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**“A TRIFLING AFFAIR:”
LOOMIS LYMAN LANGDON AND
THE THIRD SEMINOLE WAR**

by PATRICIA R. WICKMAN

WHEN, in 1899, Colonel Loomis Lyman Langdon, United States Army, Retired, penned the ironic statement which referred to “A Trifling Affair,” he did so, at least, from the vantage point of forty years of active military service to his country. His had been a long and eventful carrer and, particularly as regards Florida history, one might even say that Colonel Langdon was a man who had been in all the “right” places at all the “right” times.

By his sixty-ninth year, however, the sobriety of age had somewhat obscured the exuberance of youth. The memory of his own first engagement was but one of many— and perhaps, indeed, a “trifling” one— but a fond one nonetheless.¹ So, he could write dispassionately of his earliest campaign: “The regular . . . has come, in the process of time and experience to find, at last, in soldiering his natural life, and the events with a dramatic coloring that would drive a new volunteer into a hysterical condition of feeling, finding relief through a kind of safety valve of cheering, excite in a regular hardly a languid interest. Whatever is occurring now,’ he says, ‘has happened before, and will happen again.’ ‘There is no use getting excited about it. Keep cool.’ ‘Let the other fellows cheer.’ ‘It doesn’t appear to hurt them and they rather seem to like it’.”²

What a fascinating contrast this statement offers to the excitement of the fresh young officer who went off to his first conflict in the Florida Everglades.

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1. Loomis L. Langdon to G. W. Langdon, April 9, 1856, in Loomis L. Langdon Papers, Private and Official Letters, 1856-1906, Florida State Archives, M74-06 (hereinafter Langdon Papers).
2. Loomis L. Langdon, “Campaigning in the Everglades,” *The Helping Hand*, XXXI (July 1899), 62-63.

Loomis Lyman Langdon was born in Buffalo, New York on October 25, 1830, the son of George Washington Langdon and Sarah Williams Russell. In his name was drawn together the history of three families which had been in America since the latter part of the seventeenth century. The Langdons, in particular, numbered among their progenitors such early national formers as John Langdon, governor of New Hampshire and signer of the 1787 federal Constitution.³ After receiving his preliminary education at public and private schools, young Langdon obtained an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point in July 1850.

The West Point of the mid-nineteenth century still occupied a critical position relative to the national growth. For many years it had been virtually America's only school of higher technical and scientific education. As a consequence, its graduates were often found among the leaders of national scientific, engineering, and industrial development. During those years, too, which were critical to the formation of a young state, Florida would become an invaluable "proving ground" for theoretical knowledge gained at the Point and a rare and unforeseen prelude to an entire century of American warfare. From 1835 to 1858, as the major Indian/white conflicts escalated and declined, significant proportions of the Academy's graduating classes would gain their first actual combat experience in Florida's Indian wars.

George L. Hartsuff, two years Langdon's senior, would step into Florida history as the survivor of a skirmish with the Seminoles on December 20, 1855 near Fort Drane. Hartsuff would go on to distinguish himself at the battles of Manassas and Antietam, to retire in 1871 as Major General Hartsuff, and to die in 1874 at only forty-four years of age from wounds received in battle.⁴

A classmate of Langdon, who would also serve in Florida, as chief of ordnance in 1857, was Oliver O. Howard. Howard's illustrious military and civil career would span the Civil War,

3. Biographical sketch of Loomis L. Langdon in Langdon Papers; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 62 vols. (New York, 1893-), LII, 108; *Biographical Directory of the Governors of the United States, 1789-1978*, 4 vols. (Westport, CT, 1978), III, 942.

