

STARS

Florida Historical Quarterly


Volume 34
Number 1 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 34,
Issue 1

Article 5

1955

“Southern Rights” and Yankee Humor: A Confederate-Federal Jacksonville newspaper

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Recommended Citation

Chamberlain, Valentine B. (1955) "“Southern Rights” and Yankee Humor: A Confederate-Federal Jacksonville newspaper," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 34 : No. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol34/iss1/5>

"SOUTHERN RIGHTS" AND YANKEE HUMOR

A Confederate-Federal Jacksonville Newspaper

During the War for Southern Independence, Jacksonville was occupied by Federal forces several times for varying periods. On October 5, 1862, the town was seized for the second time, having just been abandoned hurriedly by most of the inhabitants who had not already left their homes earlier in the war.

Captain Valentine B. Chamberlain was in command of a company of the 7th Connecticut Volunteers which was among the first to land. Later he wrote home a full account of the expedition, with details of the desolation he found in Jacksonville. The letter is of so much historical interest to us in Florida that it was printed entire in this *Quarterly* (xv. pp. 85-94, Oct. 1936)*

In one of the deserted buildings, Capt. Chamberlain came upon a printery which proved to be the office of a small Jacksonville newspaper *Southern Rights*, a single sheet of only one printed page. The next issue, vol. I, no. 11, Oct. 4, 1862, (the day before the arrival of the Federals) was set-up ready for printing. Capt. Chamberlain writes:

"He [Gen. Brannan, in command] gave me instructions to fire the office of the Secesh paper and gut it— I did both and more too. I found some of the type up and so I added some to the matter, having printers in my company, and printed a few copies. It proved quite a sell. The General thought it was the last paper printed by the retreating editor. After we got home [Hilton Head, S.C.] the printers of *The New South* got hold of a copy and they supposed it was real Sesech, so they went to work and set it up anew and are making, I suppose, quite a speck as they sell the paper for five cents. After printing, as I

* The letter was reserved in the family of Capt. Chamberlain, and because it is of so much interest to us in Florida, has been given to the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, by his son, Mr. Rodman W. Chamberlain, of New Britain, Connecticut.

have said, I had my company take down the press and carry it to the boat. . . ."

It is quite evident, from their content, that he added four paragraphs, all in the first column. These he marked with a pen, as shown on the enlargement of that column herewith. Evidently a local election was in the offing.

Both the original, as Capt. Chamberlain printed it, and the reprint as set-up again at the headquarters of the district in Hilton Head, South Carolina, are reproduced in facsimile here. An "Explanation" was added to the reprint, as shown.

Because of their especial interest, other portions of Capt. Chamberlain's letter are reprinted here from the *Quarterly* of more than twenty years ago:

"If you could see Jacksonville you could thoroughly realize what secession has done for the south. Desolation and distress are before you. Before reaching the city you see the ruins of a large number of steam saw mills, they were burned before our people reached there last season. The work was done by the rebels to keep them from our possession. I believe they are owned mostly by northern capital. Grass and weeds grow rank in the principal streets. Houses with blinds closed attest the absence of inmates. Stores with shelves but no goods. Churches deserted and gloomy. Depot, but no cars. Such is the general look of the city. There are a few places where the people stay, through secesh and union rule. Some of them look very well. About the streets you see darkies, a few women, a very few men. The men, you are told, are away up the country, but you know they are in the rebel army. Provisions are very scarce and consequently dear. The prices range about those at Savannah. Corn and sweet potatoes are the chief dependence. One Dutchman that we brought away says that 'he eats no more hominy for ten years.'

"In this place I saw for the first time a woman chewing snuff or 'dipping.' It was on picket close by where we fired upon the

Duval County, at the election in October next.

☞ We are authorized to announce W. A. McLEAN, Esq., as a Candidate for Representative, from Duval County, at the election in October next.

☞ We are authorized to announce HUGH. A. CORLEY, as a Candidate for the office of Register of Public Lands of the State of Florida at the election in October next.

☞ On account of the presence of distinguished visitors the election is indefinitely postponed. ☹

Notice.

The Editor of this paper is absent from town for a few days on urgent business in the interior. It is therefore announced that the publication of this Paper will hereafter be weekly suspended as it has been heretofore, weakly continued.

The taking of our battery after a loss of courage, but no blood, and the presence of the Yankee Fleet, and the fearful proximity of Gen. Brannan and his forces, render the *Southern Rights* precarious.

To fill up, we make some selections from our last issue.

Our stock of paper being small, because of the extensive use of that article in making Confederate Notes, we are unable to meet the large demand for this week's issue.

Exempts from Conscription.

The Confederate Congress has passed an Act, by which certain persons are exempt from milita-

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EXPLANATION—When the U. S. Forces under Brigadier General J. M. Brannan visited Jacksonville, Fla., the form of the "Southern Rights" was found standing in the Office just as it was left by the *Steakdining Rebels*. The office was immediately "cleaned out," and—there being more "Devils" than printers present—the form was thrown into "pj" in less time than it takes to write it. A proof sheet coming into our possession, we re-print the sheet as near like the original as possible, for the purpose of showing to our friends at the North, the "Talent, Vigor, Heroism and Military arder" that is ~~not~~ displayed in this Trophy of Jacksonville. [Printers.]

This Explanation was added to the reprint as reset at Hilton Head.

From the reprint.

Camp 7th Regt. Conn. Vols

Wilmington N.C. Oct 10-1862

My dear friends:

If you are of the mind you
may take a rumble with me in fact
go on an "Expectation". It is several days since

So the rumble has
been. It matters little after all when the body fails.
Wednesday he has come home. He has I call Port Royal home.
I have not forgotten another & clearer one. It was rather rough
& rainy. a bad time for the earth on the hill. Thursday morn-
ing came by to the death. And here down in Camp. And
thus it happened in the "Flinders War"

As ever
Wilmington.

more than in tonight any day since
more promising for ten years. In this place I den for
the first time a woman chewing snuff or "dipping". It was
done in a nickle. Done by when he found upon the Casahy.

cavalry. (By the way, the women in that region were frightened some. We fired directly toward the town right in among the houses. We were forced to it by the presence of the enemy in that locality. The women folk complained bitterly of the rebel soldiers for leaving the Bluff and coming into the town to fight.) But I was speaking of the 'dipping.' After the skirmish with the enemy was fairly over, I stepped onto the piazza of one of the houses close by, to talk to the ladies. There they were, one quite decent looking young woman, married, husband gone, she said he was not in the rebel army. She sat in a rocking chair, with a tin box looking like one of my old worm boxes in one hand, and a stick in the other. The stick she plunged into the box, in which was the snuff, then into her mouth. After a little, she would spit from her mouth the collected saliva black with tobacco. How do you like the picture of the Jacksonville ladies? . . .

"We lost one man in this place. . . . And thus it happened in the 'Florida' war.

As Ever,
VALENTINE"