

1960

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Recommended Citation

Bearss, Edwin C. (1960) "Civil War Operations In and Around Pensacola Part III," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 39 : No. 4 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol39/iss4/3>

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA PART III *

by EDWIN C. BEARSS

Pensacola Is Lost

FIVE DAYS SUBSEQUENT to the great artillery duel of November 22-23 Bragg endeavored to transmit mail to the Confederate prisoners held by the Yankees. Brown refused to receive the letters and even disdained to state his reasons for so doing. He was by no means as courteous and amiable as he had been after the attack on his outside confrere, Colonel Wilson. Later in the day a small yawl attempted to enter the bay from the fleet, a privilege heretofore accorded to the Federals, as until November 22 the Rebels' vessels had been allowed to tie up at the navy yard without interference. Fire was opened, and the crew hurriedly abandoned the vessel and swam for shore.¹

On December 3 Federal troops, under Brigadier General John W. Phelps,² occupied Ship Island, Mississippi. This island, lying twelve miles off the Mississippi coast, would provide an ideal base for units of the Federal fleet charged with the mission of blockading the mouths of the Mississippi River. In addition, a serious threat to Mobile was implied with the Northerners in possession of the islands flanking the Mississippi Sound. Secretary of War Benjamin inquired of Bragg "whether General Withers had taken any measures to defend Mobile against a *coup de main* via Pascagoula?"³ Bragg replied to this inquiry on December 11:

The danger to Mobile which you suggest is provided for. Mounted men are stationed at the points where the en-

* Part I of this study appeared in the October, 1957, number of the *Quarterly* and Part II in the January, 1961, number.

1. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington: 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. VI, 771-72 (cited hereafter as *Official Records*).
2. John W. Phelps was born in Vermont and graduated from the Military Academy in the class of 1836. Upon graduation he was commissioned a brevet 2d lieutenant in the artillery. Phelps rose gradually in rank and on May 17, 1861, was commissioned brigadier general of volunteers.
3. *Ibid.*, 774.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 331

emy might land, with instructions to report any hostile demonstration, and all our infantry out of the forts and light artillery are in readiness for concentration on any point, and the telegraph could secure re-enforcements from here [Pensacola] in ten hours.⁴

In spite of the threat constituted by the Yankee occupation of Ship Island, the Confederate garrison at Pensacola was weakened during the initial week of December by the dispatch of the 7th Alabama, commanded by Colonel Wood, to East Tennessee.⁵ All the while, Bragg continued to be plagued by his old bugaboo - shortage of arms. At this time nearly 3,000 men in the Department of Alabama and West Florida were sans weapons.⁶

Besides the chronic arms shortage another problem now arose to confront the Confederates. The term of enlistment for many of the twelve months' men had nearly expired. Just as marked progress was being made in the re-enlistment of these men, the Confederate Congress, on December 11, passed the "Bounty and Furlough Law." This Act provided a bounty of fifty dollars and a furlough of sixty days with transportation to and from his home to any soldier who would enlist for two or three years or for the duration of the war. By way of further inducement it also promised that all troops re-enlisting should, when their original terms of enlistment expired, have the right to reorganize themselves into companies, battalions, and regiments and elect their officers. The latter feature Major General Emory Upton characterized as, "An act to disorganize and dissolve the Provisional Army." The bounty inducement was made to include all State troops that might enlist for more than two years in the Confederate service and to all volunteers recruited for three years or the duration of the war.⁷

Bragg found that men who had been satisfied with their competent field officers were "now tom and tossed about by the intrigues of designing men, seeking their own advancement or revenge upon others who have made them do their duty."⁸ Discord now reigned where harmony had prevailed, and many of

4. *Ibid.*, 779.

5. *Ibid.*, 777.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Albert B. Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: 1924), 6-7.

8. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 784.

the most capable officers Bragg felt sure would "be sacrificed to this fell spirit."⁹ The commander of the Department of Alabama and West Florida believed that if the "Bounty and Furlough Law" had not been passed he would have been able to secure the re-enlistment of 5,000 of the 6,000 twelve month's men stationed in and around Pensacola. Confronted with the confusion engendered by the law he felt that if 2,000 renewed their services it would be remarkable.¹⁰

The Confederate Government's satisfaction with Bragg's conduct of affairs in the West Florida-Alabama region was expressed in a letter from Secretary of War Benjamin on December 27. In this epistle the North Carolinian was offered the command of the Trans-Mississippi Department. Benjamin's letter stated further:

You have so thoroughly and satisfactorily prepared the defenses at the latter point [Pensacola] that we scarcely believe another attempt will be made on your defenses, and hope that by sending Kirby Smith to take your place, if you should leave, that important point will be successfully defended.¹¹

The news of a federal raid upon Biloxi, Mississippi, on the last day of the year caused Benjamin to rescind this offer to Bragg.¹²

After the Federal bombardment of November 22-23, Bragg

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 788-89. Edmund Kirby Smith was born at St. Augustine, Florida, on May 16, 1824. He was appointed to West Point and graduated in 1845, standing 25th in his class. During the Mexican War he received two brevets for gallantry and meritorious conduct. On March 3, 1861, he resigned from the United States Army, and was commissioned a colonel of cavalry in the Confederate States Army. In June he was promoted to brigadier general and was severely wounded during the Battle of First Manassas on July 21, 1861.

