

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 27
Number 3 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 27,
Issue 3

Article 5

1948

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Recommended Citation

Smith, George Winston (1948) "Carpetbag Imperialism in Florida, 1862-1868 Part II," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 27: No. 3, Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol27/iss3/5>

CARPETBAG IMPERIALISM IN FLORIDA 1862-1868

by GEORGE WINSTON SMITH

PART II

Part I of this monograph recognized the minor but continuous northern economic influence in Florida from the early nineteenth century to the time that Yankee enterprise surged into the peninsula a generation after the War for Southern Independence. There were shown in some detail the commercial implications in northern determination to hold the State during the secession crisis, the expectations of profitable exploitation which arose with the first military occupation by Federal troops, and the attempts of Florida's refugee "unionists" to kindle sympathy in the North for the "regeneration" of their homeland. Attention was given also to the extravagant plan of Eli Thayer, the veteran promoter of free Kansas during the 1850's, to organize "free labor" immigration to Florida on such a scale that a host of soldier-colonists would soon create there a Utopia of diversified industry and small farms—each community to be replete with free schools, spired churches, and other characteristics of New England civilization.

Although Thayer's Florida scheme had a large measure of Support from New York businessmen, leading newspapers, crusading clergymen, would-be immigrants of German-American extraction, and others, it reached only the blueprint stage because of President Lincoln's practical objections. In contrast to Lincoln's attitude, Salmon P. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, seemed quite willing to use his powers on behalf of Thayer's project. In this he was abetted by Lyman K. Stickney who became the most notorious of the early Florida carpetbaggers. After the Thayer proposal was shelved, Stickney was able to continue his machinations in war-stricken Florida by reason of the fact that Chase had appointed him chairman of the Florida Direct Tax Commission under the authorization of the congressional act of June 7, 1862. This law, although technically but a supplement to a direct tax law of 1861 which levied a tax upon all the States, was a move to confiscate the real property of southern landholders. Administered by Stickney, it threatened to become an instrument of predatory corruption in Florida. His fellow commissioners were Harrison Reed (a Wisconsin editor), and John S. Sammis (a Jacksonville refugee). For a time at least, Sammis was willing to cooperate in Stickney's designs; Reed soon became his inveterate enemy. Late in 1862 they were ready to take up their work in Florida.

(I) ORIGINS OF THE STICKNEY RING

Before the Florida Direct Tax Commissioners could hope to make extensive tax assessments and sales of "rebel" property in Florida, further military operations were essential in the Jacksonville area. Nevertheless, Fernandina and St. Augustine already were in posses-

sion of the Union forces, and Stickney could see before him a limited entree to southern wealth. Before he made a leisurely journey southward at the end of 1862, he quietly began to make preparations. With James M. Latta, an Indianian then employed in the Interior Department, he made an agreement whereby Latta would advance sums with which to buy Florida cotton and turpentine in the occupied ports, and retain one-third of the profits.¹ A Florida Yankee, Calvin L. Robinson received from Stickney a promise of employment as an assessor with the Tax Commission, together with assurances that Stickney would recommend him to New York merchants who wished to find an agent for the collection of their Florida claims. Stickney also made arrangements to send to Florida on a government transport, a considerable quantity of supplies for the commission. These later proved to be merchandise which in part found its way into a commercial establishment set up by Stickney and his associates at Fernandina. For when Stickney finally arrived there he organized a trading firm in partnership with Robinson and William C. Morrill (a resident of Fernandina) under the name of Robinson, Morrill and Company. Most of their stock consisted of the goods brought in under the label : "government property. " There were quantities of stationery, clerical supplies (i.e., paper, inkstands, penholders, pens, ink, rulers, portable desks, portfolios) clothing, Yankee notions, wines, brandy, whiskey, medicines, field glasses, collapsible cups, sheaf knives, and many other articles in demand by those of the armed forces who in that occupied area had no access to traders in free markets. Many of these goods were the supplies of the Tax Commissioners, but the other Florida Commissioners never saw them ; and they were there by the grace of Stickney's generously padded expense account.

It was, of course, contrary to Treasury regulations

1. House of Representatives, *Executive Document*, No. 18, 38th Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 69, 97.

that these wares, even those which Stickney himself bought for the trade, should be sold without special permits and the consent of military authorities in the district. All the more remarkable, therefore, was it that Brigadier General Rufus Saxton commanding at Beaufort on the Sea Islands, not only consented to Stickney's trading activities, but even allowed some goods to be taken from the Sea Islands to Fernandina for sale there.² On his leisurely journey to Florida, Stickney disembarked at Beaufort where he spent most of January and February. By making patriotic speeches to the freedmen and ingratiating himself into the favor of the staff officers, he built up a most cordial relationship with Saxton. After visiting Florida in February, Stickney returned to Beaufort, and with capital of about \$1,500 he established a newspaper, *The Free South*. Its circulation was small, but Saxton (who received frequent praise in the paper) allowed Stickney's printing materials to come in from the North on government transports, and gave the publisher one of the old Beaufort mansions rent free for his printing establishment. For the same advertising a New York daily would have carried for \$300, *The Free South* asked from the South Carolina Direct Tax Commissioners nearly \$7,000 to publish their South Carolina tax sale notices in four successive issues.³

Later Stickney brought journalism in Florida under the influence of his "ring" when he *moved* an "abandoned" press from St. Augustine to Fernandina, and began to publish *The Peninsula*. Its first managing editor was Latta, the Interior Department clerk; when Latta quarreled with Stickney, the leader of the "ring" transferred the paper to his brother, John K. Stickney, and to his partner, William C. Morrill. Jacksonville then became its place of publication.⁴

2. *Ibid.*, pp. P-8, 13-15, 100.

3. *New York Tribune*, February 27, March 19, 1863.

4. H. Rep. Ex. Doc. No. 18, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess. pp. 7-8, 15.

(II) THE STICKNEY-HIGGINSON EXPEDITION

While Stickney spent considerable time in the manipulation of his business negotiations, he never lost interest in the broader aspects of imperialism in Florida. The Federal troops in the Department of the South with headquarters at Hilton Head on the Sea Islands promised a considerable success to Yankee carpetbaggers if their commanders would authorize operations on the peninsula. Here again circumstances favored Stickney.

The early months of 1863 found the Department of the South relatively inactive. Major General David Hunter, commanding, at Hilton Head, had more than enough forces to secure the Sea Islands, but although an attack upon Charleston harbor was in the offing, he was unwilling at the time to risk serious offensive operations on the mainland. In January, therefore, he authorized Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson and the First South Carolina Colored Regiment to make a plundering raid up the St. Marys river. From this the negro troops returned to Beaufort with bars of railroad iron, yellow pine lumber, a cargo of bricks, rice, resin, cordage, and "other small matters suitable for army purposes." Even a flock of "contraband" sheep was soon grazing near the regimental camp.⁵ As for Stickney, the black troops after their successful foray began to assume greater importance in his plans. He knew that Higginson and the negroes were eager for more action of the sort they had just experienced, and that Hunter wished to separate the colored regiment so far *as* possible from the activities of the white troops: the General himself admitted that the blacks "could not consistently with the interests of the service (in the present state of feeling) be advantageously employed to act with our other forces."⁶

Stickney had no trouble in working up Higginson's enthusiasm for an attack upon Jacksonville. "My chief

5. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (129 vols. Washington 1880-1901). Series I, XIV, pp. 196-198.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 424-425.

aim," wrote Higginson, "was to get the men into action, and that of the Florida [Tax] Commissioners [was] to get them into Florida." Soon Stickney, Higginson, Saxton, and one or two others visited Hunter at Hilton Head. They found the general in a genial mood, and after a lengthy though pleasant chat received his permission to send Higginson's men to Florida. At the most there were to be only a thousand blacks, although Higginson evidently hoping to enroll new recruits at his destination, took arms and uniforms with him for again that many. "It was urged," Higginson later reminisced, "that it was worth while to risk something to hold Florida, and perhaps bring it back into the Union." In his report to the Secretary of War, Saxton gave another argument which Stickney might well have recalled from the earlier propaganda on behalf of the Thayer plan. Saxton hoped that all of Florida might be cleared of the enemy "and an asylum established for persons from other States who are freed from bondage by the proclamation of freedom. . . ."⁷

The orders issued to Higginson sent him to Fernandina, and from there to Jacksonville, where he could entrench himself, "carry the proclamation [of emancipation] to the enslaved," occupy as much as possible of the country, and "weaken, harass, and annoy" the Confederate troops in Florida. On the morning of March 10, gunboats convoyed Higginson's command up the St. Johns river to Jacksonville, and then threw shells in the direction of the enemy as the colored detachments went ashore. Skirmishing broke out as Higginson secured his base by cutting down linden trees for barricades and abbatis; he quickly wheeled field pieces into the streets, and burned those houses which stood in the way of his gunboat batteries. Then he was able to glance about at his conquest, and pronounced the occupied town attractive. Before the war, he remembered, Jacksonville had

7. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston, 1870), pp. 97-98.

