

1974

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Recommended Citation

Paisley, Clifton (1974) "Tallahassee Through the Storebooks: Era of Radical Reconstruction, 1867-1877," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 53 : No. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol53/iss1/5>

TALLAHASSEE THROUGH THE STOREBOOKS: ERA OF RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION, 1867-1877

by CLIFTON PAISLEY*

L EON WAS the largest and richest county in Florida at the outbreak of the Civil War. Its population numbered 12,343, and its property was assessed at \$8,843,095 in 1860. It led the state in agriculture; its farms were valued at \$2,482,211, and during the crop year 1859 they produced 16,686 bales of cotton, 421,654 bushels of corn, and 136,038 bushels of sweet potatoes. It ranked third in manufacturing. Twenty-six establishments in 1859 employed 239 male and seven female workers and produced products worth \$261,200. The county, like the rest of Florida and the South, suffered grievous economic losses during the war. Emancipation freed 9,089 slaves which represented a capital loss of \$4,469,440.¹ Leon suffered a heavy casualty toll also; over 200 households suffered the loss of a father, husband, son, or brother. Many men were also crippled and disabled.²

Despite these setbacks, the economy of Tallahassee, Leon's only community of any consequence, appears to have been in a relatively healthy postwar condition, as evidenced by the number and variety of business and professional establishments listed in a directory compiled in 1867: twelve drygoods stores, twelve

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1. Leon County Tax Rolls, 1860, microfilm, reel JR 3889, Florida State Library, Tallahassee. Hereinafter cited as LCTR. U. S. Census Office, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Population*, I (Washington, 1864), 54-55; *Agriculture*, II (Washington, 1864), 18, 19; *Manufactures*, III (Washington, 1865), 60.
2. Some indication of the loss of young men from four years of war is provided in census returns for 1860 and 1867. The *Eighth Census, 1860, Population*, I, 50-51, reported that in Leon County there lived 875 white males older than twenty years compared with 687 white females, a surplus of 188 men; while a special state census in 1867 showed just the reverse—the number of white males over twenty-one stood at 721 and the number of females at 811, a surplus of 90 women. The special census of 1867, certified by Secretary of State Benjamin F. Allen on June 29, 1868, is quoted from the Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, June 30, 1868. Hereinafter cited SPC 1867.

lawyers, eight physicians, six grocers, four carpenters, three apothecaries, three bakers and confectioners, three jewelers, three notaries, and three painters.³ There were two auctioneers, barber shops, billiard saloons, blacksmiths, book and music stores, boot and shoe makers, insurance agents, livery stables, machinists, mantua makers, merchant tailors, milliners, oyster houses, printers, railroads, and wholesalers. There was also one banker, book binder, brass founder, carriage and saddler, carriage maker and trimmer, cotton weigher, export and import company, express company, furniture store, gunsmith, harness maker, hotel, lumber yard, miller, photographer, real estate broker, savings bank, shoe store, tinner, undertaker, and variety store.

The county's population increased approximately twenty per cent between 1860 and 1867. A special 1867 state census listed 11,650 blacks and 3,257 whites. Tallahassee's population according to the federal census of 1870 was 2,023 and 4,813 persons lived within its more inclusive voting precinct.⁴ The county's black population increased during Reconstruction, reaching 12,341 in 1870 and 14,830 in 1875, while the white population declined to 2,895 in 1870 and 2,507 in 1875.⁵

An examination of the prewar and postwar business records of William P. Slusser reveals the impact that Reconstruction policies beginning in 1867 had on the economy of the area. Arriving in Tallahassee from Ohio in 1849, he opened a hardware store on Monroe Street in the late 1850s. Before the war most of Slusser's business had been with the large cotton planters and with Tallahasseans who in some way profited from the cotton economy. Tallahassee was not only the state capital of Florida, it was also a major market town for a plantation hinterland extending from Gadsden to Madison counties and into neighboring parts of Georgia. As the terminus of a twenty-mile railroad to the port of St. Marks, Tallahassee was the only town in the region on a railroad line. From the stores in Tallahassee planters purchased manufactured goods shipped in from New York and other parts of the North, and food that came from the Midwest

3. Tallahassee *Semi-Weekly Floridian*, February 19, 1867.

4. *Eighth Census, 1860, Population*, I, 54-55; SPC 1867; U. S. Census Office, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population*, I (Washington, 1872), 98.

5. Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, October 5, 1875.

by way of New Orleans. About 50,000 bales of cotton a year were shipped out of St. Marks to pay for this merchandise.⁶

Slusser's antebellum trade included the sale of bathtubs, washing machines, cistern pumps, and expensive stoves and refrigerators to the affluent citizens in the area. Typical was the order from former Governor Richard K. Call on July 1, 1858, which included a bathtub, foot tub, and spice box for a total of \$9.75. Fred R. Cotten, a neighbor of Governor Call on Lake Jackson, purchased "for lady," May 6, 1858, a "garden engine" costing \$35.00. Slusser installed roofs, pipes, gutters, and pumps made of zinc, tin, iron and lead for houses, stores, and farm buildings. On June 21, 1859, he sold Michael Ledwith roofing material for a twenty-by-eight foot green house on a plantation owned by Joseph John Williams. Later that year, November 10, Williams paid \$136.75 to have a plantation engine room covered with tin.⁷ There was a large order, January 24, 1859, from George Washington Parkhill who had married a short time earlier Elizabeth Brooks Bellamy and was now building a new home on his plantation, Tuscawilla, twelve miles east of Tallahassee. Parkhill engaged Slusser to roof a portico and install 399 feet of gutters and downspouts. The bill also listed a firegrate with fixtures costing \$48.00.⁸

