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THE COTTON MILL CAMPAIGN IN FLORIDA, 1828-1863

by RICHARD W. GRIFFIN

THE MANUFACTURING impulse in the South appeared as early as 1790 when primitive cotton factories were established in Kentucky and South Carolina. In Virginia an association to promote manufactures was launched at Richmond in 1786. This early interest in development of cotton manufactories was not comparable, however, to that which set off the cotton growing craze after the invention of the cotton gin.

This second, and more extensive, period of Southern textile manufacture developed in part as a result of the impulse created by the Embargo of 1807, and from that time on the manufacture of cotton was never entirely abandoned in the section. This period was, for many of the early promoters, a time of costly learning which saw the capital of many mills swept away in the years after 1815 when the competition of British manufacturers nearly destroyed the infant textile industry of the nation. The years after 1816 saw an increasing flow of dislocated Yankee machinists into the South, bringing with them the necessary skill and experience to add to the capital and enthusiasm of many Southern pioneer entrepreneurs. In the decade from 1816 to 1826 a new and firm foundation was laid, upon which the growth of the Southern industrial revolution was to permanently build and upon which an undreamed of expansion was to continue for generations thereafter.

The clarion call of the protectionists was heeded by the industrial pioneers of the South, for they were well aware that the section could enjoy many of the same advantages for manufactures as did New England. Thus the tariff defenders of the late 1820's had many sympathetic auditors in the not so solid agrarian South. The year 1827 marked the start of a significant cotton mill campaign which was only slowed by the Civil War. In 1827 the legislature of North Carolina established a select committee to investigate the opportunities for the manufacture of cotton

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and wool in that commonwealth. The committee made an exhaustive study of the subject, holding special hearings at which the few successful cotton manufacturers of the state testified as to the opportunities for further industrial expansion. The chief aim of this committee was to stem the tide of migration from the state by publicizing its many economic opportunities.¹

In the same year the Georgia legislature made a similar study at the behest of John J. Schley, a native of Maryland who had migrated to Georgia and founded the state's first cotton mill at Louisville in 1808. Both studies attracted wide attention, but the report of the North Carolina committee was given more notice. It was published by leading newspapers in every part of the South in 1828, and was further broadcast to the planters through the columns of *The American Farmer*.

The Southern cotton mill campaign launched by *The Farmer* in 1827 and 1828 stimulated an immediate response in Florida. David B. McComb, a planter residing near Tallahassee, wrote a long letter proposing agricultural improvements for the region which would make the establishment of cotton factories easier. He was evidently an immigrant from New England for he cited his own experience with textile mills to strengthen his argument to his fellow planters to operate cotton factories in conjunction with cotton plantations. He pointed out that there was as much merit for the cotton planter to spin his cotton as for the rice and sugar planters to operate hulling mills and refineries. He argued that slave labor could be used in such factories and, indeed, was to be preferred to "white labour, both on account of its certainty and cheapness." The result he predicted for cotton planters would be "more profit, by 100 per cent., than any other investment of capital." He concluded his letter saying

These ideas I have long entertained, and am happy to see them so ably illustrated and enlarged upon in late numbers of the *Farmer*. The ball of the "American System" has taken a Southern direction, and such will be its uniformly accelerated motion, and effect upon the merits of our southern nabobs, that while their orators are vociferously declaiming, on the floors of Congress, against internal improvements and tariffs, they themselves will be making strong and I trust, successful experiments, and complete the combinations

1. Richard Griffin, "The Fisher Report, 1828," *The Cotton History Review*, II (January, 1961), 46-67.

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of the three *generic* branches of human industry, agriculture, manufactures, and commerce.²

It seems fair to conclude that other residents of Florida were not immune to the general excitement expressed in sister states with regard to this important subject. In any case in 1835 five citizens of Pensacola, Joseph Forsyth, A. P. and E. E. Simpson, George Williams, and Henry Ahrens, secured a charter from the territorial legislature for the Escambia Manufacturing Company which was to be a cotton mill located in Arcadia. The charter allowed the company a capital of \$60,000 and was to extend for a period of fifty years.³

The efforts of these individuals were not rewarded by sufficient public support to immediately establish their novel project; probably because of its strangeness and the fact that the Panic of 1837 curtailed the investment of capital. The depression years had, however, shown clearly the need for a departure from the exclusive attachment to growing cotton, and by 1841 favorable public notice was made of their efforts.

