

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 51
Number 1 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol 51,*
Number 1

Article 5

1972

Tallahassee Through the Storebooks: War Clouds and War, 1860

Clifton Paisley



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Paisley, Clifton (1972) "Tallahassee Through the Storebooks: War Clouds and War, 1860," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 51: No. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol51/iss1/5>

TALLAHASSEE THROUGH THE STOREBOOKS: WAR CLOUDS AND WAR, 1860-1863

by CLIFTON PAISLEY*

TALLAHASSEE was a prosperous community, and the tastes of her citizens on the eve of the Civil War ran to luxury goods and labor-saving devices as indicated in the daybook for 1860-1863 of the William P. Slusser store on Monroe Street, Tallahassee.¹ In the fall of the year, when schooners, barks, and brigs arrived at St. Marks port to pick up the some 50,000 bales of cotton shipped yearly out of Apalachee Bay, the vessels unloaded a variety of consumer goods that were eagerly awaited: bathtubs, washing machines to replace or at least to supplement scrub boards, and pumps and lead pipe to conduct water from cisterns to inside bath and utility rooms. Bird lovers purchased expensive cages for their canaries, and many paid \$40.00 to \$50.00 for cooking stoves, \$30.00 for refrigerators, and \$5.00 for ice cream freezers. Sillabub churns, patented egg beaters, and sad iron heaters were in demand. Expensive roofing and gutter materials – zinc, tin, iron, and lead – were used on the fine houses along McCarty and Calhoun streets and the stores on Monroe. While most of these commodities were purchased by the more affluent whose prosperity was buoyed by twelve-cent cotton, goods were available for everyone.² Especially were there toys for children, rich and poor. In the weeks before Christmas the Slusser store shelves were piled high with toy steamboats,

* Mr. Paisley is research editor, Graduate Research Office, Florida State University.

1. William P. Slusser daybook, Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Slusser, listed in the 1850 census records as a tinner, was born in Brookfield, Ohio, in 1825. He came to Tallahassee in 1849, and in 1859 bought from Smallwood, Earle & Co., successor to the New York creditors of J. Martin Williams, a store building Williams had owned on Monroe Street about two blocks from the capitol. Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, March 12, 19, and 26, 1892; Chancery File 1218, Office of Leon County Circuit Clerk, Smallwood, Earle & Co. v. R. H. Gamble, exr., estate of J. Martin Williams.
2. According to Harry Bates Brown and Jacob Osborn Ware, *Cotton* (New York, 1958), 543, the average annual price of cotton for the five years preceding the Civil War were: 1856, 13.2 cents a pound; 1857, 12.5 cents; 1858, 12.1 cents; 1859, 11.3 cents; and 1860, 12.3 cents.

trumpets, guns, china and crying dolls, mechanical squirrels, India rubber balls, and toys on wheels, many of which sold for only a few cents apiece.

Although military conflict was fast approaching, there was nothing in the buying habits of Tallahasseans in 1860 to indicate anything but boundless confidence in the continued prosperity of Middle Florida's cotton plantation system. There are 717 pages in the Slusser store daybook, covering the period 1860-1863; 364 pages are devoted to 1860 transactions. In December, the most active month, purchases amounted to \$1,439.-55, \$1,008.15 credit and \$431.40 cash.

August and September 1860 were the slowest months, with cotton just beginning to be marketed. Slusser used this period to restock his store, and on August 13, 1860, he left for New York with \$4,395 in checks and a small amount of cash. He expected to order most of his merchandise on credit. He returned September 21, and shortly afterwards the packing cases and barrels began arriving in Tallahassee.

Since Slusser's was a hardware store, its accounts reveal the extent to which money from Florida's uncertain cotton crop, sold at see-saw prices, was funneled into the purchase of heavy metallic manufactured goods. Prices were high: in the spring of 1860 G. W. Betton paid \$5.00 for a large lard can, a universally used commodity, while thirty-five iron spikes cost Frank K. Payne ten cents each. One fire grate sold on March 5 for \$20.00, and another for \$18.00. Zinc cost fifteen cents per square foot and valley tin for a roof, twenty-five cents a running foot. J. A. Edmondson paid \$3.25 for thirteen feet of valleys on March 15. In the same month J. R. Gregory and Co. paid \$8.00 for fifty-gallon oil cans and \$3.50 for fifteen-gallon containers.