4. George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. from its Establishment, in 1802, to 1890*, 6 vols. (Boston, 1891), II, 484-90.

his service as head of the Freedmen's Bureau, the expedition against the Nez Percé Indians in 1877, and his appointment as superintendent of the United States Military Academy in 1881.⁵

At the head of Langdon's class, academically, was young G. W. Custis Lee, son of Captain Robert Edward Lee, United States Corps of Engineers. Robert E. Lee had already achieved a distinguished name for himself in his country's service, and in September 1852, he had been appointed superintendent of West Point. Custis Lee, upon his graduation in 1854, would follow his father's example and make a career in the Corps of Engineers until 1861, when personal loyalties would direct the Lee family otherwise. However, between 1854 and 1857, Lieutenant Lee would serve as assistant engineer for the construction of Fort Clinch at Amelia Island, Florida.⁶ Altogether, of a total of forty-six in Langdon's 1854 graduation class, eight of the new young officers— one-sixth of the class— would be posted to service in Florida during the Third Seminole War.

As a young brevet second lieutenant, Langdon took his place in an American military establishment which was in a transitional phase— organizationally, tactically, and especially technologically. Military requirements had never been of primary importance in a country which was wedded historically to the ideology of the citizen, as opposed to the professional, soldier, but brilliant minds were at work inside the establishment to supply the technology necessary to bring the United States military "up to date," particularly in the area of ordnance. The lessons of Napoleon were not wasted on the likes of Robert P. Parrott, John A. B. Dahlgren, Josiah Gorgas, and Thomas J. Rodman. Artillery types and tactics were slowly transforming that branch from what had been mainly an instrument of siege warfare into an important arm of field combat.⁷ It was to this branch of the military then, the artillery, that Lieutenant Langdon was initially assigned, and in this branch that he would serve, with only brief interruptions, until his retirement, by reason of age, in October 1894.⁸

His first post was in garrison at Fortress Monroe, Virginia,

5. *Ibid.*, 576-77.

6. *Ibid.*, 572.

7. Walter Millis, *Arms and Men* (New York, 1956), 67.

8. Langdon sketch, Langdon Papers; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, LII, 108.

for artillery training. This massive work at Old Point Comfort had been begun only thirty-seven years prior but was one of the earliest of the series of coastal fortifications undertaken following the War of 1812. This assignment was only temporary, however, and in December 1854 Langdon, now Second Lieutenant Langdon, set sail with Companies L and M of the 1st Artillery Regiment, aboard the ship Ravenswood bound for Fort Dallas, Florida, and the Seminole wars.⁹ These two companies constituted the entire garrison at the recently-reactivated Fort Dallas and would continue to do so until their transfer to Texas in November of 1856.¹⁰ Captain Samuel K. Dawson was in charge of Company L, of which Langdon was second in command, and Captain B. H. Hill of Company M was senior captain and post commander. The total garrison consisted of an aggregate of 180 men, of whom five were on furlough and three were detached to other duty, leaving an effective total strength of 172.¹¹

The military still maintained only a tenuous hold on Florida in 1854. The Second Seminole War had been a desultory conflict and the peace which followed had been uneasy at best. The United States government's official attitude toward the Florida situation was basically conciliatory during the interim between General William J. Worth's agreement with the remaining Seminoles in 1842 and 1855 when the incident of Billy Bowlegs's banana plants sparked the final conflict.¹² The federal government had attempted to restrain settlers from encroaching upon Seminole lands, to entice the Indians with offers of monetary remuneration to remove to western reserves, and to maintain a military show of strength in south Florida which might, by mere virtue of its presence, impress upon the dissidents the futility of

9. William L. Haskin, comp., *The History of the First Regiment of Artillery from its Organization in 1821, to January 1st, 1876* (Portland, Maine, 1879), 388.

10. Post Returns from Fort Dallas, Florida, February 1838-May 1858, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Returns from U. S. Military Posts, 1800-1916, Record Group 94, Microcopy 617, roll 284, National Archives, Washington, at the Dorothy Dodd Collection, State Library of Florida, Tallahassee (hereinafter National Archives post returns are cited as M617 with appropriate roll number).

