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## Race and Civil War in South Florida

by IRVIN D. SOLOMON AND GRACE ERHART

**T**wo Floridas shared one state in 1860, and the racial demographics and the mechanics of race relations differed significantly between the two regions. Most studies of slavery and race in Florida directly before and during the Civil War have dealt with the state's more densely populated and economically developed northern plantation region. Race relations in antebellum and wartime South Florida have received relatively little attention. From the outbreak of the Civil War through the early years of Reconstruction, however, the issues of race, slavery, and freedom profoundly shaped events from Tampa to Key West, developments compounded by the extensive Union deployment of African American soldiers at Fort Myers in the center of the region.

The racial demographics of North Florida's plantation cotton belt on the eve of the Civil War more closely resembled those of the Deep South states than those of the less-developed South Florida counties. Of the 104,424 whites and 61,745 slaves residing in Florida in 1860, the majority of both lived in the state's northern counties, particularly in the region between the Suwannee and Apalachicola Rivers known as Middle Florida. In many of the state's cotton-producing counties, slaves significantly outnumbered whites. The socioeconomic realities of plantation slavery defined relationships between the races there, much as they did throughout the Deep South. In the face of large, potentially dangerous slave populations, these relationships were based as much on the perceived need for social control as on raw economic exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Eighth Census of the United States (1860), State of Florida, Population By Age and Sex, and Slave Schedules, Florida. Alachua, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Madison, and Marion comprised the white minority counties in 1860, Records of the Bureau of the Census, M653, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (hereafter NA); see Julia Floyd Smith, *Slavery and Plantation Growth in Antebellum Florida, 1821-1860* (Gainesville, 1973), 10-11; Lula Dee Keith Appleyard, "Plantation Life in Middle Florida, 1821-1845" (master's thesis, Florida State College For Women, 1940), 2969.

Unlike the more mature plantation belt of northern Florida, the southern portion of the state remained a relatively undeveloped frontier. In 1860, the region had barely recovered from Florida's Indian wars, which ended in 1858. As the wars drew to a close, new settlers from the northern counties and neighboring Deep South states migrated to South Florida. Many of these pioneers were hardscrabble farmers who could not afford to invest in chattel slavery. While some sizeable farms, and even a few plantations, appeared in the region, most South Florida whites were small farmers, cattlemen, and individual slave owners, rather than elite planters.<sup>2</sup>

Hillsborough, Manatee, and Monroe constituted the major counties of South Florida on the eve of the Civil War. The most concentrated pockets of population were located on or near Tampa Bay and the Manatee River, and in Key West, the state's second largest city. The 1860 census counted 2,415 whites and 564 slaves in Hillsborough County, 601 whites and 253 slaves in Manatee County, and 2,302 whites and 451 slaves in Monroe County. Key West, which usually stood apart from these counties as a federal census entry, was home to 2,241 whites and 435 slaves. The city also included 156 free blacks who owned property worth over \$12,000. Key West's free black population accounted for virtually the entire free black population of South Florida in 1860, and it similarly accounted for almost one-ninth of Florida's total free black population.<sup>3</sup>

The figure of the aristocratic planter that characterized land owners in the northern reaches of the state was essentially unheard of in South Florida. Most slave owners there engaged in field work

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2. "Copy of Statement furnished Gov. John Milton showing the number and value of Slaves, Cattle, Sheep, Swine & Occupants in the State of Florida as taken in this office, Oct. 13, 1862," Comptroller's Office, Incoming Correspondence, 1845-1906, RG350, ser. 554, Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida (hereafter FSA), 1-19. See Rodney E. Dillon Jr., "The Civil War in South Florida" (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1980), 1-9; Canter Brown Jr., *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Orlando, 1991), 136-40.
  3. Eighth Census of the United States (1860), State of Florida, Population By Age and Sex, Records of the Bureau of the Census, M653, NA, Sarah M. W. Guthrie, "Land of Promise, Land of Change: An Examination of the Population of Hillsborough County, Florida Based Upon a Statistical Analysis and Comparison of The Population Census Abstracts For 1850 and 1860" (master's thesis, Emory University, 1974), 52-71; Sharon Wells, *Forgotten Legacy: Blacks in Nineteenth Century Key West* (Key West, 1982), 20.

virtually shoulder-to-shoulder with their chattel. Because major plantations in South Florida were few, most slaves in this region worked at the task method of slavery, especially as individual field hands (often working alongside members of the master's family) or as domestic servants. Through the early years of the war, cotton, tobacco, and sugar represented the most profitable crops in Hillsborough and Manatee Counties, while ranching, fishing, and the production of salt and turpentine proved the most lucrative trades in upper Monroe County.<sup>4</sup>

Antebellum slavery in South Florida took a less severe form than that of the state's cotton belt. The scarcity of plantations and the intimacy of master and slave in South Florida probably accounted for this development; the more oppressive measures of social control that characterized the heavily black counties of Middle Florida seldom took root in the three lower counties under review here.<sup>5</sup> While traveling in South Florida prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Oliver Otis Howard, future Union commander, Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner, and Howard University namesake, noted the less virulent nature of slavery in the southern region of the peninsula. He wrote in a personal correspondence: "Slavery here is in a very mild form. You wouldn't know the negroes were slaves unless you were told. White men work with the negroes . . . at any trade."<sup>6</sup> Despite the less formal, more personal working relationships between the races, slavery in South Florida nevertheless retained its inherently dehumanizing character. Bondsmen in South Florida remained mere property with no more rights there than anywhere else in the South.

Key West, the southernmost city in the United States, reflected the vagaries of slavery in South Florida. In this island city about 300 miles south of the state's major population center, slaves labored as dock workers, day workers, skilled craftsmen, construction hands, and as servants to wealthy whites. Free blacks in Key West usually

4. "Copy of Statement furnished Gov. John Milton showing the number and value of Slaves, Cattle, Sheep, Swine & Occupants in the State of Florida . . ."; Dillon, "The Civil War in South Florida," 1-19; Brown, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, 136-54.

5. See Brown, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, 138-39; Appleyard, "Plantation Life in Middle Florida," 70-104. Through the late 1850s, the Gamble, Braden, and Gates family operations near the Manatee River region represented the few major plantations of South Florida in this era.

