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CIVIL WAR CAREER OF COLONEL GEORGE WASHINGTON SCOTT

by MARION B. LUCAS *

"IS THERE NO remedy for this seeming madness?" John Scott of Pennsylvania wrote his brother George Washington Scott in January of 1861.¹ Their world seemed to be crumbling around them as they viewed the rapidly approaching conflict between the North and South which would pit one brother against the other, a tragedy which occurred often in this most devastating of American wars.

George Washington Scott was born in Alexandria, Pennsylvania, on February 22, 1829.² Well-educated as a child, he undoubtedly became familiar with the Bible. Throughout his life, Scott maintained a strong attachment for his mother, Agnes Irvine Scott, and he never forgot the admonitions she often quoted to him from the scriptures.

In 1850 Scott, a sickly lad, had left his home state of Pennsylvania for an extended tour into the Southeast. As he traveled with a horse and buggy through South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and then into Florida, selling jewelry to pay his expenses, he was increasingly attracted to the South and its people. Convinced that the Florida climate would have a salubrious effect on his health (he had frequent trouble with his throat), Scott returned home in 1851, collected his belongings, and with borrowed money and the prayers of a devoutly Christian mother, he left for Florida. He

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1. John Scott to George Washington Scott, January 15, 1861, George Washington Scott Papers (in possession of J. J. Scott, Wheaton, Illinois). The George Washington Scott Papers, with the exception of one letter, were previously unavailable to historians. They consist of 25 pieces of family correspondence dealing with a wide range of subjects, 14 letters, notes, charts, and military drills relating to the Civil War, 17 hand-drawn civil War maps, 13 miscellaneous plantation records, 20 miscellaneous newspaper clippings and pamphlets, and a typescript diary from October 4, 1850, to February 20, 1851. The manuscripts are dated from 1850 to 1898.
2. Undated genealogy manuscript, Scott Papers.

lived for about a year in Quincy, and moved to Tallahassee in 1852 where he established a mercantile business.³

Scott, by 1860, had become a prosperous businessman and planter.⁴ During his early years in Florida, Scott, as other Northerners who had moved South, became convinced of the rightness of the southern position in the slave controversy. The approach of the Civil War found Scott taking his stand with his adopted state, basing his position on constitutional grounds.

Even before the conflict began, he began making preparations for his involvement. Entering the Tallahassee Guard as a sergeant in 1860, Scott began a study of *Benn's Tactics*, and in December of that year passed his first lesson in cavalry drill under the instruction of the unit's captain, Dr. D. B. Maxwell.⁵ On March 5, a month before the firing on Fort Sumter, the Tallahassee Guards were mustered into Confederate service, and Scott was given the rank of captain in Company D, Second Florida Cavalry. It was known as Captain Scott's Company. A newspaper editorial later noted that he had "shouldered his musket, but with a resolute front, and with the Tallahassee Guards to the battle line."⁶

By 1863 Scott had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel and was commander of "Scott's Cavalry" of the 5th Battalion Florida Cavalry, one of the few units that operated in the backwaters and marshes of the middle and eastern districts of Florida throughout the entire war.⁷ Scott is an excellent example of the minor officer, the unsung hero, who often endured hardships in out-of-the-way places of the Confederacy for love of the South and his family.

On the roster of important Civil War events, Florida played a minor military role. Its most significant contributions to the Confederacy were in the area of commissary supply. The production of corn, beans, potatoes, pork, and cattle far outweighed the eighty-four skirmishes, only one of which could be considered a major battle.⁸

3. Diary of G. W. Scott, October 4, 1850, to February 20, 1851, typescript, Scott Papers; "Colonel George W. Scott," October 12, 1852, typescript, Scott Papers.

4. Clifton Paisley, *From Cotton To Quail: An Agricultural Chronicle of Leon County, Florida, 1860-1967* (Gainesville, 1968), 20.

5. Manuscript test, 1860, Scott Papers; State of Florida, *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian-Civil and Spanish-American War* (Live Oak, 1903), 267.

6. Manuscript notes, 1865, Scott Papers; *Soldiers of Florida*, 267.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Rembert W. Patrick and Allen Morris, *Florida Under Five Flags* (Gaines-

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For more than two years the war, for the most part, passed most Floridians by, with the slowly tightening blockade the major threat. Fernandina and St. Augustine on the east coast and Pensacola in west Florida had fallen to Federal forces by the spring of 1862. Key West remained a Union stronghold throughout the war. Maintaining a Confederate presence and authority in the Middle District, the area between the Suwannee and Choctawhatchee rivers, was the chief occupation of Scott and his cavalry. Vigilance was the key during those years, and he was called upon to oppose landing parties, warn citizens to evacuate slaves and other property, and occasionally suppress anti-war activities of Union sympathizers.⁹

The absence of a constant threat in the Middle District enabled Scott to continue the active management of his nearby plantation and even expand his business interests. The indifference that led some growers to continue producing cotton at the expense of sorely-needed foodstuffs, was not shared by Scott who sought to increase his production of grain and meat.¹⁰ Scott increased his labor force and attempted to oversee the planting of crops whenever possible. His plantation records reveal the purchase of ten slaves during 1862, some of whom were children, for \$6,100. In early 1863 he paid \$1,000 for a female slave and her child.¹¹

As a result of his military activities, Scott became involved in the production of salt from sea water. One of the areas best suited for salt-making lay between the Choctawhatchee River and Tampa Bay, which was included in Florida's Middle District.¹² Part of Scott's assignment was to defend the salt-making establish-

ville, 1967), 52-53; Allen W. Jones, "Military Events in Florida During the Civil War," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIX (July 1960), 42-45.