The editor of the *Pensacola Gazette*, displaying an unwonted ignorance of their six year struggle to get the factory built and assuming that it was a new project wrote, "How strange it is that nothing of this kind has yet been done here!" It suddenly became obvious to him that the South was suffering from its colonial status as a producer of raw materials and buyer of finished goods. It became patriotic to question the wisdom of sending cotton to the north and Europe only to repurchase it in the form of clothing for planters and their slaves. This editorialist concluded that "the time is fast coming when the slumbering South will be awakened to the unwelcome truth, that she must manufacture her own clothes and raise her own provisions, or her people must become the bond slaves of the north and west."⁴

The enactment of a new tariff in 1842 by Congress, and the continuing downward spiral of cotton prices, brought a new urgency to the manufacturing question in the cotton region. Planters were seeking any way to stimulate consumption of the

2. *The American Farmer*, IX (January 4, 1828), 332.

3. *Laws of the Territory of Florida*, 1835, 286-287.

4. *Pensacola Gazette*, February 13, 1841; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, February 18, 1841; *Alexandria (Va.) Gazette*, March 2, 1841; *Jacksonville (Ala.) Republican*, April 14, 1841; *Franklin (Tenn.) Western Weekly Review*, April 30, 1841; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, V (August, 1841), 140.

constantly growing surplus of cotton. The diversion of part of their capital and labor into manufactures was urged by many of the leaders of the South as a means of maintaining the planter's income. The effect of these suggestions was to stimulate a renewed enthusiasm for the scheme of cotton manufactures. In many areas this enthusiasm unfortunately developed into a craze promoting manufactures as a panacea for all the planter's difficulties.

By 1845 the price of cotton fell to the lowest position since the staple had become an important aspect of the South's economy. In face of this crisis the Pensacola investors redoubled their efforts to finance the projected company and secured a new charter under the name of the Arcadia Manufacturing Company.⁵ The editor of the *Gazette* announced to his readers that the long projected and talked of cotton mill was about to become a reality. Editors in many parts of the South hailed this announcement as the dawn of a new day in the infant state of Florida, and at the same time urged their own readers to follow this excellent lead into manufacturing enterprise. The *Gazette's* editor launched into a bitter criticism of policies that he may well have supported at an earlier date when he said that "if Southern statesmen had all along employed their influence in getting up cotton factories instead of fighting against the tariff (As Don Quixotte did against the windmill, . . .) the South would now be independent of Northern capital; we should have everything within ourselves, and a fair division of labor would make us prosperous and happy." Many of the editorial fraternity of the South echoed these sentiments even when it represented a radical shift from the conventional line.⁶ The editor of the New Orleans *Tropic* in taking note of this Florida enterprise pointed out that "there is much more wisdom in Southern men availing themselves of the benefits of the Tariff, than in whining and blubbering about its enriching the North at the expense of the South."⁷

By the fall of 1845 the Arcadia Company's mill was rising in the piney woods of West Florida. A correspondent of the New Orleans *Tropic* visited the village of Arcadia where the buildings were in process of erection. He reported that the proprietors of

5. *Laws of the State of Florida*, 1845, 139.

6. Greensboro (N. C.) *Patriot*, March 8, 1845, citing the *Pensacola Gazette*; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, February 19, 1845.

