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THE POLITICS OF SLAVERY AND SECESSION IN
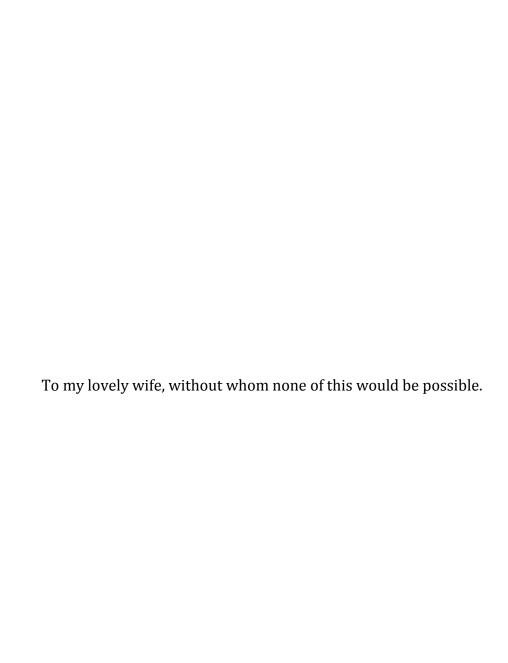ANTEBELLUM FLORIDA, 1845-1861

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2008

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for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

The political history of antebellum Florida has long been overlooked in southern historiography. Florida was a state for just sixteen years before secession set it apart from the rest of the Union, but Florida's road to secession was as unique as any of its southern counterparts. From the territorial days in the early nineteenth century, Florida's political culture centered on the development and protection of slavery throughout the state. The bank wars in the pre-statehood and early statehood periods reflected differing views on how best to support the spread of the plantation economy, and the sectional strife of the 1850s instigated Floridians to find the best way to protect it. By the end of the antebellum period amidst increasing sectional strife and a sense that secession and disunion were acceptable courses of action, Florida's population pulled together under the banner of protecting slavery – and by extension, their way of life – by whatever means necessary. Northern infringement into slavery affected not just the planters, but every free man who called Florida his home.

To my lovely wife, without whom none of this would be possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincerest thanks to my advisor, Dr. John Sacher, for his insight and assistance in making this work of history a reality; to my committee members, Dr. Richard Crepeau and Dr. Ezekiel Walker, for their role in shaping my view of history and my place as an historian; and to the friends and peers in the History department who made this journey all the more enjoyable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The admission of Florida into the United States in 1845 was greeted with fanfare

and celebration throughout the streets of Tallahassee. After an arduous six year wait

between ratifying a state constitution and admission, Floridians were ready to begin a new

period of stability that the former territory had little known during the past three

centuries. In many ways, Florida was characteristic of the rest of the South – a land of

slaves and plantations and family farmers working for a better life alongside banking and

business interests that increasingly needed the peculiar institution to thrive. The influx of

settlers from the border regions of Georgia and Alabama had provided Florida with a direct

connection to the rest of the South beginning early in the territorial period. Consequently,

Florida's transition into statehood and the Union was remarkably uneventful. But Florida

still remained a frontier. While the northern reaches of the state, stretching across the

Panhandle from Pensacola to St. Augustine, looked and acted like the rest of the South,

central and south Florida posed a daunting task to the new settlers. Nearly two-thirds of

Florida's land proved unproductive for the growing and cultivation of cotton, and what

land did remain was plagued by mosquitoes and disease. A state of nearly 60,000 square

miles (second only in size to Texas in the Deep South) faced unique obstacles on the path to

building a stable government and a prosperous economy.

But Florida would prosper. During the antebellum period, Florida would remain

small in population, but certainly not in potential. What had began as a Spanish territorial

cast-off in the early 1800s had become a region that could boast a unique identity, forged from the frontier and the interplay of planters and their non-slaveholding counterparts. By the end of the antebellum period amidst increasing sectional strife and a sense that secession and disunion were acceptable courses of action, Florida's population pulled together under the banner of protecting slavery – and by extension, their way of life – by whatever means necessary. Northern infringement into slavery affected not just the planters, but every free man who called Florida his home. It was not only the right to own slaves that was at stake, but Florida's economic future for every member of the free population. There was no a longer a planter class and a class that aspired to be them – they were all Floridians.

* * *

The story of Florida before the Civil War is among the most captivating and important in the entire South, but the politics, economy, and culture of Florida in the antebellum period have been woefully understudied. Southern historians have almost completely ignored Florida in their discussion of politics and slavery. While important, even ground-breaking political analyses have been written for other southern states, Florida's history remains curiously underdeveloped. The first and, up to this time, only major work written on Florida's antebellum political history is William Doherty's 1959 monograph *The Whigs of Florida, 1845-1854,* a brief (75 pages) account of the rise and fall

of Florida's portion of the national Whig Party.[1] Doherty, who's other work also included a number of articles exploring the frontier history of Florida, states that Florida Whigs – like those elsewhere in the United States during the 1830s and 1840s – came to power on the back of the economic panics of the late 1830s and a few standout Whig politicians. Slavery and the collapse of economic issues as a source of Whig cohesion doomed the party from the outset. In fact, Doherty contends that Florida Whigs ceased to exist as a viable political entity as early as 1852, which predates the dissolution of the national party by as many as four years.

Unfortunately, Doherty's research on the Whig party structure in Florida neglects the rest of the state's dynamic political climate. The Democrats, who had snatched the major political positions in the state in the wake of statehood, were always able to maintain at least some foothold at all levels of state politics. The bigger issue, however, lies in the fact that Doherty's monograph only runs until 1854, while the importance of Florida's role in the run-up to secession and the creation of the Confederacy are completely ignored. Conversely, Doherty deems unimportant the impact of changes in Florida's culture during the time as well, whether it be the influence of sectionalism in the late 1840s and early 1850s or the impact of new settlers from elsewhere in the South. In Doherty's estimation, the state Democratic party was nothing short of monolithic, and that slavery had been the sole cause for the demise of the Whigs.

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[1] Herbert J Doherty, *The Whigs of Florida, 1845-1854* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1959).

The dearth of historical background on Florida antebellum politics, thankfully, is not reflected in the historiographies of the other southern states. Several works in particular have helped to define the methodology and scope of antebellum political history. The seminal work of state-level antebellum southern politics is undoubtedly J. Mills Thornton's *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860.*[2] Thornton's impressively thorough 1978 work covers nearly every conceivable aspect of Alabama politics in the pre-War era, and Thornton's attention to detail borders on obsessive. *Politics and Power* advances a narrative of antebellum Alabama politics that reflects an exalted ideal of liberty and republicanism that fully permeated the white population of Alabama. This republicanism – increasingly the main connection between the slaveholding minority and the yeoman farmer majority – formed the foundation for secessionist thought in the latter half of the 1850s. Unlike the historical consensus before the 1960s and 1970s, which postulated that the twin issues of slavery and "states' rights" (as amorphous as such a characterization could be) drove the southern states away to form the Confederacy, Thornton's thesis places the impetus for secession squarely on the backs of the non-slaveholding class. Through this republican ideology and a deep, pervasive distrust of any sort of governmental or economic centralization, Alabamians of all social levels could band together against northern encroachment on their lives and their liberties.

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[2] J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 1978.

Although the concept of a southern republican ideology certainly did not begin with Thornton's work, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society* was among the very first works to expound on the importance of this ideology in driving the South toward secession. Several years prior, Eugene Genovese's ground-breaking *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* painted a picture of southern slave society that relied on the overwhelming power and influence of the slaveholding class to maintain the peace and keep the non-slaveholding population from rising against the slave aristocracy.[3] This decidedly Marxist view of the antebellum South focused on hegemonic control of slavers over the yeoman farmer, denied any sense of white equality, and reflects an argument that, in no uncertain terms, non-slaveholders were duped into supporting and protecting the institution of slavery by the laws and norms of the time.[4] Thornton's work (and the republicanism-based studies that followed) rebutted such a view in the sense that the South was not simply controlled by the elites, but that through the ideology of egalitarian republicanism, non-slaveholders could express their own political will on an equal footing with the slave holders.

Also published in 1978, William J. Cooper, Jr.'s *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* is equally as influential as Thornton's work, but Cooper's monograph places the focus of southern politics squarely on slavery.[5] He contends that the interaction between

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[3] Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).
[4] Ibid., 27.
[5] William J. Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

the forces of slavery, southern parties, political structures, and southern white values created a political system where slavery and slavery-related issues served as the fulcrum. The rise and fall of the southern Whigs can be tied inextricably to the "politics of slavery": throughout the South, the Democratic Party was successful in convincing voters that Whigs would not fully support slavery, slavery rights, or the honor and integrity of the South itself. Cooper contends that the presidential politics of the antebellum period were strongly influenced by slavery issues, not by tariffs or other popular economic issues. He writes that southern politicians were "dedicated to guarding the interests of the South," and all interests in the South could be traced back to slavery. By protecting the institution, the South would be able to defend itself.[6]

The publication of Lacy K. Ford, Jr.'s 1988 work *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* continued the historiographical movement toward a fuller understanding of antebellum politics through the prism of republicanism.[7] The most peculiar of all the southern states, South Carolina's unique political situation was nonetheless influenced by the same cultural, social and political changes that led the rest of the antebellum South toward secession. Republicanism took center stage in the Palmetto State, and as home to some of the most radical thinkers in the South (such as the inimitable John C. Calhoun), South Carolina served as an exceptionally fertile breeding ground for a republican ideology that would unite the slaveholding elite and the non-slaveholding

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[6] Ibid., 374.
[7] Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

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yeomanry against infringement of their liberties by the dangerous forces of abolitionists and the Republican Party – a "white unity" in Ford's words. Throughout *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, Ford postulates that this "white unity" led to secession, but not through the machinations of the elite slaveholders. Very much like Thornton's thesis in Alabama, Ford believed that the non-slaveholders in the state felt a particular duty in protecting the "peculiar institution." In many ways, the white men of South Carolina felt they "no longer had any choice" to stay in the Union, and as such secession was inevitable.[8]

Among the most recent of southern state studies is John M. Sacher's 2003 *A Perfect War of Politics: Parties, Politicians, and Democracy in Louisiana.*[9] Sacher's work clearly follows in the historical footsteps of authors like Thornton and Ford before, but the importance of *A Perfect War of Politics* – like Ford's work on South Carolina – is a function of the state study itself. Although Louisiana could not boast the unique political culture of South Carolina, it often stood alone amongst the southern cultures because of the existence of ethnic conflicts that were unheard of elsewhere in the South. Unlike many of the southern states, Louisiana also had contentious partisan politics well into the latter half of the 1850s, as the Whigs (and later, the Know-Nothings) kept a toehold in state politics. Conversely, Sacher argues that republicanism, once again, played the decisive role in moving the state's white population toward secession. The unequivocal support of black

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[8] Ibid, 371.
[9] John M. Sacher, *A Perfect War of Politics: Parties, Politicians, and Democracy in Louisiana, 1824-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

slavery by the non-slaveholding class was essential to keeping whites equal and maintaining their liberties.

Although not necessarily part of the historiography of antebellum southern politics, Edward Baptist's 2002 work *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier Before the Civil War* is integral in providing the socio-cultural context that is necessary to understand Florida's political culture in the antebellum period.[10] Baptist discusses the creation of a unique Floridian identity during both the frontier period of Florida (preceding statehood in 1845) and up to the decision to secede in 1860. Since the majority of Florida's territorial population came from the border regions of Georgia and Alabama (and to a lesser extent, the Carolinas), Florida was early on influenced by the politics and cultures of these states. However, Baptist argues that the settlement of the Florida frontier necessitated new social, cultural, and political infrastructures, and that the unique issues facing the Florida frontier population forced those infrastructures to reflect a new Florida identity – not one cobbled together from other states, but an identity that reflected the environment and dangers inherent in the Florida territory. As such, when Florida entered the Union in 1845, the people and politics of the Sunshine State were well on their way to carving out their own distinctive niche in the Deep South.

It is in this historiographical landscape that a synthesis of Florida's antebellum political history has become more necessary. While Florida's history, both as a territory

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[10] Edward E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier Before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

and as a state are certainly unique, there have been many aspects of Florida's political history that have been unfortunately overlooked. Floridians in the antebellum period understood the impact that "King Cotton" and slavery had upon the South and the rest of the world, and although a majority of Floridians could never afford a single slave, let alone a rolling plantation with dozens of them, the shared experience of Florida's settlers in the years leading up to the Civil War helps to explain how the slaveholders and the yeomanry – in a state with some of the most disparate geography in the entire country – could band together and find common ground to protect slavery from a northern threat that to them was both abstract and frighteningly real. As such, antebellum Florida was shaped by a pervasive sense in all parts of Florida's population that the institution of slavery must be protected from northern influence at all costs, ultimately leading to the decision to secede in 1861.

* * *

Florida's emergence on the national political scene in 1845 did not come from a vacuum, of course. To fully understand the unique situation facing the new state requires the context of Florida's tumultuous frontier days. First settled in the early sixteenth century by the Spanish, Florida had always been considered both a locale of great strategic importance and a foreboding terrain where climate, wildlife, and land would make large-scale settlement dangerous and, oftentimes, prohibitively expensive. For example, although the western city of Pensacola boasted an impressive natural harbor, neither the Spanish nor the British built any port facilities during their combined three centuries of rule, and it

would be the late 1820s before the city would be capable of receiving large amounts of imports from the sea, let alone serve as an export hub for southern goods.[11] The Treaty of Paris in 1783 would return the Floridian lands to the Spanish after a time under British control; in fact, during the Revolutionary War, both portions of Florida (West and East, separated by the north-south flow of the Apalachicola River near the central panhandle) supported the British war effort. In the aftermath of the Revolution, the Spanish spent progressively less time in the territory, tired of dealing with constant Indian unrest and a sizable number of runaway slaves from the southern United States who would enter the Indian lands looking for protection and asylum.

It was this administrative indifference that first drove the United States to demand a series of reforms from the Spanish government in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Although there were nominal prohibitions from both the Spanish and American governments against American settlers entering the Florida territory and establishing domicile, a relatively substantial number of settlers disregarded the Spanish officials. By 1810, President James Madison would claim annexation rights to a portion of the western part of the territory as part of the Louisiana Purchase, and by the first skirmishes into the territory by General Andrew Jackson in 1817, the United States had laid claim to an even more substantial part of the Spanish territory – with very little pushback from Spanish

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[11] Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "Ante-Bellum Pensacola: 1821-1860," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3/4 (Jan.-Apr. 1959): 339.

officials who seemed less interested with each passing day in administrating an increasingly burdensome and expensive territory.

With the ever-increasing number of runaway slaves from the border regions of Georgia and Alabama and Indian attacks into those same American states, the American response came to a head in 1817 and 1818, as General Jackson led United States Army forces into Spanish territory in pursuit of Seminole Indians. The First Seminole War, as the series of skirmishes came to be known, further exacerbated the tension between the United States and Spain, who regarded Jackson's actions as an infringement on sovereign Spanish territory. At the same time that Jackson had entered the territory, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams had been in discussions with the Spanish government on the frameworks of a treaty that would permit the United States to purchase the territory from Spain, but Jackson's actions resulted in the suspension of talks by the Spanish delegation. Most disturbing were reports (later confirmed) that Jackson had executed two British subjects under suspicion of aiding and abetting the Seminole Indians. Alexander Arbuthnot, a Scottish trader, and Robert Ambrister, a former member of the Royal Marines, were both charged by a military tribunal in the Panhandle city of St. Marks, near the coast of Apalachicola Bay. Both men were sentenced to death by the tribunal; Arbuthnot by hanging, Ambrister by firing squad. The incident unsurprisingly riled the British, who believed that Jackson had far overstepped his bounds by executing two of their citizens outside the territorial claims of the United States. Although some in the United States publicly worried about the likelihood of reprisals from the British, cooler heads prevailed,

and Jackson's actions were ultimately used as a bargaining tool by Adams in convincing the

Spanish government to better police their territory and take the impetus for maintaining

the peace off of the United States, or to simply cede the territory to the United States and

absolve themselves of further responsibility.[12]

By 1819, the Spanish would decide that ceding Florida was in their best interest as

their already tenuous grasp on territories in North America continued to slip away. Aware

of the exceptional bargaining position the United States now occupied, Adams finalized the

deal that would officially give the Florida territory to the United States. The Adams-Onís

Treaty, brokered by the Secretary of State and the Spanish foreign minister, gave complete

control of the Florida territories as far west as the Mississippi River, encompassing lands

that would later become Florida and the southernmost parts of both Alabama and

Mississippi. By the time the Senate ratified the treaty in 1821, plans had already been set in

motion to incorporate Florida as an official American territory. Several changes were to be

made to the makeup of the territory, however. What was before two distinct regions of

Florida served by independent capitals (Pensacola in the west, St. Augustine in the east)

were to be merged into one contiguous territory, and the lands west of the Perdido River

were redistricted to Louisiana or the Mississippi Territory, delineating what remain the

borders of Florida.

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[12] John and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2004), 42, 45.

By the time Florida was made an official territory by act of Congress on March 30, 1822, Andrew Jackson had already served as the first military governor of the territory, only to resign on December 31, 1821, fearing Congressional censure for his previous military actions in Florida during the Spanish period. President James Monroe appointed a Kentuckian named William Pope Duval as the first civilian governor of the new territory. Duval would serve Florida well in his twelve years as territorial governor. Among the major moves taken by Duval early in his administration was the selection of a location in the Panhandle for the new territorial capital, Tallahassee. As of 1822, Florida was comprised of two counties: St. John's to the east and Escambia to the west, both of which reflected the geographic demarcation of the pre-territorial East and West Florida. Many residents of West Florida thought that the East Floridians, who were impressively organized and based out of St. Augustine, would hold undue sway in territorial politics, to say nothing of the treacherous journey between Pensacola and the east coast of the territory that the territorial politicians would need to make on a regular basis. The neutral site for the state capital would be located roughly equidistant from St. Augustine and Pensacola. The territorial government had already formed two new counties, Duval and Jackson, in July of 1822, and in May of 1823, the territorial council met to create two more counties. The eastern half of Florida would now be comprised of Duval to the north, St. John's in the center of the peninsula, and Monroe to the extreme south. Western Florida had Escambia in the far west and Jackson and Gadsden counties in the center of the Panhandle. Although the reports from the *Pensacola Gazette* commented on the ramshackle nature of the new

capital during the session of 1824, Florida could now boast a capital that both factions in the state could be happy with.[13]

The next decade of Florida's frontier history saw a growth in population – both white and slave – throughout the northern expanses of the territory. Issues remained, however, with both the location of Tallahassee and the districting of land in parts of western Florida. By 1832, members of the legislative delegations from East Florida were clamoring for the state capital to be moved further east, away from Tallahassee, as the elites of St. Augustine and the surrounding lands stood in envy to the relatively substantial gains made by Middle Florida in just the past ten years. One of East Florida's most prominent newspapers, The *Florida Herald*, ran a series of editorials that gave credence to the movement and pushed for an expeditious decision on the situation by the Legislative Council.[14] During the same ten years, there had been two distinct calls from residents in West Florida for the immediate annexation of their lands into the state of Alabama. Immediately following the annexation of the Florida territory into the United States, Alabama Senator John Williams called for the ceding of all lands west of the Apalachicola River into his state, and by 1826 a number of editorials in the *Pensacola Gazette* publicly pushed for the incorporation of West Florida into Alabama – although, it should be noted, that it is highly unlikely that more than a handful of well-connected individuals were

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[13] *Pensacola Gazette*, January 15, 1825.
[14] St. Augustine *Florida Herald*, February 16, 1832.

complicit in stoking the flames of annexation.[15] What these small-scale movements seemed to reflect was a Florida that was still considered a fractious frontier by many within and without the state, even with the real and sizable political, economic, and infrastructure gains being made by the Territorial Council and the rapid growth of Tallahassee.

