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**ANDREW JACKSON'S CRONIES  
IN FLORIDA TERRITORIAL POLITICS**

*With Three Unpublished Letters to His Cronies*

by HERBERT J. DOHERTY, JR.

In Pensacola, an ancient Spanish village but then the boom-town capital of West Florida, the fifth day of October, 1821, was greeted with an unusual air of excitement. Along Palafox and Zaragoza streets, named long since for the Spanish hero General Palafox because of his heroic defense of Zaragoza, curious townsfolk gathered in gossiping knots around the Government House and public market, both fronting on Plaza Ferdinand VII. In Austin's Tavern, the servants clearing away the remains of the great farewell party of the previous night, must have furtively gathered around the windows and peered expectantly into the street. Each horse and wagon momentarily distracted every man from his work or his conversation. At length the curiosity of everyone was rewarded by the appearance of a handsome horse-drawn carriage which pulled away from the Governor's residence, crossed the Plaza and headed north through sandy Palafox street. Inside the carriage could be glimpsed the stern gray visage of Governor Andrew Jackson and the plump plain face of his wife Rachel.

Only eighty days earlier the "Old Hero" had entered the town and received the territory from Spain in the name of the United States. In many respects the departure was quite unlike his arrival. No longer was Jackson on active duty at the head of an army, nor was he followed and courted by scores of old comrades, office seekers, and young aides. Now his retinue was composed only of his wife, a handful of servants, and a few intimate friends. Among these was his personal physician, the former Army surgeon Dr. James C. Bronaugh, who was to go on to Washington to carry to the hands of President James Monroe the Governor's resignation. In the Pensacola which the little party was leaving remained many who had come to seek their

personal fortunes. Some of those who had been Jackson's intimates held or were soon to receive governmental posts, others remained to speculate in lands, to provide services as merchants or shippers, or to practice law with an eye to the many subjects of litigation arising from the change of flags. An interim government was left in the hands of the two territorial secretaries, George Walton in West Florida, and W. G. D. Worthington in East Florida.

Before leaving, the retiring governor had communicated his ideas about the territorial government and its officers to President Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. To Adams, he wrote that the government should be "simple and energetic," and that East and West Florida should be merged into one territory. To Monroe, he sent a strong representation for the appointment of Colonel William King to the governorship and a recommendation that George Walton be continued as secretary of the entire territory. King had been appointed provisional governor of Florida by Jackson after the invasion of 1818 and was a friend of long standing. Jackson favored him so strongly because of his respect for and trust in him as an officer and because he believed him to be "a much injured man" who had been unjustly condemned, for King had been suspended as the result of a court martial for speculation and for having some deserters shot. Jackson believed him innocent "of any military offence" and thought that his appointment as governor would be an excellent way for "the Government to restore him to that confidence and standing in society which he is entitled to."<sup>1</sup> The old general's cronies in Pensacola took up the cry and circulated a petition on King's behalf, but to no avail.

Under Walton in the west and Worthington in the east, the interim government encountered no serious difficulties. This

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1. Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, October 5, 1821, Jackson Papers, Library of Congress. See also John Spencer Bassett (ed.), *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, 1938), III, 123n.

brief provisional regime was terminated, however, by an act of Congress on March 30, 1822. Under this act there was to be one governor and one secretary and the Spanish division of the territory into two provinces was ended. The legislative power was vested in a Legislative Council of thirteen "fit and discreet persons" resident in Florida. Judicial power was vested in two Superior Courts and in such inferior courts as the Council might create. The confusion of legislative, judicial, and executive powers which had characterized the provisional regime of Jackson was cleared up. All of these offices were to be filled by appointment of the President of the United States. The only office created which was not appointive was the post of Delegate to Congress, which was to be filled in such manner as the Legislative Council might direct.<sup>2</sup> It was generally assumed that the Delegate would be chosen by popular election,

In filling the governorship, Monroe passed over Jackson's recommendation and appointed a fellow Virginian, William P. DuVal, the United States Judge for East Florida whom Jackson viewed as a lawyer "of very moderate capacity."<sup>3</sup> In other appointments, however, the Jacksonian influence was seen. Of the thirteen appointees to the Legislative Council, five may be termed cronies of Jackson: James Bronaugh, H. M. Brackenridge, R. K. Call, Edgar Macon, and former Colonel John Miller. In addition, Walton was named Secretary of Florida as Jackson had wished.<sup>4</sup>

The administration encountered some difficulty in filling the judgeship of the Superior Court of West Florida. John Branch of North Carolina was first appointed, but did not take office. Ultimately, in July of 1822, the appointment was settled upon a member of the Legislative Council, Jackson's friend Henry M. Brackenridge.<sup>5</sup> Under the act of March 30 each of the Su-

2. 3 *United States Statutes at Large*, 654-659.

3. Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, August 4, 1821, Jackson Papers.

4. *Pensacola Floridian*, June 8, 1822.

5. *Ibid.*, May, 25, 1822, July 20, 1822.

perior Court judges was empowered to appoint a clerk for his court. Brackenridge named John Miller to the post, to the apparent chagrin of Brackenridge's recent law partner R. K. Call (see *Appendix I*). Miller had formerly been clerk of the Escambia county court established by Jackson and was also a member of the Legislative Council, in which he continued to serve. Brackenridge, however, resigned his seat in the Council.

By act of May 8, 1822, the Congress created a three man Board of Commissioners on Land Claims for Florida which was empowered to confirm and validate all well defined Spanish grants of less than 1,000 acres. One of the original three appointees was Jackson's Tennessee crony Samuel R. Overton. Land was the basic source of wealth in Florida and a remarkable combination of former Jacksonian associates eventually became identified with the administration of the public land system in the territory. Contemptuous critics often referred to them as "the land office faction," or the "Tennessee speculators," or more often as "the Nucleus."