7. *Tusculumbia North Alabamian*, March 7, 1845 citing the New Orleans *Tropic*.

the mill were planning to begin spinning and weaving in January, 1846. They had secured sufficient machinery to consume 3,000 bales of cotton annually, which they proposed to have woven into "different numbers of Lowells, and other heavy domestics. . . ." ⁸ The owners of the mill decided to employ only slaves in the factory and one of the proprietors went to Virginia to buy the necessary hands. "It is determined to incur this last expense at once, in order to avoid the possible inconvenience of white operatives becoming dissatisfied and leaving their work." ⁹ The company officials anticipated an immediate financial success which would finance further expansion of their plant and the manufacture of an even greater variety of goods. ¹⁰

In the spring of 1846 the editor of the *Gazette* informed Floridians that the Arcadia Cotton Factory was both spinning and weaving cotton. This, he said, was an opportunity to prove that the staple could be successfully manufactured in competition with the mills of New England. In his opinion the savings on the cost of shipping the cotton North and in returning the goods to Florida would assure the owners of the factory a profit. The success he foresaw was to be assured by the fact that "here . . . at the very door of the factory, the raw material is produced, and the hog and hominy necessary for the operatives." ¹¹

The opinions expressed were not all favorable to the growth of a Florida or Southern industrial system. The editor of the *Southern Journal*, a paper published at Tallahassee, was unimpressed by the growing cotton mill campaign. In an editorial he warned his readers that the promotion of industry was merely a plot of Northern protectionists to win adherents for their unfair tariff views in the South. He seemed to be particularly fearful of the proposals for the employment of slave labor in such enterprises, not because of the competition this would make for the poor whites, but because success would invalidate the belief that the Negro was incapable of such advanced training. He ended his remarks with the peroration:

8. *Columbia South Carolinian*, September 24, 1845, citing the *New Orleans Tropic*; *Hillsborough (N.C.) Recorder*, September 24, 1845; *Little Rock Arkansas State Gazette*, October 14, 1845; *Tallahassee Floridian*, March 2, 1846, citing the *Mobile Herald and Tribune*.

9. *Pensacola Gazette*, September 13, 1845.

10. *Columbia South Carolinian*, September 24, 1845.

11. *Pensacola Gazette*, April 18, 1846; *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, May 1, 1846.

But what means this stimulating cry of "Southern Independence," which is to seduce our farmers from the fields to the factories? We confess that, for ourselves, we never wish to see the time when the South shall cease to be dependent on the North, or the North to be dependent upon the South. We assert that the one should be dependent on the other, and each will find its happiness in this mutual dependence. As it is now, the South is not more dependent on the North, than the North upon the South. . . .

As for the establishment of manufactories in the South, we state with great deference, that we have nothing to hope from such a thing. So far from mitigating the evils of the Tariff, thereby, we would only make them more inevitable.¹²

It is, of course, obvious that partisan political opinion dictated this polemic rather than any serious consideration of the merits of the question. The significant manufacturing attempts at Arcadia were pointedly ignored. The entire case of Southern capacity and opportunity for cotton manufactures received its greatest support from the Whig Party-although the popularity of the cotton mill campaign forced many Democrats to climb aboard the band wagon of the growing Southern industrial campaign. That the industrial tide of the 1840's was against the editor of the *Journal* was evident from all sides.

The events at Arcadia were watched with interest especially as the company were employing exclusively slave girls in the mill. Its promoters were hailed as benefactors of the community for the important experiment they were making. The machinery for the plant arrived at Pensacola early in December, 1845, and was ready for installation as soon as the buildings were complete.¹³ The mill occupied a two story building, ninety four by thirty-eight feet in size, and when the machines were in place it operated 960 spindles and 24 looms. The investment in the total plant was \$60,000, and the product was 4,000 yards of twilled cotton cloth weekly. The addition of more machinery, as was then contemplated, was expected to increase production to 6,000 yards weekly and 300,000 yards yearly.