11. Ibid.

12. Andrew P. Canova, *Life and Adventures in South Florida* (Palatka, 1885; 2nd ed., Tampa, 1906), 6; Ray B. Seley, Jr., "Lieutenant Hartsuff and the Banana Plants," *Tequesta*, XXIII (1963), 3-14; Kenneth W. Porter, "Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco) in the Seminole Wars, Part I," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (January 1967), 219-42.

resistance. In other words, a policy of "humanity toward the Indians, and economy to the government."¹³

This task of peaceful removal was far more easily decided upon than accomplished. Determination ran high among both settlers and Indians. "I have never lost sight," Secretary of War George W. Crawford wrote to General D. E. Twiggs, commander of the western district in Florida in 1850, "of what appeared to be a prominent wish of a portion of the inhabitants of Florida to engage in a war with a remnant of Indians in that State. Whilst another and, I believe a larger and more respectable part of the community has been inclined to an opposite purpose."¹⁴

Under the administration of President Franklin Pierce, however, Jefferson Davis replaced Crawford as secretary of war. Davis promulgated a program designed to increase pressure on the Indians and step up troop concentrations in south Florida through the reopening of Second Seminole War fortifications across the peninsula.¹⁵

Fort Dallas, originally a naval base, was occupied on six separate occasions between its original designation in 1836, and 1858 when the United States Army abandoned its Seminole War forts in Florida.¹⁶ During its final occupation, the location of the fort was on the north side of the Miami River where one Richard Fitzpatrick had begun a plantation in the 1840s. By Christmas 1854, when Lieutenant Langdon and two companies of the 1st Artillery were lightered the nine miles up the bay to the mouth of the Miami River, all that remained of the plantation was "a magnificent grove of cocoanut trees, the stone lower story of a storehouse, and three or four half-filled wells" to attest to "its former glories."¹⁷ The command at once began the task of building quarters preliminary to operations in the country.

In the spring of 1855, Langdon participated in his first forays into the Everglades, both of which he remembered uncomfortably. The expeditions were commanded by Captain Dawson with

13. George W. Crawford to D. E. Twiggs, March 20, 1850, U.S. Congress, 31st Cong., 1st. sess., Senate, *Index to Executive Documents*, XIII, serial set 561, "Message from the President of the United States," 13.

14. *Ibid.*, 16.

15. Tallahassee *Floridian and Democrat*, September 9, 1854; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, October 8, 1853.

16. Nathan D. Shappee, "Fort Dallas and the Naval Depot on Key Biscayne, 1836-1926," *Tequesta*, XXI (1961), 13-40.

17. *Ibid.*, 28; Haskin, *First Regiment*, 388.

the young Lieutenant Langdon on topographical duty. Large cypress canoes had been manufactured for the soldiers under the supervision of Lieutenant John T. Grebel, 2nd Artillery, Fort Myers, and sent around from the Caloosahatchee River to Fort Dallas.

In their "little fleet" seventy-five men set off for the "mysterious" Everglades.¹⁸ Those troops left behind, as well as the wives and children who had followed husbands and fathers to share the rigors of military life, waved handkerchiefs in farewell and cheered their encouragement from the shore. It was one of those affairs, Langdon later recalled, where "a good send off in the way of cheering, even in a camp of regulars, seemed not only proper but very natural."¹⁹

The party soon found, however, that the depth of the water in the Everglades had been much exaggerated and the going was shallow and tortuous. The canoes had to be dragged through mud, tall grass, and rank vegetation, and frequently no dry place could be found for the night's bivouac. This was the season when much of this area of Florida was under water.²⁰ The second expedition which, after great difficulty, penetrated to within sight of the place where supplies awaited, was finally forced to return despite the presence of an Indian guide. The guide, named Chai, together with his wife Polly, had been captured some years earlier by General W. S. Harney and forced to aid the troops. Langdon spoke of him sadly as "a pariah of his kind."²¹ Coerced under threat of hanging (so tradition said) to aid the white man's cause, Chai lived in constant dread of falling into the hands of the Indians.