Despite high prices, Tallahasseans and planters from Leon Gadsden, and Jefferson counties ordered large quantities of gutter and roofing materials in 1860. Slusser not only sold the materials, but sometimes supplied the labor at costs ranging from \$50.00 to \$200.00. P. B. Brokaw, on April 26, 1860, spent \$80.00 to install 200 feet of twenty-inch-wide gutters, \$35.37 for 141 feet of three-inch-wide pipe, and \$3.00 for twelve three-inch elbows.³ David C. Wilson spent \$110.95 to roof his store, and a

3. Slusser obtained most of the zinc, tin and other sheet metal, and similar supplies used for this work from the firm of Phelps Dodge & Co. of New

roof on Jacob L. Groner's store cost \$256.33. A similar job for David S. Walker cost \$290.12. The bill included \$175.04 for the store roof, in addition to flashing, gutters, and installation of zinc pipe.

Slusser also did small jobs – sometimes only soldering or the installation of a stove – for the telegraph company, the gas company, West Florida Seminary, and the Leon County courthouse and jail. On March 3, 1860, Slusser collected \$255.00 from the federal government for work at the marine hospital at St. Marks.⁴ He also repaired or replaced copper gutters on the capitol, and one of his most lucrative contracts was with the Tallahassee Railroad, which operated between St. Marks and Tallahassee. In one year – January 4, 1860-January 4, 1861 – Slusser covered the tops of one passenger and seventeen freight cars with sheet metal at a charge of twelve and one-half cents a square foot. The passenger car, including ventilators, cost \$63.50. The freight car covering was \$38.57 for each unit. The total work for the railroad for the year was \$762.34. One of the jobs, January 4, 1861, was to repair a brass and sheet iron cylinder on the engine James Ross for \$1.25. Slusser also did some metal covering on two cars of the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad.⁵

Pump and plumbing systems for cisterns were in demand in 1860. On February 9 Slusser installed a \$15.00 rotary pump, a \$5.00 suction pump, seventy-one feet of lead pipe, and forty-four feet of four-inch pipe for William K. Beard at a cost of \$54.40. Other accounts were with Mrs. M. A. Long for Brevard, for a \$5.00 cistern pump and twenty-eight feet of pipes; Green A. Chaires, a \$5.00 cistern pump and pipes; Joseph J. Williams, a \$15.00 rotary pump and pipes; R. Hodgson, a \$15.00 rotary pump and pipes; G. W. Parkhill, a \$15.00 rotary pump; the

York. His record of invoices shows more than \$2,000 in purchases from this company in 1860. Robert Glass Cleland, *A History of Phelps Dodge* (New York, 1952), 37, states that Phelps Dodge carried on the largest business in metals of any mercantile firm in the United States and probably in the world at this time. Brokaw's house, still standing on Miccosukee Road, was one of Tallahassee's show places.

4. The marine hospital was built shortly before the Civil War about 100 feet from the old Spanish fort at St. Marks. Large stones from the fort ruin were used for the foundation.
5. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, December 8, 1860.

City Hotel (DeMilly), a No. 2 Douglas pump, \$5.00; and Major John Beard, a \$5.00 cistern pump and pipes.

A few Tallahassee homes contained bathtubs, and they needed occasional repair. Dr. P. P. Lewis had Slusser paint and repair his tub for \$1.25, and Colonel Robert Gamble paid \$1.50 to have feet installed on his sponge bathtub. Repairs on Council A. Bryan's hip bathtub, in February 1860, cost twenty-five cents. There was also an active sale for new bathtubs. General William Bailey purchased one for \$6.00 and paid twenty-five cents for drayage from the depot. Twenty-two were sold between May and October 1860.

James Kirksey paid \$6.00 for one, while William R. Pettes paid \$6.50, and a sponge tub cost John Galbraith \$6.50. Richard Bradford ordered a sponge tub for \$6.00 and hand shower for fifty cents; James K. Tucker's oval tub cost \$8.00, and there was a twenty-five cent drayage; E. L. Villepigue, Walter Gwynn, and John L. DeMilly each paid \$7.00 for oval tubs, the same price paid by C. H. Latrobe for a tin bathtub. Robert Williams, W. T. Carpenter, A. P. Amaker, Alexander Shine, Alex Hayward, Robert Gorman, J. A. Dickey, Mrs. H. H. Brown, Dr. William Bradford, Preston Tatum, P. L. Warden, and W. N. Hein also bought tubs. Slusser sold children's bathtubs to Colonel Robert Gamble for \$3.25 and Mrs. Theodore Brevard for \$2.75.

George A. Croom, October 5, 1860, bought a washing machine for \$15.00. The following day Mrs. Joseph Alston bought one, and on October 22 John L. DeMilly ordered a "conical washing machine."⁶ Slusser sold two washing machines on December 8, 1860, and Mrs. Susan Blake bought a machine on January 7, 1861. Mrs. William Fisher, Mrs. Bond, and Benton Pope purchased machines. Slusser also operated a sewing machine repair service.

