserved in such place-designations as Wallace Pond, Powell Hammock, Jordan Pond, Barker Hammock, Drew Slough, Bevan Creek, Ewing Spring, Keaton Beach, ³³ Hampton Springs, Smith-McCuller Creek, Jonesville fishery, Faulkner Spring, ³⁴ and Camp Carlton. ³⁵

Homes and Customs of Settlers

Taylor county pioneers lived simply but substantial-

32. Fifty cents was assessed against each person subject to a poll tax.

33. The Keatons did not come until after the war.

34. Now called "Fenholloway Spring."

35. Now known as "The Campground."

ly. Of 295 persons on the tax roll of 1860, 181 persons each had 10 head of cattle and hogs or more, 102 had 25 or more, and seventy-eight from 50 to 1,500. There are good reasons for believing that had the true figures been substituted for those on the tax rolls they would have more than doubled these amounts. But being substantial property owners does not indicate that they lived in costly residences.

With the exception of the nine-room Jenkins home on Rocky creek, mentioned in a former paragraph, there was probably not a frame house in the whole county. The average settler lived in a one-room cabin with a front porch or front and back porches ; however, numbers of the more well-to-do had either double-penned or hip-roofed log dwellings. A double-penned house was one of two log pens united by a hallway and having a "stick-and-dirt" chimney at the end of each pen. Nearly always these houses had front and back porches called piazzas, extending the full length of the building on each side. Sometimes there was a second story called the upstairs, but oftener, to provide the extra room the second story furnished, plank or ceiling-board rooms were constructed on the back piazza. A hip-roofed house had a roof at right angles to and lowered from that over the single log pen first set up, which served to cover one or more so-called backrooms. Like double-penned houses, dwellings of this type generally had front and back porches, and likewise a room or rooms were frequently erected on the back porch. Close to many of the larger houses were log kitchens where cooking and eating took place. These were often connected with the main dwelling by walks which might or might not have roof coverings.

Even the simplest dwellings had front yards full of rose bushes, cape jessamine, four o'clocks, primroses, rosemarys, honeysuckles and others, and near the more pretentious ones, in addition to the plants mentioned, were altheas, arbor vitae, cedars and magnolias. Nearby those homes were nearly always mulberry and chinaberry

trees. Outside the front gates wateroaks were frequently set to become large trees within a few years.

Most of the furniture in these homes—chairs, tables, shelves, clothes-presses and whatever else, was home made. Many chairs were manufactured at local chair-makers' shops, but not a few families sat on benches. Cooking was nearly all done on fire-places inside the houses, but some persons had roofed cookplaces on the outside. These were elevated platform-like structures overlaid with six inches or more of sand, on which the cookpots were arranged.

The settlers cooperated with each other almost one hundred per cent, helping out at log-rollings, rail-splittings, house-raisings, fodder-pullings and hog-killings.

Only one or two settlers in any community had a sugar-cane mill and this was not only used by its owner but his neighbors, who paid an agreed-upon amount of syrup, or brown sugar, as the case might be, for its use. Cane-grindings usually ran from early in November until almost Christmas and frequently wound up with dances, euphioniously called "frolics." Frolics also followed log-rollings and rail-splittings; but probably most were given for the fun of the thing, or as a means of getting young folks (and frequently older ones, too) together.

The favorite dance at frolics was the cotillion. In this eight persons, four males and four females, danced over the floor while some person called the figures, starting with, "Honor your partner, lady on the left, balance all." Then followed, "Swing your partners, your corners too," and "all promenade." After a multitude of "sass-shaying," "ladies floating," "balancing your partners," etc., the cotillion was ended by "Right hands to your partners, gents to the center and ladies to their seats."

Music was furnished by backwoods fiddlers most of whose instruments cost less than ten dollars. Some tunes played were "Cindy," "Arkansas Traveler," "Hell After the Yearling," "Mississippi Sawyer," "Honey I

Hate to Leave You," "Drunkard in the Sawgrass," and "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Dancing was against the rules of every Protestant denomination but the frequent excommunication of members failed to stop it.

Education, Religion and Culture

From the very first, Taylor county settlers were interested in education and before the end of 1860 eight schools were in operation.³⁶ That year the sum of \$185.40 or 45 cents per pupil was allotted Taylor county from the state school funds. A teacher with, say, 20 pupils, would have 20 times 45 cents or \$9.00 added to whatever the patrons paid him.

It is impossible to tell how well these schools functioned but the writer has known a sufficient number of ante-bellum settlers of Taylor county to be certain that more than 80 per cent of them were taught to read and write and is satisfied from what he actually knows that fully 90 per cent could read well enough to get the meaning of words.

