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TORMENT OF PESTILENCE:
YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMICS IN PENSACOLA

by GEORGE F. PEARCE*

FOR MORE THAN a century, yellow fever epidemics intermittently swept over Pensacola, Florida, producing a high mortality, disrupting its economic and social life, dividing community leaders and medical authorities over courses of action in combatting them, causing untold numbers to flee, some permanently, and keeping those who remained in a state of demoralizing terror. The approach of summer each year invariably brought with it the fear of a repetition of the dreadful experience. This atmosphere of apprehension and utter helplessness was nourished by ignorance about the origin, transmission, and prevention of the disease. It was not until 1900 that medical science identified the mosquito *Aedes aegypti* as the sole carrier of yellow fever and therewith unraveled the secrets of this enigmatic disease. This medical discovery brought peace of mind to Pensacolians and to countless numbers elsewhere who had lived in terror of this fatal scourge.

On August 13, 1822, the Pensacola Board of Health announced the existence of yellow fever, and "warned all inhabitants able to remove, to retire to the country."¹ The *Pensacola Floridian* predicted that the dreadful malady's presence would soon disappear, however, since no "infection can rage here, as long as our bay continues salt, and the Gulph stream breeze, continues in its daily, luxurious office." Exposure to the sun, consumption of green fruit, and intemperance were among the causes for the fever cases originating locally, the paper learned. But,

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1. U. S. Surgeon General's Office, *Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States*, 1 (Washington, 1840), 37, on microfilm roll 250, John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola. On July 19, 1821, Andrew Jackson established a board of health at Pensacola "to take active oversight of the quarantine and health regulations." Quoted in William M. Straight, "The Yellow Jack," *Journal of the Florida Medical Association*, 58 (August 1971), 36.

according to many local doctors, "fear itself was the most contributing cause of fever," and they felt that those who were alarmed should leave town.²

McMahon, an army assistant surgeon, thought otherwise about the fever's origin, however. He observed that the wooden houses in the city were in a general "state of decay," the lots and yards contained "the accumulated filth of years," and the much neglected privies were "abominably fetid." "To these prolific sources of miasmata," he lamented, "may be added a total neglect of cleanliness in the personal habits of the inhabitants." Furthermore, he charged, lax public health measures permitted a cargo of "half putrid cod fish arriving from Havana to be sold to the inhabitants of the city. Thus a new source of pestilential effluvia was introduced, tending into action the dormant enemy within the bosom of this ill-fated city."

The board did order, the surgeon conceded, that fires of pine and tar be kept continuously burning throughout the city in an effort to cleanse the infected atmosphere. Nevertheless, "the pestilence . . . became more rife, and the disease acquired new malignancy." After August 20, "the disease spread . . . with a degree of malignancy rarely equalled in the annals of this destructive malady. Neither age, sex, complexion, occupation, nor residence, has afforded any exemption from its fatal ravages. The old and the young, the native and the emigrant [*sic*], the white and the black, have been alike subject of its baleful influence."

Symptoms of the disease, the surgeon wrote, were "a sensation . . . in the thoracic and abdominal regions; the tongue became yellowish black . . .; the stools are involuntary, liquid and dark green; the urine is small in quantity and passed with great difficulty; the pulse becomes imperceptible at the wrist; then follow . . . convulsions, and hoemorrhage from the mouth, nose, eyes, and ears . . . -the immediate precursors of death; and finally, black vomit, that ever fatal symptom, puts a period to the patient's sufferings. [Hemorrhages into the stomach and intestinal tract form the basis for black vomit - *vomito negro*.] If prominent symptoms are not . . . relieved by active depleting measures, all hopes of recovery may be abandoned."³

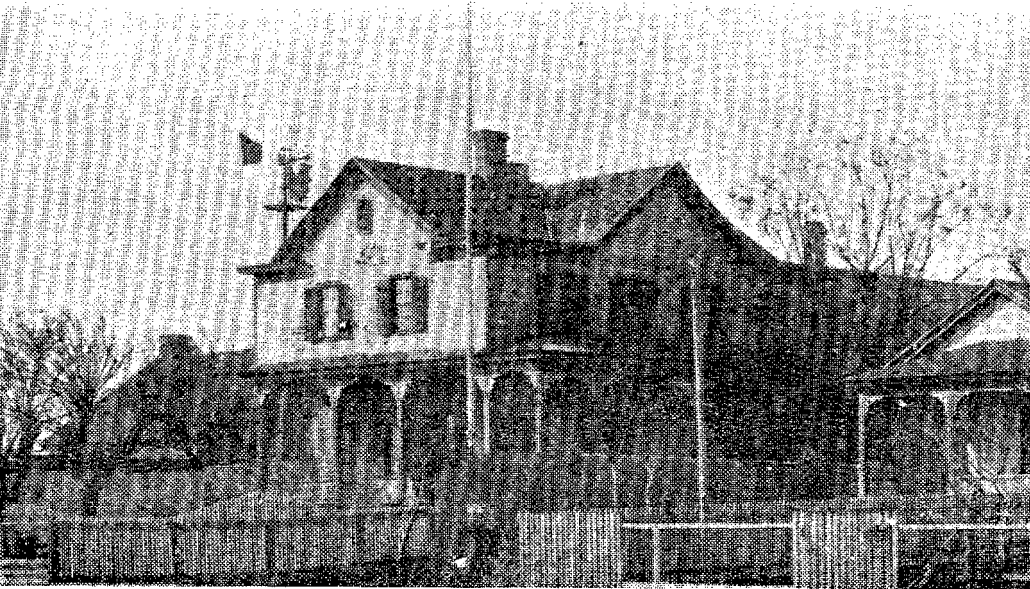
2. Pensacola *Floridian*, August 17, 1822.

3. *Statistical Report*, 1840, 36-38. The evidence does not reveal Assistant Surgeon McMahon's given name.

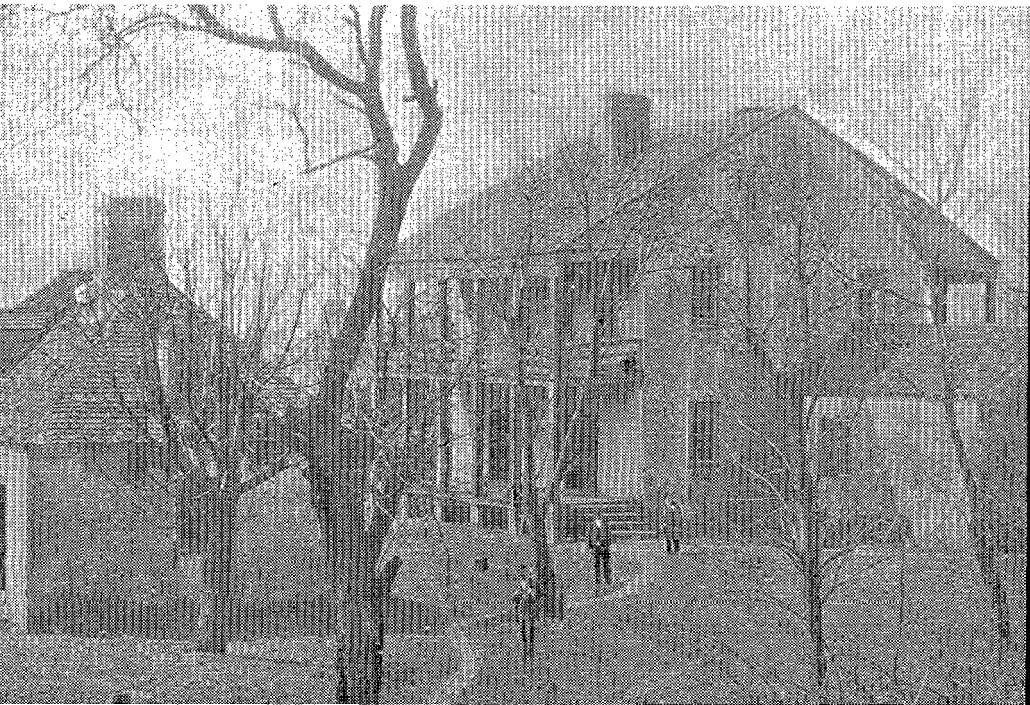
Despite this seemingly irrefutable evidence of the fever's presence, the local editor was not unalterably convinced that the upsurge in deaths was ascribable to yellow fever, especially since no soldiers "quartered in town" were infected.⁴ This challenging of the medical profession's diagnosis of yellow fever by lay persons would be heard repeatedly throughout the remainder of the century. Businessmen in Pensacola tried desperately to prevent the city being labelled unhealthy, but the disease had become epidemic by late August and during September. The death toll eventually numbered 237.⁵ Writing to George Walton on November 26, 1822, General Andrew Jackson expressed his sorrow over losing many friends from the "dreadfull calamity."⁶

