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THE ADVENT OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR IN FLORIDA, 1898

by WILLIAM J. SCHELLINGS

ON FEBRUARY 1, 1898, the Jacksonville *Times Union and Citizen* angrily denounced General Nelson Miles for what it termed an attempt to waste the taxpayers' money. Miles had appeared before a Congressional committee with a plea for funds with which to build fortifications around Washington. The Jacksonville editor declared that there was "no war in sight," and that the money might better be spent on the construction of an intra-coastal waterway, a project already looming large in the minds of many Floridians. His denial of any need for defenses was merely another manner of expressing his stubborn opposition to anything that might encourage people to think that war with Spain might result from the Cuban crisis. His attitude on this matter was the same as that of other Florida editors, all of whom believed that war would be harmful to Florida's future. ¹

In the short period of one month it was evident that his attitude had changed. On March 2 the same paper published another editorial on the same subject, the need for coastal fortifications. This time the editor pointed out that all of Florida's cities were completely defenseless, and that all of them depended to a large degree on their trade with other ports for their livelihood. He also pointed out that in the event of war with Spain, these same cities would be more exposed to attack than any others, simply because of the fact that they were so close to Cuba. He then demanded that the Army take steps immediately to provide a defense for the cities in question. In this fashion, without for a moment abandoning his sturdy opposition to war, the editor tacitly admitted that such a war was probably inevitable.

Other journals in the state were following the same line of thought. On March 9 the *Tampa Tribune* openly admitted that war with Spain was by then unavoidable, and also demanded that the War Department begin to construct batteries to protect the

1. Material for this article has been taken from William J. Schellings, "The Role of Florida in the Spanish American War, 1898." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1958.

city. The only two cities in the state that were not overly disturbed by the prospect of war were Pensacola and Key West. The existence of Fort Pickens and Fort Barrancas was enough to give Pensacola a feeling of security, and Key West was already witnessing the start of work on the strengthening of her defenses. Both cities were the sites of naval yards, and Key West was even then enjoying a boom in business due to the presence of a number of naval vessels and Army Engineers working on the forts.

All other towns, however, were very conscious of the fact that they were close to the scene of possible naval action in any war over Cuba, and were fully aware that they lacked any means of defense against possible bombardment by the Spanish. Since it was believed that the war would be almost entirely a naval affair, this danger of bombardment assumed an exaggerated importance in the minds of many. They saw Spanish ships shelling the cities at will, and even entertained fears of Spanish landing parties. One such vision in Jacksonville brought a rather sardonic rejoinder from Miami. An item in the Miami *Metropolis* scoffed at Jacksonville's fears, saying that the only defense required by that city was present in the shape of the water hyacinths already clogging the rivers. The writer laughingly declared that no ship could possibly sail up the St. Johns River in the face of a barrage of hyacinths.

Despite this and other similar remarks, the majority of people in the cities concerned took matters very seriously. They, in common with the residents of cities up and down the eastern seaboard, were convinced that the danger was really great, and that fortifications were not only necessary but that the Army had the magical power of producing them at will. As it was, even if the Army had had the men to man such guns, it did not have the guns, the money with which to purchase them, nor the time in which to build the desired works. Ignoring this, cities such as Jacksonville and Tampa pressed their demands for protection without letup, and seemed to believe that any delay was deliberate on the part of the Army.

Tampa, with what was probably the most intensive campaign for guns, began its attempt to secure them on March 11. Mayor M. E. Gillette wrote to Representative Stephen Sparkman, asking the Congressman to use his influence to aid the city. He outlined the defenseless condition of Tampa, stressed the commercial im-

portance of the harbor to the trade of southern Florida, and urged that immediate action be taken. Sparkman did write to Secretary of War Russell Alger to inquire whether or not the Army had any plans to defend Tampa, passing on to the Secretary the information given by Gillette, and requested an immediate reply.²

Alger in turn passed the letter on to General John M. Wilson, Chief of Army Engineers, for a reply. Wilson, whose office was then receiving many such letters, wrote to Sparkman, politely explaining that the Army did not have any plans for Tampa, and that under the circumstances he felt that none could be prepared. He cited the delays that would be encountered in securing land, drawing up plans, building the works, and then placing the guns. As a final answer, he added that in any event the Army did not have funds for any such project. Sparkman duly forwarded the reply to Major Gillette.

