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**COW CAVALRY:
MUNNERLYN'S BATTALION
IN FLORIDA, 1864-1865**

by ROBERT A. TAYLOR

SECESION and civil war filled the air along with the blossoms of spring in Florida and the rest of the rebellious South in 1861. Florida's membership in the new Confederate States of America augmented southern leader's confidence in the region's basic agricultural strength. It was well known that antebellum Florida possessed large numbers of beef cattle, which in an emergency could feed thousands of rebel soldiers. Florida beef would figure prominently in Confederate logistics, but could never meet the high expectations placed upon it by the government.

By 1863, Florida had become the primary source of beef for the Confederate troops defending Charleston and the Army of the Tennessee. The fall of Vicksburg and the closing of the Mississippi had stopped the trickle of beef from the Trans-Mississippi region, placing added pressure on supply officers to find food. To facilitate such collections, Florida was divided into five commissary districts under the overall command of Major Pleasant W. White of Quincy. As the chief commissary of Florida, White was charged with procuring foodstuffs for the Richmond government, especially cattle. His task grew difficult as enemy forces threatened cattle herds moving northward to the armies. The Florida prairies and woodlands often became battlegrounds as Union troops, pro-Union Floridians, and Confederate deserters and draft evaders attempted to stop the flow of needed cattle. Herds coming from the rich beef areas in south and central Florida came under increasing attack as the Civil War entered its third year.

By 1864 it was clear that an increased Confederate military presence was needed in south Florida in order for the beef shipments to continue. Even if the state had the troops under its command to restore order, the problems of operating in the primitive area could not easily be overlooked. South Florida was

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especially isolated because there was no transportation into the interior. No railroad lines ran south of Cedar Key, and any military units operating in the region would be hard-pressed to find adequate food, unless they knew the land. Captain J. J. Dickison, already a famous cavalry leader in north Florida, noted the difficulties involved: because of the lack of rail transportation and roads, "an expedition to that field was one attended with great inconvenience and fatigue." While a command should be sent to the area, it could not be done "while threatened by so formidable a force of the enemy" then in north Florida.¹

In the meantime the attacks on the cattle herds continued unabated. Captain James McKay, Tampa resident and commander of south Florida's Fifth Commissary District, was convinced that something had to be done to regain control of the countryside. He vented his anger at Richmond's seeming inaction in a letter to White on March 25, "the government is certainly very blinded to their interests in leaving this country as they do."² McKay had gone so far as to hire additional men to protect herding parties and do picket duty. By the end of March he sent a letter to Secretary of War James A. Seddon via Major White proposing the formation of a special unit that would gather and protect the herds from any and all threats.³

White had already received similar proposals from the other officers in his command. They recommended that a unit of at least 300 men was needed to collect and drive cattle. Under the chief commissary's command these companies would be organized along the lines of regular cavalry units with attached quartermaster and transport to supply food and forage. These companies would have the capacity to defend themselves from Union raiders and deserters while insuring a continuous and certain supply of beef for the army. The unit should be formed as soon as possible for the upcoming cattle driving season to

1. J. J. Dickison, "Florida," *Confederate Military History* Vol. II (Atlanta, 1899), 90.
2. James McKay to Pleasant W. White, March 25, 1864, Pleasant W. White Papers, Collection of the Florida Historical Society, University of South Florida, Tampa (hereinafter cited as White Papers).
3. James McKay Receipt Book, December 2, 1863, James McKay Papers, Collection of the Florida Historical Society, University of South Florida, Tampa (hereinafter cited as McKay Papers); White to Lucius B. Northrop, February 25, 1864, White to A. G. Summer, March 10, 1864, Agents to White, March 5, 1864, White Papers.

begin in April. Trying to drive cattle under any other mode of operation would be "extremely precarious," and the chances were that little Florida beef would reach the troops at the front.⁴

While the unit that would become the Cow Cavalry was the brainchild of McKay and was supported by every officer who knew anything about Florida conditions, it was not a totally original idea. During the Second Seminole War, a body known as the "cracker cavalry" was formed. These recruits from the local area knew eastern and southern Florida well, were good horsemen, and even better shots. It was said that "twenty of these men were equal to any thirty city dwellers."⁵ McKay had memories of past battles with the Seminoles when he offered the plan. His meetings with the few remaining tribal leaders had not comforted him; he still feared that they might take advantage of the military weakness and confusion in the region and go on the warpath. There was little likelihood that the Seminoles would become pro-Union, but they did have many scores to settle with their white neighbors.