Notwithstanding this situation, it became a common practice for the local editor to carry articles during this period extolling the healthful condition of the city. One such news story appeared on August 6, 1825, assuring its readers "of the almost total absence of disease from our City."⁷ While minimizing the presence of any disease locally, Pensacola papers were not averse to printing glaring accounts of epidemics in the rival cities of Mobile and New Orleans. A week after the article appeared describing the absence of fever in Pensacola, local citizens read that many were fleeing New Orleans and that Mobile was "almost entirely depopulated." "Under these circumstances," the editor cautioned, "it behooves us to be unremitting in our vigilance" against this fearful pestilence.⁸ Mirroring the belief that the disease was imported, and contagious, the local board of health imposed quarantine measures against all vessels arriving in the port from Mobile and New Orleans. This quarantine further stipulated that "no person . . . coming from . . . Mobile by land, shall . . . enter this

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4. Pensacola *Floridian*, August 17, 1822. Since few cases of fever had appeared among the troops before their departure from the city to a dry elevated position in the vicinity, some residents assumed their immunity "was due to their peculiar habits and mode of living." Consequently, "whiskey and salt pork were . . . considered as prophylactics." *Statistical Report*, 1840, I, 37.
 5. George Augustin, *History of Yellow Fever* (New Orleans, 1909), 811.
 6. Jackson to Walton, November 26, 1822, in Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "Andrew Jackson's Cronies in Florida Territorial Politics," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIV (July 1955), 26.
 7. *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, August 6, 1825.
 8. *Ibid.*, August 13, 1825.



The Pensacola Infirmary as it appeared about 1896. Courtesy of the Pensacola Historical Society.



United States Marine Hospital, Pensacola, late nineteenth century. Courtesy of the Pensacola Historical Society.

YELLOW FEVER IMMUNITY CARD.

This Certifies that John H. Caro
a native of Florida
and resident of Pensacola Fla. experienced an
attack of Yellow Fever at Mayington Fla.
in 1863 Attending Physician

No. 227

Joseph L. ...
State Health Officer of Florida.

This card does not exempt bearer and personal effects from disinfection.

An example of the yellow fever immunity cards issued by the Florida State Board of Health during the late nineteenth century.

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION OF BEARER.

HEIGHT 5 FEET 4 INCHES. WEIGHT 140 POUNDS.
HAIR yes CO. HAIR STRAIGHT, COREY, BLACK. HAIR, CO, BROWN.
NO MUSTACHE. NO, YES; NO, BLACK. NO, BEARD.
YES NO, BLACK. SIDE WHISKERS, YES, NO, WHITE.
NO, SIZE LARGE NO. FOR NO, FULL, NO, SLENDER. EYES,
NO, DARK, BLUE, BROWN, BLACK. EARS PIERCED, YES, NO. SPECIAL
MARKS, SCARS, ETC.

(SIGNATURE) *John H. Caro*

RESIGNED May 15 189

City, under a penalty of Fifty Dollars, without special permission of this Board."⁹

In spite of these measures, the sickness appeared in Pensacola late in October 1825, but the local paper assured its readers that the cooler weather "would fully reinstate our City in her well-deserved character-that of being as healthy a place as any in the Southern climate."¹⁰ How successful such statements were in mitigating apprehension is unknown. If one person's observation is accurate, considerable anxiety over yellow fever continued to prevail. Commodore William Bainbridge, who was in Pensacola in November 1825 as a member of a naval commission to select a site for establishing a navy yard, wrote that "The Town of Pensacola has a population of about 1400 souls." The population had evidently remained much the same, Bainbridge remarked, "since the fever of 1822-which caused many to remove from it and prevented others from coming to it from apprehension of the return of the fever."¹¹

The *Pensacola Gazette* remained quiet about yellow fever for the remainder of the 1820s, but ignoring it did not make it disappear. Writing from the navy yard in July 1826, Samuel Keep, who had recently arrived there to oversee the construction of a wharf, informed his brother in Boston that the frigate *John Adams* had arrived at the yard with yellow fever cases aboard. "I shall not remain here unless I am absolutely obliged to do so."¹²

The following spring, Keep revealed again his anxiety to his brother: "I must confess to you that I do not think I can possi-

9. Ibid. Quarantine measures were important to those who believed that the disease was imported and contagious. Out of sheer desperation, however, even those who supported the local origin theory usually advocated such action. In 1802, Stubbins H. Firth, a medical student at the University of Pennsylvania, conducted experiments which had proved yellow fever was noncontagious. Among other things, "he slept in the soiled clothing and bedding of yellow fever patients, [and] he repeatedly swallowed quantities of 'black vomit' expelled by yellow fever patients," and did not acquire yellow fever. "When he published his results in 1804, . . . the lesson they taught was largely overlooked." Straight, "Yellow Jack," 35.
10. *Pensacola Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, October 29, 1825.
11. "Manuscript Notes Of A Journal Of Commodore Bainbridge, U. S. N., Of Voyage En Route to Pensacola, Fla., Together With Brief Minutes While There and During Return Voyage From Pensacola to Washington," p. 20, in Box 533 (PS-Navy Yard and Naval Hospital, Pensacola, Fla., 1825-1877), Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
12. Samuel Keep to Dr. N. C. Keep, July 12, 1826, Keep Manuscript Collection, John C. Pace Library.

bly stand it. I am almost sick and I think the prospect is that it will be sickly here in a few weeks." Northern mechanics who had come to work in the navy yard apparently felt likewise and started returning home with the arrival of hot weather. "My men are leaving fast," Keep wrote, "I have only twelve left."¹³ His prediction about an approaching sickly season proved accurate. He informed his brother on September 2 that yellow fever had appeared in Pensacola. If Keep's description of conditions in Pensacola is accurate, yellow fever had obviously reached epidemic proportions: "More than two thirds of the inhabitants of this small city[,] Creoles as well as the American population[,] are sick with a fever which some of the people are too obstinate to call Yellow because it will be a damage to the city-they cry peace and safety in the morning and are buried perhaps before they see another sun. There was a funeral this morning before I arose from my bed-the victim was the Marshall of West Florida. The Navy Agent was buried the day before yesterday. Whole families lie sick without even a servant to administer to their wants for the disease is not confined to the Gentry, and servants cannot be obtained for love or money. So many people have left the place that . . . [burglaries] are committed almost every night."