8. O.R., Series I, XIV, p. 423.

been the center of a rapidly expanding lumber trade. Extensive wharfs faced the river front, and blocks of brick warehouses combined with evidences of "neatness and thrift everywhere visible" further reminded him that before the war energetic Yankees had owned much of its property. "Rebels" had burned to the ground the large hotel renowned as the chief resort of northern invalids, but the abolitionist colonel was still able to find comfortable quarters in a "handsome brick house" which had been the home of a native New Yorker.⁹

Higginson's stay in Jacksonville would have been more pleasant had he not begun to worry immediately over his "deficiency in numbers." The optimistic reports which Saxton was sending to Washington notwithstanding, Higginson's command numbered but nine hundred effectives, and although he had come to recruit in Jacksonville, he found hardly any able bodied negroes left in the town when he arrived there. Stickney, who had landed with the expedition, then demonstrated his usual inclination to meddle in military affairs by volunteering to secure at Fernandina from the command of Colonel Joseph Hawley four additional companies of white troops and a light battery. The fearful Higginson was only too eager to endow "the energetic Judge," as he affectionately referred to Stickney, with the commission which so inflated the conceit of the would-be imperialist that he boasted he was going to "obtain a large reinforcement of troops for the purpose of holding this place permanently." On the evening of the 20th, Higginson effusively greeted the return of "our devoted civic ally, Judge [Stickney], and superficially it did appear to be a triumphant arrival as the transport *Boston* loaded with the 6th Connecticut Regiment trailed the Tax Commissioner up the river. Two days afterward a portion of the 8th Maine Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Joseph F. Twitchell also landed at Jacksonville.¹⁰ Despite Higgin-

9. O.R.N., Series I, XIII, p. 745; Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, pp. 99n, 105-106.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107, 117; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Boston and New York, 1898), pp. 261-262; O.R., Series I, XIV, p. 226.

son's gratitude for his "devotion," Stickney did not procure these reinforcements; they came from Saxton's command at Beaufort, not from Fernandina. From the beginning the department commander, David Hunter, would have disavowed any intention to use them for the permanent occupation of Jacksonville. The 8th Maine brought rations for only ten days, or just long enough to guarantee a safe evacuation. By March 27, ironclads had arrived at Beaufort for an attack upon Charleston, and Hunter had sent brigades to North Edisto and Coles Islands en route to that South Carolina bastion. He needed troops from Florida for picket line duty on the Sea Islands when his best regiments left for the Charleston operations.¹¹

Evacuation and Firing of Jacksonville

The Stickney-Higginson expedition was nonetheless determined to produce some tangible evidence of a successful raid. No sooner had he established his headquarters at Jacksonville than Higginson sent his second in command, Colonel James Montgomery, from Kansas and a ruthless veteran of the "border warfare," with a portion of the Second South Carolina Volunteers up the broad St. Johns river to establish recruiting posts for runaway slaves. Montgomery did more; he plundered everything in sight. When he returned to Jacksonville with his 120 men they bore "fruits of foraging" which "loaded to the very water's edge" the transports assigned to evacuate them from the town. It was on the morning of the 29th that the heavily loaded vessels with their cargo increased by Unionists clutching their personal effects and furniture slipped quietly downstream toward the sea as those on their decks looked backward at "the sight and roar of the flames, and the rolling clouds of smoke" which arose from buildings fired by

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 424-425, 427, 432.

the incendiary torches of the Federal troops.¹²

Stickney might well have seen the destruction of his ambitions in these fires, but he was not long discouraged by this abortive conclusion of Higginson's pillaging adventure. With only a pause in the Sea Islands the indefatigable Tax Commissioner continued on his way to the North, and in April he was once again in Washington, asking Chase to obtain from the War Department light gunboats, four regiments of infantry, two companies of cavalry and six columbiads—all to be used in Florida for the assistance of the Direct Tax Commissioners! With an eye to the political future, Stickney flattered Chase, and reassured him that if the Federal taxation and trade regulation statutes were "vigorously enforced" they would be "all sufficient . . . to make Florida a loyal, free State before the meeting of the next Congress."¹³

If Higginson's negro regiments had not made Federal occupation of Jacksonville a lasting reality, Stickney was not less hopeful that black troops would eventually be the answer to his problem. When he arrived in the North, he learned that Massachusetts business men under the auspices of Governor John A. Andrew were raising new colored regiments, while in the Mississippi valley Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas with a commission from Lincoln himself was busy putting negro refugees into Federal uniforms. Both Stickney and Chase saw the possibility of diverting some of these forces to Florida. At the end of May, Chase informed Garfield that the Florida project would, *it* seemed, be realized after all, and that it wasn't unlikely that negro troops would be relied upon for its accomplishment.¹⁴

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 226-229, 234, 237-238, 837-838; Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, pp. 114, 126-128; O.R.N., Series I, XIII, p. 794; Branch Cabell and A. J. Hanna, *The St. Johns, A Parade of Diversities* (New York, 1943) p. 209.

13. Stickney to Chase, April 16, 17, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 74, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

14. Chase to Garfield, May 31, 1863 (copy), Chase letterbooks, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

To Major General James S. Wadsworth, the Secretary of the Treasury sent Stickney with a proposition that the general should lead such a campaign, but only to receive a cagy reply which read: "I have passed several hours very agreeably with your friend Mr. Stickney, and learned a great deal more of Florida than I had ever known before. It is a more interesting field than I had supposed, but I have always been opposed to detaching troops to operate in the extremities of the Confederacy, and what I should prefer for myself would be a field of more active military operations.¹⁵ Undaunted by one more failure, Stickney, in June, was requesting Secretary of War Stanton to give Mansfield French, a belligerent northern missionary to the Sea Islands, authority to raise a regiment of colored men in New York City and Brooklyn for an invasion of Florida.¹⁶

(III) THE TAX COMMISSIONERS IN FLORIDA

One of the motives behind Stickney's determination to overrun Florida was his design that it should be set off as a separate military district. Although his relations with Saxton and others at Beaufort had been quite satisfactory, Stickney foresaw greater personal advantage in a cleavage of Florida from the Department of the South. His partner, William C. Morrill later admitted that if they had succeeded in this, he (Morrill) might have become post sutler at Fernandina with all traders and regimental sutlers obliged to buy at his establishment, "let alone the demand [for goods] that would naturally arise from citizens in the State, especially in exchange of cotton, sugar, etc., for the necessities of life." If, Morrill hinted to Calvin L. Robinson, the third member of the partnership then in the North, Robinson

15. *Id.* to Wadsworth, May 31, 1863, *Ibid.*; Wadsworth to Chase, May 31, 1863, Chase MSS., box 13, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

16. Stickney to Stanton, June 6, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 76, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

would describe their prospects to northern mercantile houses, with emphasis upon their expectations for "a proper mercantile business after the war," they should be able to get sufficient credit.¹⁷

When, in June, 1863, Stickney visited New York, he had to adjust another matter. This involved the sale by the Florida provost marshal who was none other than James M. Latta, a member of Stickney's "ring," of railroad iron belonging to the Florida Railroad Company. Latta had struck off a quantity of this iron to Calvin L. Robinson, a fellow "ring" member, for \$250.00, and Robinson had shipped some of it to the North where he had prospects of selling the lot for between eight and ten thousand dollars. But Sammis, Stickney's erstwhile friend and a member of the Tax Commission, had revealed the transaction to Colonel Joseph Hawley who took steps to seize the iron on the grounds that the sale had been collusive and illegal. Stickney used his influence in New York and Washington with marked effect, and soon he was able to assure Robinson that the "iron business" was "all right." No proceedings were begun against Robinson or Latta, and apparently they were able to dispose of the iron to northern buyers. Stickney, however, made it clear that Sammis was "out of the ring."¹⁸ From the beginning the other Tax Commissioner, Harrison Reed, had remained aloof and had quietly begun to oppose Stickney at Fernandina. Sammis' defection meant that Stickney, although still Chairman, would be a minority of one on his own Tax Commission. Nor did he have long to wait for tangible evidence of this.

