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Harry P. Owens



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APALACHICOLA: THE BEGINNING

by HARRY P. OWENS

EDMUND M. BLUNT, editor of *The American Pilot*, stated in 1822, that there were only three points of destination on the gulf coast of the United States: New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola.¹ Another port, however, Apalachicola, was slowly beginning to grow, and within twenty years it would supersede Pensacola as a cotton port.

Ships from Pensacola approached Apalachicola by sailing along St. Rosa Island, past St. Andrews and St. Joseph Bays, and by sailing southward to the point of Cape St. Blas. After rounding that cape, an easterly course paralleled St. Vincent's and St. George's Islands. Between these islands and the mainland was Apalachicola Bay. The approaches to Apalachicola Bay, either from the west or from the southeast, offered little variation in scenery: thick growths of pine and oak trees, interspersed with beaches of white sand and occasionally a small shell mound.² A Swiss traveler, Heinrich Bosshard, recorded that it had taken him four hours to sail past St. George's Island, and all that he saw was a thick growth of trees, while the entire country appeared to "lie as level as the sea."³

Apalachicola Bay was accessible by three passes. The very shallow Indian Pass between Cape St. Blas and St. Vincent's Island was useful only to canoes and bateaux. St. Vincent's Island

1. Edmund M. Blunt, *The American Coast Pilot* (New York, 1822), 287.
2. *Ibid.*, 277; Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (New York, 1775), appendix, lxviii-ixix. See also facsimile edition with introduction by Rembert W. Patrick (Gainesville, 1962). William Darby, *Memoir on the Geography and Natural and Civil History of Florida* (Philadelphia, 1821), 20; John Lee Williams, *The Territory of Florida* (New York, 1837), 20-21. See also facsimile edition with introduction by Herbert J. Doherty, Jr. (Gainesville, 1962).
3. Heinrich Bosshard, *Anschaungen und erfahrungen in Nordamerika*, translated for the author by John M. Lippincott, 3 vols. (Zurich, 1853-1855), I, 604-09.

was triangular in shape and contained only a small amount of usable land. The main entrance to Apalachicola Bay, usually referred to as West Pass, lay between St. Vincent's and St. George's Islands. The narrower pass between St. George's and Dog Islands was known as East Pass. St. George's was about forty miles long and from one-half to two miles wide.⁴ Apalachicola Bay, from Cape St. Blas to the eastern end of St. George's Island, was about fifty miles long, but large oyster banks near St. Vincent's and midway of St. George's reduced the usable length by one-half. The depth of West Pass and the bay was a matter for continuing dispute; generally ships drawing ten feet of water could anchor within a mile or two of the river's mouth, while ships drawing less than eight feet could almost always reach the wharves at the new port.⁵

The passes between the islands and the large bay were not sufficient reasons to warrant the erection of a port. There were numerous other harbors, bays, and inlets along the west coast of Florida, but Apalachicola Bay had one asset that all others lacked: a river system that penetrated deep into the interior. This river, the Apalachicola, entered the bay through a maze of swamps and bayous. Andrew Ellicott, while surveying the thirty-first parallel, tried to locate the river's mouth, but he found "the coast so intersected, and cut up by numerous water courses, nearly of the same magnitude, that the true channel was not ascertained until the 13th. . . ." ⁶ He later reported that the Apalachicola had three main channels into the bay: the eastern one was filled with logs and was impassable; the western one was serviceable; and the middle channel branched off into several forks, some of which led to dead ends.⁷ The geographer, William Darby, described the Apalachicola as the only river, except the Mississippi, that had a true delta at its mouth.⁸ At its mouth the port of Apalachicola was established.

4. Williams, *Territory of Florida*, 22-23, 30; John Lee Williams, "Journal of John Lee Williams," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, I (April 1908), 38-39.

5. *Niles' Weekly Register*, XVI (March 1819), 44.

6. Andrew Ellicott, *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott* (Chicago, 1962), 212.

7. *Ibid.*, 235.