Keep informed his brother that he had saved many lives. He described how he allegedly treated one fever patient: "I bled him and gave 25 grains of clear calomel-four hours after bled him again and gave 25 grains of calomel-also gave green arrow root[,] chicken water[,] and sulfate and Quinine." Keep also described how he would treat himself if he became a victim of the malady. "My determination is . . . to stick the lancet into both arms and let them bleed-which I hope to be able to do myself."¹⁴

13. Samuel Keep to N. C. Keep, May 4, 1827, *ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, September 2, 1827. One can assume that Keep had talked with local physicians and was describing the standard treatment for most any sickness at this time. With the bacteriological explanation of communicable diseases still in the future, the medical profession was unable to determine the origin and causative factors for most diseases. Thus, in the South, one medical historian states, bloodletting was a traditional therapeutic until well past mid-century. "The two medicines basic to any treatment . . . were calomel and quinine." "Bleeding was only one aspect of medical treatment." Purging, by excessive doses of the laxative calomel (mercurous chloride), and by blistering (placing some irritative substance on the skin to create a second or third degree burn and when pus appeared in them, it indicated that the blisters were drawing poison

The *Gazette* broke its general silence about the presence of yellow fever in September 1830, after the *Mobile Commercial Register* claimed that the disease had broken out in Pensacola. A few cases of "slight fever" caused by the "extreme heat" had occurred in Pensacola, the editor admitted, but in every instance it had "yielded to medicine."¹⁵ The *Gazette* attested to the city's health throughout the 1830s, but said little, if anything, about the presence of yellow fever. In July 1836, it commented that "An unusual number of strangers have made this place their retreat for the summer."¹⁶ Appearing at about the same time, a brochure advertising the sale of town lots boldly claimed that Pensacola "is recognized as a place of refuge from all malignant diseases."¹⁷ Naval Surgeon Isaac Hulse, writing to a friend on April 12, 1836, from the Pensacola Naval Hospital, recalled that during his practice there over the last thirty-nine months "The whole number of cases of yellow fever was about 80."¹⁸ One can assume, therefore, that sporadic cases were present in Pensacola during the same period.

This relatively healthy state of affairs changed in 1839. In August, the *Gazette* complained about the sparse number of visitors in town, but discounted deteriorating health conditions as being the culprit responsible for their absence.¹⁹ Some sickness existed in Pensacola, the editor admitted, but what we have here is all imported from Mobile and New Orleans.²⁰ On the other hand, Surgeon Hulse wrote to a friend on November 2 saying: "Within six weeks Pensacola has been visited with an epidemic

from the system), to cleanse the system was also fundamental to the cure. John Duffy, *Sword of Pestilence: The New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853* (Baton Rouge, 1966), 150-51.

15. *Pensacola Gazette and Florida Advertiser*, September 18, 1830.

16. *Pensacola Gazette*, July 9, 1836.

17. *Sale of Town Lots at Pensacola With a Description of the Place, Climate, etc.* (New York, 1836), 4.

18. Hulse to B. F. Thompson, April 12, 1836, in Charles J. Werner, *Dr. Isaac Hulse, Surgeon, U. S. Navy, 1787-1856, His Life and Letters* (New York, 1922), 23. On September 13, 1834, Commandant Wolcott Chauncey wrote the navy commissioners saying the naval hospital was too small to accommodate fever patients, and that he had "put up huts on the beach in front of the hospital to take care of the sick." Chauncey to navy commissioners, September 13, 1834, in Box 520 (PN-Hospital Construction at Pensacola, Fla., 1828-1846), Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

19. *Pensacola Gazette*, August 24, 1839.

20. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1839.

fever." Hulse also told the West India Squadron's departure from Pensacola to escape the fever, but Hulse was permitted to remain behind due to "the wishes of the people of Pensacola" and because "the place was indifferently supplied with medical aid."²¹ Hulse said the disease resulted from the "general epidemic state of the atmosphere."²² In treating the disease, Hulse relied chiefly on bloodletting, and the use of such purgatives as calomel, castor oil, enemas, and blistering.²³ He claimed that during the epidemic he had "treated 146 civilian cases with a loss of only six."²⁴

Pensacola experienced only sporadic fever cases the following seven years, but in 1846 an epidemic occurred at the naval hospital. Surgeon Hulse wrote that "Scarcely an individual residing at the Hospital escaped an attack." About ten or twelve cases proved fatal. But Hulse was especially saddened by one of these: "the malady which made such ravages here . . . deprived us of a favorite daughter. She died after 4 days illness at the age of 7-full of excellence, loveliness and promise." He believed the epidemic had "its origin in local causes"-that is, from stagnant ponds located near the hospital grounds which emanated poisonous effluvia or germs infecting the atmosphere.²⁵

The following summer the naval hospital was again filled with fever patients. When rumors appeared that the epidemic was spreading city officials appointed a health officer and imposed a quarantine against all shipping.²⁶ There is no record of the number of cases and deaths from yellow fever in Pensacola during the 1840s. Nonetheless, its presence was probably a major factor contributing to Escambia County's lack of substantial growth.²⁷

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21. Hulse to Thompson, November 2, 1839, in Werner, *Dr. Isaac Hulse*, 30. Pensacola was the home port for the West India Squadron.
 22. Isaac Hulse, "Navy Reports," *Maryland Medical and Surgical Journal*, I (1840), 440.
 23. Isaac Hulse, "Monograph on the Yellow Fever," *Maryland Medical and Surgical Journal*, II (1842), 401.
 24. *Ibid.*, 394.
 25. Hulse to Thompson, March 13, 1847, in Werner, *Dr. Isaac Hulse*, 40-41. These ponds were very likely the breeding place of the *Aedes aegypti*.
 26. *Pensacola Gazette*, September 4, 1847.
 27. The county's population increased by only 358 (3,993 to 4,351) during the decade of the 1840s. J. D. B. De Bow, *Statistical View of the United States . . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census . . .* (Washington, 1854), 206.

Following the fever's presence in 1847, Pensacola enjoyed a period of relative freedom from the pestilence. But in 1853 it struck again with increased fury. The steamer *Vixen* had arrived at the navy yard in late July from the West Indies with many cases of yellow fever among the crew. Before long an epidemic reigned, taking a heavy toll of officers and men. John F. Hammond, assistant surgeon at neighboring Fort Barrancas, claimed that while the *Vixen* was moored at the navy yard the daily sea breeze spread her effluvia through the community. To support his position, he described how a youngster who had fished from the decks of the *Vixen* "Took the fever," and shortly afterwards his sister contracted the same disease. Although "they were carried into the country, both of them died with black vomit."²⁸ With an epidemic raging, the yard was again the scene of a work stoppage as most workers fled.²⁹

On October 8, as it had done in the past, the *Gazette* eventually acknowledged the fever's presence by exclaiming that it had disappeared.³⁰ However, within two weeks, the editor wrote that "the fever had made its appearance again."³¹ Before it had run its course, the epidemic equalled in severity that of the previous most devastating calamity in 1822. According to one source, "The scourge raged within fearful violence from the latter part of July to about the 10th of October, carrying off about 260 victims of the 1,200 who remained in the city."³² It was indeed a heavy toll in life. For a decade after this devastating epidemic, only a few scattered cases of fever appeared in Pensacola.