Acting in Stickney's absence from Florida, Sammis and Reed put the unredeemed property of Fernandina up for sale at auction beginning on June 15. They did so knowing that Stickney had earlier argued for postpone-

17. H. Rep. Ex. Doc., 18, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 152, 154.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 150.

ment of this sale "until more territory should be open to the Tax Comrs. and more people present to secure homes." As soon as he had word of the sales, Stickney began a furious attack upon his colleagues. He could point to the meager proceeds of the auctions which brought only \$10,912.38 (including taxes paid by those reclaiming their property which amounted to \$304.13). It was undeniable also that the conditions which accompanied the sales were not above suspicion. At the first day's auction Harrison Reed was the only commissioner present, and with the exception of one piece of property to be used as a colored orphan asylum, he bid in all that was offered for the government. In the latter days of the sale both Reed and Sammis bought personally two blocks each of town property, and Reed, in addition, bought a lot for each of his two sons. Stickney also professed to be shocked that the two commissioners paid \$2,200 for advertising, but the advertisements appeared solely in *The Peninsula*, and Stickney himself was the owner of the newspaper.¹⁹

Stickney insisted that the Fernandina sales could have been held just as well in November as in June. Since he had not been present, and had received no notice of the time or place of the auctions (Reed and Sammis insisted they had informed Stickney of these facts) Stickney charged that the sales were illegal, and immediately began to demand that the Commissioner of Revenue set aside as irregular the tax sale proceedings. He also began to press for the removal of Reed and Sammis from the commission.²⁰

Under oath, Stickney swore that he had no other motive but public policy in taking his stand on the Fernandina sales, but afterward he admitted that while in New York during June, 1863, he became attorney for

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5; Stickney to Chase, November 3, 1863, January 7, 1864, Chase MSS., vols. 83, 86, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

20. H. Rep., Ex. Doc., 18, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 3.

Marshall O. Roberts who had a claim against the Florida Railroad Company for over \$700,000. Roberts was the President of the United States Mail Steamship Company, and even then was acquiring profits of \$3,000,000 for the charter and sale of his steamships to the government. When Thayer was publicizing his immigration plan in the fall of 1862, Roberts wrote to him that he had advanced large sums of money to complete the Florida railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Keys, and because of that the Thayer plan might be of great service to him. "The loss of this sum," he explained, "has greatly impoverished me, but you may yet aid me in getting something out of it. I will do my share cheerfully." If transportation were needed, Thayer might keep it in mind that the Roberts steamers were "fine sea-going ships, and ready for service." Roberts might have added that the Florida Railroad Company owned the original plat of Fernandina, besides property there in depot grounds, railroad iron, rolling stock, buildings, the wharf, and whatever lots in the city had not passed into the hands of private buyers. Some of the heavy stockholders, such as David Yulee and Joseph Finegan, were avowed rebels, and their property would become forfeit for the non-payment of taxes. Knowing this Roberts sent Stickney a \$500 retainer, in return for which Stickney proposed to rescue the debt owing to Roberts and other northern creditors by a bill in chancery (in the United States court) to oust the "rebel" owners. He would then get title to the property for Roberts and the others. But much of the company's property was in Fernandina, and Stickney's uncooperative associates on the Tax Commission were proceeding to strike off that town to the Government and private buyers. Unless these sales were set aside the company (assuming that the "loyal" creditors might secure control of its assets) could not meet the

conditions of redemption. If the sales were negated, Roberts might redeem the property for a small sum.²¹

September found the three Tax Commissioners in Washington, ready to carry their unsavory squabble to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, J. J. Lewis, and to Chase himself. The whole affair was particularly embarrassing to the Secretary of the Treasury who as recently as the previous June had written enthusiastically of the Commissioners, praising them as "men of ability and sound judgment." Mistakenly, he considered Stickney to be an old resident of Florida, and disregarded all warnings against that adroit Commissioner's devious course. For example, Edward L. Pierce, a friend whom Chase trusted and respected, advised the Secretary at the time that Stickney was pressing his case (i.e. September, 1863) that it would be well to watch Stickney's trans-

21. The post-war evolution of the Florida Railroad Company (i.e. the Fernandina and Cedar -Keys line) falls outside the scope of this work. However, in 1868, the United States Attorney General, William M. Evarts, took under consideration the application of Florida Railroad Company trustees for the issue of repayment drafts to purchasers of certain tax lands in Fernandina, with a claim by the trustees that the lands had been duly redeemed by them under Federal statutes. Evarts ruled that the application could not be granted in the absence of any certificate from the Board of Tax Commissioners authenticating the redemption. This, however, was after Stickney ceased to control the Florida Commission. See, B. F. Hall, *et als*, eds. *Official Opinions of the Attorneys General* (39 vols., 1852-1941), XII (1870), pp. 517-518. It is more significant that the trustees (in reality they were trustees of the Florida Internal Improvement Fund) offered the road for sale at auction in November, 1866, and at that time the creditors of the Florida Railroad Company paid \$323,466 for it; E. N. Dickerson was one of the leaders of this group, but Marshall O. Roberts was certainly one of the most important of his associates. The *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* openly announced that the road was purchased by Roberts without mentioning the others. After much swindling in the railroad's lands and other misfortunes the road finally passed into the hands of a party of capitalists headed by the Englishman, Sir Edward Reed and C. D. Willard. They combined it with the Florida Central, and other peninsular lines. Finally, it was acquired by the Atlantic Coast Line system. See, Helen R. Sharp, "Samuel A. Swann and the Development of Florida, 1855-1900," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, XX (1941), pp. 170, 177-178, 186-187; *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, III (1866), pp. 522, 663, XXXII (1881), p. 100, XXXIV (1882), p. 86.

actions ; but the advice went unheeded. On many another occasion Chase had been guilty of execrable judgment in the choice of subordinates, and with continuing obstinacy he had kept them in office. Perhaps his own political ambition combined with his estimate of their value to his faction served to blunt his own moral sense, but it was also true that even the most shallow of these appointees paid lip service to strong anti-slavery opinions which Chase so earnestly claimed for himself. Stickney, however, did not pretend to be a champion of the freedman ; he went so far as to suggest in his correspondence with Chase that the negro should not be made a "speciality." Yet Chase was nonetheless infatuated with Stickney's blandishments.²²

It was obvious in September, 1863, of course, that Stickney's enemies on the Tax Commission had been guilty of certain irregularities which Stickney could use to pillory them before public opinion, and he did not hesitate to do just that. As the newspaper accounts of the sales began to appear, editorial cries of indignation demanded that the malefactors should suffer appropriate punishment. When their heads did not immediately roll, the *Chicago Tribune*, to cite but one instance, angrily proclaimed: "It is notorious that the commissioners of taxes for Florida have sold vast tracts of land to themselves for a song. . . . but we have not heard that the guilty parties have been removed from office." Congress should be called upon to provide "adequate penalties for that class of offences."²³

Stickney's enemies on the Tax Commission were willing to fight for their offices. Sammis, attempting to counter Stickney's influence with Chase, appealed to Chase's personal friend William Allen Butler, the head of a powerful New York law firm which included the

22. Chase to Robert J. Walker, June 8, 1863, Chase letterbooks, Historical Society of Pennsylvania ; Pierce to Chase, September 17, 1863, Chase MSS., box 10, Historical Society of Pennsylvania ; Stickney to id., January 6, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 70, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

23. *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1863.

Collector of the New York port. Harrison Reed likewise tried to procure strong assistance. His brother, Herbert Reed, an appointee in the New York customs house, wrote to Chase on his behalf; another influential correspondent of Chase, William Henry Brisbane of the South Carolina Tax Commission, was Harrison Reed's uncle by marriage.²⁴ In a bid for the favor of radical anti-slavery men, Commissioner Reed wrote to the veteran abolitionist Samuel J. May that the recent sales of the Florida Commission had been "thronged" by negroes. Some of these colored people, according to Reed, were then promised that "buildings" should be erected on vacant lots and sold to them 'on time'. About thirty families had been able to secure homes at prices they could afford to pay for them. "As a class," Reed expounded, "they are essential to the future prosperity of the South, and as free laborers if properly protected and directed, will cause the wilderness of the Slave States to 'blossom as a rose,' and 'the desert waste to smile with abundance.'"²⁵

Reed and Sammis were fighting a lost battle, for, on September 11, Commissioner J. J. Lewis gave Stickney his first triumph by ruling that the Florida sales should be set aside as void "for want of concurrence of all three ... [Commissioners] in the proceedings," and because of "other irregularities on the part of the two, who acted in the absence of their sick colleague." (Stickney had insisted that his trip to the North in the spring of 1863 was due to illness!) Lewis further held that it was the duty of the government to order a resale. Soon after this, Sammis submitted his resignation, and William Alsop whom Stickney recommended received the place. Although he did not return to Florida as Commissioner, Harrison Reed retained his appointment for several

24. William Allen Butler to Chase, October 24, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 82, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; Herbert Reed to *id.*, November 3, 1863, *Ibid.*, vol. 83.