6. Oliver Otis Howard to Lizzie Howard, March 29, 1857, Oliver Otis Howard Papers, Special Collections, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

worked as skilled or semi-skilled laborers, finding opportunities in the urban environment that similarly attracted most free blacks across the state to towns and cities. Because of its large free black population, perceived prosperity and employment opportunities, and the presence of Union garrisons, Key West attracted many escaped and liberated slaves throughout the war.<sup>7</sup>

The island's sizable pro-Union population also proved to be a magnet for blacks seeking freedom, which resulted in the black population of Key West nearly doubling during the 1860s. In the spring of 1861, a Union commander noted: "We are on terms of friendship with the best portion of the citizens [of Key West], and all hope there will be no collision."<sup>8</sup> Later that summer, a *New York Herald* correspondent reported: "Key West has a thoroughly Union-loving population . . ."<sup>9</sup> The Unionist *Key West New Era* perhaps best summed up this sentiment when it stated in 1862 that "we do not believe that there is a reasonable man in Key West but what sees, in the downfall of the Confederacy, the extinction of slavery."<sup>10</sup> The *New Era* also noted the determination of slaves to secure freedom once Union troops had proclaimed martial law in the island city:

The usually quiet and monotonous life in this city has been broken . . . There has been such an amount of talk about skedaddding, of late, [by] persons of African descent, who were formerly held up to service of labor . . . of all ages, sexes, sizes, and imaginable shades of color, house servants, laborers, . . . have left their masters' bed and board in search of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>11</sup>

Yet slavery continued to be a divisive issue in Key West through the early war years. Even after the outbreak of war in the spring of 1861, the federal government countenanced slavery in South Flor-

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7. Ninth Census of the United States (1870), The Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, and Selected Ages and Occupations, Population of Civil Divisions Less Than Counties, Table III— State of Florida, vol. I, Records of the Bureau of the Census, M653, NA. See also Julius J. Gordon, *A History of Blacks in Florida: An Analysis of Free Negroes Enumerated in the U.S. Census of 1850, 1860, in Florida* (Tampa, 1988), 97; Wells, *Forgotten Legacy*, 14-30.
  8. J. M. Brannon to L. Thomas, March 13, 1861, United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter *ORA*), 128 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), ser. 1, vol. 1, 360.
  9. *New York Herald*, June 6, 1861.
  10. *Key West New Era*, October 4, 1862. The Unionist *New Era* appeared in Key West in April 1862, supplanting the former secessionist paper *Key of the Gulf*.
  11. *Key West New Era*, September 20, 1862.

ida by leasing black bondsmen from their masters to continue the work on Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas and Fort Taylor in Key West, both of which remained in Union hands throughout the war. The scarcity of local white laborers, most of whom worked in the extensive wrecking and salvage industry of the lower Keys, accounted for the slave labor demand in Key West and stimulated slaveowners to take advantage of the situation. Throughout 1861 and 1862, Department of War payroll vouchers for Fort Taylor alone averaged about forty-five slave laborers per month, a figure that represented about one-tenth of Key West's total slave population. Initially, masters received \$20 per month for each slave, while the U.S. government supplied the slave's food, shelter, and medical care. Later, as the sectional fervor escalated in Key West, a standard pay of \$1.12 per workday was substituted for both black and white laborers, raising the monthly wage of slaves hired out to over \$36. Some slaves may have kept part of the wages owed their masters, but just as frequently a slave agent deceptively kept the bondsman's presumed pay for himself. At the outset of the war, a northern soldier observed such proceedings and recorded in his diary: "An 'agent' reserves one dollar and [a] half per day for this slave's services, and is not ashamed . . . to pocket the money."<sup>12</sup>

Following the outbreak of hostilities, the chronic shortage of white labor made slave labor extremely valuable to both the Union and the Confederacy. Non-traditional tasks such as conveying messages between masters, rounding up distant cattle, and securing stores characterized slave labor in both the panhandle and the southern reaches of Florida during the Civil War, although it is arguable that bondsmen in South Florida took on a much wider array

12. "View of Key West," *Harper's Weekly*, April 19, 1862, 34; J. St. C. Morton to W. H. French, April 22, 1861, L. G. Arnold to W. H. French, April 22, 1861, Letters Received, Department and District of Key West, 1861-1868, RG 393, NA; Work Returns, 1859-1861, 1861-1862, and Payroll Vouchers, Accounts Current, and Abstracts of Disbursement. Office of the Chief of Army Engineers, RG77, National Archives, Regional Archives Branch, East Point, Georgia; L. G. Arnold to Headquarters, April 20, 1861, found in Josiah Shinn, "Fort Jefferson and Its Commander, 1861-2," Lewis G. Schmidt Collection, FSA; William H. Foster, "This Place Is Safe: Engineer Operations at Fort Zachary Taylor, Florida, 1845-1865" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 1974), 89-111, 148, 188-90; *Key West New Era*, August 16, 1862; Albert Manucy, "The Gibraltar of the Gulf of Mexico," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 21 (April 1943), 308-309; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 15, 1861; Ames Williams, "Stronghold of the Straits, A Short History of Fort Zachary Taylor," *Tequesta* 14 (1954), 14; Diary of Harrison B. Herrick, 110th NY Regiment (quotation), cataloged as "Sun, Sand and Soldiers," 1953, Oswego County Historical Society, Oswego, New York.

of duties during the conflict than their northern Florida counterparts. As white labor in South Florida became increasingly scarce after the institution of the Southern Conscription Act in April 1862, Confederate forces relied on blacks as seldom before. James McKay Sr., blockade-runner turned Confederate commissary agent, received orders to employ "Negroes as can be had" for cattle drivers. As an inducement, some Confederates went so far as to pay their servants for extra efforts. Robert Watson, a Confederate soldier temporarily stationed at Tampa, wrote: "We pay two dollars each a month for servant hire, they cook and wash for us and keep our house in order."<sup>13</sup> But the general refusal of Confederates to treat their slaves with any measure of human dignity hampered the effectiveness of their use in any great numbers.

The North vacillated on the questions of humane treatment and emancipation of slaves. Congress passed the Confiscation Act on August 6, 1861, authorizing the forfeiture of property, including slaves, used in "aiding, abetting or promoting" the war effort against the United States. But this statute proved ineffective in defining the status of slaves owned by non-belligerent Confederate sympathizers. On May 9, 1862, General David Hunter, commander of the Department of the South, declared free all slaves in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida based on the reasoning that "slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible . . ."; nevertheless, President Abraham Lincoln countermanded the order a mere ten days later. On July 17, 1862, Congress passed a Second Confiscation Act (technically the Militia Act), which freed slaves (termed "contraband") of disloyal owners. An executive order empowering federal authorities to impress property "necessary or convenient for any military or naval service for which it may be found competent" reinforced the act.<sup>14</sup> Still, by late 1862, the

13. Robert Taylor, *Rebel Storehouse: Florida in the Confederate Economy* (Tuscaloosa, 1995), 106; Pleasant W. White to Joseph P. Baldwin, October 2, 1863, Pleasant W. White to James McKay Sr., October 2, 1863, box 2, Pleasant White Papers, Collection of the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Florida; Diary of Robert Watson (Florida Volunteer Coast Guard) (quotation), Key West Avengers, March 15, 1862, Schmidt Collection.