Stoves, mainly cook stoves, were in demand. Occasionally a Franklin stove sold for \$15.00; parlor stoves cost \$20.00, while a small box stove was priced at \$10.40, which was what Dr. John Bond paid on March 24, 1860. The range was the most expensive, costing \$40.00 to \$50.00 or more, but there were

6. By 1860 some twenty-nine factories in ten states were producing washing machines. See John W. Oliver, *History of American Technology* (New York, 1956), 268.

several customers. General William Bailey, one of the wealthiest men in Florida, bought an expensive kitchen range, a No. 8 Challenge costing \$55.00 or \$64.40 installed.⁷ The No. 10 Empire cook stove, at \$47.00 was also popular, and James B. Gamble bought a No. 7 range for \$42.00, \$45.99 installed. Expensive fire grates also were in demand: David S. Walker paid \$18.00 for one in November 1860, and Francis Eppes paid \$14.25 for two iron fenders and two fire dogs. A "fine fire grate" bought by James H. Bull, January 9, 1860, cost \$21.00, and two days later he secured a \$36.00 grate and a trivet costing \$1.75. The following December Eppes purchased another \$21.00 grate. Dr. John S. Bond bought two fire grates in November for \$18.00 and \$20.00.

Tallahasseeans and their planter neighbors not only sought the latest manufactured goods of whatever kind, but also newly invented gadgets and other imports. Sad iron heaters or furnaces sold for \$5.00; house bells for \$1.50. Copper wire and brass turns were needed to ring the bells. James H. Bull and Joseph J. Williams bought folding stepladders for \$5.00, while a "patented fly trap," selling for the same price, was in demand. Bull bought a fly trap, a "garden and fire engine," which cost \$35.00, and a plate warmer priced at \$9.00. Walker ordered a "fine ice cooler" for \$4.50. English coffee pots were priced at \$5.50 and \$6.50, and Britannia-ware teapots sold for \$2.00. Planished tea kettles and dishpans were available. Colonel Robert Gamble secured twenty lightning insulators for \$4.00. New agriculture and gardening tools were sold. Guano distributors, selling for \$1.00 each, were purchased early in 1860 by Amos Whitehead, Dr. Edward Bradford, William K. Beard, and Captain William Lester.

House lighting was changing from candle to lamp, but Tallahasseeans seemed to be in some doubt about what kind of lamps to buy or oil to burn. Rape seed oil was favored by some, such as F. L. Villepigue, Joseph Chaires, and Dr. W. F. Robertson, but it was expensive, cost \$2.25 a gallon. Slusser

7. Civil War Governor John Milton labelled Bailey the richest man in Florida. See an unpublished biographical sketch of Bailey by Susan Bradford Eppes in David S. Walker Library, Tallahassee. Formerly of Jefferson County, Bailey owned extensive plantations there and in Leon County, and he operated a cotton mill at the edge of Monticello. He moved to Tallahassee shortly before the outbreak of the war.

purchased burning fluid, a mixture of high proof alcohol and redistilled turpentine, from Aaron Seeley at \$26.39 a barrel. Burning fluid provided a bright flame, and it was the most widely used lamp oil at this time, despite the fact that it was extremely dangerous.⁸ One customer from Quincy burned camphrene, a pine oil distilled from spirits of turpentine, and bought a \$3.00 camphrene lamp. Sperm and whale oil had been abandoned by this time, but some still used lard or lard oil. A. R. Paul of Quincy and D. C. Wilson of Tallahassee were among those who used gas for lighting. Wilson ordered thirty-one feet of gas pipe for \$10.00 in January 1860, and paid thirty-eight cents for a tin piece for his gas fixture. A gas company in Tallahassee evidently manufactured the fuel. Kerosene, which had only recently come on the local market, was gaining favor, and former Governor Richard Keith Call, John Craig, and George W. Scott used it in their homes.

Fine lamps, whatever the fuel, were in vogue. A "kerosene lamp" sold for \$3.50, but with all fixtures it could cost \$5.00 or more. In March 1860, Stephen Ellenwood of Monticello bought three solar lamps for \$6.75.⁹ Some Tallahasseeans, among them W. G. M. Davis, Dr. James Randolph, and Robert G. Shepard, owned "moderator lamps," with elaborate mechanisms for forcing viscid oils, such as rape seed oil, up a wick.¹⁰ F. L. Villepigue bought a "fine pressure lamp" for \$11.00, D. W. Gwynn ordered a center table lamp costing \$8.00, and William H. Branch secured a lamp for \$6.00. On October 30, Ellen Call Long paid \$5.38 for a lamp set for her father, former Governor Call.