9. Clement A. Evans, ed., *Confederate Military History* 12 vols., (Atlanta, 1899; facsimile ed., New York, 1962), XI, pt. 2, 47-48; William Frayne Amann, ed., *Personnel of the Civil War* 2 vols. (New York, 1961), I, 185.
10. John F. Reiger, "Deprivation, Disaffection, and Desertion in Confederate Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII (Jan. 1970), 279-80. G. W. Scott to wife, Bettie Scott, March 9, 19, 1864, Scott Papers. Scott's northern background may have influenced his farming practices.
11. Manuscript receipts, October 17, December 30, 1862, April 6, 1863, Scott Papers.
12. Ella Lonn, "The Extent and Importance of Federal Naval Raids on Salt-Making in Florida, 1862-1865," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, X (April 1932), 167; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* 128 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), ser. I, XIV, 735 (Hereafter cited as *OR*).

ments, and their business potential was too obvious to be neglected by his shrewd financial mind. Though St. Andrews Bay, where the recent years of drought had caused the evaporation of much of the fresh water, was considered the ideal location for salt-making, Scott and a fellow officer chose to invest nearer home in the Newport area, about five miles north of St. Marks. There they purchased large sugar boilers and several steam boilers commonly used on ships. Though salt manufacturing establishments were in constant danger from rather effective hit-and-run attacks from the blockading Union forces after the fall of 1862, Scott and his partner, Captain P. B. Brokaw, apparently prospered. In early 1864 Scott estimated his share of the investment to be worth between six and eight thousand dollars.¹³

The scarcity of the product and the danger involved in the process of salt-making led to large profits. But the enterprises were not without criticism. Their workers, exempt from military service, were thought by many to be little more than draft dodgers, and the owners were accused of gouging the public. To ameliorate some of these criticisms, the salt workers were organized on a militia basis in early 1863. Rendezvous points for these irregulars were arranged in case of attack, and they were ordered to cooperate with the military in the vicinity. These efforts, however, were severely hampered by shortage of arms. The first inspection revealed only forty-three guns for the 498 men in the area between St. Marks and the Suwannee River.¹⁴

While protecting salt works in the Newport area in early 1863, Scott became involved in one of the largest engagements of his career on the Ocklockonee River. On March 20 Acting Master Richard J. Hoffner, with two boats and a crew of thirty, led a Union raiding party from the blockading squadron aimed at capturing a recently-arrived blockade runner, the *Onward*. The small force battled treacherous currents, stiff winds, and thick fog for almost three days before the mouth of the Ocklockonee was located and the race up the river began. The *Onward* was sighted at 8:00 a.m., and as the raiders approached, the Con-

13. G. W. Scott to wife, March 18, 1864, Scott Papers; Lonon, "The Extent and Importance of Federal Naval Raids on Salt-Making in Florida," 167, 175.

14. Lonon, "The Extent and Importance of Federal Naval Raids on Salt-Making in Florida," 181-82; Reiger, "Deprivation, Disaffection, and Desertion in Confederate Florida," 286-87.

federates aboard, except for an old man and a boy, successfully made their escape.¹⁵

Hoffner attached a line to the *Onward* and began towing it downriver, stopping between 11:00 a.m. and five that afternoon because of low tide. Unluckily, the *Onward* ran aground about nine o'clock that night, having covered only half the distance to the sea. Floating with the tide at daylight, March 24, the escape continued, when, until about two hours from the open sea, the vessel again ran hard aground. A line was run to shore to pull the *Onward* free of the mud, but all efforts proved fruitless. Hoffner and his men built makeshift breastworks, recapped and primed their weapons, and waited for the tide to free them.¹⁶

At 2:30 a.m. on March 24, Scott received word to report to Roberts' Ferry on the Ocklockonee River to assist Lieutenant H. K. Simmons in the recapture of the *Onward*. Within the hour Scott had left his camp at Newport with thirty cavalrymen. Lieutenant J. Tucker of Company I, Second Florida Cavalry, was also requested to dispatch a similar force to the same rendezvous. Four and one-half hours later Scott's cavalry linked up with Lieutenant Simmons's detachment where the *Onward* was aground. Simmons's men had been watching Hoffner since the evening of the twenty-third.¹⁷

Hoffner's lookouts had observed Scott's approach long before he arrived, but remained unaware that Lieutenant Simmons's men were already on the scene. Within thirty minutes Hoffner's men observed some 200 Confederates running from tree to tree, making their way to the river's edge. Upon signal the Southerners opened fire. Scott's men were utilizing Maynard rifles at a distance of about 300 yards. The Union forces, with minie bullets rattling all around them, responded with rifles and a howitzer which fired canister and shrapnel.¹⁸

After a fight lasting about one hour and a half, Hoffner decided to burn the *Onward* and try to escape in the other boats. To their chagrin, however, when the Union seamen climbed into the smaller boats, their weight caused the vessels to sink. Thus,

15. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy* (Washington, 1863), 38 Cong., 1 sess., IV, No. 1, 291-92; (Hereafter cited as *Annual Report*).