Major White formally submitted the request to Richmond, and its reception was favorable. Major Alonzo B. Noyes of the Second Commissary District informed the commanding officer of the depot at Madison and soon after that the plan to organize "a battalion of cow drivers" had been approved by the War Department. There was still the question of who would be given this important command. Captain C. F. Stubbs, commander at Madison, urged White to appoint his brother, Thomas M. Stubbs, since he was qualified and truly deserving. Jefferson Davis, however, had already decided on Charles J. Munnerlyn for the position.⁶

Born in Georgetown, South Carolina, in 1822, Munnerlyn's family had lived in Georgia and Florida. Charles Munnerlyn was a successful lawyer and a planter of some wealth when the Civil War began. He enlisted as a private in the First Georgia Volunteers seeing action at Pensacola and in West Virginia. In 1862, he was elected a member of the Confederate House of Representatives from Georgia. When he lost his reelection bid

4. White to Summer, March 10, 1864, White Papers.

5. D. B. McKay, "My Memories of Pioneer Florida," *Tampa Tribune*, August 24, 1958.

6. White to Northrop, January 15, 1864, White to Charles J. Munnerlyn, January 15, February 25, 1864, C. F. Stubbs to White, April 11, May 21, 1864, White Papers.

in 1864, he hoped to become a military judge since he felt that his health was not good enough for the rigors of field duty. President Davis decided, however, that Munnerlyn was the man to go to Florida to organize and lead the new cattle guard. He received a major's commission and the command of the First Battalion, Florida Special Cavalry.⁷

Major White was pleased with the president's choice. He had met Munnerlyn before the war, and had more recently discussed the possibility of his becoming the state superintendent of fisheries. White gladly informed his superiors in Richmond that Munnerlyn possessed "business capacity in a high order" and had operated his own large plantation with great success. The government would be well served to confer with him on questions pertaining to Florida. White thought that this principled patriot would serve the cause well as the senior officer in the new battalion.⁸

Munnerlyn arrived back in Florida in the late spring and began the not inconsiderable task of building his battalion in a state almost barren of military-age males. One of his first decisions was to appoint Captain William Footman as his executive officer. Footman, a native of Leon County, had a good record as a cavalry officer. He had commanded F Company of the First Florida Cavalry during operations on Amelia Island and Fernandina in 1862, and his commander there had praised him as a "zealous, intelligent, and efficient officer." He then moved north with the First Florida in December 1862, into the Cumberland Gap area. By mid-1863 he was leading most of the regiment on raids deep into Kentucky. Munnerlyn would rely heavily on Footman because of his experience in cavalry operations, an area in which Major Munnerlyn himself had little exposure.⁹

Munnerlyn still had the problem of where he would find the enlisted men that he needed. The first place he turned to was the Army of the Tennessee, as it was dependent on Florida beef for its fresh meat. General Joseph E. Johnston was easily persuaded to detach some of the Florida men in his army for service with Munnerlyn. Willing volunteers skilled in working with cat-

7. Jon L. Wakelyn, *Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy* (Westport, CT., 1971), 327.

8. White to Northrop, January 15, 1864, White Papers.

9. U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Series 1, Vol. 6, 133, Vol. 21, 142 (hereinafter cited as O.R.).



The Confederate Commissary Agent in Florida issued an urgent plea for food supplies in November 1863. His circular was widely distributed throughout the area. Photograph reprinted from the *Tampa Tribune*, March 15, 1886. The artwork is by Greg Williams.

tie were needed; conscripted men would be useless on the range if their hearts were not in the work. Sixty such men came south under a Lieutenant Spencer. They reported for duty at Live Oak, which served as a base for the moving of supplies to Johnston's army. Munnerlyn asked for and received volunteers from the various Commissary Bureau depots from Tampa to Quincy. But these were nowhere near the number of troops needed to patrol the line from Lake Okeechobee to the Georgia border. Munnerlyn knew that individual companies would have to be raised from the remaining local men living in the afflicted counties. Since the alternative was increased chaos, the call for volunteers went out.¹⁰

10. Thomas B. Ellis Diary, 8, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, manuscript collection, Box 26, University of Florida, Gainesville; J. P. Baldwin to White, March 29, 1864, White Papers.