Many were by no means without culture. In some homes could be found the works of Peter Parley, St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*, Jonathan Edwards' *Life of Rev. David Brainerd Taylor*, DeFoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Rev. Richard Flavel's *Fountain of Life*, William Gillmore Simms' *Francis Marion*, and always the King James Bible.

In school they learned far more than mere geography in books on that subject by such authors as Rev. Jedidiah Morse; and numerous selections from McGuffey's fifth and sixth readers gave them an excellent introduction to Shakespeare.

These frontier folks were far better learned in old British and early American ballads than their present-day descendants and frequently sang with great gusto

36. James H. Wentworth, county superintendent of public instruction, reported in 1869 that sometime during that year eight schools had been running. It is practically certain that these were in houses used prior to the war.

"Lord Randal, My Son," "The House Carpenter," "Lord Thomas and Fair Ellen," "Two Loving Sisters Neat and Trim" (one version of the "Two Sisters" ballad), "Barbara Allen," "Sweet Mary," "The Rake and Rambling Boy," and "Maggie."

The census of 1860 reported two Baptist and two Methodist churches in the county with seating capacities of 350 and 300, respectively. Many church services, however, were held in private homes, under brush arbors, or some regular gathering place. In the churches and religious gatherings of those days one often heard such hymns as "Rock of Ages," "Come Humble Sinners in Whose Breast," "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood," "When I Can Read My Title Clear," "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand," and "The Lord Will Provide."

Fundamentalism was universal and even those who were excommunicated from the churches were as certain of the existence of heaven and hell as they were of Washington or Tallahassee. An infidel was considered worse than a murderer or hog thief.

Industries

Nearly all buying and selling was done at Newport on the St. Marks river and until several years after the opening of the twentieth century one main highway out of Perry was still called "Newport Road." Over this, prior to the war, went most of the county's cotton, hides, and what was produced in excess of domestic needs of sugar, syrup, pork, beeswax, etc.

Brought home were barrels of flour, caddies of tobacco, packages of snuff, sacks of coffee, bolts of cloth, axes, plow tools and general replenishments of family needs, not forgetting the necessary supplies of calomel and quinine, opium, paregoric, Dover's powders and blue mass. Many bought jugs of whiskey, either for beverage or medical use, but quite often for both.

The chief industries of the county at secession were farming and stock raising. A few ran fisheries and there

were five or six small merchants. The two largest stores, run by Neal Hendry and J. H. Sappington, had stocks assessed at \$1,500 each; John S. Cochran's goods were valued at \$500, and Emory Vann's at \$380. Two other persons had mercantile stocks listed at \$50 each. All were small country stores. E. F. Ezell, John M. Towles and William Bevan operated fisheries.

By the census of 1860 Taylor county had 20,154 acres in farms of which 5,072 acres were improved. Those produced crops as follows:

Wheat 49 bushels, rye 28 bushels, corn 27,100 bushels, oats 12 bushels, rice 600 pounds, tobacco 250 pounds, ginned cotton 90 bales averaging 400 pounds each, wool 210 pounds, peas and beans 6,302 bushels,³⁷ Irish potatoes 321 bushels, sweet potatoes 18,005 bushels, cane sugar molasses 1,738 gallons, and cane sugar 24,000 pounds.³⁸ Other products of Taylor county farmers and stockmen were butter 6,253 pounds, beeswax 198 pounds, and orchard products valued at \$4,150. The value of slaughtered animal products was \$18,128.

The only corn mill in the county employed one hand at a cost of \$240 per year and produced meal valued at \$2,000. The one saw mill also employed one hand at an annual cost of \$240 and sawed \$600 worth of lumber.³⁹

On the Eve of War

On the eve of the Civil War Taylor county seemed perfectly oblivious to the struggle in the offing. In after years, however, there were some who talked of the warning signs they saw in the sky that people might have done well to heed. There were meteors or shooting stars, displays of the aurora borealis (not known by that name of course), and perhaps one or more comets.

In spite of the fact that less than one-tenth of Taylor county's population in 1860 was slaves, the result of the

37. Probably includes peanuts.

38. These figures almost certainly refer to crops produced in 1859, the year before the census was taken.

39. The proprietor of the mill was undoubtedly John E. Jenkins, Sr. At the same water mill meal was ground and lumber sawed.

election in that year showed a small majority for the secession Democrat, John Milton, for governor. We do not have the exact vote in the gubernatorial race but R. B. Hilton, the Democratic candidate for Congress got 86 votes to 84 for Richard C. Allen, the Constitutional Unionist candidate. The Democrats won a more decisive victory in the presidential election, their electors receiving 86 votes to 64 for the Constitutional Unionists.