8. Darby, *Memoir on Florida*, 14.

Interest in the Apalachicola River kept pace with interest in Florida after Jackson defeated the Seminoles in 1818. *Niles' Register* reported that 300 Georgians had settled on the Chat-tahoochee,⁹ and Alexander Arbuthnot testified at his trial that "... hundreds of Americans came pouring into the Indian territory."¹⁰ These statements, while exaggerated, did show that the interior was being considered for settlement. James Grant Forbes' *Sketches* helped publicize the opportunities offered by the river system;¹¹ Darby's *Memoir* contributed its part to stimulating interest in the Apalachicola River,¹² and Florida newspapers added to the propaganda.¹³ *Niles' Register* predicted that the "fine harbor. . . will receive much trade from the interior and be the seat of a large commercial city - look at the map."¹⁴

Not all the comments about Apalachicola were complimentary. Bernard Romans complained of the "uncommon swarms of flies, gnats, and other insects . . . at St. George's Sound and Islands, they are intolerable."¹⁵ *Niles' Register* warned that few persons would migrate to Florida unless they were prepared for a lonely and isolated existence,¹⁶ while the *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser* claimed that "Apalachicola [has] . . . no convenient situation for a town; water is scarce and bad and the adjacent country low and unhealthy."¹⁷ John Reynolds, Gadsden County pioneer, detested Florida so much that he was reported as saying that "no man would migrate to Florida - not out of Hell itself."¹⁸

9. *Niles' Weekly Register*, XVI (March 1819), 40.

10. National Archives, Record Group 46, Senate Territorial Papers, "Minutes of the proceedings of the special court for the purpose of examining charges against A. Arbuthnot, St. Marks, April 28, 1818," npn.

11. James G. Forbes, *Sketches, Historical and Topographical, of the Floridas; More Particularly of East Florida* (New York, 1821), 120-21. See also facsimile edition with introduction by James W. Covington (Gainesville, 1964).

12. Darby, *Memoir on Florida*, 14.

13. *Pensacola Floridian*, November 5, 1821.

14. *Niles' Weekly Register*, XVI (March 1819), 44.

15. Romans, *Natural History of East and West Florida*, 227.

16. *Niles' Weekly Register*, XX (August 1821), 353.

17. *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, August 20, 1825.

18. J. Randall Stanley, *History of Gadsden County* (Quincy, 1948), 15.

Regardless of these diverse opinions, Apalachicola Bay offered an opportunity for those who would speculate on the future of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River valley. *Niles' Register* warned that Florida ports could easily be used by smugglers and that some "SPECULATIONS . . . in *human flesh* as in *other* commodities have been put on foot."¹⁹ The government acted to counteract smuggling, and on May 23, 1821, James Monroe informed Governor Jackson that the area between Cape Florida and the Apalachicola River had been established as a customs district. St. Marks was named as the port of entry and Mark Harden was appointed collector.²⁰

There is no evidence to indicate how many vessels put into Apalachicola Bay during the next year. It is reasonable to assume that coasting vessels may have used the anchorage or have used St. George's Sound as an inland passage. An important event occurred in the spring of 1822 when the brig *William and Jane*, the first square-rigged vessel to enter the port, sailed through West Pass. It loaded aboard 266 bales of cotton, "the product of the first seed ever planted in the neighborhood," for shipment to New York. Cotton cultivation, it was reported, had "succeeded beyond expectation" in the area.²¹

The potential commerce of the Apalachicola River system prompted the creation of a new customs district. The area between Cape St. Blas and Charlotte Bay was called the District of Apalachicola and Charles Jenkins, surveyor and inspector for the port at Pensacola, was named collector. Receiving his appointment in the spring of 1823, he soon moved to the mouth of the Apalachicola River,²² and was there when John Lee Williams visited on October 13, 1823.²³ Jenkins' time was taken up with many small matters and his letters to the comptroller's office contained numerous references to such items as pencils, ink, paper,

19. *Niles Weekly Register*, XX (March 1821), 49.

20. James Monroe to Governor Jackson, May 23, 1821, Clarence E. Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Florida, 1821-1824*, 26 vols. (Washington, 1956-1962), XXII, 55-56; *Niles Weekly Register*, XX (June 1821), 224.

21. *Niles Weekly Register*, XXII (June 1822), 224.

22. *Pensacola Floridian*, June 22, 1822; *Niles Weekly Register*, XX (June 1821), 224; Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXII, 658; *Niles Weekly Register*, XXIV (March 1823), 36.