At the same time, issues with the Seminole Indians had seemingly subsided in the wake of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823. Although the terms set by the United States in many ways benefited the tribe – a sizable tract land stretching from modern-day Ocala to south of Tampa Bay, military protection by the United States Army, and compensation totaling about $5,000 per year for twenty years – a number of small skirmishes continued to arise along the northern and western borders of the Seminole lands. For the rest of the 1820s, therefore, Florida settlers and the Seminole Indians found themselves in an uneasy peace, only occasionally punctuated by land or compensation issues. [16] This peace was short-lived, however, as now-President Jackson sough to implement 1830's Indian Removal Act by moving all of the tribes from the southern United States west of the Mississippi River, including the Seminoles in Florida. Tribal leaders who believed that the Act contradicted the terms negotiated in Moultrie Creek objected fervently to the uprooting of their lands. Several of the most prominent Seminole chiefs, including a young leader named Osceola, began a campaign of guerilla warfare against settlers throughout the central part of the territory. As tensions increased between the territory and the Seminoles,

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[15] Doherty, Jr., "Ante-Bellum Pensacola," 353-354.
[16] Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 63-64.

preparations for another war against the Indians began in earnest, although several

prominent territorial officials, including Governor Duval, only requested that the Seminoles

be removed from the areas in and around the capital city.[17]

The increasing uneasiness in the Florida territory culminated with the opening

incident of the Second Seminole War in late 1835. While leading two companies of soldiers

on a march from Fort Brooke, near Tampa, to Fort King (the site of modern-day Ocala) on

December 28, Major Francis L. Dade was intercepted by a band of Seminole Indians and he

and nearly 140 of his men were killed in what would become the worst Indian attack in

Florida's history. For the next two years, small groups of Seminoles engaged in both

guerilla-style warfare and pitched battles against the U.S. Army dispatched to the territory.

With little hope for peace, General Winfield Scott was named the commander of the forces

in Florida and tasked with rooting out the toughest Seminole elements, but his largely

ineffectual leadership led to a series of power changes that ended with General Thomas

Jesup taking control of the effort in December 1836. By the time General Walker Keith

Armistead took command of the war effort in May 1839, an estimated $20 million had

already been spent fighting the Seminoles, and it would take another three years of raids

and bribery to finally force all of the major Seminole tribal leaders to surrender and be sent

to the western reservations by January of 1842. In all, over 1,500 soldiers had been killed,

and thousands of white settlers and Seminoles alike had died during the seven years of

conflict. What was left was a Florida territory that, now free of the Seminole threat, could

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[17] William P. Duval to John C. Calhoun, July 29, 1824, Interior Department Indian Office.

begin the process of development and growth unhindered by internal or external impediments.

That is not to say that the only issue facing the Florida settlers was dealing with the Seminoles. In fact, any attention not given to the Indian problem in the late 1830s was likely focused on the economic crisis facing the United States (and by extension, the Florida territory) and the task of the Legislative Council to begin the process of producing a constitution in preparation for Florida's application for admission to the Union. The first half of the decade had been very good to the Florida territory, as land prices rose quickly and the soils of Middle Florida earned a well-deserved reputation as wonderfully conducive to cotton and staple crop production. Because of the unique economic situation afforded them, the bankers and lenders in the territory opened lines of credit for any planter willing to take on the risk of setting up residence, oftentimes backed by collateral that was vastly overvalued – and in some cases, nonexistent, especially in cases where slaves were placed as collateral.[18] These bankers and planters came to be known, rather cryptically, as "The Nucleus," and their political and economic influence in the territory was impressive, to say the very least. Boasting such luminaries in their ranks as Governor Duval, and later the third territorial governor of Florida, Richard Keith Call[19], the Nucleus could maintain a tight grasp on the monetary policy of the territory, to say nothing of the legislation necessary to

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[18] Larry Schweikart, "Southern Banks and Economic Growth in the Antebellum Period: A Reassessment," *Journal of Southern History* 53 (February 1987), 24.

[19] Governor Call was first appointed by President Jackson in 1836, and served until 1839. He would subsequently be reappointed by Presidents Harrison and Tyler in 1841 and would serve until 1844, the only man to serve as a governor of Florida (both territorial and as a state) in two non-consecutive terms.

keep regulations loose. Naturally, the incredible political and economic clout of the Nucleus, and by extension Middle Florida, did not sit well with the territorial residents in both West and East Florida, and especially those in St. Augustine, where most of the economic influence in the territory had originated from prior to the land boom of the early 1830s.

It was in these early bank days that territorial politics began to mirror the increasingly partisan tone of the rest of national politics. Party affiliation, if there was any to be found in the early days of the Florida territory, would largely revolve around one's views of the banking system and the role of Tallahassee in developing monetary policy. The more conservative contingent, usually found throughout the capital and the surrounding region and much more likely to be of the planter class, was stridently pro-bank in their ideology. Conversely, the more radical factions of the territory could be found in the western and eastern extremes of the state, and were decidedly anti-bank and anti-bond. Especially in the middle of the 1830s, these men were openly associated with the anti-bank fervor of the national Jacksonian Democrats. Almost by default, the pro-bank men would become much more closely associated with the Whig Party, although any sort of official affiliation would wait until well after the Constitutional Convention in 1838 to take hold in a substantive way.

As the Panic of 1837 gripped the nation, the economic situation in Florida became increasingly dire. In May and June of that year, Florida banks took the drastic step of cutting off payments of hard money throughout the territory, and there was a very real

sense that the outstanding bonds that had been so freely distributed in the previous years would be recalled and their payoffs distributed.[20] Concurrently, the new territorial governor R.K. Call had begun the push toward a statehood convention and the drafting of the first constitution of the territory. By the time the convention was finally convened in December of 1838 in the sleepy frontier town of St. Joseph, the economic depression had rallied the anti-bank forces throughout both East and West Florida against the undue economic influence wielded by the Nucleus in Middle Florida. With the twin population centers of Pensacola and St. Augustine allied against the bankers of Tallahassee, the extremities of the territory were able to produce an anti-bank majority of delegates to the convention.[21] With their new-found majority, the anti-bank faction elected similarly-minded East Floridian Robert Raymond Reid as the convention's president. The Nucleus' preferred candidate, formed territorial governor Duval, would be beaten by a single vote, setting into motion a constitutional convention that unequivocally favored the incipient Democratic party establishment in the territory. From this convention, the very foundations of Florida's antebellum politics would be created.

As the convention continued into 1839, the likelihood of a resolution approving Florida's application for statehood seemed less and less likely. The contentious debate between the pro- and anti-bank forces threatened to kill all momentum toward the Florida

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[20] *Pensacola Gazette*, May 13 & June 10, 1837.
[21] Dorothy Dodd, *Florida Becomes a State* (Tallahassee: Florida Centennial Commission, 1945), 44-47.

19

territory being accepted as a state.[22] The debate, however, clearly indicated who the major

players in Florida's politics would be over the next two decades. The anti-bank contingent,

led by Robert Reid, named one of the few anti-bank men from Middle Florida, James D.

Westcott, as the head of the highly influential banking committee, and the most ardent

spokesman for the position of most of the East Floridians was David Levy, a lawyer from St.

Augustine who would later be elected the territorial delegate to Congress in 1841 – largely

due to the notoriety he acquired for his role during the constitutional convention. The pro-

bank men countered with a rising star of their own: Edward C. Cabell, a Tallahassee-area

planter whose nuanced views on the importance of the Bank in Florida led to his

prominence in the Whig Party during the 1840s and early 1850s. These four men would

come to define antebellum politics in Florida, to say nothing of their influence on the

constitutional process.

 While the three-pronged attack of Levy, Westcott and Reid held court over the

constitutional proceedings surrounding the bank and the economic state of the territory, it

was Cabell and the Middle Florida planters that came to define the status of slavery

throughout the territory and the place of the peculiar institution in the state constitution.

Since Tallahassee boasted some of the most fertile lands in the entire territory, many of the

planters that moved to Florida during the 1830s had moved into the Tallahassee region

and had brought their money and political acumen with them. Florida's constitution would

prohibit the state from ever introducing legislation that would have allowed for wholesale

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[22] Ibid., 59-60.

emancipation of slaves, and unlike many of the other southern states, Florida's constitution

allowed for representation in both chambers of the State Congress that included the

apportionment of three-fifths of the number of slaves – the same federal clause found in the

U.S. Constitution. In one fell swoop, the planters had effectively invalidated the main

reasoning behind the ideology of the anti-bank members of the convention; with the higher

representation rates throughout Middle Florida, the planters of Tallahassee could set both

the political and economic agendas in the state throughout the antebellum period.

The constitutional convention would draw to a close in January of 1839 with a

debate over whether or not the new constitution – drafted in just over five weeks – should

be released to the voters of Florida for a public referendum. After it was finally decided to

allow the constitution to come to a vote in May of 1839, the voters of Florida responded

with mixed feelings. Of the nearly 8,000 votes cast in regard to the new constitution, only

51 percent were in favor of immediate ratification.[23] While Middle and South Florida voted

overwhelmingly in favor of the new constitution (approximately 75 percent in both

regions), East and West Florida remained largely opposed to ratification. East Floridians

were especially reticent to accept the constitution, as just 27 percent of the votes cast

expressed a desire for ratification. Much of this resistance was due to the economic

situation in East Florida in the late 1830s, as the region had been suffering from an

economic depression for most of the decade – well before the economic panic had made

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[23] Calculated from "Statement of the Votes for and Against the Constitution," 10 February 1841; in Dodd, *Florida Becomes a State*, 376-378.

itself known in Tallahassee. The increased expenditures that would come with statehood would be an immense financial strain on East Florida, and the keen knowledge that continuing hard economic times in the eastern part of the territory would make them more dependent on the hated Middle Florida planters and bankers for financial solvency. Regardless of the sentiments of a substantial minority of Floridians – sentiments that remained all the way until the very eve of statehood in 1845 – the constitution had passed public muster and was declared ratified by convention president (and soon-to-be territorial governor) Reid in October of 1839.[24]

Florida would find itself in a holding pattern for the next several years, as the precedent set by the Missouri Compromise of 1820 made the entrance of a slave state without a corresponding free state a political minefield. In the interim, the anti-bank men of East and West Florida found themselves increasingly organized, and in the aftermath of the St. Joseph's convention, began to call themselves "Democrats" and started the process of building a party apparatus that would give them a clear leg up on their pro-bank "Whig" competition once statehood was approved. David Levy's election as the territorial delegate to Congress mirrored the rise of the Democratic influence in the territory, although territorial politics would not be completely controlled by the anti-bank men: the election of Whig William Henry Harrison to the presidency in 1840 likely meant a changing of the territorial governor as well, and in 1841, Harrison – in one of the few decisions he made

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[24] St. Augustine *News*, February 8, 1845; "Proclamation of President of the Constitutional Convention," October 21, 1839, in Dodd, *Florida Becomes a State*, 340.

during his month in office – reappointed R.K. Call as territorial governor. Call, who had originally been appointed by Jackson in 1836, had fallen out of favor with Van Buren and was replaced in 1839. His party allegiance now decidedly Whig, Call made a triumphant return to Tallahassee. While his Whigs would take control of the territorial council in 1842 and 1843, Call was never able to reconcile his previous political affiliations with the new Whig party in Florida, and this factionalism only helped to serve the Democrats, who saw their opportunity to dominate state politics as soon as Florida's application for statehood was approved by Congress. Luckily for them, statehood was just around the corner.

CHAPTER TWO: ONE STATE, TWO PARTIES – 1845-1850

On the morning of Monday, March 3, 1845, nearly three months into the second session of the 28th Congress of the United States and on the final day of his presidency, John Tyler signed the bill that approved statehood for the territories of Iowa and Florida. Now the twenty-seventh state in the Union, Florida had been preparing for admission for nearly six years since the conclusion of the St. Joseph's convention. Both the Democratic and Whig parties had foundations in place to begin the process of electing Florida's first governor and representative, as well as the inaugural Florida State House and Senate classes. President Tyler's appointment of Democrat John Branch to the post of territorial governor, along with sizable gains during the previous territorial council elections, meant that the Democrats were assured of holding nearly all major positions of power during the transition into statehood. The ideological differences between the Democrats and the Whigs would come to define the first half of Florida's antebellum history. All the while, the demographics of the young state were changing as well, with explosive population growth and one of the highest concentrations of slaves and slaveholders in the entire South. By 1850, the parties were starkly delineated on most counts, not the least of which was their stances on the economy and monetary policy in a state still recovering from the depression of the late 1830s. Ultimately, the tumult surrounding the Compromise of 1850 and the deep partisan divides throughout national politics affected the politics of Florida in ways few in the country could have envisioned.

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The first party conventions held after statehood highlighted the differences between the Democrats and Whigs in 1845. The Democrats quickly and efficiently selected their slate of candidates for the state offices, offering William Moseley as their choice for governor and selecting David Levy Yulee – having added the surname upon his conversion from Judaism to Christianity – as their candidate for representative. On the other hand, the Whigs reluctantly nominated Richard K. Call for governor and a lawyer from eastern Florida named Benjamin Putnam as the representative candidate, all just a month before the special election in May 1845.[1] The campaigns were little more than laundry lists of past wrongdoings, as the Democrats pressed the Whig candidates on their ties to the same banks that had helped to exacerbate the economic depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s.[2] The Whigs could only weakly respond that the Democrats were political opportunists whose sole concern was dictating to the voters what was best for them. Clearly, the voters felt that the Democrats were in better shape to lead the state, as the May 26 returns came back overwhelmingly for the Democrats. In the gubernatorial election between the Democrat Moseley and the Whig Call, Moseley took nearly 57 percent of the vote, carrying all but five of Florida's twenty-five counties.[3] While Call did well in the major Middle Florida counties of Leon, Jackson, and Gadsden, his lack of support throughout the rest of the state emphasized the disconnect between the planter class of Tallahassee and the surrounding area and the rest of Florida. The same trend continued in the U.S. House

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[1] Pensacola *Gazette*, May 3, 1845.
[2] Ibid.
[3] The final numbers gave Moseley a 3,391 to 2,561 margin of victory (830 votes of 5,592 cast).

election, where Yulee defeated his Whig counterpart by an impressive 1,235 votes, 3,608 to 2,373. The twenty percent margin of victory was among the largest in the state, and as in the gubernatorial election, Middle Florida went heavily for the Whigs while the Democrats took the remainder of the state.[4]

Because the Whigs showed so poorly in the earliest round of state elections, both chambers of the state Congress went to the Democrats, who won 11 of the 17 Senate positions and three-quarters of the forty state House districts. This overwhelming Democratic victory was a referendum on the state of Whig politics in Florida. Although the Whigs had won elections during the territorial period and could claim some heavyweights in their ranks, such as R.K. Call and Edward Cabell, their lack of political cohesion seemed to be a major obstacle very early in the state's history. Even with the backing of the planter class in Middle Florida, the Whigs were still the underdogs in nearly all of the election races in the state, since the Democrats had better organization in the far reaches of the state.[5] It did not help the political situation for the Whigs when the Democratic-controlled state Senate chose two of their own to represent Florida in the U.S. Senate in October 1845. There was little doubt that the fame and notoriety earned by David Levy Yulee and James Westcott during the constitutional convention in 1838 and 1839 would be advantageous once Florida became a state. Yulee had already been elected as a representative, and gladly

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[4] Election data culled from returns printed in St. Augustine *Florida Herald*, May 20, 1845.
[5] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida*, 18.

took the opportunity to serve as one of Florida's initial senators.[6] Westcott, a strident anti-

bank man whose work as head of the banking committee in St. Joseph set the tone for the

rest of the convention, would take Florida's second seat as a Class 3 senator. With the

exception of the House seat vacated by Yulee's appointment to the Senate, the Democrats of

Florida held every major national and state political position, and were clearly prepared to

further consolidate their political gains in the coming elections. The political outlook for the

Florida Whigs was bleak, and would look even worse after a special election in October to

fill Florida's vacant House seat.

After their defeat in May, the Whigs were prepared to front a candidate with

considerably more general election appeal than Benjamin Putnam. An East Florida Whig,

Putnam was meant to appeal to voters outside of Middle Florida, but as the May 1845

election clearly showed, the only part of the state that went with any regularity to the

Whigs was Tallahassee and the surrounding counties. To remedy this situation, the Whigs

nominated Edward Cabell, who at this point was both the most well-known and most liked

Whig politician in the state. Even the Pensacola *Gazette*, a strong Whig organ that had

initially called for the party to sit out this round of state elections, threw their support

behind the young candidate, calling him their only real hope to restore "the good old

conservative cause of the Whigs."[7] The Democrats countered with a former legislator from

the territorial days, William H. Brockenbrough and a new political strategy. Because of

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[6] It should also be mentioned that Yulee was the first Jewish man elected to the U.S. Senate, although by this point in his political career, he had converted to Christianity.
[7] *Pensacola Gazette*, August 16, 1845.

Cabell's relatively young age (just twenty-nine in 1845), the Democrats could not feasibly tie him to bank issues dating back in the 1830s, as they could with some of the older-guard Whig politicians (most notably Call). The election would therefore hinge on the strengths of the party organizations and the turnout of voters in the two specific areas of the state: the planters of Middle Florida would have to come out in full force to support Cabell, and hope that the huge gains made by the Democrats in the preceding elections led to a sense of complacency in Pensacola and St. Augustine.