Little campaigning was conducted during the summer months in south Florida. The task of survival was, in itself, a campaign as mosquitoes, sand fleas, and unremitting heat and humidity taxed both physical and emotional endurance. At Fort Dallas, the numbers of present sick totalled 138 during 1855. Daily camp duties were purposely unrelaxed so that the men might focus on

18. Langdon, "Campaigning in the Everglades," 62; Haskin, *First Regiment*, 389.

19. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 389.

20. Alexander S. Webb, "Campaigning in Florida in 1855," *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, XLV (November-December 1909), 413.

21. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 390.

their soldiering rather than their tedium.²² Desertions were not unusual, however, and the general courts martial which were convened regularly tried to reinforce military discipline.²³

Only one incident stands out in Langdon's memories of his first Florida summer. Lieutenant George Bell, 1st Artillery, an "active and enterprising" officer who had just joined his unit, led a scouting party below Fort Dallas along the coast of the Hunting Grounds and the islands which fringed the mainland.²⁴ On one deserted beach the party discovered the remnants of the cargo of a wrecked vessel including a weather-bleached barrel still filled with wine. Langdon indicates no consideration of returning to the fort with this prize. "The wine," he says, "was passable, and rationed out made an agreeable addition to the daily gill of whiskey issued . . . to scouting parties."²⁵

On October 30, Lieutenant Langdon left for Key West on detached service to a general court martial. He rejoined his unit fifteen days later. The days were becoming shorter and cooler. One encountered fewer mosquitoes during a winter campaign in south Florida than at any other time of the year but this was slight compensation. Steaming-hot muddy water turned to freezing-cold muddy water. The Everglades were as mysterious as ever, the enemy was no more visible than ever, and one cold tedious day was almost equally as dull as one hot tedious day.

With 1856 came new adventures, however. Early in January the Seminoles struck the mill of Peter Johnson three miles below the Pirate's Punch Bowl, or five miles below Fort Dallas.²⁶ Here, he and two employees, "Beck, a Vermonter, and a Key Wester named Ferrol," were engaged in the production of coontie or "arrowroot," which was used "not only as food for invalids but for making biscuit."²⁷ The Indians killed Beck and Johnson and

22. Webb, "Campaigning in Florida," 409.

23. Post Returns from Fort Dallas, M617, roll 284.

24. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 389.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 390-91. There is some confusion here, perhaps occasioned by Langdon's distance from the event at the time of his writing. He recalls the attack as having taken place in the fall of 1855, while Covington fixes the date as January 6, 1856, see James W. Covington, *The Billy Bowlegs War, 1855-1858: The Final Stand of the Seminoles Against the Whites* (Chuluota, 1982), 41.

27. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 390-91; Langdon, "Campaigning in the Everglades," 63. Florida coontie, although frequently confused with the true West Indian starch tuber commonly known as arrowroot (*M.*

put a ball through the clothes of Ferrol who escaped and paddled to the fort for help. Langdon, although on sick report, volunteered his services and with two boats full of troops went to bring in the few families who lived on the Miami River above the garrison. On the following day, Langdon returned to Johnson's place and buried the two victims.²⁸

On February 15, a schooner transferred Captain Dawson's company of four officers and seventy-eight enlisted men, along with Chai, Polly, and the canoes, around Cape Sable to the Caloosahatchee River. The original order detached the company to Punta Rassa and Malco Inlet and from thence they were to make incursions into the Everglades.²⁹ However, new instructions from Colonel Harvey Brown, commander of troops in the Caloosahatchee, sent the unit immediately to report to Fort Myers with orders to reinvest abandoned Camp Daniels, about one-half mile west of there.