### *A Rift in the Crony Clique*

Evidences of dissension within the ranks of the Jackson followers began to crop up soon after Jackson's departure. The split seems roughly to have hinged upon the rival ambitions of Call on the one band and of Bronaugh on the other. Call was backed by former Captain Richard J. Easter who had become his law partner after Brackenridge's elevation to the bench. Bronaugh had the sympathy of Secretary Walton and Judge Brackenridge. The little evidence available also seems to indicate that Call and his friends sought support among the old inhabitants of the city, while his opponents relied on the more recently arrived American elements.

Events in 1822 emphasize the rift. The discontent engendered

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6. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1822; 3 *United States Statutes at Large*, 718.

by the appointment of Miller as clerk of the court was heightened when the Legislative Council met in July. Though the Council was required by law to meet on June 10, there was no quorum present until July 22. On the second day of the session Bronaugh was unanimously elected presiding officer and had been, meanwhile, prominently mentioned in connection with the Congressional post. Call also had designs on the post of Delegate to Congress and in later years his opponents claimed that he had tried to block Bronaugh's selection as President of the Council. As published in the *Pensacola Floridian*, however, the Council proceedings show only that in the first day of the session the election of officers was deferred one day on motion of Call.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, the rivalry between the contending factions in the Council is made clear by the debates and maneuvers on the question of establishing suffrage qualifications for the election of a Delegate.

### *Who Should Vote?*

A bare quorum of nine of the thirteen members of the Council was on hand when the session finally got underway. They divided evenly in support of the opposing sides, with Bronaugh holding the decisive vote as presiding officer. In the struggle over the suffrage qualifications, Bronaugh and his followers favored a broad manhood suffrage which would even have included members of military units stationed in Florida. Call and his followers generally favored restricting the vote, except where the old inhabitants were concerned. Call's group offered an amendment specifically granting those inhabitants the suffrage and Bronaugh's faction opposed it. In addition to Call, Edmund Law, George Murray, William Reynolds, and Joseph M. White supported this measure. It was White's vote which carried the proposal, but on all other suffrage issues White voted on the

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7. *Pensacola Floridian*, June 15, July 27, 1822; *Tallahassee Floridian*, March 23, 1833.

other side with Greenbury Gaither, James R. Hanham, and John Miller. Hanham and Miller were both former army officers.

After having won the franchise for the old inhabitants, Call introduced a measure which would have denied the ballot to soldiers, sailors, and marines stationed in Florida. A tie vote ensued which Bronaugh broke with his vote against the bill. Reynolds later proposed a measure to exclude from the suffrage all non-taxpayers and Call attempted a proposal to exclude as well those who were not eligible for jury duty and militia service. Both were defeated by the deciding vote of the presiding officer.<sup>8</sup> The explanation for this division on the suffrage issue may be found in the fact that Call was in the good graces of the old residents while Bronaugh was highly popular among the troops, and both were looking ahead to the Congressional elections.

In the forthcoming race, Bronaugh apparently would have had the advantage over Call. He was President of the Council, was being widely promoted for Congress, and had the sympathy of Andrew Jackson— who had advised Call in the spring to steer clear of politics. The old general had admonished his former aide to secure his fortune and practice before entering public service.<sup>9</sup> Later he expressed surprise that Call and Easter were not united behind Bronaugh, asserting that “every man who really wishes for the prosperity of Florida” should support him. Some of Jackson’s concern stemmed from his hatred of Colonel William Barnett who had been mentioned as a possible candidate of considerable strength. Jackson feared that division among his Florida cronies might lead to the election of Barnett or an East Florida candidate (see *Appendix I*).

### *Flight from Yellow Fever*

Abruptly during the week of August 10-17 this political controversy was terminated by the appearance of an epidemic of the dread yellow fever. To escape the disease the Council moved

8. Pensacola *Floridian*, August 10, 1822.

9. Andrew Jackson to R. K. Call, May 20, 1822, Jackson Papers.

to a ranch fifteen miles from Pensacola where its meetings were held until the adjournment on September 18. The move, however, was unsuccessful in protecting the members from the fever and on September 2 James Bronaugh fell victim to it. Shortly afterwards Joseph Coppinger Connor, the clerk of the Council, also died. Edmund Law was chosen president and plans for popular election of the first Delegate were dropped. Instead, Joseph M. Hernandez of St. Augustine was chosen by the Council to represent Florida in the closing session of the Seventeenth Congress and provisions were made for popular election of a Delegate to the Eighteenth Congress in 1823. By act of Congress in 1823, the suffrage in Florida was specifically denied to members of the United States armed services.<sup>10</sup>

### *Andrew Jackson's Democracy*

During his governorship (and he was technically governor in the interim period), Jackson made statements and committed acts which shed some light on his pre-presidential outlook toward democratic government. In recent years some historians have characterized Jackson's association with the ideals of political democracy as little more than political opportunism. They emphasize his lack of concern for doctrinaire democracy before he became president and assert that there is no evidence that he cared for majority rule or individual rights.<sup>11</sup> However, his

10. Pensacola *Floridian*, August 17, 1822; Bassett, *Jackson Correspondence*, III, 170n; Caroline Mays Brevard, *A History of Florida* (DeLand, 1925), I, 76.