Floridians throughout the state answered Munnerlyn's call. There were finally nine companies, with local men serving as officers. Cow hands and ranchers, who were exempt from the Confederate draft, enlisted because they had seen the depredations being committed in the countryside with their own eyes. Farmers and other settlers joined to protect their homes and serve the South at the same time. The fact that these men would be fighting on their own doorsteps decreased the possibility of their deserting at the first shot. Because they were natives, they knew the terrain well and would be able to use that knowledge against the Yankees and their cohorts. There were also a number of veterans from units like J. J. Dickison's cavalry who could use their hard-learned skills as soldiers to add to the battalion's efficiency. These troopers were rugged individuals who had banded together for a common purpose, so they may have lacked the military bearing of professionals. All who joined did receive an exemption from regular army service, but had full combatant-status in the event of Union capture.¹¹

The nagging manpower shortage intensified when orders from the War Department arrived calling for the return of the detailed men to their parent units. Major White protested to Colonel Lucius B. Northrop, commissary-general of the Confederacy, that these men must stay until Munnerlyn's battalions were ready to take their places in the field. Along with a few armed civilians, they were the only defense that south Florida could muster. If the detailed men were ordered out, the citizens would be quickly overwhelmed. Their retention, urged White, was a necessity for some degree of stability in the region. General P. G. T. Beauregard, the regional commander, had already issued a proclamation of amnesty for deserters intended to decrease the number of such men roaming the Florida range. Captain McKay was forced to rely on some of these returning deserters to supplement his drover forces for the upcoming season. Major A. G. Summer also used them in his Fourth Commissary District, but found them unsatisfactory. These "renegades" from Tennessee and Georgia should be back in the regular army, thought Summer, and he promptly turned them over to the nearest enrolling officer.¹²

11. Joe A. Akerman, Jr., *Florida Cowman: A History of Florida Cattle Raising* (Kissimmee, FL., 1976), 95.

12. Summer to White, April 17, 1864, White to McKay, April 4, 1864, White to Northrop, April 19, 1864, White Papers.

Meanwhile, companies of the Cow Cavalry took the field to protect the cattle drivers in April. One of the first to begin operations was under Captain John T. Leslie of Tampa. A member of a prominent family, Leslie resigned his commission as a major in the Fourth Florida Infantry to organize and lead a company. The roll of Leslie's unit read like a who's who of Hillsborough County society. Residents often joined more from a desire to defend themselves and their community than from any abstract loyalty to the Confederacy. Tampa and its surrounding area looked to these men to restore order. Leslie and his lieutenants set out to do just that.¹³

Leslie established a base at Ichepuckassa (present-day Plant City) and began patrolling. These missions often reached points as far inland as the shores of Lake Okeechobee. They also ranged southward into the cattle areas of Manatee County. It was here that they fought their first battle in April 1864. A skirmish with Unionists at Bowlegs Creek cost the life of Private James Lanier. His son was the company surgeon, and probably attended his father on the battlefield. Another trooper was wounded in the brief action but lived to fight again.¹⁴

John Leslie was an aggressive commander who longed to take the fight to the enemy. While leading a night raid against Union forces at the hamlet of Bay Port, east of Brooksville, he suffered a serious wound. Two other soldiers were killed in this clash and another on the banks of Twelve Mile Creek. This degree of action, by south Florida standards, may be a factor in explaining why the company roster showed five men as having deserted. Leslie was leading his men into harm's way too often for their tastes. But the other 158 men in the company stayed on for the duration of the campaign.¹⁵

Battle casualties soon forced Leslie and other company commanders to bend the rules about enlisting under-age males. Private Thomas K. Spencer, who would later edit a Tampa newspaper, served under Leslie in the Fourth Florida at the age of fifteen until his status was detected and he was discharged. He promptly enlisted in another unit and soldiered until captured and interned at Fort Lafayette, New York. After being paroled

13. U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Compiled Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Florida* (Washington, D.C., 1957), Leslie's Company, roll 5.

14. D. B. McKay, "My Memories of Pioneer Florida," *Tampa Tribune*, December 6, 1959.

15. *Ibid.*

he returned home and once again joined Leslie. J. T. "Dick" Robles was only sixteen, but was considered one of the unit's best scouts. One lad died under the wheels of a government wagon. Another was discharged for being under-age, but he later enlisted in the company being formed under Captain Francis A. Hendry.¹⁶

Another man who would serve under Hendry was Francis C. M. Boggess. Born in 1833 in Huntsville, Alabama, Boggess was a veteran of the Mexican War, the Lopez filibustering expedition, and the Second and Third Seminole Wars. In the late 1850s he settled near Fort Meade in Polk County as a school teacher and rancher. But the outbreak of yet another war disturbed his peaceful sojourn. Boggess railed against secession and swore fidelity to the Union, but he had no desire to put on another uniform. So he packed up his family and moved farther out into the wilderness near Fort Ogden. But there was no escape for him. "A man was hunted," Boggess wrote in later years, "no difference where he went."¹⁷ When the call went out for volunteers for Munnerlyn's force, Boggess and men like him were expected to serve. As a cattleman, he knew that the attacks must be stopped or his income would suffer. His family was potentially threatened by the outlaws, and what matter did it make for what cause they were fighting. The veteran soldier enlisted under Hendry and was commissioned as a lieutenant.¹⁸