14. General Orders No. 11, May 9, 1862, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 14, 341; By the President of the United States of America: A Proclamation, May 19, 1862, *ORA*, ser. 3, vol. 2, 42-43; Militia Act of 17 July 1862, "The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639-1886," 915-16, M858, RG94, Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served During the Civil War, NA. See also La Wanda Cox, *Lincoln and Black Freedom: A Study in Presidential Leadership* (Columbia, 1981), 7, 14-15.

North had promulgated no clear policy either on ending slavery or on the equitable treatment of freedmen.

The North's ambivalence on the race question also affected its military policies. Even though blacks aggressively petitioned the War Department for permission to enlist, Lincoln instructed the military branches to reject the mustering-in efforts of blacks. President Lincoln himself found slavery repugnant; however, in an effort to keep non-abolitionist northern whites and the border states loyal to the Union, he maintained throughout the first two years of the conflict that it was a "white man's war."<sup>15</sup>

President Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in early 1863 notably raised black men's expectations to join the fray. Faced with an unpopular military draft and declining enlistments at the time of the Proclamation, Congress shortly thereafter passed a revised Militia Act, which allowed the military services to recruit "persons of African descent." That spring, the War Department issued General Order No. 143 creating the Bureau for Colored Troops, which eventually became the U. S. Colored Troops (USCT) branch of the U.S. Army. More than 186,000 black troops, serving in some 166 regiments, eventually saw action as USCT soldiers.<sup>16</sup>

The United States Navy, in fact, had already enlisted new black volunteers prior to the War Department's 1863 edict. The small, ship-poor Gulf Blockading Squadron began using blacks before most other naval squadrons. In September 1861, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles sent orders to Commander William W. McKean of the Gulf Blockading Squadron addressing the "large and increasing number of persons of color, commonly known as contrabands, now subsist[ing] at the navy yard and on board of ships of war." These slaves, he stated, could neither be discharged from service nor could they remain unemployed. If they were willing, Welles ordered, they should receive naval work and compensation. Like the army's policy in 1863, the navy's initial compensation for blacks was minimal in all duty areas. Secretary Welles directed that black sailors "be allowed . . . no higher rating than boys, at a com-

15. Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1953-1955), vol. 8, 2.

16. General Orders No. 143, May 22, 1863, *ORA*, ser. 3, vol. 3, 215-16; see Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York, 1966), 261-91; James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (New York, 1991), 145-243. Blacks represented nearly ten percent of Union forces by war's end.

pensation of \$10 per month and one ration per day," a rate and pay far below that of white sailors.<sup>17</sup>

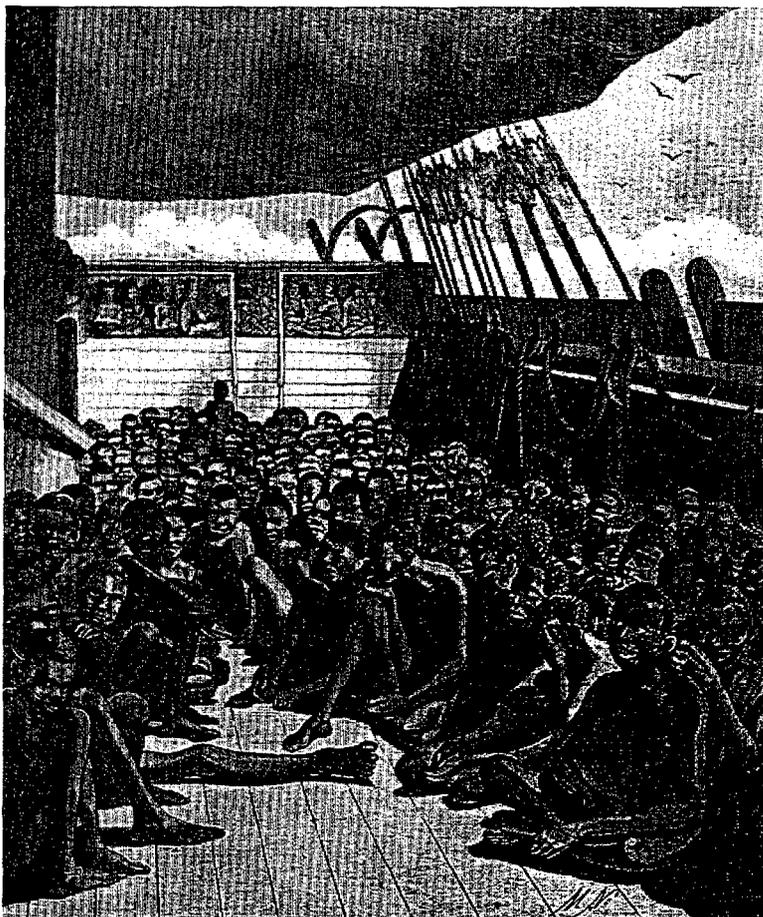
When the Gulf Blockading Squadron reconfigured into the East Gulf Blockading Squadron (EGBS) and the West Gulf Blockading Squadron (WGBS) in early 1862, the Union navy changed its attitude toward enlisting blacks out of necessity. In July 1862, Welles sent a pointed note to both Flag-Officer James Lardner, commander of the EGBS, and to Flag-Officer David G. Farragut, commander of the WGBS. Welles wrote: "To supply your wants you will have to resort to the expediency of enlisting contrabands, as no more men can be sent you, Enlistments do not keep pace with the wants of the service."<sup>18</sup> Thereafter, the EGBS augmented its forces with local black recruits, particularly those familiar with Florida's long, irregular coastline and those experienced in sailing the uncharted waters of the southern peninsula and disparate Keys. Keeping with tradition, many of the black sailors who had joined the EGBS by 1862 served in integrated crews, such as that of the *James L. Davis*, which patrolled the waters off South Florida. Still, the number of black sailors remained small, their pay inequitable, and their status questionable until the Navy's ad hoc policy on black forces in the waters of the East Gulf changed wholesale as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation and Congress's subsequent actions in early 1863.<sup>19</sup>

Florida blacks serving in the EGBS performed the unique duty of helping to suppress the African slave trade in the war years. Although outlawed in 1808, numerous records suggest that the clandestine slave trade continued along Florida's remote southern coast through the outbreak of the Civil War. In April 1860, the U.S.S. *Mohawk* captured the slave ship *Wildfire* and towed it to Key West. The *Wildfire's* cargo of 350 Africans reposed at Key West's barracks (special barracks built for receiving presumably ill slaves

17. Gideon Welles to William W. McKean, September 25, 1861, United States War Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of The Rebellion* (hereafter *ORN*), 30 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1894-1922), ser. 1, vol. 16, 689.