11. Harold C. Syrett and Thomas P. Abernethy are two of the more recent promoters of this viewpoint. Abernethy in his book *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1932), 249, asserts, "Democracy was good talk with which to win the favor of the people and thereby accomplish ulterior objectives. Jackson never really championed the cause of the people." Professor Syrett in his book *Andrew Jackson, his Contribution to the American Tradition* (New York, 1953), 22, says that "Jackson never showed any marked concern for the rights of the individual or the views of the majority." He also observes, "While serving as a delegate to Tennessee's constitutional convention, a Representative in Congress, a Senator, a member of his state's highest court, and the first American governor of the Florida territory, Jackson did not once espouse a policy that was designed to aid the majority or to weaken the control of the minority over the government."



actions while governor provide some evidence for qualifying the assertions of these scholars. For instance, in the much-wit-icized Vidal affair<sup>12</sup> Jackson was motivated by concern for an humble mulatto woman denied her rights by an apparently corrupt Spanish bureaucracy. His subsequent rough treatment of Spanish officialdom stemmed not from cynical indifference to individual rights, but from his desire to secure long overdue justice to an individual citizen and from his belief that "the great can protect themselves, but the poor and humble require the arm and shield of the law."<sup>13</sup> That Jackson possessed authoritarian powers in Florida was not his doing, but that of the Congress. He publicly recognized the dangerous precedents of his ill-defined but extensive powers when, in handing down his decision in the Vidal case, he had asserted, "I am clothed with powers that no one under a republic ought to possess, and which I trust will never again be given to any man."<sup>14</sup>

After the new territorial government was launched, the controversy over who should be qualified to vote for the Delegate to Congress gave him the opportunity to express rather liberal views on the suffrage. He believed that as long as Florida remained a territory, and until her lands should be put up for public sale, "all freemen of six months residence should be entitled to a vote" (see *Appendix I*). His prefatory qualifications of this endorsement of universal manhood suffrage do not significantly weaken the importance of the main assertion. Rather, they reflect (1) his recognition of the constitutional right of a state to impose whatever suffrage qualifications it might desire, and (2) the assumption of the westerner that any man might readily acquire property. Indeed, in large measure the belief in universal suffrage without property qualifications was an

12. For the background of the Vidal case see *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIII (July, 1954), 15-19.

13. Andrew Jackson to John Quincy Adams, August 26, 1821, *State Papers*, 17 Congress, 1 Session, No. 42.

14. *Pensacola Floridian*, September 22, 1821.

idea which only gradually derived from frontier conditions under which property qualifications became meaningless because property was so easily acquired. Political democracy in the United States has been of gradual growth, often having no prior theoretical justification.

It might be argued that Jackson's views on the suffrage question stemmed from his feeling that a broad suffrage would be better insurance for Bronaugh's election. Bronaugh's partisans in Florida did believe that this would be the case if the suffrage were broad enough to include the troops stationed there. Jackson himself acknowledged that there could be no question of Bronaugh's election if the soldiers should vote, but he did not recommend that they be given the vote. His letter in Appendix I points up as well his clear-cut opposition to a property qualification by the territorial government. There is also missing any mention of barring the Spanish inhabitants from the ballot-an idea to which the Bronaugh faction was favorably inclined. The positive emphasis of this letter is upon residence alone as the qualification for voting: "All freemen residents will be bound by your laws, & subject to punishment under them – and of right, ought to be entitled to a voice in making them." These expressions would do credit to most nineteenth century advocates of political democracy.

In this Florida controversy, Jackson had given his support to Bronaugh because of the respect and confidence derived from his long and intimate friendship with him. The two men had seen much military service together in the Southern District which Jackson had risen to command, and in which Bronaugh had climbed to the post of Surgeon General. His death was sorely felt by Jackson who eulogized him as "noble and brave." (see *Appendix II*). Bronaugh's death, however, served to heal for a time the growing breach among the Jacksonian following in Florida. After his death no one in West Florida immediately

challenged Richard Call's claim to the Congressional seat and in June of 1823 he was elected to it by virtue of a three way division among his opponents in East Florida.<sup>15</sup>

*Joseph M. White*

The opposition to Call subsided but did not die out. During his two year Congressional term that opposition crystallized around the person of Joseph M. White. White had come to Florida in 1822 after appointment by Monroe to the Legislative Council and in 1823 he had been stepped up to membership on the Board of Land Commissioners. Though he had no prior Jacksonian associations he had fallen in with the Bronaugh faction and from the beginning had been in opposition to Call.

Call's Congressional term coincided with Jackson's tenure in the Senate as the junior senator from Tennessee (see *Appendix III*). In this period several of the Jacksonian land were rewarded in Florida, due to the combined efforts of Jackson and Call. One of the first was Call's new young law partner Benjamin D. Wright, recently arrived in Florida from Pennsylvania. Wright was named United States District Attorney at Pensacola in 1824 and in the same year was also appointed to the Legislative Council.<sup>16</sup> Call and Wright maintained close relations with the Pensacola city officials for almost a decade and Wright was generally thought to be the spokesman of those officers.<sup>17</sup>

*James Gadsden and Robert Butler*

While Call and Jackson were in Congress, Florida provided a haven for two other rather prominent cronies. Colonel James Gadsden of South Carolina had left the army in 1822 after the Senate had refused to approve Monroe's appointment of him

15. St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, September 27, 1823.

16. Commission of Benjamin D. Wright, Misc. Perm. Commissions E, State Department, National Archives; James O. Knauss, *Territorial Florida Journalism* (DeLand, 1926), 63-64; Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* (Atlanta, 1902), I, 157.