Captain Hendry had established his base at Fort Meade, and his area of operations included the wilderness tract of southwest Florida from the Peace River to Lake Okeechobee. Like Leslie's men they drove small herds of 300 or fewer cattle, and provided cover for others driving larger herds. But the Union forces were by no means stagnant during this period. A unit from Fort Myers made a raid deep into the interior and struck at Fort Meade in the early summer of 1864. Lieutenant Boggess and thirty of his men pursued them, but the Federals escaped unharmed. On returning to the fort, Boggess heard a rumor that his company might be ordered to Lake City for duty. He believed, however, that any order of that nature would be foolish,

16. Board of State Institutions, *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole, Civil, and Spanish-American Wars* (Live Oak, Fl., 1903; facsimile ed., Macclenny, Fl., 1983), 135.

17. Francis C. M. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars: The Autobiography of F. C. M. Boggess* (Arcadia, Fl., 1900), 67-68.

18. *Ibid.*

because neither he nor his men would leave their families behind at the mercy of the enemy.¹⁹

With enemy activity like the raid on Fort Meade, few cattle were being gathered because the drovers were being used to defend the area while the Cow Cavalry companies finished organizing. Captain McKay believed that the large numbers of Confederate deserters in south Florida gained encouragement from the government's inability to control the country. As the Union base at Fort Myers grew stronger it served as a rallying point for Florida Unionists. Unless something was done soon to reduce Fort Myers and remove its influence, no cattle could be expected from south Florida. The government could either help field Munnerlyn's battalion, a relatively small force, or delay and be forced to commit large bodies of regular troops to reopen the cattle trails. Captain McKay thought that Munnerlyn should be strengthened by at least a battalion of good infantry. Richmond replied that such troops would be sent only when they could be safely spared from other fronts.²⁰

McKay was surprised that the Indians in south Florida had not contacted the Federals at Fort Myers. Perhaps Confederate gifts of woolen cloth and two dozen muskets had mollified them, or perhaps they just did not want to become involved in the white man's war. Their attitude was much easier for McKay to understand than that of some south Florida ranchers. A few refused sell their cattle; they preferred them to any monetary profit. Others would allow the government to have the stock if they would not have to be bothered by collections and droving. A third group refused to sell for Confederate currency, and to avoid losing their cattle by impressment drove them farther into the interior. The upper sections of the Myakka and Kissimmee river valleys served as hiding places for such cattle. Dispersed in such a manner, they proved almost impossible to gather.²¹

The tide in southwest Florida turned when Captain Henry's 133-man company began operations. In his first report, Major Munnerlyn rated this company as the most efficient and

19. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars*, 68; Rodney Dillon, "The Civil War in South Florida," (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1980), 290.

20. McKay to White, March 25, 1864, White to W. S. Barth, April 12, 1864, Barth to White, April 19, 1864, White Papers.

21. McKay to White, March 25, 1864, White to Northrop, February 23, 1864, White Papers; Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: A History of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida* (St. Petersburg, 1950), 146.

reliable in the entire battalion. Their presence had a marked effect on Union rustlers and renegades, who could no longer operate at will or with impunity. The company also contained many of the most prominent families of the region. There were three Hendrys, two Blounts, and a Summerlin on the roster. The company soon suffered casualties as a result of its aggressive patrolling. Some of these were not combat-related, however, as in the case of Private J. R. Durrance who was accidentally shot by a fellow soldier's discharging rifle.²²

A third company was eventually formed in the Tampa Bay area, under the Reverend Leroy G. Leslie, father of Captain John Leslie. He had been a resident of Tampa, a prominent slaveholder, and had fought in the Third Seminole War. Many of the 112 members of his company were no doubt also members of his congregation at the First Methodist Church of Tampa. He and his men fanned out to the north of Tampa and established a base camp at Brooksville. He also set up four picket posts for added security in Hernando County. The company was fortunate to have in its ranks a number of commissary bureau veterans who were skilled in cattle herding.²³

Increased cattle operations in the summer of 1864 led to added vigilance on the part of the Federals and their surrogates. Cow Cavalry units in the field also remained active in order to meet the threat the Unionists posed. John Leslie, recovered from his wound, returned to the saddle having lost none of his desire to strike at the enemy. With a platoon of nineteen men Leslie launched a surprise attack against a force of over 100 deserter-outlaws near the village of Cork and quickly routed them. The Union army proved not to be so easily scattered. Sergeant Thomas B. Ellis recorded the events of a Union raid in July 1864. The Federals landed a force of 400 regulars, a group of ex-deserters, and a contingent of black troops on the coast of Hernando County. They then moved inland toward Brooksville after brushing aside a Cow Cavalry picket force and taking eleven prisoners. Ellis learned of the landing and dashed off to alert Reverend Leslie's company.²⁴

The Federals in the meantime continued their march, burning barns and looting homes to within two miles of Brooksville.