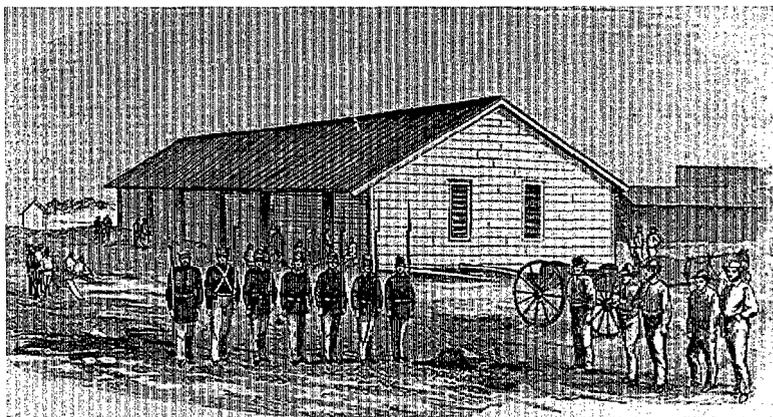
18. Gideon Welles to James Lardner and David G. Farragut, July 2, 1862, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 269; David J. Coles, "Unpretending Service: The *James L. Davis*, The *Tahoma*, and The East Gulf Blockading Squadron," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (July 1992), 44-45.

19. See Coles, "Unpretending Service," 45; George E. Buker, *Blockade, Refugees, and Contraband: Civil War on Florida's Gulf Coast, 1861-1865* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 43-78.



The slave deck of the sailing ship *Wildfire*, brought into Key West on April 30, 1860. *Harper's Weekly*, June 2, 1860.

taken off slave ships) until they could be returned to Africa. In December 1860, two more slave ship prizes entered Key West's port, swelling the number of slaves captured to a reported 1,432. The *New York Times* noted in 1862 that South Florida rebels sought a re-instituted African slave trade, either by their own commerce or by foreign delivery. In June 1862, the U.S.S. *Amanda* captured an unnamed slaver in the South Florida waters; the "slave prize" had just unloaded between 750 and 800 slaves at Cuba and presumably was



The barracks at Key West, where slaves were confined. *Harper's Weekly*, June 2, 1860.

searching the southern peninsula waters for ports at which it might curry new business for its illicit trade.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, evidence suggests that slave ships operated along the South Florida coast during the early part of the war. In July 1861, Major William Henry French, then stationed at Key West, sent a message based on information gleaned from an informant to Flag-Officer William McKean, commander of the Gulf Blockading Squadron: "I have . . . information that a schooner fitted out as a slaver is in the Caloosahatchee River, awaiting to fill its crew and also for letters of marque from Montgomery [Alabama]. Her appointments, I am told, are full . . ." <sup>21</sup> About three weeks later, the navy's attempt to capture a privateer (probably the same slaver reported in the Caloosahatchee) ended prematurely after Union forces realized that former United States Senator and now Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory had probably warned the ship's personnel of the impending Union expedi-

20. "The Africans of the Slave Bark 'Wildfire,'" *Harper's Weekly*, June 2, 1860, 344-46; *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (Washington, D.C., 1969), vol. 4, 408; Paul Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies* (Annapolis, Md., 1989), 93; Emily Holder, "At the Dry Tortugas During the War: A Lady's Journal," *The Californian Illustrated*, February 1892, 183. Emily Holder was the wife of Dr. Fred Holder. *New York Times*, March 13, 1862; Williams, "A Short History of Fort Zachary Taylor," 15; N. Goodwin to J. L. Lardner, June 18, 1862, and Joseph E. Jones to N. Goodwin, June 18, 1862, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 265-66.

21. William H. French to William W. McKean, July 20, 1861, *ORN* ser. 1, vol. 16, 592.

tion.<sup>22</sup> Given South Florida's long and remote coastline, and its proximity to Cuba and other Caribbean slave ports, it is probable that the black sailors of the EGBS routinely patrolled and surveyed hostile or unidentified ships with the intention of freeing Africans from a destiny of bondage. Although few slaves appeared in the navy's monthly engagement enumerations, the fact that EGBS sailors accepted suppression of the African slave trade in southern Florida waters as an integral part of their duties lent an unconventional aspect to race issues in this region.

Whether they served in the federal navy or in the army, contraband were accepted into the military and workforce simply because unit commanders thought them to be resistant to the most feared "killer of the tropics" – yellow fever. Yellow fever epidemics swept Key West and the Tortugas with a vengeance in both 1862 and 1864. Probably introduced by prize ships captured upon returning from Cuban ports, these unprecedented "seasons" of yellow fever, as the military termed them, claimed a mortality of one-half of some units and proved just as deadly for the civilian and refugee population of the lower Keys. In the yellow fever epidemic of 1862, fully three-fourths of the Union garrison at Fort Taylor contracted the disease. During the outbreaks of 1864, Admiral Theodorus Bailey, commander of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron, recorded a mortality rate at Key West of between twelve and fifteen persons per day. So severe was the outbreak that theater commander General Daniel P. Woodbury placed all of Key West under a rigid no-commerce quarantine, virtually shutting off trade and communications to the tiny island city.<sup>23</sup>

The pestilence similarly struck the civilian labor force attached to the fort. During the devastating yellow fever recurrence of 1864, eight "acclimated" contraband (blacks who had already recovered from the disease) were rushed aboard the schooner *James S. Chambers* to Key West to address the labor shortage. Major Wilder of the 2nd USCT wrote that he had lost "many dear friends" and more white officers to the malady "than are killed in half a dozen

22. William Mervine to Gideon Welles, August 17, 1861, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 16, 639.

23. General D. P. Woodbury, "Quarantine Regulations," March 15, 1864, Letters Received, Department and District of Key West, 1861-1865, RG 393, NA; Charles Smart, *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, D.C., 1888), vol. 1, 675-83; Theodorus Bailey to Gideon Welles, July 27, 1864, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 737-39; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 26, 1862; Foster, "This Place Is Safe," 181. Native Key Westers often used local terms such as "yellowjack" or "the stranger's fever" to describe incidents of yellow fever.

fighters.” Despite strong evidence to the contrary, Wilder wrote in a letter home that “[s]carcely a man among the [black] privates has died from this disease.”<sup>24</sup> So pervasive was the belief that blacks naturally resisted yellow fever that the Union shipped hundreds of contraband from South Carolina and Louisiana to Key West to ensure a reliable labor force immune from yellow fever for its military installations.<sup>25</sup>