While secession was being discussed following the victory, in the nation, of the Republicans, one or more Union speeches were made in Taylor county. Wilkinson Call, a nephew of ex-Governor R. K. Call, spoke at Shady Grove and perhaps at other places, but seemingly without influencing many.

In the secession convention which met January 3, 1861, Madison, Taylor and Lafayette counties were considered as a group, the whole being allowed four members. Two of these were residents of Madison county and one each of Lafayette and Taylor respectively. Taylor's member, W. H. Sever, was strong for secession, voting against every movement in the convention calculated to cause delay.

Soldiers Taylor County Furnished

If William Watson Davis is correct in his assertion that Florida contributed 15,000 soldiers and sailors to the Confederacy,⁴⁰ it may be stated, the writer believes, with as much correctness that Taylor county furnished not less than 250, a number somewhat above the general average, and considerably more than its voting population.

There were few enlistments prior to the first of June 1861, but soon after that date volunteering became rapid. Madison was the chief enlistment point but many joined the service at Monticello and some at various other places.

40. *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913) p. 322.

The county furnished approximately ten officers to the Confederate army, three of whom, John M. Hendry, Thomas T. Carlton and James W. Faulkner, were captains. John S. Cochran was a first lieutenant, and there were about half a dozen second and third lieutenants.

Such incomplete evidence as we can get from *Soldiers of Florida*, published under the direction of the Board of the Commissioners of State Institutions in 1903, indicates that more Taylor county soldiers served in Virginia than in the West. Perhaps as many as 75 either remained in Florida or were sent back for service there. Some of these helped guard salt works along the coast and others did valiant fighting at Olustee, Natural Bridge and other battles and skirmishes.

Salt Making Along Taylor County Coast

During the course of the war salt became so scarce a commodity that numbers of persons living in Taylor and nearby counties made land entries along the Gulf coast of the county for the purpose of acquiring salt-manufacturing sites. Among these were Gabriel Harden, Jackson Sapp, John Taylor, Randall B. Williams, William H. Sever, Joseph Eaton,* Elias E. Blackburn,* Wm. W. Barrs,* John Barrs,* James W. Faulkner, John Towles, Jesse W. Hunter,* J. Bryant Creech,* Civil J. Fulford, Wyche Fulford, William Standaland, Thomas Young, Wiley W. Whiddon, John R. Morse, Rufus Standaland and John G. Pettus.⁴¹

Signs of old salt works still remain in the southern part of the county, where perhaps more was made than elsewhere. There are good reasons to believe several of those making it at other points had by late in 1863 or early in 1864 either deserted to the enemy or at least had begun communication with the Federals in Cedar Key. Probably half of the salt-makers were from south Georgia and counties nearby Taylor. Salt-manufacturing so impressed some with its possibilities for profit that a few persons continued in the business until possibly as late as 1867.

41. Names marked (*) were non-residents.

State Assistance to Poor Families

By 1862 numbers of Taylor county families were having to endure such inconveniences as inability to get soap, flour, refined sugar and clothing, but necessity became the mother of invention. The boys who were left behind, and even the women folks, chopped down black-jacks, the ashes of which after burning were made into lye forming the base of the family soap.

Many families kept their looms going, working until late at night in weaving material for their clothing. Socks and stockings were home knit.

Brown sugar was easily manufactured each year at cane-grinding time and rice was had from small planted patches.

To assist poor families to get the necessary cards to prepare their cotton and wool for weaving, the legislature of 1862 passed a joint resolution reading,

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Florida in General Assembly convened. That the sum of twenty thousand dollars is hereby appropriated and placed at the disposal of the Governor of the State for the purpose of purchasing and importing from abroad a quantity of Cotton and Wool Cards sufficient to supply the present necessity of the people of the State; the Governor shall cause said cards to be distributed to the poor in each county in the State gratis and without charge; *Provided, however,* that if a surplus of said Cards remain after supplying the poor, the Governor shall cause the same to be sold at a price sufficient to remunerate the State for the number so disposed by sale.⁴²

The legislature of 1862 appropriated \$200,000 for the relief of needy soldiers' families, in which, of course, Taylor county was to share proportionately. Supplementing this, the legislatures of 1863 and 1864 each appropriated \$500,000.