22. *Soldiers of Florida*, 316.

23. Gary R. Mormino, and Anthony P. Pizzo, *Tampa: The Treasure City* (Tulsa, 1983), 55; *Records of Confederate Soldiers*, Leslie's Company, roll 5.

24. Ellis Diary, 10.

An estimated 500 people jammed country roads, either fleeing the raiders or flocking to witness the expected clash with Confederate defenders. When the Confederates arrived, a sharp fight broke out despite the fall of darkness. Firing was reportedly heard as far away as Ocala, but the Cow Cavalrymen got the worst of it and fell back in confusion. The Federals then retraced their march to the coast with their booty and re-embarked on their waiting vessels.²⁵

Despite setbacks like this, Munnerlyn continued to build up his battalion's strength. Captain W. B. Watson enlisted ninety-eight soldiers in a company at Mellonville (present-day Sanford) on the St. Johns River. Watson had served as an officer in the Second Florida Infantry and had seen combat at the Battle of Williamsburg and the other battles in Virginia in 1862. His mission now was to clear Orange and Volusia counties of Unionists who were rustling cattle and driving them to northern-controlled St. Augustine. Major White found that Watson's men were "experts in their profession and absolutely indispensable" if cattle were to be forwarded north.²⁶

Watson's career in central Florida soon ended, however, when he and four other men were captured by surprise at Enterprise on Lake Monroe in October 1864. Several of his men escaped, minus their horses. They blamed their ambush on a betrayal by a spy in their midst. Watson's capture and the company's frequent absences under Munnerlyn threatened the gathering of cattle in central Florida's Fourth District. Taking command, Lieutenant W. B. Allen moved the company's base back to the village of Orlando, an important watering stop for the herds. Central Florida also provided a second company for the battalion, commanded by Captain Samuel Agnew. It was comprised of the usual mix of veterans and locals, such as Private Thomas Pedrick who had been wounded that spring near Chattanooga. Agnew made his base at Hodge Ferry on the Withlacoochee River from where he could protect the herds from Union raids operating out of Cedar Key. Skirmishes and ambushes soon left dead and wounded on both sides as the conflict

25. J. S. Acton to White, July 12, 1864, White Papers; Akerman, *Florida Cowman*, 94.

26. Edward C. Williamson, ed., "Francis P. Fleming in the War for Southern Independence," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 28 (July 1949), 41; Summer to White, October 31, 1864, White Papers.

continued. Agnew often led his men on regular scouting patrols in the Gulf Hammock area while driving beef.²⁷

Captain James Faulkner raised a company of west Florida men for service in Taylor and Lafayette counties. On June 29 the company had been detached for a highly successful cattle-gathering mission, the first of many for Faulkner's men. Hogs were also collected and guarded until they could be driven northward. Faulkner's command faced a strong enemy in the Taylor County "Independent Union Rangers." This band of Unionists and deserters followed the lead of W. Strickland and were dedicated to the overthrow of Confederate rule. The Rangers, highly disciplined and well-organized, challenged the Confederates for control of the county. The two forces grappled with each other with both fury and cruelty. Strickland himself was later captured and executed by Confederate troops.²⁸

Madison County provided the seventh Cow Cavalry company. Commanded by Captain J. C. Wilcox, it guarded vital rail terminals in that county, and provided protection for Georgia-bound beef. Special Order No. 1, issued from the chief commissary's headquarters, placed Wilcox's unit under Major White's direction if and when such action was necessary. Wilcox and his officers also had the added responsibility of scouting the Gulf coast west of the Suwannee River. This mission was often shared with Faulkner's company, along with herding, under the direction of the district commander. West Florida also had its share of Union sympathizers, who attempted to slow or stop altogether the flow of food from reaching the rest of the Confederacy.²⁹

Another west Florida unit was raised in Jefferson and Leon counties by William J. Bailey. A volunteer colonel during the Second Seminole War, Bailey had seen more recent action with the Fifth Florida Infantry in Virginia. Bailey was soon replaced, however, by Captain E. A. Fernandez, who, as it turned out, could never recruit enough men for his command to be very effective and he had little impact on his area of operations. The

27. Summer to White, October 11, 1864, White Papers; *Soldiers of Florida*, 314; Akerman, *Florida Cowman*, 93.
28. White to Barth, June 29, 1864, White Papers; John F. Reiger, "Anti-War and Pro-Union Sentiment in Confederate Florida," (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1966), 94-95.
29. Special Order No. 1, July 26, 1864, White Papers; Akerman, *Florida Cowman*, 93.