12. *Ibid.*, 794. Flag Officer McKean had been informed that a Rebel steamer was at anchor near Biloxi on December 31. In consequence of this intelligence he dispatched Commander Melancton Smith, with the steamers *Water Witch*, *New London*, and *Henry Lewis*, to endeavor to capture her, but upon reaching Biloxi Smith discovered that the steamer had been removed. The commander demanded the surrender of the town, the command was complied with, and a detachment of seamen and marines was landed, a small sand battery destroyed, and two guns, a 9-pounder and an 6-pounder, brought off.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 333

ordered the construction of new batteries on Oak Island, Deer Point, and at the mouth of the Big Lagoon. By the end of the year these emplacements had been completed and armed with 10-inch columbards. These additional fortifications greatly strengthened the Confederates' position in the Pensacola Bay Area.¹³

During this period the bluecoats on Santa Rosa Island were reinforced by the 75th New York Volunteers, Colonel John A. Dodge commanding.¹⁴ Colonel Brown called Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas' attention to the fact that:

The Sixth [New York] Regiment, I am sorry to say, so far as the officers are concerned, is in a state of disorganization; criminations, recriminations, charges, and counter-charges, between the officers, and especially between the colonel and two or three espousing his side and the other officers of the regiment, became of such daily occurrence, that I had peremptorily to stop it, and to notify all concerned that I would entertain no more complaints. . . .¹⁵

In closing his letter to the War Department, Brown requested to be relieved from his post citing "that I cannot endure another summer in this enervating climate, and that my health and probably my life will be sacrificed by it. I have now spent upwards of fifteen years in Florida, and I require the bracing influences of a Northern climate."¹⁶

The next clash in Pensacola Bay was precipitated by the Confederates. On January 1, about 3 A.M., a small private steamer was imprudently run into the wharf at the navy yard within range of the Federal guns. This was the first instance of a boat of any kind putting in at the navy yard since the bombardment of November 22-23. Hence Brown viewed it as sheer bravado or an

13. *Ibid.*, 674.

14. *Ibid.*, 673, 782. Brown's return for his command for the month of December was as follows:

| <i>Stations</i> | <i>Troops</i> | <i>Present for Duty Aggregate</i> | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | <i>Officers</i> | <i>Men</i> | <i>Present</i> |
| Santa Rosa Island: | | | | |
| Fort Pickens | Detachments 1st and 2d | | | |
| Camp Lincoln | Artillery and 3d Infantry | 19 | 568 | 704 |
| | 6th New York Infantry | 13 | 228 | 474 |
| Camp Seward | 75th New York Infantry | 32 | 711 | 829 |
| | | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | <u> </u> |
| | Total | 64 | 1,497 | 2,007 |

15. *Ibid.*, 673-74.

16. *Ibid.*, 674.

attempt by the Rebels to draw his fire. The Federal commander ordered his heavy guns to open fire upon the steamer. After three shots had landed nearby, the vessel pulled hurriedly away from the dock. One of the Southern siege guns briefly returned the Yankees' fire - then all was quiet.¹⁷

On the mainland General Anderson was in command of the Confederate forces in the absence of General Bragg, who was inspecting the defenses of Mobile Bay.¹⁸ Anderson, while under the influence of intoxicating beverages, forgot about the demonstrated superiority of the Federal heavy ordnance, and directed the Rebel batteries to be prepared to open fire.¹⁹ Three-quarters of an hour after the initial firing had ceased, the Confederate heavy ordnance roared into action.

The Yankees vigorously returned this fire, using only their heaviest guns. Their rate of fire was much slower than in the previous month's bombardment, but more accurate. Convinced by their former experience of the difficulty of destroying or burning the forts or the buildings in the navy yard, at the extreme range, with explosive projectiles, the Federals this time used rock-fire and carcasses. By 9 P.M. a large fire was kindled in the navy yard. Within an hour the whole firmanent was illuminated as a large and valuable warehouse, with considerable public property, was consumed in the conflagration. From this hour on, except for a harrassing fire maintained by the Union mortars, the big guns stood mute. By 2. A.M. the Federal mortars, too, ceased firing and at 4 A.M., with the return of an irate General Bragg, the Confederate cannoneers in turn ceased their labors.²⁰

In assaying the results of the second bombardment one is convinced that in this exchange, like that of November 22-23, the Confederates came off decidedly second best. Undoubtedly the chief factor contributing to this continued inferiority was the fact that the majority of the Federal artillerists were regulars who had served a long apprenticeship. A secondary reason was the continued shortage of powder and shot that served to embarrass the Confederates and greatly limit the amount of target practice their gunners could have. Colonel Brown noted that the

17. *Ibid.*, 495-96.

18. *Ibid.*, 497.

19. *Ibid.*, 498.

20. *Ibid.*, 495-98.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 335

Rebels' fire on January 1 was not as accurate as in the exchange of the previous month and that very few shot or shell struck the walls or entered Fort Pickens.²¹ The Federals reported their losses as two men slightly injured.²² While the Confederates did not suffer any men killed or wounded, considerable material damage was caused by the fire in the navy yard.²³ Probably of greater importance, the Confederates had expended a large supply of ammunition that was almost impossible to replace. A final upshot of the affair was General Dick Anderson's relief from duty. Bragg informed Adjutant General Cooper: "I . . . urge on the Department my request for a second in command here who could be intrusted with this army in my necessary absence."²⁴

In the course of his tour of inspection of the defenses of Mobile Bragg noted that the infantry brigade, commanded by the former Confederate Secretary of War, Brigadier General L. P. Walker, was in deplorable condition. The commander had established his headquarters in Mobile with a large and useless staff maintained at a great expense, while his troops suffered in crowded tents and huts. Walker had even neglected to provide any hospital facilities for those of his command struck down by illness. Bragg found no evidence of organization or training schedule. A state of anarchy seemed to prevail with each regimental commander exercising authority independent of the others.

The necessary consequences of such a state of affairs were disease, demoralization, and a high mortality rate. Each day approximately one-third of Walker's command reported for sick call.²⁵

Walker was ordered to report to his command but, protesting sundry pretexts, he was still absent from his brigade on January 1. Bragg, expressing the disdain of the West Pointer for the political general, informed the Secretary of War: "Except as a matter of principle, I attach no importance to the absence of the general [Walker], as his want of knowledge and experience, and it appears to me an inaptitude for military command, render it

21. *Ibid.*, 496.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, 497-98.

24. *Ibid.*, 498.

