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JACKSONVILLE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

by SAMUEL PROCTOR

THE YEAR 1860 was one of political unrest and agitation in Florida. Most Southerners argued with an unyielding passion that secession had become a matter of necessity and that independence was the only possible course of action for the South. A political meeting in Jacksonville on May 15, 1860, overwhelmingly resolved: "We are of the opinion that the right of the citizens of Florida are no longer safe in the Union and we think she should raise the banner of secession and invite her southern sisters to join her."¹ The *Jacksonville Standard*, on July 26, 1860, announced that if "in consequence of Northern fanaticism the irrepressible conflict must come we are prepared to meet it."

The presidential election of November 7, 1860, climaxed this year of fierce political strife. The southern Democratic party's candidates, Breckinridge and Lane, carried Florida by a vote of 8,543 out of a state total of 14,347,² while not a single Floridian voted for Lincoln. But he was now president-elect of the United States and for most Southerners this was the "beginning of the end."³ Shortly after election results were published, a Fernandina newspaper printed on its masthead the program which most Floridians supported: "The Secession of the State of Florida. The Dissolution of the Union. The Formation of a Southern Confederacy."⁴

The legislature assembled in Tallahassee on November 26, and four days later Governor Madison Starke Perry signed the bill calling for a secession convention to meet January 3, 1861.⁵ On December 22, 1860, special elections were held to select convention delegates. A few days later, the editor of the *St. Augustine Examiner* confidently predicted that 1861 would witness the "onset of war." It would be a tempest, he said, that Southern-

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1. William Watson Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913), 41-42.
 2. Cited in *Ibid.*, 46. See also Dorothy Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, 1850-1861," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XII (October, 1933), 51.
 3. Tallahassee *Floridian*, November 10, 1860.
 4. Fernandina *East Floridian*, November 14, 1860.
 5. *Florida Senate Journal* (1860), 59. A. A. Canova represented Duval County in the House and A. S. Baldwin in the Senate.

ers would meet "with stout hearts and armed nerves," and without fear or trepidation.⁶

Duval County was represented at the secession convention by J. M. Daniel, court clerk, and John P. Sanderson, attorney. The latter represented the sixteenth Senatorial District.⁷ Sanderson, a moderate secessionist and one of the wealthiest men at the convention, was chairman of the thirteen-man committee appointed to prepare an ordinance of secession.⁸

In a matter of just one week the delegates had prayed, listened to inflammatory speeches by Florida citizens and by secessionists from Alabama, South Carolina, and Virginia, and had drawn up the ordinance that took Florida out of the Union. By a vote of 62 to 7, at exactly 12:22 P.M., on January 10, 1861, the convention declared that all political connections between Florida and the United States had been severed and whatever legal ties existed were now broken. Florida became by this dramatic action a sovereign and independent nation.⁹

The state Convention reassembled in Tallahassee on Tuesday, February 26, and two days later unanimously adopted the ordinance, introduced by Mr. Daniel of Jacksonville, which ratified the provisional constitution of the Confederate States of America.¹⁰ The Confederate Congress, March 6, authorized President Jefferson Davis to accept 100,000 volunteers for twelve-month enlistments for a force that would be used "to defend the South and to protect its rights."¹¹

Governor Perry received Florida's first troop requisition on March 9.¹² The call was for 500 men, but volunteer enlistments

6. *St. Augustine Examiner*, December 29, 1860.

7. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida, Begun and held at the Capitol in the City of Tallahassee, on Thursday, January 3, A.D., 1861* (Tallahassee, 1861), 6.

8. *Ibid.*, 21. In the December 22, 1860, election Sanderson had defeated Stephen Bryant, a strong secessionist, and a Mr. Hendricks, a Unionist. See Francis P. Fleming, *Memoir of Capt. C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C.S.A.* (Jacksonville, 1884), 22.

9. *Ibid.*, 29, 110.