The rejection of its plea did not discourage Tampa. It merely doubled and redoubled its efforts, enlisting the aid of the Board of Trade, numerous private citizens, and the city council, as well as the Mayor. All wrote letters or sent telegrams to Secretary Alger, to General Wilson, and to Representative Sparkman. All argued the commercial importance of the city, pointing out that customs receipts at Tampa exceeded those at any other southern city. All, however, received variations of the reply Wilson had sent to Sparkman.

The War Department refused to alter its stand, insisting that the difficulties involved were too great and the time was too short. Not until the end of March did a change of attitude appear, and then only after new and stronger influence had been brought to bear. Tampa was the terminal of the Plant System, a railroad with connections to Washington and New York. It was also the terminal of the Plant Steamship Line, with wharves and storage facilities at Port Tampa, in addition to the extensive freight yards and warehouses of the railroad. Also, the Plant System owned a string of hotels in Florida, with the huge, garish Tampa Bay Hotel the largest of the lot. All were vulnerable to attack from

2. National Archives, *Selected Records Relating to Tampa, Florida, 1896-1898* (Washington: 1934), item lff. The entire story of the attempt to secure defenses is on this strip of microfilmed letters. See items 1 through 22.

the sea, possibly even more so than Tampa itself. Henry Plant, president of both companies, wrote to Secretary Alger on March 22.

In his letter Plant repeated the same arguments that had been presented so many times by others, but he also added a reminder that the government already owned land on two small islands at the entrance of the bay. Egmont and Mullet Keys were so situated that a battery erected on each could command the entrance to the harbor. In addition to this bit of information that may have had considerable weight, Plant wrote in a fashion that indicated a fairly close friendship with the Alger family. He closed his letter with a hope that he and his wife would soon be able to see Mr. and Mrs. Alger in Washington.³

Whether it was the information about Egmont and Mullet Keys or the personal relationship between Alger and Plant that changed the mind of the War Department, it did change. Three days after the letter had been written, Alger sent new orders to General Wilson. The Engineers were told to prepare plans for Tampa's defense, and were specifically told to utilize Egmont and Mullet Keys. Tampa was notified of the change in plans at once, and an almost audible sigh of relief went through the city. Oddly enough no one took the trouble to notify Representative Sparkman, who continued to write letters to Alger asking for action in behalf of Tampa. Finally, on April 4, the Congressman discovered the change in plans, and immediately wired Mayor Gillette to the effect that the city's defense was now assured.

The decision to erect batteries was one thing, but getting the work underway was another. Lieutenant Colonel W. H. Benyaurd, Engineer in charge of the Florida District office, was placed in charge of the work. Under the plans drawn up in Washington, batteries of small caliber guns were planned, at a cost of some \$25,000. Benyaurd protested, saying that the work as planned would do no more than offer "moral encouragement" to the city, and that an effective defense was impossible unless batteries of much larger guns were built. His protest was overruled, however, and the work was begun, though not rapidly enough to satisfy Tampa.

Other Florida cities were having somewhat similar experi-

3. *Ibid.*, item 8.

ences, though not all ended even that well. In Jacksonville the *Times Union and Citizen* had continued its demands for protection ever since its first editorial on March 2. The editor spurred the city to demand that the Florida congressional delegation insist that the Army do something, and reiterated his belief that Florida deserved priority because of its proximity to Cuba. On March 21 the editor noted with some glee that J. E. Ingraham of the Florida East Coast Railroad had gone to Washington to add his influence to that of the Congressmen; the newspaper appeared to have more confidence in the ability of the railroad-man to secure action than in that of the Congressmen. But despite this and other efforts made by city officials, the Board of Trade, and the businessmen of the city, no action was taken by the Army until April 4. On that day a plan was announced to provide batteries for all the major coastal towns in the state. Apparently Mr. Ingraham's influence was less than that of Mr. Plant.