As the initial returns came back from the special election on October 6, the Whigs had every reason to be optimistic. The race was considerably closer than anyone in the state could have predicted, and the final tally sent to Secretary of State James T. Archer indicated that Cabell had won by the slimmest of margins. Of 4,995 votes cast, Cabell beat Brockenbrough by just 51, 2,523 to 2,472. Governor Moseley duly signed off on the Secretary's report and Cabell was commissioned as a U.S. representative. Immediately following the election, however, the Democrats who had backed Brockenbrough began a loud and vociferous campaign to nullify Cabell's electoral win and replace him in the U.S. House with Brockenbrough, who they thought had actually won a majority of the votes because a number of precincts had not fully reported their vote totals. A statewide election committee recommended a recount of the votes, and when Brockenbrough gained more than 150 votes by the conclusion of the recount, the House of Representatives recommended that Cabell be stricken of his commission and that Brockenbrough be seated

in his stead.[8] The Whigs had seen their first chance at national political influence taken from them as quickly as it had been earned, and Cabell and the party reluctantly took a step back and lamented the seemingly impenetrable Democratic hegemony over Florida politics. The end of the Whig party in Florida seemed near.

But the unique timing of the special election vis-à-vis the planned Congressional election of October 1846 meant that the issues of 1845 stayed fresh in the minds of voters in the interim period. Infuriated by a situation that he felt reflected the cronyism of the Democratic party, Cabell ran a relentless, year-long campaign to win the seat for the Whigs. Subsequently, Edward Cabell would do more in the twelve months leading up to the election to solidify the Whig party establishment in Florida than any Whig politician had done previously, or would do for the remainder of the antebellum period. Cabell transformed himself from a Tallahassee planter and lawyer to perhaps the most important and influential politician in the entire state. What made Cabell so influential was his realization that the economic situation in Florida – which had not appreciably improved throughout the first half of the 1840s – could be instrumental in moving the Florida electorate toward the more conservative ideology of the Middle Florida Whigs. Cabell argued around the state that Democratic economic policies were, at their core, fiscally irresponsible and that mounting debts and diminishing tax returns in Tallahassee were threatening to plunge Florida back into another economic recession, while the rest of the

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[8] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida*, 19.

South saw increasing returns on cotton exports.[9] Cabell defined the political discourse in 1846 within the context of the economy – not slavery, nor southern liberty -- and with his impressive turnaround, reset the fortunes for the Whigs in Florida as well. For the plantation owner and the yeoman farmer alike, a thriving economy was far more important in maintaining the stability of slavery; Cabell and his Whig counterparts knew that keeping Florida's economy sound brightened the future prospects of the party.[10] For many in the state, Cabell had become the epitome of the upstanding Florida politician; the Palatka *Whig Banner*, one of the few party papers in East Florida, called Cabell "a worthy gentleman, and an honest, open, upright Whig politician."[11]

The 1846 election would prove to be the turning point for the "worthy gentleman" and the Florida Whigs. Cabell would face Democrat Hiram William Kain, a little-known state senator from the coastal Panhandle town of Apalachicola. The Democrats, acutely aware of how a Brockenbrough campaign would look throughout Middle Florida, decided against running the incumbent and hoped that most voters would simply gravitate toward any Democratic candidate, regardless of background. Although the election on October 5 was still exceptionally close – Cabell pulled out his second electoral victory by just 103 of the 5,877 votes cast – the "legitimate" victory for the Whigs indicated that the party was ready and able to contest the Democrats in elections across the state. The Whigs would gain an additional seat in the Senate and an impressive seven additional seats in the lower

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[9] *Niles' Weekly Register*, December 5, 1846.
[10] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 21.
[11] Palatka *Whig Banner*, July 7, 1846.

house of the state Congress.[12] The Democratic establishment now had to concern

themselves with real Whig influence in Florida's politics, and Cabell's vote gains in the

western and eastern parts of Florida meant that Whig ideology was beginning to resonate

in locales that Democrats had dominated just a year prior. Most importantly, the

population increases in the major cities – Tallahassee, Pensacola, and St. Augustine – meant

that some of the constitutional prohibitions placed on the creation of corporations and

bank charters were now antagonistic to any sort of real economic growth in the young

state. Of course, the economic portions of the constitution were drafted and quickly

approved by the Democratic-leaning majority of anti-bank men during the St. Joseph

convention, and Florida voters were not soon to forget who owned the economic recession.

It certainly did not help the Democratic cause in Florida when Senator Yulee, having been

in office no more than a month, introduced a wide-ranging resolution that called for the

immediate annexation of Cuba, much to the dismay of Whigs in Florida who had already

opposed the expansionist bent of the Polk Administration.[13]

  The increasingly conservative Whigs provided a stark juxtaposition to the

progressively radical Democrats, and the voting population continued to take notice. The

1847-1848 election cycle would provide a number of watershed moments for the Whigs,

and across the board the party would chip away at the Democratic foundation. Increased

public frustration with Democratic policies meant that the Whigs had to be prepared to

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[12] St. Augustine *News*, November 13, 1846.
[13] *Pensacola Gazette*, January 10, 1846.

step into the power vacuum, and uplifted by Cabell's victory in 1846, the Whigs were more than capable of launching a series of impressive electoral attacks on the opposition. By the time the dust had settled from the 1847 state elections in October, the Whigs had taken control of both the chambers of the Florida Congress by substantive margins, their first legislative majorities in Florida's history.[14] With three major elections scheduled for 1848 – representative, governor and president – the Whigs were in line to further consolidate their political gains. Their majority in the Senate gave them the votes necessary to send the first Whig senator to Washington. Jackson Morton, who had served numerous roles in the territorial government, including president of the Legislative Council and a delegate to the St. Joseph convention, would replace the incumbent Democrat James Westcott. Morton was a prominent businessman from Pensacola whose Whig credentials were strong and brought with him the support of West Florida, a region that had slowly – but surely – been moving politically closer to the Whigs. Unfortunately, the choice of a West Floridian upset many Whigs in the eastern half of the state, who continued to feel slighted by their western and Middle Florida counterparts.[15] Although the Whigs were able to pull together and vote through Morton in January of 1849, there were certainly some cracks in the strong façade that Cabell and the Whig gains of the previous several years had helped to create.

The situation was much brighter for Representative Cabell, who ran for reelection to his House seat in October 1848. The Democrats nominated a member of the old guard,

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[14] Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, October 19, 1847.
[15] Tallahassee *Floridian Sentinel*, December 9, 1848.

former territorial governor William Duval, as their candidate for the House election, but few political observers in Florida gave Duval any sort of chance against the powerhouse Cabell. The election returns reflected this sentiment, as Cabell defeated the venerable Duval by a robust (for Florida, at least) 577 votes. Nearly 8,200 votes were cast statewide in the election that made Cabell the most important politician in all of Florida. What made Cabell stand out from the rest of the political establishment was not just his youth, but that no Floridian had come to so completely represent his party and ideology as Edward Cabell. In fact, the Marianna-based *Florida Whig* asserted that Cabell's influence throughout the state had convinced the Democrats to nominate candidates that would be most palatable to the Whig majority.[16] In the unique position of serving as the only directly elected national representative from Florida, Cabell could also claim to be the representative of a majority of the Florida electorate, and therefore added legitimacy to the Whig rise to power.

The conservative shift of the electorate was mirrored in the gubernatorial election as well. The Whigs of all three regions of Florida agreed to nominate Thomas Brown, an impressively experienced Tallahassee planter and businessman who had served in the territorial and state legislatures. Most tellingly, Brown was also one of the original members of the Nucleus and had very strong associations with the original Union Bank during the territorial days. In 1845, Brown's candidacy would have been a non-starter against the anti-bank Democrats, but three years later he was seen as one of the safest bets

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[16] Marianna *Florida Whig*, April 5, 1848.

in the Whig field.[17]His Democratic opponent, William Bailey, had been approached by the

Whigs as recently as 1845 to serve as their candidate for governor, and his ideology

paralleled the Middle Florida planter class that he had been part of for many years.[18] With

little substantive difference between the gubernatorial candidates, the campaigns were

much less contentious than the race between Cabell and Duval, two political heavyweights

with long Floridian histories. Brown was clearly the more accomplished candidate, and

even with his old bank ties was able to pull more than fifty-two percent of the votes in

1848, beating Bailey by 399 votes.[19] Compared to the initial gubernatorial election in 1845,

where they had won just a fifth of Florida's counties, the Whigs now carried a majority (14

of 27 counties), including all of the large slaveholding counties in Middle Florida and Duval

County in East Florida, home of the growing port town of Jacksonville.

Completing the Whig trifecta of election victories in 1848, presidential candidate

Zachary Taylor took the state in commanding fashion, winning Florida with over fifty-eight

percent of the popular vote over Michigan Democrat Lewis Cass. Taylor's 1,285 vote

margin of victory over Cass was the largest Whig victory in Florida in 1848, and capped

what would be the most successful election cycle the Whigs would enjoy during the

antebellum period. Early in the nominating process, many Whigs from West Florida and

older Whigs from Middle Florida had preferred Henry Clay as the Whig presidential

candidate, but the increasingly national popularity of Gen. Taylor, as well as the voting

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[17] Ibid., May 3, 1848.
[18] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 25.
[19] The final returns gave 4,145 votes to Brown and 3,746 votes to Bailey.

mass of most of Middle and East Florida, had helped to swing a majority of Whig support to

him during the summer. Taylor's seeming detachment from party politics was extremely

attractive to many Whigs, and the high likelihood of him carrying both Whig and Democrat

voters in the fall meant a surefire Whig victory. The Marianna *Florida Whig* voiced the

concerns Floridians had with Democrats: the party had a deep and abiding "lust for

conquest and annexation," and the conservatism of Taylor became his biggest strength with

the electorate.[20] By the time of the November election, Taylor enjoyed Whig support

everywhere in Florida, and the elections returns from the county level reflect as much. In

the middle Panhandle, Taylor consistently polled higher than sixty percent, and more than

eighty percent of the voters in Holmes county in the western panhandle voted for the Whig

candidate. Generally, Taylor dominated in the Panhandle and in eastern Florida, but most

counties south of St. Augustine went to Cass. The heavy turnout in the national elections

certainly seemed to indicate that the Florida electorate was becoming much more deeply

invested in the nation-level issues of the time, at the expense of more local politics. Both the

House and presidential elections pulled higher voter turnout than the gubernatorial

election, a trend that would continue throughout the rest of the antebellum period.

     What the election numbers also supported was the rise of the planter class as the

principal voting bloc in the state. While the number of slaveholders was fewer than those

yeoman farmers and businessman who did not own any slaves, their immense political

clout was felt throughout Middle Florida. The major centers of Whig power in Middle

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[20] Marianna *Florida Whig*, July 15, 1848.

Florida – Leon, Gadsden and Jackson counties, and the cities of Tallahassee, Quincy and Marianna, respectively – were, unsurprisingly, those counties in the state with the highest number of slaveholders, as well as comprising nearly a third of Florida's population by the 1850 census.[21] These same three counties also had slave populations of at least fifty percent of the total population, and in Leon County more than seventy percent of all persons in the Tallahassee area were slaves. What heralded the increase in Whig support in East Florida was a simultaneous increase in the number of slaves and the percentage of slaves to the total population in the eastern counties. The three counties of any consequence, Nassau, Duval and St. John's, all had sizable slave populations (Duval's 2,106 slaves was the highest number outside of the immediate Tallahassee area) and conversely, slaves made up at least forty percent of the population between Jacksonville and St. Augustine. The census numbers in both 1840 (while Florida was still a territory) and 1850 provide the quantitative foundation for explaining why the Whigs were able to make enormous electoral gains in such a short amount of time. Qualitatively, the conservative state of Whig politics meant favorable economic policies toward slaveholders, and with ever-increasing cotton profits and an influx of settlers and slaves from outside the state, doing as little as possible politically to upset the fragile balance made for excellent electoral returns.

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[21] In the 1850 census, Leon County had a population of 11,442; Gadsden County, 8,784; and Jackson County, 6,639, for a population total of 26,865 out of 87,445 in the entire state. U.S. Census Bureau. *The 1850 U.S. Census*.

The political upheaval between 1845 and 1848 can be explained not necessarily by massive changes in ideology; on the contrary, both parties had largely stayed true to the political points they had laid out during the territorial period. The change can be traced to the nonslaveholders throughout the state who realized how important business interests were at the time in maintaining slavery and their way of life. Although the farmers and businessmen did not directly participate in holding slaves themselves, the necessity of the peculiar institution in maintaining this way of life permeated their political decisions more and more. This time, Florida voters aligned themselves with the Whigs and their economic-centered ideology as the best way to maintain this *status quo*. On top of beginning the process of developing a distinctive Florida identity, whether political or cultural, there was also a transition toward more policies that protected slavery. Even if many Floridians did not own slaves, they were all invested in the slave society.

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Florida's first census as a state in 1850 revealed a booming population, increasing slave numbers, and a consistent influx of new settlers into the border regions of the Panhandle from Georgia and Alabama in particular. Florida's population of 87,445 was the smallest state population in the Union, but in the ten years since the 1840 census, Florida's population had grown by more than sixty percent, from 54,477. Most of the population centers were found in the Panhandle, and in Middle Florida specifically. Leon and Gadsden counties paced the rest of the state, but there was also impressive growth throughout East Florida. Marion County, created from south Alachua county and seated by the town of

Ocala, was already on par with Escambia and St. John's, although Pensacola and St. Augustine were two of the most established cities in all of Florida, if not the entire South. These areas of highest population growth were also among the best planting areas in the state. The more moderate climate of northern Florida better suited the growth of cotton and other staple crops, and the limestone ridge that ran like a backbone down the state extended the fertile, clay-based soils of northern Florida farther south into the peninsula.[22] The vast majority of the major plantations in the state (those with thirty or more slaves) could be found along this "black belt" of Florida, which stretched from the Choctawhatchee River west of Tallahassee to the outskirts of Jacksonville in the east, and traveled as far south as the sparsely-populated Hillsborough county, south of Ocala.[23] Conversely, the southern expanses of the state were dominated by loose, sandy soils that made any sort of cotton growing nearly impossible, and the areas that could support such planting , such as some of the wetlands found in the Everglades, were so far removed from the rest of the state that setting up a plantation and developing an efficient means of getting crops to market became prohibitively expensive – and dangerous.[24]

Although Florida lacked the absolute population numbers of the rest of the South, there was no doubt that Florida was a slave state, through and through. The state ranked fourth in the South in percentage of slaves as part of the total population with 44.9 percent,

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[22] Edward A. Fernald, *Atlas of Florida* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Foundation, 1981), 25.
[23] Ibid., 136. Few plantations were ever built this far south, largely a function of the increasingly swampy surrounding lands and serious issues with irrigation and insect, especially mosquitoes.
[24] Ibid., 62.

trailing only South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana. Of the 39,310 slaves counted in the

1850 census, more than twenty percent resided in Leon County alone (more than 8,200 of

Leon's 11,400 residents were slaves, a staggering seventy-two percent). Three additional

counties – Jefferson, Gadsden and Jackson – had slave majorities, and five more counties

throughout the state were higher than forty percent. Naturally, the most valuable farms

and plantations were found in the slave regions. Based on the cash value of farms per

capita, Leon county was unsurprisingly the wealthiest in the state, at $153 per person (over

$1.7 million total), in line with the average per capita farm value in Virginia and Louisiana.

The numbers also support the rise of Marion county as a real center of planter culture in

eastern and southern Florida, boasting a per capita value of $103 (nearly $350,000 total).

Unsurprisingly, the least valuable farms could be found in the southernmost reaches of the

peninsula, where Monroe County "led" with a paltry $1.66 per capita. The outlier in the

state was Nassau County, where more than fifty percent of the population was slave, but

mustered just $4 per capita in farm value. Florida had the lowest per capita value of any of

the southern states, and outpaced only California and the Minnesota territory. In total, the

1850 census recorded $6.32 million in aggregate farm value, or $72 per person in the

state.[25]

Like all of the other slave states, Florida did have a number of free blacks living

inside state lines in 1850. In all, there were 932 free blacks in Florida, of which 375 (more

[25] All information compiled using the aggregate cash value for farms in a county; from United States Census Bureau, *The 1850 U.S. Census*.

than forty percent) lived in Escambia county alone, and free blacks made up more than eight percent of the population in Pensacola. Compared to the rest of the South, Florida was in the middle of the pack in percentage of the total population identified as free blacks. Just a fraction more than one percent of Florida's population was free black, considerably lower than the three percent found in Virginia and Louisiana, but far more than the sub-0.2 percent ratios in Texas and Mississippi. Incredibly, Florida had more free blacks than Mississippi (932 to 930), although Mississippi's total population was nearly seven times larger. The concentration of so many free blacks in Escambia County can be attributed to Pensacola's long history – especially the Spanish influence in the 18th and early 19th centuries – and relative distance from much of the planter culture of the rest of West and Middle Florida. Only thirty percent of the population of Escambia County had been born out of state, so it is very likely that the free blacks were descendants of other free blacks who had made Pensacola their home in the days of Spanish rule. With the ratification of the St. Joseph's constitution in 1839 came increased prohibitions against emancipation of slaves in the state, so the chance that the free black population of Escambia was composed of recently manumitted slaves is very low.

It was the out-of-state population that had slowly helped to define Florida's identity in the early antebellum period. Approximately twenty-eight percent of Florida's population had been born out of the state, but the concentrations were considerably higher in two specific areas. The highest concentrations, in excess of forty-five percent, were found in the western Panhandle directly adjacent to the Alabama border. The long-standing history

between West Florida and Alabama helps to explain the elevated numbers, as the influx of Alabamian Whigs into West Florida helped to tip the political scales in favor of their Florida Whig counterparts. Although the Whigs had consistently done well in Holmes, Santa Rosa and Calhoun counties, their majorities increased significantly from 1845 to 1850, and this expansion of Whig power can be directly attributed to the Alabama settlers. The second area in Florida that saw a high concentration of out-of-state settlers was East Florida. With the premier growing areas around Tallahassee and throughout Middle Florida already accounted for, new settlers would have to move south. The numbers for Alachua, Marion, Hillsborough and Levy counties bear out this point. Between 1840 and 1850, both the populations of whites and slaves increased dramatically in these areas, as did the number of residents born out of state. Since there were no sizable shifts in the demographics of Middle Florida, the population boom of East Florida could be attributed to a migration southward of Georgia planters from the border regions. Florida's geography would have formed a natural conduit for the settlers, as well: with Middle Florida thoroughly settled and the sandy soils of St. John's and Orange counties unsuitable for cotton growth, the spine of the Florida peninsula. Once again, the shining example of this explosive growth was found in Marion County, where ten years had taken an economic depressed area better known for being a central battle line during the Seminole Wars and transforming it into the hub of planter culture in eastern and southern Florida. For Florida, the 1850 census, all trends pointed upward for the state population. Politically, however, the Whigs would soon face an existential crisis over the very fate of the Union.