In the meantime, the Civil War began, and Pensacola and the navy yard passed from Confederate to Union hands. Late in August 1863, sickness broke out on board the Federal supply ship *Relief*. The fever had its origin, Navy Surgeon B. F. Gibbs asserted, in the filthy unventilated holds of the *Relief* where de-

28. U. S. Surgeon General's Office, *Statistical Report On the Sickness and Mortality In the Army of The United States From January 1839 to January 1855*, I (Washington, 1856), 325-26.

29. U. S. Navy Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1853* (Washington, 1853), 444.

30. *Pensacola Gazette*, October 8, 1853. The issue carries the date October 9, 1853.

31. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1853.

32. Augustin, *History of Yellow Fever*, 812. Pensacola had a population of 2,164 in 1850; thus roughly half the people had fled. De Bow, *Statistical View of the United States . . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census . . .*, 375.

composing matter emanated a noxious poisonous effluvia. Upon visiting the ship, he found the odor "most intolerable" when the hatches were opened. "In consequence of these nauseating odours," the surgeon exclaimed, "it was impossible for me to but indifferently explore the hold of the ship, and I was glad to again shut up the fomites of the fever under closed hatches, with the conditions that gave them birth." Gibbs was satisfied that the disease had a shipboard origin, but he was uncertain as to how it reached land.³³ The commandant of the yard wrote the Secretary of the Navy on September 29 informing him that "the disease yellow fever had become epidemic in the Yard."³⁴ The dreadful scourge disappeared with the advent of cold weather, but only to reappear again four years later to add to the miseries of a city then under military occupation.

Supposedly the city was infected by the crew of the English ship *Fair Wind* which had contracted the disease in Kingston, Jamaica, before arriving in Pensacola on June 21, 1867. During July, fever cases were rapidly increasing, and many were leaving Pensacola as fast as possible. "But, with the natural unwillingness of a commercial community to declare itself pest ridden, the disease was called . . . billious fever, Dengue or breakbone fever, red fever . . . etc., until the Mayor of Pensacola [on] . . . August 9 . . . announced the existence of yellow fever in that city."³⁵ Shortly thereafter, Pensacola was described as the "city of the plague. All its unacclimated inhabitants have fled; and its deserted streets tell a tale of silent horror." The fever also raged epidemic at the navy yard, and in September it was closed and all officers granted leave. An observer on the scene remarked: "There are no men left to guard it; and all labor has been suspended."

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33. B. F. Gibbs, "Account of the Epidemic of Yellow Fever which visited Pensacola Navy Yard in the Summer and Autumn of 1863," *American Journal of Medical Science*, 51 (1866), 341, 344. The unacclimated suffered most, Gibbs found. However, he also discovered that "sexual excesses favored an invasion of the disease." He gave this example; "A clerk who had escaped during the height of the disease, toward the close of the epidemic became *placee* with a mulatto woman, and was shortly taken with fever and died." *ibid.*, 350.
34. W. Smith to Gideon Welles, September 29, 1863, Commandant's Letters, Letter Book No. 2, 1863, May-November, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, National Archives.
35. "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic at the Naval Station, Pensacola, Florida, 1867," *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, XVIII (March 14, 1868), 227-28.

The character of the fever in Pensacola was described as extremely virulent, and a charitable association was organized "to nurse the sick and bury the dead."³⁶ One member of the association recalled: "we had a charitable people to care for the sick and destitute, without outside help. Nearly all our citizens, when not sick, gave their entire time and attention to nursing the sick and burying the dead. . . . They hired a two-story building at the corner of Palafox and Romana Streets, which they used as a hospital and for the headquarters of the Noble Band . . . all the sick who had no homes [strangers] and those who could be better treated at the hospital were taken to it, to get well or die. This hospital was open at all hours to charitable visitors; it was attended by all the Doctors of the city, without charge, and, the Noble Samaritans, did the nursing and defrayed the expenses."³⁷ In spite of the appearance of cooler weather in September, the epidemic continued unabated with the number of deaths mounting daily. The high mortality rate prompted one person to remark: "It must soon expire from the want of fuel." A persistent rumor making the rounds was that the water in the harbor had an amber-colored hue, something which had not occurred since the last epidemic in 1863.³⁸

Pensacola medical authorities believed the city was infected in 1873 by the ship *Golden Dream* that arrived on June 11 from Havana with fever cases aboard. Pensacola physician Robert B. S. Hargis claimed the epidemic was due to a southwesterly wind which "swept rapidly over the infected ship each evening from the 28th of July till some time after the disease became epidemic on August 15." The germs carried by the winds found a hospitable environment in the unsanitary conditions of the city. The board of health had no medical adviser, Hargis insisted, and the only preventative action it had taken was to order the citizens to clean out their privies and to clean up around their premises.³⁹

36. J. C. Hoadley, ed., *Memorial of Henry Sanford Gansevoort, Captain Fifth Artillery, and Lieutenant-Colonel by Brevet, U. S. A.; Colonel Thirteenth New York State Volunteer Cavalry and Brigadier-General of Volunteers by Brevet* (Boston, 1875), 248, 252, 253. Gansevoort commanded the detachment of the Fifth Artillery stationed at Fort Barrancas from April 1867 until military rule in Pensacola ended in February 1869.

37. *Siempre La Patria*, "Recollections of the 1867 Yellow Fever Epidemic," *Pensacola Pensacolian*, January 6, 1884.

38. Hoadley, *Memorial of Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 249, 252.

39. Robert B. S. Hargis, "Yellow Fever Epidemic at Pensacola, 1873," *New Orleans Medical and Scientific Journal*, I (March 1874), 783.

The epidemic soon spread to the navy yard. The Secretary of the Navy described it as an "unusually fatal epidemic" which seriously retarded construction work in progress there.⁴⁰ In all, there were 600 cases in Pensacola during this epidemic; sixty-two of which proved fatal.⁴¹ Unfortunately, after a few months respite during the winter months it reappeared with renewed frenzy.

Ships arriving from Havana during the summer of 1874 were placed in quarantine, along with ships free of the disease, without any effective restrictions against communication between the infected and the healthy. Furthermore, lax quarantine enforcement permitted stevedores to work on ships in quarantine and to come ashore at night along with seamen from the ships. Commenting on this lax quarantine enforcement, George M. Sternberg, army surgeon at Fort Barrancas, said: "When the mass of the people headed by a respectable number of physicians, insist that the disease is a necessary evil, resulting from annually recurring climatic conditions, it is useless to expect their support in the maintaining of a quarantine for its exclusion."⁴² The first case of fever appeared in the city on August 17 and the last on November 9.⁴³ "The disease progressed with fearful rapidity, and everyone able to leave the place did so."⁴⁴ The population of Pensacola was 3,347, but 1,947 fled, thereby reducing the population over one half. Of those remaining, 354 died. "Among the poor," it was reported, "burials were made without much ceremony without even going to the graveyard in some cases. Some were buried on the sand beach, and the shifting of sand by the ebb and flow of tide exposed the naked feet of some of the dead."⁴⁵

The fatality rate among the naval officers at the navy yard was also extremely high. On September 28, Paymaster William J.

40. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1874* (Washington, 1874), 19.

41. Augustin, *History of Yellow Fever*, 812.

42. George M. Sternberg, "Yellow Fever In Pensacola, Fla., in 1873, 1874, and 1875," *American Public Health Association Report*, 11 (1875), 469.