Much of Slusser's trade was in less expensive items such as kitchen tinware, buckets, cups and milk pails, and washpans. These were sold to local people and in quantity to merchants and peddlers throughout the region who planned to resell the items. In 1858 Slusser sold \$27.76 worth of merchandise to Bizzill

6. Clifton Paisley, "Tallahassee Through the Storebooks: War Clouds and War, 1860-1863," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LI (July 1972), 37-51. This is based on a Slusser store daybook, 1860-1863, in the Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Slusser first rented his Monroe Street store building for \$200 a year and on March 21, 1859 made the first \$1,000 payment toward purchase of the building for \$3,000. One of the first improvements by Slusser was the installation of a pair of iron spiral staircases fabricated in New York at a cost of \$122.20. See William P. Slusser Storebooks, Volume II (January 1, 1858-February 24, 1860), 356, and Volume III (July 1, 1858-February 24, 1866; January 2, 1873-May 12, 1873), 269, 450, Manuscript Collection 114, Florida State Library. Hereinafter cited as Storebooks.

7. Storebooks, II, 105, 504, 642; III, 3.

8. *Ibid.*, II, 366; III, 211. Parkhill did not have the enjoyment of the house for long; he was killed in the Battle of Gaines Mill, near Richmond, Virginia, in 1862. C. Parkhill Mays, Monticello, to Paisley, January 8, 1973.

and Snelling of Quincy; \$37.10 to Daniel Ladd of Newport; \$21.33 to DeCaussey and Bailey of Station 3 (Jefferson County); \$37.25 to W. A. Chester of Sofkee, Decatur County, Georgia; \$39.40 to William C. Rawls & Co. of Decatur County; \$45.74 to John S. Hopson & Co. of Hopsonville, Georgia; and \$39.83 to O. H. Mays of Grooversville, Georgia.⁹

The slave plantation system collapsed at the end of the Civil War, and Slusser's lucrative business as a supplier declined proportionately. The depressed condition of Leon County's agriculture after 1865 could not be blamed on political conditions. Much of the problem was due to the one-crop economy of the area. Reconstruction politicians joined southern farm leaders in promoting diversification and some newly transplanted northerners were among the most skilled innovators in Leon County farming. As it turned out, however, cotton remained dominant, at least until 1879 when a postwar peak production of 9,562 bales was reached. Fruit- and vegetable-growing, cattle-raising, and dairying prospered for only a few years.¹⁰

Only rarely did planters come into Slusser's store to trade after the war, and when they did it usually was to buy processed or manufactured items shipped into Tallahassee. Progressive farmers realized these commodities could have been grown on local farms, but statistics show that in many cases production after 1865 was lower than it had been before the war. John S. Winthrop, owner of several thousand acres, was a customer in 1876. On two occasions he bought 238 pounds and 359 pounds of meat at eleven and twelve and one-half cents a pound, evidently as "furnish" for croppers on his lands.¹¹ Slusser's order book for 1875-1879 contains copies of letters to distant suppliers directing shipments of lard, butter, corned beef, shoulders, hams, cheese, onions, and potatoes via Fernandina or Jacksonville.¹² Raw milk was a locally-supplied commodity. An entry, May 2, 1876, records Mrs. Hilton's bill of \$362.66 for milk to the City Hotel.¹³

9. Storebooks, II, 39, 111, 394, 413, 422, 448, 473.

10. Clifton Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida, 1860-1967* (Gainesville, 1968), 125 (table), *passim*.

11. Storebooks, V (January 1, 1876-January 26, 1878), 295, 315.

12. *Ibid.*, I (June 14, 1875-August 29, 1879), *passim*.

13. *Ibid.*, V, 161.

But if the plantation and farm economy declined during the Reconstruction period, business in Tallahassee prospered, at least so far as Slusser's store is an example. Only rarely is there a reference in his storebooks to the political controversy of the times. An entry on March 15, 1870, shows \$1.95 from the cash drawer to pay a debt for George A. Slusser, a relative and employee of the storekeeper, to one "Berger a blue coated scoundrel belonging to the U.S.A."¹⁴ An occasional customer was Harrison Reed, Florida's first Republican governor, who, in May 1870, ordered \$54.35 worth of gutter work on his house.¹⁵ Business in Tallahassee probably was helped by the fact that Leon County was the scene of relatively little lawlessness and violence during Reconstruction, as compared with areas like Jackson County, where at the height of Ku Klux Klan activity in 1868-1871 there were 153 killings.¹⁶