17. Tallahassee *Florida Advocate*, February 14, 1829.

as Adjutant General of the army. He had come to Florida where in 1823 Monroe had entrusted to him the task of removing the Indians from the inhabited parts of North Florida to a point in the interior of the peninsula to the south. In this capacity he negotiated the treaty of Moultrie Creek which moved the Indians to an inland southern location. For sixteen years Gadsden remained in Florida and was several times the Congressional candidate backed by the Call faction. In 1832 he again was named to treat with the Indians and negotiated the treaty of Payne's Landing which provided for removal of the Indians to the West. In the Indian War that followed he served variously as chief of staff to General Winfield Scott and as quartermaster general of the militia.<sup>18</sup> Gadsden is remembered in United States history primarily for his services rendered while minister to Mexico under President Franklin Pierce. In that capacity he obtained a large tract of land for the United States which is still referred to as the "Gadsden Purchase."

Colonel Robert Butler, like Gadsden, was an unemployed army officer who was placed in a Florida office through Jackson's influence. Butler had long served with Jackson and had been in charge of receiving East Florida from Spain at St. Augustine in 1821. Under the act for the reduction of the Army in that year, he was ordered transferred from the Fourth Infantry as a colonel to the First Infantry as a lieutenant colonel.<sup>19</sup> Rather than accept the reduction he resigned from the service and Jackson secured from Monroe "the President's positive promise that something shall be done for him."<sup>20</sup> Shortly after arriving in Washington as a senator, Jackson pressed upon Monroe the claims of Butler to the post of Surveyor General of

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18. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, 1903), I, 441; Rerick, *Memoirs*, I, 154, 175, 188; "James Gadsden," *Dictionary of American Biography*, (New York, 1934), VII, 83-84.

19. Heitman, *Army Register*, I, 276.

20. Andrew Jackson to Rachel Jackson, January 15, 1824, in Bassett, *Jackson Correspondence*, III, 223.

Florida, which post Monroe had intended for James P. Preston, a former governor of Virginia. In February, 1824, Jackson was able to report that he had obtained Monroe's promise that Butler should be appointed to the Florida office.<sup>21</sup> The new appointee arrived in Florida in November of the same year and brought with him from Tennessee Robert W. Williams and Isham G. Searcy as his clerks. With their arrival, both Gadsden and Butler and his clerks associated themselves with Call and his political friends.<sup>22</sup>

By 1824, the people associating politically with Call, Gadsden, and Butler were coming to be regarded as the only Jacksonian group and the White faction was coming to be composed of people hostile or indifferent to Jackson. By this time, too, Call was becoming identified in the popular mind with the big landed interests; while White, who had gained favorable notice for uncovering land frauds in Pensacola, was becoming a symbol of the opposition to the land speculator. Beginning late in 1824 the Call faction was spoken for in the new capital city of Tallahassee by the *Florida Intelligencer*, edited by Ambrose Crane. Early in 1825, Crane was appointed first postmaster of Tallahassee and had already been named by Governor DuVal as one of three commissioners to conduct public sales of lots in the capital and to receive bids for the construction of public buildings. Butler was also one of the three commissioners.<sup>23</sup>

In 1825 Call declined to run for reelection to Congress and secured for himself the appointment to the newly created post of Receiver of Public Monies at the federal land office in Tallahassee.<sup>24</sup> At the same time Samuel R. Overton, Jackson's Tennessee friend was named Register of the land office. Overton

21. Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, February 22, 1824, *ibid.*, III, 229.

22. Robert Butler to George Graham, November 15, 1824, Letters recd. Surveyor General of Florida, General Land Office, National Archives.

23. St. Augustine *Florida Herald*, February 1, 1825; *Pensacola Gazette*, April 9, 1825.

24. George Graham to R. K. Call, February 23, 1825, Misc. letters sent, General Land Office, National Archives.

had occupied this post but three months when he was replaced by George Ward, who was a staunch adherent of the Call faction. Whether or not Overton's replacement was due to differences with Call is not clear; however, about this time Call informed Jackson that he suspected Overton of being his enemy. Jackson, after Overton's exit from the land office, replied with the hope that Call might be wrong, but he asserted "should this be established against him I will abandon him."<sup>25</sup>

Though Call did not run again in 1825, James Gadsden made the race with Call's support. Gadsden, in fact, became the perennial candidate of the faction, running unsuccessfully for Congress again in 1827, in 1829, and in 1831. Joseph M. White, who had the sympathy of and limited support from the Adams administration, was victorious each time.

### *The Nucleus*

By the time Jackson assumed the presidency in 1829, the faction led by his former cronies in Florida had fairly well solidified and was being variously referred to as the Call party, the land office faction, or "the Nucleus." It had also added to its ranks influential men who cannot be properly termed personal cronies of the old general. In Tallahassee, Call himself was probably the most important member but the faction also included among its leaders there Romeo Lewis, sheriff of Leon county; Richard C. Allen, a land speculator; William B. Nuttall, a planter; and George K. Walker, Call's cousin and partner. George Ward, Robert Butler, Isham G. Searcy, and Robert W.

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25. Andrew Jackson to R. K. Call, July 24, 1825, Call Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Undoubtedly the fact that George Graham, the head of the General Land Office was friendly toward Jackson and Call expedited the securing of land office posts for Jackson's cronies. Graham also cooperated on at least one occasion by going so far as to forward to Call a letter received in Washington criticizing the administration of the land office in Tallahassee. He did it to "guard you against the machinations of your enemies." (Graham to Call, February 25, 1827, Misc. letters sent, General Land Office, National Archives.)