Their stay at Camp Daniels lasted only several weeks but during that time Langdon was placed in command of a scouting party of seven to search for a fisherman named Hudson and his companion who had been reported missing. A steamer towed their small craft the sixteen miles downriver to Punta Rassa from which point they rowed until sundown to reach Charlotte Harbor. The missing boat, a schooner-rigged craft, was spotted there, high and dry, among the reeds. On the deck lay the bodies of the missing men with bullet holes in their heads. All articles of value had been stripped from the craft and a Negro who had accompanied them was gone. The murders were attributed to "Esmarto" who, with his band of thirty warriors, was thought to be hovering in the area.³⁰

It was apparently while operating out of Punta Rassa that Langdon received information of the end of the tragic life of Chai. The Indian and Polly, his wife, had left Langdon's company a couple of weeks before and proceeded to Malco with a company of the 2nd Artillery. There, alone in his tent one

arundinacea), is a member of the *Zamia* family. The crushed stems yield an edible starch, after washing to extract an alkaloid.

28. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 390-91.

29. *Ibid.*, 391; Post Returns from Fort Dallas, M617, roll 284. Malco was thirteen miles northeast of Fort Myers, in present-day Collier County. In 1891 the name was changed to Marco.

30. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 392.



Undated photograph of Loomis Lyman Langdon. Note “uniforms and accouterments” which Langdon wears, which suggests the date may have been at the time of his promotion to full colonel, January 25, 1889. Medal is the badge of the Loyal Legion.

evening with his wife, he informed her of his decision to put an end to his anxiety. Fixing a rifle to the tent pole, the unhappy man pointed the muzzle at his heart and shot himself in her presence. Polly was being sent back to Fort Myers when she made a stop at Punta Rassa and detailed the events to the sympathetic Lieutenant Langdon.

On March 3, Langdon's company was transferred once again, this time to Fort Deynaud, approximately twenty-nine miles (or about seven hours) upriver from Fort Myers. Deynaud was a palmetto-thatch and blockhouse fortification which was garrisoned by three companies of the 2nd Artillery (about 150 men)—about “as small a detachment as could be charged with the care of the line from Fort Myers to Lake Okeechobee, about sixty miles.”³² Once there, the company was battalioned with Company C, 2nd Artillery, under the post commander brevet Major Lewis G. Arnold, captain, 2nd Artillery. On the next day, the battalion set out southward, in the direction of Big Cypress Swamp and Billy Bowlegs's village. Second Lieutenant Alexander Webb of the 2nd Artillery, who remained in garrison, remarked that the battalion's leaving gave the post “a deserted look” and that they carried off “everything” including all the food available “except some pork and beans.”³³

Major Arnold was “a small and dignified officer . . . a brave soldier and a cultivated gentleman.” He was also “a good-natured commanding officer”—a decided virtue in the swamps and sand fleas of Florida.³⁴ On the third day out the command reached the site of old Fort Simon Drum (in present-day Collier County) and halted to cut cypress with which to build the fort. Ten days later a high stockade and two flanking blockhouses were completed. A detachment was left to garrison the position which was designated for use as a supply depot.³⁵ Shortly, the detachment was relieved by Lieutenant Grey of the 2nd Artillery. In the meantime, the battalion continued about ten miles down

31. *Ibid.*, 390; Post Returns from Fort Myers, February 1850-January 1865, M617, roll 827.

32. Webb, “Campaigning in Florida,” 407; Post Returns from Fort Deynaud, February 1838-April 1858, M617, roll 315.

33. Webb, “Campaigning in Florida,” 414.

34. *Ibid.*, 405.

35. Post Returns from Fort Simon Drum, March 1855-April 1856, M617, roll 1542.

country to the scene of "Hartsuff's Massacre."³⁶ Soon after passing that site another temporary halt was called to build a small blockhouse for use as a subdepot. This site was designated Depot No. 1 and returns indicate that it was garrisoned throughout March and April of 1856.³⁷ On March 31, while construction was still in progress, Lieutenant Langdon was detached with sixty men to reconnoiter Billy's town. The party found the town abandoned and encountered no Indians though many fresh trails were in evidence.