25. Cited in New England Loyal Publication Society Broadside, No. 126 (October 10, 1863), Boston Public Library.

months, and visited the Sea Islands where he did his utmost to plague his victorious rival.²⁶

In scoring his marked success, Stickney carefully maneuvered Chase by the most skillful responses to the Secretary of the Treasury's outstanding trait—vanity. Neither was the carpetbagging Yankee unaware that Chase's self-conceit merged with an overpowering lust for political power. A casual glance at the correspondence which passed between the two men easily demonstrates that from the beginning Stickney had scored his best points with references to the opportunities of political reconstruction in Florida. It is unnecessary to assume that Chase from the outset foresaw that reconstructed State regimes controlled by his friends would be stepping-stones to the White House for himself. In the light of the evidence it is safer to assert that Chase had faith that the South could be regenerated by such governments more effectively than by the proposals of Lincoln or others in the government who voiced opinions chronically opposed to his own.

It would even be difficult to say at just what point Chase began to think seriously of himself as a rival to Lincoln for the Republican-Union nomination of 1864, but certain it is that by September, 1863, he was actively doing just that. By then the spoilsmen in his department were beginning to inform him of devices intended to corral convention delegates. In the custom houses, internal revenue offices, special trade agencies, and especially in the States disrupted by the war his appointees were striving to offset the efforts of those who were responding to Lincoln's patronage favors. At best the Chase enthusiasts could see a close decision if they drummed up maximum support in the North, but in direct proportion to the success of their efforts there would the importance of southern delegations from recently reconstructed states emerge as the decisive element in

26. New York *Times*, September 12, 16, 1863; Stickney to Chase, November 3, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 86, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

the convention. Florida, if reconstructed under Stickney's leadership, would fit well into the category of useful delegations.

While the decision on the Florida tax sales was still forthcoming, Washington correspondents of New York newspapers began to revive earlier stories that Floridians were loyal; if they received help they could rid the State of "rebels" by employing Florida negroes recruited within the lines of Federal military occupation. Such had been the identical pattern of Stickney's failure the previous spring, but the correspondents were willing to overlook this at the prospect that Florida might send "loyal representatives" to the next session of Congress; that, in turn, would do much to insure recognition of a Florida delegation at the approaching Republican-Union convention.

When, early in September, Stickney called to consult with him about the reconquest of Florida, Chase was in the proper mood, and Stickney's picture, as usual, was painted in the most brilliant colors: 5,000 men could reclaim the State, and Quincy A. Gillmore, then commanding the Department of the South, approved of such a Florida campaign. Without disclosing Brigadier General Rufus Saxton's past benefactions in affairs commercial, Stickney was hopeful that his military friend from the Sea Island might be given command in Florida. From Stickney's ubiquitous ally, the Reverend Mansfield French, Chase received stirring Biblical assurance that a colored army marching into Florida would create such a panic among the secessionists there "as when the Syrians fled, through fear, from Samaria."²⁷ During October, Chase secured for his admiring private secretary, Homer G. Plantz, the lucrative District Attorney's post at Key West, and Plantz, who John Hay declared "went down with but two ideas, to steal money for himself and votes for Chase" became Stickney's useful

27. Mansfield French to *id.*, October 10, 1863, *Ibid.*, vol. 82; New York *Tribune*, September 10, 1863; Chase Diary, MSS., (entry of September 6, 1863), Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

adjutant. When, in December, Chase began to reveal his first slight doubt of Stickney's probity, and sent a cautious inquiry, Plantz hastened to reassure him that Stickney was worthy of any trust: "He [Stickney] is universally respected and trusted by our best men here; and as heartily denounced by copperheads and ex-Secessionists."²⁸

As was becoming his custom, Stickney after his summer's sojourn in the North tarried for a time at Beaufort on his way to Florida. His purpose was to talk with Major General-designate Gillmore, and from the General surprisingly enough he extracted the promise of another campaign in Florida if the War Department would give its consent. To Chase the Tax Commissioner penned a confidential note: "I think it is very important indeed for *you* that General Gillmore be identified with the Florida conquest. He is anxious to win distinction according to the Republican programme. At the same time I do not think the Senate ought to be in a hurry to confirm him as Maj.General. Wait until the delegation in Congress [from Florida] ask for his confirmation for his services in conquering the rebels of their State."²⁹

For the next two months Stickney continued to develop his plans. He steadily grew bolder until finally, on December 14, he clambered aboard the U.S.S. Vermont, then lying in Port Royal harbor, and told its incredulous commander, William Reynolds, that gunboats would be needed to cooperate with a brigade of infantry, which was about to leave with a body of cavalry for campaigning in Florida. Reynolds could only say that Stickney must secure the admiral's consent before using the gunboats, but the astonished officer hurriedly made a report of his interview to Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren, commanding the South Atlantic Blockading Squad-

28. Plantz to Chase, December 5, 1863, January 12, 18, 1864, Chase MSS., vols., 84, 86, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; Tyler Dennett, *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York, 1939), p. 110.

29. Stickney to Chase, December 11, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 85, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

ron, who was then supervising operations off Morris Island near Charleston. Dahlgren then indignantly complained to Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, saying that prior to Reynolds's letter neither Stickney nor anyone else had mentioned another diversion toward Florida; he considered it as nothing less than injurious to his main attack against Charleston. But Dahlgren might better have saved his words, for even then Gillmore was suggesting the feasibility of Florida operations to Major General Henry W. Halleck, and on December 22 he received through Halleck permission granted by Stanton to undertake such a movement in the peninsula.³⁰

So certain was Stickney of military sponsorship for reconstruction in Florida that in company with William Alsop and Calvin L. Robinson he went to St. Augustine, where, on December 19, they staged a unionist meeting in the district court room. Stickney's *Free South* announced that this meager assemblage was a response to President Lincoln's amnesty proclamation of December 8, 1863 which, in setting forth the Lincolnian ten percent plan of reconstruction, provided for oath taking by the people, with a promise, that if this were done to the extent of ten percent of the State's votes in 1860, Lincoln would extend recognition to a government of their formation.

There is no evidence that Stickney favored Lincoln's reconstruction formula; he was quite willing to use it as a pretext to establish his own ascendancy over a "rump" government of unionists in Florida, but if such a government were based upon so little as one percent of the population his influence would probably be greater in it than if it were more representative of the State's voters. In his speech to the St. Augustine unionists, Stickney first reassured the handful of "loyalists" that unlike the earlier Thayer scheme, the new plans for the regeneration of Florida did not require that "a soldier's vocation" should be theirs. He did predict, however, as

30. O.R.N., Series I, XV, pp. 179-180; *Senate Report*, No. 47, 38th Congress, 1st Session, p. 1.

Thayer's propaganda had done a year before, that with free institutions thousands of Germans would make their homes in Florida. The resolutions adopted at the St. Augustine meeting had been drawn up by Stickney and submitted to Chase for approval; they directed the appointment of a committee composed of Stickney ring members and Plantz with authority to call a State convention. In an account of the St. Augustine proceedings which Stickney sent to the New York *Tribune*, New York *Evening Post*, Washington *Chronicle*, and other prominent anti-slavery papers of the North, there were allusions to St. Augustine as a favorite winter resort for invalids from the North in the ante-bellum era. One of these "inspired" articles noted, that New England troops who occupied the city were drawn from almost every trade and profession. If they were allowed to remain there until the end of the rebellion they might have a part in constructing "the framework of a glorious commonwealth." The *Free South* (which had an exchange list in the North) praised Stickney "for the energy and wisdom with which he has pushed forward this good work." Regarding the possibility of political reconstruction it continued: "Her [Florida's] people long dwelling in ignorance will now be brought into the light of education; her rivers long silent will now soon teem with commerce; her rich soil relieved from the blight of slavery and cultivated by freemen will pour its treasures into the granaries of the world. A new era has commenced."³¹

To emphasize the material benefits of unionism, Stickney accompanied his December meeting with a tax sale of St. Augustine real estate. These auctions began on December 21, and lasted for one week. There were, he informed Chase, "many bidders." One obstacle, however, was Stickney's enemy on the Tax Commission, Harrison Reed, who refused to participate in the sales and

31. Beaufort (South Carolina) *Free South*, January 2, 1864; New York *Tribune*, December 29, 1863; Stickney to Chase, December 21, 1863, Chase MSS., vol. 85, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

argued they were illegal because *The Peninsula*, the advertising medium for the sale notices, had suspended publication for a week during the period in which the law required consecutive announcements of sale. Stickney then renewed his demands that Reed be removed from the Commission, and Reed finally resigned as of January 1, 1864.³²