Williams of the land office; and Ambrose Crane, A. S. Thruston, Edgar Macon, Leslie A. Thompson, Edward R. Gibson, successive editors of the group's newspaper voice were prominent. In Pensacola, the main burden of the faction was borne by Benjamin Wright who in 1834 came into control of the influential *Pensacola Gazette*. In 1830, Walker was sent to Pensacola as United States District Attorney and strengthened the influence of the faction there. In East Florida, Joseph Sanchez, an old inhabitant; Charles Downing, a lawyer; and Samuel Bellamy, a lawyer-planter, were most closely associated with the group. In addition to these men, by 1829 Governor DuVal was also identified with the Call party, which was now referred to popularly as the Nucleus.

The most important office in Florida which was not in the hands of the Nucleus was the Congressional post which White held from 1826 to 1838. His popular strength was based upon his support of preëmption laws and his reputation as an opponent of the land speculators. After the accession of Jackson to the presidency, White ceased to wield much influence at the White House, which increasingly turned to other sources for advice on Florida policies. The Nucleus redoubled its efforts to unseat White in 1831, but he was returned. DuVal, who actively opposed White, had moved to kill his influence over the patronage by sending Jackson a list of removals which should be made in Florida to effect "the salutary reforms which you have commenced." He reminded the president that many of his friends had been denied office when the latter had been governor and asked, "I beg of you to remember them now. . . ." <sup>26</sup>

White retaliated by attempting to discredit DuVal and prevent his reappointment. The Delegate charged that DuVal had been taken into "the harvest of the speculators" whom he had

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26. William P. DuVal to Andrew Jackson, April 21, 1829, copy in MS. "Florida Territorial Papers," Territorial Records Office, National Archives; Tallahassee *Floridian and Advocate*, May 19, June 2, 1831.

once characterized as worse than thieves, and he sent documents to Jackson purporting to show that the governor was guilty of fraud, misappropriation of funds, carelessness, negligence, and general maladministration.<sup>27</sup> DuVal, however, was staunchly defended by the Nucleus and was reappointed. A counter-attack by DuVal was launched when he voided the 1831 election on the grounds of fraud, declared White's seat empty, and held a new election. White was again elected, but the House of Representatives refused to recognize the second election and seated him on the basis of the first.<sup>28</sup>

By 1833, White's perennial opponent, Gadsden, was losing favor in the eyes of the Jacksonians. The development of the nullification controversy in South Carolina in 1832-1833 was a decisive factor. Gadsden firmly believed that nullification was the just remedy of an oppressed minority and, although he did not make his views public immediately, he ultimately went with Calhoun and deserted Jackson on this issue. Aside from this, many of the Nucleus felt that it would be unwise to again entrust their electoral fortunes to Gadsden. There was some lack of concert in reaching agreement upon a replacement candidate but, due to the efforts of Benjamin Wright, rival ambitions among the members of the faction were at length subordinated in support of a somewhat reluctant Call for the 1833 Congressional race.<sup>29</sup> Despite his prestige and connections, Call proved no stronger than Gadsden had been and White again won out. Call, however, placed much of the blame for his defeat upon Gadsden whom he suspected of having covertly opposed his election. Gadsden denied that he was opposed to Call's election or that he had any control over the votes of his friends whose opposition might have spelled Call's defeat.<sup>30</sup> Jackson expressed

27. *Ibid.*, February 24, April 14, 1831.

28. *Ibid.*, July 7, August 10, 1831.

29. Benjamin D. Wright to R. K. Call, May 27, 1832, Call Papers, Florida Historical Society Library.

30. James Gadsden to R. K. Call, August 25, October 11, 1833; R. K. Call to James Gadsden, August 28, 1833, Call Papers, Florida Historical Society Library.



great surprise at the defeat and asked if Gadsden's opposition to Call might have stemmed from Gadsden's being a "nullifier." He asked "to be correctly informed" so that he might "never invest one with office under the General Government . . . who would nullify its laws and oppose their execution."<sup>31</sup>

Following the Gadsden-Call split in 1833, the closely knit propertied group that was the Nucleus began to weaken and lose its influence. In part this reflected the split in the national administration between the forces of Calhoun and the Jackson-Van Buren group. Gadsden was the Calhoun sympathizer, and Call, though he had no liking for Van Buren, adhered to the Jackson partisans. In part, this also reflected the growing diversification of interests among proper tied men in Florida. By the 1830's, the land office was ceasing to be the center of attraction for ambitious men. Banking and railway corporations were rising in importance and were claiming their attention and resources. Pensacola, Tallahassee, and St Augustine each had rather important banks, and railroad schemes were projected in virtually every populated place in the territory. Competition for the favors of the territorial government divided propertied groups among themselves and promoted sectionalism. Late in the territorial period the statehood movement also accentuated the sectional divisions. The people of East Florida, desiring continued material benefits from the federal government, opposed statehood and felt that the territory could not yet financially sustain a state government. Much the same attitude was prevalent in West Florida. Yet in prosperous Middle Florida – the territory's "black belt" district – statehood sentiment was strong, for the politically articulate group were anxious to be free of federal control.<sup>32</sup>

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31. Andrew Jackson to R. K. Call, July 14, 1833, copy in MS. "Journal of Governor R. K. Call," 197-198, Florida Historical Society Library.

32. In this era "Middle Florida" was the region between the Suwannee and Apalachicola Rivers.

*The Democratic Party and the Banks*

The waning importance of the Nucleus was accompanied by evidences of new influence being exerted over the appointment of officers to Florida posts. At the close of DuVal's fourth term in 1834, John H. Eaton was named governor and thereafter men sympathetic to Van Buren and hostile to the local banking corporations began to fill the federal posts. After the financial panic of 1837 and its subsequent depression, these men found a dynamic, vital issue on which to organize politically: opposition to banks, monopoly, and privilege of every stripe. This group, rather than the old Jacksonian cronies, formed the core of Florida's Democratic party.

