

1928

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Recommended Citation

Pasco, Samuel (1928) "Samuel Pasco (1834-1917)," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 7 : No. 2 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol7/iss2/6>

SAMUEL PASCO (1834-1917)

Samuel Pasco was born in London, on June 28th, 1834. His parents moved to Prince Edwards Island during his infancy and later settled in Charlestown, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. He attended school there and afterwards entered Harvard College, graduating in 1858. About the time of his graduation, a group of Southern planters in far-off Florida had organized an academy and applied to the president of Harvard to recommend a principal. The graduate was recommended and accepted the position. And so the young English-American was transplanted from the hotbed of abolition to the heart of the Old South. The young schoolmaster, traveling largely by stage-coach, made his way to the scene of his future labors at Waukeenah, in the southern part of Jefferson County.

Two years spent in the intimacy that the warm-hearted Southern hospitality soon established between him and the families of his pupils, completely won him over to the cause of the South, and when he closed the academy in July, 1861, it was to go forth with fifteen of his older pupils and enlist in the armies of the Con-

Note-The accompanying history of Jefferson County, Florida, was prepared by Senator Pasco at the time of the dedication of the court house at Monticello in 1910, and was in part used by him in an address on that occasion. As first written the history of this region was traced from the earliest times to 1910; but because much relating to the period prior to the establishment of the county in 1827 has appeared in other articles in the **QUARTERLY** the narrative will begin with that year. The entire manuscript has been given to and may be seen in the collections of the Society.

Samuel Pasco, of Pensacola, has been asked to bring together here an outline of the most important events and services of his father's life. It is hoped that an adequate biography of one whose services to Florida were so extensive will appear in a future issue.--Ed.

federacy. His devotion to his boys is vividly illustrated by an incident told by one of his comrades, Clarence Smith, in *Camp Fires of the Confederacy*, entitled "Private Pasco", in which he rescued a wounded boy under heavy fire from between the lines. He served in the Third Florida Regiment throughout the war. Though almost continuously detailed for clerical work at regimental headquarters to the time he was captured, he participated in every action that his command engaged in. He was wounded and captured at Missionary Ridge and remained for fourteen months a prisoner at Camp Morton, despite the efforts of Northern friends to induce him to take the oath of allegiance. At length he was exchanged and the end of the war found him on crutches, on furlough in Florida while recovering from his wounds.

Samuel Pasco's first public office was Clerk of the Circuit Court of Jefferson County, to which he was elected in the interim between the surrender of the Southern forces and the beginning of the so-called Carpet Bag regime. The records of Jefferson County show the following formal protest entered on the minutes of the Circuit Court when he surrendered the records to his successor:-

BE IT REMEMBERED that on this the 24th day of August, A. D. 1868, came Robert Meacham and claimed the office of Clerk of the Circuit Court in and for the said County of Jefferson, by virtue of a certain instrument purporting to be a commission from one Harrison Reed, claiming to be Governor of the State of Florida, and it appearing that the said Commission is issued under the State seal, and that the said Harrison Reed is actually exercising the functions of Governor as aforesaid and that he has full power to enforce the said Commission; the undersigned, believing it to be his duty as a good citizen to yield obedience to the existing government, has this day surrendered all the records, seals and other public property that has been in his custody as Clerk of the Circuit Court and Criminal Courts in and for this County of Jefferson

to the said Robert Meacham, but he does the same under protest, reserving and claiming all his rights as Clerk as aforesaid. And he protests that the authority under which the said Robert Meacham is acting is unlawful and a usurpation.

And in testimony hereof, he hereto sets his official signature as said Clerk on that day and year aforesaid.

S. PASCO, Clerk

After leaving the clerk's office, he entered the law office of Colonel W. S. Dilworth, his old regimental commander, forming a partnership which lasted until the death of the latter.

His next and perhaps greatest public service was as chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee in 1876 when, under his leadership home rule was restored in Florida. He served in that capacity until 1886. He was elected president of the Constitutional Convention of 1885 which framed our present constitution. In the Democratic Convention of 1886, he and General Perry were placed in nomination for governor, and there ensued a contest that broke all records for endurance. Finally in the interest of harmony he withdrew his name, and on his motion General Perry was nominated by acclamation. In 1887 he was chosen speaker of the House of Representatives; and at the same session was elected to the United States Senate where he served continuously for approximately fourteen years. In 1899 he was appointed on the Isthmian Canal Commission serving until it completed its labors. This was his last public service. He died March 13, 1917.

Samuel Pasco was called to the leadership of almost every body, legislative, political, and fraternal of which he was a member. He served as state commander of the Confederate Veterans; for three years he was grand master of the Masons, and as we have already recounted, served in succession as speaker of the House, chairman of the Democratic Executive

Committee and president of the Constitutional Convention.

His life was too active and full otherwise for much work of a literary character, but he was deeply interested in all matters pertaining to history, particularly of his adopted State. He wrote the chapter on Florida in *Why the Solid South*, a history of reconstruction in the South, edited by Hilary A. Herbert. He also wrote a history of Masonry in Florida.

While this sketch is intended rather as a brief recounting of his public service than as a biography, we cannot forbear quoting a tribute paid him by the late General B. W. Partridge who knew him intimately for more than fifty years:

He was a potent thinker--a deep student--a loyal devotee to those things that men love and respect--an ardent tutor--a courageous soldier--a patriotic zealous citizen, clean in his public and private conduct--a model of loyalty in his home life--a devoted husband--an idolized father--inflexible in his private friendships--a safe, unselfish political captain--a statesman and a philosopher, and above all--an exemplary Christian.

SAMUEL PASCO (JR.)