Besides cook stoves, customers also purchased accoutrements for the kitchen and dinner table from Slusser's. Ice cream freezers were a novelty, and they were in demand in Tallahassee. Mrs. Robert Williams purchased one for \$4.50 on May 26, 1860, and Mrs. William H. Branch ordered one on June 5. Barton

-
8. Burning fluid gained great popularity in North America as the price of whale oil rose at mid-century, but many persons were injured or killed in accidents involving its use. Loris S. Russell, *A Heritage of Light: Lamps and Lighting in the Early Canadian Home* (Toronto, 1968), 93.
 9. Solar lamps, designed principally for the use of lard, came onto the American market about 1850, most having been manufactured in Philadelphia. *Ibid.*, 123.
 10. *Ibid.*, 88.

Pope secured a six-quart freezer for \$7.50 on June 8, and four days later E. L. T. Blake purchased a four-quart Messen freezer for \$5.50. A "patented" freezer cost Colonel Finlayson of Jefferson County \$5.50 on June 25. Sillabub churns, used to make a wine and milk dish and selling for seventy-five cents, were popular. James H. Bull ordered a refrigerator on May 25 for \$30.00, and T. W. Brevard bought one on July 28. Turkey roasters were priced at \$5.50 and egg beaters, \$1.25.

Of the 12,343 persons living in Leon County in 1860, 9,089 were slaves; only a comparatively small number of the 3,194 whites were propertied with incomes from plantations or business enterprises. Only the more affluent could afford expensive things like washing machines, refrigerators, and cook stoves. Most people could afford only the basic necessities. Slusser's records show what white collar workers, mechanics, and common laborers were earning. The clerks in the store received \$2.00 to \$2.25 a day, but any time away from work meant a loss of pay. William Haar lost \$9.00 for being absent "on a spree" on November 5-8, 1860, and he and A. B. Hutchins, another clerk, were docked \$2.25 and \$2.00, respectively, for being absent on Christmas Day, 1860. Slusser paid his help's board bill and a few other expenses including laundry, which usually averaged seventy-five cents to \$1.25 a month for each man. Aunt Lucy, probably a free black, was the laundress. John, the barber, may also have been a free Negro. His and Aunt Lucy's poverty are indicated by the size of their occasional purchases. John's most expensive item was a barber's block for \$5.00. Slusser paid \$1.00 to have trees in front of his store cut down, then \$1.50 "for hire of Negro for planting trees." Mechanics and skilled craftsmen were relatively well paid. Those doing routine gutter work earned \$2.00 a day, and skilled roofers and metal craftsmen received \$4.00 a day.

Slusser's store contained merchandise for the less affluent. Water sprinkling cans cost seventy-five cents; bread toasters, \$1.00; salad washers, seventy-five cents; oyster knives, thirty-eight cents; coffee machines, \$1.50; milk strainers, \$1.75 a dozen; turks head brushes, \$1.25; cob web brushes, \$1.00; and Japanese brooms, fifty cents. There were an assortment of pots, dish pans, and sauce pans available at twenty-five cents to fifty cents apiece.

Slusser carried on a large repair business, even on pots and pans. Leon County's major cotton planter, Joseph J. Williams, sent in a slop pail for a new bottom, twenty-five cents, and a water pitcher for repairs, thirteen cents. Former Governor John Branch had a new thirteen-cent bottom put on his coffee pot. When built-in obsolescence and the throw-away habit both were unknown, Slusser repaired carriage lamps, the soda fountain at Gregory and Tatum's, the parasol of General Whitfield's daughter, and on one occasion, Mrs. John Craig's corset.

Bird cages frequently were brought in for repairs, and Slusser sold many new ones, including three in January 1860. D. Bray Maxwell paid \$4.00 for a canary cage; James H. Bull ordered a "fine bird cage" for \$8.00; and another sold for \$4.50. Arvah Hopkins purchased one for \$6.00 and David B. Hogue for \$6.50. Mrs. Anderson and Colonel Robert Gamble sent their parrot cages in for repairs. A. Gallie, the Scottish merchant, paid \$4.00 for a "mocking bird cage" and John Carson \$5.00 for a squirrel cage.

The new stock that began arriving in the fall of 1860 encouraged new business at the Slusser store. In addition to housewares, pumps, gadgets, and luxury goods, there were many toys – whistles, tops, false faces and noses, mechanical squirrels, and dolls of many kinds. Mrs. William Bradford on one visit purchased a gun, a glass dog, and a glass bird; Mrs. Nat Holland secured a wax angel, toy trunk, toy dog, and top. Some well-to-do customers wanted expensive hobby horses. George T. Ward, James H. Bull, and Rudolph Files, of Jefferson County, bought hobby horses for \$11.00, \$9.25, and \$12.50, respectively. There were many sales of cheaper horses along with children's cabs and carriages for \$5.00.