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The newly elected Whig governor Thomas Brown rose to the lectern in the Hall of

Representatives in Tallahassee on January 13, 1849, to deliver his inaugural address in a

national political climate that was becoming more polarized by the day. The aftermath of

the Mexican-American war had left American politics in a state of disarray, as northern and

southern interests debated endlessly on the status of the territories acquired during the

conflict. Congressman David Wilmot, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, had introduced

legislation, the eponymous Wilmot Proviso, in 1846 that would have dictated that slavery

would be banned in any and all territory acquired from Mexico, whether during the war or

afterward. Southern politicians balked at the idea, especially Democrats who felt that the

northern insistence on legislating slavery in new territories severely curtailed the political

power of the South.[26] Senator John C. Calhoun, the firebrand from South Carolina, released

his "Southern Address" in 1849, demanding that any abolitionist sentiment should be

tamped down immediately and that slavery should not, under any circumstance, be

restricted in the new territories. Coupled with a small but vocal faction of the northern

Whig party that increasingly supported abolitionist and "Free Soil" ideologies, the

discourse in Washington had taken a turn for the worse. Governor Brown was acutely

aware of the stakes at hand when he began his address.

"I believe that the Northern fanatics have done much to weaken the attachment and

reverence of the people for the Union," the governor declared, "but I fear as much has been

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[26] Cooper, *The South and the Politics of Slavery,* 233-234.

done by Southern demagogues as Northern fanatics."[27] Even as concepts such as "disunion"

and "dissolution" reentered the southern lexicon for the first time since the Nullification

Crisis of the 1832 and 1833, Brown and the Florida Whigs represented a largely cohesive

group that refused to believe that the Union should be threatened by differences over

slavery. Naturally, the "southern demagogues" referenced by Brown in his address

included Calhoun, who had consistently pushed a view of party politics and slavery in the

Senate that relatively few would overtly agree with but that even fewer could ignore. The

more conservative Whigs of Florida had refused to sign off on Calhoun's "Southern

Address", as both Representative Cabell and Senator Westcott stood in strong opposition to

the sentiments expressed by Calhoun and his supporters in Congress.[28] There was an

implicit understanding that slavery, while the lifeblood of their main voting bloc and the

means by which many Whig politicians in the South had made their livelihoods, was a

remarkably contentious issue that required careful and measured reactions. For these

conservatives, any agitation on slavery was dangerous for both agrarian and business

interest in the state.[29]

It was the specter of secession and dissolution that most bothered the Whigs of

Florida. Representative Cabell was ardent in his opposition to the Southern Address, but

his stance that the rights of the southern states should not be infringed upon resonated

with many in the state. It was the singular point of secession that the Whigs were most

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[27] Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, January 16, 1849.
[28] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 35.
[29] Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, February 20, 1849.

adamantly opposed to, as politician like Cabell saw the process of dissolving the Union as impractical and unachievable without ripping the very fabric of the Union apart.[30] There were some in Florida, however, who took Cabell to task for not fully supporting Calhoun's views. An increasingly radical faction of the Democratic party, who could be classified among the state's first "southern nationalists", railed against the representative by passing resolutions in Madison and Gadsden counties (both Whig strongholds) condemning Cabell for his stance on the slavery issue. More indicative of the opinions of the voting population was the *Florida Republican*, a Whig paper in Jacksonville. In referring to the idea of secession, the paper's editorial stated that "[i]t is no remedy. It will kill, not cure the patient."[31]

The discussion of secession and state's rights came to a first peak in June of 1850. For months, the most ardent Democratic supporters of John Calhoun had pushed for a convention of southern states to hammer out and ratify a cohesive platform that would both define the demands of the more radical southern elements and balance the northern abolitionist threat that some in the South were convinced was about to infiltrate the slave states. Among these increasingly radical Democrats was none other than Senator Yulee, who had contacted Calhoun in late 1849 with the idea of a southern convention and pledged Florida's support in the endeavor. Yulee may have read into the actions of the Florida general assembly when they passed a resolution indicating that Florida would not

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[30] Jacksonville *Florida Republican*, February 1, 1849.
[31] Ibid., June 14, 1849.

recognize any law that prohibited slavery in the Mexican territories. This reply to the

possible passing of the Wilmot Proviso was accompanied by a large number of Whig

objections to the language of the resolution, and they pledged their support toward

unionism. Nevertheless, as the Convention drew nearer, Governor Brown refused to make a

public statement regarding Nashville, although the Whig organs in Tallahassee and

throughout East Florida were vehement in their protestations against the Convention,

hoping that the convention be "strangled in its birth than lend it countenance" if the

delegates intended to pursue disunionist aims, and that the convention should therefore be

"deprecated and detested."[32]

Concurrently, the "Great Compromiser" Henry Clay had returned to the Senate

chamber to develop legislation that would allow for a lessening of the sectional tensions

racking the Union. Upon entering the intensely partisan situation, Clay's first compromise

measures were met with disdain from both extremes of the political spectrum in Florida, as

radical Democrats saw the Compromise as a "surrender bill", and the Whig *Florida*

Republican lamented that Clay's proposals had not gone far enough to back up the radicals

from the brink of disunion. What made the political debate most belligerent was the

influence, yet again, of Calhoun. While his influence was felt heavily throughout the Senate

deliberations on Clay's proposals, Calhoun's simultaneous push for the Southern

Convention meant that the radicals' aims were crystal clear: as a Whig paper wrote,

Calhoun's quest for "southern rights" would not be satiated until he heard the "clang of

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[32] Ibid., January 24, 1850.

arms and din of conflict over the fragments of a broken Union."[33] But the call for disunion would quickly slip away, especially after an impassioned speech from Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster in early march that soundly condemned both the northern abolitionists and the southern secessionists, loudly calling for the preservation of the Union. Representative Cabell showed support for the work of both Webster and Henry Clay in defusing the sectional tension, commenting that the men had acted "nobly toward the country" in their crusade for a viable political compromise.[34] The Whig press also resounded in support for Clay and Webster's political stance, as Jacksonville's *Florida Republican* characterized their actions as a "harbinger of hope."[35]

With Clay's compromise framework more likely to pass muster in both chambers of Congress by the day, the opening of the Nashville Convention on June 3 was met with less fanfare and much less sectional tension that would have been the case just six months prior. In January, the trio of Cabell, Yulee and Morton had sent a joint letter to Governor Brown asking for Florida's participation in Nashville, under the auspices that a united southern front would serve the region's best interest when dealing with the possibility of northern encroachment upon southern liberties. Brown rebuffed the congressional delegation with a pointed response, declaring that the convention in Nashville would be a thinly veiled attempt at legislated revolution, "directly against the spirit if not the letter of

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[33] Jacksonville *Florida Republican,* April 11, 1850.
[34] Ibid., April 25, 1850.
[35] Ibid., March 21, 1850.

the Constitution of the United States."[36] Brown spoke to the ever-increasing rhetoric between the northern and southern factions of both parties, but expressed his belief that the United States would be fully capable of resisting the secessionist tide. While the Whig party organs around the state were uniformly in favor of Brown's stance, the Democratic press was relentless in their opposition to the governor's position. One of Brown's most strident critics was actually a member of his own party, Senator Jackson Morton. The senator was adamant that the Nashville Convention could provide a means to save the Union from sectionalism (in some roundabout way), and if not, would be capable of at least saving the southern way of life. The governor responded with one of the most devastating rejoinders of the entire exchange, stating that he regretted Morton's lack of experience in the public arena and hoped that the senator would come to regret his decision upon gaining the proper experience in running the state.[37] From this point until the convention, both the Whigs and the Democrats reluctantly agreed on two major points: that the convention itself was inevitable, and was relatively popular among the general population and that Henry Clay's compromise measures were likely the best avenue for the political successes of both parties.

With the death of John Calhoun on March 31, the tone of the Nashville Convention moved away from disunionist sentiment and took a much more moderate tack. The Florida delegation reflected this move as well, as both Whig and Democratic voters chose a total of

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[36] Thomas Brown to David Yulee, Jackson Morton, and Edward Cabell, February 6, 1850, in Jacksonville *Florida Republican*, March 7, 1850.
[37] Brown to Morton, March 30, 1850, in Jacksonville *Florida Republican*, March 21, 1850.

six delegates through a series of local, bipartisan meetings, as Governor Brown had refused

to officially name any delegates to Nashville. All three regions of Florida were represented,

and the decidedly conservative slant of the delegates ensured that Florida's delegation

would vote against disunion, should the situation arise. Representative Cabell was chosen

by the delegate meeting in Marianna, but did not end up attending the convention. In

totality, the convention produced far fewer fireworks than the initial idea would have

predicted. Other than a resolution condemning Clay's compromise measures that was

wholly agitated by the South Carolina delegation, the main point to arise from the

Convention centered on the recommendation by the Nashville delegates to extend the

Missouri Compromise line all the way to the Pacific Coast in California.[38] As the convention

adjourned, there was little to do but wait for Congress to vote on the collection of bills that

would comprise Clay's great compromise. The death of President Taylor in July meant that

Millard Fillmore would take his place in the executive, and the new president immediately

threw his political weight behind Clay, almost ensuring that the bills would be passed at

some juncture in the near future.

Although Clay would fail at his initial attempt to get an omnibus bill passed at the

end of July, the guidance of Illinois Democrat Stephen A. Douglas meant that the five major

components of the compromise – admission of California, the end of the Washington, D.C.

slave trade, popular sovereignty in the New Mexico and Utah territories, a fugitive slave act,

and compensation to Texas for land – would finally pass the Senate during a two-week

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[38] Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (New York: Scribner, 1947), 315-317.

span in mid-September and were signed into law by President Fillmore. The Compromise

of 1850 was seen as the pinnacle of the Whig Party's influence in national politics, and the

general popularity of the Compromise in Florida bode well for the Whigs in the state. But

cracks began to show in the party establishment nationally, especially in regards to how

the sectional issues that surrounded the end of the Mexican-American War pitted northern

Whigs against their southern counterparts. Conversely, there were some in Florida,

especially in the Democratic newspapers, that saw an opportunity to exploit the breaks in

the national Whig structure and go as far to connect Florida Whigs directly to their

northern brethren. It is historical irony that the shining moment of Whig party history

would also signal the beginning of the end for Whigs around the country. As Florida

prepared for the mid-term elections of 1850, the Whigs could little see the political storm

brewing on the distant horizon.

CHAPTER THREE: A TIME OF TRANSITION – 1850-1854

As the repercussions from the Compromise of 1850 reverberated throughout the nation, the Florida Whigs seemed content to focus on the task before them – maintaining their majorities in the state House and Senate and re-electing Edward Cabell to the House of Representatives. As the most prominent Whig, Cabell had struggled in his support for various measure of the Compromise, ultimately becoming the only member of the Florida congressional delegation to throw their support behind the entire Compromise.[1] On a regional scale, Cabell's issues with portions of the Compromise reflected the growing rift between southern Whigs and their northern, more radical counterparts. Like many of his Whig associates in the South, Cabell opposed two major portions of the Compromise – the admission of California as a free state and the prohibition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia – while northern Whigs had pushed emphatically for the same proposals. The division between the two party factions would be glossed over in 1850, but the discord brought about by the Compromise would serve as the catalyst for the disintegration of the party in just a few years' time.

For Florida voters in 1850, the campaigns and platforms they encountered differed starkly from previous elections. The confluence of the political turmoil wrought by the Compromise of 1850 and the Nashville Convention meant that Florida Democrats had not been able to convene a full state convention, choosing instead to send the party into the

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[1] Doherty, *Whigs of* Florida, 42.

mid-term elections with no official platform. The Whigs, on the other hand, had been able to convene a convention and produced a party platform for 1850, but for the first time in Florida's political history, the elections would hinge on a *national* issue – the Compromise – over the more typical Florida fare of internal improvements and the state bank. That is not to say that such a transition was unexpected, however; the Compromise was clearly the most polarizing national issue the South had experienced since the Nullification Crisis in 1833. Both parties tried to take advantage of this new electoral playing field, but the Democrats were in a better position to go on the political offensive against the incumbent Whigs. With little to lose, Democrats selected John Beard, a lawyer from North Carolina who had moved to Florida in the territorial days and who had served as a clerk of the court and a register of public lands since 1845, to front the party ticket against Whig representative Ed Cabell.

Cabell had maintained a high level of popularity in Florida during his previous two terms, rising through the Whig party ranks in the state and becoming the *de facto* state party leader. Cabell had been largely in favor of the Compromise, and the slate of Whig candidates in the election reflected his position. Beard and the Democrats, however, vociferously attacked the Compromise; in one defense of his views regarding the Compromise, Beard told the *Florida Republican* that he would "never agree to any such terms," going as far to say he would "resist to the 'last extremity'" the tenets of the law.[2] Florida voters, for perhaps the first time since statehood, had two candidates for the House

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[2] Jacksonville *Florida Republican*, September 26, 1850.

of Representatives with clearly delineated views on a major national issue, and the Whigs

moved to use this to their electoral advantage. Cabell spoke of Beard as favoring the

"dissolution of the Union" in September 1850, less than two weeks before the election.[3]

Conversely, Cabell made it clear where he (and other Whigs) stood on the Compromise:

"The issues are Union or disunion – I am for the Union: Peace or war – I am for the peace."[4]

Even in 1850, in the smallest southern state, the language of secession and disunion began

to enter the political lexicon.

Although Cabell did little campaigning in 1850, the Whigs were ably promoted by

their candidate for register of public lands, David Shelby Walker. A former state senator

and representative, Walker lauded the party line with aplomb in the run-up to the October

elections, framing the election as a referendum on the Compromise itself and the views

espoused by Beard and other, more radical Democrats. Several of the Whig party papers

trumpeted the unionist credentials of Rep. Cabell, and in the case of Jacksonville's *Florida

Republican* – one of the most outspoken Whig papers in the state – Cabell was crowned the

"Upholder of the South and Defender of the Union," in sharp contrast to the "revolutionists"

that the Democrats had put forward for election.[5] Ideologically, Cabell's views were the

epitome of a moderate in the 1850s, as many southern Democrats saw the Compromise as

too restrictive of slavery, while northern Whigs like New York's William Seward thought

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel,* October 1, 1850; Jacksonville *Florida Republican*, October 3, 1850.

that the laws were too lenient, and were especially taken aback by the inclusion of the fugitive slave law.[6]

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The 1850 elections were a victory for the Whigs at the state level, at least on the surface. Cabell officially received 4,531 of the 8,581 votes cast, giving him a margin of victory of 481 votes in the race for Florida's sole seat in the House.[7] The incumbent won 15 of Florida's 27 counties, and as per the returns from the previous two election cycles, Cabell won handily in the Whig strongholds in the Panhandle. In nearly half of those counties, Cabell posted margins of victory of over 20 percent, including a 37-point win in Holmes County. The representative carried three of Florida's four regions – West, Middle, and East Florida – excepting a relatively poor showing in the state's southern counties of Hillsborough, Benton, Dade, and Monroe. In the district elections, however, the Whigs narrowly lost control of both the House and Senate chambers, but David S. Walker proved successful in his candidacy for register of public lands against Democrat Mariano D. Papy, who would later serve as Florida's attorney general from 1853 until secession. Nevertheless, a deeper look at the numbers pointed toward tough times ahead for the Whigs in Florida, however.

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[6] John M. Taylor, *William Henry Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1991), 85.
[7] Official vote totals published in Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel,* November 19, 1850. When the votes are tabulated from the county-level results available in the *Florida Sentinel*, there are a number of discrepancies with the final tallies. Total votes equal 8,473 (108 fewer), and Cabell's margin of victory drops by 36 votes to 445.

Although Cabell defeated Beard by nearly 500 votes, the comparisons to 1848 could

have left the Whigs a bit more uncertain of their future prospects. Voter turnout for the

congressional election had increased by almost 400 votes over the previous one, 8,187 to

8,581, but Cabell's margin of victory decreased by nearly a hundred votes. The three major

counties of Middle Florida – Jackson, Gadsden, and Leon – all gave substantial majorities to

Cabell in both 1848 and 1850. Since the population (and political influence) of Middle

Florida was dominated by slaveholders, Whig economic policy had long been seen as most

protective of their interests.[8] Cabell's support of the Compromise, however, had introduced

doubt into the minds of some slaveholders, especially in East Florida, where sugarcane and

staple crop production oftentimes exceeded cotton growing. Beard did very well in that

area of Florida and farther south; both regions were home to some of the poorest areas of

the state. Of the ten most affluent counties in the state, only three produced Democratic

majorities, and only Jefferson County was located in Middle Florida.[9] Although the Whigs

still could count on the support of the wealthy and powerful slaveholding class, the

Democratic party seemed the party of choice for the yeomanry and merchant classes in

Florida. [10]

    With the exception of the Compromise in 1850, the basic precepts of Democratic

ideology had become more in line with the Whigs, especially on economic matters. The

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[8] Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., "Florida and the Crisis of 1850," *Journal of Southern History* 19, no. 1 (Feb. 1953): 34.
[9] Statistics compiled from United States Census Bureau, *The 1850 U.S. Census.*
[10] Counties where the slave population made up less than 40 percent of the total population had gone consistently to the Democrats since 1845. Statistics compiled from *The 1850 U.S. Census* and election data found in Appendix A.

divisiveness of the Compromise provided Democrats with a catalyst to put the Whig party

of the defensive, especially after they were able to win back several seats in both state

houses. With little difference in their ideology, between the 1850 and 1852 elections the

parties experienced their own version of *détente* until the proceedings to elect a successor

to Senator Yulee. Yulee's radical stance on slavery, disunion, and the Compromise left a

sour taste in the mouth of a number of Democrats in the state, who felt that the senator had

ignored South Florida and the western parts of the Panhandle when he lobbied for a cross-

Florida railroad, one that would serve the interests of planters in the northern part of the

state alone. In what would amount to their last major political power play in Florida, the 28

Whig politicians in the joint assembly allied themselves with disaffected Democrats to

block the re-election of Yulee to the Senate, at outcome that would have seemed inevitable

with a Democratic majority present.[11] Certainly a prickly man, Yulee had little endeared

himself to many in his party, and was certainly no friend to the Whigs. It would take four

contested ballots, but the Whigs and a small contingent of southern Democrats were able to

elect Stephen Russell Mallory of Key West as the next senator from Florida. But the

"victory" was superficial at best; in the span of just two years, the Whigs had gone from the

majority party in Florida to having precious little control over their political destiny. Such

was the state of affairs for the Florida Whigs.