16. *Ibid.*, 292.

17. *OR*, ser. I, XIV, 236-37.

18. *Annual Report*, 1863, 292; *OR*, ser. I, XIV, 236-37.

under brutal Confederate fire, the Union seamen were forced to jump overboard and drag the two craft across the mud flats for about half a mile.¹⁹

It was during this imprudent evacuation that the Federal raiders suffered all their casualties. One man was shot through the heart and six were wounded, including Hoffner, who took a bullet in his neck. Hoffner's only comfort came from his belief that the Confederates had also suffered heavily, but in fact Scott's men suffered not a single casualty.²⁰

Scott, quite accurately, placed the size of the Union force at twenty-four to twenty-eight, but like Hoffner, his estimate of the enemy's casualties was too high. He thought only nine to twelve had escaped.²¹ Both Captain Scott and the commander of the Federal squadron, when praising their men for this engagement, used the same phrase, "coolness and bravery."²²

In mid-February 1864, Brigadier General Truman Seymour began his ill-fated Olustee campaign, marching westward out of Jacksonville with about 5,500 Federal troops. With the Union build-up, the Middle District was alerted, and Colonel Scott was ordered, on February 10, to Sanderson, about eight miles east of Olustee, where he was to link up with Major Robert Harrison's command. Their mission was to harass the enemy "without risking too much."²³

Scott's men were really in no condition to take part in this campaign. The years of service without resupply had taken its toll in both personnel and equipment. An inspection of the Second Cavalry shortly before Scott received orders to go to Sanderson revealed these weaknesses. One company had no rifles-only sabers. Saddles were of such poor quality that they hastened the breakdown of their horses. Other companies were only partially armed with weapons, and there was a shortage of cartridges for the Maynard rifles. The inspecting officer, Captain L. Jaquelin Smith, concluded that while Scott's men made a fairly good appearance, they were "armed in a very inferior manner."²⁴

Scott had long realized these deficiencies and had been trying

19. *Annual Report*, 1863, 293.

20. *Ibid.*; undated newspaper clippings, Scott Papers: *OR*, ser. I, XIV, 237.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Annual Report*, 1863, 290; *OR*, ser. I, XIV, 237.

23. *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 595.

24. *Ibid.*, 582-83, 585, 588.

to rectify the situation for months. His requests for arms and ammunition, previously endorsed by Governor John Milton, were seconded by Captain Smith on the eve of the Olustee campaign.²⁵ It was, however, too late. The ten days before the battle proved to be a difficult period for Scott's 140 cavalymen. They spent much of their time in the saddle, and in the twenty-four hours preceding the fighting Scott's men were engaged in such "hard service" that they were held in reserve through much of the battle.²⁶

In preparing for the Union attack at Olustee, Confederate Brigadier General Joseph Finegan built a defensive line which blocked the transportation routes that ran from Jacksonville to Lake City.²⁷ His cavalry were positioned on his flanks to prevent turning movements by the adversary.²⁸ Once the fighting started a cloud of confusion descended over the raw, recently-recruited, and untrained black Federal troops. The poorly-led Union line wavered, then panicked, and retreat soon turned to rout.²⁹ Olustee was a hard-fought battle on both sides, and casualties ran high. Union losses were 203 dead and 1,152 wounded, most of whom were left on the field, and another 506 missing, many of whom were captured. Confederate casualties were placed at ninety-three killed, 847 wounded, and only six missing.³⁰

Though the Confederate cavalry at Olustee did play a part in the battle, their role was minor. Scott's cavalry was not sent into action until about four o'clock in the afternoon when he was ordered to reinforce Lieutenant Colonel A. H. McCormick's cavalry on the Confederate right.³¹ Scott made no mention of his activities at Olustee in extant letters, but General P. G. T. Beauregard, upon evaluating the battle reports and visiting the battlefield, concluded that the failure of the cavalry to pursue the panic-stricken Union forces allowed "the fruits of victory" to slip away. Indeed, Beauregard's criticism of the Confederate cavalry

25. *Ibid.*, 582-85; ser. IV, III, 45, 83, 111.

26. *Ibid.*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 353, 594-95.

27. John E. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War* (Gainesville, 1963), 197.

28. George F. Baltzell, "The Battle of Olustee," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, IX (April 1931), 219; *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 352-53.

29. *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. I, 304, 311, 313-14, 318; Richard McMurry, "The Battle of Olustee," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, XVI (January 1978), 18-19.

30. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 198-99.