In November 1860, the store began selling items like a toy on wheels, \$1.50; a rolling doll, fifty cents; pollyoscope toy, seventy-five cents; toy circus, \$1.75; Japanese toy, seventy-five cents; toy girl knitting, \$1.00; china doll, \$3.00; toy parlour, \$1.50; and tool chest, \$2.25. India rubber footballs and small India rubber balls were sold and occasionally a box of "alphabetic letters" for sixty-three cents. A rabbit drummer, toy guns, and bugles cost fifty cents. Sales increased in December, reaching a peak just before Christmas. General William Bailey on December 20 bought \$5.43 worth of toys, including two trans-

parent slates, four India rubber balls, one April butterfly, four grace hoops, three china baskets, and four toy guns.

December not only meant Christmas, but in 1860 it was also the season when talk of secession was loudest in Tallahassee. On December 22 Florida voters elected delegates to the secession convention scheduled to meet on January 3, 1861. Perhaps it is not surprising that there were active sales of toy guns, bugles, drums, and occasionally papers of torpedos and soldier hats. Mrs. Thomas Maxwell bought a doll and a toy sword, and Mrs. G. C. Townsend bought a box of "alphabetic letters" and a toy gun for thirty-eight cents each.

The political crisis seemed to have had little effect on business at the Slusser store. On December 1, 1860, General Bailey ordered \$66.17 worth of gutter and flashing for his house.¹¹ It took two men two days to do the work. On December 3 Mrs. Bailey ordered \$27.21 worth of household supplies, including an \$8.00 plate warmer, a \$3.25 egg boiler, a \$5.00 chafing dish, a coffee piggon, a waffle iron, and a sillabub churn.

The convention voted on January 10 to take Florida out of the Union, and the next day the delegates signed the secession ordinance at a public ceremony. Secretary of State F. L. Villedieu affixed the great seal of Florida to the document, then announced in a "clear and distinct voice" (as a witness said) that Florida was now "an independent nation."¹² On that very same day he ordered a gallon of rape seed oil at the Slusser store. The following day Mrs. Catharine Murat, who fired a ceremonial cannon at the end of the ceremony and whose late husband, Achille Murat, was a nephew of Napoleon, purchased

-
11. This doubtless was for the house later known as The Columns, at Adams and Park Streets. Bailey had owned this place since 1847 and occupied it after moving to Tallahassee. As late as March 2, 1860, the house was occupied by Colonel R. H. Gamble and other members of his family. The Slusser storebook identifies him as "brick house" Gamble to distinguish him from his father, Colonel Robert Gamble. Marjorie Fain, "Some Extracts From the History of the Gamble Family in Florida," *Tallahassee Historical Society Annual*, I (February 1934), 40-55. Built about 1830, The Columns was one of the first brick houses built in Tallahassee. In August-October 1971, the Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce moved it to Park and Duval streets to serve as its headquarters.
 12. William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913; facsimile edition; Gainesville, 1964), 67.

a thirty-eight cent coffee pot.¹³ Trade was normal January 11, and Slusser sold conical washing machines to Mrs. Bond and Mrs. William Fisher, a \$40.00 Daylight stove to Dr. Galphin, and a \$2.00 slop pail to General Bailey. Joseph Chaires paid \$26.51 on his 1860 account.

Despite the fact that the Federal blockade would soon cut off the regular supply of metal goods, zinc, lead, tin, and iron products continued to sell. On April 26, 1861, General Bailey ordered \$16.25 for more gutter work, apparently to complete the job only partially accomplished the previous December. In June Joseph John Williams had gutters installed on his Calhoun Street home; the job came to \$129.15.¹⁴ Edward Gamble also had some gutter work done which cost \$45.95. In June Captain William Fisher bought a new empire stove for \$28.00, and Joseph Whitner ordered 120 feet of lightning rods and points, which came to \$31.50. George W. Betton bought a kitchen range for \$35.00 in July, and in October 1861, Joseph Williams ordered a \$20.00 fire grate. Metals were now becoming scarce, and Frederick R. Cotten purchased sixteen feet of scrap pipe on October 30. On December 9, 1861, A. Nims bought a \$15.00 rotary pump, the only one sold that year.

Tallahasseeans continued to purchase new bathtubs and to repair older tubs. Colonel A. A. Fisher bought a hip bathtub on March 8, 1861, and on September 21, he ordered a zinc hip tub for \$7.00. Meanwhile, on April 17, he had returned the first tub and replaced it with a "large bath tub with pipe and stop cock," which cost \$16.00. Mrs. Sally Branch bought an oval tub costing \$8.00 on May 14, and B. C. Lewis secured for \$15.00 a tub on June 5. Lucian Duval paid \$8.00 for a tub on June 13. Mrs. Edward Bradford purchased an oval tub for Pine Hill Plantation on July 3, and on July 29 James H. Bull bought a \$15.00 tub. On November 11, 1861, General Bailey had his old tub repaired and repainted. On July 25, 1863, Governor John Milton secured a sponge bathtub costing \$25.00, a shower bath costing \$10.00, and a rope and pulley, apparently part of the shower mechanism, for \$1.25. Milton must have established a record as one of Florida's cleanest governors for

13. A. J. Hanna, *A Prince in Their Midst* (Norman, 1946), 244.

14. The Williams House, at 217 North Calhoun Street, was razed in 1955, and the land is now used for a drive-in-bank.

he added to his lavatory equipment on August 18, 1863, with two \$4.00 wash pans and two \$3.50 wash pans.