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[11] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida*, 47

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       With no overarching national issues to influence the elections in 1852, the lead-up

to the elections were far less contentious than it had been just two years before. Although

Floridians had voted in favor of the Whigs in 1850, the following years had seen schisms

and breaks in the Whig establishment, both nationally and at the state level. The rupture in

the Whig ranks surrounding the Compromise had rent the northern and southern factions

of the party apart. In the aftermath of this nominal Whig victory, trust in the party's ability

to articulate and defend the most critical interests of the South – namely, that of slavery

and the preservation of southern liberty – began to wane throughout the South, especially

in the face of the resurgent, moderate center of the Democratic party.[12] In Florida, Cabell

and the Whigs had done little since the 1850 election to assure voters that the Whigs held

the best interests of Florida in mind. Perhaps the biggest threat to the Whigs came from

within, a point that crystallized when Cabell announced his support for the idea of a new

Union Party in the first half of 1852. At its heart, this new party was to be composed of the

Whig establishment and the moderate Democrats that had become almost

indistinguishable from their Whig counterparts. Richard K. Call, who remained one of the

most vocal Whig supporters in Florida, spoke of a Union party as a necessary tool for

reining in the power of northern political interests.[13] Ironically, this push for southern

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[12] Avery O. Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 121.
[13] R.K. Call to Joseph Clisby, November 29, 1851. Clisby was a newspaper publisher in Tallahassee during the early 1850s.

unity would sabotage the future unity of the Florida Whigs, and Cabell's career in Florida politics.

When Cabell rose in the House of Representative in February 1852 and declared that he would throw his support behind Millard Fillmore as the Whig presidential candidate, his days as Florida's premier Whig politician were numbered. Increasingly wary of the national Whig Party, Cabell had begun to correspond with like-minded "Unionists" in the House and throughout Florida, urging them to band together to prevent the northern Whigs from hijacking the national party and nominating Winfield Scott for president later in the year.[14] Initially unwilling to support the candidacy of Winfield Scott on the Whig ticket, Cabell subverted any remaining trust in a strong and orderly Whig establishment in Florida. He was not alone in the South, however; several other prominent southern politicians, most notably Georgians Alexander H. Stephens and Robert Toombs, stood with Cabell in opposition to a Winfield candidacy.[15] But the death knell for the Florida Whigs had been rung: both moderate and radical Democrats in the state were quick to pounce on this politically advantageous situation. Against an opposing party with both national and regional schisms wrecking any hope of producing an organized platform, Democrats capitalized on wooing those voters that had helped to maintain the Whig majority for the past several years. The large slaveholders were still firmly ensconced in the Whig camp, but the Democrats had long put the disunionists and dissenters behind them, and their appeal

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[14] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 50.
[15] *Congressional Globe,* 32 Congress, 1 Session. 451-456.

to the yeomanry and smaller slaveholders continued to grow. Their major candidates for the congressional and gubernatorial races, Augustus Maxwell and James E. Broome, respectively, appealed to as wide an audience as the Democrats could manage. Broome was a South Carolinian by birth who had opposed the Compromise, while Maxwell was a staunch moderate who matched Cabell's ideology in countless ways – a smart political maneuver that would position the Democrats to hold their own voters and cut into Whig totals. Such an agreeable candidate was Maxwell that some Whigs begrudgingly acknowledged that the Democrat was a "generally popular" candidate: high praise in the political environment of 1852.[16]

The Whigs countered with their mainstay, Edward Cabell, as he sought his fourth consecutive term in the United States House. His earlier pronouncement against a Scott candidacy for president, however, did not bode well for him during the state Whig convention in July. The convention selected George T. Ward, a noted planter from Tallahassee, as their candidate for governor, and controversy struck immediately. Ward, who had served as one of Florida's representatives to the national Whig convention earlier that year, had become a strong supporter of Winfield Scott, and initially refused to take part in any Whig ticket that included the dissenter Cabell. Faced with a seemingly intractable conflict, the Whig representatives were left to holding a secret session to arrange a suitable solution to the problem, including the contingency of removing Cabell from the Whig ticket in order to acquiesce to Ward's demands. Faced with the likely end to

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[16] Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, May 11, 1852 & June 22, 1852.

his political career, Cabell finally yielded to the overwhelming pressure from his counterparts and reluctantly agreed to support the Scott candidacy.[17] Regardless of Cabell's capitulation, the Whigs in Florida had been mortally wounded during their summer of infighting. The Democratic press gleefully wrote of the Whig demise, deeming it nothing short of "political suicide" in the face of an increasingly organized and prepared Democratic party.[18] As the elections in October neared, it would seem that the entire fate of the two-party political system Florida hung in the balance.

When voters went to the polls on October 5, the returns heralded in a new era of politics in antebellum Florida. Although their electoral majorities were slim, the Democrats swept both statewide elections and boasted much stronger majorities in both the House and Senate. The hotly contested congressional race between Cabell and Maxwell came down to a margin of just 22 votes, but Maxwell defeated the incumbent Whig 4,590 votes to 4,568. Several aspects of the voting returns indicated a small but noticeable shift to the Democrats. Cabell had won his election in 1850 by 481 votes, but with a turnout increase of 577 votes, seven of every eight new voters stood in the Democratic tallies. The biggest shifts in the state came in the loss of both Leon and Gadsden counties for the Whigs – two of the largest slaveholding counties in the Panhandle, and in the case of Leon County, the center of political power via Tallahassee. What had been Whig strongholds in previous elections going back to 1845 were now leaning Democratic, Gadsden by 13 votes (432 to

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[17] Dorothy Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, 1850-1861, Part I," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (Jul. 1933): 16.
[18] Pensacola *Gazette*, August 14, 1852.

419) and Leon by a more substantive 64 votes (396 to 332). Cabell continued to do well in West Florida, winning more than 55 percent of the electorate west of Tallahassee.[19] But the loss of Middle Florida would be crippling for the Whig Party going forward, as the party had long depended on the power and influence of the slaveholders in the counties around Tallahassee to maintain their place in state politics. Without Leon and Gadsden counties, and with the continued loss of voters from East and South Florida, the chance of a Whig resurgence was effectively nil.

The same trends were even more evident in the gubernatorial election between Ward and Broome. With roughly the same turnout as the congressional race, the Democrats continued to show substantial gains in the Middle Florida plantation counties. Broome defeated his Whig opponent by 292 votes, 4,628 to 4,336. Like Maxwell, Broome won both Gadsden and Leon counties, and by similar amounts. As with the other statewide race, West Florida stood firm in the Whig column as the rest of Florida shifted toward the Democrats. It is perhaps telling that Broome, and not Maxwell, received the larger majority in the two races. While Maxwell was chosen because of his moderate credentials and his ideological similarities to Cabell, Broome stood in stark contrast to George Ward. The *Florida Whig* had objected vehemently to Broome's assertion during the campaign that he was a friend to the Union and had nominally supported the tenets of the 1850 Compromise, naming him a "Secessionist in the abstract and the concrete," but it seems clear that Florida

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[19] See Appendix A for county-level election data.

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voters were unwilling to provide the Whigs with a second chance.[20] The conservatism of

Ward and the more radical nature of Broome's politics better reflected the directions that

Florida voters could choose from in 1852. The reorganization of the Democratic party in

Florida over the past two years had paid massive dividends, and with these major wins a

full month before the presidential elections, it was almost a foregone conclusion that the

Democrats would be able to deliver Florida for Franklin Pierce as well.[21]

In the wake of the Democratic victories a month earlier, the presidential election of

November 2 was nothing if not anti-climatic. Cabell had done very little campaigning for

Winfield Scott around the state, and coupled with the knowledge of his animosity toward

the Scott candidacy and the breakdown in Whig organization at the state and county levels,

Scott stood little chance of having a strong showing in defeat, let alone actually winning the

state against Pierce. When the ballots were tabulated, Franklin Pierce would sweep

Florida's three electoral votes in a lopsided win, 4,318 votes to Scott's 2,875. Pierce's

twenty percent margin of victory was in line with the margins in most of the Deep South,

and spoke to Scott's inability to inspire confidence in many disaffected southern Whigs,

who saw Pierce and the Democrats as viable, moderate alternatives to a crumbling, faction-

ridden Whig party. The Whigs lost all but four counties in Florida, keeping Holmes, Nassau,

Santa Rosa, and Wakulla counties, but the loss of most of western and Middle Florida

proved to be most detrimental to the Whig cause. The biggest slaveholding counties turned

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[20] Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, May 11, 1852.
[21] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 56-57.

en masse to the Democrats, forsaking Whigs that had best protected their political and economic interests in the antebellum period. More than 62 percent of the vote in Leon County went to Pierce, and more than 65 percent of voters went for Pierce in Gadsden, one of the most staunchly pro-Whig locales in Florida's history.[22] A massive drop in voter turnout most likely led to the depression in Whig votes, as nearly 2,000 fewer voters took part in the presidential election as had voted in the state elections just a month prior. The Democratic tallies had lost just under 300 votes since October, but the Whigs suffered an incredible drop-off of nearly 1,700 voters – 39 percent of all Whig voters in October did not cast a ballot in the presidential election. More than any other aspect of the election, the Whig inability to mobilize the vote in November 1852 exemplified the growing electoral trend in the South of Democratic dominance.[23]

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The question of how – and why -- the Whigs sank from their political heights so quickly cannot be answered simply through the prism of the deep ideological disagreements between the northern and southern factions of the party in the early 1850s. The Compromise of 1850 did much to expose the ideological chasms that plagued a national party trying to remain relevant on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. Slavery had not been a political issue of any real importance for many years, but the role of "Manifest Destiny" in expanding both the physical size of the United States and the governing power

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[22] See Appendix A for county-level election data.
[23] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 57-58.

of the federal government was an essential catalyst in bringing slavery back to the forefront of American politics. For perhaps the first time in many slaveholders' lives, the "peculiar institution" was something that politicians could fight over, something that had the potential to be legislated. Abolitionists had long pushed for the cessation of slavery, but with their limited reach and influence, southern politicians could dismiss them as nuisances, and nothing more. The Compromise lay out, and in no uncertain terms, what *could* be at stake in the fight over slavery.[24] While the most radical voices were drowned out by the time the Compromise was signed into law, the seeds of discord and distrust in the southern Whig establishment had been planted. In a time where the conservatism of the Florida Whigs – which had long been a key selling point to the more affluent in Florida society – began to sway under the ideological weight of the party's northern faction, the voters of Florida began to reassess their political connections.[25]

It was the ideology of slavery that drove the movement away from the Whig party, as slavery was becoming an issue that brought together slaveholder and non-slaveholder alike. The Florida Democrats had always done well by consistently pulling poorer voters from outside of Middle Florida into their ranks each election season. These voters, many of whom did not own a single slave, held small farms in parts of Florida that could very easily

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[24] Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 53.
[25] Doherty, *Whigs in Florida*, 60.

be defined as still "frontier."[26] It is not to say, of course, that slaveholders never voted for

Democratic candidates, but the pro-bank, pro-internal improvement platform of the Whigs

from the territorial days had long been more appealing to slaveholders and the upper

reaches of the merchant class. In areas with excellent natural ports, like Pensacola and

Jacksonville (Escambia and Duval counties, respectively), Whigs had fared very well, as

they had in the large, populous Middle Florida counties surrounding Tallahassee. Early in

Florida's state history, when economic questions faced the state year after year and bank-

related issues dominated state politics, the Whigs were consistently competitive – and

between 1847 and 1850, they were the majority party in state politics. But as the

importance of these economic issues waned in relation to slavery and the perceived

intrusion of northern power into southern politics, the continued economic conservatism

of the Whigs held diminishing appeal at a time where southern liberties were increasingly

at stake.

It is incredibly important, then, to explore the connection between the appeal of the

Democratic anti-bank men of the 1840s and the Democratic opponents of the Compromise.

Florida's first "fire-eater," David Levy Yulee, had earned his Senate election in 1845 in large

part to his virulent opposition to the Bank from as far back as the state constitutional

convention in 1838. Yulee had pushed fervently for a sizable Florida contingent to be sent

to the Nashville Convention, only to be rebuffed by the Whig governor at the time, Thomas

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[26] Census Bureau, *The 1850 U.S. Census*. In the southern counties of Florida, the lack of good top soil meant that cotton production was very difficult, and sugarcane production was prohibitively expensive. The yeomanry set up where the soils allowed crops like corn or (increasingly) citrus to take root.

Brown. The owner of a sugarcane plantation southwest of Ocala, Yulee was acutely aware

of what he saw as wholly unnecessary intrusion into southern life by northern interests,

exemplified by the laws that made up the Compromise of 1850. Yulee was heavily

influenced in his ideology by John Calhoun, and the South Carolinian's stringent belief in

the autonomy of the South and the necessity for a southern balance to northern political

party were at the very core of Yulee's own beliefs.[27] Governor James Broome had also been

an anti-bank man in the 1840s after he had retired from the merchant business, and his

views on the Compromise – and more importantly, the rights of southern states vis-à-vis

the national government – paralleled Yulee in almost every way. A plantation owner

himself, Broome viewed the furor over the Compromise as less an issue of slavery, but as

an issue of the southern right to practice slavery without molestation from the North.[28]

These shifts in party affiliation came to a head in 1854, when both the Kansas-

Nebraska Act and the mid-term elections combined to provide Florida's Whigs with a fatal

political blow. When Stephen Douglas broached the topic of the popular sovereignty of

incoming states as a means to garner southern support for the Midwestern

Transcontinental Railroad, it was initially seen as a way to prevent a repeat of the political

turmoil that surrounded the Compromise four years prior. In reality, popular sovereignty

was seen by many, especially those against slavery in the northern states, as wholesale

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[27] David Yulee to Charles E. Dyke, May 26, 1860, "Thoughts on Secession.". In these letters, Yulee explains his past antipathy for the Compromise of 1850 and northern intrusion. Dyke was the editor for the Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal* at the time.
[28] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida*, 55.

nullification of both the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850. An amendment sponsored by Archibald Dixon, a moderate Whig senator from Kentucky, explicitly stated that the Missouri Compromise parallel of 36 degrees, 30 minutes, should be repealed to allow for an easier flow of slaveholders into the new territories and more equitable representation for those slaveholders.[29] When Douglas reluctantly agreed to cede the point, it was almost a foregone conclusion that the Act would pass; since Democrats controlled both the House and Senate, as well as the presidency, it was highly unlikely that a northern Democrat like Douglas could not produce enough votes from his party members to gain passage of the bill. Alongside the dwindling number of southern Whigs who held seats, the bill passed the Senate with relative ease, 37 to 14 (both Florida senators voting in the affirmative), but it was a much closer vote in the House: with a large number of northern Whigs still in office, the bill passed 113 to 100, but by an overwhelming 69 to 9 margin amongst representatives from the southern states.

In Florida, it became clear by the spring of 1854 that the Kansas-Nebraska Act would be the center of political attention in the upcoming election, much as had been the case in 1850 with the Compromise. Buoyed by their wins in 1852, Democrats were able to emerge with a party platform that fully supported the Act and the "state's rights" tenets they believed it to espouse.[30] The Whigs, battered and unorganized, did not convene a state convention in 1854, simply agreeing to the decisions made by county-level party

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[29] Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union,* 95-96.
[30] Jacksonville *Florida Republican*, June 29, 1854.

organizations in Leon and Gadsden counties to nominate former governor Thomas Brown

for Congress, against the Democratic incumbent Augustus Maxwell. In a shrewd political

gesture that seemed to foreshadow the fate of the Whigs after the election, Democrats in

Middle Florida lobbied Whigs to unite their parties under the flag of the southern

Democracy. Under the pretense of preserving the political agency of the Whigs at a time

where their national party structure was falling apart, Democrats thought to neutralize any

organized opposition in the state and bring Florida to a virtual one-party political system.[31]

Understandably, Florida Whigs denied such a request and pushed on with the election

season, although their hopes of regaining any semblance of political power waned by the

day.

Those hopes for a Whig resurgence were dashed completely after the elections on

October 2. In the highest turnout election to that point in Florida's history, Augustus

Maxwell handily defeated Thomas Brown by 1,074 votes, 5,638 to 4,564. The 10,202 votes

cast were approximately one thousand more than had been cast in 1852, but the Whigs

could only manage to add *four* votes to their tallies. Maxwell had continued to tack toward

the political center, and even with the recognition of having served as governor, Thomas

Brown was unable to combat the superior organizational skills of the Democrats. With

every region of Florida voting in favor of the Democratic candidate, it had become clear to

the Whigs that their time as a viable party in the state had come to an end. Since 1850, the

conservatism of the Whig ideology and platform had become a major detriment to them, to

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[31] Ibid., September 7, 1854.

say nothing of the havoc wreaked by the divisions inside the national party as well.

Democratic candidates in nearly all races, whether national or state-level, had stressed

their support for protecting slavery and the rights of southern states to govern themselves

without undue outside influence. The Democrats became more appealing to a slaveholding

class that had placed their trust in the Whigs, but the seeds of distrust sown during the

earlier campaigns were finally coming to harvest. By staking out a legitimate claim to the

same portion of the political landscape that the Whigs had long held, the Democrats were

able to marginalize the Whigs, while at the same time giving Whigs no choice but to

assimilate into the Democratic Party. The demise of the Whig party in Florida was not

simply a matter of the national party structure falling apart – in states like Alabama and

Mississippi, Whigs fell out of voter's favor before the collapse of the national party – but of

a political environment where the two competing parties had become so similar in ideology

that voters were drawn to the better organized, more publicized platform.[32] Both parties

had unequivocally stated their support for the "southern cause" and for the protection of

slavery, but the Democrats had simply been better able to reach the voters.

The ability of the Democrats to pull together an electoral coalition of their earlier

constituents – the yeomanry, the smallest slaveholders, and the lower merchant classes –

and the predominant Whig strongholds of slaveholders and the societal elite indicates a

basic foundation for the republican principles that had would boil over in Florida in the late

1850s. Slavery was the central issue in 1854 politics, but since an overwhelming number of

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[32] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida*, 60-61.