43. Joseph Wilson and others, "Report of a Naval Medical Board to Investigate the Circumstances Connected With the Visitation of Yellow Fever at Navy Yard, Pensacola, Fla." U. S. Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, *Hygienic and Medical Reports by Medical Officers of the U. S. Navy* (Washington, 1879), 700.

44. J. R. Tyron, "Epidemic of Yellow Fever at the Navy Yard, Pensacola, Fla., During the Summer and Fall of 1874," *Sanitary and Medical Report, U. S. Navy, 1873-74* (Washington, 1875), 453.

45. Wilson, "Report of a Naval Medical Board," 701-02.

Thompson telegraphed Washington saying "that he was the only commissioned officer left on duty."⁴⁶ Another wire to the Secretary of the Navy on November 2 from A. A. Semmes, captain commanding, listed those who had died during the epidemic; it contained the names of six officers, including Commandant W. B. Woolsey and two surgeons.⁴⁷ The epidemic evidently created extreme privation among the citizenry. Henry Davidson wrote in his diary on December 31, 1874: "The year ends on a state of extreme impecuniosity and no prospect of anything better for a year at least. I suppose by the next new year we shall all be in our graves, starved to death."⁴⁸

On June 27, 1875, the German bark *Von Moltke* sailing from Havana and bound for Pascagoula, Mississippi, put into Pensacola harbor because of sickness among her crew. During the night the *Von Moltke* anchored opposite Fort Barrancas before reporting to the quarantine station the following morning where it was determined that five crew members had fever. The pilot of the vessel returned to his home in Warrington and allegedly infected nearby Fort Barrancas. But Major George M. Sternberg, army surgeon of the fort, did not rule out the possibility that the disease germs were wafted on the wind which "was blowing in such a direction as to come from her to the fort."⁴⁹ After ascertaining that no one from the post went aboard the *Von Moltke*, Surgeon H. N. Beaumont at the naval hospital said: "We are reduced to the necessity of supposing that the yellow fever germs were sown broadcast by the wind which flew from the *Von Moltke* in the direction of Fort Barrancas." The only other explanation, he believed, was that they "floated ashore by infected articles thrown overboard from the vessel."⁵⁰ James S. Herron, surgeon-in-charge of the marine hospital in Pensacola, did not rule out the wind theory of the transmission of the disease, but he leaned more heavily toward transmission by infected articles. The pilot, it was

46. Thompson to Robeson, September 28, 1874, in Commandant's Letters, Navy Yards-Washington, Pensacola, Mare Island, 1874, no. 100, Naval Records Collection of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, National Archives.

47. Semmes to Robeson, November 2, 1874, *ibid.*, no. 134.

48. From the foreword of a diary of William Henry Davison, "Quarantine Station, Pensacola, 1876," Special Collections, John C. Pace Library.

49. Sternberg, "Yellow Fever in Pensacola," 479-80.

50. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1881-1882* (Washington, 1882), 627.

said, was wearing the captain's pea jacket when he came ashore from the *Von Moltke*. Stringent quarantine regulations placed against the port by the commandant of the navy yard and the Pensacola Board of Health presumably prevented its spread to those places.⁵¹

For the succeeding seven years, a few sporadic cases of the fever appeared in Pensacola. Strict quarantine regulations, which required all vessels to discharge their ballast at the quarantine station and be fumigated, some believed, had virtually rid the city of the detested malady. Such talk created a false sense of security, according to William Henry Davison, who was serving as port inspector in 1876. Connivance between the captains of ships calling at the port and some members of the board of health and stevedores who questioned the necessity of the regulation made a farce of quarantine. Davison claimed that violations of the quarantine were reported to the mayor, but usually went unpunished. "So much for having a weathercock at the head of affairs," he wrote.⁵²

Reportedly to strengthen quarantine regulations, on April 10, 1882, the quarantine station for Pensacola and the bay was moved from Deer Point, some four miles from the city, over to Little Sabine Inlet on Santa Rosa Island. According to a Pensacola ordinance, quarantine measures went into effect on May 15. Nevertheless, the naval officer in charge "soon reported . . . that the regulations were not being observed, and that the quarantine was a farce." He complained that "sailors, boardinghouse keepers . . . and stevedores were allowed to come and go at all times . . . having written permission from the board of health." Moreover, the officers and men of the ships in quarantine "kept up their visiting . . . regardless of the state of their vessels or the conditions of their crews."⁵³

If complacency existed, it was shattered early in August when fever appeared on the Spanish bark *Saletta*. Fever from the vessel spread ashore, according to Dr. R. B. S. Hargis, president of the Pensacola Board of Health, when a Mrs. Rosario laundered the

51. James S. Herron, "Yellow Fever at Barrancas, Near Pensacola, Fla., in 1875," Marine Hospital Service of the United States, *Report of the Super-vising Surgeon, 1874-1875* (Washington, 1876), 140-43.

52. Davison, "Quarantine Station, Pensacola, 1876," 57-58.

53. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1883-1884* (Washington, 1884), 567.

clothes of the captain and crew of the vessel. Hargis had been "severely denounced" in 1873 when he announced the presence of yellow fever in Pensacola. And since the lay element of the board of health was presently reluctant to recognize its existence, Hargis thought it wise to act with caution to allay panic.⁵⁴ "It is certainly the fact," reported the surgeon general of the navy, "that yellow fever existed in Pensacola for at least fourteen days before the board of health acknowledged it [on August 28]." Suspicion about the presence of the disease mounted among the citizens in the meantime, and "many persons departed . . . if not . . . convinced of the existence of the disease in their midst, at least alarmed at the various startling rumors relative to its presence."⁵⁵

William Martin, a navy physician, criticized the indecision on the part of the board. It permitted businesses to stay open in the fever area, Martin charged, which were frequented by people both in and outside the district. Consequently, they "were a constant menace to the entire population." Moreover, due to differing opinions among the members of the board, funerals were conducted at the Catholic church. Testimony, Martin claimed, clearly showed "that fever spread along the route usually followed by those funeral processions through Government street to Alcaniz, and thence to the cemetery."⁵⁶

In defense of the board, Hargis contended that the year 1876 inaugurated a new order of things regarding shipping in Pensacola. Italian ships rarely were seen in Pensacola prior to that year, he said, but now appeared regularly in connection with the lumber trade. These vessels were poorly constructed and their crews were "ill-fed, ill-paid, and always dirty." The ships gave off the most "pestiferous emanations" and were a threat to the health

54. R. B. S. Hargis, "The Pensacola Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1882," *American Public Health Association, Public Health Papers and Reports*, IX (Washington, 1884), 6-7.

55. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1883-1884*, 566-68.