23. Williams, "Journal of John Lee Williams," 40.

books, and reimbursement for a ten-dollar desk and chair set. Most of his questions concerned rules and regulations of the customs office, but he constantly asked, even pleaded, for a small boat.²⁴ In late 1824, Jenkins considered moving to St. Marks but changed his mind. He explained, "there is a prospect of getting a steamboat in this river, and several families and stores being established at this place. These circumstances induce me to alter my mind, and to prefer a continuance at this place, if I am allowed a boat and hands - but without I shall not remain here or at St. Marks."²⁵ There is no record that a steamer reached Apalachicola nor that any large number of families moved in. When he did not get his boat, Jenkins resigned and left Apalachicola in December 1825.²⁶

His replacement, David L. White, arrived early the following summer, and when he found that the customhouse was occupied, he erected a temporary camp for himself and his family about 300 yards back from the bay.²⁷ Conditions improved, and in September White informed the comptroller that a small store, thirty by twenty-six feet, could be rented for fifteen dollars a month. His request for funds was probably denied, because in July 1827, he notified Joseph Andrews, his superior, that he had built a small office at his own expense.²⁸ White, like his predecessor, continued to press for a small boat and hands. He tried to show the urgency of having a boat by predicting that Apalachicola would cease to be an expense within the next twelve to eighteen months since business was increasing rapidly and two loads of salt from Japan were expected any day.²⁹ With each

24. Charles Jenkins to Joseph Andrews, January 5, 1824, April 30, 1824, February 7, 1825, Record Group 36, Records of the Bureau of Customs, Letters from Collectors of Small Ports, Alexandria, Annapolis, Apalachicola, 1790-1834, National Archives. Cited hereafter as NA, RG 36, Letters from Small Ports.
25. Jenkins to Andrews, February 7, 1825, *ibid.*
26. David L. White to Andrews, September 14, 1826. Jenkins was not entirely alone on the bay because Henry Yonge of Apalachicola was nominated for the Florida legislative council in February 1823. See Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXII, 616, 640-41.
27. White to Andrews, July 1, 1826, NA, RG 36, Letters from Small Ports.
28. White to Andrews, September 14, 1826; White to Andrews, July 19, 1827, *ibid.*
29. White to Andrews, November 15, 1826, *ibid.*

passing month the hope that Apalachicola would become a large port increased. In early 1827, White wrote that he was expecting a river boat with "five thousand bales of Upland Cotton and some Sea Island cotton."¹³ Besides cotton, lumber, staves, cedar, and live oak timbers were arriving from the interior by way of the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers. Business improved so rapidly that New Orleans newspapers reported 5,000 barrels of merchandise was being sent to Apalachicola from Mobile and perhaps "double that amount" from New Orleans.³¹ William Neves, a merchant on Apalachicola Bay, advertised in Tallahassee that he had a "commodious store house" and could ship produce consigned to him to any port.³² The Pensacola newspaper complained that all the business was going to Apalachicola and erroneously reported that 50,000 bales of cotton would be shipped from that port in 1828.³³

Two important Apalachicola events occurred in 1827-1828. On April 24, 1827, the steamboat *Fanny*, under command of Captain John Jenkins, cleared Pensacola for Apalachicola. Two other boats, one of which was probably the 148 ton *Steubenville*, soon followed. During the winter, these vessels were busy bringing cotton and lumber down to the bay for shipment.³⁴ The *Fanny*, the *Steubenville*, the *Monroe*, and the *Virginia* reached the falls of the Chattahoochee at Columbus, Georgia, during the late winter and early spring of 1828, but the *Fanny* exploded just south of Columbus in January 1828.³⁵

30. White to Andrews, February 26, 182[7], *ibid*.

31. New Orleans *Weekly Louisiana Gazette* quoted in *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, August 6, 1835.

32. Tallahassee *Florida Intelligencer*, March 24, 1826.

33. *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, February 15, 1828; *Niles' Weekly Register*, XXXIV (April 1828), 124. This estimate was much too optimistic. The best estimates show that only 317 bales of cotton were shipped in 1828. See *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 24, 1836.

34. *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, April 27, 1827; White to Andrews, July 19, 1827, NA, RG 36, Letters from Small Ports.

35. Bert Neville, *Directory of Steamboats with Illustrations and Lists of Landings on the Chattahoochee-Apalachicola-Flint-Chipola Rivers* (Selma, 1961), 9; Green Beauchamps, "The Early Chronicles of Barbour County," Scrapbook of 1873, Department of Archives, Montgomery, Alabama, npn.