31. *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 353-54; Baltzell, "Battle of Olustee," 219.

commander, Colonel Carraway Smith, was so sharp that the colonel asked for a court of inquiry in order to clear his name.³²

In the dispute, however, it appears that Colonel Scott was free of criticism, since immediately after the battle he was appointed "chief of the vedettes." He was given "150 picked men" and ordered to watch the movements of the Federal forces who had retreated east of the St. Marys River. And while the Confederate position was to be purely defensive, General Finegan was given the authority, should Scott find the Union forces had abandoned the St. Marys line, to occupy territory between that river and Jacksonville.³³

While Scott did not take part in the worst of the fighting at Olustee, it is clear that the carnage of the battle had a lasting effect on him. The absence of men and material made facing the hard facts of the situation imperative: Federal armies, if properly led, could march just about anywhere in Florida they desired. Consequently, Scott decided that both he and his family should make preparations for the future. Less than a month after Olustee, Scott wrote his wife Bettie two extensive letters. "For fear anything might happen to me," he wrote on March 18, 1864, "I have thought it best that I should give you a statement of how my affairs are arranged." What followed was a meticulous two-page review of his indebtedness, both in the North and the South, and a complete accounting of his various business interests, their value, and the money owed him.³⁴

The second letter, dated March 19, proceeded to suggest a course of action for his family should the Union army invade the Middle District of Florida. After "quietly" packing clothes, bed spreads, dishes, and utensils not currently in use, Scott told his wife, she should be ready, "without attracting attention," to flee at a moment's notice to South Georgia. Scott went on to suggest which teams were to be hitched to particular wagons, how loads were to be arranged, and how much food should be taken. He drew a diagram in the letter explaining how the parlor carpet could be rigged into a tent for his wife and children. Only "Aunt Gina" was to be left behind with enough food and money to watch over things while the Federals were there.³⁵

32. *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 323, 353-55.

33. *Ibid.*, 335.

34. G. W. Scott to wife, March 18, 1864, Scott Papers.

35. *Ibid.*

Scott carefully pointed out to his wife the need of paying the tithe tax, a ten per cent levy on agriculture products and one of the most hated of Confederate government taxes, before she departed Tallahassee.³⁶ His feelings were patriotic, practical, and without remorse. Duty compelled him to pay his share. Scott's letter describing his debts and how they should be met is a lesson in character. The government needed these items for the war effort, and besides, it was clear that Aunt Gina would not be able to prevent the invading army, should it come, from making off with most of his stored goods. Finally, Scott reminded his wife that she should not let governmental agents sequester his horse "Stonewall." The law allowed him to retain three military horses, the letter concluded, and "Joe," his present mount, was failing fast.³⁷

But what if the Middle District were not invaded? Scott hoped to be prepared for that also. He directed his wife to see that the spring planting was completed, especially the corn crop. It was important, he wrote, that the slaves "push early and late" to ensure a good crop. Drawing upon his experience, Scott urged Bettie not to let the field hands "lay off for every little complaint" during the next three months, the cultivating season.³⁸

The period of extensive operation that had begun before Olustee for Scott continued through August. There were, during those months, no improvements in commissary supplies, mounts, ammunition, or arms for his men, and while Scott reported having enough to eat, he characterized his meals as "pretty rough fare." Only boxes of food from home, and the hope that the Yankees would be defeated in Virginia kept his hopes up.³⁹ In the spring of 1864 his base of operation was Camp Milton, about twelve miles west of Jacksonville. Scott attempted, with 168 men, to patrol the territory from Callahan to Bayard, a distance of about sixty miles.⁴⁰

While Scott was operating in the eastern part of Florida, Con-

36. *Ibid.*; Reiger, "Deprivation, Disaffection, and Desertion in Confederate Florida," 283-84.

37. G. W. Scott to wife, March 19, 1864, Scott Papers.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, March 9, May 14, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers; [G. W. Scott] to Captain W. G. Barth, July 21, 1864, Scott Papers.

40. G. W. Scott to wife, May 19, 1864, Scott Papers; [G. W. Scott] to Barth, July 21, 1864, Scott Papers; Evans ed., *Confederate Military History*, XI, pt. 2, 80, 92.

federate authorities were attempting to deal with one of the more troublesome aspects of the Civil War in Scott's home area, the Middle District. For years deserters and anti-war Floridians had congregated in swamp-infested Taylor County where they were led by William W. Strickland. Strickland and his "Rangers," who formed the "United States of Taylor," gave information to Union forces, acted as guides for Federal raiding parties, and even engaged in guerrilla activities such as burning bridges, cutting telegraph lines, and derailing trains. In 1864 a brazened band of about 100 partisans attempted to ambush Governor Milton in the vicinity of Tallahassee. Their intention was to deliver him to the Federal officers commanding the Gulf blockading squadron, but their plot failed when a pro-Confederate Floridian exposed the scheme.⁴¹

Command of the forces chosen to root out the "Rangers" was given to Lieutenant Colonel H. D. Capers. With him was Major Charles H. Camfield, one of the more ruthless of the Confederate officers involved in the operation of burning and killing. Camfield's harsh policy, rather than suppressing the deserters and winning the support of the people in Taylor County, actually increased disaffection among the pro-Confederate population. Strickland was finally captured and executed in March 1865 during the Natural Bridge campaign.⁴²

In mid-July 1864 Union forces in the Eastern District began another invasion of central Florida when 700 to 800 men were landed near Broward's Neck. Scott, guarding the region with only 156 men, realized that the best he could hope for would be the delay of whatever move Union Brigadier General William Birney might try to make. Several skirmishes occurred, some Confederate property was destroyed, and Camp Milton was abandoned, only to be recovered shortly without loss of property.⁴³ The Confederate defense had been bent, but it was not yet broken.