The Florida banking corporations, which received most of the blame for the depression, had been so intimately tied to the old Jacksonian group in Florida that they almost automatically became ranged in opposition to the new antibank Democrats. Under DuVal's administration, most of the banks had been chartered and backed by territorial bonds. Under Call, who was named governor in 1836, new issues of securities guaranteed by the territorial government had been sold by the banks. On top of this, the boards of directors and stockholders (particularly of the Union Bank of Tallahassee) were comprised in great measure of members of or sympathizers with the old Nucleus. In the face of the depression and the political storm against them these conservatives became confused and divided, some acquiescing in the demands for the abolition of the banks, some stubbornly standing for the banks and the payment of their obligations whatever the cost, and some advocating preservation of the banks but repudiation or evasion of the government-endorsed bank securities.

*A Constitution for the Expectant State*

In the midst of the financial crisis came the Constitutional Convention of 1838-1839 to draw up a government for a future

State of Florida. This convention became the battleground of the bank and anti-bank forces and the controlling strength of the anti-bank element was made clear by its defeat of DuVal for the convention presidency. Robert Raymond Reid of St. Augustine was named presiding officer. Reid, with James D. Westcott, Jr., and David L. Yulee, was one of the "big three" of the early Florida Democracy. At the close of the convention, the anti-bank group formally organized as Florida's Democratic party. In the same year President Van Buren removed Call from the governorship, climaxing a series of disagreements between the territorial and federal administrations and named Reid to the post. In 1839, too, the anti-bank constitution was ratified, and in 1841 Yulee went to Congress, ending Charles Downing's brief four year tenure there. The year 1841 also saw the Democrats sweep the Legislative Council.

The contending political forces on the national scene had fairly well crystallized by 1840 as the Whig and Democratic parties, and in Florida whether they liked it or not the Democrats' opponents found themselves being dubbed Whigs – a name they gradually accepted. Richard Call, after his break with Van Buren, became one of the bittered critics of the Democrats and actively campaigned for William H. Harrison, the Whig presidential nominee in 1840. Call, George Ward, George K. Walker, Benjamin D. Wright, and Charles Downing were among the outstanding Whig leaders in Florida after 1840. Of the original Jackson cronies of 1821, Bronaugh was dead, and Brackenridge, Easter, Butler, Gadsden, Miller, and Walton all had left Florida or had retired from political life. Only Call remained active, and throughout the early statehood period, as he had in the territorial days, this last of the cronies stood as a symbol of frontier conservatism. Through the years he stood as a vital link, tying together all the succeeding conservative political groups – from the Nucleus to the Whig party, then

the Native American party, and finally the Constitutional Union party of 1860.

## LETTERS OF ANDREW JACKSON TO HIS CRONIES.

## APPENDIX I\*

\* The originals of this and the letters which follow are in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida as are those published in this *Quarterly*, xxxi, no. 1. All have been unknown until now, not having been included in Bassett: *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 6 vols. (The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-1935.) All but the last letter are in Jackson's hand, and that one was signed by him.

In the above mentioned publication, Bassett includes a letter from Jackson to Bronaugh dated July 18, 1822, which he states "was perhaps Jackson's last letter to Bronaugh." The letter here published is obviously a later one and there seems to be no reason not to believe that it is actually the last one. Bronaugh died on September 2 and undoubtedly this letter arrived after his death.

(Andrew Jackson to James C. Bronaugh)

Hermitage August 27th 1822

Dr. Bronaugh

I had the pleasure on last evening to receive your letter of the 22nd ult.

It affords me great pleasure to be informed of your flattering prospects of success on your election,<sup>1</sup> I need not say what I am sure you believe, the great anxiety I have that you should succeed. My mortification is great to hear that my friends (and what I allways supposed yours) Capts Call and Ea[s]ter<sup>2</sup> should be luke warm on this subject. The letters I have recd. from Capt Easter, induced me to believe he was your active friend, and in all Capt Calls, he mentions you with friendship, from which I did suppose that amongst all our friends they would be union & active union, on this subject.

I have recd Judge Brakenridges<sup>3</sup> [sic] letter, & sincerely

1. Bronaugh was considered the leading contender for election as Florida's first Delegate to Congress.
2. Richard Keith Call and Richard J. Easter, former army officers and aides to Jackson, were law partners in Pensacola and came into opposition to Bronaugh probably because of Call's own ambition to go to Congress.
3. Henry M. Brackenridge, United States Judge for West Florida, who had assisted Jackson in the organization of the provisional government and in the preceding transfer negotiations.

regret that there should exist any heart burnings, between him, Call & Easter. You know my good opinion of, and friendship for them all, I have no doubt from the Judges explanation, but the whole has originated from a mistake, on the part of Capt Call & Easter and that when cool reflection assumes its empire they both will be satisfied with the Judges giving the Clerkship to Colo. Miller<sup>4</sup>. I am much pleased that Colo. Walton<sup>5</sup> & Shannon,<sup>6</sup> are your active friends, I knew Colo. Miller too well ever to doubt him, he, you will find, is a man of sterling worth – and under all circumstances to be relied on. I was aware as I formerly named to you of the duplicity of Colo Barnett.<sup>7</sup> Call and Capt Easter both know my opinion of him, and every person who really wishes for the prosperity of Florida, & that Pensacola should be hastened ought to unite in your support as they must be convinced if they do not. Barnett cannot, & I hope will not be elected. It will be a candidate from the east, unless there is perfect union in the west in your support. If the soldiary should be admitted to vote you are safe, the army will stick by you. They certainly will not prove traitors to their own selves – and altho Col. Brooke<sup>8</sup> may have some hostility toward you, he will be silent, and go with the army. Under existing circumstances, it would be impolitic & unjust to make a property qualification. Residence alone, in justice to all, should be required. This is the only republican rule that can be estab-

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4. John Miller, a former lieutenant-colonel in the army, was mayor of Pensacola and a member of the first territorial Legislative Council. He had been clerk of the county court of Escambia, and Brackenridge named him clerk of the United States Court of West Florida.