There always had been a demand in Tallahassee for guitars, fiddles, fiddle strings, and other musical supplies, and some items as they became available continued to be sold in wartime. James S. Tucker bought a \$6.00 banjo in April 1861, and on June 11, 1863, Governor Milton bought six guitar strings for \$2.25. New bird cages were not available, but older ones were repaired. In March 1863 Francis Eppes had some work done on a squirrel cage which cost him fifty cents. In December 1862, James B. Gamble's purchases included a chess table, \$15.00, wood mats, \$7.00, and a plate warmer, \$7.00. Whimsical items such as false noses with whiskers, china dolls, crying dolls, and toys of every description continued to be in demand. In December 1861, Joseph J. Williams purchased \$4.35 worth of toys, and Colonel Robert Gamble paid \$3.70 for two china dolls, one harmonica, two china sets, two cuckoo birds, and a toy engine.

Beginning May 21, 1861, with the opening of hostilities, Slusser started selling military supplies to the state of Florida - canteens, mess kits, nests of kettles, tin plates, and other equipment were ordered. The first purchase was for \$72.25, and by the end of May Florida had bought \$1,005.27 worth of equipment. The largest order was placed May 31: \$834.25 worth of equipment - 104 mess kits, twenty-six and one-half dozen mess pans, 1,759 canisters, and four goods boxes.

How Slusser had been able to stock military equipment is not evident from the store records, but state purchases sent sales zooming from \$900.98 in April 1861, itself a good month, to \$1,401.20 in May 1861. Of the May transactions \$142.20 was cash and \$1,259 credit. Slusser received payment from the state on June 15. Between May and December 1861, he sold \$1,706.26 worth of equipment to the state, receiving prompt payment. Besides kitchen and mess equipment, Slusser delivered 500 belt buckles at twenty-five cents each. Between June and August 1861, he sold \$203.80 in cartridge boxes, at twenty cents apiece, to James B. Purdy, evidently a military purchasing agent, who paid for the material in his own name.

In October 1861, Slusser began selling equipment to the Confederate government, and these transactions, through November 1862, amounted to \$564.75. In the early days of

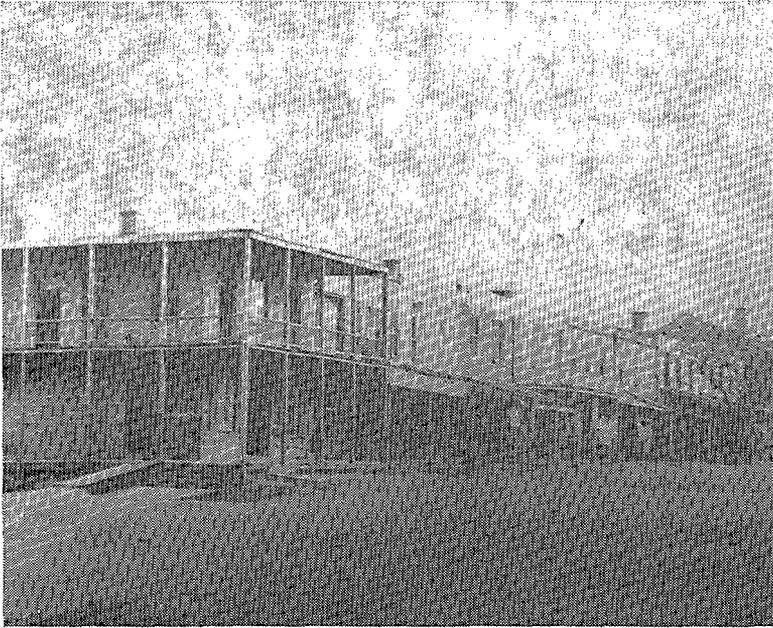
mobilization some military supplies were sold to individuals, either for themselves or members of the family or to outfit a company. Thus on May 21, 1861, William H. Branch, and Dr. John S. Bond each purchased a twenty-five cent canteen. Slusser sometimes lined boxes with zinc, for use on military campaigns, charging \$4.00 for a medium size box and \$10.00 for a large one. On July 29, 1861, Wash Parkhill ordered \$55.72 of equipment including canteens and camp dinnerware. P. B. Brokaw secured \$29.00 worth of army goods on September 27. Slusser helped outfit George W. Scott when he organized a cavalry unit. Altogether, his military sales during 1861, exclusive of small sales to individuals, amounted to \$2,476.08.