25. *Ibid.*, 793. Walker had resigned as Secretary of War on September 16, 1861, and accepted a commission as brigadier general.

impossible for him to supply the wants in that brigade. I consequently look for little improvement without a change.”²⁶

Despite Bragg’s foreboding the results of the “Bounty and Furlough Law” were not as dire as he had predicted. Its evil consequences had been mediated by the cooperation of J. Gil Shorter, the recently elected governor of Alabama, and the people on the home front who, as a general rule, had prompted their relatives and neighbors to remain in the armed services. Many of the troops who had gone on leave were back with their units before the expiration of their furloughs. Bragg, to encourage the re-enlistment of the twelve months’ men, visited the cantonments of the sundry units in his department and personally exhorted them.²⁷ In spite of the apparent success of the re-enlistment campaign Bragg, who continued to fret, and with good cause, over what effect the re-organization would have on the units and whether or not the men would choose competent field officers, admonished Benjamin: “The great question now is to keep up their organization [the units], for one of our well organized and instructed regiments, under good officers, is worth any two which could be made up of a heterogenous mass fresh from the country, and they require but half the number of arms.”²⁸

With the arrival of an artillerist in the person of General Samuel Jones, Dick Anderson’s replacement from Virginia, Bragg re-organized his Department. He divided the 16,068 troops under his command into two armies: The Army of Mobile and the Army of Pensacola. General Withers retained command of the former forces and General Jones assumed charge of the latter. General Walker, an encumbrance of whose conduct Bragg had repeatedly complained, was transferred to Montgomery to command the Camp of Instruction. Bragg noted, “I have no idea he will be of any service; but he can do less harm there.” Gladden was ordered to Mobile to take over Walker’s dispirited brigade, and Brigadier General J. K. Jackson replaced Gladden at Pensacola.²⁹ It was with regret that Bragg relinquished the immediate command of the Army of Pensacola; however, he would now be

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, 806.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*, 815, 816, 820. Samuel Jones was born in Virginia in 1820 and graduated from West Point in 1841. He served on the Maine frontier during the boundary dispute prior to the Webster-Ashbur-

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 337

able to devote more time to preparing the units of his command for combat.

News of the Confederate disasters at Mill Springs, Kentucky,

ton Treaty; in Florida, 1845-46; and from 1846 to 1851 was on duty at the Military Academy as assistant professor of mathematics and instructor of infantry and of artillery. Jones resigned from the U. S. Army on April 28, 1861, and was commissioned major in the Confederate artillery. At the 1st Battle of Manassas Jones served as Beauregard's chief of artillery and ordnance. He was advanced to colonel for this service and he was promoted brigadier general to date from July 21, the day of victory. Abstract from field returns of the Department of Alabama and West Florida, February 1, 1862:

| <i>Troops</i> | <i>Present For Duty Officers</i> | <i>Present Men</i> | <i>Aggregate Present</i> | <i>Aggregate Present and Absent</i> |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Army of Pensacola, Brig. Gen. Sam Jones, Commanding | 377 | 5,254 | 6,790 | 8,150 |
| Army of Mobile, Brig. Gen. J. M. Withers, Commanding | <u>440</u> | <u>6,777</u> | <u>9,278</u> | <u>10,056</u> |
| Grand total | 817 | 12,031 | 16,068 | 18,206 |

The organization of the troops in Bragg's department was as follows:

Army of Pensacola:

- 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 17th Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 1st Florida Infantry Regiment
- 5th Georgia Infantry Regiment
- 36th Georgia Infantry Regiment
- 1st Louisiana Infantry Regiment
- 5th Mississippi Infantry Regiment
- 8th Mississippi Infantry Regiment
- 9th Mississippi Infantry Regiment
- 10th Mississippi Infantry Regiment
- 27th Mississippi Infantry Regiment
- 2 companies Independent Alabama Mounted
- Independent Florida Mounted Company
- Company Alabama State Artillery
- Robertson's Alabama Light Artillery Company
- Detachment C. S. Marines

Army of Mobile:

- 2d Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 18th Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 19th Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 20th Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 21st Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 22d Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 23d Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 24th Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 25th Alabama Infantry Regiment
- 2d Alabama Infantry Battalion
- Alabama Infantry Company
- 1st Mississippi Infantry Battalion
- 6 companies Alabama Mounted Volunteers
- 1st Battalion Alabama Artillery
- 2d Battalion Alabama Light Artillery

on January 19 and Fort Henry, Tennessee, on February 6 had serious repercussions in all parts of the Confederacy. On February 8 Bragg received a letter from Benjamin which read in part:

The President desires that you will as soon as possible send to Knoxville all the troops you can spare from your command without immediate danger, and he hopes that the number will be at least four regiments. The condition of affairs in Kentucky and Tennessee demands from us the most vigorous effort for defense, and General A. S. Johnston is so heavily outnumbered, that it is scarcely possible for him to maintain his whole line without large additional re-enforcements.³⁰

Bragg divined Flag-officer Foote's intent to push his gunboats up the Tennessee River and sever the railroad line linking Memphis and Chattanooga, and rushed a regiment northward to Decatur, Alabama, to guard the vital Memphis and Charleston Railroad bridge across the Tennessee River. In accordance with the President's instructions the 5th Georgia, 9th Mississippi, 20th and 23rd Alabama Regiments entrained for Knoxville.³¹ Bragg correctly foresaw that the dispersed condition of the Confederate defenses was an invitation to disaster. Orders were immediately drafted charging General Jones with the task of withdrawing his forces, save for an outpost, from Deer Point. The gunboat Bradford was ordered to stand by that position every evening to bring off the picket in case of attack.³²

Confederates' hopes in Bragg's department were chilled further on February 16 when rumors of the fall of Fort Donelson were received. The fall of the bastion guarding the Cumberland River was confirmed in a telegram from Benjamin to Bragg two days later. Bragg was informed, "the President desires that you proceed as promptly as possible to withdraw your forces from Pensacola and Mobile and hasten to the defense of the Tennessee line. In doing this, of course the first care will be to save, as far as possible, all our artillery and munitions of war."³³

It was proposed by the Confederate War Department to withdraw all Southern forces from Pensacola - as a weak garr-

30. *Ibid.*, 823.