Altogether the St. Augustine sales did not justify Stickney's report to Chase that the property had been moving "remarkably well." The proceeds amounted to \$19,329 in cash, with lots valued at \$4,578 struck off to the Federal government. William C. Morrill, Stickney's partner, bid in about \$2,000 of the property, and Stickney himself later took possession of one lot. He then proceeded to repair the house on it, planted trees and vines, and gave other indications that he was claiming ownership. Ironically, the Commissioners apparently bought one of the lots for John Hay, Lincoln's private secretary, who certainly purchased tax sale property when he visited Florida between January and March of 1864.³³

Stickney's relations with Hay were most peculiar. Why so ardent a Chase man as Stickney should personally invite Lincoln's private secretary to participate in southern reconstruction was in itself an enigma. Yet Stickney did just that. On the night of December 28, Hay, in Washington, received letters from Stickney and another Florida resident inviting him to come to Florida, and be their representative in Congress. That same evening, Hay talked over Florida's reconstruction with Lincoln who advised him to go "and engineer the business there." With the reports of Stickney's St. Augustine meeting before him, Hay believed there was a possibility "of getting the State under way" early the next spring. "I will go down there," he recorded in his diary, "& form my plans after I get there, as to my own

32, *Id.* to id. December 21, 1863, January 7, 11, 1864, *Ibid.*; H. Rep. Ex. Doc. no. 18, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 3.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 15; Dennett, Hay, pp. 43-44, 46.

course."³⁴ Already, in 1863, Hay had visited Florida, and had written: "... I never saw a more beautiful country than Florida. The soil is almost as rich as our [Illinois] prairie land. All sorts of fruit and grain grow with very little cultivation, and fish and game of every kind abound. ..."³⁵ Stickney knew of Hay's interest in the State, and he also believed him to be a personable young man who was loyal to Lincoln but perhaps gullible enough to fall in with the Stickney plans for political reorganization. It could not be gainsaid that Hay would use his influence to keep Gillmore's interest in Florida up to the mark. Finally, and most important, since Lincoln was taking a deep interest in reconstruction it would be but a short while before he would attempt to interfere in Florida's affairs anyway, so why not forestall hostile interference by inviting Hay, and attempt to control rather than oppose his influence?

When Hay arrived at Gillmore's headquarters on the Sea Islands, he presented to the General a formal letter of instruction from Lincoln. This contained no extraordinary request for a change of Gillmore's plans, but in his reply to it Gillmore indicated plainly enough that he understood his future duties to include an increasing emphasis upon political reconstruction in Florida. He wrote: "... I am led to the impression that ... I am expected to initiate, guide, and control, such measures as may be necessary under the Presidential Proclamation of December 8th, 1863, to restore the State of Florida to its allegiance. ... The plan now being pursued by Gen. Banks in Louisiana impresses me very favorably, and can doubtless in its principal features, be both easily and speedily applied to Florida."³⁶

34. Ibid., pp. 145-146.

35. William R. Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay* (2 vols., Boston and New York, 1915), I, pp. 154, 271. Thayer said that Hay acquired a total of seven pieces of land in Florida in 1864, and that he got patents for these after the war.

36. Gillmore to Lincoln, January 21, 30, 1864, Lincoln MSS., vols., 139, 140, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; S. Rep. no. 47, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2.

Gillmore correctly understood both Lincoln and Hay, but Stickney was also present to extend warm greetings to the President's Secretary when he arrived in the Sea Islands. Confidentially reporting to Chase, Stickney contended that Lincoln had approved of the St. Augustine meeting, and that Hay was "directed to cooperate" with him (i.e. with Stickney). There would be, Stickney promised, no difficulty in "signing-up" enough voters to establish a State government, and the task would be the easier because Chase had sent a revenue cutter to aid the Tax Commissioners in gathering together unionists from along the coast and St. Johns river. Chase, of course, had not done so with knowledge of Hay's mission; indeed, Stickney's letter implied that Chase might not yet have been advised that Hay was going to Florida.³⁷ At no time did Stickney exhibit the rancor over Hay's presence that Plantz did when he snarled: "Private Secy. Hay is coming here to run for Congress, with which end in view Mr. Lincoln makes him a major." Secretly, Stickney was just as earnest. Gillmore, he whispered to Chase, had given him to understand that he was Chase's friend, "decided and active," while Stickney himself had been organizing "a free State league, or if you please a Chase league," which he thought would "work to a charm," and deliver Chase control of the State under a unionist constitution.³⁸

Stickney did not minimize the influence which Hay, through Lincoln, had with Gillmore, but he also remembered that so early as December 30 the General had arrived in Fernandina for a tour of inspection and had taken "a lively interest" in Florida affairs.³⁹ Upon returning to the base at Hilton Head, Gillmore replied to a note from Chase who urged him to action in Florida with assurances that he had engaged "Judge Stickney" in long conversations and "expected valuable advice and

37. Stickney to Chase, January 26, 1864, Chase MSS., vol. 87, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

38. Id. to id., February 5, 1864, *ibid.*, Plantz to id., January 27, 1864, *ibid.*

39. Stickney to *id.*, January 11, 1864, *ibid.*

assistance from him."⁴⁰ Nearly a week before Hay's arrival Gillmore disclosed to Stanton and Halleck his intention to occupy the west bank of the St. Johns river. Halleck with typical harshness then reminded Gillmore that such an expedition might be successful in gathering recruits (negroes and unionists), and open an outlet for cotton, but that it could have only small value as a military measure. Nevertheless, Gillmore persisted. Butressed by Hay's encouragement and Lincoln's order, he confidently announced on January 31 that he meant to occupy the richest portion of the country between the St. Johns and Suwanee rivers to bring out cotton, lumber, turpentine and other products. Furthermore he intended to begin the restoration of Florida to the Union. Led by Brigadier General Truman Seymour, three brigades and one light battery left Port Royal harbor on February 5 for Jacksonville. Gillmore and his staff followed two days later.⁴¹

In the preparations for the campaign, Hay essayed to play an important role, but he was still able to pay a call at Fernandina to evaluate the unionist sentiment there. His conclusions, written out for Lincoln while his steamer, bound for Jacksonville, lay off the mouth of the St. Johns river, were significant:

I have found among the leading men I have met a most gratifying unanimity of sentiment. Those who have formerly been classed as Conservative are willing to accept readily the accomplished events of the war and to come back at once: while those of more radical views who, we have reason to fear, would rather embarrass us, are readily in favor of your plan as exhibited in the case of Louisiana and Arkansas. There is no opposition to be apprehended from either native Unionists or Treasury Agents. The people are ignorant and apathetic. They seem

40. Gillmore to *id.*, January 18, 1863 [*sic.* 1864], Chase MSS., box 6, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

41. Dennett, Hay, pp. 165-166, *Sen. Rep.* no. 47, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1-2.

to know nothing and care nothing about the matter. They have vague objections to being shot and having their houses burned, but don't know why it is to be done. They will be very glad to see a government strong enough to protect them against these every day incidents of the last two years. I have the best assurances that we will get the tenth required: although so large a portion of the rebel population is in the army & so many of the loyal people refugees in the North, that the state is well-nigh depopulated. We will have a clean slate to begin with. . . .⁴²

Hay's, and for that matter Lincoln's, reconstruction technique were here clearly set forth. Events were to prove the young secretary's prophecy of the requisite ten percent to be overly optimistic. His estimate of the Treasury Agents' inability to harm Lincolnian reconstruction could have been either the most self-evident naivete, or the shrewdest of conclusions drawn from his early meetings with Stickney. Either he had failed altogether to understand Stickney's machinations, or he was certain that he could overmatch Chase's representative in the political vendetta that was certain to follow.

