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## Alabama and West Florida

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## ALABAMA AND WEST FLORIDA ANNEXATION

by HUGH C. BAILEY

**E**VEN BEFORE the Alabama Territory came into being, the inhabitants of the area north of West Florida coveted the land which lies west of the Apalachicola River. As early as 1811 two hundred sixty three residents of the Mississippi Territory petitioned the Congress of the United States to add West Florida to their jurisdiction. Not only would this give the territory sufficient population for admission to statehood, they asserted, but it would promote the interests of the people of both sections. After pointing out that many of the rivers of the Mississippi country flowed through West Florida, the petitioners stated that "where Nature fixes the boundaries of a state, there ought to be its limits when they do not conflict with its real and substantial interests." They trusted that the gentlemen of the congress would see the situation in the same light.<sup>1</sup>

Though this petition bore no fruit, the spirit which it reflected did not wane. The Alabama Constitutional Convention meeting in the summer of 1819 petitioned the congress to add West Florida to the new state. Largely due to the votes of Southern senators this was not done, although the Alabama congressmen did not give up until the boundaries for the new territory of Florida were erected.<sup>2</sup>

Even within the Florida Territory there continued to be strong sentiment for division, particularly in East Florida. In 1838 a public meeting at St. Augustine adopted resolutions favoring such action. The tradition of two territories, one under St. Augustine and the other under Pensacola, was firmly planted in the minds of many people. Some went so far as to contend that the Adams-

1. "Petition to Congress by Inhabitants of the Territory," Referred December 27, 1811, in Clarence Edwin Carter (comp. and ed.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (21 vols. to date, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1934- ), VI, *The Territory of Mississippi, 1809-1817*, 253-257.
2. See the author's, "Alabama's Political Leaders and the Acquisition of Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXV, (July, 1956), 26-29.

Onis treaty imposed the duty of forming two states out of the Florida cession.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it was not until 1854 that Alabama again assumed the initiative in her mission to gain West Florida. In that year the Alabama legislature passed a joint resolution proposing that the state of Florida cede to Alabama all of her territory lying west of the "Chattahoochee {sic} and Apalachicola" rivers, subject, of course, to the necessary sanction of the United States Congress.<sup>4</sup> Evidently nothing came of this expression of desires. Four years later, however, the same resolution was again passed, but this time provision was made for the Governor of Alabama to appoint a commissioner to bring the resolution before the Florida legislature and chief executive.<sup>5</sup>

In compliance with this resolution, Governor A. B. Moore appointed Judge Gappa T. Yelverton, of Coffee County, as the Alabama commissioner. After conferences in Tallahassee he reported that the leaders of the Florida government had refused to assent to transfer on any terms.<sup>6</sup>

With the coming of the war Alabama's attention was diverted from Florida, but reconstruction revealed that the Florida dream was not a monopoly of any one segment of the population. Between 1868 and 1874 the most zealous and sustained effort was made by the radical governments to acquire West Florida for Alabama.

On December 30, 1868, the Alabama legislature passed a joint resolution introduced by J. L. Pennington, a leading Republican from Lee County, which authorized the governor to negotiate with the government of Florida to annex that portion of the

3. Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida, Embracing a General History of the Province, Territory and State; and Special Chapters Devoted to Finances and Banking, the Bench and Bar, Medical Profession, Railways and Navigation and Industrial Interests* (2 vols., Atlanta, The Southern Historical Association), I. 168.
4. *Acts of the Fourth Biennial Session of the General Assembly of Alabama . . . .* (Montgomery, Brittan and Blue, 1854), 501.
5. Joint resolution, dated February 8, 1858, in *Acts of the Sixth Biennial Session of the General Assembly of Alabama. . . .* (Montgomery, N. B. Cloud, 1857), 432.
6. Francis G. Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Alabama State Bar Association Held at Montgomery, Alabama, June 28 and 29, 1901* (Montgomery, Brown Printing Co., 1901). 110; Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* (4 vols., Chicago, The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921). II, 1392

state lying west of the Chattahoochee. Furthermore the governor was empowered to draw upon any unappropriated funds in the treasury to defray the expenses involved in conducting the negotiations.<sup>7</sup>