Slusser also continued to supply civilian purchasers from his dwindling stocks. Sometimes the entries jostle together oddly in the storebook. Following a sale of \$74.90 in military equipment to the state on May 22, 1861, is the sale of a china doll to Mrs. Murat for \$1.50; a powder flask to "Kirksey and nephew Jack" for \$1.75. One of the next entries was the purchase of a child's carriage by Charles S. Findlayson of Jefferson County.

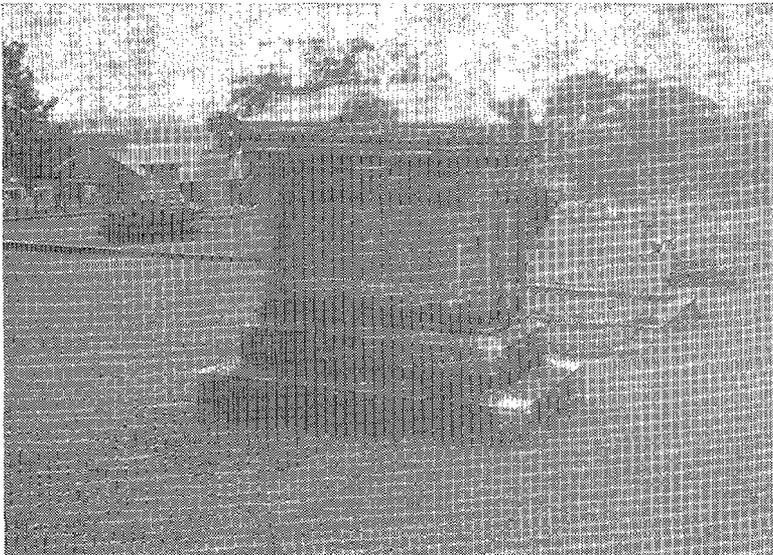
Slusser's personal involvement in the war, in addition to his being a supplier, is indicated by occasional daybook entries. On May 21, 1861, is entered a disbursement of \$20.00 cash for subscription "to the relief of the poor"; on June 8 \$5.00 "cash paid for clothing of volunteers"; on July 8 a \$25.00 subscription to T. A. and John Bradford "for equipping the Leon Hussars camp outfit"; and on November 6 a payment of \$5.00 "for the relief of Charleston." On April 7, 1862, the daybook notes \$10.00 "paid out for hospital," and again on September 27, \$50.00 "for hospitals." The daybook in the spring and summer of 1862 records the movement of his brother, Levi, to and from military camp, and in April 1863, Slusser invested \$2,000 in Confederate bonds.¹⁵

With the military orders Slusser was able to keep pace with his pre-war civilian business, but after the Confederate government purchase of November 3, 1862, the daybook records no

15. Slusser apparently was a bachelor or widower without any children, but he was from a large family, several of whose members lived in Vandalia, Illinois, where his parents were buried. Levi and another brother, Isaac, apparently lived in Tallahassee. Probate File 1036 A and B, Leon County Courthouse.



View of Monroe Street looking northward from Jefferson *circa* 1870. The Slusser-Williams store was third or fourth from the corner (Picture courtesy of Mrs. John W. Henderson, Tallahassee)



William Pitt Slusser's grave, Tallahassee City Cemetery

more sales directly to the Confederacy or to the state. Slusser apparently was able to obtain some goods passing through the blockade or coming down illegally from the North. An entry in November 1861, indicates an agent had been sent to Columbus, Georgia, probably on a buying trip; and in August 1862, Slusser went to Richmond, Virginia, for two weeks. That he was able to get goods from some source is indicated by sales for December 1862, totaling \$770.93, about half the prewar level.

The shortage of supplies was reflected in the sale of lamp oil. Tallahasseeans had been utilizing kerosene for lighting, but the war severely limited the supply. On May 10, 1861, Mrs. Dozier bought a \$3.50 kerosene lamp, and there were other such sales indicating buyers expected kerosene to continue to be available. On November 2, 1861, St. John's Episcopal Church obtained four gallons at the old price of \$1.50 a gallon. However, by September 1862, the price had more than tripled, and Colonel Robert Gamble paid \$2.50 for only one-half a gallon. Gamble secured a solar lard lamp for \$3.00. In March 1863, Robert H. Gamble, Thomas Hayward, and Edward Houstoun paid \$4.00 for lard lamps, while many others were bringing in their old lard lamps for repairs. Rape seed oil also was expensive, and there was little available; A. B. Noyes paid \$3.00 on January 5, 1863, for half a gallon. Burning fluid continued to be used, but the price was also rising, and in June 1863, it was selling for \$2.00 a half gallon,