31. *Ibid.*, 894.

32. *Ibid.*, 824-25.

33. *Ibid.*, 828.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 339

son would inevitably invite capture - but it was deemed advisable to leave an effective garrison in the forts guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay. The continued occupation of the forts guarding the entrance to Mobile Bay, it was believed, would defer for an extended period a movement against Mobile.³⁴

Bragg was ordered to entrain all the Confederate forces in Mobile as well as those in Pensacola and dispatch them northward on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad to the Tennessee border. At Corinth, where the Mobile and Ohio Railroad intersected the Memphis and Charleston Railway, the Rebels were to detrain and await further orders. Heavy rains had washed out a number of bridges on the Mobile and Ohio, and troop movements were temporarily forestalled; however, by February 27 repairs had been effected and the transfer of the 1st Louisiana, and 18th and 22d Alabama Regiments to the endangered area commenced.³⁵

General Jones, at Pensacola, received the following directive from Bragg:

You will make all dispositions at the earliest moment, working day and night, to abandon Pensacola. Send to this place [Mobile] all the heavy shell guns, rifle guns, and carriages, etc., complete, with the ammunition for them; all other supplies to Montgomery. . . .

This movement should be made with all the secrecy possible; removing your guns at night, and masking the positions, taking the most advanced first. Keep sufficient troops in position to deceive the enemy until all is ready.

I desire you particularly to leave nothing the enemy can use; burn all from Fort McRee to the junction with the Mobile road. Save the guns, and if necessary destroy your gunboats and all other boats. They might be used against us. Destroy all machinery, etc., public and private, which could be useful to the enemy; especially disable the sawmills in and around the bay and burn the lumber. Break up the railroad from Pensacola to the Junction, carrying the iron up to a safe point.³⁶

On February 28 General Bragg, at the urgent request of General P. G. T. Beauregard, decided to proceed immediately to Corinth.³⁷ As General Withers had previously been relieved of

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 834-35.

36. *Ibid.*, 835.

37. *Ibid.*, 834. In February 1862 Beauregard had been ordered to the Mississippi Valley as second in command to Albert S. Johnston.

command at Mobile, on February 4, and sent to Fort Pillow, Tennessee, Bragg decided that the senior officer in the department, General Jones, should assume command in his stead.³⁸

In the year that Bragg had commanded the Confederate troops in and around Pensacola he had performed a creditable job. He had shown himself to be an excellent organizer and disciplinarian. On assuming command he had brought order out of chaos. Undoubtedly his men were the best drilled of any Confederate force in the spring of 1862. The historian in weighing the course of future events wonders what the results would have been if Bragg's talents had been applied to the training and organization of the Confederate armies instead of his being assigned to a field command. One of Bragg's characteristics that was to bode ill for the future had already asserted itself. This was the North Carolinian's inability to get along with his subordinates. While Walker was undoubtedly incompetent, Dick Anderson, when handled correctly, was to prove himself to be one of Robert E. Lee's more valuable aides.

Six days prior to the assumption of departmental command by General Jones, Colonel Brown in accord with his previous request was relieved of command of the Department of Florida by Brigadier General Lewis G. Arnold.³⁹ Intelligence of the consternation among the Rebels on the mainland was related to the new Federal commander by two whites and two Negroes who crossed over to Santa Rosa Island from Milton by way of East Bay. However, the removal of troops and heavy ordnance from the Southern strongholds was ably camouflaged by General Jones so that the Federals discounted these individuals' story of a Confederate evacuation of the Pensacola area. Arnold complained to the War Department:

As my position is a defensive one, on an island, I am perfectly helpless for any offensive movement requiring water transportation for 50 men without naval cooperation. I have not under my command a dispatch steamer or sail vessel, and have scarcely enough surf-boats to land stores for the command.⁴⁰

38. *Ibid.*, 836.

39. *Ibid.*, 436. Lewis G. Arnold had been promoted to brigadier general of volunteers on January 24, 1862.

40. *Ibid.*, 705.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 341

The sailing sloop-of-war *Vincennes*, of the Head of Passes debacle, was the only ship-of-war lying off Santa Rosa Island, but was worse than useless for operations within the bay.

In the second week of January, Secretary Welles had made a change in naval organization when he divided the Gulf Blockading Squadrons into two commands, the Eastern and Western Gulf Blockading Squadrons. The important Western Gulf Blockading squadron, with its task of opening the Mississippi from its mouth, was entrusted to Captain David G. Farragut, a native of East Tennessee, while McKean would assume responsibility for the Eastern Gulf Blockading Squadron. February 2 found the new commander aboard his flag-ship *Hartford* voyaging forth from Hampton Roads, Virginia. After eighteen days at sea the *Hartford* arrived off Ship Island. Here Farragut met Flag-Officer McKean, the necessary transfers were made, and the next day the Tennessean formally assumed command of his new station.⁴¹

Arnold, desiring to take advantage of the discomfiture of the Confederates, took up his pen and composed a letter to the new Federal naval commander on March 15. In his epistle he called attention to his inability to conduct offensive operations without naval cooperation. Arnold proposed that with the aid of several gunboats a landing could be effected at Town Point. Arnold correctly viewed Town Point as the key to Pensacola Bay. Elaborating this point he wrote:

The rebels have, and will have, entire control of the bay and inner harbor as long as they hold this point [Town Point] and their line of forts and batteries; but if we can take this point, your gunboats can pass out of range of their heaviest guns - from Four Mile Point, on Santa Rosa Island, to Milton, on the main-land, which would enable you to capture or destroy all the rebel steamers and sail vessels in those waters, and more perfectly blockade the harbor of Pensacola.⁴²

Farragut, due to his preoccupation with the pending assault on Forts Jackson and St. Philip, answered in the negative Arnold's request for the aid of several gunboats.⁴³

41. Alfred T. Mahan, *The Gulf and Inland Waters* (New York: 1883), 52.

42. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 711.

43. *Ibid.*, 712.