The mill hands were nearly all Negro girls, forty in all, between the ages of fifteen and twenty. They were "mostly married, and look as happy and contented with their vocation as it has been our lot to see anywhere; they are comfortably lodged, well fed,

12. Tallahassee *Southern Journal*, April 14, 1846.

13. *Pensacola Gazette*, December 15, 1845.

well clothed and kindly treated." The company furnished living quarters for their hands conveniently located to the mill.¹⁴ The slave operatives proved a success and the production of the Arcadia Factory increased as they became more proficient in the operation of the machinery. The proprietors began to plan further expansion of the machinery in order to increase the manufacture of cloth to 10,000 yards weekly.¹⁵ The continued experiment with slave labor in the factory attracted both national and sectional attention. At the end of the first year of operation the company was still operating its original equipment, which was powered by water; the workers included thirty-three girls and six boys who were taught and supervised by three overseers from Northern mills. The company had invested about \$24,000 in its labor supply, the average cost being about \$400 per slave.

A local editor reported that "as an experiment, we are happy to hear, it has more than answered the sanguine expectations of its worthy proprietors."¹⁶ The slaves were not only well cared for, but were vying with each other in learning the various operations. The editor of the *Gazette* said that "to suppose as many have pretended to do, that they are not equal to white girls in a factory is ridiculous nonsense, it is to suppose that the manipulation depends on the color of the fingers."¹⁷ At the end of the second year of operation the *Gazette* pointed out the obvious success of this factory and its labor system to those who were fighting the cotton mill campaign. Its editor said:

Then as to the "problem" of adequacy of slave labor, it is now about as well settled as is the problem whether two things, each equal to a third, are equal to one another. It is no problem, and it never has been a problem. Doubtless you cannot make a good factory hand out of a grown woman who has been reared in a corn field, any more than you can make a good hand out of a white woman of the same description. . . . The thing is next to impossible; but with the native skill and ingenuity of mere labor—the labor of hands—the negro is just as richly endowed as the white.

14. Savannah *Georgian*, August 26, 1849, citing the *Mobile Register*; Huntsville, Ala., *Southern Advocate*, September 11, 1846; Alexandria (Va.) *Gazette*, September 1, 1846; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XV (October, 1846), 417.

15. *Pensacola Gazette* October 10, 1846.

16. *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVII (September, 1847), 323, citing the *Pensacola Live Oak*; *DeBow's Review*, IV (October, 1847), 256.

17. *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, October 17, 1846, citing the *Pensacola Gazette*.

While so many dear lovers of southern interests have been whinnying over the protection afforded to northern industry and northern capital, the enterprising proprietors of the Arcadian Factory, seem to have made the important discovery that the industry and capital which are really protected, belong to no clime exclusively, or if they do, it is to the south--to the cotton growing region--that they belong.¹⁸

The expression of such opinions were considered in some quarters as a danger to long held and oft expressed shibboleths of the arch-defenders of the "Southern way of life."

The Arcadia Factory continued to increase its production, which by 1848 had risen to 6,000 yards of cloth weekly, and consumed 1,000 pounds of cotton daily. It was claimed that this mill enjoyed a twenty per cent price advantage over distant mills in buying the raw material--a saving of fifteen dollars daily, a sum sufficient to cover the cost of the slave hands' food.¹⁹

The success of the proprietors of the Arcadia Cotton Mill stimulated interest in a similar project at Newport in Wakulla county. A Mr. Wheaton, resident of Gadsden county, who, said the editor of the Newport *Gazette* "possess much *practical* knowledge of the manufacture of cotton fabrics, and also much ingenuity as a machinist," selected as a suitable place for a cotton mill, a site then being used for a saw mill on the St. Marks river. The location was chosen because of the satisfactory water power and the safety of the place from flood damage. The cost of the projected factory--to contain 1,000 spindles to consume one bale of cotton daily--was estimated at between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The Newport *Gazette* predicted that if sufficient investors could be found the factory could be in operation in a few months. The estimate was a gross error, for even the most efficient companies took a minimum of a year from ground breaking to production. If this represented Mr. Wharton's "practical knowledge" it is just as well that local people took no interest in the undertaking and that it was abandoned.²⁰

The popular Southern interest in the building of cotton mills was growing yearly and was reflected in Florida. The Florida

18. *Pensacola Gazette*, April 8, 1848; Huntsville, Ala., *Southern Advocate*, May 27, 1848, citing the Augusta (Ga.) *Chronicle*.