5. George Walton of Georgia, Secretary of the Territory of Florida.

6. David Shannon, first president of the Escambia county court created by Jackson, practiced law in Pensacola.

7. William Barnett, a Revolutionary War veteran and former Congressman from Georgia (1812-1815), was one of the first aldermen of Pensacola by Jackson's appointment. His friendships with the old inhabitants hostile to Jackson won him Jackson's contempt.

8. George M. Brooke, a lieutenant-colonel in the Army who commanded the Army detachment in Pensacola during and just after Jackson's governorship. Brooke and Jackson were not on good terms owing to Brooke's friendship with the former Spanish governor, José Callava.

lished, untill your land titles are adjudicated, and your vacant and unappropriated land brought into market— and you come into the union as a state. Then in your constitution you can adopt such qualifications as you may think proper for the happiness, security, & prosperity of the state. Untill then all freemen of six months residence should be entitled to a vote. All freemen residents will be bound by your laws, & subject to punishment under them – and of right, ought to be entitled to a voice in making them.

I was much gratified in seeing you unanimously chosen president of the council.<sup>9</sup> So soon as your government is organized, and your laws authorising the election of a delegate are passed I will be happy to see the law, and to know the qualifications necessary to entitle an individual to vote, so soon as I see this I can form a correct idea of your probable success.

Doctor McCall is not off from Nashville yet. He will set out in a day or two.

You will see from the Nashville papers the current news of our country.

Mrs. J. joins me in good wishes for your health & happiness, and believe me sincerely your friend

ANDREW JACKSON

P.S. Present me to Mr. Overton,<sup>10</sup> Colo. Miller, Walton & Shannon, & say to Mr. Conner,<sup>11</sup> I feel happy to see him noticed by the council. I think him a excellent young man.

P.S. Since closing my letter I have recd one from Lt Donelson<sup>12</sup>

9. Bronaugh was unanimously chosen president of the first Legislative Council of Florida in 1822.

10. Samuel R. Overton of Tennessee was one of the first United States Commissioners on Land Claims in Florida. He later became the first Register of the Tallahassee land office.

11. José Coppinger Connor, apparently one of the native inhabitants of Pensacola, was appointed clerk of the first Legislative Council. He died in the yellow fever epidemic of the summer of 1822.

12. Andrew Jackson Donelson, a lieutenant in the Army and nephew of Jackson.

in which he remarks that Mr. Rutledge<sup>13</sup> in a postscript of a letter by him just recd. mentions, that you had advised Mr. Rutledge that the sum of \$240 had been allowed him, and if he had not drawn that sum, that it must be in his Lt Donelsons hands, & writes me for a copy of the account as rendered by me to the Sec. of State. I have sent it to him. I have allways been under the impression, that this sum was paid Mr. Rutledge at Pensacola and his duplicate receipts taken. If this is not the case I will regret it very much – for on the 24th of August 1821 I find his recpt and Judge Brakenridges on file for their services as interpreters and translators – and as soon as Lt Donelson arived from orleans, with the funds, I requested you to pay these two gentlemen and Capt Call, which you did as I believe. I will recollect of your naming to me that it was with great difficulty you could prevail upon Mr. Rutledge to receive it – and finding his receipt on file with Judge Brakenridge & Capt Calls and all others I had no idea but that it was paid to him as well as to the others when his recpt was taken. If not I will like to be advised how it has happened, that it was not paid to him when his recpt was given that I may have the amount paid to him. Have the goodness to write to me on the recpt of this letter. Yours A J.

*(Andrew Jackson to George Walton)*

Hermitage near Nashville

Novbr. 26th 1822

My Dear Colo.

On my return from Alabama, where I had been for the last month I had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 10th ult. It affords me great pleasure to learn that you and your

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13. Edward Rutledge served as translator for Jackson in the transfer negotiations.

family have escaped from the ravages of that dreadful fever that has vissitted your city, and has swept from existance, so many valuable citizens. I rejoice that you and your family are restored to health, & I pray god that you may long enjoy that blessing. I sincerely thank you for the circumstantial account you have given me of the death & sufferings of my ever to be lamented friend, Doctor Bronaugh. How I wished to have been with him in his sufferings, to have endeavoured to sooth & comfort him; and to have endeavoured to have saved him; as Doctor Brosenham [ sic ]<sup>14</sup> has well expressed, "Men of his noble spirit ought not to die;" few men knew the worth of Doctor Bronaugh. I well knew it, and knew how to appreciate it. He was my bosom friend, he was every way worthy of that confidence I reposed in him. He was incapable of violating confidence, or departing from the true principles of friendship. He was noble & brave, and his exit from life, notises[?] what I allways expected, and what I thought of him. But he has gone the way of all the earth, he has done his duty, here below, and I have a fond hope that he is changed to a better, & hapier clime where his spirit is blessed & is at rest— and by that Sacred Book that ought to be our guide, we are commanded not to mourn for the dead, but for the living. Peace to his name.