Slusser continued to receive orders for work on the Capitol. One job in June 1870 utilized his services and those of Charles E. Slusser at \$4.00 each per day, and the total bill was \$92.00. For this or another job, Slusser appears to have been paid with old copper which he resold. The installation of 458 feet of four-inch pipe, perhaps for wood-burning stoves in the Capitol, in July 1870, amounted to \$80.20. The installation of a zinc urine trough in January 1877 was paid for with seventy-four and one-half pounds of old copper worth twelve and one-half cents a pound. Slusser filled another order with 182 feet of sheet tin for the Capitol roof at thirty-five cents a foot, collecting \$45.50.¹⁷

A number of new state agencies were established in Florida after the Civil War, including a penitentiary at Chattahoochee. On November 26, 1869, prison officials ordered four dozen tin cups, six dozen tin plates, and a quantity of knives and forks for \$34.25. With other supplies the bill was \$98.09, collected in

14. *Ibid.*, IV (November 1, 1869-June 24, 1871), 157.

15. *Ibid.*, 226.

16. See *House Reports*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., No. 22, pt. 13, 222, 228. Florida Secretary of State Johnathan C. Gibbs reported to a Congressional Committee in 1871 that according to his records there were 153 killings in Jackson County. Joseph John Williams, a Leon County planter and the "central chief" of the county's Ku Klux Klan-type Young Men's Democratic Clubs at Tallahassee, Micosukee, and Center-ville, informed the committee that there had only been one killing in Leon County.

17. *Ibid.*, 79, 266, 280, 309; V, 456.

state script, January 15, 1870. The Tallahassee school board asked Slusser to install stoves and piping in certain school buildings. On November 26, 1869, he delivered four box stoves and 233 feet of pipe, and another a few days later. In January he collected \$166.35.¹⁸

Although Conservative Democrats criticized Republican officials for accelerating government spending, these expenditures were welcomed by Tallahassee merchants who no longer had very many affluent planters as customers. According to one historian, Florida state government expenditures rose from \$117,808 in 1860 to \$187,667 in 1867, the year before a Republican regime came into power. Spending increased to a high of \$536,192 in 1873, and declined to \$260,187 in 1876.¹⁹

Metal and metalware, Slusser's principal lines, were apparently in short supply during Reconstruction years, and prices increased as a result. A length of gutter downspout cost forty-five to fifty cents a foot as compared with twenty-one cents in 1860. Roof and gutter work and the sale of ranges and similar items declined sharply after the Civil War, although Slusser continued to handle these items. To offset the decline in the metalware trade, he diversified his store offerings, adding a variety of foods and alcoholic beverages.²⁰ He also invested extensively in real estate, purchasing several Tallahassee business properties and houses which he planned to rent.

In September 1874, Slusser secured the City Hotel across from the Capitol for \$6,400. Fronting on Adams and extending from Pensacola to Lafayette streets, the property ran to Duval Street on the west.²¹ It was the major hotel in Tallahassee. The Slusser store had been one of its chief suppliers since before the war. Now, as owner, Slusser continued to furnish its kitchen and bar needs. A typical day's order from the hotel was that of June 15,

18. *Ibid.*, IV, 24, 27, 84, 89.

19. William Watson Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 672.

20. On June 30, 1870, Slusser paid \$30.00 for licenses to deal in liquor and tobacco. Storebooks, IV, 304.

21. Leon County Deed Record Book R, 450, Office of the Circuit Court Clerk, Tallahassee. This property is now the site of Florida's new twenty-two story capitol building. City Hotel had been built in 1833 by former Governor Thomas Brown, who acquired an existing hotel and enlarged it. See Bertram H. Groene, *Antebellum Tallahassee* (Tallahassee, 1971), 29.

1876: four dozen eggs, sixty cents; fourteen pounds ham, \$2.66; four bottles vanilla, \$1.00; one dozen Milwaukee beer (quarts), \$3.00; one dozen St. Louis beer (pints), \$2.40; one dozen Bass ale, \$3.00; one dozen McEwans ale, \$3.00; and eight and one-half pounds sugar, \$1.42; for a total of \$1723.²²

Although he never was a wealthy man, Slusser enjoyed a prosperous trade before 1860, and he made money throughout the war as a military supplier for the state and Confederate governments. He continued his prosperity during the Reconstruction era. On July 1, 1858, shortly after opening his store on Monroe Street, Slusser entered a "statement of my effects," listing assets of \$8,626: \$3,043, merchandise; \$1,377, cash; and \$3,788, book accounts receivable.²³ His assets continued to grow, and on April 30, 1863, he listed them as \$21,375.81: the brick storehouse, \$4,000; other real estate, \$3,300; store stocks and trade items, \$3,000; cash on hand, \$4,181.81; and money loaned at interest, \$6,844.²⁴ In 1871, his enterprise continued in sound condition. In that year he carried \$10,000 in insurance on his store and its stock, and \$3,000 on a second store building that he rented for \$850 a year to S. Stern and Brother. Four years later, in 1875, he listed taxable property at \$20,200, including the City Hotel, valued at \$6,000; hotel furniture, \$4,000; storehouse, \$3,500; stock in trade, \$3,000; and a second store building, a business lot, dwelling, and a stable lot, \$3,700.²⁵

Besides rising government costs, there were also complaints about increased taxes. Tax bills indeed were heavy if measured by antebellum standards. On the \$19,075 valuation placed on Slusser's real and personal properties in 1876 he paid combined state and county taxes of \$458.80, as compared with a tax bill of only \$19.33 on somewhat less than half this valuation in 1860. The tax rate had jumped from approximately twenty cents per \$100 to \$2.40 per \$100.²⁶

Slusser's business was prospering, however, and part of his tax increase reflected this growth. In contrast, big rural acreages supporting a one-crop economy failed to regain their antebellum

22. Storebooks, V, 217.

23. *Ibid.*, II, 155.