Samuel Benezet, Quartermaster General in 1864, reported that he had sent 73 pairs of cards to Taylor county, and paid out \$4,570.32 for the relief of families in that county during 1862-63, and \$8,999.60 in 1863-64.

It was doubtless to provide extra food for themselves that a number of Taylor county families during the war penned cattle without the owners' permission. The Legis-

42. Florida Acts, 1862, p. 65.

lature of 1863 passed an act to stop this in Levy, Duval, Taylor, Lafayette and Wakulla counties. In 1864 this act was amended to include Brevard, Sumter, Hernando and Orange counties.

The Governor in 1864 approved an act for the education of soldiers' children. Under this it was made the duty of the county commissioners of each county not only to provide schools but to certify to the Governor the cost of maintaining them. On the Governor's approval it became the duty of the Comptroller to issue the warrants needed in payment. It is most unlikely that Taylor county ever got a dollar under this act, but nevertheless there were schools taught in the county during the war probably at the same places that James H. Wentworth mentioned in his report for the year 1868-69 after the war. As the writer remembers, he heard his mother say she went to school at Pisgah, about three miles northwest of Perry during the war. This school had been running at least since 1850.

That liquor was being legally sold in Taylor county during the war is proven by an act of 1863, returning to Edward Jordan \$50 he had overpaid for his license. The \$100 he had sent in was twice the amount required. It happened that Jordan was sheriff of the county at that time.

HUNTING DESERTERS

Before the end of 1863 many deserters from South Georgia and Madison and Jefferson counties joined persons in Taylor county, who either had gotten their fill of fighting or who never meant to enter the combat. The county has extensive swamps which furnish good hide-outs and these were well used, but an undetermined number, doubtless less than twenty of fighting age, went to Cedar Key, embarking with their families from Snyder's island, near the mouth of the Econfina and Rock island, near the mouth of the Fenholloway. Those who went to Cedar Key were said to have "gone to the Yankees."

The Confederate government took little or no notice of deserters in Taylor county until early in 1864, probably because their activities prior to that time had not been noticeable. In March 1864, Lieutenant Colonel H. D. Capers was given command of a force sent to punish those who were disloyal to the Confederate government. The following letter, dated March 27, 1864 from Colonel Capers to Major J. L. Cross, Assistant Adjutant General, sent from Camp Linton in Jefferson county, explains what went on during the campaign:

"Major: I have the honor to report that in obedience to Special Orders, No. 7 (extract), paragraphs I, and II, I assumed command of the troops designated to operate against the deserters and disaffected citizens of Taylor and Lafayette Counties, in this State. From the best information I could obtain the camp of the enemy was located near the mouth of the Econfina River, on the east bank, and surrounded by a thick marsh, which at high tide was overflowed, rendering communications with the adjoining swamps and hammocks exceedingly difficult. The recent heavy rains had swollen the rivers to such an extent that the swamps and hammock lands were covered with water and deemed almost impassable by the citizens. Under the circumstances I found it impracticable to picket the road from the Natural Bridge to the bridge over the lower-ferry of the Econfina River, as directed in the orders referred to, and decided to make a reconnoissance of the country in force to the Gulf coast and attack the enemy's camp wherever found. With this object in view I ordered the detachment of cavalry, under command of Major Camfield, to proceed from this point down the east bank of the Econfina River and to co-operate with the Twelfth-Battalion in an attack upon the enemy's camp upon Snyder's Island. Moving with the Twelfth Georgia Battalion from Gamble's farm to the Natural Bridge, and through the swamp on the east bank of the Aucilla River, I passed entirely through the country occupied by the disaffected citizens and deserters, and reached the camp of the enemy at daylight on the morning of the 24th instant. Here I found nothing but the deserted huts of the deserters, and no trace of any camp regularly organized by the enemy. The inaccessible character of the swamps, which extend from Gamble's to the coast, and the experience of the war conducted for years between the Seminole Indians and the U. S. forces in this section without any positive result, and the further demonstrated fact that these deserters and disaffected citizens did not maintain any organized encampment, but remained concealed in the vicinity of their homes, determined me to destroy their houses, in addition to the removal of their families as directed in the orders referred from district headquarters. Accordingly I ordered the destruction of every house on the east and west banks of the Econfina and Fenholloway Rivers belonging to these people.