Of even greater importance was the beginning of legal existence for the little community. The territorial council constituted the trustees for West Point, Apalachicola Bay, in 1828. David L. White, Charles S. Masters, John Jenkins, Benjamin Buel, and Martin Brooks were named trustees and given authority to regulate liquor, gambling, and markets, and provide "regular streets, lots, fences . . . erect and keep wharves . . . [and] provide for interior police and good government."³⁶

In 1827, fourteen West Point businessmen petitioned Congress;³⁷ and in 1828 "every man in the place," a total of fifty-six,³⁸ signed a petition to the postmaster general. This growth led the territorial council meeting in Tallahassee to incorporate West Point in 1829. The government was to consist of an intendant and a four-man council, each of whom was supposed to be "an occupant of a house and a resident within the town limits."³⁹ All white males over the age of twenty-one who had lived in West Point for one month were eligible to vote. As business and trade connections increased the inhabitants petitioned the council to change the name of West Point so that it would conform to the name of the bay and river. Apalachicola became the official name in 1831.⁴⁰

Apalachicola was originally in Jackson County. It then became part of Washington County when that county was established in 1825, and finally when Franklin County was created in 1832, Apalachicola became its county seat. A county court and a court of common pleas which were needed by the merchants were set up.⁴¹ Since these courts lacked authority to decide cases arising

36. *Acts of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, 1827-1828*, 22-23.

37. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 1034-35. The petition asked for \$5,000 to clear the river; those who signed it were Brooks, Lathrop & Co., Benj. F. Buel & Co., Beveridge & Nowland, David L. White, William Congan, Joseph Baker, James Gordon, James Black, John Hugg, Sam Shannon, Jas. Martin, William Neves, Jr., David Myers, and Daniel Neves. Congress granted \$3,000 to clear the river. See *U. S. House Journal*, 20th Cong., 1st Sess., 457.

38. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 108-10.

39. *Acts of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, 1829*, 49-55.

40. *Ibid.*, 1831, 7; see petitions in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV.

41. Kathryn T. Abbey, *Florida, Land of Change* (Chapel Hill, 1941), appendix, 377; *Acts of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, 1832*, 44-45; *ibid.*, 1831, 9-12.

ing under admiralty law, the citizens of Apalachicola petitioned Congress to create a court. They complained that the judge for the western district was prevented by inadequate transportation from holding regular admiralty court sessions in their community.⁴² Port Collector Gabriel Floyd wrote both to the secretary of state and the comptroller emphasizing the need for an admiralty court, and action finally came in 1838.⁴³

Population statistics for Apalachicola are incomplete, especially for the early years. The 1828 petition showed fifty-six names, including ship captains and engineers, so part of the population was obviously temporary. Some of the merchants probably were not married and others had not brought their wives and families with them. A very rough estimate would suggest that between 100 and 150 people were living in Apalachicola in 1828.⁴⁴ The 1830 census did not separate the town of Apalachicola from Washington County, but added part of Jackson County to Washington for convenience. Washington County contained 276 white males, 234 white females, 183 male slaves, 200 female slaves, seven free Negroes, and three "aliens," for a total of 893. Adding part of Jackson County increased this total to 965. When the census was taken in 1838, Apalachicola was enumerated separately and the town contained 1,890 whites, 169 slaves, and seven free Negroes, for a total of 2,066.⁴⁵

42. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 656-58 (the petition was dated February 12, 1832); U. S. *House Journal*, 22nd Cong., 1st Sess., 422-23.

43. Gabriel Floyd to John Forsyth, April 10, 1834, Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 1003-04; Floyd to R. B. Taney, April 10, 1834, Record Group 56, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, Letters to and from Collectors of Small Ports, Series G, National Archives. Hereinafter cited as NA, RG 56, Series G; U.S. *House Journal* 22nd Cong., 1st Sess., 422-23.

44. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 110. This estimate assumed that twenty-five of the men brought their wives to Apalachicola and that they had at least twenty children.

45. *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830. Population*, Washington County, p. 209, sheet 105; *St. Joseph Times*, July 18, 1838. The 1838 census was taken in order to apportion delegates for the St. Joseph Convention of 1838. *Sixth Census of the United States; 1840*, enumerated 1,616 total population for Tallahassee; Escambia County (Pensacola) - 3,993; Montgomery, Alabama - 2,197; Mobile - 12,672; New Orleans - 102,193. *Compendium of the Enumeration of the*