Clothing was very expensive. On November 19, 1862, Slusser paid \$18.00 for a pair of trousers, and shortly afterward \$30.00 for a coat and \$2.00 for a handkerchief, prices more than twice as high as they had been two years earlier. Governor Milton on January 2, 1863, purchased three large lard cans for \$45.00. Foreign goods now sometimes entered the market, apparently at greatly inflated prices. Joseph John Williams paid \$8.00 on November 13, 1861, for a "French made lamp" and in the summer and fall of 1863 the presence of English gaiters led to several expensive purchases: Dr. John S. Bond paid \$35.00 for a pair, Mrs. Bond, the same price, and Sarah Oliver, \$25.00.

The daybook reflects a decline of sales as the war progressed. There was one other difference. Before the war, sales had been largely on credit, but in December 1861, cash ex-

ceeded credit sales for the first time. Cotton planters with no place to sell their crop now became delinquent in their accounts for increasingly long periods, and Slusser apparently began demanding cash more frequently. By June 1862, only \$9.38 in sales were credit, while cash sales amounted to \$194.80. Also many persons began to find it difficult to provide themselves with basic necessities. Mrs. Murat took to canning in July 1861, buying a dozen twenty-cent cans and thirty-eight cents cement to seal them.

On March 13, 1862, Slusser took a note from Joseph J. Williams, Leon's biggest cotton planter, and loaned him \$1,000. He loaned the same amount to the second largest planter, Frederick R. Cotten, a few days later. On June 31, 1861, Slusser loaned \$1,000 to D. B. Meginniss, payable at eight per cent interest the following January 1. He made another loan, \$2,000 on May 16, 1863, to Mary S. Chaires.

Slusser himself had been able to maintain a stable financial position. In October 1861, he purchased a house at the northeast corner of St. Augustine and Calhoun streets for \$1,200, and he rented this at \$200.00 a year while boarding himself. In December 1861, he bought for \$1,500 a second brick storehouse, this one less than a block south of his store on Monroe Street. He rented the second store first for \$200.00, then \$175.00, and finally for \$140.00 a year. During most of the period covered by the storebook, Slusser rented a room, presumably in his main store building, to M. Ginnetti for \$5.00 a month. He spent more than \$200.00 in store improvements in 1860, \$46.50 for wallpaper, \$64.00 for a display case, and an additional sum to plaster an upstairs room. He bought four vacant lots – the south half of the block between Monroe and Adams, Call and Tennessee – for \$450.00 in September 1862, and he fenced this property. In a statement to the tax assessor, April 30, 1863, he reported the value of his main brick storehouse at \$4,000; other real estate, \$3,300; store stocks and trade items, \$3,000; of money loaned at interest \$6,844; household furniture \$50.00; cash on hand, \$4,181.81, total assets of \$21,375.81.

Whether he was able to maintain this kind of financial position through the war is doubtful, although after 1865 he continued as a prosperous merchant.¹⁶ In the summer of 1863

16. Assets of \$40,198.80, principally in real estate, were shown in an inven-

Slusser devoted considerable attention to fabricating equipment for the Florida card factory owned by John Cardy. This was an enterprise subsidized by the Florida government to manufacture cards for cotton and wool spinning.¹⁷ Slusser's work for this enterprise totaled \$198.62 between June and November. He also sold several dippers and kettles for salt enterprises along the coast, and evidently some of his sales were related to the presence of Confederate personnel in Tallahassee. City Hotel became an important customer at this time.

The surviving daybook of the Slusser store ends December 31, 1863. Sales presumably declined even more drastically in the remaining seventeen months of the war. For a long time bathtubs, washing machines, and refrigerators had disappeared from the store, and even the metal used in mending was nearly nonexistent. By May 20, 1865, when the United States flag flew again above the capitol, the shelves must have been completely empty of lamps, dishpans, sillabub churns, canning jars, toys, and almost every other item.

tory following Slusser's death on March 7, 1892. Boat-building was one of his activities; he built the *Wakotomica*, a sidewheel steamer, in Tallahassee railroad yards in the 1880s and which was in service between St. Marks and Apalachicola and later between Carrabelle and Mobile. Slusser's Pond, formed by the waters which now flow in a drainage ditch along Franklin Boulevard, and Slusser's Park, of which it was a part, were built as "a place of resort for children and ladies." He also had made plans at the time of his death to provide a fountain. His will specified that a \$1,000 monument be erected over his remains, which were encased in a rolled steel burial casket costing \$185.00. It stands today in City Cemetery, Tallahassee. Sarah Lewis Henderson to author, September 4, 1970; Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, March 19, 1892; Probate File 1036 A and B, Leon County Courthouse.

17. John E. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War* (Gainesville, 1963), 126-27.