company had the same general duties as Wilcox's and Faulkner's, and they often worked together in the field. These north Florida Cow Cavalrymen cooperated with the regular Confederate forces commanded by General James Patton Anderson.³⁰

While Confederates fought for control of the Florida cattle ranges, Union prisoners held in Georgia faced a daily battle to remain alive. An urgent request came in May for Florida beef to feed the 14,000 prisoners held in the stockade at Andersonville. Some beef was released, but the supply could never keep up with need. By the end of June, Andersonville's population had increased to 26,000, and supply-officer Captain H. M. Allen was forced to detach prison guards to drive beef back to the camp and to the depot at Albany, Georgia. Major White ordered all cattle at Madison and Tallahassee to be turned over to the Andersonville party. The depot at Madison had supplied 1,170 head for the Union prisoners by the beginning of August. But the battles in Georgia interfered with the regular lines of communication which heightened difficulties in matters of supply. By mid-August there were more than 30,000 captives behind the camp's grim walls with a staggering death rate. But little more could be done for them when Confederate combat troops were fortunate to be issued any type of meat two days out of seven.³¹

White was very pleased with the efforts of Munnerlyn's troops. Munnerlyn cooperated fully with White, instructing his company commanders to do the same with the commissary officers in their areas of operation. But these companies were almost taken away from their vital mission in October 1864 by the bureaucracy in Richmond. The War Department wanted men detached from other Confederate units to be returned to them now that the battalion was organized. There was also a move to change the draft status of the troopers in order to bring them into the regular army. Commissary-General Northrop personally argued against such a shift in policy, and praised the important services of the battalion. While only partially organized and equipped, it had "afforded a nucleus for the militia of that re-

30. Samuel Pasco, "Jefferson County, Florida, Part II," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 7 (January 1929), 250; *Soldiers of Florida*, 316.

31. H. M. Allen to White, May 6, June 29, July 25, August 11, 13, 1864, Stubbs to White, August 9, 1864, Alonzo B. Noyes to White, September 23, 1864, White Papers.

gion . . . checked desertions and restored the confidence of the people." Many citizens were returning to homes that they had once abandoned. During this time the Cow Cavalry guarded a line over 300 miles long "in a country infested with traitors and deserters."³²

Northrop summed up his case to the Secretary of War: "The efficiency of this battalion . . . depends on the detailed men connected with it. They, a small number, have been selected with special reference to their fitness for the duties to be performed, and around them as a nucleus have rallied a number of men whose services to the Confederacy would have been lost . . . take away these detailed men and you destroy the battalion, virtually lose possession of the country and certainly all the cattle in it. It is with confidence claimed that nowhere in the Confederacy can the services of these few detailed men be so valuable as in the present organization."³³ Secretary Seddon agreed with Northrop; the men remained where they were. He also rewarded Munnerlyn by promoting him to colonel and Footman to major by the end of the year.³⁴

The Cow Cavalry continued to patrol the trails and gather cattle on into the fall and winter of 1864. A Union scouting report dated December 9 placed Captain McKay with a force of Confederate drivers below the Withlacoochee River. His party included Lieutenant Stephen W. Hogans, reputed to be the best drover in south Florida. Captain Leslie's eighty men camped near Brooksville. Lieutenant Sloane had a party of thirty-five men near Cork, while Hendry's company was said to be near Alfafia and Peace Creek with a strength of 215 men. The Confederate command did not have specific details of where their scattered companies were located. Supply officer Noyes complained that he had been ordered to estimate the supply needs of the "Cattle Battalion," but that he did not know where they were located in the Florida wilderness. Except for the units in the Madison area, Noyes was hampered in his efforts to supply companies constantly on the move.³⁵

32. White to Northrop, October 11, 1864, Northrop to White, October 15, 1864, White Papers; *O. R.*, Series 4, Vol. 3, 730.

33. *Ibid.*, 731.

34. Rodney Dillon, "The Battle of Fort Myers," *Tampa Bay History* 5 (Fall/Winter 1983), 30.

35. *O. R.*, Series 1, Vol. 41, part 4, 808; Noyes to White, December 27, 1864, White to Northrop, November 27, 1864, White Papers.