The population varied greatly with the season. It was heaviest in the winter months when produce was coming down river and lightest in the fever-ridden summer months. In 1833 William Price, postmaster at Apalachicola, noted that for "4 to 5 months during the year there prevail[ed] a most malignant fever which carrie[d] away a large portion of the inhavitants {sic} and all who [were] able abandon[ed] the place during the sickly season."⁴⁶ Port Collector Floyd was one of those who left Apalachicola during the fever months.⁴⁷ The *Apalachicola Advertiser* reported that there had been no more than an average of seventy people in the town between August 1 and November 1, 1835; thirty-four of these had the fever and "five only escaped the disease."⁴⁸

Population had been drawn into the area to exploit the opportunities for trade. In a petition to Congress in 1832, Franklin County's delegation to the territorial council reported that goods valued at \$250,000 were stored in local warehouses, and they estimated that 150 houses and stores had been erected in Apalachicola. According to the legislators' optimistic prediction "the extensive and increasing cultivation of the lands in the upper country near the Rivers Apalachicola, Flint, and Chatahoochee, in the states of Georgia & Alabama, and in this territory, justifies the ascertainment [sic] that in a few years a town must grow at the mouth of the former river, second in size and importance to none in the Southwestern country except New Orleans."⁴⁹

Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, Sixth Census, 1840 (Washington, 1841), 96-99, 55, 50.

46. William D. Price to Andrew Stevenson (congressman from Virginia), October 1833, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 902-03. Price was trying to justify his salary and may have exaggerated the conditions.
47. Robert Mitchell to secretary of treasury, January 11, 1831, NA, RG 56, Series G. Mitchell was the collector of Pensacola and was trying to pay Floyd a sum of money but Floyd was in the "Western Country," so Mitchell sent the money to the secretary of treasury.
48. *Niles' Weekly Register*, IL (November 1835), 170. This statement must be weighed against the fact that the *Advertiser* supported the move to St. Joseph.
49. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 656-58.

The following year the Apalachicola petitioners described their community "as the third port in the Gulph [*sic*] of Mexico."⁵⁰ They were exaggerating the extent of commerce, however, and they were not consistent in their statements. In a petition signed in February 1834, they claimed imports were over \$1,000,000 and cotton exports equaled that amount.⁵¹ On April 10, 1834, they reported "exports and imports . . . but little short of Five Millions of Dollars," and predicted "double that sum for the year 1835."⁵² A more accurate statement was contained in the port collector's letter to his superior, Roger B. Taney, which stated that about 25,000 bales of cotton had been shipped from Apalachicola and imports amounted to \$1,200.⁵³ According to a report in the New York *Evening Sun*: "Apalachicola . . . [is] protected by St. George, St. Vincent and Dog Island; under these last lay the vessels of large berthen. Those of 11 feet of water come within four miles of the town, & 8 to 9 can be received at the wharves. During the active season, thirteen steam-boats plied in the river as far as Columbus, Georgia, transporting upwards valuable merchandise and downward 37,000 bales of cotton for exportation from this port - the quantity of both, and consequently the business will be considerably increased during the coming season."⁵⁴

Apalachicola merchants received their trade goods from New Orleans and New York through the coasting trade, and these records were not maintained by the customs office. The few records still in existence record boxes and barrels of merchandise entering Apalachicola, but do not contain any other detail. Advertisements in the *Apalachicola Gazette* show that the merchants offered a wide variety of articles such as champagne, brandy, rectified whiskey, apples, hay, potatoes, millstones, assorted hardware, foodstuffs, pistols, rifles, jewelry, and a wide assortment of clothes and cloth.⁵⁵ The log books of revenue cutters that patrolled the Gulf coast show that the captain

50. *Ibid.*, 984-86, petition of February 24, 1834.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Floyd to Secretary of State Forsyth, April 10, 1834, *ibid.*, 1003-04.

53. Floyd to Taney, April 10, 1834, NA, RG 56, Series G.

54. Tallahassee *Floridian*, September 6, 1835, quoting the New York *Evening Sun*.

55. *Apalachicola Gazette*, (1837).

boarded many merchant vessels entering Apalachicola Bay. Some of these vessels had cleared from Liverpool and contained cargoes of salt, others sailed from Havana with fruit, and some entered in ballast.⁵⁶ These goods, imported either through the coasting trade or from foreign ports, were eagerly sought by the up-river merchants. One vessel entered the bay in April 1828, and the captain, rather than unloading his cargo immediately, took a small boat and sailed to St. Marks. Five up-river merchants, impatiently expecting a shipment, used a steamboat to tow the vessel to the wharves, induced the first mate to clear his papers with the port collector, and then proceeded to unload the cargo.⁵⁷