The evacuation of Pensacola continued to be hampered by the damage caused to the railroads by the recent floods. It was March 4 before the first train passed over the Mobile and Pensacola Railroad, and the tracks of the Alabama and Florida Railroad were in such bad shape that trains were not permitted to run after dark. The president and superintendent of the Alabama and Florida came to Pensacola for a conference with General Jones in an attempt to resolve the problem. To expedite matters it was determined to post the superintendent at Pollard, Alabama, to supervise the movements on all roads meeting at that strategic junction. It was provided that two special trains would proceed daily from Pensacola to Pollard and there such supplies as could not be removed to Mobile or Montgomery would be stored.⁴⁴

With the transportation problem somewhat mitigated the 1st Alabama entrained on the night of March 5 for Memphis. At this time General Jones requested and received permission to retrain the 27th Mississippi Regiment at Pensacola a few days beyond the time fixed by Bragg for the evacuation of the port. The reasons cited by Jones for this request were:

I am convinced that the enemy on Santa Rosa Island is not prepared to attack this place at present. I have never believed the force as large as reported. . . .

I believe if we keep up even the appearance of being prepared to defend the place the enemy will not attack it. The governor of Alabama informs me that by the end of this week he can send me 1,000 men engaged to serve for thirty days, and by the middle of next week more. . . . Under these circumstances I believe that Colonel Jones [the commander of the 27th Mississippi], with his regiment and the men who can be collected here before I can possibly send off all the troops you have called for, can keep up such an appearance of preparation to defend the place as to deter the enemy from attacking.⁴⁵

To help relieve the strain upon the overworked railroads General Jones ordered that the steamer *Time* should be loaded with naval stores. In this way when it should become necessary to evacuate Pensacola, *Time's* captain could take his vessel up the

44. *Ibid.*, 838.

45. *Ibid.*, 840.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 343

Escambia River as far as possible. From there the naval stores could be moved to the nearby Alabama and Florida Railroad for transportation elsewhere. In addition the navy had under construction two gunboats near Milton, which were nearly ready for service. If they could not be taken up the Escambia, measures would have to be taken to provide for their destruction.⁴⁶

As a partial implementation of Bragg's scorched earth policy Lieutenant-Colonel W. K. Beard with two companies of the 1st Florida Regiment embarked on the steamer *Tom Murray* at Deer Point at 8 P.M. on the evening of March 10, arriving at Miller's Mills, in East Bay, at 11 P.M. Not wishing to injure persons unaware of the object of the mission the firing of the sawmills and other property was deferred until morning.

Completing their demolitions at Miller's Mills the Confederates again boarded the *Tom Murray* and proceeded up the Blackwater River. Occasionally the troops landed to set fire to the sawmills and stacks of lumber piled near the river's course. The mission of destruction was continued until the head of navigation was reached at the plantation owned by Jackson Morton. From there the task force returned to Milton and burned the two gunboats, as it was found to be impracticable to tow them up the Escambia River, the boats being unable to cross the bar at its mouth. From Milton the expedition proceeded up the Escambia, burning the public property encountered enroute.⁴⁷ A large quantity of ship timber which could not be burned was cut adrift. By 10 A.M. on March 15, the men of the 1st Florida had reached Bluff Springs, near the Alabama line, and Colonel Beard was able to report-mission accomplished.⁴⁸

Two days prior to the arrival of Colonel Beard's men at Bluff Springs, General Jones had transferred his headquarters to Mobile. Colonel Thomas H. Jones, of the 27th Mississippi, assumed charge of the Confederate forces involved in carrying out the evacuation of Pensacola.⁴⁹ The passive attitude displayed by the Federal troops stationed on Santa Rosa Island caused the Con-

46. *Ibid.*, 848.

47. *Ibid.*, 893. Of the two gunboats destroyed the one being built by F. G. Howard was yet on its stocks, and the one being built by Ollinger and Bruce had been in the water about ten days.

48. *Ibid.*, 859-60.

49. *Ibid.*, 856.

federates' hopes of eventually retaining possession of Pensacola to soar. General Jones informed Bragg:

Colonel Jones wrote me on the 16th instant that all was going on well; that the new troops, though unarmed, were full of energy and zeal, and he adds, "With the army I now have, had I arms, I could defy the attempt of the enemy to dislodge me." . . . Since he wrote, the governor of Alabama has sent him 300 arms, and I have strong hope of being able to send him a sufficient number to arm nearly all the new troops. I am more and more convinced that the enemy's force in the Gulf, and especially on Santa Rosa, has been greatly overestimated. When I left Pensacola only 96 tents could be seen on the island. The season for operations on a large scale on the Gulf is fast passing away, and if we can hold our ground a month or two longer all may yet be well on the Gulf Coast.⁵⁰

Jones' initiative in endeavoring to hold Pensacola earned for him Bragg's approbation. In a letter dated March 28 Bragg in succinct terms divined the course of events in the Mississippi Valley:

Our defenses on the Mississippi are very imperfect, and require all the guns we can command. Will you please hurry forward those behind. There were in all at least twenty heavy shell guns, besides 8-inch howitzers and rifle guns. Half were ordered via Memphis and the other half to New Orleans. But seven have yet reached Memphis. Please urge them forward. . . .

. . . you will change the destination of those to New Orleans, . . . and send them to Jackson, Miss., to be used on the river near Vicksburg.

It is perfectly useless to send guns to New Orleans. If we lose the river, New Orleans must fall; . . . no defense can save it; . . . the railroads would be cut immediately, and starvation would do its work.⁵¹

In response to Bragg's admonitions Colonel T. M. Jones immediately forwarded ten 10-inch and seven 8-inch columbiads, nine sea-coast howitzers, four rifled guns, and two 8-inch siege howitzers to Jackson, Mississippi.⁵²

50. *Ibid.*, 862.

51. *Ibid.*, 867.