24. Paisley, "Tallahassee Through the Storebooks: War Clouds and War, 1860-1863," 50.

25. Storebooks, IV, 99, 452-53; V, 1.

26. LCTR, JR 3889, 3889-90/91.

prosperity. This is revealed by a comparison of taxes on Slusser's store and his other Tallahassee enterprises with those of the Winthrop family plantations consisting of the Barrow Place, Betton Hill, and other acreage.²⁷ In 1860 the Winthrop properties— 6,184 acres valued at \$61,850, 149 slaves assessed at \$74,500, and other property worth \$5,325, a total of \$141,675— bore a state tax of \$236.14 and a county tax of \$56.67, a total of \$292.81. In 1867— without the large valuation on slaves— the Winthrop properties were assessed at \$78,800. At a tax rate more than three times the 1860 level, combined state and county taxes were \$581.²⁸ In 1873, the year during which state revenues reached a peak of \$664,405, the Winthrops, whose holdings were now valued at \$59,088, had a state tax bill of \$785.86, and a county tax bill of \$561.34, and the total was \$1,347.20.²⁹

Landowners were particularly bitter about the high tax rates. In September 1871, at a state taxpayers convention, irate Democrats and Republicans criticized oppressive taxes and the harsh way that they were collected.³⁰ This and other protests seem to have had some effect, and although between 1873 and 1876 the combined state and Leon County tax rate increased another ten cents, to \$2.40, the Winthrop taxes on a much-reduced valuation of \$27,504 were \$660.09, less than half the 1873 total. This was divided equally between state and county.³¹ Governor Reed in 1869 had recommended higher property assessments.³² Tax revenue increases were achieved, however, not by increasing assessments, but rather by raising the rate, at least in Leon County. The valuation of the Winthrop land was reduced during the Re-

27. These properties had come into possession of the Winthrop family as a result of the steamboat *Home* decision of the Florida Supreme Court in 1857, awarding Leon County properties of Hardy Bryan Croom to heirs of Mrs. Croom. Mr. and Mrs. Croom and their three children all drowned off Cape Hatteras on October 9, 1837. John Still Winthrop (1848-1920), who came into possession of the properties a few years after the Civil War, became known as "the last of the cotton planters." See Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 9-10, 13n. Through the Civil War and Reconstruction period the properties were owned, respectively, by Mrs. Henrietta Smith, mother of Mrs. Croom; Susan E. Winthrop; and the Susan E. Winthrop estate.

23. LCTR, JR 3889.

29. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 672-73; LCTR, JR 3889-90/91.

30. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 599, 619n, 676.

31. LCTR, JR 3889-90/91.

32. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 650-51.

construction period, the lowered valuation probably reflecting a sharp decline in productivity. The land and improvements were valued for tax purposes at \$10.00 an acre in 1860, and they were still assessed at this figure in 1867. In 1873, even though the valuation had been reduced to \$8.00 an acre, the taxes were higher than at any time during Reconstruction. The valuation was reduced still further in 1876, to \$4.00 an acre.³³

Slusser's taxes continued to increase during and after the war. In 1863 he paid \$74.76 in state and county property taxes on a valuation of \$22,000. His tax bill in 1867 was \$126 on an assessment of \$16,200; in 1873, \$360.08 on an assessment of \$15,750; and in 1876, \$458.80.³⁴ Slusser's records reflect payment of his largest tax, \$540, "on hotel, store and all real estate," on January 1, 1876. On his valuation of \$22,000 that year, the combined state and county taxes reflected a rate of \$2.50 per \$100. Besides his taxes, including the \$195.66 on the City Hotel, he paid \$229 in license fees: \$80.00 to the state for the privilege of operating the hotel, and \$40.00 for the bar; \$85.00 to the county for hotel and bar licenses; and \$16.00 to the state and \$8.00 to the county for two billiard tables.³⁵ In addition to these licenses Slusser paid Henry Fitzgiles, city tax collector, \$50.00 each for licenses to run the hotel and bar from January 1, 1876, to July 1, 1877. In October 1877 he paid a city property tax of \$115.71.³⁶

Wages paid by Slusser during Reconstruction differed little from those before the war when clerks received \$2.00 to \$2.25 a day. George A. Slusser joined his kinsman's enterprise on November 29, 1869, at a wage of \$50.00 a month. He paid his own board, \$25.00 a month. Skilled workers received up to \$4.00 a day. Charles E. Slusser, a metalworker, earned \$3.00 a day in February 1870, and on some jobs he was paid \$4.00. There was

33. LCTR, JR 3889, 3889-90/91. Without reducing the assessed valuation, succeeding Democratic administrations cut the tax rate back further. While the combined rate for state and county was \$2.40 per \$100 in 1876, a visitor in 1885 noted that the rate was only about \$1.75 at that time, and that this low rate combined with an assessed valuation "that rarely exceeds \$5 an acre" enabled holders of large acreages to rent them out to croppers and tenants, "keep only one acre in four in cultivation and realize a net eight per cent on value of whole tract." See Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 36-37.