In January, 1869, Governor William H. Smith appointed three commissioners to proceed immediately to Tallahassee. Of these two were prominent Republicans who had come to Alabama after the war. They were Pennington, the author of the resolutions and a former North Carolinian, and the incumbent Alabama secretary of state, Charles A. Miller, a native of Maine. The third member was Judge Andrew J. Walker, who had just been removed from the Alabama Supreme Court by the reconstruction government. His inclusion on the commission indicated that Governor Smith wished to wage the struggle for annexation on a bi-partisan basis.<sup>8</sup>

Backed by firm support at home, the commissioners arrived at Tallahassee in mid-January. A letter explaining the mission was submitted to Governor Harrison Reed who replied favorably and sent the communication to the Florida legislature. Accompanying this was a recommendation that commissioners be appointed to represent Florida in the desired negotiations. The legislature wished to know more about the proposed scheme before any action was taken and invited Pennington to address the chambers.

The theme of the chief negotiator's address was that cession of West Florida to Alabama would be mutually advantageous. He pointed out that the geometrical outlines of both states would be improved and that the homogeneity of the peoples of each would be increased. His trump card was the argument that annexation would facilitate the prosperity of West Florida. Once the cession had taken place, he envisioned the coal and iron of central Alabama finding its world outlet through the port of Pensacola which would become one of the worlds greatest cities. Seductively, he held this vision, partially to be achieved by the benefits of the generous Alabama railway endorsement law, before the legislature. "Gentlemen, give us the harbor of Pensacola," he pleaded,

7. Joint resolution, dated December 30, 1868, in *Acts of the Sessions of July, September and November, 1868, of the General Assembly of Alabama*. . . . (Montgomery, Jno. G. Stoker & Co., 1868), 599.

8. Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *loc. cit.*, 111.

“and we will connect it by rail with our capital and our new system of railways in ninety days after the transfer shall have been made; and within two years or less we will penetrate our mineral regions, open up a great internal highway from the Gulf to the Northwest, build up a great commercial city of Pensacola, which will confer alike its benefits on your State, and enrich the people we propose to take from you.”<sup>9</sup>

On January 25 the senate adopted a resolution carrying out Governor Reed’s request, and the house gave its approval the following day. Desiring “to promote the best interests of all the people of our State,” the legislature authorized the governor to appoint a committee of three to confer with the Alabama commissioners. These appointees were empowered to arrange terms of transfer of West Florida and to confer with the proper Alabama authorities to attain that end. They were to report, by bill or otherwise, to the next session of the legislature.

Meanwhile, before the next meeting of the chambers, the governor was ordered to hold a special election on the question in the counties Alabama proposed to annex. In order to insure an intelligent vote, it was decreed that before the referendum was held the commissioners must come to explicit terms on the conditions of transfer and these must be enumerated in the proclamation for the special election. As if it anticipated the result, the legislature added, “the aforesaid election shall not be final or binding, until the Legislature or people of the State of Florida, and the Congress of the United States, shall consent to transfer of said territory.”<sup>10</sup>

The Alabama commissioners were jubilant. Pennington wrote Governor Smith, “Our mission to Florida was far more successful than we anticipated.” He had little doubt as to the outcome of the scheme which he felt could be consummated the following winter. This would be the highlight of the Smith administration and “a crowning glory of the Wisdom of Radical rule.”<sup>11</sup>

Early in May, 1869, the Florida commissioners arrived in Montgomery. The head of the group was the carpetbagger, W. J.

9. Cited in *ibid.*, 112-113; Owen, *op. cit.*, 1392.

10. “Joint Resolution Relative to the Alabama Commissioners,” True copy made February 8, 1869, by Secretary of State Jonathan C. Gibbs, in Governor William H. Smith Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, hereinafter cited as Smith Papers, Montgomery.