On July 22, however, the main Union force of about 3,000 infantry, cavalry, and artillery, in a flanking movement up the St. Johns River, landed at Black Creek near Middleburg. The slow-

41. William T. Cash, "Taylor County History and Civil War Deserters," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (July 1948), 49-53; Reiger, "Deprivation, Disaffection, and Dessertion in Confederate Florida," 294-96.

42. Cash, "Taylor County History and Civil War Deserters," 49-57.

43. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers; *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 411-13; Evans ed., *Confederate Military History*, XI, pt. 2, 98-99.

moving Union force had not been unnoticed, but the previous week of skirmishing had so scattered Scott's cavalry in front of Camp Milton and Baldwin that he had only ninety-eight men to oppose the landing.⁴⁴

General Birney's forces were soon in control of the bridges over Black Creek at Middleburg and Whitesville, and shortly had a cavalry force and about 400 infantry across the waterway. With his small forces Scott began a brief battle after which the opposing commanders claimed victory. Scott believed that he had killed or wounded twelve of the enemy, while Birney claimed to have killed two, mortally wounded one, and forced many of Scott's men to scatter into the swamps.⁴⁵

The weight of numbers, however, was too much for Scott. Union cavalry were on his side of the creek, and to prevent being cut off he retreated six miles to a stronger defensive position. At 1:00 a.m., however, a force of Union infantry, later supported by cavalry, attacked Scott's pickets. Scott withdrew again, leaving a rear guard, moving about four miles toward Clay Hill. There, to his chagrin, he learned that about eighty to 100 cavalry had flanked him, though he did not know their location. As his rear guard, pressed by the Union cavalry, fell back on his main body, Scott slowly began to recognize his predicament-possible entrapment. His best option, he decided, was "to check" the Union forces piecemeal. He would turn on his pursuers first and worry about the cavalry behind him later. Utilizing high ground behind a creek bank, Scott's men dismounted and prepared for battle. The pursuing Federal cavalry appeared shortly, but after a "slight skirmish" withdrew, Scott presumed, to wait for infantry and artillery. When the action was not renewed within half an hour, and the Union cavalry was not located at his rear, it became increasingly apparent to Scott that the Federal cavalry had by-passed him in an effort to flank Baldwin.⁴⁶

Scott decided to march to Baldwin to unite with Colonel A. H. McCormick, his commanding officer. His force reached Baldwin about 2:00 p.m., Monday, where he learned that the St. Marys trestle had been burned, cutting Baldwin's supply line from Lake

44. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers; *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 424.

45. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers: *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 420.

46. *Ibid.*

City and forcing the Confederates to evacuate Baldwin that night.⁴⁷

About seven miles out of Baldwin, the Federal cavalry attacked their rear, only to fall back after a thirty-minute skirmish. The Confederate forces waited from 6:00 a.m. until 3:00 that afternoon for the Federals to reappear, but the battle was not renewed. The retreating army resumed its march, arriving at Camp Jackson on Thursday. The Federal army arrived the next day, and a "short skirmish" followed before they disengaged and withdrew to Baldwin.⁴⁸

The five days of campaigning from July 23 to 28 were especially difficult ones for both Scott and his men. When the retreat began, Scott was ill with a "fever." Fortunately, it ended the first night, although his rheumatism pained him so much that he often had to be helped into his saddle. Fighting day and night, the men got little sleep and had insufficient time to prepare adequate meals. It was very warm, and it rained every day of the retreat, flooding the swamps and making the swollen streams difficult to cross. Nor did their horses fare well. Without fodder and constantly in use, they, along with the men, were rapidly "broken down."⁴⁹

The Union thrust against Camp Jackson and central Florida continued for another two weeks, during which time Scott was involved in three minor engagements. The first came in early August when a party of his cavalry slipped behind the Union forces along the Florida, Atlantic, and Gulf Railroad line and attempted to capture a Federal supply train. The scheme was discovered, however, and the Confederates were forced to flee, but not before they had loosened the rails, causing the train to crash.⁵⁰

At about 1:00 a.m. on August 10, Scott led a company of some 100 cavalymen, accompanied by Major J. J. Daniels with 100 infantry, on another probe. Their objective was to drive off a northern force engaged in destroying the railroad about eight miles east of Camp Jackson. Their men were in position by daylight, with Daniels's infantry on the north side of the railroad and Scott, with seventy-eight dismounted cavalry, on the south side.

47. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers; *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 422.

48. *Ibid.*

49. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers.