34. LCTR, JR 3889, 3889-90/91.

35. Storebooks, V, 28.

36. *Ibid.*, 28, 631.

one new element in paying some skilled workers, but the practice did not appear to be widespread. B. H. Chaires received \$176, December 13, 1869, for forty-four days of unspecified services at a rate of \$4.00 a day. He also received \$10.40 in "overtime." Boagner, a carpenter, was paid \$2.00 a day for thirty-six and one-half days of work on City Hotel in 1876; his board at the hotel for fifty-seven days at \$1.00 a day also was paid.³⁷

Unskilled labor was cheap. Jack Smith received credit from Slusser on November 30, 1869, for services of an unspecified kind at the rate of \$33.00 per month including rations. The rations were one-half bushel meal, fifty cents; one gallon syrup, fifty cents; and ten pounds meat, \$2.00. Smith's total pay was \$30.00. By 1875 the pay both for skilled and common labor had declined. Frank Bartlett and W. A. Johnson received \$25.00 a month in 1875; after March 2, 1876, Johnson received \$30.00. On September 1, 1876, Herman Davis worked for \$10.00 a month and board. In 1877 Slusser paid Walter Shine and Robert Gamble \$15.00 a month without board, and Butler Lewis \$30.00, without board.³⁸

Plantation workers, tenants or croppers, received the lowest pay. When Peter, Caroline, and Jerry Coleman signed a rental agreement with Mrs. Susan E. Winthrop for the year 1871 they agreed to pay one-fourth of all their crops as rental on sixty acres of the Barrow Place. To guarantee payment they mortgaged the future crop and their livestock and farming tools.³⁹ In 1871 Joseph J. Williams, who had hired as many as 300 workers earlier and now had 270 on La Grange, Shiloh, Clairvaux, and two other plantations, noted that after the war, "I gave them a third and fed them. That was too steep and under the second contract I gave them a fourth and fed them; under the third contract I gave them two-fifths and they supported themselves." Some received one-half the crop if they were self-supporting.⁴⁰

Whatever the earnings, inflation in 1869-1870 had greatly reduced purchasing power. Kerosene cost sixty-five to seventy cents a gallon; a shirt, \$2.25; bacon, twenty to twenty-one cents a pound;

37. *Ibid.*, IV, 29, 45, 117, 125; V, 332.

38. *Ibid.*, IV, 29, 250, 287; V, 302, 604, 654.

39. Articles of agreement, signed December 26, 1870, John Still Winthrop Papers (business), 1868-1889, Florida State Library, temporarily in possession of Vernon L. McCord, Tallahassee.

40. *House Reports*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., No. 22, pt. 13, 232.

ham, twenty-six cents a pound; and a haircut, fifty cents. In the spring of 1870 syrup cost ninety cents a gallon and twenty-five cents a quart; butter sold for fifty cents a pound; lard, twenty-five cents; coffee, thirty-five cents; and four mullet, twenty-five cents. A half-bushel of corn cost sixty-two and one-half cents, and one-half peck of meal, twenty cents; a bushel, seventy-five cents. In June 1870, William D. Bloxham paid \$11.50 for a barrel of flour; earlier a barrel of buckwheat flour had sold for \$15.50.⁴¹

Despite— or perhaps because of— these high prices, David C. Wilson, a local merchant, was affluent enough in December 1870 to order from Slusser roofing for his house that cost \$150. The Methodist Episcopal Church in November 1869 engaged Slusser, at a cost of \$185.45, to install a new “furnace and heater.” The order included some sixteen feet of small pipe and sixteen feet of large tin hot air pipe, the latter costing \$1.25 a foot. In May 1870 the City Hotel purchased a lamp for the bar, another for the office, and an eight-quart ice cream freezer; the total bill was \$25.60. The Knights of Pythias, 100F, and Jackson Lodge No. 1, Free and Accepted Masons, occasionally ordered from Slusser.⁴²

In the five-year period 1870 to 1875, both prices and wages declined. During these years there was considerable construction activity in Tallahassee. In the fall of 1873, Alexander Gallie, a Scottish merchant who had moved to Tallahassee from Virginia in the 1850s, began building Gallie’s Hall, a two-story gabled brick building on the northeast corner of Adams and Jefferson streets. In later years it was called Munroe’s Opera House. Gallie’s grocery was on the first floor, and a 400-seat auditorium that would be a Tallahassee institution for the next thirty-nine years occupied the second floor. It served as a theater for touring dramatic companies, a place for school exercises, and a hall for a variety of meetings. There was a stage at the north end and at the south a gallery where spectators were invited to “hang your feet over the banister and smoke Rawls’ Huckleberry Cigars.” The public could enter by way of an iron staircase which led to a second floor piazza overhanging the sidewalk on Jefferson Street. The building was not yet completed when there was