11. J. L. Pennington to Governor William H. Smith, February 10, 1869, Smith Papers, Montgomery.

Purman. A native of Pennsylvania, he was a leader of the radical forces in Florida from before the adoption of the constitution of 1868 until the return of Democratic rule.<sup>12</sup>

The other members of the Florida team were C. E. Dike and N. C. Morange. The *Montgomery Advertiser* hastened to point out that both of these men were Democrats. Dike, it was noted, was the editor of one of Florida's leading Democratic newspapers and Morange was "a State Senator, a gentleman of property, influence and intelligence." The *Advertiser*, one of Alabama's most militant Democratic journals, even had a kind word for Purman. "Maj. Purman represents West Florida more particularly, being a citizen of that portion of the State more immediately interested in the negotiations," it reported. "It is true, he is a new settler in Florida, but his record in the Legislature shows that, although a Republican, he has not been controlled by extreme partisan views."<sup>13</sup>

The meetings of the Alabama and Florida representatives were most pleasant and on May 19, 1869, a cession agreement was signed. It provided that Alabama was to receive all the country west of the Apalachicola River, including the lands belonging to the state of Florida in the area. In return, Alabama was to issue to Florida \$1,000,000 in eight per cent bonds payable in thirty years. The railways radiating from Pensacola, one in the direction of Apalachicola and the other in that of Pollard, were to have charters confirmed and were to receive the benefits of the endorsement law of Alabama. For three years no other roads were to receive such benefits. Alabama was to pay Florida the solvent taxes unpaid in the area at the time cession was consummated. She was to permit the counties ceded to retain their state taxes for one year for purposes of local improvement. All West Florida local officials were to exercise their jurisdiction for their full terms, but under Alabama law. The annexed counties

12. In 1872 he was elected as a representative to the U. S. House of Representatives from the first congressional district, a position to which he was re-elected in 1874 when he was chosen as the Jackson County representative in the Florida house. "This was the only time in the history of Florida that one person has been elected to two legislative positions at the same time." William T. Cash, *The Story of Florida* (4 vols., New York, The American Historical Association, 1938), I, 491.
13. The *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 3, 1869, cited in Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *loc. cit.*, 113.

were to form one judicial circuit of Alabama and the judge of the First Florida Judicial Circuit was to preside here until his term expired. Finally, it was provided that the agreement would not go into effect until approved by the two states and assented to by the Congress of the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Foreseeing that objections would be raised to the payment of such a large sum for the territory and to the application of Alabama's liberal endorsement law, the Alabama commissioners hastened to vindicate their action. They pointed out that it was estimated over two million acres of state lands would be acquired in West Florida and that it was supposed that these would be of the average value of \$1.25 per acre. Moreover, it was reliably estimated that in 1867 the area had a white population of 17,813 and a Negro population of 8,858 which paid \$31,245.92 into the state treasury.

The commissioners concentrated their argument on the fact that the acceptance of the contract would bring Alabama the finest of water connections to promote her commerce and industry. Ten thousand square miles of land with a water frontage of 180 miles including the harbors of Pensacola, St. Joseph, St. Andrews and Apalachicola would be obtained. "The harbor of Pensacola," they asserted, "is unquestionably the best on the Gulf of Mexico, as it affords a safe anchorage and an entrance for vessels drawing 24 feet of water; and vessels may load and unload without lighterage at the wharves." Some might hold that railway endorsement was an unwarranted burden. The commissioners would reply "that if Alabama acquires the country, her true interest lies in making it as valuable as possible . . . . The contribution which the annexation of Pensacola and the intermediate country with the aid of railroads now existing and in prospect, will make to the aggrandizement of the mineral region of the state is so obvious, as to require no comment," the commissioners informed the governor.