Yellow fever proved particularly deadly at Fort Taylor. The military continually sought to address the problem of sick and emaciated soldiers at this southernmost fort by transferring in black troops whom they believed were immune to the disease. Yet the scourge of yellow fever proved color blind, as both white and black troops continued to succumb in high numbers to its debilitating and deadly attacks. Ironically, the myth of blacks’ resistance to yellow fever also facilitated a dramatic increase in their numbers at Key West, much to the chagrin of southern sympathizers already tense because of the steady influx of displaced or escaped slaves following the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in early 1863.<sup>26</sup>

News of the Emancipation Proclamation took almost a month to reach Key West. The first rumors of it incited amazement and excitement among the island’s African American population and even led some to hoist flags, march in parades, and engage in other acts of defiance against their masters. One black at Key West “hoped the report would not prove a delusion. He and John had laid by money working after hours, and if it was true, they would like to get to one of the English islands and be ‘real free.’”<sup>27</sup> Other

24. Theodore P. Greene to Gideon Welles, August 16, 1864, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 744; John Wilder to Richard Wilder, July 25, 1864, Loomis-Wilder Family Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (New York, 1959), vol. 3, 1723; Williams, “A Short History of Fort Zachary Taylor,” 19, 21. USCT troops in this theater died of disease at a rate of 5:1 compared to battlefield wounds.

25. John Wilder to Richard Wilder, July 25, 1864, Loomis-Wilder Family Papers; D. P. Woodbury, Quarantine Regulations, March 15, 1864, Letters Received, Department of District of Key West, 1861-1865, RG393, NA.

26. “Key West in the Summer of 1864,” *Key West New Era*, September 20, 1862; Smart, *Medical History*, vol. 1, 679. Key West’s major cemetery interred fifty-three soldiers who died of yellow fever during one ninety-day period during the height of the outbreak. See St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Burial Records, June to August 1864, Monroe County Public Library, Key West; Theodorus Bailey to Gideon Welles, July 27, 1864, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 737-39.

27. Henry J. Hornbeck (47th Pennsylvania Volunteers), Diary, January 23, 1863, copy in the Monroe County Public Library; Holder, “At the Dry Tortugas During the War,” 103 (quotation).

blacks at Key West may have looked to “Old Sandy,” a wealthy local free black respected for his farming skills, as a possible role model or for assistance in their quest for freedom.<sup>28</sup> The prospects of joining the viable free black community of Key West as another “Old Sandy” proved a siren call to blacks throughout South Florida until war’s end.

When verifiable news of the Emancipation Proclamation finally arrived in Key West on January 24, 1863, free blacks celebrated heartily. One observer recorded that blacks:

had a procession, with music and banners flying. In the afternoon, the party of blacks had a gay and happy time in the barracoons, a short distance below Fort Taylor, on the beach. Mr. Custis, a rich shipmaster addressed them in a neat speech, welcomed them as citizens . . . Sandy, the aristocratic farmer was called upon and made a speech of the day. The days festivities concluded with dancing and music.<sup>29</sup>

Elsewhere in South Florida, blacks aspiring to freedom had to flee their masters or await Union occupation of the state in the spring of 1864 before such celebrations would occur.

Although slavery persisted in certain areas of Florida until the end of the war, many slaves in South Florida simply freed themselves. Bondsmen at Key West who had served in the Quartermasters Corps or who had labored to build Fort Jefferson fled to the Union forces there and refused to return to their former masters. Fearing their blacks would flee, slave owners elsewhere tried to move their property to inland areas supposedly safe from Union naval forays or army raids. Yet military records and personal accounts of the period repeatedly refer to the serious blow delivered to southerners by the wartime loss of their slaves. While exact numbers of escaped and freed slaves remain indeterminate, reports and personal accounts on both sides confirm the determination of slaves to achieve freedom by any possible mean.<sup>30</sup>

Slaves involved in Confederate maritime activities reflected this pattern as well. Confederate blockade runners who relied on

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28. Hornbeck Diary, January 24, 1863.

29. *Ibid.*

30. See William Watson Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913), 218-42; and Cordon, *A History of Blacks in Florida*, for various biographies relating to former slaves of Hillsborough and Manatee Counties.

slaves as sailors and as dock hands for loading and unloading contraband cargoes in South Florida found their slaves all too eager to use the opportunity to escape. The number of slaves used in these operations was doubtless small, though, because of the runners' fear that bondsmen would attempt to escape to Nassau or Havana. One such black seaman was Thomas Valentine, who failed in his escape to freedom in Nassau aboard Robert Johnson's blockade runner, *Director*, in 1863.<sup>31</sup>

Confederate blockade runners also knew well the appeal that freedom in the British Bahamas had for their slaves. Cattle-runner James McKay Sr., for example, seldom took his five slaves as crewmen aboard his 450-ton steamer, *Salvor*, to British-dominated Nassau for fear they would desert. Instead, he normally sent his slaves ashore to his son's house near Key West prior to sailing for Nassau. After the *Salvor's* capture by the U.S.S. *Keystone State*, the elder McKay's friend and pre-war associate Major William Henry French, then stationed at Key West, tried to detain the ship at the island city, where a local ordinance prohibited slave testimony. Commander G.H. Scott of the *Keystone State* thwarted French's plans, however. He steamed with his prize for New York, where the testimony of the slaves was allowed.<sup>32</sup> Had French been successful, the *Salvor* possibly would have been handed back to McKay at Key West, as it had been on one earlier occasion.<sup>33</sup>

The course of bondage and freedom for blacks in Key West took a number of peculiar turns during the war. The 1861 edict that sought to evacuate from Key West all relatives of rebels caused some southerners to flee, taking their slaves with them. Other non-slaveholding whites, such as prominent citizen Asa Tift, likewise departed, choosing instead to forfeit their property rather than take the oath of Union allegiance. Still other citizens, usually Unionists, remained on the island and kept their servants throughout the war.<sup>34</sup>

31. I. B. Baxter to T. Bailey, October 3, 1863, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 562-63.

32. G. H. Scott to Gideon Welles, October 25, 1861, Thos. Savage to William H. French, October 12, 1861, A. Patterson, *et al.*, to G. H. Scott, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 109-13; see Canter Brown Jr. "Tampa's James McKay and the Frustration of Confederate Cattle-Supply Operations in South Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 70 (April 1992), 420. The court-confiscated *Salvor* sold later that year for the respectable sum of \$38,250.94.

33. Brown, *Peace River Frontier*, 147.

34. See Jefferson B. Browne, *Key West: The Old and The New* (Gainesville, 1973), 90-98; Wells, *Forgotten Legacy*, 23-30.