56. William Martin, "Conclusions As To The Outbreak of Yellow Fever at Pensacola in 1882," *Proceedings of the U. S. Naval Medical Society, 1882-1884*, I (Washington, 1884), 174-75. The creation of a State Board of Health finally received legislative approval in 1889, but before that time "the wide spectrum of quarantine concepts prevailing in the state because of independent, locally controlled agencies resulted in much conflict and inefficiency." Elizabeth Dwyer Vickers and F. Norman Vickers, "Notations on Pensacola's Medical History, 1873-1923," *Journal of the Florida Medical Association*, 61 (January 1974), 9.

of any port which they entered. Hargis was also critical of the number of "mean abodes of vice and iniquity" in Pensacola which were visited by the "dissolute and degraded wretches" of humanity. "Herein," he said, "yellow fever revelled and did its work in the summer and fall of 1882." Apathy resulting from the city being healthy for several years, and the vehement objections by railway officials and businessmen to isolation by quarantine, were named by Hargis as other forces preventing mitigation of the disease. Even so, he added, the prevailing atmospheric conditions were inimical to staying its progress. As Hargis put it: "Scores of barrels of sulphur and tar were burned, almost to a suffocating degree, in every street, alley, and vacant space of the infected districts, outside even of their limits, and still the scourge overleaped its bounds, and raged with increasing violence and malignancy until it spread over the entire city, and died out ultimately for the lack of materials."⁵⁷

The naval reservation escaped this epidemic allegedly owing to its isolation from the surrounding community enforced by an armed picket line. "Watchmen . . . were encamped at the Bayou Grande bridge, on the road to Pensacola, and it was here that the incoming mails were thoroughly fumigated." The yard steam launch patrolled the beach both day and night to "warn off all approaching ships and boats." The unacclimated officers and their families were permitted to go by steamer to Mobile, upon the word of the surgeon of the yard "that there was no yellow fever on the reservation, and that a rigid quarantine had been established against Pensacola and vicinity."⁵⁸ As one naval medical officer put it: While the naval reservation generally remained healthy, "a 'fever' was raging and killing people in the city of Pensacola . . . and against which we were strictly quarantined."⁵⁹ The navy yard was thereby "cut off from all the world-save by the sea."⁶⁰ The epidemic raged in Pensacola from August 28 to November 21; there were 2,400 cases and 200 deaths.⁶¹

57. Hargis, "Pensacola Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1882," 3-4.

58. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1883-1884*, 568.

59. Daniel M. Guiteras, "Notes on the Yellow Fever at Pensacola in 1883," *Proceedings of the U. S. Naval Medical Society, 1882-1884*, I (Washington, 1884), 176.

60. "The Yellow Fever At Pensacola," *Medical News* (February 24, 1883), 234.

61. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1883-1884*, 566. One report states that of the "2,400 cases fully one-half were among the colored

With the announcement of yellow fever in Pensacola, the Alabama State Board of Health sent its state health officer, Dr. Jerome T. Cochran, to Pensacola Junction (Flomaton, Alabama) to oversee quarantine rules against Pensacola.⁶² Upon his arrival, Cochran was informed by local officials that they had demanded the suspension of all trains running between Pensacola and the Junction. This action had interrupted the "human exodus from the stricken city," and stopped the movement of the mail, medicine, and other necessary supplies into Pensacola. Believing that a complete embargo was too harsh under the circumstances, Cochran modified the quarantine regulations. The mail from Pensacola was allowed to pass after it was taken from the mail cars and thoroughly fumigated with sulphur in a small structure he had set up for that purpose. All passengers coming from Pensacola were transferred into special cars on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. "These cars were kept locked, were not entered even by the conductors, and no one was allowed to leave them until they had passed beyond the northern boundaries of the State; and it was further provided that passenger cars so used should not be returned to the State until after frost." Likewise, freight cars going to Pensacola were not returned to Alabama, "but were allowed to accumulate on the side tracks in Pensacola and vicinity." However, when the line became practically blocked with empty cars, the boards of health of Montgomery and Escambia counties in Alabama permitted their return after the interiors were fumigated with sulphur and the exteriors were washed with copperas water.⁶³

After the 1882 epidemic, sanitary inspectors were appointed for Pensacola upon the advice of the surgeon-general of the United States Marine Hospital Service. The inspectors were "to visit each house in the city and make a report of its hygienic and sanitary condition," and to identify those where "insalubrious air prevails." Correcting this condition wherever it was discovered, some believed, was imperative if the community was to escape epi-

residents. Of the white inhabitants, many of whom were Germans and Italians, too poor to get away, a majority were seized with the disease." "Yellow Fever at Pensacola," 234.

62. Pensacola Junction was located at the intersection of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad.

63. J. Cochran, "Report on Yellow Fever and Quarantine in Pensacola," *Transactions of the Medical Association of Alabama*, 36 (1884), 149-55.

demics. The inspectors were further expected to enforce a regulation "that the yards be kept free of offal desposits." Despite these precautions, fever cases were diagnosed at the navy yard and in Pensacola and made public in August 1883. Reciprocal quarantine measures were immediately taken by both the yard and the city.⁶⁴ The *Pensacola Commercial* reported on August 22 that "there had been . . . two deaths at the Navy Yard." The editor urged that everyone remain "cool" and disregard "sensational reports." Anyone maliciously starting false reports with the obvious intent of alarming the community, he felt, "deserves a coat of tar and feathers, or better a halter and a convenient lamp post."

On the same day, August 22, the sickness of two sailors staying at the Jasper Rand boarding house on Palafox Wharf was diagnosed as yellow fever by Drs. W. F. Fordham and R. D. White. Several other physicians concurred with the diagnosis, and the board of health made an official announcement of the fever's presence and the implementation of quarantine measures.⁶⁵ The *Commercial* saw no reason for reporting the cases at Rand's boarding house and thereby creating a stampede. Indeed, in its view this action by the physicians and the board of health would do untold damage to commerce and trade through quarantine. Under these circumstances, the *Commercial* thought it behooved the board to issue a counter report.⁶⁶ The board responded by cancelling its subscription to the newspaper.⁶⁷

The board of health's announcement of the presence of the fever evidently created a frenzied scene. Naval physician Daniel M. Guiteras arrived in Pensacola two days after the board's action on August 22 and found that Rand's boarding house had been "pulled down and burned by a lot of excited people." Describing the scene further, he noted that "citizens were flying from town . . .; shipping was diverted from the port; hotels were being emptied; and business was paralyzed."

Being in the company of several Pensacola businessmen shortly after his arrival, Dr. Guiteras further recalled that it soon became evident, "from the drift of their conversation, that they

64. E. Bouvier, "Sanitary Conditions of the City of Pensacola and Vicinity, 1883," Marine Hospital Service of the United States, *Report of the Supervising Surgeon, 1883* (Washington, 1883), 251-55.

65. *Pensacola Commercial*, August 22, 1883.

66. *Ibid.*, August 25, 1883.

67. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1883.

had made up their minds to stamp out yellow fever . . . by the very simple method of changing its name." Biliious or malaria fever, the businessmen agreed, "would do just as well to account for the deaths, but it must not be yellow fever."⁶⁸

Possibly a measure of doubt about the fever's presence, as well as business reasons, prompted this decision because the medical profession itself was divided on the correctness of the diagnosis. Dr. R. D. Murray, of the Marine Hospital Service, performed an autopsy on one of the Palafox Wharf victims who had succumbed, and he attributed his death to swamp fever (malaria). Quarantine surgeon T. M. Leonard concurred fully with Dr. Murray's autopsy report. However, three other local physicians reiterated their previous endorsement of the original diagnosis by board of health physicians White and Fordham.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the board rescinded the quarantine against the city on August 30. This action largely reflected pressure from the lay members on the board. Indeed there was some talk of removing the two physicians from the board of health so that "the wisdom of its counsels should not be marred by professional incompetency and mendacity."⁷⁰ However, naval surgeon Adolph A. Hoehling lashed out at those whom he believed distorted the state of the city's health. "When fear of the loss of business causes communities and their physicians to call a disease like that now prevailing in . . . Pensacola malaria, or the prevailing disease," he said, "it is time to raise a voice in protest."⁷¹ Meanwhile, a Court of Inquiry visited the navy yard to determine the cause of the yellow fever at that place. When the study listed four possible causes, the *Commercial* said it had overriding evidence that the medical experts "know nothing at all about the matter."⁷²

Nonetheless, this charge apparently did not apply to one Pensacola physician, R. Bosso, who ran an advertisement in the *Commercial* guaranteeing that any one, over five years of age, who took one bottle of his "Wonderful Medicine" according to the directions would be "free for six months from contracting

68. Guiteras, "Notes on the Yellow Fever in Pensacola in 1883," 177-78.

69. *Ibid.*, 178-84.