52. *Ibid.*, 869.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 345

In the final week of March, General Arnold decided to send Captain Henry W. Closson, 1st U. S. Artillery, with two companies of troops and a 10-pounder Parrott rifle, to make a reconnaissance in force eastward along Santa Rosa Island toward East Pass. The Federal commander had learned that two hundred armed Rebels, under Captain McPherson, were encamped on the mainland opposite Santa Rosa Island some forty miles east of Fort Pickens.⁵³ From their cantonment situated on the narrowest point on Santa Rosa Sound the Confederates were harrassing the blockading schooners.

Closson's combat patrol left Fort Pickens on March 27 and after a difficult march of twelve miles bivouacked for the night.⁵⁴ Due to the difficult nature of the terrain it took two and one half days to cover the additional twenty-four miles. At noon on March 31 Closson's command bivouacked four miles from the Rebel encampment. Upon setting up camp the Federal captain opened communications with the blockading schooner *Maria A. Wood*. Closson requested that three surfboats be made available for a night attack upon the Southerners.⁵⁵

At dusk, leaving animals, disabled men, and surplus gear at the camp, Closson moved forward, accompanied by a force of one hundred and seventy men. After moving forward about two miles a signal fire was kindled, and at 1 P.M. two of the surfboats approached the beach fronting on the Gulf and landed. It was almost 1 A.M. before the third boat arrived. By this time all chances of surprising the Rebel cantonment were precluded for the Federals' approach had been discovered by two Confederate pickets posted on the island. Closson ordered the surfboats to return to the *Maria A. Wood*, and the men of Company K, 6th New York, to return to the Federal cantonment. The intrepid Federal commander then pressed forward with the remainder of his task force, and crossed the island. On the north beach, opposite the Rebel camp, and about 250 yards from it, the 10-pounder Parrott rifle was emplaced. Quiet was then observed until the huts in the Rebel encampment were revealed to the anxious Federal gunners by the first streaks of dawn. Closson

53. *Ibid.*, 500.

54. Closson's patrol consisted of men from Company I, 1st Artillery, and Companies K and D, 6th New York Volunteers.

55. The *Maria A. Wood* was a sailing schooner of 344 tons and its armament consisted of two 32-pounders.

gave the word to open fire, and several well directed shells burst in the midst of the camp. Loud yells and violent curses were clearly audible, and soon numerous Rebels could be discerned fleeing through the underbrush in sundry states of undress.⁵⁶

After shelling the area thoroughly the Yankees returned to their bivouac. With their supplies of rations and forage nearly exhausted and the mules broken down by the strain of pulling wagons through forty miles of heavy sand, it was readily apparent to Closson that an early return to Fort Pickens was advisable. To ease the return journey Closson transferred six sick men and all the spare gear to the *Maria A. Wood* for transport to Fort Pickens. The balance of the command then resumed the return march to their base at Fort Pickens. Late in the afternoon while trudging along the beach a scout reported a Confederate schooner making its way up the sound. The rifled gun was unlimbered and opened fire. Despite the extreme range several hits were scored on the Rebel schooner but with undetermined results.⁵⁷

Twenty-four hours later the Federal combat patrol returned to Fort Pickens. Closson's reconnaissance in force, besides breaking up Captain McPherson's cantonment, disclosed that the terrain of Santa Rosa Island was such as to preclude the large scale movement of troops. Among the Confederates the sortie stimulated fears that the Yankees were contemplating some sort of mischief.

In consequence four days later Governor Shorter of Alabama took up his pen and composed an epistle to George W. Randolph, who on March 24 has succeeded Benjamin as Davis' Secretary of War. In this letter Shorter argued:

Pensacola is, next to Norfolk, the most important point on our entire seaboard to hold at this time . . . to the Yankee Government its importance, in view of their manifest designs, is incalculable. They want a spacious and safe harbor far South for their vast naval armament. Here they have it. It is the only one in the Gulf to which their large ships can find access. When they get it, there is the spacious bay to ride in, the navy-yard to repair at, the fine hospital, and other appointments, which cost the Old Government millions of dollars. . . .

This great and important point can be securely held with

56. *Ibid.*, 500-01.

57. *Ibid.*, 501.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 347

5,000 men, properly armed and trained, against any force the Yankee Government can detach for its capture. . . .

But we are now ill provided, and if provisions be not made, and that soon, our comparatively naked condition will be known to the invaders, and they will make a stroke at us and take us I fear, almost without show of resistance.

Let me state to you plainly what is needed to put the place in condition of defense:

1st. We want a good brigadier-general - some man who will inspire confidence and effect speedy organization. The gallant and worthy colonel [T. M. Jones] who now commands the post himself feels this want.

2nd. We want small-arms for nearly half the troops; now have about 3,200, and we need permanently at the post 5,000 small arms.

3rd. We want now one or two artillery companies and several companies of calvary. . . .

P.S. - If the Secretary will furnish arms, I will furnish 5,000 more troops for the post without delay, with the troops already there included.⁵⁸

Seven days later Randolph replied to Shorter's communication, assuring the Alabama chief executive that the Confederate government: "fully appreciates the importance of Pensacola, and has been making every possible effort to arm troops for its defense."⁵⁹ However, due to the acute shortages of war material then existing in the South the Confederate government was unable to furnish the arms and accoutrements requested by Shorter.

While telegraph wires hummed with messages regarding the impending evacuation of Pensacola, grim news was received from West Tennessee. At Shiloh on April 7 the Confederate legions had been repulsed in what up to then was the bloodiest battle in which American arms had participated. In this two-day holocaust many of the units until recently stationed in the Department of Alabama and West Florida played a valiant role. The long months of rigorous training under General Bragg enabled his corps to acquit itself honorably.

58. *Ibid.*, 870-71. George W. Randolph was Thomas Jefferson's grandson. At the time of the John Brown raid he organized a company of artillery, which was subsequently maintained and operated against the Federals at Big Bethel. Randolph was commissioned brigadier general and given a command, which he held until appointed secretary of war on March 24, 1862.

59. *Ibid.*, 873.