41. Storebooks, IV, 4, 7, 8, 67, 163, 180, 182, 188, 195, 301.

42. *Ibid.*, IV, 11, 238, 414.

a benefit musical sponsored by the women of the Presbyterian Church on September 26, 1874.⁴³

Dramatic troupes, previously limited to occasional performances in the Capitol or City Hotel, now began visiting Tallahassee frequently, as evidenced by the entries in the City Hotel register.⁴⁴ On January 4, 1875, the fourteen members of E. B. Brown's Dramatic Co. engaged lodging there, as they got ready for a performance of "Marble Heart." On January 13, 1875, the five-member Burlesque Opera Troupe took rooms, and announced a performance featuring Mrs. James Maas, "Queen of the Lyric Stage." The hotel clerk entered her name in large decorated letters. On December 12, 1875, Louis B. Pike and the Original Louisiana Minstrels were in Tallahassee. The most popular show of the period was the Company of General Tom Thumb, who, on May 6, 1876, played to sellout matinee and evening performances. Six rooms of City Hotel housed the diminutive guests.

Gallie's Hall was used for a variety of functions. Miss Belle Boyd and her sister, from Washington City registered at the City Hotel on June 3, 1876. Miss Boyd gave a lecture at Gallie's Hall, and admission was fifty cents.⁴⁵ In January 1875, a Centennial Ball was held to raise funds for Florida's participation in the Centennial Exposition of 1876 celebrating 100 years of American independence.⁴⁶ In the same year it was used for a May Day celebration directed by Mrs. Williams, principal of the Female Academy.⁴⁷ In March 1875, the hall was decorated with strawberries, cabbages, turnips, beets, and Japanese plums— all the garden produce available— to interest a delegation of Indiana

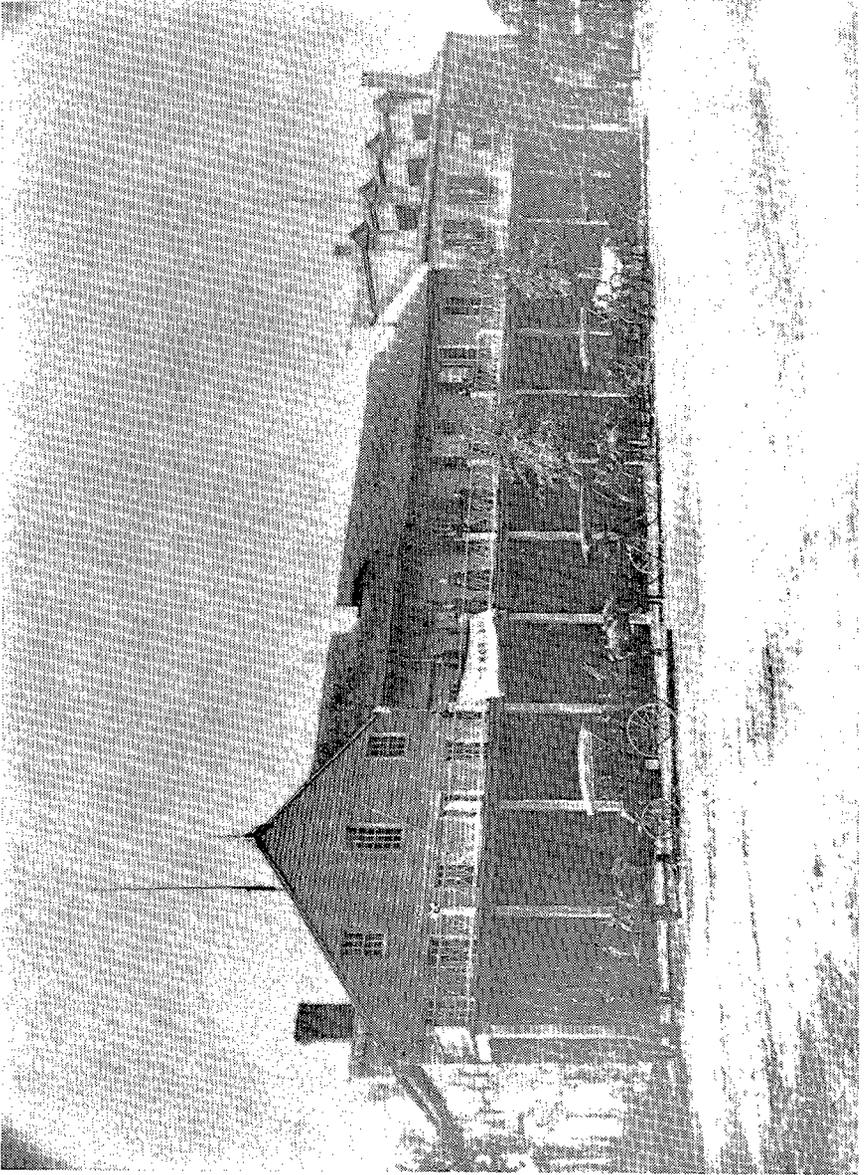
43. Maxie C. Estes, "A Century of Theatre Activity in the Capital City of Florida: An Historical Study of Theatrical Entertainment in Tallahassee, Florida, from 1857 to 1957" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1962), 26-28. That building stands today (1974) and although the stage, balcony, and seats have been removed and the auditorium is locked, one can see against the light blue of the walls where stage, balcony, and stairway to the balcony once joined the walls.