On April 2, Langdon's detachment rejoined the battalion and five days later the entire command, save only a small guard which was left at the depot, started out for Billy's town.³⁸ Major Arnold was still in command, Lieutenant George Gibson Garner, 2nd Artillery, commanded Company C (Arnold's company), and Assistant Surgeon John Moore, United States Army (later surgeon-general of the United States Army), accompanied as medical officer.

Lieutenant Langdon had spent fifteen months on active duty in this Florida war without personally having been involved in an action. His later observations on this period are detached and calm. His frustration at being unable to meet an enemy which did not fight with traditional linear, or current open field, tactics may only be inferred inversely from his exuberance when his first "real" engagement finally took place. On Monday, April 7, the anxious young officer became a veteran and as soon as the men returned to the Camp Near Depot No. 1, Langdon sat down to chronicle his pride for his father:

Dear Father—

When you get this throw up your hat, give three cheers, hip hip hurra— your son has been in an engagement, yea verrily in

36. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 392.

37. Post Returns from Depot No. 1, April 1857, and Post Returns from Camp Near Depot No. 1, March-April 1856, M617, roll 1507. The location given for Camp Near Depot No. 1 is "20 Miles SSE of Fort Simon Drum . . . 60 Miles SE of Fort Myers . . . 50 Miles S of Fort Deynaud."

38. Post Returns from Depot No. 1, April 1857, M617, roll 150. This return indicates the troop aggregate to be 181. Of these, forty-six were absent and 112 were on the expedition to Billy's town. Therefore, the guard may have numbered twenty-three maximum. A discrepancy in the enumeration, however, makes the guard appear to have been only fifteen.

three engagements the same day— Now give three cheers once more, he led the advance twice and the second time the Indians stood their ground your son Loomis was nearest them and was made an especial mark for the Indians bullets— Though I say it who should not, (because I have no friend here to say it for me who knows you) Loomis did all that could be expected and although perhaps the country may call it a trifling affair I can tell the country that it is no joke to lead six or ten men up to a hammock to provoke an attack—

I am safe, praised be God, perfectly unharmed— though the bullets whistled over and around me like hail.— And now to tell you how the thing [2] happened— Day before yesterday we left this place which is 55 miles from fort Myers, with Major Arnold in command— Capt Dawson my captain commanding “L” Company 1st Art and 2nd Lt Garner commanding “C” Company 2nd Art, which I having no command though ranking Garner was detailed on duty to make maps of the country and having been out from the 6th of March acting as Quarter master and commissary— was very well satisfied with the arrangement. Now a word in preface— It has been supposed by the old fogies that the Indians would not make a stand against regular troops. What a lamentable error— We had a hundred and eight non commissioned officers and privates, one surgeon Dr Marr *[sic]* U.S.A.— We went down the road and reached the Cypress swamp about nine o'clock— The disposition of the troops was this.— In front of the main body was the advance guard about fourteen strong— four of their number were on the flanks— We did [3] not expect an attack as I had been down to Billy Bowleg's village a few days before with 60 men and this was our destination now— we apprehended nothing— the Major, Capt Dawson, the Doctor and myself being rather tired with 4 hours walking had fallen to the rear having the rear guard behind us— We had passed through two patches of the Cypress and were then walking in the water up to our knees when I heard, or rather we all heard two cracks of a rifle— I at first supposed that the Major's servant was shooting birds, but then came a volley, the men began to fall back— and before many minutes I saw a man fall close by me. He had a hole clear through his stomach part [resting] under the skin of his back— Two or three men were limping around & the Indians whooping and yelling like devils in front of us— all among the