19. Franklin, Tenn., *Western Weekly Review*, May 26, 1848, citing the *Pensacola Gazette*.

20. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, July 12, 1847; Tallahassee *Floridian*, July 31, 1847; Savannah (Ga.) *Daily Republican*, August 10, 1847, all citing the Newport (Fla.) *Gazette*.

legislature in its 1847-1848 session, as an encouragement to the investment in manufacturing, passed a law specifically exempting the stock of manufacturing companies from taxation.²¹ There was however no noticeable rush of investors into the cotton textile business.

Meanwhile the operations at Arcadia continued to expand with each year. By 1849 the number of slaves employed in the works had increased to one hundred and they were manufacturing 7,800 yards of cloth each week.²² By 1853 this mill's capital had grown to \$80,000 and it was manufacturing 624,000 yards of sheeting each year.²³ The Arcadia Manufacturing Company was the largest and most successful of the cotton factories operated in ante-bellum Florida. What eventually happened to the company is not now known, but it was apparently not operating in 1861.²⁴

The political, economic, and social crisis created by the Wilmot Proviso stirred up further agitation for Southern industrial expansion and economic independence. It was doubtless this issue which led to an attempt to establish a cotton mill in Tallahassee. Interested persons began in 1849 to collect information about the cost of building a cotton factory and the advantages that such a plant would bring to the community. In mid-February, 1850, a public meeting was called to consider the statistics which had been collected and to make final plans for the factory if sufficient public interest and support was aroused. Information from one source suggested that the machinery for a factory of 600 spindles and twenty looms could be secured for \$8,806.00.²⁵

21. *Laws of the State of Florida, 1848*, 24.

22. *Pensacola Gazette*, March 17, 1849; June 18, 1851, citing the *Baltimore Sun*.

23. *DeBow's Review*, XIV (April, 1853), 329.

24. Kathryn Hanna, *Florida Land of Change*, (Chapel Hill, 1948) 256.

25. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, February 12, 1850.

"The first is for machinery for 20 looms and the manufacture of No. 6 yarn, although the machinery will admit of varying the size two or three numbers. One willow for opening cotton, \$75.00; 1 Whiting's pick and spreader, \$525.00; 6 36-inch cards, including clothing, at \$215 each, 1,650.00; 1 grinder \$100; twelve bobbin speeders, \$364; 1 drawing frame, 150.00; 3 throstles, 120 spindles, each at \$5.00, 1,800.00; 2 filling frames, 120 spindles, each at \$4.00, 1,440.00; 1 speeder of 34 spools, 102.00; 1 warper, \$100.00; 1 Dresser, 500.00; 20 looms at \$60.00 each, 1,200.00. Total \$7,806.00.

"Reeds, Shuttles, Bobbins, Harnesses, Belting, &c., &c., with labor for starting machinery, 500.00; 1 engine lathe and other necessary tools for repairs, \$500.00; total \$8,806.00.

One of the most complete statements came from the manager of the Waymansville Factory, Upson County, Georgia, who recommended that the company employ slaves rather than depend upon finding sufficient white labor in their sparsely settled area. He said, "it is very essential when you commence operations to have experienced men, who understand the business, even if you have to pay them high wages. Their good management will save you more than their wages amount to."²⁶ He suggested such a trained supervisor could be obtained from New England or from one of the successful Georgia mills.