44. Unless otherwise noted, the material in the following paragraphs is from City Hotel Register, Tallahassee (December 28, 1874-December 31, 1879), Manuscript Collection 115, Florida State Library.

45. Whether or not the hotel guest was the real Confederate spy is unknown. According to E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947), 181, imposters representing themselves as Belle Boyd toured the South at this time.

46. Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, January 19, 1875.

47. *Ibid.*, May 9, 1875.



Morgan Hotel (formerly City Hotel) about 1880. Trees in front were probably planted by Slusser in 1877 and cut down in 1973 to make way for the new capitol.
(State Photographic Archives, Robert Manning Sirozter Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee)



Munro Opero House (formerly Gallie's Hall), left, about 1905. Market building is across street and courthouse is in background.

(State Photographic Archives, Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee)

newspaper editors who were in the Tallahassee area. They were registered at the City Hotel.⁴⁸

Construction in Tallahassee was particularly active in 1875. In September the *Floridian* announced that the Tallahassee Manufacturing Company with offices near the depot would soon be in production, taking ginned lint cotton and spinning it into thread and weaving the thread into coarse cloth.⁴⁹ The Methodist Church purchased a half-ton bell in Cincinnati at a cost of \$320, and had it installed in the church. This bell joined that of St. John's Episcopal Church in summoning worshippers to services.⁵⁰ Lively Corner, a two-story business structure, was erected on the southwest corner of Clinton (College) and Monroe, and in the fall of 1875 the *Floridian* commented: "We doubt if larger stocks have been brought here since the war." Major Ball at Lively's Corner had "anything from a thousand dollar cashmere shawl to a hairpin" for sale, while other merchants were preparing for brisk fall and winter business.⁵¹

The editor of the Tallahassee paper was gratified that Mr. Slusser was renovating City Hotel and engaging the services of a French chef and a first-class barber. The latter, Frederick Roth of New York, was said to be the best barber since "Old John," who was remembered by many local oldtimers.⁵² Slusser's storebook records the expenditure of \$215.68 for a new tin roof on the hotel's front piazza and additional sums for carpentry, painting blinds, and general refurbishing.⁵³ After stopping at the hotel, Major Sidney Herbert described it in the *Savannah News* as "one of the most pleasant and comfortable places at which southern tourists can stop."⁵⁴

In addition to entertainers and delegations of Northerners, many others registered, including some travelers and others who were looking over the area for business reasons or perhaps because they were planning to move to Florida. There were guests from New York, Saratoga Springs, Hoboken, New Haven, and St. Louis, and some even from Cairo, Illinois, Cairo, Egypt, and

48. Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 65-66.

49. *Ibid.*, 31; *Tallahassee Weekly Floridian*, September 28, 1875.

50. *Tallahassee Weekly Floridian*, December 14, 1875.

51. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1875.

52. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1875, April 4, 1876.

53. *Storebooks*, V, 247, 332.

54. *Tallahassee Weekly Floridian*, March 21, 1876.

Hong Kong. An occasional name on the register appeared obviously born the fertile imagination of the hotel clerk, who, on Halloween 1875, registered "Rang Tang, Africa;" on November 18, 1876, "A. A. Tuttle, Sandwich Islands;" and on December 3, 1876, "Prince Otto Bisbark [*sic*] Berlin, Prussia." The thirty-four member troupe of John Robinson's Circus arrived January 9, 1875.

On a tour of Florida gathering material for a guidebook, Sidney Lanier and his wife were at the hotel, June 8, 1875. He was charmed by Tallahassee and pleased with the accommodations of the City Hotel, describing it as "a genuine old-fashioned tavern, with a long double piazza running along its entire front, with many nooks and corners here and there, and with a general suggestion of old-timey ease and honest comfort arising indefinitely out of its aspect." Lanier ascended the rear second-story porch to look out at the hills which so reminded him of his native Macon, Georgia, that he called the Tallahassee area "Piedmont Florida."⁵⁵

Increasingly during the election year 1876 there were political visitors in Tallahassee. On January 15, 1876, Congressman Ben F. Butler of Boston registered at the City Hotel. George F. Drew of Ellaville, who would shortly become the Democratic candidate for governor, stayed there several times in 1875 and 1876. His Republican opponent during the 1876 gubernatorial campaign, Lieutenant Governor Marcellus Stearns, also engaged rooms, and during the election canvass, his associates, according to John Wallace, a contemporary Negro politician, "could be seen at night hovering around Stearns in his room at the City Hotel."⁵⁶ Among the most frequent Republican visitors was Malachi Martin, a well-known Chattahoochee politician.

55. Sidney Lanier, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History* (Philadelphia, 1875; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1973) 103, 107-08. An engraving on page 107 shows City Hotel but without a row of young trees in front that can be seen in an 1880 photograph. In March 1877 Slusser employed four laborers at a cost of \$16.69 to set out and box some trees, paying the men out of the City Hotel account. These doubtless constituted some of the large liveoaks cut down along Adams Street in 1973 to make way for the new Capitol building. See Storebooks, V, 478, 480.