But even before emancipation, slaves found ways to free themselves. Many blacks who served in the Quartermaster Corps or as nurses quickly fled their bondage when war broke out. They simply refused to return to their owners, whatever the nature of their service. As one Key West slaveholder lamented in September 1861: "All my slaves have run away." Recognizing the bondsmen's determination to taste freedom, the *New Era* went so far after the issuance of an early confiscation order as to predict the escape of every slave in Key West.<sup>35</sup>

Union troops at Key West moved quickly to enforce the First Confiscation Act, issued in August 1861. As early as the following month, a secessionist family, the Lowes, took some of their slaves to a local warehouse and prepared to ship them to Indian Key. Union forces kept watch, and when the secessionists attempted to load slaves on their schooner, the Federals confiscated them as contraband of war. The Lowes' bondsmen remained at Fort Taylor nearly a month. Upon their release in October, the blacks were warned by Union soldiers not to leave the safety of Key West. Although technically a measure to deprive southern sympathizers of slaves as a source of wealth, the enforcement of the First Confiscation Act helped strengthen the Union workforce at Forts Taylor and Jefferson. As a result, however, they sacrificed the loyalty of some Federal sympathizers, who saw black workers as economic competitors.<sup>36</sup>

Many local Unionists, although supportive of Federal efforts to suppress the rebellion, did not believe the war should be turned into a crusade against slavery. In some cases, the limitations of the Emancipation Proclamation helped to improve the situation. Unionist Judge William Marvin, who presided over the federal court in Key West until 1863, legally owned domestic servants. He did not release them until 1865, leading one Union officer to accuse Marvin of "ill-timed and injudicious impressment."<sup>37</sup> After releasing his slaves in Key West at war's end, Marvin rose to political

35. Wm. H. French to Geo. L. Hartsuff, May 20, 1861, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 425-26; Theodor Bailey to D. P. Woodbury [first names], June 20, 1863, Letters Received, Department and District of Key West, 1861-1865, RG 393, NA; Henry M. Crydenwise Letters, 1861-1866, letter of June 25, 1862, Henry M. Crydenwise to Dear Parents, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; *Key West New Era*, August 16, September 13, and October 4, 1862.

36. Various letters relating to the workforce at Forts Taylor and Jefferson, 1861-865, District of Key West and the Tortugas, Department of the Gulf, Letters Received, RG393, NA.

37. M. C. Meigs to Wm. H. Seward, May 6, 1861, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 52, part 1, 139-40.

prominence in Reconstruction Florida and worked actively to ensure civil rights for the state's newly emancipated black population. Precisely why Marvin chose to retain his own "domestics" until 1865 in Key West remains an ongoing point of historical conjecture.<sup>38</sup>

Former slaves were as much a necessity in the work force at Key West and the Dry Tortugas during the war as they had been before it, for local white labor remained scarce throughout the war, and freedmen could not be easily induced to work at Forts Taylor and Jefferson.<sup>39</sup> Early in September 1862, Colonel Joseph S. Morgan, stationed at Key West, issued Order No. 50, which stated that, while no attempts would be made to lure slaves from their masters or to prevent them from returning voluntarily to them, no slaves would be forcibly returned to their masters either. Some accounts belie this: Key West resident Emily Holder, originally from New York, wrote of a former servant who "had to work on the fort." She also observed that "Colonel Tinnelle would not allow them [blacks], to leave Fort Jefferson, and many were still at work on the fort." A soldier in the 47th Pennsylvania Regiment described another such incident: "We had some excitement the other day caused by the quartermaster taking about twenty Negroes from their masters and setting them to work for Uncle Sam." Not surprisingly, even before the issuance of Order No. 50, some local whites hotly resented Federal support for blacks, free and otherwise. As one disaffected Key Wester wrote:

for instance, a "Nigger" had an old grudge against you, he meets you on the street, he abuses you, if he thinks he can whip you he will do so, then he gets the "Provost Marshall," informs against you, that you not only was the aggressor but also spoke treason against the U.S. Etc. Whatever you, as a White man may say, is of no account, the "niggers" word is taken in preference to a dozen respectable white men. You are not allowed to make a defence [sic] . . . .<sup>40</sup>

38. Kevin E. Kearney, ed., "Autobiography of William Marvin," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36 (January 1958), 207, 213, 215-19.

39. E. D. Townsend to D. P. Woodbury, December 22, 1863, Letters Received, Department and District of Key West, 1861-1865, RG 393, NA, Williams, "A Short History of Fort Zachary Taylor," 14; Wells, *Forgotten Legacy*, 30; Foster, "This Place Is Safe," 180-211.

40. Holder, "At the Dry Tortugas During the War," 102-103; Christian Boye to My Dear Son (Frank Henry Boye), September 23, 1862 (quotation), Boye Folder, Research Division; St. Augustine Historical Society, St. Augustine, Florida; Dillon, "The Civil War in South Florida," 137-38; Wells, *Forgotten Legacy*, 25.

Despite the tensions in Key West, slaves there enjoyed some freedoms and amenities seldom realized in Florida. They had their own religious services, and some even attended white churches weekly. Often white soldiers stationed at Key West praised the local contraband. One Union soldier of the 90th Regiment, New York Volunteers wrote, "I was very much surprised at the intelligence which they displayed in their remarks and exhortations . . . here the slaves are dressed almost as nicely as their masters and enjoy great privileges." Later the same Northern soldier recorded, "I would just like to see a man whipping a Negro[.] I would try the virtue of my sword if he did not stop it."<sup>41</sup>

Most of the military action involving black troops occurred in the lower peninsula rather than in the Keys. On February 22, 1864, 900 volunteers of the Second United States Colored Troops arrived at Key West as replacements for the departing 47th Pennsylvania Volunteers. Upon the 47th's disembarkation, the Department of the Gulf command at Key West moved four black companies to nearby Fort Taylor, where many worked as "colored hands" to address the chronic labor shortage at the installation. There, according to Lieutenant Colonel John Wilder, the 2nd USCT commander at Fort Taylor, the unit's morale remained high, and its dress parade proved an unusually polished spectacle. Wilder described "long lines of dusky warriors . . . all covered with blue and glory and carrying Uncle Sam's muskets so polished and bright as to look like silver. Each man with shoes blacked, brasses polished, white gloved and clean, going through the manual of arms with alacrity and precision, not often seen in our armies."<sup>42</sup> Most of these proud soldiers of the USCT thereafter departed Key West for important action in the lower peninsula. By the conclusion of the war, the 2nd USCT had emerged as one of the most active of the twelve black regiments serving in Florida.<sup>43</sup>

Companies D and I of the 2nd USCT moved first from Key West to Fort Myers on April 20, 1864. The commander at Fort Myers, a derelict Seminole Wars post reactivated by the Union in January

41. Henry Crydenwise to Dear Parents, letters of February 5, 1862 and August 19, 1862, Woodruff Library.

42. John Wilder to Mrs. M. W. F. Wilder, August 14, 1864, Wilder-Loomis Papers; Foster, "This Place Is Safe," 233.

43. 2nd USCT Regimental Returns, M594, R206, RG 94, NA; "The Negro in Military Service of the United States, 1639-1886," M858, R3, Selected Records Relating to Black Servicemen, RGs 94, 107, and 153, NA; Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion: Regimental Histories*, vol. 1, 248; vol. 3, 1723.