They did concede that from an immediate pecuniary advantage Florida had obtained the best of the negotiations. "Florida was asked to cede and of course had the vantage ground in the

14. Report of the Alabama Commissioners to Governor Smith, June 3, 1869, Smith Papers, Montgomery hereinafter cited as Commissioners Report, June 3, 1869; *Journal of the Session of 1872-73 of the Senate of Alabama*. . . . (Montgomery, Arthur Bingham, 1873), 101-105, hereinafter cited as *Ala. Sen. Jr., 1872-73*.

negotiations and her able and faithful commissioners very properly availed themselves of it." Yet in the long run the Alabama negotiators felt that their state would profit most from the contract. They were pleased with their handiwork and with their relationship with the "gentlemen of intelligence and integrity" from Florida. They believed a cession agreement had been reached which Florida would accept "if she is willing under any circumstances to cede any part of her territory." Wisely they counseled that if "she should from a sentiment of state pride reject the contract the subject had better be forever dropped, for we do not conceive, that a more favorable opportunity or a fairer or more honorable contract will ever be presented."<sup>15</sup>

In both states the machinery was soon placed in operation to obtain approval of the agreement. On June 25th Governor Reed issued a proclamation setting forth the terms of the cession agreement and calling for a referendum in West Florida on November 2, 1869. The Alabama pro-annexationist forces moved into the area and exerted what pressure they could to insure success. J. L. Pennington directed the movement. In early June he wrote Governor Smith that Purman wished him to come to Tallahassee to "assist him to work on the members of the Legislature from West Florida and secure their co-operation. . . . {I} Shall want at least a thousand dollars for expenses and to use at Tallahassee," Pennington wrote, and he suggested that the governor have Secretary of State Miller send him funds by express.<sup>16</sup>

In reply Governor Smith came to Opelika, Pennington's home town, and urged him to take personal charge of the Florida election campaign. While Smith was with him, Pennington received a telegram from Purman urging him to come at once, and it was decided that he would leave within the week. Reflecting a pessimism which he had not shown before, Pennington wrote, "I have no idea this annexation can be accomplished without the expenditure of a few thousand dollars, to carry it before the people of West Florida and then in the Legislature." He threatened to abandon his efforts if the money were not granted.<sup>17</sup>

Pennington did receive some funds, although certainly not as much as he wished. In early August, he and Secretary Miller

15. Commissioners Report, June 3, 1869, Smith Papers, Montgomery.

16. Pennington to Smith, June 7, 1869, *ibid.*

17. Pennington to D. L. Dalton, June 12, 1869, *ibid.*

requested \$4,000 in one lump sum in order to continue the campaign of persuasion. By the time the Alabama legislature turned its attention to the matter in December, the Florida annexation commission had received and expended \$10,500.<sup>18</sup>

If the returns from the West Florida election were a criterion, the Alabama commission's money was well spent. In a total vote of 1,823, 1,162 votes were cast for annexation and 661 against it.<sup>19</sup>

Despite this result, Governor Reed had come to oppose the project. Addressing the legislature following the special election, he pointed out that the Florida constitution would have to be amended before any cession of territory could be made, and he indicated his disapproval of the entire program. He could not believe that many people of the state "seriously entertained the idea of ceding one-fifth of their territory and population, and the finest harbor on the gulf, for such an insignificant consideration."<sup>20</sup>

The debate was not one sided. Many in Alabama also opposed. The Haynsville *Examiner* daily expected "that the sandbank and gopher region west of the Apalachicola has become part and parcel of the State of Alabama by the payment of some million or so of dollars on the part of the latter." It greatly feared another immense debt would be fastened on the impoverished people of the state. To those who argued that Pensacola was worth many times that sum, it replied that Alabama could trade through that port as well under Florida control as if it were part of Alabama. The Eufaula *News* felt much was to be gained for Alabama by annexation but feared that the Florida negotiators

18. Pennington and Miller to Smith, August 5, 1869, *ibid.*; J. A. Yordy, chairman of special state senate investigating committee, to Smith, December 14, 1869, *ibid.*

19. Certified copies of the official vote canvass, dated December 1, 1869; *ibid.*; Jonathan G. Gibbs to Smith, December 4, 1869, *ibid.* The votes, by counties, were:

Escambia	436	352
Franklin	58	26
Holmes	72	41
Santa Rosa	119	155
Walton	170	65
Washington	190	20
Calhoun	117	2
(There were no returns for Jackson County)		

20. Rerick, *op. cit.*, 319.

were speculators who did not represent the people of their state. The *Montgomery Advertiser* was suspicious of the entire movement.<sup>21</sup>

When the Alabama legislature convened on November 15, 1869, Governor Smith transmitted the agreement of May 19th to them and gave his approval to it, although he stated that he felt "the price to be paid is more than the State, under all circumstances of the case, ought to pay." In January, 1870, joint resolutions were introduced ratifying the agreement and requesting that Alabama's representatives in the United States Congress obtain the assent of the national government. After some dissension in committee, these measures were reported to the chamber floors, but in February the measures were referred back to committee. This was done on the grounds that, since the Florida legislature had adjourned without acting on the cession agreement, no action could be taken until its next session in January, 1871. By postponing their final action, the Alabama lawmakers proclaimed that they were giving the people of the state longer time for reflection on the subject.<sup>22</sup>

It is probable that favorable action would have been taken by the Alabama legislature had the question of the honesty of the Alabama annexation commission not arisen. In December, 1869, a special senate committee began to inquire as to how the sum of \$10,500 had been expended in the negotiations. The committee chairman demanded that the governor furnish him an itemized statement of expenses incurred by the commissioners, "the object being to ascertain in what manner and for what purposes the large amount . . . has been expended."<sup>23</sup>

Pennington replied that the Florida commissioners had been entertained with the funds. This was not a satisfactory answer since two of the visitors had been in Montgomery less than two weeks and the third only a month. The only itemized statement ever presented was that of Judge Walker. This was \$16 for hack bills. No mention, of course, was ever made of attempts to influence the Florida election. With this unfavorable publicity, it

21. Cited in Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *loc cit.*, 115.

22. *Ibid.*, 116-117; Owen, *op. cit.*, 1,935; message of Governor Smith, written June 4, 1869, in *Ala. Sen. Jr.*, 1872-73, 105.

23. J. A. Yordy to Smith, December 14, 1869, Smith Papers, Montgomery.

was with great difficulty that the house passed an annexation resolution in the session of 1870-71, but it was defeated in the senate.<sup>24</sup>

Here the situation rested until 1873 when the ardent annexationist Governor David P. Lewis, Alabama's last Republican chief executive, came into power. In February he sent a special message to the legislature calling attention to the as yet unconfirmed agreement of 1869 and urging affirmative action be taken upon it. He felt that West Florida was designed "by the laws of nature" to be part of Alabama. "The necessities of commerce, the outlets to the great highways of the world's trade and travel, reciprocal wants, necessities and benefits" cried for annexation, he believed. He could see no means by which internal improvements could profitably unite East and West Florida. On the other hand, he felt the acquisition of Pensacola would be a boon to both the West Florida area and Alabama. "Lines of vessels will only come to Pensacola with tropical fruits, sugar, molasses, cigars and coffee, when such articles of commerce can find a ready transit in the interior, and when the vessels transporting them can obtain return cargoes of coal and other products, needed for Gulf traffic." The governor felt that, "This stream of commerce flowing through our community, will bear its wealth-giving deposits along the whole length of our State."<sup>25</sup>

In March, 1873, joint resolutions were introduced in both chambers. These closely followed the agreement of 1869. They provided that one million dollars in coupon bonds of not less than \$1,000 each was to be given to Florida for West Florida and its share of the state debt. The governor was authorized to appoint three commissioners to tender the lawful Florida authorities the Alabama bonds and to do all that was necessary to consummate the cession, provided they limited themselves to offer only one million dollars as the price of cession. The commissioners were allowed up to \$3,000 for their personal expenses. This measure

24. Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (Cleveland, The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911), 577; Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *loc. cit.*, 117-119; Owen, *op. cit.*, 1,935.