10. *Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida at Called Sessions, Begun and Held at the Capitol in Tallahassee, on Tuesday, February 26th, and Thursday, April 18th, 1861* (Tallahassee, 1861), 6-7.

11. *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865* (Washington, 1904), I, 110.

12. The note from the Confederate Secretary of the Army, L. Pope Walker, to Governor Perry is cited in Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 90.

were so spontaneous and overwhelming that this request could have been met several times over.¹³ Among the many volunteer Florida military companies formed were several from Duval County. One was the Jacksonville Light Infantry whose captain, Dr. Holmes Steele, was a man of wide interests and many talents. One of Jacksonville's earliest physicians, he was also editor of the *Jacksonville Standard* when that newspaper started publishing in 1858, and the city's mayor in 1859.¹⁴ The Jacksonville Light Infantry was mustered into Confederate service on August 10, 1861, as Company A, Third Florida Infantry. Another well-known fighting unit from Jacksonville was the Duval County Cow Boys. The organization was first commanded by Captain Lucius A. Hardee and later by Albert Drysdale. Mustered in as Company F, Third Florida Infantry, August 10, 1861, it was stationed at St. Johns Bluff.¹⁵ The St. Johns Greys, Captain J. J. Daniel commanding, became Company G, Second Florida Infantry when it was mustered in at the Brick Church, corner West Church Street and Myrtle Avenue, July 13, 1861.¹⁶ The Milton Artillery, Captain George A. Acosta, was organized early in the war for the defense of Jacksonville and the St. Johns River.¹⁷ Company H, First Florida Cavalry, was still another Duval County unit. Its commander was Noble A. Hull, later clerk of the court in Jacksonville.¹⁸

In January, 1861, Southern enthusiasts took over a good bit of federal property in Florida, including Fort Marion in St. Augustine on January 7, and Fort Clinch on Amelia Island the following day. It was expected that these would become important defense posts if the North "insisted upon war" and if Florida became a theater of military operations. By the summer of 1861 several small forts had been established in the state, including one

13. The First Florida Infantry, numbering about 500 men, was mustered into Confederate service at the Chattahoochee Arsenal on April 5, 1861.

14. Webster Merritt, *A Century of Medicine in Jacksonville and Duval County* (Gainesville, 1959), 50-51; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, July 31, 1858.

15. F. L. Robertson, *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian, Civil and Spanish-American Wars* (Tallahassee, 1903), 110. See also James C. Craig, "Colonel Lucius Augustus Hardee and Honeymoon Plantation," *Papers of the Jacksonville Historical Society*, III (1954), 62.

16. *Soldiers of Florida*, 89.

17. *Ibid.*, 41.

18. Lee Eugene Bigelow, "A History of Jacksonville, Florida" (typed MS in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Fla.), 102.

constructed of palmetto logs at Jacksonville Beach near the south jetties. Fort Steele, as it was named, lay about a mile east of Mayport located so as to protect the entrance into the St. Johns River. Captain John L'Engle, a retired United States Army officer, supervised construction.¹⁹ The Jacksonville Light Infantry was stationed at this post until March, 1862.

Other forts built in the Jacksonville area early in the war were Yellow Bluff Fort, situated on a triangular-shaped peninsula jutting out into the St. Johns River at Dames Point; the fortification at St. Johns Bluff, five miles directly east of New Berlin; and breastworks on Talbot Island.²⁰ These were planned as defenses for Jacksonville and to keep federal ships out of the St. Johns. Later in the war, the Confederates located a fortification at McGirt's Creek about twelve miles west of Jacksonville, at the point where the wagon road and railroad crossed the creek. It was named Camp Milton in honor of Florida's Civil War governor.²¹