1864, had requested the black troops in an effort to strengthen the post's defenses and to enhance his force's ability to interdict the South Florida cattle trade.<sup>44</sup> The appearance of large numbers of black troops notably altered the course of the war in South Florida. Not only did Confederate locals react with fury at the Union's audacity of stationing the despised black troops in the very heart of the lower peninsula, but slave owners also feared that black troops would place a priority on capturing and freeing bondsmen in this theater. For one local Confederate, "[i]t was a war . . . for possession of this country. The Federal troops mostly Negroes . . . made a move to go through the country to burn, destroy and capture everything from Ft. Myers to Jacksonville." A Union officer recorded a differing perspective of the event: "It made the Secesh here grind their teeth to see [black] soldiers . . ." A Confederate "Home Guard" soldier recalled the event more emotionally; he observed local slaveholders "running helter skelter . . . back to their plantations to run off their negroes [sic]. I saw at once that we could do nothing to check the [Union] advance." Indeed, the slave owners' worst fears did materialize, as USCT troops eventually freed and enlisted over 1,000 former bondsmen in the state.<sup>45</sup>

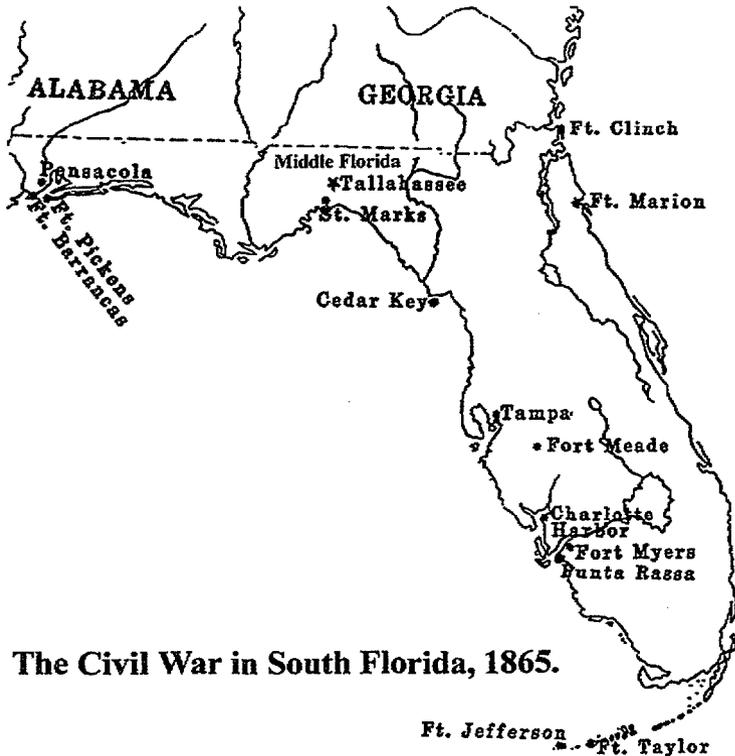
The USCT units at Fort Myers served in numerous hostile actions. Companies D and I, each composed of about seventy-five men, departed on expeditions into the heart of Confederate South Florida as early as April 1864. The black troops, often serving alongside the 2nd Florida (Union) Cavalry, participated in numerous minor actions and in such larger campaigns as those of Fort Brooke, Fort Meade, and Tampa Bay in May 1864.<sup>46</sup>

As the second largest town in South Florida behind Key West, Confederate Tampa provided a tempting target for Union naval raids on several occasions. Following the successful regarrisoning of Fort Myers with black troops in early 1864, and the troops'

44. Henry A. Crane to Henry W. Bowers, April 15, 25, August 15, 1864, District of Key West and the Tortugas, Department of the Gulf, Letters Received, RG 393, NA; D Company USCT, Regional Returns, Muster Rolls, 1864, M94-R206, Companies D and I, USCT, Annual Returns, 1864. RG 94. NA.

45. Frances C. M. Boggess, *A Veteran of Four Wars: The Autobiography of F. C. M. Boggess* (Arcadia, Fla., 1900), 69; John Wilder to Mother, May 22, 1864, Wilder-Loomis Papers; "Confederate Diary of Thomas Benton Ellis, Sr., Company C, Hernando Guards, 3rd Florida Infantry, July 1861-April 1865," 9, Manuscript Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida; USCT General Descriptive Books, RG94, NA.

46. Companies D and I USCT, Regimental Returns, Muster Rolls 1864, M594-R206, RG94, NA, Companies D and I USCT, Annual Returns, 1864, RG94, NA.



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subsequent raids upon the Confederate cattle supply lines, Union plans turned toward capturing Rebel-held Tampa. In early May 1864, a Federal force that included eighty black soldiers of Company E of the 2nd USCT embarked on a variety of ships for Tampa. On May 6, 1864, black troops disembarked from the *James L. Davis* and its companion steamer, *Honduras*, and joined 200 other troops in the march to Tampa. After a local black told advance scouts that Tampa lay virtually defenseless, the Federals marched boldly in and captured the town. "They carried off all the Negroes," a young observer of these events recalled later.<sup>47</sup> Although only a frontier hamlet at the outset of the

47. Stark Fellows to Henry W. Bowers, May 10, 1864, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 34, part 1, 390-91; Dillon, "The Civil War in South Florida," 261-62; Coles, "Unpretending Service," 52-53; Edwd. Van Sice to T. Bailey, May 8, 1864, *ORN*, ser. 1, vol. 17, 694; Anthony P. Pizzo, *Tampa Town 1824-1886: The Cracker Village With a Latin Accent* (Tampa, 1968), 70 (quotation).

war, Tampa held a small black community. Tampa's six slaves and one free black not only attended a white church in the community but also received baptism as members of Tampa's First Baptist Church.<sup>48</sup> Baptism of blacks remained rare in Florida in this period, which suggests a social link between Tampa's white and black populations seldom realized in the slave states. Once again, the physical proximity of whites working with blacks in South Florida resulted in unconventional race relations.