December brought the formation of the ninth company of the Cow Cavalry. Munnerlyn saw the need to defend the rail line that ran from Gainesville to Cedar Key. That section of track had fallen into disrepair, but the iron rails were valuable property to the Confederates. The Federals greatly over-estimated the number of cattle being taken out of the counties along the railroad, and worked to cut the flow. Union General Q. A. Gilmore placed the figure at 2,000 head per week, a number that did not reflect reality. Beef from south Florida often grazed in the vicinity of Payne's Prairie, located just south of Gainesville. Because there were so few men available, Major Munnerlyn came up with a novel idea; he proposed organizing a force from the pool of Confederate deserters roaming the countryside. Captain E. J. Lutterloh was made company commander and charged with finding men who would serve under him. Lutterloh convinced twenty men to join his force. Taking the field, they swung into action by driving the enemy back in a series of short skirmishes.³⁶

The rest of the battalion remained active until the 1864 - 1865 cattle season came to an official end on January 9, 1865. In January there were important reassignments of military forces in Florida that directly effected the Cow Cavalry. Munnerlyn's battalion was transferred from White's command and made a component of the state troops under General William Miller. The commissary bureau would now have to apply for detachments from the battalion to aid in collections or to provide covering forces. White did not favor this new arrangement, but realized that he would have to accept it for the sake of the cause. He informed his district commanders that they should make out lists of experienced men that they would need in the spring and forward it to Miller in Tallahassee. Without these specialists, Florida could never meet the 1,500 head per month minimum the bureau had set. White wanted to resume cattle collecting in April as the ranges in the upper districts could not sustain beef before then. He warned Captain McKay that the bulk of the year's cattle would be coming from his south Florida area. "I

36. Summer to White, October 31, 1864, Munnerlyn to William Miller, December 11, 1864, White Papers; Samuel Proctor, ed., *Florida A Hundred Years Ago* (Tallahassee, 1960-1965), March 1964, 2; "History of Gainesville," Edward C. F. Sanchez Papers, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History.

can not anticipate when the demand may be made," he wrote, "nor its strength."³⁷

Cow Cavalry units maneuvered to meet Union probes and deserter bands in February 1865. Lutterloh and his men found themselves under fire on February 8. A force of almost 400 Union cavalry and infantry left Cedar Key on a raid northward into Levy County. The Federals surprised a seven-man picket post at Yearty's Farm, taking three of Lutterloh's men prisoner and four of their mounts. The rest of the company rushed to join a force commanded by J. J. Dickison that was moving to intercept the raiders. The two bodies of troops clashed near Levyville on February 13. Confederates and Federals blazed away at each other from seven in the morning to almost midnight. Fatigue and the lack of ammunition ended the engagement. The Federals retreated toward Cedar Key with their booty of 100 head of cattle and fifty slaves. Dickison later claimed that the Federals had lost as many as eighty killed and wounded, while only six of his 125 men had been wounded. Only one Cow Cavalryman was known to be wounded. In his report the Union commander of the raiding party put his casualties at six killed and eighteen wounded.³⁸

While Lutterloh's men were helping to repel the Union raid, the Cow Cavalry's biggest operation of the war, the raid on Fort Myers, was getting under way. Captain McKay had been arguing for a strike against the center of Union activity in his district since the previous summer. McKay believed that his plan had merit, and when the companies of the battalion in south Florida were relatively idle, he urged such an attack. Major Footman led the command out of Tampa in the second week of February and began the 200-mile march to Fort Myers. He had about 275 men with him, including John Leslie's company and Hendry's unit under James McKay, Jr. On February 19 they reached Fort Thompson, a deserted Seminole War post located on the Caloosahatchee River near present-day La Belle. Here the command's supply train would be left for the duration of the attack.

37. White to McKay, White to Summer, January 14, 1865, White to T. M. Dudley, January 30, 1865, White to Northrop, February 10, 1865, White Papers.

38. Edwin C. Bearss, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Mark's Ends at Natural Bridge," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 45 (April 1967), 375; *O. R.*, Series 1, Vol. 49, 41-42.

Footman decided to assault the fort on the twenty-first, hoping to take the Federals by surprise.³⁹

Rain on the night of February 20 shielded the Confederate approach to the enemy base, but the knee-deep water slowed the attacker's progress. Twelve miles from Fort Myers on the Fort Thompson road stood a Union picket post manned by ten Federals. Footman knew that this post must be taken or he would risk losing the element of surprise. Lieutenant George W. Hendry, with ten men, was to make an assault on the Federals without gunfire if possible. Hendry moved out into the rainy night, only to miss the target by yards in the blackness. A Union guard heard their horses splashing through the flooded plain, but assumed that it was only some wandering cattle. Hendry returned to the main body by daybreak, leaving the troublesome Union position intact. Footman then sent another Hendry, Lieutenant W. Marion Hendry, to rush the position. He led ten men in a daylight charge on the post, sweeping over the camp at full gallop. The stunned Union soldiers offered no resistance. The Confederate column then pushed on to Fort Myers.⁴⁰

