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THE JOINT OPERATIONS OF THE FEDERAL
ARMY AND NAVY NEAR ST. MARKS,
FLORIDA, MARCH 1865

by MARK F. BOYD

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Memorials*

(I), THE BATTLE OF NATURAL BRIDGE

The elation felt by Floridians in 1864: over the collapse of General Seymour's campaign at Olustee had probably largely subsided, due to cumulating privations, before the ominous events transpired upon which that year closed. General Sherman had completed his devastating march from Atlanta to Savannah, and he had received the surrender of the latter city on December 21. This blow was followed in quick succession in 1865 by the capture of Fort Fisher on January 15, and the surrender of Wilmington itself on February -22, while Charleston had been previously evacuated on February 17.

In the absence of specific information as to the motives by which he was prompted, it may be that Brigadier General John Newton, Commanding the District of Key West and Tortugas, came to believe that the morale of military and civilian Floridians, sufficiently depressed by these signal Federal successes, would readily yield to an aggressive operation.

Be that as it may, there had been some intensification in minor operations along the west coast of Florida. On February 21 the Federal garrison at Fort Myers was unsuccessfully attacked by a force of 275 men of the Confederate "Cow Cavalry", under Major William Footman. Advice of the attack was brought to Key West the same night by the steamer *Alliance* which had left before the outcome of the engagement was known. In July of the previous year, Acting Master Edmund C. Weeks of the Navy had sought and secured a transfer to the Army, was commissioned as major and assigned to the Second

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Regiment, Florida Cavalry (Federal), and early in 1865 was stationed at Cedar Keys. On February 9 he set out on a raid with a force of 250 men (which apparently included some at least of the Taylor County Union sympathizers) along the east side of the Suwannee River, with the supposed objective of advancing via Newnansville to the railroad bridge over the river. On learning of this advance, Major General Sam Jones, Confederate States Army, who had assumed command of the Military District of Florida on the 2nd, sent a party of the reserves and Second Cavalry under Brigadier General Miller to Newnansville to oppose him, and directed Captain J. Dickison, who had just completed a successful raid to the east of the St. Johns River, to get in Weeks' rear. Ascertaining that opposition was forming, Weeks did not advance as far as Newnansville, but fell back to Station 4 on the Florida Railroad near Cedar Keys. Dickison, responding with characteristic alacrity to this threat, attacked Weeks at this point on the 13th. After an engagement lasting several hours, Weeks, upon learning of the approach of General Miller, withdrew to Cedar Keys. The news of this action was also brought to Key West by the *Alliance*,

On receipt of this news, General Newton immediately sought cooperation from Acting Rear Admiral C. R. Stribling, Commanding the East Gulf Blockading Squadron, to provide transports for the dispatch of reinforcements. The steamer *Honduras* was immediately sent to Punta Rassa to protect the Federal depot there, and on the following day (22nd), the 99th U. S. Colored Infantry (Lieut. Col. Pearsall) embarked on the steamer *Magnolia* for Punta Rassa, but before her departure the *Honduras* returned with news of the withdrawal of the "Cow Cavalry" from before Fort Myers. The *Honduras* was immediately readied to transport further troops on the following day.

At a conference of the two commanders held on the same day, an elastic plan of operations was agreed upon. The troops were to be landed either at Tampa or Cedar

Keys in order to cut off the Confederate force believed to have been sent to the lower peninsula, or else they would proceed to the neighborhood of St. Marks for a raid or sudden expedition with naval cooperation. Admiral Stribling sent orders to Lieutenant Commander William Gibson, senior officer on the blockade of St. George Sound, to concentrate at St. Marks all vessels which could be spared from the blockade between St. George and Tampa.

On the 23rd, General Newton moved his headquarters aboard the *Honduras*, and embarked three companies (A, B, and K) of the Second U. S. Colored Infantry on the same vessel, destined for Punta Rassa.

On the following day the *Honduras* met the *Magnolia* at Punta Rassa. The emergency having passed, none of the troops on either vessel were disembarked at that point, and both sailed for Cedar Keys, which may have been reached some time on the 26th.

Word was sent to recall Major Weeks, who returned to Cedar Keys on the following day. Probably on the advice of Weeks, General Newton concluded that no chance presented itself to intercept the Confederate forces in the lower peninsula, and decided to follow the alternate plan of operation.

Consequently on noon of Monday the 27th, most of Weeks' force was embarked on the *Magnolia*, leaving only a detail sufficient to guard the stores at Cedar Keys. Those embarking included Companies C, D and E, Second Florida Cavalry (Union) (dismounted), and Companies E, G and H, Second U. S. Colored Infantry. General Newton transferred his headquarters to the *Alliance*, which had arrived from Key West.

During the night the transports left Cedar Keys for the rendezvous with the naval force off Ocklocknee buoy, near St. Marks bar, thirteen miles from land. This point was reached at daylight the next morning (28th) in a dense fog. The naval force assembled during March 1st and 2nd, the fog meanwhile continuing. This, probably the largest fleet ever to have assembled in Apalachee

Bay, was a motley group. In addition to the normal complement of vessels at this station, the U.S.S. *Stars and Stripes*, which except for relief periods had been stationed in this bay since early in 1863, the U.S.S. *Isonomia*, which cruised to the southward as far as the Suwannee River, and the U. S. Schooner *O. H. Lee*, and the transports in which Newton's force arrived, the fleet when assembled included the U. S. Steamers *Mahaska*, *Fort Henry* (a New York ferry boat), *Spirea*, *Hibiscus*, and *Brittania*, together with the later arrivals, the *Proteus*, *Iuka*, and *Hendrick Hudson*, and the schooners *Matthew Vassar*, and *Two Sisters*, a total of thirteen steam and three sailing vessels. Lieutenant Commander Gibson of the U.S.S. *Mabaska*, initially the ranking naval officer, was displaced upon the late arrival of his senior, Commander R. W. Shufeldt of the U.S.S. *Proteus*, who subsequently exercised command of the naval force.