The federals, during their third occupation of Jacksonville, in March, 1863, erected two forts within the city, to protect the terminus of the railroad and to defend the approach on the south to Jacksonville by the St. Johns River. Fort Higginson, named for Colonel T. W. Higginson, commander of the federal First South Carolina Volunteers, was at the intersection of what is now Broad and Bay Streets. Fort Montgomery named for Colonel James Montgomery, Second South Carolina Volunteers, was farther along the railroad tracks.²² According to a contemporary report in the *New York Tribune* "a large forest of pine and oak trees" was cut down and about fifty small buildings, mostly houses, were demolished during the construction of these two forts.²³

The invasion of Florida's east coast was first recommended in July, 1861, by a board of Union naval officers meeting in Washington to plan the overall strategy of the blockade.²⁴ Ports on the South Atlantic coast were needed as coal depots for the blockad-

19. T. Frederick Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville, Florida* (Jacksonville, 1911), 156.

20. James C. Craig, "New Berlin and Yellow Bluff Fort," *Papers of the Jacksonville Historical Society*, III (1954), 146.

21. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 187.

22. Katherine Sproull, "The Forts of Duval County," *Papers of the Jacksonville Historical Society*, I (1947), 73.

23. *New York Tribune*, March 29, 1863.

24. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*. Ser. I, Vol. XII, 195. Cited hereafter as *ORN*.

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A Federal sentry is silhouetted against the sky during an occupation of Jacksonville. On the waterfront street are loaded Army wagons, presumably just brought ashore from a transport in the St. Johns river.



GENERAL JOSEPH T. FINEGAN, C.S.A.
Published by STARS, 1962



<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol41/iss4/5> CAVALRY CROSSING THE ST. JOHNS RIVER TO THE EASTERN SHORE

ing squadron and Fernandina and St. Augustine were excellently located for this purpose. When Flag Officer Samuel F. DuPont captured Port Royal, South Carolina, on November 7, 1861, the attack against Florida was imminent. "It is only a question of ships," Commodore DuPont said in January, 1862, and remedied this need by calling in vessels from the blockade.²⁵

Two other developments had a direct effect upon the federal invasion of Florida. The state Convention, which had called itself into special session in January, 1862, to consider the embarrassed financial condition of Florida, passed an ordinance requiring the transfer on or before March 10, 1862, of all state troops to Confederate service. Any force failing or refusing to make this transfer would be disbanded.²⁶ It was obvious that if the Confederate government assumed entire responsibility for Florida's defense it would save money, but, as Governor Milton had pointed out, it also mean that state troops would not be available for defense when needed.

Confederate military reverses in Tennessee in February, 1862, also added to Florida's security problems. On February 6, Ft. Henry was captured by Union gunboats and ten days later a Union army, commanded by General Grant, captured Ft. Donelson. "This great triumph for Federal arms," as the *New York Herald* described it, placed all of the lower South in jeopardy. On February 24, General Robert E. Lee ordered all available army units in East Florida to Tennessee without delay.

Without either Confederate or state troops to resist an invasion, Florida was vulnerable to attack. On February 28, Commodore DuPont sailed from Port Royal with twenty-six ships, including seven transports carrying a battalion of marines and a brigade of the Fourth New Hampshire Infantry under Brigadier General Horatio G. Wright. There was no opposition to the landing on Amelia Island, March 4, and Fernandina and Ft. Clinch were immediately occupied. Six days later Federal gunboats approached St. Augustine and municipal authorities, bowing to the inevitable, agreed to the peaceable surrender of the city the following day.

The final decision to proceed against Jacksonville was not

25. *Ibid.*, 477.

26. *Proceedings of the Convention of the People of the State of Florida held at Called Session, January 14, 1862* (Tallahassee, 1862), 107.

made until after the federals were already in Florida. They learned that several guns from Fernandina had been evacuated there, and they wanted to destroy the fortifications along the St. Johns between Mayport and Jacksonville. It was agreed, however, that "the permanent occupation of Jacksonville would not be judicious," and that the city would be occupied for only a few hours for reconnaissance purposes.²⁷ Thus, on the afternoon of March 8, a federal squadron consisting of four gunboats, two armed launches, and a transport with six companies of New Hampshire troops aboard sailed from Fernandina for Jacksonville. When it arrived at the mouth of the St. Johns a few hours later, its officers learned that the Confederates were evacuating the whole area, up to and including Jacksonville, and that the city was being destroyed.