Floridians owned no slaves at all, it could not serve as the sole basis for a common ideology. White male equality could be construed in a much more flattering light than simply being pro-slavery, pro-expansion, or pro-popular sovereignty. Regardless of economic class, social prestige, or slaveholding status, all white men in the South could boast personal liberties that separated them from the slaves at the bottommost rung of the southern social ladder. But these men held their republican ideals closely, and as the early 1850s seemed to demonstrate to them, the North was beginning to find ways to infringe on those personal liberties. The agrarian class that had supported the anti-bank men of the 1830s and 1840s were now likely to share a common political outlook with the slaveholders and businessmen who had sought a powerful central bank during the same period.[33] The 1850s now upon them, these two groups were now fighting for something more abstract, but far more important: their very way of life. The "Crisis of the 1850s" had not crested; in fact, the wave had only just begun to emerge.

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[33] Larry E. Rivers, "Slavery and the Political Economy of Gadsden County, Florida: 1823-1861," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (Jul. 1991): 19.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROAD TO SECESSION – 1855-1861

The 1850s were a time of political and cultural tumult throughout the United States, and Florida could serve as the prime example for the "crisis of the 1850s." At the beginning of the decade, Florida Whigs held majorities in the state houses, held the governorship, one Senate seat, and the state's lone congressional district. Buoyed by a platform built on economic conservatism and internal improvements in the late 1840s, the party had come to represent the richest and most powerful group in the state – the plantation owners and businessman of Middle Florida, especially around Tallahassee. The Democratic opposition was seen as ineffectual, having squandered their chances to turn around the state's bleak economic outlook in the aftermath of the panics of the late 1830s. While other state-level Whig organizations, like those in Mississippi and Georgia, failed to consolidate political gains during the period, Florida Whigs rose to prominence.

But what a difference just five years could make. In January 1855, Democratic representative Augustus Maxwell returned to the House to start his second term, and Democrats held every major political office in the state. Whig organization had collapsed under four years of almost unrelenting pressure, exerted by political issues that tore the national party apart. The Compromise of 1850 had been the first blow, but the emergence of slavery as *the* premier national issue in the aftermath of the Kansas-Nebraska Act meant that the Whigs, whose northern wing was home to many an abolitionist, could no longer produce a platform that could appease both North and South. Democrats in the South

jumped at this fortuitous political situation to become the majority party in every southern

state and expedite the demise of the Whigs.[1] While new coalitions would emerge, like the

American and Constitutional Union parties, they would never be able to gain any significant

traction against the more powerful and well organized Democratic party.

It was slavery that provided the clarion call for many southerners after 1854.

Politicians and polity alike saw the necessity of protecting slavery, and at all costs. While

legitimate talk of disunion and secession had emerged as early as 1832, it had initially been

tamped out as quickly as it had emerged. Now, just five years later, an increasing number of

southerners – especially those "fire-eaters", like Edmund Ruffin and Robert Rhett, who had

supported secession talk in 1850 – saw secession as a logical plan of action if northern

threats to southern rights and liberties continued. The protection of the "sanctity of

property" was at the very crux of the secession movement in the late 1850s, and for

slaveholders (and even the yeomanry) of Florida, this was no different.[2] Slavery had come

not only to represent the South politically, but the southern way of life. The road to

secession for Florida would not be the most arduous, nor would the secessionists face stiff

opposition from a Union-minded minority. For Florida, there was a sense of inevitability

toward secession. With no northern borders, neighbor to some of the most staunchly

"southern" of the southern states, Floridians innately knew their place in the South. John C.

McGehee, who would become the president of the Florida secession convention in 1860,

[1] The sole exception was South Carolina, which did not officially have a party system in the state. However, most South Carolina politicians would be seen as Democrats elsewhere in the South.
[2] Donald R. Hadd, "The Irony of Secession," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Jul. 1962): 26.

succinctly (and grimly) stated the mood of Florida in his acceptance speech at the convention. To stay in the Union, and to allow intrusions into the peculiar institution could only mean one thing: "As we stand, our doom is decreed."[3]

<center>* * *</center>

After their losses in the 1854 elections, the Whigs were essentially finished as a political party in Florida. Other party affiliations would emerge in the aftermath of the Whig demise, most notably the American Party that grew out of interest in the "Know-Nothing" platform that had emerged in 1854 and 1855. The nativist views of many Know Nothings had relatively little support in Florida, which did not have any particularly large populations of immigrants or Catholics. What it did provide was a means by which disaffected Whigs could rally under a new banner, and in 1855 the party was able to maintain some local political offices in areas where the Whigs had historically done well – according to one newspaper account, a "brilliant American victory" was had in Duval county against the Democratic monolith.[4] Inspired by their surprising showing in these elections, the American party members nominated several prominent former Whigs to combat the Democrats in 1856. David S. Walker became the American gubernatorial candidate, while state attorney James M. Baker of Lake City was named candidate for Congress.

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[3] *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida* (Tallahassee, 1861), 3.
[4] Jacksonville *Florida Republican,* October 4, 1855.

While the American party continued to coalesce, the Democrats were solidifying

their support throughout the state, to say nothing of their continued shift toward more

radical candidates and an explicitly pro-slavery platform. The 1852 gubernatorial election

had shown that Democrats were able to nominate a radical candidate, James Broome, and

that a majority of the Florida electorate would follow suit. The majorities in the state

houses afforded the Democrats the ability to send David Yulee back to the Senate for his

second non-consecutive term. For 1856, the Democrats nominated two strong radicals

from their ranks: Madison S. Perry for governor and George S. Hawkins for Congress. Both

candidates exemplified the foundation of the Florida Democratic party – explicit and

unwavering support for the protection and expansion of slavery.[5] While support for slavery

in the South would be expected for any and all candidates, the radicalization of the

Democratic party in Florida meant that the means by which slavery was to be protected

could be everything up to, and including, the threat of disunion and secession. To them, the

prohibition of slavery anywhere in the new territories was tantamount to the prohibition

of slavery in the South, and such actions should "justify a resort to measures of resistance."[6]

The presidential campaign in 1856 also reflected the increasingly factious political

landscape. National Democrats nominated James Buchanan to oppose John C. Fremont, the

first presidential candidate for the newly-formed Republican Party. The Know Nothings

coalesced long enough to support the candidacy of former president Millard Fillmore, the

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[5] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 61.
[6] Tallahassee *Floridian*, April 26, 1856.

last Whig to hold the office. In Florida, the Fillmore candidacy was seen by the old Whigs as essential in prohibiting the Democrats from taking full control of state politics; former Whig congressman Edward Cabell, who supported Fillmore and the American ticket, tried to broker an agreement that would allow electors for either candidate to cast their final votes for the winning candidate, regardless of who they had been pledged for first.[7] Democrats were quick to dismiss Cabell's attempt at checking their political power, and exploited the division in the American party ranks to ensure a Buchanan victory. The Democrats were able to convince many in the electorate that a since Buchanan had the best chance for election throughout the country, any support of Fillmore could result in a splitting of the southern vote, providing an electoral advantage for the Republicans and raising the specter that Frémont could win enough states to hand him an Electoral College victory.[8] This fear, which foreshadowed the nearly identical situation in the 1860 election, was once again built on the importance of defending slavery throughout the South and into the new western territories.

The first round of election results came in on October 6, 1856, and while the Democrat's won as expected, the American party candidates fared far better than many newspaper prognosticators had predicted.[9] In the governor's race, the Democrat Perry defeated David S. Walker by just 320 votes, 6,214 to 5,894. Turnout for this election was remarkably high, as more than three thousand new voters took the polls. Compared to

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[7] Ibid., August 30, 1856.
[8] Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, Part I." 22.
[9] Ibid., 23.

1852, the Democrats' margin of victory had only increased by several dozen votes, whereas the interim period had seen the complete dissolution of the Whig party structure. Perry took nineteen of Florida's thirty-two counties, but of the six largest counties in the state, Perry was only able to win Leon, with a margin of just thirty-six votes. Walker, running on a platform that included cheaper land prices, had endeared himself to the yeomanry in Middle Florida. He held nearly all of the Whig counties from 1852 and even won back Gadsden County, which had been the seat of consistent Whig support during the 1840s and early fifties.[10]

The congressional election saw a larger margin of victory for the Democrats, as George Hawkins defeated James M. Baker by 742 votes, 6,392 to 5,650. Voter turnout was nearly identical to the gubernatorial race, but Hawkins consistently fared better than Perry in most old Whig strongholds. Neither candidate lost a county that their gubernatorial counterpart had won, but in some counties, like Gadsden, the margin of victory for the American candidate was considerably smaller. The Democrats had prevailed in the two elections that would be most indicative of the direction Florida voters were willing to take, and the radicalization of the Democratic party was acceptable enough to not scare away a multitude of voters to the American ranks. Both Walker and Baker were highly capable candidates who had spent much time campaigning; Baker had gone as far to traverse the state on horseback, visiting small towns in the frontier areas to drum up support for the American ticket. What can be ascertained is that Florida voters had bought into the

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[10] See Appendix A for county-level election data.

Democratic message that their way of life could be in jeopardy with a Republican victory in November. The Democrats had deftly placed themselves as the most capable protectors of slavery and the southern way of life, and an electoral win in November would give Democrats a political monopoly in Florida.

As the results came back from the November 4 election, it became increasingly clear that the Democratic party had become the sole operator in the southern states. Buchanan would carry 19 states, including all of the voting slaveholding states – many by margins of more than ten percent. Fillmore's only threat to the Democrats was found in Louisiana, but since the state held the South's largest contingent of Know Nothings, a stronger showing for Fillmore would be expected. Buchanan won the national election with just over 45 percent of the national vote and 174 total Electoral College votes, while the new Republican Party delivered all of New England, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa for Fremont. While the Republican's 117 electoral votes could not win them the election, the shift of just two or three major states – Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Illinois – would have given the Republicans the necessary votes to swing the election. Fillmore and the Know Nothings were only able to win Maryland's eight electoral votes, and polled at less than 22 percent nationally in the popular vote. In what was easily the most fractious election since 1836, the candidates represented the three most prevalent views on the sectional crisis of the 1850s. Buchanan and the Democrats supported the expansion of slavery through popular sovereignty and characterized Fremont and the Republicans as the party that would pull back on slavery, an action that would ultimately lead to a civil war. Fear-

mongering aside, the Republicans were built on a platform of stopping the expansion of

slavery and their opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act two years prior. Slavery was,

therefore, the pivotal issue in 1856, and the anti-immigration views that stood at the center

of the Know Nothing campaign were far less important to the vast majority of Americans,

regardless of what side of the political spectrum they stood.[11]

The voting trends found elsewhere in the South were mirrored throughout Florida.

Although about one thousand fewer votes were cast in the presidential election, Floridians

still went strongly for Buchanan, defeating Fillmore by 1,525 votes, 6,358 to 4,833. While

the percent margin of victory was smaller than in 1852, Buchanan won twenty-five

counties, including several counties the American Party had carried just a month earlier.[12]

Columbia, Gadsden, and Madison counties voted in favor of the Democrats after supporting

both Walker and Baker in the state elections. Most telling was how well Buchanan did in

Middle Florida, where the slaveholders that had helped to influence Florida's political

culture completed their shift from the old, conservative Whig politics of the forties and

fifties to the more radical Democratic politics that dominated the late 1850s. The

protection of slavery had never been seen in Florida as a relevant political issue; as the

politics of early statehood showed, economics and internal improvements were of a far

higher importance.[13] But now, in 1856 and the growth of the Republican Party, Florida

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[11] Arthur W. Thompson, "Political Nativism in Florida, 1848-1860: A Phase of Anti-Secessionism," *Journal of Southern History* 15, no. 1 (Feb. 1949): 54.
[12] See Appendix A for county-level results.
[13] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 22-23.

voters and politicians took full notice. The Democrats had positioned themselves to reap the political rewards of their radicalization on slavery for several years, and the 1856 election cycle provided them with the fruits of their labor. Floridians were now fully invested in the protection of slavery. By 1858, there would be no external threat to the Democrats, who re-nominated incumbent George Hawkins for Congress. He was opposed by another Democrat, John Westcott, but with no support from the established party, Westcott was defeated by nearly 2,500 votes in October 1858.[14] The two-party system in Florida was dead, and the Democrats had prevailed.

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The catalyst behind the radicalization of Florida politics was a function of the increased importance of protecting slavery throughout the South. The sectional issues that had risen out of the 1850 Compromise and further exacerbated by the Kansas-Nebraska Act caused Floridians to reassess the significance of their slaveholding culture.[15] By the 1860 census, Florida was in the upper half of slave states in terms of the slave percentage of the population. Of the 140,424 people tabulated in the census, 61,745 of them were slaves, or about 44 percent of the total population. Although Florida had the lowest absolute number of slaves in the South, only four states had a higher percentage of slaves than Florida – South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. Consequently, Florida's economy, especially in the plantation belt of Middle Florida, was overwhelmingly

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[14] Dodd, "Secession Movement in Florida, Part I", 23-24.
[15] Doherty, *Whigs of Florida,* 59.

dependent on cotton production, and consequently, slave labor.[16] Nearly all of the largest

slaveholding counties were still found in Middle Florida, centered on Tallahassee, though

Alachua and Marion counties saw marked increases in the number of slaves over the 1850

census. As available cotton-supporting land all but disappeared in the Panhandle, new out-

of-state slaveholders moved south and east down the spine of Florida to set up their

plantations. As was the case ten years prior, the distribution of slaves in Florida correlated

very well to the major seats of political power and influence. Tallahassee, as state capital,

was the logical center for slaveholders in Middle Florida, and the economic growth of both

Jacksonville and Ocala in the 1850s helped to support their increasing slave populations.

Not surprisingly, these areas with high slave populations would be the loudest supporters

for secession and disunion. In West Florida, Pensacola had grown in size as a port and

import/export hub, but only about a third of Escambia County's population was slave. In

South Florida, where cotton-based agriculture was made nearly impossible by climate and

soil conditions, very few people were found. In this frontier Florida, no more than ten or

fifteen percent of the population was enslaved.

The distribution of slaveholders in the population indicated that Florida had a

relatively high percentage of slaveholders compared to other southern states. More than 34

percent of families owned at least one slave in Florida in 1860, a percentage once again

exceeded only by the four states of the Black Belt. In some Middle Florida counties, one was

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[16] Larry E. Rivers, "Slavery in Microcosm: Leon County, Florida, 1824-1860," *Journal of Negro History* 66, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 241. See also Clifton Paisley, "Tallahassee through the Storebooks, 1843-1863: Antebellum Cotton Prosperity," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (Oct. 1971): 111-127.

more likely own slaves than not: in Leon and Jefferson counties, nearly 60 percent of all families owned slaves. The surrounding counties were not much different, as Gadsden, Jackson, Madison, and Wakulla counties all exceeded forty percent. The lowest percentage of slave ownership was naturally found in southern Florida, where fewer than ten percent of the population owned even a single slave.[17] Of course, the slaves were not equitably distributed throughout the slave owning population. In Tallahassee, 54 percent of slaveholders owned fewer than ten slaves, while 80 percent of slaveholders held fewer than 20. The planter class of Florida, which can be roughly defined as those slaveholding families with more than 20 slaves, made up approximately sixteen percent of all slaveholding families in Florida in 1860.[18] Such numbers also help to illustrate the emergence of the planter class in state and national politics; all of the Democratic candidates for statewide or national office after 1852 had been slaveholders, as were most Whig candidates as well. In many ways, the likelihood of moving up in the party structure was closely aligned with "ownership of large numbers of slaves and quantities of land," as residents of Gadsden county expressed in the late 1850s.[19]

Still, the majority of Floridians did not own slaves. When Florida politics had centered on the bank and internal improvements, the slaveholding status of the voting population was of little import. The slaveholders who populated the ranks of the Whig Party were more interested in ensuring the free flow of capital into the young state and

[17] All numbers from U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. Census of 1860.*
[18] Ibid. Of the 5,152 families listed in the 1860 census, 808 families owned 20 more slaves.
[19] Rivers, "Slavery and Political Economy of Gadsden County," 7.

ensuring the building and maintenance of the railroads that would bisect the state and allow them to move cotton quickly and economically to market. The Democrats of the late forties and early fifties were popular in the frontier reaches of the state and with the yeomanry of Middle Florida because of their opposition to the Bank interests in Tallahassee. But in just a few short years, the slaveholders had switched party affiliations and voters everywhere were overwhelmingly in favor of the more radical elements of the Democratic party. One of the decisive factors in explaining this rapid transition can be found in the nature of Floridian politics during the territorial and early statehood days. Florida politics had never focused on slavery early on, but when national issues like the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act took center stage, Florida voters finally realized how ineffectual the Whigs were in dealing with schisms and disagreements in their national party. Slavery could be an issue that both the Whigs and Democrats could use to their political advantage, but as the rest of the Whig platform decayed beneath them, voters turned to a Democratic party they believed could protect their interests better. Whether personal liberties, property, or slavery – or the confluence of all three – voters understood the importance of slavery in maintaining their way of life. The correlation between radicalism in Florida and the increase in Republican "fanaticism" was exemplified by the view of Governor Broome in 1856, saying that the South had "made her last submission to unconstitutional exactions."[20] Even deeply ensconced in the South, Florida politicians felt the rise of Republicanism knocking on their door.

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[20] Florida House *Journal*, 1856, 36.