"The captured muster-roll herewith presented (A) enabled me to obtain positive evidence as to the disloyalty of the inhabitants, and from the fact that they had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States Government, I could not discriminate between them and citizens of the United States in arms against the Confederacy. At William Strickland's house (who is the leader of the gang) was captured

the muster-roll referred to, 2,000 rounds of fixed ammunition for the Springfield musket, several barrels of flour from the U. S. Subsistence Department, and several other articles which evidenced the regularity of their communication with the enemy's gun-boats. Having destroyed their property and secured their families, I returned to Mr. Linton's farm to rest the infantry, who were broken down by a continued march of several days through densely wooded swamps, and water at times so deep as to necessitate the removal of cartridge-boxes to keep the ammunition in order. In addition to the destruction of their property I have to report the capture of three prisoners, two of whom have their names on the muster-roll of the company. I have also to report the death of two men of the cavalry detachment, who were killed on the morning of the 24th instant by an accident which cannot but be considered the result of carelessness.⁴³ As no official report of this matter has been made to me, I refer to it as the loss accruing to the service by the expedition. The secondary effects of the plan adopted with these people is manifested in the communication of W. W. Strickland, sent to my headquarters on yesterday, and which is herewith submitted (B). The terms upon which he proposed to leave the swamps are such that I must refer the matter to the commanding general before answering him definitely. The subject is a delicate one, and some diplomacy must be used to secure the ends proposed. On the borders of these swamps are large planting interests, with hundreds of negroes upon them of immense service to the Confederacy in the production of grain and bacon. From their hiding places these men can commit depredations upon the property to such an extent as to materially interfere with the farming operations, and I would urge upon the general commanding the necessity under these circumstances of compromising with these men as may be consistent with the general weal. Should Strickland's company be conciliated, it will in all probability lead to the dispersion of those under the command of Coker and White, on the Fenholloway and Steinhatchee⁴⁴.

The muster-roll Colonel Capers mentioned having captured (A) read as follows:

"We, the undersigned, members of a company called the 'Independent Union Rangers' of Taylor County, Fla., do agree that we will cheerfully obey all orders given by the officers we elect over us, that we will bear true allegiance to the United States of America; that we will not under pain of such penalty or punishment as a court-martial

43. What happened was that the deserter-hunting forces were attacked by the deserters from their hiding place in a tall saw palmetto patch at a point some four and one-half miles northwest of Perry. In this attack two men were killed and two were wounded. One of the wounded men, Ryle Smith (possibly the Robert R. Smith mentioned on page 258 of *Soldiers of Florida*), was carried to the home of the writer's maternal grandfather, who lived about one and one-half miles north of where the deserters' made their attack. Later-probably after the war-the man who shot Smith told him if he had known who it was he (the deserter) would not have shot him. The writer's mother, who was then a little over eleven years old remembered the carrying of Smith to their home quite well.

44. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. LIII, pp. 316-318.

composed of ten men of the company, appointed by the captain, may inflict, give any information or speak in the presence of any one, even though it be our wives and families, of any expedition, raid, or attack that we may be about to undertake; that we agree to shoot or in some other way destroy any person or persons who are proven to be spies of the enemy, or any person who has carried information from our camps to any person through whom it may have gotten to the enemy; that all orders issued by our commanding officers relative to the killing of cattle and seizure of provisions will be cheerfully obeyed; that we agree to bring all property seized on our raids and expeditions to such place as our commanding officers may direct for the common benefit of all concerned, and in case of a division the captain shall make such distribution as to him seems most just; that we agree to make known any meeting or traitorous proceedings, or any violation of any orders of the superior officers, to our captain as soon as possible; that we agree to punish by death, or such other punishment as a court-martial may inflict, any person who may desert or entice others to do so, or shall treat with contempt his officer or weaken his authority in any way, or shall plunder or abuse any person known to be friendly to us.

"William W. Strickland, C. K. Martin, N. D. Poppell, William S. Stanaland, James M. Strickland, G. G. Sheffield, Ison Sheffield, J. W. Wallace, R. S. Stanaland, J. B. Brannon, W. A. Brannon, B. A. Driggers, C. E. Tullington, M. J. Snipes, F. Johnson, J. Snipes, J. Ayers, W. Martin, J. Martin, J. Sapp, D. Sapp, D. Harding, W. Fulford, F. Groomes, J. Johnson, A. Kirkland, B. Poppell, E. Bishop, J. Bishop, L. Whitehurst, J. Poppell, A. Starling, P. Snipes, P. Poppell."⁴⁵

The following is the letter (B) Mr. Strickland addressed to Lieutenant Colonel Capers:

"Lieut.-Col. H. D. Capers:

"My dear sir: I got your letter that you left with Mr. Johnson the 26th. I am anxious to hear from you, and you from me, for I cannot control my men since they saw you fire our house. I cannot control them any longer. I aint accountable for what they do now. As for myself, I will do anything that any half white man ever done, only to go into the Confederate war any more, though when I was in it I done my duty, I reckon. Ask Colonel Smith if I was not as good a soldier as long as he was captain, and would have been yet if Mr. Smith had of staid captain, but now I have went on the other side and tried what we call United States of Taylor, but I find it is like the Confederate men-more wind than work. As for myself, I aint agoing in for any order, only to stay with Mr. Johnson and help him tend to his stock, and I will help him to pen or drive cattle for you, but my oath will not permit me to fight any more. If you will send and get me an exemption and my men that have taken the oath to stay in Taylor and raise stock for you they will do so, but they will not go into war if you had as many again men and dogs, for our title is Florida Royals, and if we can't get a furlough from Mr. Jeff Davis during the war you will find our title right for a while: so I remain a flea until I get a furlough from headquarters, and when you put your thumb on me and then raise it up I will be gone. I give you my respects for the good attentions you paid to my wife, for it was not her

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.

notion for me to do as I was doing. Just set me and my men free from the war and we will try with leave to get corn till we can make. If not, you can go to moving the steers out of the adjoining three counties. So here is my love for the good attentions for my wife and child. If the war lasts long enough and you will raise him to be a soldier, he will show the spunk of his daddy.

"So I remain

W. W. Strickland
Florida Royals"⁴⁶

There are good reasons for believing that about one-third of Strickland's "Independent Union Rangers" or "Florida Royals" came to Taylor county during the war. Examples of these were such persons as Driggers, Groomes, Harding, Kirkland, and Whitehurst, who were on neither the 1860 nor the 1861 county tax rolls. There were one or more Sheffields on these rolls, but it is practically certain that neither G. G. nor Ison Sheffield were relations of these.

The James Coker company mentioned by Colonel Capers may have numbered as many as ten persons, of whom probably more than half were from south Georgia. White's company on the Steinhatchee was almost certainly composed of Lafayette county men.

It would be a fair estimate to say that Taylor county did not furnish over 40 resident deserters, including those who went to the Federals in Cedar Key. That Strickland's company was by far the largest deserter band in the county is proved by its being singled out for destruction and/or pacification by Lieutenant-Colonel Capers.

It will be noted that Colonel Capers in his letter to Major Cross said, "Accordingly I ordered the destruction of every house on the east and west banks of the Econfina and Fenholloway rivers belonging to these people." The Colonel probably confused Rocky creek, the principal tributary of the Fenholloway river with the main river for it was on the middle portion of this creek in the Pisgah or Jenkins mill community that much if not most of the house burning occurred.

Major Charles H. Camfield apparently had charge of all house burnings and for many years after the war

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 319.

ended he was regarded as just about the meanest man that ever set his foot in Taylor county. He did not stop with burning deserters' homes, but acted as if his duty required him to burn any where there were one or two deserters in the family, although as many or more might be loyally serving the Confederacy. One J. H. Ellison had four sons in the Southern army and two who had deserted, yet his house was burned. Camfield did not fire the nine-room home of John E. Jenkins, Sr., (the Taylor county man who went to California), although he and his sons had joined the Federals in Cedar Key. Instead he (Camfield) used this as his headquarters ; maybe leaving it undestroyed because he thought he might be sent to Taylor county on a second raid.

Governor Milton Disapproved of Capers' Raid

That Governor John Milton was displeased is shown by a letter which he wrote on May 5, 1864, to General J. Patton Anderson. Said the Governor :

I would respectfully invite your consideration . . . [to] the destruction of the property of persons who are deserters or skulkers or supposed to be. I am not convinced that any benefit has resulted from it, on the contrary it has made many women and children homeless and exposed them to disgrace and suffering. Some of these women and children *are the mothers and helpless brothers and sisters of patriotic and brave men who are soldiers in the armies of Virginia and the West.*

I must respectfully request that you will issue an order to prevent in future, the destruction of dwellings and other property necessary to the support and comfort of women and children. Already much difficulty is experienced in preventing the starvation of soldiers' families in different parts of the State, and in supplying the necessary subsistence and forage to sustain our troops in the field. The destruction of property in Taylor and Lafayette counties has caused many women and children to be dependent on the Government, who were able to support themselves.⁴⁷

In a not-too-good attempt to justify what Colonel Capers had done in Taylor county, General J. Patton Anderson in a letter of June 29, 1864 said in part:

The case of Ellison seems to be in the same predicament as to evidence, (as that of one George W. Martin who was wrongly put in custody by Confederate troops and then released) though Col. Smith thinks him a dangerous man, and one that ought not to be permitted to return to his old haunts. Col. S. has known him for many years,

47. Milton Letterbook, 1863-65, p. 60. MS in Florida State Library.

and controverts positively some of the statements made by Ellison in his petition for release. Col. S. says that one of the four sons whom the old man asserts to be in the Va. army, is a deserter and now in the gang which infests the neighborhood of the old man's residence, & c. Under these circumstances, I have deemed it the prudent course to retain him (old Mr. J. H. Ellison) until Col. S. can make further investigation of the case.⁴⁸

Colonel Smith, it will be noted, did not deny that Ellison had sons in the Confederate army, but only made rebuttal by saying that one of the four "is a deserter and now in the gang that infest the neighborhood." Remembering that Ellison's house had been burned and such provisions as he had destroyed, about March 24 or 25, is it surprising that one of the four boys in the Confederate army should desert, after learning of the wrong perpetrated upon his father? The surprise is that more of them did not desert.

It was doubtless Lieutenant Colonel Capers, who was primarily to blame for the destruction wrought in Taylor county by Major Camfield's cavalry force, but the average person discussing it after the war blamed Camfield. In 1896 I heard an aunt, who heard that Camfield died of consumption (the name then given tuberculosis), say substantially "I hope it's not so, for that would have given him time to repent and kept him from getting his just deserts in the hereafter." Yet that aunt was the daughter of a Confederate soldier and later was married to a Confederate, a man wounded at Chickamauga. After Camfield's raid, numbers who had been loyal to the Confederacy apparently became half-way indifferent. They sometimes fed deserters who were hiding and in other ways manifested a don't-care-much attitude as to the final results of the war.

The deserters' wives seized by Colonel Capers' command were carried to Camp Smith six miles south of Tallahassee, and from this point on July 7, 1864, wrote Governor John Milton the following letter:⁴⁹

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112. Names marked (*) are not believed to have been residents of Taylor County.

To His Excellency John Milton
Governor, State of Florida

We the undersigned families of Taylor and Lafayette Counties have the honor to petition your Excellency that you will withdraw your objection to our being sent to the Blockading Vessel, to seek our Fathers, Husbands & Brothers.

However much they may be to blame in having left the Confederate States, we are their wives and daughters are eternally united with them, and situated as we are, we prefer to follow their fortunes. We know that most of them are still on the coast and believe that we could soon be re-united with them. Indeed, your Excellency, we have a show of justice in our petition. We are most of us houseless and homeless and we should certainly now be allowed the privilege of going to the Federals who are mainly instrumental in offering such inducements to our male protectors as to induce them to leave us. The Military Authorities offered us the privilege of going through the lines, as a matter to be accepted or rejected by us, and now we humbly petition your honor to leave us a free choice, and even to assist us to go where we can be better taken care of.

We subscribe ourselves as representing each one her family.

Yours Most Respectfully

Sivil J. Fulford
Elizabeth Standley [Standaland]
Catharine Allbritton
Mary Ann Wright*
Elizabeth Croom* [Groom]
Frances Strawn*
Mary Strawn*
Elizabeth Martin*
Eliza Poppell
Martha A. Bright*
Carry A. Allbritton
Nancy Strawn*

In April 1864, a company of home guards was organized, designated in *Soldiers of Florida*, as "Roll- Company-, 1st Florida Reserves," with James W. Faulkner as captain. The size of the company is unknown, but the writer has satisfactory information that the ten names listed there (page 313) by no means include all its members.

Whether this company was organized for better protection against Federal forces who could have easily landed from Cedar Key at various Taylor county points, or as a dodge against service at the fighting front would be hard to prove at this day. From the best information the writer has been able to get, the company met at various intervals at Camp Carlton on the Fenholloway river to carry on drilling exercises. Certainly after some of these Home Guards began to draw pensions under the

liberal pension law of 1907, neighbors and even kinsmen did not think they deserved them.⁵⁰

Tiring of the War

By 1865 Taylor county people were getting well tired of the war, some becoming so disgusted with it as to call it "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight." They had witnessed many injustices. They had known of house burnings where at least some members of the family were away fighting for the Confederacy. They knew how in some sections of the county south Georgians were hiding out to dodge service. They did not like the unfairness shown in allowing some men to keep out of fighting. Probably more than all, they objected to doing without things that prior to 1861 they had been able to get with ease. Soldiers would write home about conditions at the front such letters as the one below sent December 4, 1863, by a Madison county soldier to his mother:⁵¹

"Dear Mother

Seat my Self this morning to inform you that I am well an we have got orders to leave here. But I do not know wher we are going too but out west. I will wright you as soon as I git to my Journey end I will wright to you again. Mother I Sent you them Slays But I cant hear wherther you got them or not Wright to her Brother Ben has gone back to Virginia and tell him if he hant gone not go take the woods first. tha have Shorten Our Rashens again we have not bin paid off yet and I dont know when we will be."