The expedition began auspiciously enough. On the afternoon of February 7, Seymour arrived with his forces at Jacksonville; that night he pushed inland, captured one hundred prisoners, and four days later his advance had taken him to within four miles of Lake City. When Hay arrived in Jacksonville with Gillmore that much occupied place was "gay with flags & busy with shipping."⁴³ Such was the familiar flurry of activity which inevitably accompanied a campaign of that type. It was an adventitious growth dependent upon the army, but it also sapped the resources of the countryside. Large droves of cattle and hogs began to appear within the Federal lines, and preparations began to extract other

42. Hay to Lincoln, February 8, 1864, Lincoln MSS., vol. 142, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

43. *Sen. Rep.*, no. 47, 38th Cong., 1st Sess. p. 3; Dennett, Hay, P. 159.

wealth from the banks of the St. Johns. One correspondent remarked that Jacksonville was beginning to "assume quite a business aspect." Traders were applying for permits to land their goods, and one Yankee enterpriser thought of operating a hotel.⁴⁴ Gillmore unhesitatingly solicited Chase to open the Jacksonville port for trade; and he informed Halleck: "I desire to see the lumber and turpentine trade on the St. Johns river revived by loyal men. Stickney in similarly importuning Chase for the relaxation of trade restrictions reminded him that if Jacksonville, Fernandina, and St. Augustine became commercial centers hindrances to northern immigration would disappear."⁴⁵ The northern press was not as eager for regeneration through military conquest as it had been earlier in the war. The *New York Times* which had backed Thayer strongly spoke cynically of "the scatteration policy again."⁴⁶ But with the arrival of northern troops in Jacksonville some publicity extolling the opulence of the sub-tropical triumph began to appear in New England newspapers. The *Boston Advertiser* predicted that when Florida renewed its allegiance to the Federal government there would no doubt be "a considerable movement in the northern and middle states of persons desirous to change our severer climate for that of the perpetual springtime of the valley of the St. Johns. . . ." There they would find "magnificent pine lumber," and "valleys of the greatest richness of soil."⁴⁷ A published letter from a Union army officer waxed enthusiastic over the Jacksonville region. The city, he recalled, had been an important ante-bellum lumber market, and had been connected with Tallahassee by a rail-

44. *New York Times*, February 23, 1864.

45. Cited in *Sen. Rep.* no. 47, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 3; Stickney to Chase, February 24, 1864, Chase MSS., vol. 88, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

46. *New York Times*, February 13, 1864; See, however, *ibid.* February 26, 1864, which admitted that a timely blow might be struck against Confederate supply centers, especially those of beef cattle, in Florida.

47. *Boston Advertiser* cited in *New England Loyal Publications Society Broadside*, no. 170 (March 3, 1864), Boston Public Library.

road built with northern capital. In central Florida pineapples grew "as easily as onions in Massachusetts." He concluded that "any judicious plan of colonization could not but find in Florida ample success..."⁴⁸

At the time, the old New England Emigrant Aid Company was beginning to arouse itself for such an effort. Having finally settled its financial accounts, that strange combination of militant philanthropists and shrewd Yankee capitalists with which Eli Thayer had tried to claim Kansas for "free labor" was again ready to turn its attention to organized emigration. In 1862, the membership of the Society had chosen for president, John Carter Brown, the Providence cotton manufacturer. Amos A. Lawrence, another textile capitalist was one of the vice-presidents, and wealthy Bostonians such as Martin Brimmer and C. J. Higginson accepted places on the board of directors, as did J. P. Williston of New Bedford, William Cullen Bryant, and Senator Edwin D. Morgan of New York. Eli Thayer was noticeably absent, but the veteran colonizer and Unitarian, Edward Everett Hale, was willing to assume the burdens of promotional leadership. In January, 1864, he framed a report to the executive committee which discussed Florida, and this was quickly followed by an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*.⁴⁹ The latter effort was a colorful bit of propaganda. It began with a sweeping analysis of the effects of northern invasions throughout history, and leaped to the hasty conclusion that: "Northern invasions, when successful, advance the civilization of the world. . . . The softness of Southern climates produces, in the long run, gentleness, effeminacy, and indolence, or passionate rather than persevering effort. . . ." From the standpoint of progress, Hale believed that the war was "nothing but a terrible piece of ploughing . . .", and as it drew to its close there was great need for those from the North who

48. Cited in *ibid.*, no. 174, (March 17, 1864).

49. Hale to Amos A. Lawrence, January 26, 1864, Lawrence MSS., vol. 24, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; *History of the New-England Emigrant Aid Company with a Report of Its Future Operations* (Boston, 1862), pp. 27-33.

would "begin on the harrowing and planting" of the southern soil. With more specific attention to Florida, he continued:

Take for instance, this magnificent Florida, our own Italy. . . . It will be a Free State, offering the privileges of a Free State to the eager eyes of the North of Europe. That valley of the St. Johns, with its wealth of lumber, the even climate of the western shore,—the navy yard to be reestablished at Pensacola,—the commerce to be resumed at Jacksonville,—the Nice which we will build up for our invalids at St. Augustine,—the orange groves which are wasting their sweetness at this moment . . .—will all be so many temptations to the emigrant. . . . The lumberman from Maine and New Hampshire who have seen the virgin riches of the St. Johns, like the Massachusetts volunteers who have picked out their farms in the valley of the Shenandoah . . . will furnish men enough, well skilled in political systems, to start the new republic in regions which have never known . . . a true republic . . . till now. . . .⁵⁰

Political Reorganization Fails

Meanwhile, in Florida Hay and Stickney were busy with the first steps in political reorganization. Hay scarcely had reached Jacksonville before he began to post copies of Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation about the town. With a book of printed "loyalty oaths" under one arm, he visited Confederate prisoners, and was highly elated when they came to him under a colored guard to hold up their hands as he read through the oath. The townsmen were less responsive, and he correctly surmised they knew that if they were "true to Gillmore" they might get cotton for trade, but if "false to Finegan" (the Confederate commander in the vicinity) they might "stretch hemp."

50. (Edward Everett Hale), "Northern Invasions," *Atlantic Monthly*, XIII (1864), pp. 245-249.

So quickly did high hopes vanish that just a week after Hay began his work, Stickney was able to advise Chase that Hay was ready to admit that Lincoln's reconstruction plan would fail in Florida because of failure to enroll ten percent of the 1860 voters.⁵¹ Inwardly Stickney was not at all distressed by this; he had nothing to gain if Lincoln's prestige increased due to a successful execution of the ten percent plan; if oaths were accepted from that many Floridians the political aspect of the new government would be entirely too conservative to guarantee the Stickneyites control of it. Stickney's power would be much more secure with a "rump" convention composed of a small group of carpetbaggers and poor-white unionists such as he had gathered together the previous December in St. Augustine.

What little hope remained for a quick restoration of the State disappeared when the Federals, on February 18, suffered a decisive defeat at Olustee. In that engagement, Seymour with about 5,500 men was rashly pushing ahead toward the Suwanee valley when he came upon about the same number of well-placed Confederate troops under Brigadier General Joseph Finegan's command. After heavy losses, Seymour retreated all the way to Jacksonville where the Union forces remained for many months without another important advance while nearly 15,000 Confederates hovered nearby.

The Olustee rout was remarkable because of Seymour's strange inconsistency. Gillmore had instructed him to hold Baldwin, Jacksonville, Magnolia, Palatka, and "the south prong of the St. Mary's river." At these points Gillmore planned to establish "small works" for defense; they would mark out a quadrilateral surrounding Jacksonville for Stickney, Hay and the other "reconstructionists" to work out their designs in. At least for the time, the "loyalists" would find sufficient resources for exploitation.

51. Dennett, Hay, pp. 159-162; Stickney to Chase, February 16, 24, 1864, Chase MSS., vol. 88, -Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

When they were issued these instructions apparently had well suited Seymour who warned Gillmore that a further movement toward the interior was inadmissible. Then with a somewhat critical reference to Gillmore's relations with the carpetbaggers he observed: "... what has been said of the desire of Florida to come back now is a delusion. . . . Stickney and others have misinformed you. . . ." Just before Gillmore returned to Hilton Head on February 14, the two generals conferred in Jacksonville about the defenses to be erected there and at nearby positions. The main body of Seymour's troops was then at Baldwin. No advance into the interior was authorized, and Gillmore left Florida fully believing that there would be no more extended offensive operations of any kind. Then on the 18th he was shocked to receive at his Hilton Head base a dispatch from Seymour, dated February 17, which briefly stated that Seymour intended to advance without supplies to destroy a railroad near the Suwannee river, a hundred miles inland from Jacksonville. Gillmore immediately rushed countermanding orders by his Chief of Staff, Brigadier General John W. Turner, but Turner's boat was delayed by a storm for nearly two days, and he arrived at Jacksonville only after the battle of Olustee had begun. When he was asked to account for his hazardous change of strategy, Seymour explained that there was little doubt in his mind that "the people of this State, kindly treated by us, will soon be ready to return to the Union; they are heartily tired of the war"; but only six days before he wrote this he had cautioned Gillmore that "Stickney and others" had misinformed Gillmore by delusive claims that Florida was ready to come back into the Union!⁵²

When news of the Olustee affair reached the North, newspapers of the Democratic opposition maintained Hay's mission had been a political trick to gain delegates

52. *Sen. Rep., no. 47, 38th Cong., 1st Sess.*, pp. 14, 21; Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, VIII, p. 284; "Florida," in *The American Annual Cyclopaedia* (title varies, 42 vols., New York, 1867-1893), IV, p. 378; O.R., Series I, XXXV, part. 1, pp. 281-282.