70. Quoted in Vickers and Vickers, "Notations on Pensacola's Medical History," 8.

71. Guiteras, "Notes on the Yellow Fever in Pensacola in 1883," 191.

72. *Pensacola Commercial*, October 27, 1883.

any of said contagious diseases.“⁷³ Unfortunately, Bosso contracted yellow fever himself after having treated a fever patient at the navy yard. The physician who attended to him said: “He persisted in drinking abundantly of his remedy, and, unnecessary to say, the black vomit persisted too, until the time of his death; before he died he wanted me to sign a certificate stating that he had not died of yellow fever, for, he said, ‘if I die of yellow fever people will not buy my medicine any more.’ The physician on the case described it as “a good cathartic, with the disadvantage of being expensive, (one-dollar for an eight-ounce bottle).“⁷⁴

Pensacola was spared the torment and suffering of another yellow fever epidemic in the decade from 1883 to 1893. During that time, however, the public’s fear of the pestilence evidently had not abated. On August 9, 1893, the board of health announced the deaths of two yellow fever victims. The local paper described the scene created by this announcement: “This [news] flew like wild fire over the city and gathered wings as it went. The cheeks of timid people which but a few hours before had been radiant with smiles, suddenly paled with fear and in an incredibly short time in every part of the city preparations for departure were being made. The north bound train which left at 1:45 p.m. was filled to overflowing and hundreds of others hurried their preparations to leave on the night train.“⁷⁵ Such hasty action is understandable, considering “the absolute helplessness of citizens and physicians in controlling the spread or anticipating the course of the plague.“⁷⁶

Mayor William Dudley Chipley concurred with the board of health’s decision to impose a quarantine until it could be determined whether an epidemic existed.⁷⁷ During this time the board promised to post bulletins that would keep the public in-

73. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1883.

74. Guiteras, “Notes on the Yellow Fever in Pensacola in 1883,” 178. Dr. R. Bosso was born in Verona, Italy. He had been in the United States for nine years, but had come to Pensacola only a short time before his death. His widow remained in Pensacola and married Constantine Apostle, who apparently owned a grocery store. William Bernard Simmons, “Bosso’s Blessing To Mankind,” typescript, Pensacola Historical Museum. Simmons is a great-grandson of Dr. Bosso.

75. *Pensacola Daily News*, August 10, 1893. Miss Lelia Abercrombie remembers her family talking about leaving Pensacola for Marietta, Georgia, during the epidemic. Interview with author, November 12, 1975, Pensacola.

76. Robert B. S. Hargis, *Yellow Fever: Its Ship Origin and Prevention* (Philadelphia, 1880), 50.

formed about its findings. In an obvious attempt to ease the anxiety of those who remained in the city, the *Daily News* reported that the mayor and the surgeon general had "agreed that in case an epidemic occurs people would be placed in sanitary camps . . . and cared for by the government."⁷⁸ Not pleased with the quarantine, however, the paper observed: "Trade and industry have received a paralyzing shock and hundreds of people have been thrown out of employment in consequence."⁷⁹ Soon thereafter state health officer Joseph Y. Porter announced that the quarantine "involving the interdiction of travel and the consequent embarrassment to commerce, should now cease" because an investigation had ruled out fever as the cause for the first two deaths which were responsible for implementing it.⁸⁰ The board of health followed Dr. Porter's advice and lifted the quarantine, and made a plea for the people to forget the scare.⁸¹

In September 1897, fever cases were reported in Flomaton, Alabama, only forty miles from Pensacola. Nonetheless, the city was enjoying exceptionally good health at this time, according to reports by local physicians at the September meeting of the Pensacola Medical Society. Papers were also read at the meeting on the origins of yellow fever. Dr. Frank G. Renshaw supported the germ theory while Dr. W. E. Anderson argued strongly in support of the poisonous gas theory. Despite this difference in theories over its origins, there was a general consensus among the local physicians that the city was safe from the fever.⁸²

This optimism was not shared by Captain Junius W. MacMurray, commanding officer at Fort Barrancas, and he made preparations to remove his command to a healthier area. At the urging of the fort's physician, Captain William C. Gorgas, and Dr. Porter, MacMurray abandoned the plan, however. Removal of the troops, they were convinced, could very likely spark a panic.⁸³ Commenting on yellow fever at the fort, Dr. Gorgas said: "The fear of yellow fever is so great through all this country . . . , that I think keeping up the morale of the people is more im-

77. *Pensacola Daily News*, August 13, 1893.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1893.

81. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1893.

82. Vickers and Vickers, "Notations on Pensacola's Medical History," 14.

83. *Ibid.*

portant than the slight service intra-garrison quarantines do." The terror of the contagion was so great, Gorgas claimed, that the sick were "avoided and looked upon with . . . dread, and the dead carted away at night and buried without ceremony."⁸⁴ Gorgas sometimes performed as undertaker, gravedigger, and clergyman during these burials while the family remained at a distance.⁸⁵ Before such depressing scenes would end permanently, Pensacola would experience one more epidemic.

In June 1900, United States Army Surgeon Walter Reed was sent to Cuba as president of a commission appointed to study the infectious diseases of that country, but more especially yellow fever. In September the Reed commission had recorded three cases of yellow fever transmitted by the mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti*) that had fed previously on patients clinically ill with yellow fever. Subsequent work of the commission proved conclusively that the mosquito was the sole carrier of yellow fever. As a result of this discovery, the commission advised medical authorities that "the spread of yellow fever could be most effectively controlled by anti-mosquito measures and the protection of the sick from the bites of mosquitoes."⁸⁶ Five years later health authorities in Pensacola followed this advice.

On July 15, 1905, several hundred persons left Pensacola on a railroad excursion to Mobile and New Orleans. Many of these people visited relatives in a quarter of New Orleans which, it was learned afterwards, had been infected by yellow fever.⁸⁷ On August 29, three cases of fever were reported. Each of the victims, Manuel Migul, George Klonio, and Chris Thimoras, had traveled to New Orleans on the excursion. Dr. Porter, following Dr. Reed's advice, immediately informed the public that an attempt would be made to isolate the disease by establishing a sanitary cordon around the area where the victims lived, and all houses within the district would be inspected to detect further cases of yellow fever. Within these boundaries dwellings would be

84. Quoted in *ibid.*, 15.

85. Marie D. Gorgas and Burton J. Hendrick, *William Crawford Gorgas: His Life and Work* (New York, 1924), 65. As the chief sanitary officer in Havana, Cuba, in 1901, Major William C. Gorgas instituted measures that completely eradicated yellow fever from that city within six months.

86. George K. Strode, ed., *Yellow Fever* (New York, 1951), 8, 10-11.

87. Joseph Y. Porter, "Yellow Fever In Tampa and Pensacola, Florida, 1905," *Public Health and Marine Hospital Service Report, 1906* (Washington, 1907), 175.