The merchants tried to extend their business into the interior. William Price, advertising as the Apalachicola Drug Store, promised prompt attention to orders from physicians and planters.⁵⁸ Other storekeepers advertised in Columbus, Georgia, newspapers, and Hiram Nourse expanded his business by forming a partnership with a Columbus merchant.⁵⁹ In addition to supplying merchandise to the city at the head of navigation, the merchants sent goods to the increasing number of planters along the river.⁶⁰

As soon as the Indians were removed from the fertile lands in the interior, farmers moved in to plant their cotton. Henry and

56. National Archives, Record Group 26, U.S. Coast Guard, Treasury Department, Journals of Revenue Cutters. The vessels and masters for this period are as follows: *Alabama*, Winslow Foster, 1833; *Washington*, Daniel P. Auger, 1833; *Taney*, Henry D. Hunter, 1834; *Jackson*, Henry D. Hunter, 1835-1836; *Dallas*, F. Green, 1836. The coast guard cutters sailed along the Gulf coast and made periodic checks on the various ports; for this reason, it would be impossible to compile a complete list of ships or cargoes that entered the Gulf ports. Larger ports, such as Mobile or New Orleans, warranted a permanent vessel and inspector. Hereinafter cited as NA, RG 26.

57. White to Anderson, April 12, 1828, NA, RG 36, Letters from Small Ports.

58. Tallahassee *Floridian and Advocate*, May 4, 1830. Price later served as postmaster and port collector; he also practiced medicine. See Price to Stevenson, October 1833, Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 902-03.

59. *Columbus* (Georgia) *Enquirer*, September 1832-June 1833.

60. Marcus Cicero Stephens Papers, No. 3402, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Dale counties in southwestern Alabama, just south of the old Creek territory, had a small population in 1830, and it almost doubled ten years later. The Alabama Creek lands, south of the falls on the Chattahoochee, had been divided into Russell and Barbour counties shortly after the Indian Removal Bill passed Congress. They contained the largest population in eastern Alabama: Barbour in 1840 had a white population of 6,476 and 5,548 slaves; Russell contained 5,917 whites and 7,596 slaves.⁶¹

The major river port on the Alabama side of the Chattahoochee was Irwinton, later named Eufaula, and settlers had moved onto the bluff there before 1833. It was a rough frontier town at first, and the inhabitants regularly carried knives, pistols, and rifles. As the farming population increased, Irwinton developed a more sophisticated society, and its location at the head of navigation during the dry months caused it to acquire significant importance as a commercial center.⁶²

The two major towns in Georgia were Columbus, at the head of navigation on the Chattahoochee, and Albany, the head of navigation on the Flint River. Columbus was laid out for speculative purposes in 1828, and it became one of the boom towns of west Georgia.⁶³ Visitors venturing to Columbus were astonished at the rough frontier features. Mrs. Basil Hall included in her *Journey* a sketch of the community which showed a few log cabins facing streets which still had trees growing in them.⁶⁴

61. *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830* (Washington, 1832) 100-01; *Sixth Census of the United States, 1840* (Washington, 1841) 244-45.

62. Green Beauchamps, "The Early Chronicles of Barbour County," no page numbers; J. A. B. Besson, *History of Eufaula, the Bluff City of the Chattahoochee* (Atlanta, 1875), 4-12; Harry P. Owens, "A History of Eufaula, Alabama" (unpublished Master's thesis, Auburn University, 1963), 9-10; William Irwin to Lewis Cass, July 30, 1832, U. S., *Emigration of Indians*, Vol. III, 410; Irwin reported eighteen whites on the bluff.

63. J. R. Jones Papers on Muskogee County, Georgia, File No. 106, Special Collection Division, University of Georgia Library, Athens; George G. Smith, *The Story of Georgia* (Atlanta, 1900), 544-49; E. Merton Coulter, *Georgia, A Short History* (Chapel Hill, 1947), 222.

64. Margaret Hall (Mrs. Basil Hall), *The Aristocratic Journey; Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Months Sojourn in America, 1827-1828*, ed. Una Pope-Hennessy (New York, 1931), 238-40, sketch opposite 38.