The main attack began in the late morning after other Union picket guards were surprised and taken prisoner. Shots were exchanged, and a black Union sergeant was killed. The Confederates blazed away with their rifles and a brass six-pounder. Union guns answered in what the veteran Lieutenant Boggess thought was a poor example of fire discipline on both sides. Footman soon realized that the fort's defenses were too strong for his light cavalry. He ordered a withdrawal, and the march back to Fort Thompson began. The Federals possessed neither the horses nor the desire to pursue them.⁴¹

It rained on the tired and hungry troopers as they plodded toward their supply base. Men ate the corn that had been brought along as feed for the horses. The column passed the Boggess homestead, where the lieutenant provided some bread and salt from his own stocks for his men. This angered Major Footman who wanted the entire command to be similarly supplied. Boggess was already disgusted with the major and the

39. McKay to White, July 4, 1864, White Papers; Dillon, "Battle of Fort Myers," 32-33.

40. Frances K. Hendry, "Lee County: Early Days in Fort Myers," *South Florida Pioneers* 10 (October 1976), 4-5.

41. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars*, 69-70; Dillon, "Battle of Fort Myers," 33.

whole operation, and he cared little about Footman's complaints. He called Footman "a complete failure" and believed that only the rain had prevented the useless slaughter of the entire command. So ended the Cow Cavalry's Fort Myers campaign.⁴²

In spite of bleak prospects for the Confederacy in March 1865, no commander in Florida pondered capitulation. The new commander of the Military District of Florida, Major General Samuel Jones, hoped to improve the command structure in the state. He wanted J. J. Dickison to be made a colonel and placed in charge of south Florida in the event of its being isolated by Union forces. This grant of authority would include the "commissary battalion," another name for the Cow Cavalry. Jones reported that it had about 800 men collecting cattle and rendering much service in the field where they were often the only Confederate troops operating. "I do not propose to interfere with the organization of the battalion," Jones wrote, "but to give Captain Dickison sufficient rank to enable him to exercise command over it." General W. J. Hardee, the departmental commander, consented to the new arrangement.⁴³

As the cattle herding season began in April 1865, word reached Florida that Robert E. Lee had surrendered in Virginia. Lieutenant Boggess, now quartermaster of Hendry's company, first heard the news while in Tallahassee on court martial duty. He returned to Brooksville with the information about the time that Lieutenant William B. Henderson arrived from Tampa with the same news. Both reported to Major Footman, who warned them that they would be arrested if they repeated it to anyone. Footman knew what information like this, coupled with rumors that Governor Milton had died mysteriously at his Marianna home, would do to the morale of the entire command. The strain of waiting led to tension between the officers and men of the Cow Cavalry. Boggess and James McKay, Jr., had an argument over the issuing of needed clothing to the former's men. McKay was reluctant to release government property with the future so uncertain, but Boggess threatened that if the uni-

42. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars*, 69-70.

43. *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. 47, part 2, 1390.

forms were not forthcoming he and his men would take them by force.⁴⁴

Cow Cavalrymen yearned for home, but the war was not officially over. The Confederacy still lived in name and in the hearts of its most hard-core partisans. But it was obvious that further bloodshed was pointless. Colonel Dickison turned over command of all Confederate forces in south Florida to Colonel Munnerlyn on May 5. He informed Captain Lutterloh of his action, and then left for home. Tampa was occupied on May 27, and Union commissioners set out to accept the surrender of Confederate units in the vicinity. There was no choice but to concede defeat. On June 5, 1865, at Bay Port, Munnerlyn's Battalion surrendered to representatives of the Second Florida Cavalry of the Union army.⁴⁵

Lieutenant Boggess left for his new home in Manatee County before the surrender ceremonies. A company of black Union troops under a Lieutenant De Costa was sent out to parole any Confederate soldiers who had not been processed. Some held back, but not Francis Boggess. He reported and was promptly paroled. He recalled in his autobiography that he disliked the fact that he had surrendered to a unit of black men.⁴⁶ But that was only one of the changes that Boggess and the other veterans of Munnerlyn's Battalion would have to accept. They would return to homes that were often shells, and try to make a living in a state with a shattered economy. And they would have to learn to live in peace with men who had been their mortal foes. Things would not be as they were before, and it would be decades before the wounds of a shattered community could heal.

44. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars*, 72-73; Daisy Parker, "John Milton, Governor of Florida, a Loyal Confederate," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 20 (April 1942), 360-61.

45. Mary E. Dickison, *Dickison and His Men* (Louisville, Ky., 1890; reprinted Gainesville, 1962), 212; *O. R.*, Series 1, Vol. 49, part 2, 984.

46. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars*, 74.