Prior to the arrival of Shufeldt, the following plans were developed at a joint staff conference:

1) To land a party of seamen and of the Second Florida Cavalry on the night of the 3rd to take possession of the bridge over the East River, and if possible capture the pickets there ;

2) To land the troops on the same night in readiness to start at daylight on the 4th;

3) The land expedition was to march to Newport, destroy the public establishments there, cross the River St. Marks, take St. Marks in rear or strike the railroad between St. Marks and Tallahassee, attacking isolated bodies of the enemy to prevent a concentration and destroying and capturing such property as might be useful to the enemy;

4) In order to effect these objects, parties were to be landed to destroy the railroad and other bridges over the Ocklocknee River, the trestle or bridge over the Aucilla River, and to break up the railroad between St. Marks and Tallahassee ; and

5) The naval force was to endeavor to silence the batteries at St. Marks and capture them, to land a force of

500 to 600 seamen at Port Leon to cover the land expedition, to prevent the enemy crossing in its rear between St. Marks and Newport, and to threaten St. Marks. No doubt was entertained that this landing at Port Leon could be effected.

Major Weeks related in a report written on the 9th, that on Thursday, March 2nd, six men under William Strickland were landed at the mouth of the Aucilla River, with orders to burn the railroad bridge at the head of that stream. Weeks did not succeed in landing another party at the Little Aucilla (*sic*) for the purpose of cutting the railroad in the rear of St. Marks, owing to the vigilance of pickets stationed there. However, a third party, under a Mr. Green, citizen, was landed near Shell Point, with orders to proceed to the Ocklocknee railroad bridge and burn it.

The fog having risen, the whole fleet put to sea on the 3rd, sailing until after dark in order to deceive the Confederates, should they have discovered the vessels. It returned to the bar after dark, which the pilot was unable to cross, and a heavy gale arising, the vessels were obliged to anchor. However at 7 p. m. on the 3rd, a large party under Major Weeks, consisting of 60 men of the Second Florida Cavalry left the *Magnolia* in small boats, but owing to the gale, did not effect a landing until midnight. A detachment of 30 seamen under Acting Ensign Whitman of the schooner *O. H. Lee* was assigned to operate under Weeks. These were sent up East River with orders to proceed to the bridge, about four miles from the light-house, capture the pickets stationed there, and hold the bridge until Weeks' arrival. Owing to his delayed landing, Weeks did not arrive there until 4 a. m. on the 4th. The pickets had fled, leaving their arms and one horse. At sunrise Weeks was attacked by a Confederate cavalry force of about 60 men, which were repulsed with some loss to the attackers. He sent a mounted officer (probably on the captured horse) to the light-house to see whether the troops had landed, with the intention of holding the bridge if reinforcements were available. Upon

being informed that the vessels were aground and no troops landed, he withdrew to the light-house under attack by skirmishers.,

On the morning of the 4th, part at least of the fleet got under way, heading for the light-house, the *Spirea* leading. This vessel soon ran hard and fast aground, a situation in which she was soon joined by the transport *Honduras*. No mention was made of the *Magnolia* from which Weeks disembarked, but she was likely afloat in the vicinity. Other vessels of the fleet, the *Hibiscus*, *Proteus* and *Iuka* arrived, the last anchoring outside. Owing to the delays occasioned by fog and grounding, the debarkation of the troops was not completed until 4 p. m. of the 4th. They were moved inland about two and one-half miles to a spot of elevated ground suitable for an encampment, there to await the landing of the artillery, ammunition and ambulances, which was effected about 8 a. m. on the 5th. The site of the encampment is probably the low knoll on which the offices of the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge are situated.

The artillery consisted of two navy boat howitzers disembarked from the fleet, to which was later added the light 12-pounder captured at East River in the advance. All were drawn by hand the whole distance. The howitzers were served by seamen. The only horses on the expedition are said to have been those used by General Newton and his staff.

It is impossible to synthesize in a single narrative the events of the succeeding three days. We are obliged to reconstruct two accounts describing separately the events as viewed from the Federal and Confederate standpoints. While in general agreement, they often disagree on detail, or some detail may be presented which is, for natural reasons, omitted from the other. Newton's narratives attempt to gloss over his reverse, in general magnifying his slight accomplishments, and criticising his naval collaborators. The Confederate narratives are meager in detail but highly jubilant over their success.

Federal Account of the Battle

On the morning of the 5th General Newton's command advanced on the road leading to the East River bridge, from which they found the planking removed, with opposition at that point from the battalion of Fifth Florida Cavalry commanded by Lieut.-Col. George W. Scott, with two pieces of artillery. Companies G and H of the Second Colored Infantry were formed in a skirmish line, charged over the open ground to the bridge, and opened a rapid fire on their opponents, who withdrew. The skirmishers filed over the bridge, capturing the 12-pounder previously mentioned, and turned it against their enemy. General Sam Jones declared that capture was a consequence of the unmanageability of the horses, which evidently made off with the limber and caisson.

The bridge was promptly repaired by the Ninety-ninth Colored Infantry, and the advance upon Newport continued, being scarcely impeded by a few cavalry pickets. A heavy smoke seen arising from the direction of Newport was considered to arise from the burning of the bridge over the St. Marks River at that point. The battalion of the Second Florida Cavalry (Federal), under Major Weeks was pushed on in advance to save the bridge. Weeks arrived there at 11 a. m. on Sunday the 5th, and found the bridge burning, and in an effort to save it, charged the east bridge-head, but was checked by heavy Confederate fire from entrenchments on the west side. The bridge was burned at one end and cut off at the other, while the approach was under complete command of the Confederate musketry. Weeks set the two howitzers at his disposal so that one played directly across the bridge, the other being set to the right so as to enfilade the Confederate pits, but did not succeed in driving his opponents out. Various industrial buildings at Newport had been set afire by the Confederates.