Execution of W. W. Strickland

Many loyal Confederates were saddened and doubtless a number angered by the execution of W. W. Strickland by shooting at Tallahassee in March 1865. Strickland was the man who wrote the letter to Lieutenant Colonel H. D. Capers specifying conditions upon which the deserter band would cease its activities, provided they did not have to do any more fighting. These conditions,

50. The following persons are known to have served in the Homes Guards company: James W. Faulkner, captain, F. M. Adams, A. J. Adams, Thomas L. Gunter, William C. Henderson, Thomas B. Hendry, Ezekieil Hodges, M. C. Mathis, M A. Mixson, W. J. Morgan, Mills W. Parker, S. N. Smith, J. M. Wilder. There were doubtless at least twenty-five others in the company.

51. MS. in Florida State Library.

we are reasonably sure, were not satisfactorily met,⁵² for when captured in March, 1865 Strickland was listed as member of the Second Florida Cavalry, U. S. Army. He and a Federal soldier taken with him were charged with trying to burn a railroad bridge⁵³ and according to the ordinary rules of war his execution was just. But many Taylor county citizens knew why Strickland deserted and perhaps were more sympathetic toward him than they would have otherwise been.

A comrade of Strickland's told the writer some forty years ago that while the company of which both were members was stationed in Jefferson county Strickland hearing that his wife was dangerously ill at their home across the Aucilla river in Taylor county, about fifteen or twenty miles away, asked leave of the captain to go to see her. Being refused he went anyhow and upon his return the captain told him that in punishment he would have to grub a stump and wear a barrel placarded "Coward." Strickland, as his comrade later related it, said, "I'll die before I'll do it." This overbearing captain was therefore the cause of Strickland's desertion.

As Strickland's letter to Colonel Capers stated he had been a good soldier as long as Colonel Smith was captain, we may infer that his desertion bore a relation to the change in his company commander.

Another very probable reason for the displeasure of Taylor county folks at Strickland's execution was that

52. Assistant Adjutant-General Cross, writing to Colonel Capers, March 28, 1864, stated: "Mr. Strickland's letter has been referred to General Anderson for his decision, with recommendation that those who have taken the oath of allegiance to the United States be received as we do deserters from that Government, provided they come in and consider themselves in good faith citizens of the United States. Those who have deserted from our Army and will come in by the 5th of April will be sent to their regiments and those subject to the military service who have never been in it are recommended to be employed to tend and drive beef, provided they come in and give themselves up. If Mr. Strickland will meet you under a flag of truce it is the opinion of the brigadier general commanding that this whole matter can be settled without further difficulty." (*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. LIII, p. 320)

53. Probably the bridge across the Aucilla river between the present towns of Greenville and Aucilla.

his father-in-law, W. N. Johnson, was a wealthy stock owner who helped many needy families by letting them pen his cattle, not only enabling them to better fertilize their sugar cane, vegetable gardens and tobacco and sweet potato patches, but to get milk and butter free for several months each year. In addition to this Mr. Johnson had one or more sons in the Confederate service and this very likely made his neighbors and acquaintances think that Strickland should not have been shot. The Strickland execution lost the Confederate cause far more support than it gained.

War's End Pleased Most Citizens

The end of the war was not displeasing to the majority of Taylor county citizens. There were not many slave owners and these were not greatly hurt, as they, in general, had more wealth in cattle than in negroes; and during the years following the war they had little trouble in hiring the service of their former slaves at low cost. There was, of course, the four years loss of time suffered by soldiers in the service. Many had the whole course of their lives changed. Numbers of soldiers who had marched and traveled about so much got a roving notion into their heads and not a few went to South Florida or to Texas as a result. Nearby counties such as Madison and Jefferson took their toll and, on this account, Taylor county's population increase during the decade 1860-1870 was much less than it should have been from the natural increase caused by excess of births over deaths.

The permanent results of the war seem to have been more hatred for the negroes, a distaste for political control by the wealthy, a desire to be left severely alone, a greater detestation than ever of outside authority and a permanent appetite for the corn bread and collards to which the Civil War had accustomed them.