Another traveler, complimenting its location on the banks of the Chattahoochee, called it "the frontier town of Georgia."⁶⁵ While the hotel there was large, travellers found it dirty and ugly, and one expressed his amazement at seeing Bowie knives and "Arkansas Toothpicks" at nearly every shop. The same visitor emphasized the crude existence by citing an example which he found as an endorsement on a note he received in change: "Here goes the last of an ample fortune, spent in debauchery and every sort of vice. So now farewell dissipation-farewell to the courtesan-to the gaming table-to sleepless nights and haggard days. Farewell-Farewell-Reform, reform, I will reform-Spent in a brothel."⁶⁶ Columbus was a frontier town, but it was soon to shed those characteristics and become one of the major commercial and manufacturing towns in west Georgia. By 1838, the streets were filled with cotton and 1,000 bales arrived every week during the season.⁶⁷ Merchants did not worry about slow business; their major problem was getting a supply of goods. This was the role that Apalachicola merchants could perform, and for this reason the community flourished during the 1840s.

Albany was the other Georgia town which related to Apalachicola. In December 1836, Albany was represented by only one store and a small house. When Nelson Tift arrived to begin his career in the mercantile business, he used barges to transport cotton to Apalachicola and returned with \$8,000 in merchandise. He conducted his business shrewdly and became the leading merchant in town, owner of several steamboats, and a land speculator.⁶⁸ The increasing farming population in Baker, Lee, Sumter, and Dooly counties used Albany as a trade center, and population and wealth increased.

65. Alexander Mackay, *The Western World; or Travels in the United States, 1846-1847*, 3 vols. (London, 1849), II, 264.

66. James S. Buckingham, *The Slave States of America*, 2 vols. (London, 1821), I, 515.

67. Paris Jenks Tillinghast to William Tillinghast, December 16, 1838, in William Norwood Tillinghast Papers, Duke University Library, Raleigh, North Carolina.

68. Nelson Tift, "Diary," No. 1219, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. *Apalachicola Gazette*, May 14, 1836, urged the merchants to develop commercial relations with the farmers on the Flint River which ran "through a portion of the richest cotton lands in Georgia. . . ."

The triangle between the Flint and Chattahoochee contained a mixture of good river bottom land as well as piney ridges sections.⁶⁹ Francis Ticknor, a young doctor, left Columbus during the early 1840s to practice medicine in that area. He complained to his friends about the loneliness and drabness of life at a place called Pine Woods about ten miles from Albany, and pointed out the perils that a young man could face: "A fellow is in danger here, thats a fact; he gets so lonesome, so sick of sickly faces and drawling voices and all that sort of thing that he is strongly disposed to fall in love with the first sympathizing Samaritan that passes that way."⁷⁰ As population increased in the Chattahoochee-Flint River triangle west Georgia lost its appearance as a frontier section. The 1840 census showed that for the twelve Georgia counties that used the river system as a means of transportation, the population was 55,188 whites and 34,064 slaves, or a total of 89,252."⁷¹

The Apalachicola River touched five Florida counties: Jackson, Washington, and Calhoun were on the west side of the river, Franklin County surrounded the mouth of the river, and Gadsden bordered the east side. Much of the produce from these counties came to Apalachicola, but Pensacola to the west and Tallahassee and St. Marks to the east also offered markets and merchandise to the Florida farmers. The 1840 population for these counties was:

	White	Slaves	Total
Jackson	2,045	2,636	4,681
Washington	507	352	859
Calhoun	732	410	1,142
Franklin	808	222	1,030
Gadsden	2,639	5,992	8,631
	<u>6,731</u>	<u>9,612</u>	<u>16,343</u> ⁷²

69. Thomas P. Janes, *Handbook of the State of Georgia* (Atlanta, 1876), 221-25.

70. Francis O. Ticknor to William Nelson, June 6, 1844. M. T. Furlow Collection of Ticknor Letters, Collection No. 30, Duke University Library.

71. *Sixth Census of the United States, 1840*, 232-37 (Baker, Decatur, Dooly, Early, Harris, Lee, Marion, Muscogee, Columbus, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot counties).

72. *Ibid.*, 454-55.