Upon Newton's arrival at Newport, it was concluded that passage of the St. Marks River at that point, either by way of the bridge or by fording was impossible, and a decision was made to attempt a passage at the so-

called Natural Bridge, which according to the guides, was four or five miles above.

The Natural Bridge of the St. Marks River is a swampy area near the southern boundary of Leon County, where the river passes through a series of underground passages between sinks and rises for a distance of perhaps half a mile. This produces an intricate series of disconnected short channels which, beginning at a rise, flow above ground for a short distance to disappear underground at a sink. The last rise is in the basin, from whence the river flows above ground to its confluence with the Wakulla. About one-half mile below the basin, the river is traversed and dammed by a ledge of lime rock. Two or three decades before these events other natural obstructions below this point had been removed at government expense to afford barge navigation of the channel to a site just below this ledge, once known as Rockhaven.

With the decision of Newton to attempt to flank the Confederate position at Newport, Major Weeks' detachment of the Second Florida Cavalry (Federal) was ordered to remain at Newport and prevent Confederate passage of the bridge. He posted sharpshooters along the river bank who were engaged most of the day and night. At 2 p. m. on Monday, the 6th, the Confederates opened fire with a piece of artillery on the pickets in the rear of Weeks' position, probably marking the arrival of Lieut. Whitehead's section. They kept up a brisk fire of artillery and musketry for four hours. The Confederates endeavored to get hold of the bridge, first to repair it, later to cross it, in which efforts they were repulsed.

In accordance with his decision, Newton's force made a night march from Newport to Natural Bridge, over an old and unfrequented road, the distance being found to be some miles longer than anticipated. He was disappointed in the hope that his appearance there would be unexpected.

At daybreak on the morning of Monday the 6th of March, Major Lincoln with Companies B and G of the Second Colored Infantry, attempted passage of the Nat-

ural Bridge. He drove back the Confederate pickets, but soon found his further progress checked by a superior force behind entrenchments, which took full advantage of the sloughs, ponds, marshes and thickets as auxiliary defenses on the front and flanks. Another spot, about a mile below the Natural Bridge, probably where the ledge of lime rock previously mentioned exists, was suggested as suitable for crossing, but on examination was found to be impracticable, and to be guarded as well. It having been reported by an officer on picket that the Confederate position could be flanked, Newton decided to feel out the enemy and attempt to force a passage. Accordingly Colonel Townsend, with Companies A, B, and H, Second Color&d Infantry was sent to turn the enemy's right flank if possible, while Major Lincoln with Companies E, G, and K of the same regiment, and Lieut. Col. Pearsall (with the Ninety-ninth Colored Infantry) were to render support. As Townsend's force advanced, the Confederates withdrew and abandoned their breastwork, but almost at the foot of the works a wide, deep slough was encountered, which the troops could not pass. Townsend consequently returned. Newton now concluded that it had been demonstrated that the enemy's position was too strong to be carried, and finding that his force occupied 'a low salient, exposed to cross fire, he withdrew to a previously selected position in open pine-barrens, about 300 yards distant, which was effected in perfect order without molestation. The Confederates, apparently assuming that Newton's force was in full retreat, emerged from concealment in heavy columns of regular troops with artillery but without skirmishers, and were received with a perfect line of infantry supported by artillery. The Confederates, according to Newton, made two desperate charges, but were repulsed with heavy loss, leaving him master of the field. Aside from harassment by a small force of cavalry on the return march, the enemy was not seen again. After waiting an hour, and there being no indications of the presence of the enemy, the return march to the light-house was begun, which was reached at 4 a. m. on the 7th.

While Newton was inland, Commander R. W. Shufeldt arrived, and being senior to Lieut. Commander Gibson, the latter yielded command of the naval force. In a later report, General Newton comments adversely on the relief of Gibson, with whom he had a complete understanding, which he considered sufficient to account for the fatal delay or inactivity of the naval force at the critical moment, and stated that had no change been made in the naval commanders he could not have failed to accomplish his most sanguine expectations. He further stated that the expedition returned because the navy was unable to cooperate in any manner, the ammunition was nearly expended, and because communications would have been cut in less than eight hours because of failure to land a force of seamen at Port Leon.

The attempt of the naval force to ascend the St. Marks River was apparently begun on the 4th, while landing of the troops was in progress. After great efforts the *Honduras*, *Fort Henry*, *Brittanica* and *Hibiscus*, in the order named, ascended the river, the former almost as far as Big Bayou on the east shore, within a mile and a half of Port Leon. The *Stars and Stripes* got aground just below the *Hibiscus*, the Mahaska was stuck near the light-house in Spanish Hole, while the *Spirea* remained aground outside. Commander Shufeldt continued in his efforts to get the vessels up the river to attack the fort, until the news was received on the 6th that the army was falling back. Acting Ensign Whitman was again sent with 40 seamen to the East River bridge, to hold it until the passage of the army, which he did and later burned it. A conference between Commander Shufeldt and General Newton was held on the 7th, after which the ships in the river were ordered to drop back to an anchorage off the light-house.

Although General Newton claimed that the enemy received two weeks notice of the expedition by a refugee known to have left one of the blockading vessels, this allegation, in view of the nebulous character of the expressed plans prior to departure of the expedition from Key West, appears unsubstantiable. The appearance of

the transports at Cedar Keys and the departure of the dismounted Second Florida Cavalry (Federal) on the vessels may have been known, and have intensified alertness of the Confederate authorities; but it is likely that a report from the skirmishers who followed Weeks back to the light-house, to then discover the presence of the fleet, probably afforded the first intimation that an attack was imminent.

Confederate Account of the Battle

According to the *Floridian* and *Journal* of Tallahassee, as copied in the *Florida Union*, news of the landing of the Federals at St. Marks light-house reached Tallahassee at 9 o'clock Saturday night (4th).