Mr. Rutledge delivered the negroes safely to me,<sup>15</sup> I intend sending them on immediately but find that Dick has become so much edicted to drink that I could not trust him. I have detained them here untill I hear from Madam Bronaugh to whom I had written some time ago— and again on yesterday. On the subject of his wardrobe I have only to remark; that I would advise you to pack them up in a trunk, & send them to his mother. It would be hard so to divide them as to please.

14. John Brosnamah, a physician in Pensacola, was one of Jackson's appointees to Pensacola's first Board of Aldermen.

15. The Negro slaves belonging to Dr. Bronaugh were sent on to his mother after his death which was on September 2, 1822. "Dick" was Bronaugh's personal servant.



It would be difficult to Judge who was his friends – and to prevent any feeling on the subject, I would advise sending his ward robe to his mother. There are here some debts due him for money loaned, which I will endeavour to collect & remit to his mother, one debt will be lost, the Debtor being insolvent – but I hope to be able to collect the Balance which will close all his business here, & take the negroes to Loudon [sic] County Virginia.

How I sincerely regret the loss of many of my friends there, and particularly my friend Major Dinken[sic].<sup>16</sup> He was the life & soul of his Regt. and in him the army has lost one of its most worthy members. I hope our friend Cary Nicholas is still safe.<sup>17</sup> May he survive the dreadful calamity.

I am fearful your police was lax, & not sufficiently attended to, or the rotten fish could not have been introduced; to which is ascribed, the introduction of that fatal fever – and I fear many fell victims to its ravages after introduced, for the want of proper arrangements, for their comfort & accommodation. It appears no arrangements were adopted to prevent it spreading, nor no hospital prepared for the reception of the sick. I hope before this reaches you, the city will be restored to perfect health, and that you will profit from experience, & have a more vigilant police another season. Pensacola is a healthy place with a proper police, and the present catastrophe is no evidence to my mind of the contrary. I have the prosperity of the Floridas much at heart, and its late dreadful visitation has filled my heart with woe.

Should Mr. Davidson who attended my deceased friend Doctor Bronaugh in his last moments & followed him alone to his

16. James E. Dinkins, a native of South Carolina, was a major with the Army detachment stationed in Pensacola.

17. Cary Nicholas, a former major in the Army and native of Virginia, resigned from the Army in 1821 and settled in Pensacola. He practiced law and was the city's first United States postmaster. He was one of the first publishers of the Pensacola *Floridian*, and died in 1829 after having served for a number of years as Clerk of the Superior Court of Middle Florida.

Robert H. Anderson's Chronicles in Florida Territorial Politics

Should Mr. Dawson who attended my dear  
friend Doctor Brownough in his last moments,  
I followed him alone to his grave, be with you  
present to him Mrs. I & my profound respects -  
This act to my dying friend, has endeared him  
to me and has left on my mind, lasting im-  
pressions of gratitude, never to be forgotten.

present me although unacquainted, expres-  
sively to your Lady a mother, and accept for  
yourself Mrs. I and my kindest resolutions.

present me to Mr. Samuel Overton, Col. &  
Easter & to all friends, and believe me to be  
very respectfully your friend.

Andrew Jackson

Col. George Walton

Andrew Jackson to George Walton, Nov. 26, 1822.

grave, be with you, present to him Mrs. J. & my profound respects. This act to my dying friend, has endeared him to me, and has left on my mind, lasting impressions of gratitude, never to be forgotten.

Present me although unacquainted, respectfully to your Lady & mother, and accept for yourself Mrs. J. and my kindest salutations.

Present me to Mr Saml Overton, Call & Easter & to all my friends, and believe me to be very respectfully your friend.

ANDREW JACKSON

Colo. George Walton

### APPENDIX III

*(Andrew Jackson to George Walton)*

Hermitage October 28th 1823

My Dear Col.

Your letter of 24th ult. is befoe me, and I take great pleasure in acknowledging its receipt. Your remarks respecting the succession to Mr. Duval<sup>18</sup> had been anticipated and were sometime since substantially presented to Mr. Monroe, with such considerations as were in my power in favor of your claims. No doubt much *sinister manoeuvre* has been used; but opposed to the evidences of integrity & talent furnished by your past services, I trust that the President will not give the victory to inferior pretensions.

The favorable location of the Indians was necessary to the establishment of Harmony between the two sections of your Territory. If this be secured, the channels to improved government, agriculture & commerce are unobstructed, and Florida flourishing and powerful, will yet prove how necessary she

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18. William P. DuVal, the first civil governor of Florida, served from 1822 to 1834. Before his appointment he was United States Judge for East Florida.

was to the best interests of the Union, – especially to its military protection.

You are aware of my appointment to the Senate of the US by the legislature of this state<sup>19</sup> – a measure adopted without my approbation. I accepted the appointment, because of the general obligation which binds every citizen to the service of his country. For certainly, he who enjoys the blessings of our free and happy institutions should not shrink from the responsibilities of such service; when the citizens of other forms, aristocratic & even despotic, recognize the principle– accounting it the sacred tie between the government & the governed. The only question with me, after my name had been put in nomination, was, whether from my age & the impaired state of my health, there were not others better qualified for the station. These considerations however, not prevailing with the Legislature, I am elected, and I commit myself to the same Providence that has directed my past destinies.

I should write you more in detail, but that I am much hastened with business, intending to leave this for Washington on the 10th proximo. Mrs. Jackson unites with me in best wishes to your aged mother & to Mrs. Walton. We also beg to be presented to Mr. Overton.

yr. sincere friend

ANDREW JACKSON

Col George Walton

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[The body of this third letter is not in Jackson's hand, although the signature is his.]

19. Tennessee.