25. *Ala. Sen. Jr.*, 1872-73, 100-101.

received the approval of both houses and was signed by the governor on March 27.<sup>26</sup>

Immediately Governor Lewis transmitted the joint resolution to Governor Ossian B. Hart of Florida. "If it shall be your Excellency's pleasure to convene your General Assembly, in Extraordinary Session," Lewis wrote, "I will send Commissioners to your Capital to enter negotiations respecting the same." Since the question was not a new one, he hoped that "public opinion is to a good degree ripe for action."<sup>27</sup>

In an effort to insure success, Governor Lewis entered into correspondence with the intriguer, W. J. Purman. Late in April the Florida congressman, in a letter marked "Very Confidential," gave a political diagnosis of the reaction to the question in his state. He felt that annexation would become an issue between the two political parties and that its merits would be obscured and the wishes of the people of West Florida would not be considered. He was authorized to state that Governor Hart "will truly favor the measure in the premises by first submitting the question of annexation or anti-annexation to a vote of the *whole* people of the State. In no other manner will he be friendly to the movement."

Since the question would ultimately rest with public opinion, Purman reasoned that the annexationists must have the support of the press if they hoped to win. He reported that the *Tri-Weekly Union* of Jacksonville could be "the lever" in the movement and that due to financial embarrassments it would shortly change hands. "By a contribution to *this* paper *now* we would secure it as our chief organ *for* annexation." The Tallahassee *Sentinel* and a dozen minor papers could also be enlisted, he wrote. He demanded to know whether the friends of annexation in Alabama had any contingent fund to carry on the campaign. If they did, he advised them to make use of it at once.<sup>28</sup>

26. *Acts of the Session of 1872-73, of the General Assembly of Alabama*. . . . (Montgomery, Arthur Bingham, 1873), 125; Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *loc. cit.*, 119, and Owen, *op. cit.*, 1,395, do not mention the struggle of Governor Lewis for annexation, and they incorrectly hold that no action was taken by the session of 1872-73.
27. Governor David P. Lewis to Governor Ossian B. Hart, April 11, 1873, in David P. Lewis Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.
28. Purman to Lewis, April 21, 1873, *ibid.*

Governor Lewis reacted favorably to Purman's suggestion. Not only did he appoint L. E. Parsons, J. C. Goodlow, and R. W. Cobb as official commissioners, but he used unofficial representatives armed with cash in an effort to elect annexationist lawmakers to the Florida legislature. In April Governor Lewis conferred with a delegation from Pensacola friendly to annexation. Colonel Blount of this group and some of the leading members of the Alabama general assembly met with the governor and discussed means to influence favorable Florida action. They concluded that Alabama had no authority to pledge anything above the \$1,000,000 in bonds which she had offered Florida. Yet they believed that the expenditure of a small sum, which they defined as \$10,000 or so, "would be no obstacle to a ratification by Alabama of an arrangement of so large a character." The governor wrote Purman, "I would not hesitate to pledge out of the Executive Contingent Fund as much as the public service would permit for the accomplishment of annexation." He would take the responsibility, he stated, of going before the assembly and defending his use of a sum of as much as \$5,000. "And this is independent of what the equities of any representations to the next Session of our General Assembly, may induce that Body to do," he hastened to add. He believed that they would reimburse proper outlays of the Florida friends of annexation. Colonel Blount had mentioned that the anti-annexationists had opposed a special session on the grounds of expense. The Governor was willing to recommend that the Alabama legislature assume "such extraordinary Expense, that might become an obstacle to your success outside of the merits of the Bill itself." No such session was called, however.<sup>29</sup>

As it became apparent that the question would depend upon the outcome of the fall elections in Florida, annexationists in both states began to chart their course. Colonel Blount and his Pensacola delegation obtained friends for the movement in the Jacksonville area, and Purman laid plans for a "flying visit" to Montgomery to confer with Lewis and other Alabama leaders.<sup>30</sup> The governor asked the Alabama commissioners if they felt that it would be wise to use \$1,000 from the contingent fund for publication in Florida journals. J. C. Goodlow replied, "I should