for Lincoln to the Republican-Union party convention at Baltimore. With a degree of truth, the New York *Herald* complained that the Gillmore expedition had been undertaken "by express direction of President Lincoln" for political objectives. At the other extreme of opposition, Lincoln's enemies among the radical anti-slavery Republicans in Congress obtained an investigation of the fiasco by their congressional Joint Committee of Investigation, the Committee on the Conduct of the War. After taking some testimony from the principal figures involved in the episode this Committee grudgingly conceded that Gillmore had planned his expedition before Hay arrived with instructions from Lincoln, and that Seymour's military decisions had not been ordered by the President. Nonetheless, rabid Chase supporters such as Plantz took obvious delight in Hay's discomfiture.⁵³

Stickney carefully hid any elation over Hay's embarrassment. He chose to stand by quietly while the efforts in the North to win the nomination for Chase reached their climax in a circular letter issued under the sponsorship of Senator Samuel C. Pomeroy of Kansas. The "Pomeroy Circular," however, proved to be a clumsy political device and the Chase "boom" suffered rapid deflation. On March 1, Stickney admitted to Hay that "no power on earth" could prevent Lincoln's nomination.⁵⁴ It was self-evident that so many northern state delegations had aligned themselves with Lincoln that there was greatly diminished need for the southern "pocket boroughs."

But Stickney continued to strive for political dominion in Florida. Of Hay he wrote, "I have not opposed him but rather moulded his views in harmony with my own. He now works with me, and for the measures I wish to prevail."⁵⁵ Simultaneously, Stickney was

53. New York Times, March 7, 1864; New York *World* cited in *Boston Traveller*, March 12, 1864; New York *Herald*, February 28, 1864; *Sen. Rep.*, no. 47, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., 25 pp.

54. Dennett, Hay, p. 165.

55. Stickney to Chase, March 2, 1864, Chase MSS., Vol. 88, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

dispensing Treasury patronage to known friends of Chase. Robert Carter, a treasury department clerk from Beaufort, came to Jacksonville at Stickney's invitation to be editor of *The Peninsula*, and he immediately offered himself as a candidate for collector of the port there. For tax assessor under the Direct Tax Act, Stickney chose his brother, John K. Stickney. Finally, the would-be boss informed Chase that the executive committee chosen at the St. Augustine meeting of the preceding December would appoint Plantz, Philip Fraser, and himself as delegates from Florida to the Baltimore convention.⁵⁶

Opposition to Stickney

By the spring of 1864 Stickney had to reckon with factional rivals in Florida politics. One of these opponents was O. M. Dorman, a paymaster in the army, who in January wrote to Congressman Jesse O. Norton from Hilton Head, pleading for a chance to accompany Gillmore's expedition to Jacksonville where he might rally the unionists who favored Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation. His letter passed from Norton to Lincoln, and the request was granted. The day before Dorman wrote to Norton he had a long conversation with Hay during the course of which Lincoln's secretary listened to his tirade against Stickney's reconstruction measures. It is hardly conceivable that Dorman would almost immediately after that have sent his appeal to Norton without some encouragement from Hay. Within a month Stickney was complaining that Dorman, "the worst copperhead in the country," was busy trying to form a State organization in Florida.⁵⁷

Stickney also faced treason in his own house. During March, Calvin L. Robinson disposed of his interest in the business partnership with Stickney and Morrill by selling

56. *Id.* to *id.*, March 15, 1864, *ibid.*, Vol. 89; Robert Carter to *id.*, April 9, 1864, *ibid.*

57. O. M. Dorman to Jesse O. Norton, January 21, 1864, Lincoln MSS., Vol. 139, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; Stickney to Chase, February 16, 1864, Chase MSS., Vol. 88; Dennett, Hay, p. 155.

his share to them. That this accompanied a political break as well became evident when Stickney complained that Robinson's recent acts had satisfied him that Robinson was "politically unstable."⁵⁸ Other opponents then challenged Stickney's ambitions. Buckingham Smith of St. Augustine, John S. Sammis (Stickney's former associate on the Direct Tax Commission), and others met in Jacksonville, May 18, to call a convention for the appointment of delegates to the Baltimore convention. Apparently, even Philip Fraser went over to this group. When their convention met on May 24, they appointed a five-man delegation which included Robinson and other Stickney opponents.⁵⁹ The Stickney faction, however, nominated its own representatives to Baltimore, and engaged in recriminations with the other camp.⁶⁰ Plantz, who came North to attend the convention with Stickney, admitted to Chase that the nomination was "pre-determined" for Lincoln, but Stickney, just a few days before the opening session professed to see "a strong tide" setting in Chase's favor.⁶¹

One of the most irritating questions at Baltimore did concern the admission of delegations from the seceded States. The committee on credentials at length agreed to extend to one Florida delegation the privilege of occupying seats on the convention floor, but denied it voting rights. The delegation also received an invitation to name one member to the Republican Union National Committee. This proved to be none other than Calvin L. Robinson.⁶²

Stickney's influence declined steadily during the later stages of the war. In the spring of 1864 the Treasury Department finally authorized an investigation of

58. H. Rep., Ex. Doc., No. 18, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess., p.15; Stickney to Chase, March 15, 1864, Chase MSS., Vol. 89, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

59. "Florida," in *The American Annual Cyclopedia*, IV, pp.373-379.

60. Dennett, Hay, p.167.

61. Stickney to Chase, May 25, 1864, Chase MSS., Vol. 90, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

62. *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 8, 11, 1864; *New York Tribune*, June 9, 1864; *New York Times*, June 9, 1864.

his activities, and after Chase resigned his cabinet post in June, Stickney's Florida enemies sought his removal from the Tax Commission. One of them wrote to the new Secretary of the Treasury: "I hear that the Tax Commission is no longer to be cursed by its former chairman. Thank God for that. If the department could have had the views of the honest men and General officers of this department he would have gone long ago. . . . but Mr. Chase would not listen. Stickney has done us much damage but I trust the courts of the U. S. will in a measure right the wrongs. . . ."⁶³ Stickney managed for a time to retain his place on the Tax Commission, but the attacks upon him continued. His nemesis, Harrison Reed, even placed in Lincoln's hands a long letter exposing Stickney's dealings with the Florida secession legislature. In January, 1865, a congressional document in the form of a committee report made public many of the tawdry details of Stickney's "ring" which an investigation had uncovered the previous spring.⁶⁴ Thereafter, Stickney did not again approach the center of the Florida political stage. When Chase, who was by then Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, made a tour of the South in 1865, Stickney hurried up the gangplank of the vessel carrying his most influential friend the moment that craft docked at Jacksonville. Stickney's enemies then circulated the rumor that Chase was ready to give Stickney assistance in rebuilding and operating the Fernandina and Cedar Keys railroad.⁶⁵ But nothing came of this.

Within the State newly arrived carpetbaggers such as Thomas W. Osborn and Daniel Richards with their "Lincoln Brotherhoods" and "Loyal League of America" were striding into the foreground. The most ironic twist was afforded by the emergence of Stickney's bitterest enemy, Harrison Reed, who became a carpetbag gov-

63. Charles D. Lincoln to William P. Fessenden, September 14, 1864, Fessenden MSS., Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

64. *H. Rep. Ex. Doc., no. 18*, 38th Cong., 2nd Sess.

65. William W. Davis, *The Civil War & Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913), p.352.

ernor and storm center of Florida politics in the reconstruction era. Once, in 1868, Stickney telegraphed from New York the text of a bill for the incorporation of a Florida Savings Bank, which a confederate, A. A. Knight, introduced into the legislature. Although the bill sought to create a speculative monstrosity and granted no protection to investors, it passed both houses within twenty-four hours. Harrison Reed had the satisfaction of vetoing the bill, and exposed its swindling provisions so convincingly that the Senate upheld his action.⁶⁶

Stickney the Florida propagandist had a longer life by a year or two than Stickney the political boss. He never ceased to publicize the State as a sub-tropical paradise. His newspapers at Beaufort and Jacksonville carried lavish prophecies of the peninsula's future wealth, and it was obvious they did so with the hope that northern exchanges would copy their columns. After the Olustee disaster had been followed by a discreet interval, Stickney again secured the attention of the influential *Washington Chronicle* which remarked that Stickney had prepared for publication his "History of Florida." No doubt this was the same "history" that Stickney had begun in connection with Eli Thayer's immigration plan. According to the *Chronicle*, Stickney was detailing Florida's "resources and advantages" with "special reference to the wants of emigrants."⁶⁷ The volume did not appear, and two years later it was none other than J.D.B. DeBow's *Review* which printed another "chapter" with an introductory heading which announced: "The following constitutes one of the chapters of a very able work which is now in the course of publication from the pen of L. D. Stickney on the 'History of Florida'. When finished, it will be one of the most valuable works in relation to that 'Land of Flowers' which has ever emanated from the press. We trust that the author's enterprise and spirit will be rewarded with

66. John Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida* (Jacksonville, 1888), esp. pp.42-46, 83, 89.

67. *Washington Chronicle*, July 27, 1864.

heavy orders for the work. . . .” Whatever other inconsistencies and defections he was guilty of, this “chapter” published in the greatest economic journal of the southern tradition stressed Stickney’s obdurate zeal for immigration to Florida. After recalling the advantages arising from the redivision and “parcelment” of lands during the great revolution in France, he preached that “the South’s proudest triumph and real glory now consists in shaking off the prejudices of the past, and in keeping pace with events which follow a great political and social revolution. . . . By encouraging the migration of sober, industrious people to the State, . . . the door to prosperity unprecedented in history will be opened wide.”⁶⁸

The propagandist Stickney continued to publish his *Florida Union* until May, 1867 when he retired from its editorship.