“The alarm was given and the note of preparation sounded throughout the whole city and county, and was extended to the other counties. The militia was ordered out, and an unanimous and invincible response was made to the call. Every man and boy capable of bearing arms was at his post. Never, since the first commencement of the war, have the people exhibited a greater spirit. One company of cavalry marched nearly sixty miles in twenty-four hours. Others marched on foot, thirty and forty miles to overtake their companies who had gone ahead, and in a very short time a sufficient force was on the way to the scene of action to meet any force the enemy had there.”

Newton was to find that he was poking a nest of hornets.

In view of the scanty and incomplete muster records of the Confederate forces of Florida which have survived, and the meager references elsewhere to the units which responded to this emergency, it is impossible at this time to list them in any degree of completeness. Among them, however, may be enumerated the following:

1. Battalion Fifth Florida Cavalry, Lieut.-Col. George w. Scott:
 - Company C, Captain D. W. Gwynn
 - “ F, “ Dozier
 - “ G, “ W. H. Milton (Marianna)
2. Second Florida Cavalry, Colonel Caraway Smith:
 - Company A, Captain Clinton Thigpen
 - “ I, “ S. G. Parramore
 - “ K, “ Jesse A. Jones
3. Gamble's Battery:
 - (Kilcrease's Company), Captain Patrick Houston
4. Dunham's Light Artillery (Milton Artillery) :
 - Captain Henry F. Abell
 - “ Jos. L. Dunham'
5. Company of Cadets, West Florida Seminary:
 - Captain V. M. Johnston
 - Active Captain D. W. Gwynn"
6. First Florida Reserves, Colonel J. Jacqueline Daniel:
 - Company A, Captain Isaac B. Nichols
 - “ B, “ J. B. Spencer
 - “ c, “ W. W. Poe
 - “ E, “ W. D. Thurberville
 - “ F, “ W. A. Barwick
 - “ G, “ Hawkins
 - “ I, “ Green B. Hodges

It has not been possible to determine the unit designations of the following organizations, *viz.*:

1. Lieutenant Whitehead's Section Artillery (Gadsden County)
2. Gadsden Grays
3. Colonel Samuel Love's militia

It is suspected that all of these were from Gadsden County, and that the following companies belonged to one or the other:

Captain Du Pont's Company (men over 50) Gadsden Grays'

“ Scott's “

“ Smith's “

“ Johnston's “ (probably the V. M.

Johnston above) (placed on detail at Tallahassee)

*From battlefield monument

It appears from General Newton's reports that he believed that while General Sam Jones was mobilizing the available forces in Middle Florida he made an appeal to Governor Brown of Georgia for aid, as Newton speaks of the arrival of 1000 troops from Georgia. Jones did request that rolling stock of the Savannah, Albany and Gulf Railroad be run over to the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad via the newly reopened Lawton-Live Oak connection. It is more likely that Newton's information really referred to the arrival of the Second Florida Cavalry which, dismounted, arrived opportunely on the field at Natural Bridge, and probably determined the outcome. They probably arrived from the east by train. The attempted firing of the Aucilla trestle appears to have been discovered by a troop train.

Early on the 5th, Brigadier General William Miller went to Newport with a company of cadets from the West Florida Seminary and a small body of militia. This small force was steadily strengthened throughout the day. Fortunately on the night of the 4th and morning of the 5th, in anticipation that an invading force might attempt crossing on the bridge which there spanned the river, a breastwork commanding the bridge had been thrown up (13).

With Newton's advance, Scott fell back with his detachment of the battalion of the Fifth Florida Cavalry, and two pieces of artillery, to the East River bridge, from which he removed the planking, unlimbered his guns and prepared to offer some resistance. This stand could not long be maintained, as it was not desired to give the Federals occasion to discover a ford some distance above the bridge. Here one of the cannon was lost as already related. Four Federal dead were later found at this point. Scott retreated to Newport, and after crossing the bridge, damaged it sufficiently by fire to render it impassable. Buildings at Newport, including a foundry, as well as saw and grist mills, were set ablaze in order not to obstruct the line of fire. The reception General Miller accorded Weeks at this point has already been described, and lead

General Newton to conclude that passage of the river at that point was impracticable. General Sam Jones went to Newport on the night of the 5th. General Miller, anticipating that General Newton would make a night movement toward Natural Bridge, sent Lieut.-Col. Scott with his cavalry to await them there.

During the night the only semblance of panic which arose was checked by prompt action of General Miller, who, on learning that the officer in charge of the small force left at the fort in St. Marks, probably alarmed by the advance of the fleet up the river, was preparing to blow up the magazine, burn the gun-boat *Spray*, and put fire to some 600 bales of cotton at the port, set off at once for St. Marks, fortunately arriving before these designs were consummated. His orders put an end to all thought of surrender at that place. He returned to Newport before dawn, and proceeded to Natural Bridge, which he reached an hour after sunrise.

Reinforcements continued to move throughout the night on the railroad, which General Jones ordered to detrain at the turpentine-still (probably Woodville rather than Wakulla station), a point closer to Natural Bridge than Newport. The plank road as well was thronged. The small force at Newport was ordered up also, being later replaced there by Lieut. Whitehead's section of artillery. This hastily assembled force of reserves, a few cavalymen, and a section of artillery arrived at Natural Bridge a short time before four o'clock in the morning of the 6th. The entrenchment at that point had been thrown up earlier, in anticipation of such an emergency, just as that at Newport is reported to have been (13).

On arrival the troops were placed so as to extend the line, which originally was across the road, just in front of the bridge, so that the right and left flanks finally rested on the river below and above. On the left was Dunham's battery and the Gadsden Grays, with Colonel Love's militia in reserve near the left center. The West Florida Seminary cadets occupied the center, in front of the bridge. To the right was Scott's battalion of the Fifth

Florida Cavalry. Captain Houston's battery was to the left of the right center, to the right of which was stationed Colonel Daniel's regiment of reserves. The line thus formed a crescent, the concavity toward the bridge, which permitted a converging fire at the point where the Federal forces meant to cross.