The farmers of the up-river country conducted their business with merchants at Columbus, Eufaula, and Albany, or they established commercial relations with merchants in Apalachicola. The farmers along the river had access to the river boats at many places; one captain listed twenty-six regular landings in 1844.⁷³ Apalachicola merchants established business connection with the increasing number of up-river planters and merchants. Steamboats left Apalachicola loaded with supplies for the up-country and returned with a cargo of cotton, timber, tobacco, and small lots of other farm produce. The major commodity was cotton. Fragmentary statistics show the amount of cotton handled by Apalachicola merchants during this early period: 1828-317 bales; 1829-1,500 bales; 1830-2,400 bales; 1831-5,500 bales; 1832-16,000 bales; 1833-26,000 bales; 1834-29,000 bales; 1835-32,864 bales; and 1836-51,673 bales.⁷⁴

The yearly commerce and navigation reports issued by Congress offer little help in determining the amount imported or exported from Apalachicola. These reports for the years before

73. Apalachicola *Commercial Advertiser*, January 8, 1844. The landings and their distance from Apalachicola were: Old Woman's Bluff, 7 miles; Fort Gadsden, 25; River of Sticks, 50; Iola, 75; Stone's Landing, 75; Richo's Bluff, 90; Stifnolgee, 100; Blountstown, 120; Ochesssee, 140; Aspalaga 147; Chattahoochee, 157; Brown's Ferry, 172; Neal's Landing, 172; Porter's Ferry, 207; Columbia, 219; Howard's Landing, 239; Fort Gaines, 259; Eufaula, 294; Roanoke, 314; Florence, 319; Jernigan's Landing, 324; Bickerstaff's Landing, 336; Bryant's Landing, 348; Fort Mitchell, 360; Woolforf's Bar, 368; and Columbus, 378 miles.

74. The sources for each year are as follows: 1828, *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 24, 1836; 1829, *ibid.*; 1830, *Merchant Magazine*, Vol. IV (February 1841), 195; 1831, *ibid.*; 1832, *Apalachicola Gazette*, March 24, 1836, *Columbus Enquirer*, August 4, 1832; 1833, *Columbus Enquirer*, August 30, 1834; 1834, *Niles' Weekly Register*, IIL (March 1835), 60, 248; 1835, *Apalachicola Commercial Advertiser*, September 30, 1843, and Floyd to Woodbury, November 28, 1835, NA, RG 56, Series G; 1836, *Apalachicola Commercial Advertiser*, September 30, 1843. Mobile, the second largest port on the Gulf, shipped the following amounts of cotton: 1830-53,697; 1831-59,934; 1832-76,220; 1833-79,900; 1834-79,613; 1835-144,949; 1836-150,924. For the Mobile statistics see *DeBow's Review*, XVIII (January-June 1855), 506. For an account of the rise of Mobile, see Weymouth T. Jordan, "Ante Bellum Mobile: Alabama's Agricultural Emporium," *Alabama Review*, I (July 1948), 180-202.

1838 do not list the separate districts of Florida; they treat the territory as a whole. Some separate schedules, such as number of ships registered or tonnage entering, occasionally list Apalachicola, St. Marks, or Pensacola, but these spotty statements preclude any generalization. In 1841, Congress did issue a report showing the gross revenue and the cost of collection for each Florida port. It shows that the Apalachicola collector's office did not pay its expenses until 1832. Apalachicola and Pensacola were about equal in cost and occasionally Apalachicola grossed more than Pensacola. St. Marks was generally smaller than either Apalachicola or Pensacola, but in one year, 1831, it conducted more business than the other two combined.⁷⁵

During the decade and a half after Major Jenkins moved to the mouth of the Apalachicola River, a town grew up, and it held the promise of becoming one of the largest ports on the Gulf. The people there built homes, warehouses, offices, grocery stores, a drug store, a hotel, and Dinsmore Westcott started the town's first newspaper, the *Apalachicola Advertiser*.⁷⁶ The merchants were handling 50,000 bales of cotton for the planters in the interior, and about fifteen river boats plied the river system. While this appeared impressive, Apalachicola was only a small town with no regular plan and the buildings were erected ". . . according to the notion of each person building."⁷⁷ Apalachicola, after surviving competition from the St. Joseph enterprise, dominated the cotton trade of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River valley. During the 1840s, it became the third largest cotton port on the Gulf of Mexico.

75. U. S. House of Representatives, *Collection of Customs Since 1829*, Document No. 61, 23rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 20-25.

76. Tallahassee *Floridian*, February 22, 1833; James O. Knauss, *Florida Territorial Journalism* (DeLand, 1926), 29-34.

77. *City of Apalachicola v. Apalachicola Land Company*, Circuit Court, Leon County, Florida, January 23, 1861, in *Office of the Clerk, Supreme Court, Tallahassee, Florida*.