(IV) POST-WAR TRENDS

The northern interest in Florida which Stickney tried so persistently to exploit, developed but slowly in the dreary years after Appomattox. In 1866, Edward Everett Hale while struggling to arouse active sympathy for the founding of “a new Antioch” in Florida, admitted that the northern people were turning away from the South. He lamented: “It [the North] has found that with the West it can run the machinery very well, and thinks little and cares less what becomes of the Southern States. . . .”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Hale and his associates of the New England Emigrant Aid Company continued their efforts; with John Murray Forbes and Martin Brimmer as the leading spirits, they began to sell shares at \$100 each to those who desired to become part of a Florida colony, and early in May, 1867, they sent to

68. “Florida-Past, Present and Future . . .,” *De Bow’s Review Monthly*, XXXIII, (1866), pp.382-392.

69. Hale to William B. Weeden, September 18, December 20, 1866, in Edward Everett Hale Jr., *The Life and Letters of Edward Everett Hale* (2 vols., Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1917), II, pp.22-23.

Jacksonville a representative to publish an Emigrant Aid "loyal" paper there. However, the agent appointed to gather together the emigrants for Florida had but limited success, and in September, 1867, the Company announced that it was foregoing its plans for an organized community in favor of advice to settlers who would go singly or in small groups to settle where they pleased in the peninsula. To carry on this service it continued to solicit funds in 1868, and it likewise accepted gifts for the *Florida Union*, its newspaper outlet for northern ideas which they had taken over from Stickney.⁷⁰

Although not in the nature of idealistic communal units, migration, especially to the St. Johns valley, did begin. It was perhaps the most renowned of all anti-slavery propagandists, Harriet Beecher Stowe, herself imbued with a desire to "form the nucleus of a Christian neighborhood" somewhere along the banks of the St. Johns, who believed that immigration "was positively and decidedly" setting in, but she complained it was "a mere worldly emigration, with the hope of making money, nothing more. . . ."⁷¹ There was a reviving interest in Florida's citrus fruit. According to one estimate, in 1866 alone between 75,000 and 100,000 trees were transplanted and budded in the State. Watermelons too were beginning to receive attention as a possible cash crop for northern markets.⁷² In 1867, the Federal Commissioner of Agriculture noticed that although Florida lands as a whole had depreciated 55 per cent from their 1860 valuations, near the St. Johns river they had in-

70. Hale to Charles Hale, May 7, 1887, *ibid.*, p.25; Hickman, *loc. cit.*, pp.266-267.

71. Charles E. Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe . . .* (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1891), pp.400-412; Charles E. Stowe and Lyman B. Stowe, *Harriet Beecher Stowe*, (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1911), p.239; Harriet B. Stowe, "Our Florida Plantation," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XLIII (1879), pp.641-649.

72. "Some Facts in Regard to the Cultivation and Consumption of Oranges," in *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for the Year 1877* (Washington, Government printing office, 1878), pp.564-565; George W. Atwood, "The Fruits of Florida," in *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture For the Year 1867* (Washington, Government printing office, 1868), pp.140-147.

creased 33 percent in market value where northern settlers had established themselves and made improvements.⁷³ Some of these northern newcomers were fishermen; several small colonies of them at New Berlin, Mayport, and Palatka had arrived with their gill nets to catch shad for the northern markets. Mostly from Connecticut, they sometimes returned to northern waters for summer fishing, but continued a thriving business in Florida.⁷⁴

The first post-war "fever of speculation" was hindered in becoming something more than that by the difficulties which surrounded the acquisition of good land titles. If such entanglements could be avoided there were other sources of discouragement. In orange speculations the immigrant was tempted to go beyond his capital. A heavy frost in December, 1868, destroyed most of that year's fruit, and afterward the "die back" and black aphids ruined many a grower. Labor was scarce and incapable. Malaria and chills added physical discomforts. It was hard indeed to make a living from dairying and truck farming until the citrus began to bear. There were inadequate transportation lines to the North, and until the early 1880's most of the fruit had to be sent by water routes. Unfair tactics of commission merchants and bad packing made the problem worse; crates of fruit were carelessly tossed about ship decks, and fully a third of the melons shipped from Florida ports to New York never reached their destination. If any immigrant lacked outstanding merits of skill, patience, intelligence, and application he was almost certain to fail, as hundreds did, and leave the State in disgust. The war psychology lingered on to make the immigrant's social adjustments more difficult. Illustrating this, a pamphlet published during the reconstruction era advised prospective immigrants they would be safe in Florida, but added:

While it is undoubtedly true that a stranger

73. "Relative Value of Lands," *ibid.*, p.105.

74. Goode, *The Fisheries and Fishery Industries*, Vol. V, pt. 2, pp.528-530.

could not hope to meet with as much cordiality and courtesy in the South as in those more fortunate regions that have never been tossed in the boiling cauldron of secession, or been cursed with the pressure of the iron heel of conquering armies in a bitter civil war, it is also true that there is nothing to deter an immigrant who seeks to better his condition from settling in Florida, except the absence of that courtesy and kindness which he would receive at the West, or even in the South before the terrible struggle for the death of slavery had perverted the minds and embittered the hearts of men.

On the other hand, post-war psychology in Florida had another aspect expressed in the same imperialistic propaganda by the remark that "the whole population of the State" was becoming "rapidly convinced that 'men, money and labor' . . . [were] to be the watchwords of success in the future of Florida." Gradually, this idea became dominant. Associations were formed in various counties to cooperate with a State Bureau of Immigration established by a new State constitution.⁷⁵

The new capitalism was first noticeable in the tourist centers. Whereas Whitelaw Reid in the spring of 1865 could describe Jacksonville as nothing but a few brick warehouses and stores fronting upon almost bottomless sand streets, it presented, in 1869, quite a different appearance to another reporter who noticed its clean thoroughfares, plank walks, new store buildings, and enlarged wharves. Everywhere he thought he *saw* "the magic touch of Northern hands and capital. . . ." More particularly, he observed that the influx of winter visitors was through northern enterprise being supplied

75. *Florida, Its Climate, Soil, and Productions*: (Jacksonville, 1868), p.11; Louise Seymour Houghton, "The Truth About Florida," *Lippincott's Magazine*, Vol. XXVII (1881), pp.508-512; Theophilus W. Moore, Treatise and *Hand-Book of Orange Culture in Florida, Louisiana and California* (Third edition, New York and Jacksonville, 1883), esp. 14, 55, pp.141-143.

with small houses.⁷⁶ Solon Robinson, a Connecticut-born organizer of agricultural societies who had become widely known as editor of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* in its agricultural department, had moved to Jacksonville for his health, and was busy superintending the construction of new dwellings. In the St. Johns valley, "a small army" was cutting pine, and more than half a dozen saw mills were running in the city.⁷⁷

Florida was now on the eve of a much greater development brought about mostly by men and capital from without the State; but the narratives about Sanford, Disston, Plant, Flagler, and others are very different from the stories of those who brought nothing with them except a carpetbag and empty but yearning pockets.

76. Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour . . .* (Cincinnati, etc., 1866), p.162; Ledyard Bill, *A Winter in Florida . . .* (New York, 1869), p.82; T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville, Florida . . .* (St. Augustine, The Florida Historical Society, 1925), pp.150, 161.

77. Herbert A. Kellar, ed., *Solon Robinson, Pioneer and Agriculturist* (2 vols., Indianapolis, Indiana Historical Bureau, 1936), II, pp.38-39.