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Up to 1856, secession still seemed an excessive reaction to a perceived northern

aggression against slavery. The turmoil wrought by Kansas and Nebraska had inflamed

sectional tensions, to be sure, but it was not until the emergence of the Republicans as a

legitimate electoral threat that secession became a more palatable solution to the problems

at hand. The fire-eaters grew louder, and their messages resonated with southerners who

had grown increasingly wary of Republican rule. The radical Alabama congressman

William Lowndes Yancey wrote a public letter in 1858 that disavowed the power of

political parties to protect the rights and liberties of southerners. His solution was simple:

the radical southern minds must "precipitate the cotton states into a revolution" to truly

preserve slavery.[21] The equally notorious South Carolina Senator Robert Rhett had worked

with Yancey at the Alabama Southern Convention that same year to agitate a split in the

Democratic party along sectional lines, and the Virginian Edmund Ruffin was one of the

most outspoken secessionists in the entire South. Combined with the palpable fear that

pervaded the South in the aftermath of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, secession

seemed to become more inevitable by the day.[22]

When Florida Democrats nominated Madison Perry for governor in 1856, they were

fully aware of the planter's radical leanings, and while Florida never produced a nationally-

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[21] Eric H. Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 222, 225.
[22] Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, Part II," 46.

known fire-eater with the same notoriety as a Ruffin or Rhett, Perry was among the most amenable politicians in Florida to the idea and implementation of secession. The beginnings of Florida's secession movement can be traced to a speech Perry delivered to a joint session of Florida's legislature in November 1858, where the governor presciently recommended that the state begin the process of a "thorough reorganization of the state militia" in the face of the "increasing strength and influence of the abolition element."[23] A year later, Perry once again came out strongly in favor of secession, imploring the Florida Senate to adopt a resolution that would unequivocally declare Florida as supportive of disunion should Republicans prove victorious in the 1860 presidential election. The senators wasted no time in drafting legislation that provided the governor with full authority to work in concert with other southern states "for the maintenance of their rights," particularly (and perhaps solely) in regards to slavery.[24] Governor Perry had placed the impetus for secession firmly on the back of the peculiar institution. Any infringement on the right of southerners to hold slaves – whether real or perceived – was grounds for the dissolution of the Union. In the lead-up to the 1860 elections, Perry's speeches were circulated around the state to inspire Floridians to raise and join militias, and the Democrat organs wrote of new volunteer companies emerging throughout the state.[25] Even if the Republicans were unsuccessful in taking the White House or effecting majorities in either chamber of Congress, the mood in Florida was that of preparation for secession and war.

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[23] House *Journal*, 1858, 27.
[24] Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, Part II," 46.
[25] Ibid., 46-47.

The national Democratic party was faced with a sectional split during the Charleston Convention in April 1860. Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas had long been the standard-bearer for the national party, but his staunch and continued support of the Kansas-Nebraska Act led to strains with the southern branch of the party. Of particular concern was the so-called Freeport Doctrine, in which Douglas declared his persistent support for the concept of popular sovereignty, which now stood in opposition to the *Dred Scott* ruling by the Supreme Court in 1857. Many southerners took Douglas' support for popular sovereignity as tantamount to treason against the South, and after the delegates voted in favor of the northern platform that mirrored Douglas' stance on the issue, 50 southern delegates, including several from Florida, walked out of the proceedings in protest. Earlier that month, the Democrats had met in Tallahassee to appoint delegates to the convention, and had gone as far to condemn the Douglas doctrine they assumed would form the basis for a northern Democrat platform. The actions of the Florida delegation met with support from Senator Yulee who, in a letter to the editor of the *Floridian and Journal* in Tallahassee, implored the South to never abandon what he called the "Liberty of Growth"; the delegates had removed Florida "from entanglement with this vicious party device."[26] T.J. Wombwell, the editor of the Fernandina *East Floridian*, went as far to advance the cause of immediate secession in the face of the Democratic party split, as the break-up of the Union was an inevitability. The South was "well prepared for that grave issue now, as she will be one or

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[26] David Yulee to Charles E. Dyke, May 26, 1860, "Thoughts on Secession."

ten years hence."[27] Naturally, there was some opposition to the removal of delegates from Charleston, most notably coming from former Whig congressman Edward Cabell, who rightly foresaw how a split in the Democratic Party would almost certainly predicate a Republican victory later in the year. However, Cabell had moved from Florida to Missouri after his political career (and the Whig Party) ended in mid-1850s, and almost no one in the state publicly disagreed with the actions of the Florida delegates.[28]

By June, the Florida Democrats convened for their state convention and nominated John Milton, who had been one of the Florida delegates that had walked out in Charleston, for governor. Milton and the Democratic nominee for Congress, R.B. Hilton, were both members of the radical wing of the party and were both supporters of secession in the case of a Republican victory in November. The convention also took the task of appointing a number of delegates to the *southern* Democratic convention to be held in Richmond, as well as convening a number of delegates to be sent to Baltimore in June for a continuation of the original Democratic convention in April. By now, Douglas had lost almost all support in Florida; his highest-profile supporter, Senator Yulee, had thrown his support behind John Breckenridge after Douglas had stated during a speech in Norfolk that southern states did not have the constitutional right to secede. Yulee, however, was not initially supportive of the plan to send delegates to Richmond. The senator was wary of a southern party convention that could further disintegrate the fragile ties between the northern and

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[27] Fernandina *East Floridian*, May 10, 1860.
[28] Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, Part II," 47.

southern wings of the Democracy. Yulee called for a convention of southern states, "the

better for our own security and for the Union," but warned that the Richmond convention

would "weaken the South without any countervailing good."[29] But at the heart of the matter

was Yulee's support for secession, and his views were indicative of the mood in Florida in

mid-1860. If the Republicans were to gain control of the national government, "it would be

the duty of the Southern States to secede from the present confederacy ."[30]

 While the Democrats geared up for possible secession, the more conservative

elements in the state looked for a cause to serve as a counterweight to the radical

Democratic politics. As was the case throughout the country, the Constitutional Union party

provided a rallying point for those who disproved of secession, and they boldly proclaimed

that the Democrats had no other issue in the upcoming election except for disunion. After

like-minded Floridians called a state convention in June 1860, the delegates quickly threw

their support behind the presumptive presidential candidate, Tennessee Senator John Bell.

Bell had originally served as a Whig while a representative and later as a senator, so Bell's

conservative leanings made him a strong fit with the Constitutional Unionists. The Florida

convention also nominated Edward Hopkins for governor and newspaper editor B.F. Allen

for Congress. During the campaign, Allen made clear that he believed secession was not the

solution to the sectional issues facing the South. More so, Allen indicated that he would

continue to serve in the House under a Republican president. For him (and by extension,

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[29] Yulee to Dyke, May 26, 1860.
[30] Ibid.

the Constitutional Union Party), the election of a Republican in November was not sufficient grounds for secession.[31] By the October elections, however, Floridians had proclaimed their stance on the issue of disunion. Both Democratic candidates won their races with healthy majorities, leaving little doubt as to which path – secession or union – the voters preferred. In the gubernatorial race, Milton defeated Hopkins by 1,420 votes, 7,302 to 5,882. The Democrats had won nearly all new voters to the polls in 1860; even with the increased turnout of over a thousand voters, the Constitutional Union party actually *lost* 12 votes when compared to the Americans in 1856. The voters were even more emphatic in their support for the Democrats in the congressional race, where Robert Hilton defeated B.F. Allen by more than 2,550 votes – the largest margin of victory in any state or national race in Florida's history up to that point.[32] If the October elections were any indication, the presidential election in November would be a landslide in favor of Breckenridge.

Although there had been no popular referenda on the topic of secession, political observers in Florida looked to the presidential election as the best indicator whether or not immediate secession would be palatable to a large majority of Florida voters. A vote for Breckenridge could be construed as supportive of the secessionists' plans and opposition to the Republicans. A vote for Bell and Everett was unmistakably a vote in favor of union and a peaceful resolution to the sectional conflict, while a Douglas vote would likely mean the

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[31] Fernandina *East Floridian*, September 20, 1860.
[32] See Appendix A for election data.

same thing.[33] In the end, Floridians went overwhelmingly for Breckenridge and the

Southern Democrats. Of the 13,108 votes cast, 8,155 (over 62 percent) went for the

Breckenridge ticket. The Democrats carried 31 of Florida's 38 counties, garnering at least

45 percent of the vote in every county except Clay, Escambia, and Santa Rosa. Tallahassee

and Jacksonville had voted heavily in favor of Breckenridge, and in the growing planter

counties of Alachua and Marion, Breckenridge earned more than 75 percent of votes cast.[34]

In almost every single county with sizable slave populations, Breckenridge and the

Southern Democrats did very well, and confirmed that most Floridians, whether

slaveholder or not, saw secession as a necessary means to defend the institution of slavery.

In fact, Breckenridge polled better in Florida than in any other southern state with the

exception of Texas. Bell and Everett did manage to run competitively in some areas of

Florida, especially in the west, but with just 36 percent of the vote, the Constitutional

Unionists could not claim to exert any future influence on the process of secession. Douglas

would collect just 222 votes in Florida – more than two-thirds of those votes coming from

the port cities of Pensacola and Jacksonville, which had experienced a small migration of

northerners in the late 1850s.[35] But it would be all for naught. Lincoln carried eighteen

states and walked away with a sizable Electoral College victory. Nationally, Breckenridge

and Bell combined for about 31 percent of the popular vote, compared to nearly 40 percent

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[33] Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, Part II," 51.
[34] Please see election data in Appendix A.
[35] John F. Reiger, "Secession of Florida from the Union: A Minority Decision?" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (Apr. 1968): 361.

for Lincoln and about 30 percent for Douglas. If the election nationally had proven anything, it was that the country was more divided than ever. Republicans were the party of the North, and with Douglas now effectively marginalized, the Democrats were the party of the South. Secession was now inevitable.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The reaction to Lincoln's election was swift and unmistakable. Democratic papers throughout the state, like the Tallahassee *Floridian*, implored Governor Perry to utilize the powers given to him by the Legislature a year earlier and convene the assemblies for discussion of immediate secession. In Fernandina, the *Weekly East Floridian* exclaimed that an "irrepressible conflict has commenced" and that Florida politicians should "throw doubt and indecision to the wind" in regards to secession in the wake of the Lincoln election.[36] The machinations were now in motion for a Florida secession convention, scheduled to be one of the earliest in the entire South. Governor Perry rose to the lectern at the beginning of the regular session of the General Assembly and proclaimed that the only acceptable plan of action for the South was "secession from our faithless, perjured confederates." The assembly intended to convene a secession convention for January 3 of the new year, and when the resolution came to a vote in both houses, the bill passed unanimously in both chambers. It was clear that the elected representatives of the Florida people were already invested in secession before South Carolina declared their own official secession from the Union on December 20. The last several years of Democratic rule and the lack of viable

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[36] Fernandina *East Floridian*, November 14, 1860.

second-party opposition had stacked Florida's legislature with radical politicians who thoroughly supported the right of secession and the protection of slavery. The timeline would be even more condensed now, as Perry's signature on the convention bill meant that elections for delegates would commence on December 22 for the convention two weeks later. At this point in time, the question of secession was not a matter of *if*, but simply a matter of whether or not secession would be an immediate action or whether Florida would wait until Georgia and Alabama declared their intentions for secession. Although the "cooperationists," as those who favored deferred secession were called, were to a man the most conservative members of the Legislature, to think that "conservative" meant what it had just a year or two earlier would be folly. Compared to the political climate in Florida as recently as 1858, almost every member of the Legislature was ardently pro-slavery and accepting of the inevitable fate of secession in the wake of the Republican electoral victory.

As the Florida secession convention opened on January 3, 1861, South Carolina had already been separate from the United States for a full two weeks, and both Mississippi and Alabama had called conventions concurrent with Florida's. Sixty-nine delegates were elected to the convention, about sixty percent of whom were considered immediate secessionists in the Florida press.[37] It is telling that 51 delegates were slave owners, and the vast majority of the delegates were born either in Florida, Georgia, or South Carolina, and had lived most (if not all) of their lives in a slave society. Only eight of the 69 delegates

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[37] Ralph A. Wooster, "The Florida Secession Convention," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Apr. 1958): 374.

were born outside of slaveholding areas, and according to Census reports, each owned

slaves as of 1860.[38] Whether planter, merchant, or lawyer, the men of the Florida secession

convention were all different shades of the same color; the debate over whether one

delegate or another was for immediate or deferred secession is purely academic. Each

delegate had been elected for the sole purpose of removing Florida from the United States.

The protection of their property – their slaves – and by extension the entire way of life in

the southern states was at stake. The protection of this precious property "was worth every

sacrifice that such a radical measure as secession might entail," and involvement in the

Convention effectively negated the significance of "conservative" or "radical."[39]

Among the first orders of business was the election of ardent secessionist John C.

McGehee as president of the proceedings. Unlike many of the other slaveholders at the

Convention, McGehee was a devout Christian who saw it a moral necessity to protect

slavery at all costs.[40] The election of McGehee immediately set the tone for the remainder of

the Convention, as it became increasingly clear that the most radical members of the

delegation – those calling for unilateral secession – held the most influence. Former federal

judge McQueen McIntosh introduced a series of resolutions that came to define the purpose

of the Convention itself. First, the resolution made clear that the Florida delegation

believed secession to be a constitutional right of the states to enact as they saw fit. Because

of the supposed constitutionality of secession, the elected representatives at the

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[38] *U.S. Census, 1860*, as compiled in Wooster, "Florida Secession Convention". 383-385.
[39] Hadd, "Irony of Secession," 26.
[40] Dodd, "The Secession Movement in Florida, Part II," 63.

Convention were therefore tasked with the responsibility of this severance. In what would be the most important wording of the resolution, the delegation found "just and proper cause" for Florida to secede from the Union.[41] The passage of the McIntosh resolutions was the final push toward immediate secession, as the cooperationists found themselves increasingly marginalized by the sheer inertia of the proceedings. By January 10, the final Ordinance of Secession had passed the Convention by a vote of 62 to 7. As McGehee announced the Ordinance passed, marked in the Convention Journal of Proceedings at 12:22 p.m., Florida became the third state to declare secession from the Union. Just sixteen years after statehood, Florida stood at the precipice of the conflict that would disrupt every aspect of southern life, all for the sake of trying to protect it.

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[41] *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida, Begun and Held at the Capitol in the City of Tallahassee, on Thursday, January 3, A.D., 1861* (Tallahassee: Dyke & Carlisle, 1861), 6.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Florida's secession from the United States on January 10, 1861, the state became the third to leave the Union in the aftermath of Lincoln's victory. Governor Perry had requested $100,000 in funding from the Legislature to help fund the development of local militias throughout the state. It had been almost thirty years since any real conflict had occurred in Florida, and the newest generation of militiamen had not seen war at all. The three months leading up to the beginning of hostilities at Fort Sumter saw Floridians scrambling to organize before outright war began. Due to the immense influence of the secession convention and the acquiescent nature of the state houses, the convention maintained control of the militias through the beginning of the War. However, the emergence of the Confederate States of America meant that Florida was required to contribute troops to the central army stationed in Pensacola.[1] The political situation of March and April 1861 meant that Gov. Milton was bound by the secession convention and the Legislature, and with the increasing number of officers in the militia ranks, he was influenced by the military as well. There would be no unity in Florida's military organization until well after the War began. The fight for the protection of slavery began with a very inauspicious start.

The war would ravage most of the South, but Florida was able to dodge most of the brunt of the battles. There were several battles throughout the state, including the Battle of Olustee in February 1864 that involved more than 10,000 soldiers and resulted in nearly

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[1] George C. Bittle, "Florida Prepares for War, 1860-1861," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Oct. 2007): 149.

3,000 casualties for both sides; the Confederate victory headed off a likely Union charge to

capture Tallahassee. For the war, there are no reliable numbers to indicate the number of

casualties that Florida soldiers suffered during the war, although about 15,000 soldiers

took part in the war.[2] Florida's immense coastline made the initial Union plan of naval

blockades more difficult than expected, and Florida maintained a thriving smuggling

market during the Civil War. The small population of the state made it difficult at times for

the state to provide the necessary troops to the Confederate war effort, and by the middle

of the war in 1863, a substantial amount of anti-Confederacy sentiment began to rise

throughout the state. Although this sentiment was likely not indicative of a pro-Union

minority, the level of cultural and political unrest in Florida made the war effort even more

difficult. By 1865, the rest of the South had submitted to the Union Army, and after

sectional turmoil, secession, and four years of fighting, the institution that the South had

fought so hard to protect was gone. So ended the first chapters of Florida's state history,

not with a bang, but with a whimper.

It is well known just how important a role slavery played in the southern United

States before the Civil War. On the eve of the war, nearly four million slaves lived in the

South, and what had started as a war to quell a rebellion evolved into a conflict for the very

freedom of those slaves. The historical debate, though, has centered on what role slavery

played in instigating the sectional conflict in the first place. Theories of states' rights, the

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[2] Sandra Friend, *Florida in the Civil War: A State in Turmoil* (Brookfield, Conn: Twenty-First Century Books, 2001), 35.

economic and manufacturing inequities between the North and South, or the election of Lincoln and the Republicans have all been proposed as singular reasons for secession and civil war. But at the heart of every southern issue, every conflict between northern and southern interests, was slavery. Slavery so permeated the culture and politics of the South as to be inexorable from one another. Boiled down to its very essence, the Civil War was fought for the protection and future expansion of slavery. It is also strikingly clear that the politics and culture of Florida in the antebellum period directly reflect this theory. After economic issues became *passé* in the early 1850s, the only difference between Whigs and Democrats in Florida was their policy toward slavery. National events had delineated how and where the sectional conflicts would play out, and the Democrats were much more capable in convincing Floridians that their policies could best protect slavery and the interests of every free person in the state.

As the elections of 1858 and 1860 and the secession convention of January 1861 definitively demonstrated, Florida voters were keenly aware of the political and cultural importance of protecting slavery. In newspaper accounts, legislative proceedings, and speeches and letters from major players in the state, the point of conversation ultimately led back to protecting slavery. Republican rule would mean an infringement of the rights of slaveholders throughout the South, and with one of the highest percentages of slave ownership in the South, Florida would be instantly affected. The actions of Florida politicians and the voting numbers of the rest of the population both point toward the same conclusion: the protection of slavery was the paramount issue in Florida in the years

leading up to the Civil War, and all political decisions made in the state were influenced by this realization. Even for those families in Florida who could not think to afford a slave, their place in society was guaranteed by slavery. Florida's economy continued to grow throughout the 1850s, all built upon the back of slavery and increasing cotton production. Parts of Florida, especially around Tallahassee, were blessed with rich soils that were capable of growing even long-staple cotton, which could garner a substantially heftier sum on the open market.[3] Anything that could disrupt the movement of slaves, goods, and capital around Florida and the rest of the South meant an end to the southern way of life. Slavery had to be protected, and secession was the one way the South could conceive to ensure its survival.

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By no means is this research into the political history of antebellum Florida complete. Although Florida's statehood before secession lasted just 16 years, the multitude of personalities and opinions means that an even more detailed picture of Florida's place in the antebellum South can be created. There are a number of additional areas of research that should be explored in the future, but one in particular deserves immediate attention. More research should be done on the influence of egalitarian republican ideology in Florida as a catalyst for secession. Other longer, more in-depth analyses of state politics in the South have postulated that republicanism was the most pervasive reason for non-slaveholders to support secession and the Civil War, even more so than slavery. The

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[3] Rivers, "Slavery in Microcosm: Leon County, Florida," 240.

difference between a protection of slavery argument and the republican ideology argument is largely academic, but the implications are more wide-ranging. The number of sources from the "average person" in Florida is unfortunately quite small, and ascertaining the mood and ideology of the common yeoman farmer or merchant is difficult outside of voting records. Although Florida did have a thriving newspaper industry in the antebellum period, the papers of the frontier and early statehood periods focus predominantly on agricultural and economic topics, while in the 1850s the papers become far more politicized when slavery takes over as the dominant topic of the day. Within these sources, the number of stories pertaining to the common folk of Florida is, again, very low. It is important, however, because republicanism *was* a major influence in many regions of the South. This may have been the same in Florida, but the current availability of necessary primary source material makes such a conclusion untenable.