With the capture of Tampa, black units for the first time participated in a decisive raid on a Confederate stronghold in Florida. Even late in the war, the few slaves in Tampa, combined with those of surrounding Hillsborough County, accounted for most of South Florida's bondsmen, valued at over \$860,000.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps their determination to free the area's black population played a role in the USCT's successful occupation of Tampa. By all accounts, their conduct there proved exemplary. General Daniel P. Woodbury's official report states that the "colored troops on shore behaved remarkably well," but that the white troops, often former pro-Union refugees bent on revenge, "were not so easily controlled."<sup>50</sup> The black troops' good performance earned them the grudging respect of their white comrades in arms. In writing home to his family, a white soldier of the 47th Pennsylvania Regiment punctuated his letter with the following comment on the general conduct of white-black relations in South Florida: "[N]one of our army was fiting for niggers yet, bud I tell you that they are fiting for us and have saved a manny a lives of ours."<sup>51</sup>

Throughout their remaining actions in South Florida, the men of the 2nd USCT aggressively pursued three major objectives: to emancipate slaves, to destroy the plantations of slave masters, and to recruit and enlist former bondsmen as fellow soldiers.<sup>52</sup> A

48. Oliver Otis Howard to Lizzie Howard, March 29, 1857, Howard Papers; *Tampa Tribune*, September 20, 1953.

49. Dillon, "Civil War in South Florida," 288; Samuel Proctor, ed. *Florida One Hundred Years Ago* (Tallahassee, November 1964), 3; *Ibid.* (Tallahassee, October 1964), 4.

50. D. P. Woodbury to William Dwight, May 12, 1864, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 35, part 1, 389-90.

51. Reuben Keim to Friend Richard (Richard Long) (47th Pennsylvania Volunteers) May 27, 1863, Keim Folder, Schmidt Collection.

52. Companies D and I, USCT, Regimental Returns, Muster Roles, 1863-1864, M594-R206, RG 94, NA (former slaves frequently appear in these rolls as "contraband"); Henry W. Bowers to George P. Drake, August 6, 1864, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 35, part 1, 405-406.

Confederate observer of these events recorded: "In consequence of the operation of the enemy [out of Fort Myers] every man who could use a musket was placed in Service running Negroes from reach" of the black Union troops.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, these forays proved so nettlesome to the Rebels that they responded by creating the First Battalion, Florida Special Cavalry (known in South Florida as the Cow Cavalry) to meet the new military threat. Although the Cow Cavalry engaged primarily in guerrilla campaigns against the Union forces, its most notable action of the war resulted from the unit's failed attack on Fort Myers itself in an attempt to crush the despised black troops.<sup>54</sup>

A Confederate Cow Cavalry force of some 400 men attacked Fort Myers on February 20, 1865. The ill-planned "surprise" attack, anticipated by the fort's commander, quickly evolved into an artillery duel, which the cannoneers and marksmen of the 2nd USCT eventually won. A Confederate officer later recalled that "[i]t was seen that nothing was accomplished."<sup>55</sup> A *New York Times* reporter visiting the fort at the time of the battle wrote a long article about the Confederate defeat in this southernmost theater. He observed: "The colored soldiers [at Fort Myers] were in the thickest of the fight. Their impetuosity could hardly be restrained; they seemed totally unconscious of danger, or regardless of it and their constant cry was to 'get at them.'"<sup>56</sup> Following the day-long battle, the Confederate force retreated ignominiously northward, eventually disbanding and returning to their private affairs until war's end.<sup>57</sup>

The Battle of Fort Myers proved the final action for the USCT in South Florida. Shortly after this engagement, the fort suffered decommissioning, and its Union garrison was reassigned to more northerly theaters. Companies D and I joined with Companies A, B, and K of the 2nd USCT and departed the port of Puma Rassa at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee for Cedar Key in early March 1865. The seasoned troops of the 99th USCT soon joined the 2nd at Cedar Key. Thereafter, the combined units departed for critical action in Middle Florida, playing a leading role in the bloody battle of

53. J. L. Peterson to D. W. Gwynn, May 28, 1864, Correspondence, 1845-1906, Comptroller's Office, RG 350, ser. 554, FSA.

54. Brown, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, 171-75.

55. Boggess, *Veteran of Four Wars*, 68.

56. *New York Times*, March 18, 1865.

57. F. A. Hendry, *A History of the Early Days in Fort Myers* (Fort Myers, 1985), 2-6; Boggess, *Veteran of Four Wars*, 68-74; Dillon, "The Civil War in South Florida," 305-12; Brown, *Florida Peace River Frontier*, 171-75.

Natural Bridge at the St. Marks River approach to Tallahassee on March 6, 1865. Despite the Union defeat in this action, the commander noted his troops had been “highly complimented by [the Commander of the Union forces] for good conduct in this battle.”<sup>58</sup>

Following their service at Natural Bridge, the black veterans of South Florida remained in the state until they received mustering-out orders in late October 1865. Two units of the 99th USCT shifted back to South Florida (primarily to the Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor areas) to assist in postwar Union duties through 1866. Military pension records suggest that the USCT veterans who had fought in the southern peninsula during the war eventually settled in areas close to their original homes in Maryland and northern Virginia.<sup>59</sup>

The changes wrought from Tampa to Key West by the Civil War destroyed the peculiar personal relationship between the races that distinguished this region from the more northerly plantation belt of Florida prior to the conflict. While the war itself served as a catalyst to acts of courage and rebellion by individual blacks against white authority, arguably it was the appearance and actions of the USCT that more profoundly shaped the issues of race, slavery, and freedom in this southernmost theater of the conflict.

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58. James Doyle to J. S. Ransom, March 15, 1865, A. T. Pearsall to A. Ransom, March 15, 1865, letters Received, Department and District of Key West, 1861-1868, RG 393, NA, Dillon, “The Civil War in South Florida,” 313; John Newton to C.T. Christensen, March 19, 1865, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 49, part 1, 58-62.

59. USCT Order Books, 99th Infantry; USCT, 99th Infantry, Field and Staff; USCT Regimental Returns, February 1865-October 1865, M594-R206; USCT Muster Rolls, March-November-December, 1865, M594-R206; USCT Morning Reports, 1865, all in RG94, NA; War Department, Adjutant-General’s Office, October 24, 1865, *ORA*, ser. 3, vol. 5, 158; John Newton to Headquarters, District of Key West and Tortugas, April 19, 1865, *ORA*, ser. 1, vol. 49, part 1, 66-68. Pension records reflect that many of the USCT veterans of the Battle of Fort Myers suffered deafness, chronic hearing problems, and vision-related disabilities after the war.