Hardly had the line at Natural Bridge been formed before skirmishing began at 4 a. m., which continued until 10 or 11 o'clock, during which period two attacks were repulsed. The fighting intensified subsequently, probably at the time of Townsend's advance, and continued heavy for three or four hours. Although each of the three Federal attempts to cross the bridge were made with marked spirit, they were repulsed each time with considerable loss. According to General Jones, after the two initial attacks the enemy formed under a cover of a thick hammock and kept up an obstinate fight at intervals for ten or twelve hours.

Early in the afternoon Colonel Caraway Smith arrived with a battalion of the Second Florida Cavalry dismounted, which was placed so as to extend the line further down the west bank of the river. After a brisk fire from the four pieces of Confederate artillery, slackening of the Federal fire indicated their withdrawal. Thereupon Captain H. K. Simmons of the Second Florida Cavalry was ordered to penetrate the hammock, and ascertain the position of the Federal forces. Observing felled trees and a breastwork, he, in disregard of caution, ordered a charge and was killed on the breastwork. This ended the fight.

The Federal retreat was covered by felling timber across the road, which had to be cleared before the Confederate cavalry could pass. Although pursuit was continued for 12 miles, removal of these obstacles so delayed the pursuers that Newton managed to withdraw without a rear guard action, and the Confederates returned to Newport.

When it was ascertained that the Federal force had reembarked and withdrawn, the Confederate forces took

up their line of march for Tallahassee on Thursday the 9th. On arrival in the capital city, they were addressed by Governor Milton in the hall of the House of Representatives, and in complimentary orders by General Sam Jones, were allowed to retain their arms and equipment.

According to General Jones, the Federal force landed at the light-house was estimated at between 1500 and 2000 men. General Newton believed that he was opposed at Natural Bridge by a force likewise consisting of from 1500 to 2000 men. He stated that according to rumor, the Confederates were reinforced about noon by 1000 veterans from Georgia. While no specific confirmation on this point has been encountered, it is surmised that if these may have actually arrived in Tallahassee, they were detained there to man the local fortifications. It appears more likely that the report which came to his ears of Confederate reinforcements arriving about noon, related to the arrival of Colonel Caraway Smith's men of the Second Florida Cavalry, who were indeed veterans. Newton also stated that he originally calculated on an available Confederate force of from 600 to 700 men, whose numbers through impressment might be increased to 1000. That the Confederate position at Natural Bridge was well selected, is confirmed by Newton, who stated that 200 resolute men, aided by artillery, could hold it against five times their number.

General Newton declared that his expedition started from the light-house with 893 men, but detachments at Newport and at outposts up and down the river, together with losses in action, had reduced his force to 500 when the imagined Georgia reinforcements to the Confederates arrived. All Federal troops at Natural Bridge were black, of the Second and Ninety-ninth U. S. Colored Infantry (the last described by the Confederate newspaper as the 19th Louisiana), with white officers.

It is doubtful if General Sam Jones had an accurate knowledge of the number of men who rallied to his call. Any estimate made at this date can only be a very rough approximation, based on the identifiable units in *Soldiers*

of Florida (10). From this the following data have been secured :

unit	CO.	Possible Strength	Wounded	Killed	Notes
5th B.	C	97	1		Complete roster
	D	12			“ “
	F	50		Treplett	“ “
	G	50	1	Simmons*	Mustered out, Apr.-May? '65
Gamble		40	1		“ “ “ “ “
Dunham	Abell	12	2		“ “ “ “ “
	Dunham	“1			“ “ “ “ “
Cadets					So data
1st Res.	A	17			As mustered out
	B	22	1		“ “ “
	C	11	1		“ “ “
	E	13	1	Grubbs	“ “ “
	F	9	2		“ “ “
	G	7	1		“ “ “
	I	12	1		“ “ “
	2nd Cav.				
	A	30	3		“ “ “
	I	109	6		“ “ “
	K	93	2	*	“ “ “
Total		595	23	3	

**Soldiers of Florida* lists 2 men named Henry K. Simmons as killed on March 4 (sic). One as Capt. Co. G, 5th Fla. Cav. Batt., the other as Pvt. Co. K., 2nd Fla. Cav. They probably are the same individual, who received a battlefield promotion and transfer.

This does not consider the unidentified units, the Gadsden Grays, Col. Love's militia, or three other companies of Gadsden County militia, all of whom may have comprised one unit. Their combined strength probably did not exceed 100 men. In the absence of data regarding the cadets, their number may be set at 25.

Since the Second Florida Cavalry did not arrive until the later stages of the action, we may subtract their strength of 232 men from the total of 583 given, and add 125 as the approximate strength of the other units, for a total of 476, as an estimate of the strength of General Sam Jones' force for the greater part of the battle. In round numbers there may perhaps have been a total of from 600 to 700 Confederates engaged. What gives plausibility to this figure is the circumstance that all of the reported Confederate casualties, 3 killed and 23 wounded are included in the units for which figures are tabulated. Col. Daniel was wounded by being dashed against a tree

by his horse (14). It appears that the casualty figures relate solely to the action at Natural Bridge. It is not known what losses occurred elsewhere.

It would thus appear that there was actually no great disparity in the number of the contestants involved, and that each side grossly overestimated the number of its opponents.

General Newton reported the following casualties, which probably cover the whole expedition, viz. :

Unit	Killed		Wounded		Missing		Total
	Officers	Men	Officers	Men	Officers	Men	
Staff	1		1				2
2nd Fla. Cav.		1		2		13	16
2nd US Colored		10	6	41		1	58
99th US Colored	1	8	2	37	1	23	72
Total	2	19	9	80	1	37	148

Newton stated that all of his wounded, excepting eight fatally wounded who were left at a house two miles from the field, were brought away. In some respects the data of this table do not check with other information. Lieut. Carrington (143 N.Y.) and Capt. Tracy (2nd U.S. Co., A.A.A.G.) are the staff officers given respectively as killed and wounded. The name of the officer of the Ninety-ninth killed is not given, but Lieut. Col. Pearsall of that regiment was wounded. Of the Second Regiment, Major Lincoln, and Lieutenants Murphy and Seymour subsequently died from wounds, while Col. Townsend was wounded but recovered. The Federal casualties were roughly 16 per cent of their force, or one for every six men. Assuming that the forces engaged were roughly equal in numbers, the Federal casualties were about seven times greater than those of the Confederates.