The Confederate military, realizing that with the forces at hand Jacksonville could not be defended, ordered the city evacuated. On March 7, Mayor H. H. Hoeg announced this decision in a proclamation, but he counseled citizens to remain in their homes and to pursue their ordinary business activities.²⁸ Notwithstanding the Mayor's efforts, there was panic and hysteria. Scores of families hurriedly packed their belongings into wagons to move inland, at least as far as Baldwin where the Confederates planned to establish a line of defense. City offices were closed and all public records were buried.²⁹

Upon orders of Brigadier General James H. Trapier, commanding Confederate forces in East Florida, the following property was destroyed: eight sawmills, a large quantity of sawed lumber, an iron foundry and workshops, a machine shop, and a gunboat under construction for the Confederate Navy Department.³⁰ One mill was saved when the owner, a Mr. Scott, raised the British flag over it.³¹ The famous racing yacht *America*, which had recently run the blockade into Jacksonville, was taken

27. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 239. Cited hereafter as *ORA*.

28. *ORN*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, 500; Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 158-59.

29. According to Bigelow "A History of Jacksonville, Florida" 105; the records were not properly wrapped and "when exumed after the war, were found to be so badly damaged by water and decay, as to be illegible."

30. *ORA*, Ser. I., Vol. VI., 414-15. Itemized list of property destroyed, *New York Herald*, March 20, 1862.

31. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 161.

up the St. Johns to Black Creek and sunk there at Taylor's Landing to prevent its being captured.³² The rails, bolts, and spikes of the Florida Railroad from Fernandina to Callahan, and the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Central from Jacksonville to Baldwin were ordered taken up and the crossties burned.³³ It is questionable that this order was fully carried out.

A few hours before the Union forces arrived, a mob of Confederate "regulators," many of them refugees from Fernandina and St. Augustine, came into Jacksonville to loot and plunder property and businesses belonging to suspected Northern sympathizers. Stores and warehouses along Bay Street and the waterfront were broken into and a building at the corner of Bay and Hogan Streets was burned. The mob also set fire to the Judson House, a large four-story wooden hotel on Bay Street.³⁴

Jacksonville was surrendered on March 12 by Sheriff Frederick Leuders, and the Fourth New Hampshire Infantry quickly occupied the city. Guards were posted at street corners and in front of public buildings, and pickets were stationed in the outlying areas to guard against attack. Shortly after the landing, a deputation of Unionists, many of whom had been hiding with their families in the woods along the south side of the river, presented themselves as a welcoming committee. These people, for the most part prosperous merchants, lumbermen, and real estate dealers recently moved down from the North, claimed that many Floridians were really anti-Confederate but were afraid to voice their true feelings. Now that the federals had arrived, they would flock "to the protection of the American flag."

General Thomas W. Sherman arrived in Jacksonville on March 19, and at a public reception held in the town square (now Hemming Park) the Unionists urged him permanently to occupy Jacksonville and to fortify it as a stronghold. Calling themselves "The Loyal Citizens of the United States of America," these sympathizers held a meeting in the county courthouse and drafted resolutions which they presented to General Sherman. Denouncing secession and protesting the "forced contributions of money, property, and labor enlistments for military service pro-

32. Bigelow, "A History of Jacksonville, Florida," 116-17.

33. Dorothy Dodd, "Florida in the War, 1861-1865," in Allen Morris, *The Florida Handbook, 1959-1960* (Tallahassee, 1959), 42.

34. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 134.

cured by threats and misrepresentations," they asked for protection.³⁵

At first, the Federal occupiers considered remaining in Jacksonville for political reasons, hoping perhaps to encourage anti-Confederate feeling throughout Florida.³⁶ General Sherman even attempted to institute some rather premature reconstruction policies, and invitations were issued to a number of Florida counties to send delegates to a meeting in Jacksonville April 10, 1862, to discuss the organization of a new state government.³⁷ The Union high command, however, considered a permanent occupation to be a military mistake, and Jacksonville was ordered evacuated.³⁸ The Unionists were bitterly disappointed and many, fearful of remaining in the area without military protection, were happy to accept the invitation to accompany Union troops to Fernandina. There they became the responsibility of Lieutenant Colonel Horatio Bisbee, Jr., who after the war settled in Jacksonville.³⁹ The evacuation created a controversy in the northern press and even in Congress. The House of Representatives demanded "all the facts and circumstances" of the withdrawal from Secretary of War Stanton, but the request was denied. Lincoln, according to Stanton, did not believe that it was "compatible with the public interest at present to disclose" the reasons for the military evacuation.⁴⁰

There had been very little military activity in Jacksonville during the occupation. On the evening of March 24, Confederates captured two federal pickets who strayed beyond their defense lines. Early the next morning Confederate Lieutenant Thomas E. Strange, Company K, and Lieutenants William Ross and Charles Ross, Company I, Third Florida Infantry, supported by ten volunteers, attacked federal pickets at Brick Church along the western edge of town. Three federals were killed and four were captured. Lieutenant Strange was a Confederate casualty. On the night of March 27, a federal picket fired on a strange looking party discovered hiding in the woods, killing one person and

35. *ORA*, Ser. I., Vol. VI., 251-52; *New York Herald*, March 31, 1862.

36. *Ibid.*, 129, 255.

37. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 166.

38. *ORA*, Ser. I., Vol. VI., 124.

39. *Ibid.*, 130.

40. Pleasant D. Gold, *History of Duval County, Including Early History of East Florida* (St. Augustine, 1929), 136.

wounding another. An investigation revealed that it was a group of runaway slaves from Lake City.⁴¹ Another brief skirmish occurred March 31 between detachments of Union and Confederate troops near Three-Mile Creek just outside Jacksonville. No casualties were reported.⁴²

Jacksonville was occupied for a second time by an amphibious force which left Hilton Head, South Carolina, on September 30, 1862. It consisted of 1,573 men aboard four transports conveyed by six gunboats. Earlier that month the federals, employing artillery fire from two gunboats, had made two unsuccessful attempts to dislodge Confederates occupying St. Johns Bluff.⁴³ But now, superior Union firepower forced the Confederates to abandon their positions on the high bluffs overlooking the river, and on October 5 federal troops landed at Jacksonville.⁴⁴

It was a desolate, nearly empty city that they occupied. Captain Valentine Chamberlain of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteers described it as a city where "Grass and weeds grow rank and tall in the principal streets. Houses with blinds closed attest the absence of inmates. Stores with shelves but no goods. Churches deserted and gloomy. Depot, but no cars. . . . About the streets you see darkies, a few women, and a very few men. The men you are told, are away up the country, but you know they are in the rebel army. Provisions are very scarce and consequently dear." Captain Chamberlain reported that his soldiers broke into a drug store and carried off whatever they could find. He also said that he "saw for the first time a woman chewing snuff or 'dipping.'" ⁴⁵

A company of the Forty-seventh Pennsylvania Volunteers, aboard the *Darlington*, and a convoy of gunboats made a quick sortie up the St. Johns in search of rebel steamers. They captured the eighty-five foot steamer *Governor Milton* hidden in a creek near Enterprise and burned and raided a number of plantations and farms, particularly along Trout River and Cedar Creek.⁴⁶

On March 11 the Union forces evacuated Jacksonville, taking back with them to Hilton Head, South Carolina, "several white

41. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 167.

42. Gold, *History of Duval County*, 133.

43. *Ibid.*, 137-39.

44. *ORN*, Ser. I, Vol. XIII, 363, 369.