cypress trees— We formed and charged them but could see none, at least I have not seen an Indian yet— [4] We rushed through that place and came to a clear space beyond— In front of us and about a quarter of a mile off was Bowleg's village— not an Indian to be seen— The village by the way has been deserted for months— We halted an[d] I went back to get my blanket, haversack and canteen— and took a party of men with me to bring up Sims the poor fellow who died with a bullet through his body³⁹— we got him and brought him to the front, buried him, patched up the wounded— and then as Corporal Carson the man in command of the advance guard was wounded, I took command and led the way to Billy's town, Before I got there though at that time I could have thrown a stone into the house, I was ordered back as the Indians had been seen on the left— I led my little party about fourteen strong back to the main body and awaited orders— I saw there was some indecision and cut the [knot] by asking if I should not go on. Yes directly. I turned to my men and in [5] presence of the whole batallion told them "Come on we will bring on the fight," I led them along a trail and soon came to where it branched off— I took the largest one and soon met another branch Still keeping the largest I soon saw in front of me a smooth level place, (through which the trail led) and bounded by low bushes which edged the hammock— I was in front, two men about 5 yard [sic] behind me and the rest scattered in rear as I walked very fast— I expected a fire as the trail (very fresh led directly into the hammock—) and sure enough it came— pop pop pop— not an Indian to be seen and we were not a hundred yards from the hammock— my men ran back to the main body except two who threw themselves behind some cabbage palmetto trees 15 or twenty yards in my rear— As for me I pulled out my gun and fired one shot at the bushes whence the fire came— and as the bullets were flying pretty thick, I [6] concluded to throw myself on the grass— The rifles cracked and the balls went over me, huwisht, huwisht, whit, while I was lying there in advance of

39. John Simms was a private in Second Lieutenant Webb's Company L, 2nd Artillery, and apparently was with a small detachment which had joined Major Arnold late from Fort Simon Drum. Webb reported: "One fact in regard to Sim [sic] is that he told me to keep \$100 he gave me, in case he was killed; he said he had no one to send it to." See Webb, "Campaigning in Florida," 416, 419; Post Returns from Camp Near Depot No. 1, March-April 1856, M617, roll 1507.

all. I believe that the Indians thought I was hurt— and wanted to make sure work of it. I then got up and went back to the trees— We turned this place, gave them a few volley and charged the hammock— And after that I led the advance again— coming to a cluster of palmettos I told two of my men to fire from this into the hammock of live oak in front and if Indians were there we would draw their fire— and sure enough, as soon as the balls rushed there we got an answer— We charged this hammock and then came back to the place where we had buried Sims— We slept there that night and the Indians in the evening took the roofs off Bowlegs houses so that we could not fire them fired a volley, whooped and left. The next morning we returned to this place— four wounded [73 men were brought in One had to be carried in a blanket for 8 miles—

I am well and with God's help will keep so— Don't let mom see this letter till you hear from me, unless you think it safe—

Love to all

Your affectionate Son
Loomis

P.S.— Do write how you are doing and whether you are well—
Direct to Fort Myers— Via Tampa— Fla— ⁴⁰

The men of companies L and C remained in the Camp Near Depot No. 1 throughout the following week. Then, reinforced by two small companies of Florida Rangers, they went to Billy's town, burned it and a neighboring village, and destroyed what crops they found growing there but had no further encounters with the Indians.

Word of the battle "in the cypress" spread among the other south Florida troops, exaggerated by anxiety. At Fort Center, where the report was brought in by Lieutenant Hartsuff and his mounted party five days after the event, the number of Seminoles involved was supposed to have been 200!