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Even today, Florida is impossible to characterize as a single, monolithic culture. Floridian identities differ from the Panhandle to the Keys. Although it is technically the furthest south of all the Deep South states, Florida has maintained a distinct identity from the rest of the South, even if similarities still remain. The situation was much the same in the antebellum period, where Floridians saw carved out their own distinctive niche in the South. Politically, Floridians stuck to the two-party system longer than any other state except Louisiana, turned around their economy the fastest after the panics of the 1830s, and decided that unilateral secession was their best course of action. Instead of simply

following the lead of the larger, more powerful slave states on its borders, Florida

politicians were some of the most fiercely independent minds in the South. Although much

of the history of the southern United States has glossed over or ignored Florida's place in

the antebellum South and the role that state played in secession, figures like Cabell, Call,

Yulee, Mallory, McGehee, and Perry all left indelible marks on state and South alike.

APPENDIX: VOTER DATA, 1845-1860

Presidential Election of 1848

November 7, 1848

County	ZACHARY TAYLOR Whig		LEWIS CASS Democrat		TOTAL VOTES
Alachua	176	53.01%	156	46.99%	332
Benton	39	38.61%	62	61.39%	101
Calhoun	50	45.05%	61	54.95%	111
Columbia	285	50.18%	283	49.82%	568
Dade	0	0.00%	5	100.00%	5
Duval	312	58.98%	217	41.02%	529
Escambia	226	59.32%	155	40.68%	381
Franklin	131	48.34%	140	51.66%	271
Gadsden	452	63.31%	262	36.69%	714
Hamilton	129	51.81%	120	48.19%	249
Hillsborough	71	40.34%	105	59.66%	176
Holmes	111	80.43%	27	19.57%	138
Jackson	422	71.77%	166	28.23%	588
Jefferson	213	45.71%	253	54.29%	466
Levy	444	61.41%	279	38.59%	723
Liberty	39	62.90%	23	37.10%	62
Madison	272	64.76%	148	35.24%	420
Marion	209	58.38%	149	41.62%	358
Monroe	63	42.28%	86	57.72%	149
Nassau	73	73.00%	27	27.00%	100
Orange	17	27.42%	45	72.58%	62
St. Johns	137	46.60%	157	53.40%	294
St. Lucie	0	0.00%	5	100.00%	5
Santa Rosa	204	76.40%	63	23.60%	267
Wakulla	165	65.74%	86	34.26%	251
Walton	216	72.24%	83	27.76%	299
Washington	88	47.83%	96	52.17%	184
TOTALS:	**4,544**	**58.23%**	**3,259**	**41.77%**	**7,803**

Presidential Election of 1852

November 2, 1852

County	WINFIELD SCOTT Whig		FRANKLIN PIERCE Democrat		TOTAL VOTES
Alachua	111	34.69%	209	65.31%	320
Calhoun	13	17.57%	61	82.43%	74
Columbia	197	36.89%	337	63.11%	534
Dade	No Returns		No Returns		-
Duval	274	46.60%	314	53.40%	588
Escambia	202	48.67%	213	51.33%	415
Franklin	87	33.46%	173	66.54%	260
Gadsden	170	35.71%	306	64.29%	476
Hamilton	27	18.75%	117	81.25%	144
Hernando	47	33.57%	93	66.43%	140
Hillsborough	70	29.79%	165	70.21%	235
Holmes	73	55.30%	59	44.70%	132
Jackson	260	49.90%	261	50.10%	521
Jefferson	85	20.99%	320	79.01%	405
Leon	227	37.15%	384	62.85%	611
Levy	27	38.57%	43	61.43%	70
Madison	101	35.56%	183	64.44%	284
Marion	137	39.94%	206	60.06%	343
Monroe	95	45.02%	116	54.98%	211
Nassau	48	62.34%	29	37.66%	77
Orange	35	50.00%	35	50.00%	70
Putnam	37	44.05%	47	55.95%	84
St. Johns	97	40.93%	140	59.07%	237
St. Lucie	0	0.00%	7	100.00%	7
Santa Rosa	218	57.82%	159	42.18%	377
Wakulla	90	53.57%	78	46.43%	168
Walton	113	42.32%	154	57.68%	267
Washington	34	23.78%	109	76.22%	143
TOTALS:	**2,875**	**39.97%**	**4,318**	**60.03%**	**7,193**

Presidential Election of 1856

November 2, 1852

County	MILLARD FILLMORE American		JAMES BUCHANAN Democrat		TOTAL VOTES
Alachua	142	28.23%	361	71.77%	503
Calhoun	50	41.32%	71	58.68%	121
Columbia	460	49.89%	462	50.11%	922
Dade	No Returns		No Returns		-
Duval	434	56.00%	341	44.00%	775
Escambia	234	48.45%	249	51.55%	483
Franklin	96	35.16%	177	64.84%	273
Gadsden	300	47.77%	328	52.23%	628
Hamilton	157	46.59%	180	53.41%	337
Hernando	40	28.37%	101	71.63%	141
Hillsborough	173	32.16%	365	67.84%	538
Holmes	87	53.37%	76	46.63%	163
Jackson	457	51.46%	431	48.54%	888
Jefferson	145	27.10%	390	72.90%	535
Leon	294	41.53%	414	58.47%	708
Levy	55	55.00%	45	45.00%	100
Liberty	63	41.72%	88	58.28%	151
Madison	360	44.23%	454	55.77%	814
Manatee	31	56.36%	24	43.64%	55
Marion	210	39.33%	324	60.67%	534
Monroe	54	19.57%	222	80.43%	276
Nassau	70	34.48%	133	65.52%	203
Orange	33	39.29%	51	60.71%	84
Putnam	25	26.32%	70	73.68%	95
St. Johns	75	27.47%	198	72.53%	273
St. Lucie	No Returns		No Returns		-
Santa Rosa	334	62.55%	200	37.45%	534
Sumpter	49	32.89%	100	67.11%	149
Volusia	41	44.09%	52	55.91%	93
Wakulla	149	46.86%	169	53.14%	318
Walton	143	52.57%	129	47.43%	272
Washington	72	32.00%	153	68.00%	225
TOTALS:	**4,833**	**43.19%**	**6,358**	**56.81%**	**11,191**

Presidential Election of 1860

November 6, 1860

	JOHN BELL		STEPHEN DOUGLAS		JOHN BRECKINRIDGE		TOTAL
County	Constitutional Union		Northern Democrat		Southern Democrat		VOTES
Alachua	195	26.82%	5	0.69%	527	72.49%	727
Brevard	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	8	100.00%	8
Calhoun	9	13.64%	0	0.00%	57	86.36%	66
Clay	114	66.67%	0	0.00%	57	33.33%	171
Columbia	214	34.35%	3	0.48%	406	65.17%	623
Dade	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	16	100.00%	16
Duval	195	32.94%	51	8.61%	346	58.45%	592
Escambia	377	56.61%	97	14.56%	192	28.83%	666
Franklin	61	17.68%	0	0.00%	284	82.32%	345
Gadsden	384	49.48%	0	0.00%	392	50.52%	776
Hamilton	111	29.44%	23	6.10%	243	64.46%	377
Hernando	27	15.08%	1	0.56%	151	84.36%	179
Hillsborough	60	16.53%	0	0.00%	303	83.47%	363
Holmes	74	39.15%	0	0.00%	115	60.85%	189
Jackson	462	47.43%	0	0.00%	512	52.57%	974
Jefferson	158	24.50%	0	0.00%	487	75.50%	645
Lafayette	80	45.45%	0	0.00%	96	54.55%	176
Leon	282	36.91%	0	0.00%	482	63.09%	764
Levy	47	19.42%	0	0.00%	195	80.58%	242
Liberty	75	50.34%	0	0.00%	74	49.66%	149
Madison	226	33.73%	0	0.00%	444	66.27%	670
Manatee	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	50	100.00%	50
Marion	99	16.23%	1	0.16%	510	83.61%	610
Monroe	60	21.51%	0	0.00%	219	78.49%	279
Nassau	82	21.93%	1	0.27%	291	77.81%	374
New River	82	22.34%	7	1.91%	278	75.75%	367
Orange	67	54.92%	9	7.38%	46	37.70%	122
Putnam	No Returns		No Returns		No Returns		-
St. Johns	74	25.96%	0	0.00%	211	74.04%	285
St. Lucie	No Returns		No Returns		No Returns		-
Santa Rosa	411	59.22%	17	2.45%	266	38.33%	694
Sumter	44	28.57%	1	0.65%	109	70.78%	154
Suwannee	145	49.32%	5	1.70%	144	48.98%	294
Taylor	64	42.11%	0	0.00%	88	57.89%	152
Volusia	17	19.77%	0	0.00%	69	80.23%	86
Wakulla	104	37.14%	1	0.36%	175	62.50%	280
Walton	173	51.80%	0	0.00%	161	48.20%	334
Washington	61	28.77%	0	0.00%	151	71.23%	212
TOTALS:	**4,634**	**35.62%**	**222**	**1.71%**	**8,155**	**62.68%**	**13,011**

Gubernatorial Election of 1845

May 26, 1845

County	RICHARD K. CALL		WILLIAM D. MOSELEY		TOTAL
	Whig		Democrat		VOTES
Alachua	91	32.04%	193	67.96%	284
Benton	4	4.88%	78	95.12%	82
Calhoun	5	7.46%	62	92.54%	67
Columbia	128	27.35%	340	72.65%	468
Dade	5	7.69%	60	92.31%	65
Duval	156	39.90%	235	60.10%	391
Escambia	171	64.04%	96	35.96%	267
Franklin	106	48.40%	113	51.60%	219
Gadsden	279	54.81%	230	45.19%	509
Hamilton	44	25.88%	126	74.12%	170
Hillsboro	38	33.93%	74	66.07%	112
Jackson	332	71.86%	130	28.14%	462
Jefferson	149	36.79%	256	63.21%	405
Leon	321	54.41%	269	45.59%	590
Madison	124	41.61%	174	58.39%	298
Marion	74	44.05%	94	55.95%	168
Monroe	73	31.74%	157	68.26%	230
Nassau	23	15.13%	129	84.87%	152
Orange	10	26.32%	28	73.68%	38
St. Johns	107	38.49%	171	61.51%	278
St. Lucie	1	5.88%	16	94.12%	17
Santa Rosa	29	17.47%	137	82.53%	166
Wakulla	78	46.99%	88	53.01%	166
Walton	202	75.94%	64	24.06%	266
Washington	11	13.41%	71	86.59%	82
TOTALS:	**2,561**	**43.03%**	**3,391**	**56.97%**	**5,952**

Gubernatorial Election of 1848

October 2, 1848

County	THOMAS BROWN		WILLIAM BAILEY		TOTAL
	Whig		Democrat		VOTES
Alachua	139	46.03%	163	53.97%	302
Benton	47	40.52%	69	59.48%	116
Calhoun	68	54.84%	56	45.16%	124
Columbia	272	48.14%	293	51.86%	565
Dade	0	0.00%	5	100.00%	5
Duval	276	53.38%	241	46.62%	517
Escambia	205	57.26%	153	42.74%	358
Franklin	101	42.62%	136	57.38%	237
Gadsden	439	57.46%	325	42.54%	764
Hamilton	139	36.87%	238	63.13%	377
Hillsborough	No Returns		No Returns		-
Holmes	115	69.70%	50	30.30%	165
Jackson	402	68.60%	184	31.40%	586
Jefferson	160	36.36%	280	63.64%	440
Leon	397	58.90%	277	41.10%	674
Levy	37	69.81%	16	30.19%	53
Madison	284	58.68%	200	41.32%	484
Marion	213	51.82%	198	48.18%	411
Monroe	57	30.98%	127	69.02%	184
Nassau	84	47.46%	93	52.54%	177
Orange	18	30.00%	42	70.00%	60
St. Johns	129	44.03%	164	55.97%	293
St. Lucie	3	15.00%	17	85.00%	20
Santa Rosa	177	67.56%	85	32.44%	262
Wakulla	130	58.82%	91	41.18%	221
Walton	159	60.69%	103	39.31%	262
Washington	94	40.17%	140	59.83%	234
TOTALS:	**4,145**	**52.53%**	**3,746**	**47.47%**	**7,891**

Gubernatorial Election of 1852

October 4, 1852

County	GEORGE T. WARD Whig		JAMES E. BROOME Democrat		TOTAL VOTES
Alachua	160	40.20%	238	59.80%	398
Brevard	0	0.00%	6	100.00%	6
Calhoun	72	47.68%	79	52.32%	151
Columbia	284	47.49%	314	52.51%	598
Dade	No Returns		No Returns		-
Duval	341	55.45%	274	44.55%	615
Escambia	234	50.98%	225	49.02%	459
Franklin	92	35.38%	168	64.62%	260
Gadsden	402	46.74%	458	53.26%	860
Hamilton	148	46.84%	168	53.16%	316
Hernando (frm. Benton)	61	36.53%	106	63.47%	167
Hillsborough	124	38.75%	196	61.25%	320
Holmes	112	74.17%	39	25.83%	151
Jackson	366	59.13%	253	40.87%	619
Jefferson	149	35.31%	273	64.69%	422
Leon	347	47.86%	378	52.14%	725
Levy	0	0.00%	5	100.00%	5
Madison	315	55.65%	251	44.35%	566
Marion	239	47.23%	267	52.77%	506
Monroe	74	32.46%	154	67.54%	228
Nassau	60	51.28%	57	48.72%	117
Orange	40	56.34%	31	43.66%	71
Putnam	74	56.92%	56	43.08%	130
St. Johns	95	40.60%	139	59.40%	234
Santa Rosa	237	60.93%	152	39.07%	389
Wakulla	182	58.90%	127	41.10%	309
Walton	161	56.69%	123	43.31%	284
Washington	79	37.80%	130	62.20%	209
TOTALS:	**4,336**	**48.37%**	**4,628**	**51.63%**	**8,964**

Gubernatorial Election of 1856

October 6, 1856

County	David Shelby Walker "American"		Madison S. Perry Democrat		TOTAL VOTES
Alachua	189	36.00%	336	64.00%	525
Brevard	4	28.57%	10	71.43%	14
Calhoun	83	46.63%	95	53.37%	178
Columbia	499	53.54%	433	46.46%	932
Dade	0	0.00%	6	100.00%	6
Duval	488	64.38%	270	35.62%	758
Escambia	234	47.46%	259	52.54%	493
Franklin	107	40.68%	156	59.32%	263
Gadsden	423	53.48%	368	46.52%	791
Hamilton	226	54.85%	186	45.15%	412
Hernando	87	41.63%	122	58.37%	209
Hillsborough	157	33.05%	318	66.95%	475
Holmes	112	79.43%	29	20.57%	141
Jackson	471	53.58%	408	46.42%	879
Jefferson	176	33.21%	354	66.79%	530
Leon	368	47.67%	404	52.33%	772
Levy	79	53.74%	68	46.26%	147
Liberty	76	44.97%	93	55.03%	169
Madison	535	55.85%	423	44.15%	958
Manatee	34	60.71%	22	39.29%	56
Marion	267	43.06%	353	56.94%	620
Monroe	62	21.09%	232	78.91%	294
Nassau	93	46.73%	106	53.27%	199
Orange	43	43.88%	55	56.12%	98
Putnam	106	46.29%	123	53.71%	229
St. Johns	64	24.43%	198	75.57%	262
Santa Rosa	303	59.41%	207	40.59%	510
Sumpter	81	49.69%	82	50.31%	163
Volusia	47	60.26%	31	39.74%	78
Wakulla	194	56.73%	148	43.27%	342
Walton	181	51.86%	168	48.14%	349
Washington	105	41.02%	151	58.98%	256
TOTALS:	**5,894**	**48.68%**	**6,214**	**51.32%**	**12,108**

Gubernatorial Election of 1860

October 1, 1860

County	Edward A. Hopkins Constitutional Union		John Milton Democrat		TOTAL VOTES
Alachua	192	27.16%	515	72.84%	707
Brevard	4	23.53%	13	76.47%	17
Calhoun	20	20.00%	80	80.00%	100
Clay	138	67.32%	67	32.68%	205
Columbia	283	55.27%	229	44.73%	512
Dade	0	0.00%	27	100.00%	27
Duval	275	54.35%	231	45.65%	506
Escambia	397	72.18%	153	27.82%	550
Franklin	41	21.93%	146	78.07%	187
Gadsden	425	54.49%	355	45.51%	780
Hamilton	179	42.22%	245	57.78%	424
Hernando	87	29.10%	212	70.90%	299
Hillsborough	43	11.08%	345	88.92%	388
Holmes	80	47.06%	90	52.94%	170
Jackson	470	47.81%	513	52.19%	983
Jefferson	175	29.07%	427	70.93%	602
Lafayette	92	45.77%	109	54.23%	201
Leon	352	46.81%	400	53.19%	752
Levy	86	33.46%	171	66.54%	257
Liberty	99	57.56%	73	42.44%	172
Madison	423	64.09%	237	35.91%	660
Manatee	9	9.18%	89	90.82%	98
Marion	235	35.71%	423	64.29%	658
Monroe	45	22.61%	154	77.39%	199
Nassau	71	21.45%	260	78.55%	331
New River	222	56.35%	172	43.65%	394
Orange	114	67.86%	54	32.14%	168
Putnam	110	42.47%	149	57.53%	259
St. Johns	104	34.44%	198	65.56%	302
Santa Rosa	319	55.48%	256	44.52%	575
Sumter	98	50.26%	97	49.74%	195
Suwannee	137	50.37%	135	49.63%	272
Taylor	88	49.72%	89	50.28%	177
Volusia	39	37.50%	65	62.50%	104
Wakulla	146	46.95%	165	53.05%	311
Walton	198	50.90%	191	49.10%	389
Washington	86	33.99%	167	66.01%	253
TOTALS:	**5,882**	**44.61%**	**7,302**	**55.39%**	**13,184**

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