-A few words may be said about the consequences of the sabotaging raids instigated by Major Weeks. General Newton relates that the party for the Ocklocknee returned without making a serious attempt to reach the bridge. He complained that although the men sent were picked, had good knowledge of the country, and could have, with little risk to themselves, obstructed the railroad for several days, so far as known neither of the bridges was damaged nor the railroad obstructed. Newton however,

(either did not know or would not tell the whole story. The clipping from the *Floridian and Journal* in his hands contained a paragraph to the effect that on Tuesday last (presumably March 7th) it was discovered that an attempt had been made to burn the Aucilla trestle on the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad. The damage was slight, insufficient to stop the trains, and the telegraph line was cut at the same point. This was supposed to be the work of deserters and may have been part of the program of the enemy to prevent troops from being brought from the east to take a hand in the late fight. Strickland and one of his companions who were landed at the mouth of the Aucilla River were captured in Federal uniform with the aid of dogs, shortly after discovery of the fire at the railroad bridge. They were brought to Tallahassee, court-martialled, convicted and shot on the 18th (9). Strickland had deserted from the Confederate service and became a leader of those in Taylor County disaffected with the Confederacy (7).

The Quincy paper (4) also relates that two deserters were captured, summarily court-martialled, convicted and shot on the spot. One surmises that the spot was Newport, and that the men were also from Major Weeks' command.

A great deal of hardship resulted in Wakulla County from the Confederate set conflagration at Newport. The same clipping previously cited relates that the loss of Mr. Dan Ladd's grist mill made corn meal scarce, and that destruction of the work-shops and saw-mill was a great loss to the government, as nothing from either was saved. The bridge was easily repaired, as it had not been burned.

Although General Sam Jones did not, in his report to General Johnston, cite any individual or unit for conspicuous service during the action, the Tallahassee and Quincy papers were generous in their praise, not overlooking any unit.

The reports available do not reveal just when Newton re-embarked his force at the light-house, but it does not appear that he tarried there. His earliest report on his subsequent activities is dated from Key West on the 15th,

the day of his return. He later stated that after the expedition was over, the troops were distributed to the posts at Cedar Keys, Punta Rassa and Key West, that at Fort Myers being broken up.

Despite the whole-hearted spontaneity with which the people of Middle Florida rallied to repel the invasion, the success of their efforts could not change the worsening trend of events in areas beyond their horizon, nor postpone the inevitable. General Lee surrendered on the 9th of April, and General Johnston surrendered on the 26th of the same month. On the 8th of May, Admiral Stribling reported to Secretary of the Navy Welles, that the blockading officer at St. Marks reports that the authorities at Tallahassee are ready to surrender on the terms of Johnston's capitulation, and awaited arrival of officers appointed by General Sherman. A few days later (May 10), Brigadier General Ed. M. McCook arrived in Tallahassee from Macon for this purpose, and received the surrender of 8,000 Confederate troops in Florida. Thus did Tallahassee, the only capital of a Confederate state east of the Mississippi River not captured by force of arms, render submission.

The opinion was entertained in Tallahassee at the time of the expedition, that General Newton, on finding that his passage of the St. Marks River was blocked, might continue his flanking movement along the east bank, ascending to the head of the rise just south of the St. Augustine road near the Jefferson County line, and attempt entry of Tallahassee *via* the St. Augustine road. Brevard (8) relates that in anticipation of such a movement, "the troops coming to reinforce the Confederates at the bridge, were ordered placed in the forts around Tallahassee, especially in the fort on the hill commanding the St. Augustine road and the hill country to the east." This earthwork, well preserved, lies in Old Fort Park, Tallahassee.

Through one of those ironies of fate, the occurrence of which does not seem wholly devoid of malice, Brigadier-General Newton, shortly after these events, did come to Tallahassee, and from the Headquarters of the District

of Florida in that city, he himself issued General Orders No. 1 on June 19, 1865, wherein is stated that in compliance with General Order No. 81, Department of the Gulf, he, as senior officer present, assumes command of the District of Florida (11), a post which he retained until the end of the following July. Major Edmund C. Weeks, during carpet-bagging days, is stated to have resided in Tallahassee (12).

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NOTE: It does not appear that any issues of the *Floridian and Journal* of Tallahassee (a semi-weekly) for February and March, 1865 have survived. (See Elmer J. Emig: "A Check List of Extant Florida Newspapers, 1845-1876." *Florida Historical Quarterly* XI (Oct. 1932) pp. 77-87). One of General Newton's reports in (1) is accompanied by an undated clipping from this newspaper.

(II) THE CADETS OF THE WEST FLORIDA SEMINARY
IN THE BATTLE OF NATURAL BRIDGE

Florida State University in Tallahassee has evolved from an institution created by the State Legislature on January 24, 1851, first known as the Florida Institute, and after January 1, 1857, as the West Florida Seminary. This occupied a building on the site of the Westcott Building of the present university. The Institute, and its successor, the Seminary, were operated for male students until October 1, 1858, subsequent to which time girls were accommodated in a separate department known as the Female Institute, housed in a building located to the rear of the Lively School (the old Leon High School), and were counted in the total enrollment of the Seminary.