Near the end of April, Company C was relieved at the camp by another company of the 2nd Artillery, but Langdon's unit and the new detachment remained in the Big Cypress throughout April and early May. Almost one-third of the men fell ill— a

40. Loomis L. Langdon to & W. Langdon, April 9, 1856, Langdon Papers.

quite usual occurrence but one which would nevertheless "astonish anyone who had not served in Florida."⁴¹

In early May the Camp Near Depot No. 1 was abandoned, marking the beginning of the summer hiatus in the south Florida campaign. Fort Simon Drum was also closed and abandoned and the garrisons were recalled to Fort Myers. Company L, 1st Artillery, with its aggregate reduced to ninety-one, arrived there on May 19, 1856. On June 2, Fort Center was also dismantled and evacuated.⁴²

Second Lieutenant Langdon and Company L were recalled once more, to their primary duty station at Fort Dallas. They departed Fort Myers on June 16, on board "the old steamer Jasper," and reached Fort Dallas three days later.⁴³ The troop strength of Company L had been further reduced to seventy-nine. Langdon was granted sixty days of leave beginning September 28 but apparently used the time to rest and recuperate without leaving the area since orders had already been received which would terminate the 1st Artillery's involvement in Florida's Indian war.

Langdon's service in the state was not destined to end, however, when the two companies which had entered Florida together only two years before embarked on the transport steamer *Suwannee* on November 3, 1856, bound for Fort Brown, Texas.⁴⁴ The rising young officer would be posted to nine separate duty stations in Florida over the next thirty-one years, and his service record, in and out of the state, reads like a chronology of national history during that tumultuous period.

After four years spent dismantling the forts on the Rio Grande, First Lieutenant (soon captain) Langdon returned to Florida to participate in the opening gambits of the Civil War. In command of a battery of ten-inch mortars, he participated in the repulse of the Confederate attack on Santa Rosa Island and in the bombardments of the Navy Yard and Fort Barrancas. Today, Battery Langdon at Fort Pickens commemorates his action there. From Pensacola Captain Langdon proceeded to the garrison at Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas and thence to

41. Webb, "Campaigning in Florida," 407.

42. Post Returns from Fort Dallas, February 1838-May 1858, M617, roll 284.

43. Haskin, *First Regiment*, 394.

44. Post Returns from Fort Dallas, February 1838-May 1858, M617, roll 284.

operations against Charleston, South Carolina, but by February 1864 he returned once again to Florida. This time, as chief of artillery, he was breveted major for gallant and meritorious service at the Battle of Olustee.⁴⁵

Six times more, between 1872 and 1889, major, lieutenant colonel, and finally Colonel Langdon would serve in Florida. At Forts Pickens and Jefferson he would command during dreaded yellow fever epidemics and during the captivity of Geronimo and the Apache prisoners of war. At St. Augustine barracks and in command of Fort Marion he would receive many of those same Indian prisoners and would bestow the name "Marion" upon a girl child who was born there to one of Geronimo's wives.⁴⁶

Fame is ephemeral. Many who have been involved in Florida's past to far lesser degrees are far better known than Loomis Lyman Langdon. Perhaps this is partially because he appears to have been a restrained and dignified man with varied interests but strong priorities: his nation and his regiment were the mainstays of his life. Promoted brigadier general on the retired list in 1904, General Langdon died on Friday, January 7, 1910. His remains were returned to the cemetery of his alma mater, the United States Military Academy at West Point.⁴⁷ As we hear him soberly eulogized by a military comrade, we can smile knowingly at the private excitement of a fresh young officer in Florida: "On the battlefield, in the calm and philosophical way of his nature, he resolutely confronted danger, and coolly and intelligently directed his forces to overcome it. His whole personality was a representative type of the modern soldier as well as of the Christian gentleman."⁴⁸

45. While brothers Loomis and Charles supported the Union, their eldest brother, George, served as an assistant engineer in the Confederate States Navy. He was a member of the force which surrendered after the Battle of Mobile Bay to Admiral David Farragut. See Langdon sketch, Langdon Papers.

46. Omega G. East, "Apache Prisoners in Fort Marion, 1886-1887, Part II," *El Escribano*, VI (April 1969), 14.

47. *New York Times*, January 8, 1910; Langdon sketch, Langdon Papers.

48. H. M. Lazelle, "Eulogy," in *Forty-first Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point*, New York, June 14, 1910 (Saginaw, Mich., 1910), 144.