The project got support from the editor of the *Sentinel* who frequently reprinted articles dealing with manufacture of cotton in other Southern states as a means of encouraging local residents to invest in such undertakings.²⁷ He had in November, 1850, republished a long article by a Tennessee planter, Mark R. Cockrill, who in 1849 had received wide circulation in Southern newspapers for a persuasive article urging that "the spindles and looms must be brought to the cotton fields." Cockrill tried to show planters how they could pool their capital and build spinning mills throughout the cotton region. He suggested 350 mills with 10,000 spindles each. They would be sufficient to spin all of the cotton grown and not consumed by Northern mills in 1848. The effect on the planters would be to increase the value of cotton threefold, so that cotton which sold for \$40,000,000 would bring the planter-manufacturer \$120,000,000. He went into rather minute detail as to how this industrial revolution was to take place, as well as what should be done to make each unit most efficient. It was a plan grand in conception and one which may have had momentary appeal to many planters, but none-the-less one which displayed many flaws.²⁸

Ten months after the original meeting to consider a Tallahassee cotton factory, John G. Gamble, knowing the editor's sympathy for local industry, wrote the *Sentinel* urging him to revive the interest of the people in the plan. Gamble said that "a matter so vital to the interest of the Cotton Planters, must not be buried."

"Operatives necessary, 2 superintendents, 1 machinist, 3 men and 2 boys, 22 young women and girls-30. Amount of cotton consumed per day 350 pounds, wast 12 per cent. Quantity of cloth manufactured 600 yards of 3/4 weighting 1/2 pound per yard."

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, October 8, 1850; June 17, 1851.

28. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, November 16, 1850.

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He urged the building of a cotton factory in every county in the South. This, he said, would enable Southerners to spin their entire crop and by this means increase greatly the prosperity of the entire region.

Gamble pointed out that British mills were producing millions of pounds of yarn for domestic weavers on the continent and the obvious conclusion was that the South could just as readily supply the market and more cheaply than the English mills. He urged the residents of Leon county to join in the patriotic effort to raise \$30,000 for the establishment of a cotton mill with 1,000 spindles.²⁹ Eventually sufficient interest was aroused to warrant the formation of a cotton mill company in Tallahassee. Stock was sold on subscription and the editor of the *Floridian* was enthusiastic in describing the manifold advantages that the city was about to enjoy.³⁰ However, his dream was not to be realized as there were not sufficient subscribers to the company's capital. This result was, perhaps, due to the fact that the price of cotton made a remarkable recovery and the planters' attention was drawn once more to the field and away from the factory.

Two more cotton factories were built in Florida in the 1850's. The earliest was the Madison Cotton Mill built by Captain N. P. Willard. This spinning mill was begun in 1851 and was in full operation by February, 1852. The capital invested in the mill was \$30,000, secured by Captain Willard and others in the vicinity of Madison. The mill operated at first 800 spindles and produced 500 to 750 pounds of yarn daily. When Willard sent his yarn to Tallahassee merchants for inspection they reported to the editor of the *Floridian* that the yarns were equal to any manufactured in the South. The Editor said that "we are rejoiced to be able to chronicle the fact that one man in Florida has met with sufficient encouragement . . . to embark in the work of manufacturing." The implication must have been obvious to his local readers - "Go thou and do likewise."³¹

The factory offered employment to poor white families-the thirty employees being boys and girls between the ages of ten and

29. *Ibid.*, December 23, 1850. John G. Gamble was the chief promoter of planter investment in cotton manufactories before the Cotton Planter's Convention at Macon, Georgia, in March, 1852. J. D. B. DeBow, *The Industrial Resources of the Southern and Western States*, 3 vols. (New York, 1852-53) I, 139.

30. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, December 18, 1852.

31. *Ibid.*

eighteen, whose wages varied from eight to fifteen dollars a month. The Madison Cotton Mill consumed 320 bales of cotton yearly by 1853, and the owners planned to increase the machinery and double production by the following year. The company sold its yarns in the area around Madison and its surplus production was sold in New York. In 1854 N. P. Willard shipped 757 bales of yarn from Wakulla valued at about \$18,000.³²

The editor of the *Floridian* mistakenly claimed for Willard the distinction of having spun the first cotton yarn in the state as well as being its first cotton manufacturer. Willard was accorded recognition for the advantages the mill brought to Madison and the surrounding countryside, for creating a local market for the small cotton producers, as well as for increasing the consumption of the surplus food produced by small farmers.³³ This cotton mill was destroyed by fire in 1857 with the loss of the entire capital of \$40,000. The blow to Willard was considerable as the insurance on the plant had expired just prior to the fire. It was more disastrous, however, for the poor families who had come to depend on the mill for employment. Despite the hope expressed by the editor of the Madison *Messenger* that the mill would soon be rebuilt the Madison Cotton Mill was not destined to rise Phoenix-like from its ashes.³⁴