29. Lewis to Purman, April ?, 1873, *ibid.*

30. Purman to Lewis, May 12, 1873, *ibid.*

without hesitation use enough of the contingent fund to inform the people of Florida of our proposition of annexation.”<sup>31</sup>

Colonel R. W. Ruter was dispatched to Florida to exert whatever influence he could. Later he presented the state of Alabama a bill for \$1,575.10, including \$1,010.00 for salary for September 23, 1873 to January 2, 1874.<sup>32</sup> Goodlow conferred with George W. Wentworth in Pensacola and urged him to run as an annexationist candidate for the state senate. The Alabama commissioner assured him that his expenses would be taken care of. As evidence of good faith, he gave him \$600 on Friday and promised to deliver \$500 the following Sunday. Goodlow then suggested that Senator Harralson be brought into the area “to enlighten the colored voters on the subject of Annexation.” Harralson came but went over to the other side for what Wentworth believed to be a monetary consideration. Wentworth concluded the campaign, was defeated, and presented his claims to Alabama for \$1,000. “I am now and always shall be a Republican,” he wrote a friend of Governor Lewis. “I want nothing except what I have actually paid out, that I do want, and must not be blamed for trying to get it. I do not want to give this matter publicity for I know how anxious our political enemies are to get hold of such things as this, and especially in the Southern States.”<sup>33</sup>

When the friends of annexation were defeated, even in Pensacola the Alabama annexationists abandoned their plan. Governor Lewis informed the Alabama legislature in his message of November, 1874, that since no arrangements had been com-

31. Lewis to L. E. Parsons, J. C. Goodlow, and R. W. Cobb, October 20, 1873, *ibid.*; Goodlow to Lewis, November 8, 1873 *ibid.*

32. “Account of Col. R. W. Ruter in connection with Annexation of West Fla.,” *ibid.* In a letter of December 22, 1873, Ruter protested to Governor Lewis that the governor had received an evil and untrue report of his activities.

G. Gillis wrote Ruter (October 10, 1873, Lewis Papers, Montgomery) from Jacksonville that the friends of cession should look to the east and west of Florida, not the central portion of the state, for aid. He felt that the Tallahassee newspapers would labor hard to defeat the plan and that they would be copied by many of the country journals. He suggested good articles be published in the eastern newspapers and that these emphasize that if West Florida were ceded the capital would be moved to Madison, Live Oak, Lake City, Gainesville, Ocala or some place to the south. He also felt political capital would be gained if the people were told public improvements would be speeded up in the east after annexation took place.

33. George E. Wentworth to Colonel J. B. Bingham, January 3, 1874, Lewis Papers, Montgomery. Bingham was the state printer,

pleted for the cession no bonds had been issued under the terms of the act of March, 1873.<sup>34</sup>

The determination of the people of Florida to save their state from dismemberment had apparently triumphed for all time. Yet a new annexationist movement sprang up in 1901. On March 4 of that year the Alabama legislature authorized Governor William D. Jelks to appoint a three-man commission to negotiate for the territory west of "the thread of the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola rivers and west of a line running due south from the thread of the mouth of the Apalachicola river, bending west so as to pass between the islands of St. George and St. Vincent." The governor appointed Samuel Blackwell, Richard C. Jones and William Martin to the posts. All evidence would indicate, however, that the group never formally organized and that it left no reports.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps its members concurred with the commissioners of 1869 who, working under more advantageous conditions, had counseled that if state pride led Florida to object to annexation that the subject should be forever dropped.

34. *Journal of the Session of 1874-75 of the Senate of Alabama*. . . . (Montgomery, W. W. Screws, 1875) 58.

35. Owen, *op. cit.*, II, 1392; Caffey, "The Annexation of West Florida to Alabama," *loc. cit.*, 110.