45. "A Letter of Captain V. Chamberlain, 7th Connecticut Volunteers," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XV (October, 1935), 93.

46. *ORA*, Ser. I., Vol. XIV, 131.

refugees, and about 276 contrabands including men, women and children.”⁴⁷

Again, in March, 1863, a large detachment of federal troops occupied Jacksonville. It included two regiments of South Carolina Negro volunteers under Colonel Thomas W. Higginson and reinforcements from the Sixth Connecticut and the Eighth Maine. The purpose of this occupation, according to one report, was “to collect Negro recruits, to plunder, and probably to inaugurate some vague plans of ‘loyal’ political reconstruction.”⁴⁸ The northern soldiers pitched their camp in west Jacksonville in the pine woods between Broad Street and Myrtle Avenue. The Brick Church became a picket station and guards patrolled the area along the edge of the cemetery that adjoined the church. Fort Higginson and Fort Montgomery guarded the terminus of the railroad and gunboats patrolled the river. A large number of trees were cut down in the city to make barricades and abatis, and field pieces were mounted at strategic street corners.⁴⁹

The presence of Negro troops particularly infuriated the Confederates under command of General Joseph Finegan who were stationed about ten miles west of Jacksonville. Confederate scouts and raiders frequently attacked pickets, ambushed reconnaissance groups, and shot lone soldiers wandering in the woods.⁵⁰ Federal soldiers, meanwhile, ransacked private property and sometimes unnecessarily abused non-combatants. The Union command agreed to the evacuation of Jacksonville’s women and children, and on March 17 they were transported safely to Lake City.⁵¹ During the next few days there were several skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces in the outlying areas west of the city.

General Finegan lacked sufficient troops for a full-scale attack on the city, but he thought he had enough guns to bombard it. His chief ordnance officer, Lieutenant Thomas E. Buckman, later a prominent Duval County official, suggested mounting a thirty-two pound rifled gun on a railroad car to be backed by a loco-

47. *Ibid.*, 131.

48. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 171-72; *New York Times*, March 22, 1862; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston, 1870), 97-129.

49. Bigelow, “A History of Jacksonville, Florida,” 120.

50. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 177.

51. *ORA*, Ser. I., Vol. XIV, 839.

tive to the western edge of Jacksonville. The Confederate command approved the idea and about three o'clock on the morning of March 25, Buckman and Private Francis Sollee, First Special Battalion, Florida Volunteers, took a detachment of gunners down the railroad to a point about a mile and a half from town and started firing. The gun did very little damage and its future effectiveness was diminished when the Federals destroyed much of the track leading into Jacksonville.⁵²

Plunder and booty were no longer readily available in Duval County and the surrounding area and by the end of March preparations were being made again to evacuate Jacksonville. Before the soldiers were loaded aboard their transports, however, someone set fire to the Catholic Church, the parsonage, and two private homes, all of which were completely destroyed. The next day several other buildings were fired including St. John's Episcopal Church. By April 2 at least a third of Jacksonville's main business area was in ashes. Perhaps the damage would have been greater had not General Finegan arrived shortly after the federals moved down river. His men extinguished the flames and saved a good bit of property.⁵³

The fourth and final occupation of Jacksonville, in February, 1864, was conceived by Major General Q. A. Gilmore commanding at Port Royal, South Carolina, and was sanctioned by President Lincoln. The plan was to occupy Jacksonville with a sizeable force and establish a supply base there. The federals hoped to push into interior Florida, capture Lake City, and the railroad across the Suwannee, and thus control the eastern approaches to Tallahassee. They wanted to sever Florida and thus destroy the vital food supply lines to the other Confederate states. Florida had become the "Breadbasket of the Confederacy," and was shipping a vast quantity of pork, beef, molasses, corn, potatoes, and other foodstuffs, to the Confederate military. The federals hoped that the Unionists in East Florida could organize a loyal state government, and to put this part of the plan into operation Lincoln sent John Hay as his personal representative to Jacksonville. Hay, however, was not very successful; the federals consistently overestimated their strength in Duval County. General Truman A. Sey-

52. T. Frederick Davis, "First 'Steam' Gun in Action," *The Journal of the American History Foundation*, II (Fall, 1938), 172-74.