50. *Ibid.*

They awaited the enemy until about 8:00 a.m., when, according to orders, Major Daniels began returning to camp.⁵¹

Scott sent for his reserves and his horses, about half a mile to his rear, with the intention of moving closer to Baldwin to locate the enemy. Just as his men and mounts arrived, however, a scout reported that about forty enemy cavalymen and 400 infantrymen were moving on their position. Realizing that he could not meet the Union troops in a pitched battle, Scott successfully harassed them enough to prevent their destroying more of the railroad though he could not dislodge them. He was convinced, however, that if Major Daniels had continued to occupy his position north of the railroad, their combined force could have handled their enemy "pretty roughly." Scott's casualties during the encounter consisted of one wounded.⁵²

On Friday, August 12, 1864, the Confederate commander at Camp Jackson, Colonel A. H. McCormick, led Scott and Daniels on another raid along the railroad. Their force consisted of 100 cavalry, 300 infantry, and two pieces of artillery. Daniels's infantry again occupied the north side of the railroad, with Scott's cavalry to the south. The Union force, consisting mostly of black troops engaged in destroying the railroad, soon appeared, and a short skirmish followed. McCormick, believing it imprudent to try to stand against the superior Federal army, decided to withdraw. While there was no report of Confederate casualties, the northern troops apparently suffered one killed and several captured.⁵³

Scott felt he was in a "very unpleasant position" during the July and August campaigning. His men were forced to go into the interior of Florida to obtain fresh horses, an irregular process that often led to their piecemeal return.⁵⁴ The enemy outnumbered him, he believed, ten to one, and the terrain allowed Union troops, often with Confederate deserters as guides, to filter through his scattered pickets. The result was that the people of the Eastern and Middle districts of Florida were becoming increasingly critical of the military, and that worried Scott. If they only knew "the disadvantages we have had to labour under," he

51. *Ibid.*; *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 426.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, 1864, Scott Papers: *OR*, ser. I, XXXV, pt. 1, 438.

wrote his wife, they would not “blame us” for the current predicament. It was the “circumstances,” not the will of his beleaguered fighting men that dictated their withdrawal from Baldwin.⁵⁵

Scott did not have to wait long before the immediate situation improved for East Florida. The Federal “invasion” was only another “raid,” and on August 15 Baldwin was evacuated after the buildings and supplies had been set on fire. Scott’s dissatisfaction with his army’s inability to defend East Florida was no greater than was the Union commander’s with the failure of his army to do more than raid and retreat. When one of his colonels took time in his report to praise several of his subordinates, the Federal commanding general labeled the praise as “simply ridiculous,” saying that their achievements were only valuable as a “record of raiding and not of fighting.”⁵⁶ With this withdrawal, Federal activity in East Florida declined until the end of the war, and Scott and his cavalry returned to patrol duty in the Middle District.⁵⁷

With the Confederacy crumbling in the fall of 1864, General Beauregard and Governor Milton, with literally no other choice, threw their support behind a new plan for defending Florida. Upon being attacked, Confederate forces were to retreat, following a scorched earth policy, luring the Federals into the interior of the state, thus lengthening their supply lines. At a prearranged point, a newly-organized militia force would rendezvous with the retreating Confederate troops and defeat the enemy.⁵⁸

Though this minute-man-type militia was stronger in the communiques of Confederate officials than it was in military potential, the concept did play an important part in the last campaign in which Colonel Scott participated. In late February 1865, Federal naval and military officers worked out a joint plan for an attack on Tallahassee. The operation began on March 3 with the landing of sixty cavalymen and thirty sailors led by Major Edmund C. Weeks on Light House Island. Their objective was to secure a bridge, about four miles to the northeast, which spanned the East River and hold it until the army had crossed. After the cavalymen disembarked, the sailors rowed up river

55. G. W. Scott to wife, August 14, Scott Papers.

56. *OR*, ser. 1, XXXV, pt. 1, 429-31.

57. Evans ed., *Confederate Military History*, XI, pt. 2, 118.

58. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 202-03.

where they surprised the Confederate pickets and captured the bridge, but four hours passed before Weeks and his troops arrived.⁵⁹

Scott, commander of the forces guarding the bridge, was alerted by the fleeing pickets, and a reconnaissance by Major William Milton reported about 150 Union troops at the bridge. At daylight Milton attacked with forty-five men.⁶⁰ Weeks estimated the attacking force at sixty and later reported that they were repulsed without loss to himself. Nevertheless, Weeks was not sure that he could hold the bridge without the expected reinforcements. Upon learning that the Union troops had not yet disembarked, Weeks decided to fall back to the light house.⁶¹ Scott, however, saw Weeks's retreat as running for the "cover of the guns of the fleet."⁶²

With the attack on East River bridge, Scott had sounded the alarm, and the new defense plan went into action. Tallahassee quickly became a beehive of activity as preparations were made to defend the city.⁶³ In addition to the militiamen and townspeople who joined the Confederate troops, the most unique volunteers consisted of the cadets of the West Florida Seminary. They were about twenty-five in number, all of whom were under seventeen years of age. Before the campaign was over, they were involved in some of the very hard fighting but without loss of life.⁶⁴

Weeks's movement to the bridge had been premature by more than twenty-four hours. Successive delays prevented the landing of the reinforcements before 4:00 p.m., and by the time supplies, ammunition, and artillery had been moved ashore, night had fallen. It was 8:00 a.m. the next morning, March 5, before the Union advance began.⁶⁵

Scott, realizing he was hopelessly outnumbered, decided to make a temporary stand behind the East River bridge. A small force of cavalry under a Lieutenant Croome was left to watch the

59. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 70; Edwin C. Bearss, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Marks Ends at Natural Bridge," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (April 1967), 381.

60. [G. W. Scott] to Major W. G. Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers.

61. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 70.

62. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers.

63. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 11, 1865.

64. Mark F. Boyd, "The Joint Operations of the Federal Army and Navy Near St. Marks, Florida, March 1865," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXIX (October 1950), 119-20.

65. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 60.

Union army on the east side of the river. Scott had the plank floor of the bridge removed to prevent a crossing without destroying the facility. With only sixty men and one piece of artillery, he awaited the enemy, allowing them "within easy range." When the Union attack came, about 9:00 a.m., the size and swiftness of the move caught Scott by surprise. Orders were given to retreat, but the heavy fire laid down by the Federal troops caused so much confusion among a portion of Scott's men that his only piece of artillery had to be abandoned. Scott's sole recourse was to harass the Union army as it marched toward Newport.⁶⁶

After delaying the Union advance for several hours, Scott retreated across the St. Marks River, fired the east end of the bridge, and then occupied the well-placed breast-works on the west bank. He was soon reinforced by thirty-five militiamen under Captain H. A. Gray and a detachment of marines commanded by a Midshipman Hogue.⁶⁷

When the Union commander observed the smoke, he assumed the bridge over the St. Marks, which he had hoped to capture intact, was ablaze, and he ordered Major Weeks forward in an attempt to save it. When Weeks arrived, he found that the east end of the bridge had been destroyed, and the rifle pits on the west bank completely infilladed the portion of the facility which remained. Nevertheless, Weeks attacked, only to be repulsed by Scott's forces in a three-hour skirmish.⁶⁸ Scott won the fight, but there was an unfortunate side effect. The flames from the burning bridge were blown to a nearby grist mill, a saw mill, and some workshops, all of which were extremely valuable to the economy of the community.⁶⁹

During the fighting at Newport Bridge, Confederate Brigadier General William Miller arrived and assumed command. He ordered Scott to move up the west bank of the river to Tompkins Mill where he was to block a ford. Scott guarded the crossing until 2:00 a.m. when he learned, probably from Lieutenant Croome, that the Union troops were moving further upriver toward

66. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers; *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 60.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

69. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 60; Bearss, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Marks," 384.

Natural Bridge. The southern cavalryman knew his next destination.⁷⁰

Scott reached Natural Bridge just as J. J. Daniels appeared with 380 reserves and militiamen and two pieces of artillery. Scott quickly selected a defensive position, but before all the Confederate troops were aligned, Brigadier General John Newton's Union force of about 500 black troops attacked.⁷¹ Scott's cavalry held the Confederate right, next to the cadets who occupied part of the center. The Confederate line was a semi-circle, starting at the river and running back to the waterway, thus allowing excellent fields of fire from light trenches which had been previously dug.⁷² The northern troops found the "sloughs, ponds, marshes, and thickets" a great ally of the Confederate defenders in the dawn attack, and were beaten back with substantial losses.⁷³ While the Union force regrouped, the Confederates placed newly-arrived reinforcements into their line.⁷⁴

Following a lull of about twenty minutes, the Union army began a second attack. During the fighting Daniels was thrown from his horse and severely injured.⁷⁶ He apparently instructed Scott to take command, but then General Miller arrived, and he ordered Scott "to combine a supervision of the line under his direction."⁷⁶

When it became apparent that the Natural Bridge could not be carried by direct assault, General Newton began probing the Confederate flanks.⁷⁷ Scott had anticipated a flanking move on his right and had ordered Captain D. W. Gwynn to move further down river to resist any attempted crossing. During the afternoon Colonel Carraway Smith's cavalry arrived, and Scott's right was extended even further. After several more hours of fighting, the

70. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers. Major Weeks remained at Newport bridge to prevent the Confederates from attempting to cut off the Federal retreat route. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 60.

71. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers; Major General William Miller, "Battle of Natural Bridge," July 4, 1898, manuscript, Scott Papers.

72. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 60.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Miller, "Battle of Natural Bridge," Scott Papers.

75. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 11, 1865.

76. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers.

77. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 60-61.

Union forces broke off the engagement and withdrew to a group of pine barrens about 300 yards away from the Natural Bridge.⁷⁸

The battle should have ended at that point, but it did not. Early in the afternoon the Confederates began an artillery bombardment of the northern forces in the pine barrens, followed by a frontal assault over the Natural Bridge. When the attack ended the Union forces were still holding their position, leaving the Confederates with only additional casualties to show for their heroic efforts.⁷⁹

Following the Confederate assault, General Newton began a withdrawal to the lighthouse. The road was blocked by felled trees preventing pursuit by the Confederate infantry. Scott, however, managed to follow the retreating enemy with a handful of cavalry, harassing them at every opportunity. His efforts were rewarded with thirty-five prisoners before nightfall.⁸⁰

When the Battle of Natural Bridge began, the Confederates were definitely outnumbered. They were, however, steadily reinforced with small numbers of reserves and militia to the extent that before the day ended about 475 troops were engaged in battle with three killed and twenty-three wounded. The Confederate commander placed the number of Union casualties at "not less than 300," a figure roughly double the number General Newton reported for the entire campaign.⁸¹

It is understandable why the Confederates were elated by Natural Bridge. A superior enemy had sought to invade Florida; it had been blocked and forced to retreat. When the war ended a month later, Tallahassee was the only Confederate capital east of the Mississippi River that had not fallen to the Federals.⁸² Much of the praise for the defense of Tallahassee went to Scott. One newspaper wrote: "It appears that it was mainly owing to the energetic and stubborn resistance of Col. G. W. Scott, with his small cavalry force, between the point of landing and the St.

78. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers; Boyd, "Joint Operations of the Federal Army and Navy," 110; *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 61.

79. *Ibid.*, pt. 2, 1135-36; pt. 1, 61; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 11, 1865.

80. [G. W. Scott] to Poole, March 10, 1865, Scott Papers; Boyd, "Joint Operations of the Federal Army and Navy," 110.

81. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 2, 1135-36; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 11, 1865; Boyd, "Joint Operations of the Federal Army and Navy," 111-13.

82. Bearss, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Marks Ends at Natural Bridge," 390.

Marks river, and the delay that it occasioned the Yankees, that we were enabled to concentrate sufficient forces to arrest them . . . where we did.”⁸³ Scott’s warning, the Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal* reported, allowed time for the “unanimous and invincible response” of its citizens.⁸⁴ “If the people of Georgia had turned out to oppose Sherman as the Floridians have in the battle fought at Natural Bridge,” another editor wrote, “he never could have reached Savannah.”⁸⁵

The lavish praise which the citizens of Tallahassee heaped upon themselves was, of course, exaggerated. There was no comparison between the small, poorly led force of General Newton and that of Major General William T. Sherman. Nevertheless, Natural Bridge was a great psychological victory and had an effect on the people of the Middle District not unlike that of New Orleans on an earlier generation.

The spirit of pride created by Natural Bridge was shortlived; a month later the Confederate army in Virginia collapsed and General Lee surrendered his remaining meagre forces to General Grant. No doubt Colonel Scott had anticipated the inevitable. He surrendered his troops on May 13, and was paroled ten days later.⁸⁶ Shortly after he was reunited with his family.

The problems of George Washington Scott during the Civil War were typical of those of a thousand other officers of the Confederacy. His lines were stretched beyond the breaking point on too many occasions, and he and his men seldom received adequate munitions or commissary supplies to prepare them for battle. In spite of these conditions, Colonel Scott fought loyally and diligently against overwhelming odds. He understood his task and performed it with increasing skill: to protect the Middle District of Florida, always being careful to keep his army in the field by preventing its capture or destruction. Scott’s ability, poor Federal officers, and the failure of the northern high command to see Florida as an important military front prevented Union success in northern Florida. The one consolation that Scott had was that he served his country in the vicinity of his home, permitting the loneliness and anxiety of a bitter Civil War to be

83. Undated newspaper clipping, Scott Papers.

84. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 11, 1865.

85. *OR*, ser. I, XLIX, pt. 1, 64.

86. Miscellaneous manuscript notes, 1865, Scott Papers.

broken by frequent letters and packages from home which assured him that his wife and children were safe.

The northern and southern wings of the Scott family never regained the closeness that had existed before the war. John Scott had gradually moved toward the Republican party during the war years, and in 1869 he was chosen United States Senator by the Republican-controlled legislature of Pennsylvania. His most notable work in the Senate involved his opposition to the deprivations of the Ku Klux Klan. After one term as senator, during which he was allied with the railroad barons, John Scott became a lawyer for the Pennsylvania Railroad. With his death in 1896, the families went their separate ways.⁸⁷

After the Civil War, George Washington Scott became again a successful merchant-planter in Tallahassee where he continued the model farm he had established in the 1850s. His progressive agricultural activities led to experiments with fertilizer. He was active both in state and Leon County politics. At the Constitutional Party Convention which met in Tallahassee on September 25, 1867, Scott was made secretary. He was also named to the state executive committee.⁸⁸ The following year, at a nominating convention in Quincy, Scott was nominated for governor on the Conservative ticket. In the election the Republican party, newly organized in Florida, scored an overwhelming victory. Scott received 7,852 votes to his opponent's 14,170.⁸⁹

In 1870, Scott moved to Savannah, Georgia, where he hoped to expand into cotton and other business interests. Following financial reverses, Scott moved to Decatur, Georgia, just outside Atlanta, in 1877, where he amassed a fortune in phosphate fertilizer, cotton manufacturing, and real estate. Scott was a strong supporter of the Presbyterian Church throughout his lifetime. While living in Tallahassee he had served as a deacon in the church there. He was one of the founders of Agnes Scott Institute, later Agnes Scott College, which was named for his mother. His gifts to the institution came to more than \$175,000 when he died

87. Erwin Stanley Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism: A Study of Pennsylvania and Presidential Politics, 1860-1872* (Philadelphia, 1964), 314-19; United States Congress, *Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress, 1774-1961* (Washington, 1961), 1573.

88. Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville, 1974), 171.

89. *Ibid.*, 190-92.

on October 3, 1903, at the age of seventy-four. The Tallahassee paper described him in an editorial as “one of Florida’s noblest sons.”⁹⁰

90. Undated newspaper clipping, Scott Papers; *Atlanta Constitution*, October 4, 1904; Paisley, *From Cotton to Quail*, 20-22.