56. John Wallace, *Carpet-Bag Rule in Florida: The Inside Workings of the Reconstruction of Civil Government in Florida after the Close of the Civil War* (Jacksonville, 1888; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 340.

The relative trickle of political visitors before the general election, November 7, 1876, turned into a flood five days later with the arrival on November 12, of Senator William E. Chandler of New Hampshire and many other nationally prominent Republicans. They had come to Florida to gather evidence that could help swing Florida's electoral votes into the Republican column and elect Rutherford B. Hayes president of the United States.⁵⁷ On the same day that Chandler checked in at City Hotel, General John M. Brannan and several other officers of the United States Army, also registered. Brannan and twelve companies of soldiers were supposed to preserve order in Florida during the vote validation process. Several Democrats also arrived that same day, including Julian Hartridge of Savannah. Newspapermen Henry W. Grady of Georgia representing the *New York Herald* and Howard Carroll of the *New York Times* were also hotel guests. Other politicians and reporters registered at the hotel throughout that week.

When the City Hotel was filled, additional guests were housed at Mrs. E. A. Brokaw's boarding house. If Democrats and Republicans mingled at City Hotel, only Democrats were welcomed at Mrs. Brokaw's. These included Manton Marble, former owner of the *New York World* and a close friend of Democratic presidential nominee Samuel J. Tilden; Leverett Saltonstall, D. W. Sellers, and John R. Reed of Boston; Samuel G. Thompson of Philadelphia; and G. W. Guthrie of Pittsburgh. The Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian* reported that "a large number of prominent Tallahasseans" called at the Brokaw House one night to serenade the Northerners, who appeared at the door to acknowledge this courtesy.⁵⁸

New guests arrived at the City Hotel almost as soon as the old ones departed. The hotel bulged with visitors; its rooms and lobbies buzzed with political talk during most of November and

57. See Jerrell H. Shofner, "Florida in the Balance: The Electoral Count of 1876," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVII (October 1968), 122-150, and "Florida Courts and the Disputed Election of 1876," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII (July 1969), 26-46.

58. Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, November 21, 1876. Mrs. Brokaw was the widow of Peres B. Brokaw, whose beautiful house still stands at North Meridian and Miccosukee roads. Mrs. Brokaw's boarding house, however, probably was another house, not now standing. Interview with Mrs. D. A. Avant, Tallahassee, February 14, 1973.

the early days of December, as Republicans and Democrats prepared their cases for the election canvassing board. All of this meant welcome business for Mr. Slusser. As the hotel kitchen and bar satisfied the needs of his guests, his store delivered groceries and drink supplies. On November 15 the bill for groceries was \$57.95, and included a firkin of cooking butter, a barrel of flour, thirty pounds of sugar, and twenty-five pounds of coffee. The following day the bill was \$44.86 for an order that included forty-five pounds of butter at thirty-seven and one-half cents a pound. Mrs. Brokaw's orders also increased; on November 20 the bill was \$25.80.⁵⁹

Among the Republican guests at City Hotel in November were General Lew Wallace of Indiana, John A. Kasson of Iowa, George M. Biddle of Philadelphia, A. Wheeler of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and former Governor Edward F. Noyes of Ohio. On December 5, after most of the political visitors had departed, the hotel clerk, evidently tired of registering names of prominent visitors, entered this notation about new arrivals: "George Washington and U. S. Grant, Washington City, and General Sherman, U.S. Army."

The hectic month of politicking and electioneering, during which many coded telegrams were exchanged between Washington and Tallahassee, resulted in the decision that Hayes had won the Florida electoral vote. The State's canvassing board ruled that Marcellus Stearns also had been elected governor, but this decision was contested by the Democrats, who won a favorable ruling from the Florida Supreme Court. Thus, George F. Drew was inaugurated on the Capitol steps on January 2, 1877. City Hotel was filled to capacity with guests who had assembled to celebrate the Democratic triumph. Almost as soon though as these inaugural guests checked out of their rooms, the hotel was filled again with thirty-four members of Howe's Great London Circus on January 9, 1877. Forty-two railroad cars transported this troupe, its animals, and equipment to Tallahassee.⁶⁰

Regardless of what revisionist historians have written about the Reconstruction era in Florida, most of the people of the time believed that it had been a time of high-handed political

59. Storebooks, V, 390, 391, 396.

60. Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, January 9, 1877.

chicanery. Nor have the revisionists successfully challenged the contention of historians like William Watson Davis and writers like John Wallace that the period was marked by corruption on a scale hitherto unknown in Florida. Was the period of Radical Reconstruction also a time of severe economic repression and hardship? Perhaps the majority of whites did not fare well, and it is certain that the economic gains of blacks did not match their political ones. But it was not a time of hardship for William Slusser, who had adjusted to the times and who enjoyed a prosperity brought about by the expenditures of expanding state government that replaced, at least in part, the loss of his old plantation accounts. Slusser continued to increase his income over the years, and when he died, March 7, 1892, he left an estate valued at \$40,198.⁶¹

61. Paisley, "Tallahassee Through the Storebooks: War Clouds and War, 1860-1863," 50-51n.