Four days after the battle of Shiloh, General Sam Jones received a telegram from General Robert E. Lee ordering him to turn over the command of the Department of Alabama and West Florida to Brigadier General John Forney and report to General Beauregard at Corinth. Forney arrived but, suffering from the effects of the gunshot wound received at Dranesville, Virginia, in the autumn of 1861, could not immediately take charge. Jones informed General Lee of Forney's condition, and was told he could not leave Mobile until Forney was fit for active duty.⁶⁰

Meanwhile a Federal fleet under the command of Farragut had entered the Mississippi and was attacking the twin Confederate bastions, Forts St. Philip and Jackson, some seventy miles below the Crescent City. In consequence of this action Major General Mansfield Lovell, the Confederate commander at New Orleans, requested that additional pieces of heavy ordnance be forwarded from Jones' department for the defense of New Orleans.⁶¹ In accord with Lovell's request and to deceive the Yankees, the large columbiads were removed from their positions in the dead of the night and fierce looking Quaker guns mounted in their stead.⁶² Two days later, on April 24, Lovell informed Jones by telegraph: "The enemy has passed our forts. It is too late to send any guns here; they had better go to Vicksburg."⁶³

Colonel T. M. Jones, on receiving intelligence that Farragut's fleet had succeeded in passing the forts below New Orleans, came to the conclusion that with his limited means of defense reduced as it was by the withdrawal of nearly all his heavy guns and ammunition, he could not hold the Federals at bay any longer. He determined on his own initiative to begin the evacuation of the balance of the heavy guns and war materiel.⁶⁴ Three days later Colonel Jones received written instructions from General Lee: "I would state that it is deemed expedient to remove at once all Government property, including guns, munitions of war, etc., not necessary for present service. . . ."⁶⁵ On receipt of Lee's instructions on the subject, round the clock fatigue details

60. *Ibid.*, 881.

61. *Ibid.*, 882.

62. *Ibid.*, 661.

63. *Ibid.*, 883.

64. *Ibid.*, 660.

65. *Ibid.*, 884.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 349

were instituted to insure the removal of the heavy guns and public property. All the powder and most of the large shot and shell were removed; the small sized shot were buried. Most of the valuable machinery, besides large quantities of copper, lead, brass, and iron, even the gutters, lightning rods, window weights, bells, pipes, and everything made of those valuable metals were removed.⁶⁶

On the afternoon of May 7 the Confederates at Pensacola were informed that Commander D. D. Porter, with a number of mortar schooners and gunboats, was off Fort Morgan.⁶⁷ Some of Porter's junior officers suspected that the Confederates were evacuating their stronghold guarding the eastern approach to Mobile Bay. To test this thesis the steamer *Clifton* ran in under the guns of Fort Morgan. Ten shots were fired at the impudent Federal vessel before Lieutenant-Commander Charles H. Baldwin could extricate his ship from its embarrassing situation. Porter, convinced that the Rebels were not evacuating the forts, and deciding that the sea was becoming quite rough, ordered all his vessels save the flagship *Harriet Lane* to return to Ship Island.⁶⁸

News of Porter's activities at Fort Morgan served as a stimulus to the hard working Southerners at Pensacola. The next day the 8th Mississippi Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel James T. Gates commanding, was rushed to Mobile. Colonel Jones now issued eleventh hour instructions concerning the impending evacuation to his subordinates. During the night all the sick and the personal baggage were removed. To deceive the Yankees, sentries were posted as usual on the beach. Under cover of darkness the Confederates marched out of their cantonments, taking the road to Oakfield. One hour after the departure of the main column the sentinels were withdrawn and followed in its wake.⁶⁹

Previously Colonel Jones had assigned five companies of cavalymen to carry out a scorched earth policy. The grim troopers now moved to their assigned stations. At 11:30 P.M. upon a pre-arranged signal two blue lights were displayed by

66. *Ibid.*, 661.

67. *Ibid.*, 660.

68. Richard S. West, *The Second Admiral* (New York: 1937), 147; *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, 1894-1927), Ser. I, Vol. XVIII, 478-79 (cited hereafter as *Official Records - Navies*).

69. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 660.

Colonel John R. F. Tatnall and Colonel Jones from the cupola of the Marine Hospital and promptly answered by similar signals from the navy yard and Forts Barrancas and McRee. The troopers then commenced their work of destruction.⁷⁰ Scarcely had the signals been extinguished ere the public buildings, tents, and everything of combustible material from the navy yard to Fort McRee were enveloped in sheets of flames. Residents of Pensacola, seven miles away, aided by the light from the conflagration could easily read a newspaper. Jones' orders were to destroy everything that could be of use to the foe - explosive shells, wood, and other combustibles were mixed into the large stacks of coal stored in the navy yard before they were fired. This was to discourage any attempts to extinguish the blaze on the part of the Yankees.⁷¹

Having received orders not to destroy any private property the Confederates' scorched earth policy in reference to Pensacola was quite limited. Only a large turpentine factory containing a large quantity of resin, the quartermaster's storehouse, some small boats, and three small steamers used as picket boats were fired. In addition the torch was applied to two privately owned steamers, the *Mary* and the *Helen*. The steamboat *Turel*, of light draught, was loaded with valuable stores and machinery and proceeded up the Escambia River to a point beyond the Federals' reach. The casemates and galleries of Fort McRee and the store rooms of Fort Barrancas which had been previously filled with old lumber and shell were ignited.⁷²

Having completed their work of destruction, the Confederates in the early morning hours of May 10 withdrew from the area. The demolition teams rejoined their comrades at Oakfield, six miles north of Pensacola. Five companies of cavalry, under the command of Captain F. J. Myers, covered the Confederate retreat up the Alabama and Florida Railroad toward Pollard, Alabama.⁷³

Across the bay a few minutes before midnight General Arnold was aroused by the officer of the day who informed him "that Fort McRee, the navy-yard, Marine Hospital and Barracks,

70. *Ibid.*, 660-61.

71. *Ibid.*, 661.

72. *Ibid.*, 662.