Dr. Wm. G. Dodd, Dean Emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University, has supplied the following data of the enrollment in this early institution, derived principally from the 1869 report of the President of the Board of Education, Mr. J. T. Bernard (Board of Trustees) to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The enrollment in the institution in the first thirteen years of its existence, as far as can be determined from surviving reports and records, is as follows:

School Year	Students Enrolled			Comment
	Male	Female	Total	
1856-57	76	—	76	
1857-58				No data
1858-59			130-200	Opened Oct. 3 with 130 enrolled, more than one half girls. Attendance increased to about 200 at midyear.
1859-60			120	A local paper reports enrollment of "upwards of 120".
X360-61			250	About 250 of both sexes.
X361-62)) No data
1862-63)	
1863-64)	
X364-65	34	24	58	
1865-66	57	29	87	
1866-67	48	30	78	
1867-68	42	24	66	
1868-69				School closed, although one of the buildings was used for a private school.

During the war period, the Legislature of 1863 passed an Act changing the name to the Florida Military and

Collegiate Institute, and providing, in order to exempt the teachers at the Institute from conscription, that the Governor be authorized to commission such teachers as officers in the state service. According to Dr. Dodd, this Act was vetoed by Governor Milton. However the minutes of the Board of Trustees preserve a letter written by Captain V. M. Johnston, acting principal of the school, dated August 7, 1864, which in part is as follows:

"I then propose that the Board authorize me to secure the exemption of the school from military duty, except for those of a military age, at the discretion of the Governor or General Commanding the Department of Florida in cases of great emergency. I propose lastly, to secure additional arms and accouterments for the use of the school, uniforms for the Cadets, and, indeed, to do everything that is necessary to make this school a first class Military Academy, an honor to the Board, and the pride of the State."

Respectfully,

(signed) V. M. JOHNSTON

The minutes of the Board show the following action to have been taken on August 23, 1864:

"Upon motion the following resolution was adopted- Resolved: That the President of the Board be authorized and requested, after conference with the Governor of the State, and with Captain Johnston to take measures to obtain from the authorities in Richmond permission for youths under 18 years of age to pursue their studies at the Military Academy until such emergency shall occur as to require their services in the field, under an assurance that such youths shall be armed and disciplined and held subject to any requisition for military duty".

In continuance of this subject, the minutes for February 6, 1865, contain the following entry:

"Resolved: that the bill of Captain Johnston of \$115.00 for expenses incurred by him in Richmond etc., in fulfilling the instructions of the Board -be allowed, and authorized to be paid".

Miss Sue Archer relates in a paper (2) describing the role of the Cadets in the battle, written in 1911, that the Cadets of the Seminary came from homes in Tallahassee and vicinity, Quincy, Bainbridge and Thomasville, as well as Jefferson County, and were about 60 in number. Since this number materially exceeds that given in the previous table as the total enrollment for 1864-65, we regretfully conclude that on this point Miss Archer is in error.

The Cadet company is uniformly referred to in the pension petitions later mentioned, as Company I, without specifying the regiment to which attached. I, being the ninth letter of the alphabet, implies that such regiment, which may have been a local militia organization, such as Home Guards, had eight other previously organized companies.

It is well and uncontrovertably known that some of the students, organized as a company of West Florida Cadets, participated in the resistance to the Federal expedition commanded by Brigadier General John Newton, which culminated in Newton's repulse at the Battle of Natural Bridge. From various circumstances: the meagerness of the surviving records of the Seminary or Institute; the equal lack of surviving Confederate military records relating to the successful repulse of this invasion; the muteness of the Cadet participants themselves; and the present absence of survivors, make it impossible at this late date, to prepare an adequate account of the unusual and unique part which this handful of teen-age boys played in this action. As a consequence the tale of their participation has begun to assume the character of folk-lore. An effort to check this trend, by the collection of all available information relating to their heroic exploit, appears desirable.

It is stated by a pension applicant that the Cadets were rendering responsible military service to the Confederate States Army and the State of Florida for 17 (7) to 18 (12) months prior to the close of the war, and that many of the older Cadets joined the Tallahassee contingent of Home Guards to go to Olustee in February, 1864 (7). Subsequent to Olustee, a military hospital was established in Tallahassee in the Masonic building (on the site of the present Masonic hall) and in the Baptist Church to the west of it, to accommodate the Federal prisoners secured in that action. These were guarded by Cadets, who also rendered other military service when no other troops were available in Tallahassee (7).

It will be recalled that the Seminary records indicate that a total of 34 unnamed male students were enrolled in

the session of 1864-65. Since the curriculum provided primary as well as secondary instruction, it is likely that this enrollment was limited to boys under military age, perhaps from 8 to 17 years inclusive. Miss Archer (2) gives a list of 43 names, purporting to be those of the Cadets who participated in the battle. J. R. Blocker (3), who was a member of Captain Gwynn's company which skirmished with the Federal advance at East River, says that on the retreat of this force to Newport on March 5th, they were there reinforced by 12 men from the *Spray* and from 20 to 30 Cadets. As already shown, Miss Archer's list is in excess of the contemporaneous enrollment of male students in the Seminary. Making allowance for boys under 12 years of age, Blocker's statement of from 20-30 (say 25) Cadets, appears credible. It is likely that many of those Miss Archer named belonged to other units of the Home Guard.

The most accurate information available today is derived from the state pension records. Eligibility for state pensions was determined by certain maximum property qualifications. Applications had to be endorsed by two companions in arms from the same unit. Consequently applications could be vouched for by men who themselves were ineligible. The following partial roster of the Cadets is secured from the pension records, the individuals being either applicants or endorsers :

MEMBERS OF COMPANY I, WEST FLORIDA CADETS MAKING OR ENDORSING PENSION APPLICATIONS

NO.	Name	Year	Applicant	Endorser	comment
1.	Henry Ware Demilly	1852	+		
2.	D. Sheppard Shine	1851	+		
3.	Franklin P. Damon		+		*
4.	C. L. Beard	1849	+		*
5.	Egbert Nims	1847	+		
6.	James B. Dickson	1850	+		*
7.	John Wesley Wethington	1847	+	Of 3,8	
8.	William W. Perkins	1852	+	Of 1,2,5,9	*
9.	W. F. Quaile	1850	+	Of 1,2,5	*
10.	Wm. A. Rawls			Of 3,6,8,9	
11.	Luther Tucker				Mentioned 7
12.	G. Lavan Baltzell			Of 4	Mentioned 7
13.	W. H. Anderson			Of 4	
14.	John Milton, Jr.			Of 6	*

*On Miss Sue Archer's list (2).