“screened and fumigated,” and all inhabitants were to remain and be given bi-daily medical inspections. A police guard was stationed around the restricted territory to enforce the regulations.⁸⁸ At the same time, health authorities urged people to wage relentless warfare against the infected mosquitoes by screening their houses and destroying their breeding places. General fumigation days were established by Mayor Charles H. Bliss, and he assured the public that there was no reason to “get afraid and run away as formerly.”⁸⁹

It soon became obvious, however, that a sizable exodus was occurring despite such reassurances. The *Pensacola Journal* reported that “a number of persons have left the city,” but played down its significance.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, state health authorities soon found it necessary to “place a sanitary guard around the entire city under the direction of the sheriff of the county, to prohibit anyone leaving the city” and possibly spreading the disease to other portions of the state. A water patrol of the harbor was established to prevent departure by that means.⁹¹

Apparently aware that some were eluding the cordons, as the fever jumped the bounds of the quarantine area and was rapidly assuming serious proportions throughout the city, the United States Public Health and Marine Hospital Service established a detention camp near McDavid, Florida. Any person wishing to leave Pensacola had to remain in the nearby camp for seven days, the believed incubative period of yellow fever. Refugees could not leave the camp under any circumstances before the elapse of this

88. Porter, “Yellow Fever in Tampa and Pensacola, 1905,” 176. It was “bounded by Romana Street on the North, Alcaniz on the East, Church Street on the South, and a line drawn from Church Street along Jefferson Street through Cushman’s alley to Romana Street on the West.” *ibid.*

89. *Pensacola Journal*, August 30, 1905.

90. *Ibid.*, September 3, 1905. Lewis Bear recalls that people were “swarming out” of Pensacola. He and his parents went by train to Greenville, Alabama, but they were not permitted to leave their car until they reached Cincinnati, Ohio. Interview with author, November 11, 1975, Pensacola. At the age of thirteen, Lelia Abercrombie recalls leaving Pensacola on a sealed train bound for the Roanoke-Salem area in Virginia. Many others were also leaving, carrying shoe boxes well stocked with food. Interview with author, November 12, 1975.

91. Porter, “Yellow Fever in Tampa and Pensacola, Florida, 1905,” 177. As a result of this action, Dr. S. M. Gonzalez was placed under arrest for making disparaging remarks about the board of health. *Pensacola Journal*, September 7, 1905. John Ellis Knowles remembers hearing that guards armed with shotguns patrolled the three main roads leading out of Pensacola. Interview with author, November 14, 1975, Pensacola.

prescribed period of time.⁹² To enforce this regulation, the camp was to be "circled by two barbed wire fences" and armed guards would patrol in between them.⁹³ Upon completion of the detention, the refugees were issued a certificate permitting them to travel to other points either within Florida or elsewhere.⁹⁴

When the epidemic had not abated by the second week in October, the State Board of Health responded by creating a fumigating force of 100 men to destroy mosquitoes.⁹⁵ That the mosquito was responsible for transmission of the disease, according to health officials, was unequivocally supported by the freedom from infection enjoyed by the nurses at St. Anthony's Hospital. The wards in the hospital were carefully screened and fumigated and, "although there were virulent cases of yellow fever in these wards, none of the nurses contracted the disease."⁹⁶

Despite this medical advice in the transmission of yellow fever, one Constantine Apostle placed a full page advertisement in the *Pensacola Journal* saying: " 'Sit Tight' " and "Keep Cool!" because "Bosso's Blessing to Mankind" is "the only Positive Cure for Yellow Fever." Instructions for taking the patent medicine were also given.⁹⁷ These advertisements ceased after this news item appeared about a yellow fever death on October 6: "Corfetti, the Greek who died late last night, was somewhat a favorite of the general public. He managed the store of Constantine Apostle on Government St."⁹⁸ The Lewis Bear Company also advertised one way to avoid the pestilence: "No Yellow Fever, No Headache! No Backache! as long as you drink Green River, The Official Whiskey of the United States Government."⁹⁹ Indeed, many business enterprises, unlike on previous occasions, exploited the epidemic. Hooton's Pharmacy advertised that it had received a large

92. Porter, "Yellow Fever In Tampa and Pensacola, 1905," 178.

93. *Pensacola Journal*, September 19, 1905.

94. Porter, "Yellow Fever In Tampa and Pensacola, 1905," 178.

95. *Pensacola Daily News*, October 13, 1905.

96. Porter, "Yellow Fever In Tampa and Pensacola, 1905," 177.

97. "Take the first bottle in two or three doses within an hour's time. Then take a tablespoonful every hour until the second bottle is used up. Then take one tablespoonful every two hours until the patient has recovered. The medicine may be given with crushed ice." *Pensacola Journal*, September 10, 1905. According to John Ellis Knowles, it was believed that Bosso's medicine was "principally alcohol." Interview with author, November 14, 1975, Pensacola.

98. *Pensacola Journal*, October 6, 1905.

99. *Ibid.*, September 19, 1905.

shipment of sulphur, oil of citronella, and insect powder for combatting the mosquito. In bold letters it said: "We want your business."¹⁰⁰

Most likely as a result of recent discoveries on the cause and transmission of yellow fever, the press took a different attitude toward the epidemic. The *Journal* recognized the fever's presence and was not critical of the quarantine measures instituted. Indeed, one editorial stressed that the existence of fever might even prove a "Blessing in Disguise." Mainly, because it possibly would bring federal quarantine regulations which would be applied to all Gulf coast cities. New Orleans and Mobile, it contended, with weak quarantine regulations, profited at the expense of Pensacola where regulations were stringent.¹⁰¹ The *Journal* regularly carried yellow fever reports. The report for October 29 listed only one new case.¹⁰² Reacting to this encouraging development, Mayor Bliss requested that the quarantine around Pensacola be removed "in order that country people might enter the city and dispose of their produce." He also wanted the water patrol modified "to allow vessels more liberty in coming and going."¹⁰³ On November 12, the *Journal's* headline read: "Not A Single Case Of Yellow Fever In Pensacola."¹⁰⁴ Action by health authorities in Pensacola, for the first time in the history of Florida, had suppressed a yellow fever epidemic before the appearance of frost. The last yellow fever bulletin appearing in the *Journal* listed a total of 562 cases and eighty deaths.¹⁰⁵

The report of the surgeon general of the United States Navy in 1906 reflected the successful conquering of the dreadful pestilence which had haunted and terrorized the citizens of Pensacola and other coastal cities for over a century. It read: "Precautionary measures have been taken throughout the year at the Pensacola Navy Yard to prevent the reappearance of yellow fever." "Mosquitoes were hunted down in every direction and . . . every precaution was taken in the management of suspicious cases." No cases of yellow fever have occurred "either at Pensacola or at

100. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1905.

101. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1905.

102. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1905.

103. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1905.

104. *Ibid.*, November 12, 1905.

105. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1905. Frederick R. Bonar, English vice-consul at Pensacola, died of yellow fever on October 10, 1905. *Pensacola Daily News*, October 10, 1905.

this station and the health record is very good.”¹⁰⁶ The dreaded scourge, yellow fever, had succumbed to medical science.

106. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1907* (Washington, 1907), 1217. Warfare against the mosquito rid localities of the pestilence, but it was not until 1937 that a vaccine was developed which provided “a practicable, safe method of large-scale immunization against yellow fever.” Strode, *Yellow Fever*, 37.