The third and last antebellum Florida cotton mill was established by a group of Jefferson county men who called themselves the "Southern Rights Manufacturing Association."³⁵ Their intent was obvious when they raised the money to establish the Jefferson Cotton Factory near Monticello. Their mill was completed in December, 1853, and their plan to manufacture Osna-burgs was only retarded by a lack of suitable hands. The Tallahassee editor in reporting these activities at Monticello vainly urged his readers to give it their support.³⁶ The plan to furnish local planters with cloth suited for clothing slaves was not entirely successful. Lack of local patronage forced the company to sell a large part of its production in the New York market.³⁷

32. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1853; Huntsville, Ala., *Southern Advocate*, December 28, 1853; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXXI (September, 1854), 384.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1857, citing the Madison *Messenger*.

35. Hanna, 257.

36. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, December 3, 1857.

37. *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXXI (September, 1854), 384.

Samuel Stevens, superintendent of the Jefferson mill, sent samples of the company's product to the editor of the *Floridian*. The letter which came with the sample goods was published by the paper. It urged Tallahassee capitalists to engage in the business. Stevens predicted that a half-dozen local planters could raise the necessary \$60,000 which would produce all the cloth they would need and consume a large part of their cotton. Stevens said that "such a mill, with cotton and Osnaburgs at present prices, will clear its capital certainly in three years if not in two years."³⁸

The Jefferson factory, although it had sufficient machinery to produce 600,000 yards of Osnaburgs and 100,000 pounds of yarn each year, was soon facing serious financial reverses.³⁹ It was unable to compete with Northern mills which were, by their sound financing, able to extend the long credit terms which the merchants had to have. The Jefferson concern could not, and its products were often without buyers. A visitor to the mill applauded the stockholders for their efforts which he called "a lasting monument of the enterprise, liberality and progressive spirit."⁴⁰

Unfortunately for the owners, Samuel Stevens, their Agent, and their Delaware trained superintendent, were unable to offset the disadvantages under which the company operated. The debts piled up until bankruptcy faced the firm. Its closing was prevented by the efforts of General William Bailey who paid the debts, gave the investors a small part of their original investment, and took complete control of the enterprise. By 1860 the mill employed sixty-five men and women and produced cotton goods valued at \$40,000 in that year.⁴¹ General Bailey continued to

38. Samuel Stevens, Monticello, to C. E. Dyke, Tallahassee, March 14, 1857, in Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, April 1, 1857.

39. Hanna, 257.

40. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, April 1, 1857. "Mr. Samuel Stevens, kindly invited me to join him in a ride to the Factory. It is located about half a mile east of the village, and by the intervening woodland is concealed from view until you arrive within a short distance of its location. There it stands with its cottages for the operatives, and other necessary appendages, a lasting monument of the enterprise, liberality and progressive spirit of the stockholders, but more especially those who suggested the work and superintend its faithful execution. . . . I may remark that the whole concern does credit to the State, the Middle District, the County of Jefferson and the village of Monticello, as well as to its stockholders, agent and superintendent."

operate the Jefferson Mills during the Civil War furnishing to the hard-pressed Confederate government supplies of cloth for soldiers. In the same period he also supplied some cloth to local residents. He generously supplied the clothing for two companies of the Fifth Florida Regiment which were commanded by his two sons.

The ante-bellum developments in the Florida manufacture of cotton had no lasting impact as similar developments had in neighboring Georgia and Alabama. The introduction of cotton manufacturing was a hybrid activity which for a variety of reasons did not enjoy in Florida the same advantages of states to the north. Thus Floridians saw in a very short period the rise and fall of the cotton textile industry within their boundaries.

41. Hanna, 257.