The names of four others are somewhat uncertainly mentioned by John Wesley Wethington in the endorsement of Franklin P. Damon's application. These are Pros Demilly, Charles Pearce, Tom Myers and Herman Damon, who are also on Miss Archer's list. There may also be added the name of Tod Archer, brother of Miss Sue Archer, by her statement (2), as well as that of George Lewis, by statement of his daughter, Miss Mary Lewis. Thus of approximately 25 Cadets who may have taken part in the Battle of Natural Bridge, we can rescue the names of about three-fourths from oblivion.

John Wesley Wethington of Jefferson County was, according to Miss Archer (2), the Cadet Captain. He was already a veteran, having enlisted at Monticello in 1861 in the 3rd Florida, had been wounded, captured and exchanged. He had earlier participated in the battle of Olustee.

About 9 p. m. on the night of March 4th, 1865, Tallahasseeans were aroused by whistle blasts at the railroad station made by a locomotive sent special from St. Marks with news of the Federal landing at the light house. The authorities immediately set out to muster all available men, who were mainly Militia or Home Guards. According to Miss Archer (2), the first group to respond, at about daybreak, was Captain (sic) William Miller's company from Marianna. It is not clear whether this Miller is the same individual referred to in other reports as Brigadier-General William Miller. This is likely an error, however, as she probably had Captain W. H. Milton in mind., Miss Archer (2) states that Governor Milton ordered out the Cadets, which news caused great consternation to their families, as the most were but children. Mothers and sisters went to the station to say good-by. At the station, Captain Johnston of the Seminary appears to have screened the boys according to age, retaining those less than 12 years of age. It would be inferred from pension petition statements, that at this time they were actually inducted into the service of the CSA. Mrs. Eppes

(18) says none were permitted to go without written permission of their parents. The Cadets appear to have accompanied General Miller's force to Newport, as these appear to have been the earliest units to rendezvous at that point. On the morning of the 5th they covered the retreat of Colonel Scott with Captain Gwynn's skirmishers of the Fifth Florida Cavalry across the river bridge in the face of Major Weeks' advance. The stiff resistance there encountered forced General Newton to conclude that passage of the river at that point was impossible.

When it became apparent that General Newton would attempt to flank the Confederate position by advancing to Natural Bridge, the Cadets, who by now appear to have been under direct command of Captain D. W. Gwynn, were among the force from Newport sent during the night to Natural Bridge on the double quick. Here, according to Miss Brevard (15), the Cadets occupied a position in the center of the line, in front of the bridge, in close contact with Scott's Battalion of the Fifth Florida Cavalry to their right. Not one of the Cadets was wounded in the action (18).

In the first flush of enthusiasm following the repulse of the Federal force, the services of the Cadets received high acclaim. Thus the *Columbian* of Lake City, quoting from the *Floridian and Journal* of Tallahassee, says (17) :

"The Cadets from the Florida State Seminary were in the fight, and behaved in the most gallant manner. Their praise is on the lips of all who took part in the fight".

Some, at least, of the Cadets appear to have returned after the battle in the first Tallahassee bound train on the night of the 6th. Miss Archer (2) relates how the enthusiastic colonists at Bel Air flagged the train to dispense refreshments to the earliest of the returning troops, and decorate the boys with garlands. Others were detained to convey prisoners to Tallahassee (9).

It is likely that it was at the exercises held in the Capital building on the 9th, that the presentation of a

flag was made to the Cadets. This company flag, according to Miss Archer, was made by Miss Elizabeth Douglas, and presented by Miss Mattie Ward. "Presentation, because of inclement weather, instead of (being made) on the east front of the capital, was held in the Hall of Representatives. Captain Houston and his company were drawn up in a line in the rear of the hall and the cadets in front. *** No one knows what has become of this flag" (2).

The statements on several pension applications would indicate that the Cadets were discharged from Confederate service about May 15th, after the arrival of Brigadier-General Ed. M. McCook, USA, in Tallahassee to receive the surrender of the Confederate forces in Florida. It was stated by one of the applicants (7) that General McCook closed the school and relieved the Cadets of their arms "because they were in the service", and had just returned from actual fighting. The buildings of both schools were used as barracks by McCook's troops until September, 1865.

It was not until many years later that any expressions belittling the Cadets were voiced. Mrs. Eppes (18) describes the pride of those who participated, and the chagrin of those who did not. She further relates that:

Charley says, "We stayed right behind General Miller and his staff all the time."

"Why was that, Charley?" I asked.

"So we could protect him." was the proud answer.

I did not dare to tell the dear little fellow that the commanding officer was supposed to occupy the safest position.

Of a graver nature is the allegation of the anonymous "Old Confederate" (4) who on hearsay disparaged the Cadets, and claims that the Cadets, on reaching the battleground, and meeting with four men bearing a stretcher on which were, the remains of Captain Simmons, broke and ran. This allegation is incredible in view of the circumstance that Captain Simmons' death was a late event in the battle, occurring after Newton had withdrawn his force from before the Confederate entrenchments, and that all other accounts agree that the Cadets occupied a

place, in the trenches from the beginning of the engagement., Hence this statement is regarded as both apocryphal and libellous. Probably in after years no one in Tallahassee was better informed on the details of this engagement than Miss Caroline Mays Brevard, who quickly rose (14) to refute this slander.

It is regretted that at this late date a more comprehensive account cannot be prepared of the valor of this small company of teen-age boys, or that the names of all cannot be presented. The recollection of their heroism merits careful preservation as the most cherished tradition of the lineal successor of the West Florida Seminary, the Florida State University.

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