73. *Ibid.*

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 351

and several other buildings, and two Rebel steamboats were on fire.”⁷⁴ Since the fires had all broken out simultaneously Arnold correctly assumed that the origin was arson. In the vain hope of curbing the incendiarism ashore and putting the Rebels to flight, the Federal gunners opened fire. Arnold summoned his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Richard H. Jackson, who upon reporting was directed to board the schooner *Maria A. Wood* and proceed to Pensacola to demand the formal surrender of the city of its civil authorities. By 5:30 A.M. the *Maria A. Wood* had arrived off the city and a boat bearing Lieutenant Jackson was sent ashore under a flag of truce. Acting Mayor John Brosenham delivered the city into Federal hands, and the *Maria A. Wood* stood back to Fort Pickens.⁷⁵

Meanwhile fifty miles to the west at 2 A.M. on May 10 the *Harriet Lane's* lookout reported a brilliant light illuminating the sky in the direction of Pensacola. Porter ordered the *Harriet Lane* eastward at forced draught. The *Harriet Lane* steamed into Pensacola Bay on the course Porter had plotted the previous year for the *Powhatan*. Without communicating with the fort, Porter proceeded up the bay to Pensacola. Enroute up the bay the *Harriet Lane* encountered the *Maria A. Wood* returning to Santa Rosa Island. A shot was fired across the *Maria A. Wood's* stern. Porter was informed by Acting Master Chase, of the schooner, that Lieutenant Jackson had stolen the commander's thunder and had already received the city's capitulation. Nevertheless the bombastic naval officer, completely ignoring the fact that Arnold did not have any ships to transport men to the mainland, continued up the bay to Pensacola. It was mid-afternoon before Porter returned to Fort Pickens and the aid of his comrades in arms.⁷⁶

The *Harriet Lane* was immediately turned into a ferry and by 3 P.M. had landed 400 men, two pieces of artillery, horses, and some baggage carts in the neighborhood of the navy yard. Once upon the mainland Arnold's troops wasted little time in hoisting "Old Glory" over the navy yard, Forts Barrancas and McRee, and Barrancas Barracks.⁷⁷

74. *Ibid.*, 658.

75. *Ibid.*, 658-59; *Official Records-Navies*, Ser. I, Vol. XVIII, 481.

76. West, *Second Admiral*, 147; *Official Records-Navies*, Ser. I, Vol. XVIII, 479. The *Harriet Lane* was a side-wheel steamer of 600 tons, and was armed with three IX-inch Dahlgrens, one 30-pounder Parrott Rifle, and one 12-pounder James Rifle.

77. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol VI, 658; West, *Second Admiral*, 147.

Two days later a portion of Arnold's command (1,000 strong) took formal possession of Pensacola. The only opposition encountered by the Federals during their march from Fort Barrancas occurred when some Rebel vedettes fired on the advanced guard. Upon entering the city Arnold formed his troops in a square around the flagstaff in the plaza and raised the national ensign. As the colors shot to the top of the staff the only loyalists to make a public demonstration were Negroes. If there were any pro-Northern whites in the town they suppressed their emotions. One could never tell when the Federal troops might be withdrawn and Secessionists knew how to be most unpleasant toward acknowledged Unionists in their midst.⁷⁸

Survey parties from the Federal Army and Navy rapidly totalled up the extent of damages caused by the Confederates' scorched earth policy in the area. Colonel Jones' demolition teams had done an excellent job on the navy yard. Commander Porter stated: "The yard is a ruin." Despite these evil tidings Porter was able to report a number of facilities that could possibly be salvaged.⁷⁹ General Arnold informed the Secretary of War: "Fort Barrancas is very little injured by the fire and Barrancas Barracks not at all. Fort McRee is seriously damaged, Marine Hospital destroyed, and several store-houses in the navy-yard . . . burned."⁸⁰

After sixteen months the Federal government had repossessed the public property in the Pensacola Bay area that had been seized by the state of Florida on January 12, 1861. Initially Fort Pickens was as isolated and susceptible to attack as Fort Sumter, but in Florida affairs were handled more judiciously by both parties. Outside of a few musket shots exchanged in the second week of January a tense period of watchful waiting prevailed for nine months.

On September 14, five months after the surrender of Fort Sumter, occurred the first clash of arms in the Pensacola area in

78. West, *Second Admiral*, 147-48.

79. *Official Records-Navy*, Ser. I, Vol. XVIII, 482. The stone wharves could still be used, and would hold a large amount of coal. The armory still stood as did the chimney to the smithery, the new casting shop, and new storehouse; the shears were injured near the top, but capable of being repaired as were several pile drivers. There were some chains still left in the yard, eight bouys for the channel, five or six anchors, a quantity of ready made iron work, and a number of piles of 32-pound shot. The diving bells were still in good order.

80. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 658-59.

CIVIL WAR OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND PENSACOLA 353

which blood was shed. It was on that date that the Federals, in a commando type raid, landed under the cover of darkness and burned the Confederate schooner *Judah*. One month later the battle of Santa Rosa Island was fought. In this engagement many of the vices and virtues of the recently formed volunteer armies were revealed.

The artillery duels had served only to demonstrate the marked superiority of the Federal artillery over the Confederate, a factor that was to be true throughout the conflict. In the Pensacola area the Federal superiority in heavy ordnance could be attributed to several factors - trained and seasoned cannoneers, better siege guns, and a prolific supply of powder and shells.

With its defeat at Forts Henry and Donelson the Confederate high command was forced to re-evaluate its defense commitments in the sundry departments President Davis had established. To bolster its sagging defenses in the Tennessee River Valley strategic outposts had to be given up - Pensacola was ordered evacuated.

Governor Shorter, of Alabama, along with the Confederate commanders on the spot, correctly realized that Pensacola Bay was the best anchorage on the Gulf and urged the Confederate War Department to hold the area. However, a bankrupt and agrarian people lacking many of the tools of war were unable to hold their exposed bases in the face of superior Northern sea power. Ten days after the occupation of New Orleans by General Butler's troops Pensacola was yielded by the Confederates.