53. *ORA*, Ser. I, Vol. XIV, 232-35.

mour commanded the expedition which landed at Jacksonville on February 7, 1864. It consisted of about 5,500 men aboard launches, transports, and gunboats. While the main body of the army was landing, a Union gunboat hurried up to McGirt's Creek and there captured a rebel steamer being loaded with cotton.

The bulk of the Union army did not tarry in Jacksonville but pushed on toward Baldwin, which was important as a rail head. They occupied that hamlet on February 9. Meanwhile, raiding parties marched southwest as far as Gainesville, north to Callahan and the St. Marys River, and south to Palatka on the St. Johns. Confederate forces commanded by General Finegan had meanwhile secured sizeable reinforcements, and on February 13 moved into a position near Olustee Station, on Ocean Pond just east of Lake City, which seemed to offer a maximum of natural protection.

Continuing their advance through the little village of Sanderson, forward units of the United States Army made contact with the Confederate outposts shortly after noon, February 20. The federal skirmish line kept advancing and by two o'clock a major battle was underway. By late afternoon the tide had turned in favor of the southern troops and the federals were retreating from a bloody battlefield. Losses were large on both sides, but there was no doubt but that the Confederates had scored a victory.⁵⁴ The Confederates pursued the retreating federals until they reached McGirt's Creek, just a few miles from Jacksonville. General Beauregard himself had come to Florida to lead a final assault on Jacksonville, but then decided that he lacked sufficient troops to continue the offensive.

Meanwhile, the federals brought scores of wounded soldiers back into Jacksonville where they turned churches and private homes into hospitals. They quickly erected fortifications to protect themselves against an expected Confederate attack. A line of breastworks was erected from Hogan's Creek to the area around Union and Beaver streets, then west to Davis Street, and southwest to McCoy's Creek. Seven batteries were placed along this

54. The Battle of Olustee has been described many times. See Luis F. Emilio, *A Brave Black Regiment, History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865* (Boston, 1891), 148-185; Mark F. Boyd, "The Federal Campaign of 1864 in East Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXIX (July, 1950), 3-36; Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 268-95.

line. On the St. Johns River, Yellow Bluff was fortified and Mayport was garrisoned.⁵⁵ Additional reinforcements were rushed in, bringing the total of Union troops stationed in Jacksonville to about 12,000.

A Union officer in Jacksonville described conditions in a letter which he wrote his wife. "Peach trees," he said, "are in full bloom. People are planting corn, and in the city they get early garden sauce,⁵⁶ such as green peas and the like from St. Augustine every day. . . . This is a rich country, . . . and [it is] the place to make money in times of peace. . . . A good many are finding it out . . . and when the war is over, very many Northern men will move *South*. . . ." ⁵⁷

By the end of March heavy drafts were being made on northern forces encamped in Jacksonville and an evacuation order was issued. Between April 8 and May 15 transports loaded with soldiers moved down the river every day, until there was only a force of about 2,000, mostly Negro troops, remaining. On the night of May 31-June 1 the federals attacked and captured Camp Milton, forcing the Confederates to withdraw their lines to Whitehouse and Baldwin.⁵⁸

On July 26, 1864, the last troops were withdrawn from Jacksonville and, except for occasional raiding parties from Fernandina and St. Augustine, there was no further military activity in Jacksonville for the remainder of the war.

55. Bigelow, "A History of Jacksonville, Florida," 130-131.

56. A colloquial expression for "garden vegetable eaten with meat."

57. Vaughn D. Bornet (ed.), "A Connecticut Yankee After Olustee," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (April, 1949), 386-87.

58. Davis, *History of Early Jacksonville*, 189-90.