Plans for defense were well and good, but by April war was more than a possibility. It was on April 11 that President McKinley sent his message to Congress asking for authority to use armed forces in Cuba, and by then the cities on the coast were becoming more than alarmed as they waited in vain for work to begin on the fortifications. A large number of towns took independent steps to assure their safety, such as initiating movements to secure rifles from the State Adjutant General for the use of groups of men organized into units of Home Guards. Such local volunteers began drilling and taking target practice in Pensacola, Miami, Palatka, Lake Worth, West Palm Beach, Coconut Grove, and several other towns. St. Augustine pleaded for a garrison to be placed at St. Francis Barracks, and demands for the rehabilitation of old Fort Clinch were heard. Several citizens, Mr. W. W. Dewhurst for one, offered tracts of land ranging from two to two hundred acres for the use of soldiers sent to protect St. Augustine and St. Petersburg.⁴

While the agitation for protection was still going on, new developments had occurred that tended to take the attention of editors and officials away from the matter of defense. On March 13 the War Department had begun to make vague plans for

4. National Archives, War Records Division, *Record Group 98*, File No. 1606. Miami *Metropolis*, April 22, 1898. *Times Union and Citizen* (Jacksonville), April 20, 23, 1898.

the approaching war. It announced the creation of a new Department of the Gulf, including the states of Florida and Georgia. Next it announced plans to concentrate the troops of the regular army in several camps in the southeastern section of the country. Headquarters of the Gulf Department were instructed to report on possible camp sites, and in general it was evident that the Army foresaw the possibility of a need for an army of invasion for Cuba. Speculation was rife on the site of the camps, but even more interesting was the matter of which city would be selected as a base of supplies for any such army.

The Jacksonville *Times Union and Citizen* had brought the matter up as early as March 1, when it sharply challenged the right of Atlanta to regard itself as the obvious choice for a base. But the statement was an isolated item, and no further consideration of the matter appeared in the paper for some time. Even after the announcement of the Army's plans for concentrating troops had been made, the *Times Union and Citizen* ignored or overlooked the possibility that one or more camps might be established within the state. It even failed to renew its claim to a base of supplies for Florida, an omission particularly odd in view of the paper's previous record of searching out every means of bettering the economic position of the state.

All was changed, however, when the *New York Times* printed a story about a conference held at the War Department. The meeting had been held on March 29, and the story, appearing the next day, told of an attempt to decide exactly where the Army would concentrate its troops. Apparently no final decision was reached, as two officers, one from the Army and one from the Navy, were appointed to consider the relative merits of four cities, and to decide on one of them. The four were New Orleans, Mobile, Tampa, and Savannah, and the decision was to be based on the availability of rail and shipping facilities. It was obvious that the *New York Times* erred on one point, for what was to be decided upon was not a camp but a port of embarkation and base of supplies for any future Cuban expedition. All cities mentioned were ports, and the need for shipping facilities indicated an emphasis on ocean transport. At any rate that was the interpretation given the announcement in Florida, and it was on that basis that Tampa now sought to influence the decision in its favor.

The city and its officials were literally galvanized into action. Mayor, Council, Board of Trade, businessmen, all went to work writing letters and sending off telegrams to Secretary of War Alger, to congressmen, and even to President McKinley. The two Tampa papers, the *Times* and the *Tribune*, joined in an effort to publicize Tampa's advantages over the other cities under consideration. Articles praised the rail terminal, the warehouse space available, and the shipping facilities at Port Tampa. The harbor was described in some detail, and the fact that Tampa was the nearest to Cuba of all four cities was played up as a great advantage.⁵

The *Tampa Times* published an article, the first of a series, on March 31. It attempted to itemize all of Tampa's good points. The railroad facilities were described as the "largest and best-equipped in the South." The "unequaled" yards of the Plant System were supplemented by the "modern" terminal and warehouses of the Florida Central and Peninsular Railroad. The wharves at Port Tampa, said to be six thousand feet long, were declared capable of handling sixteen ships at a time. The *Times* asserted that the Plant System was ready to double-track the nine miles of single track road from Tampa to Port Tampa "at a minute's notice."

Other stories followed in both papers. Correspondents for out of state papers filed similar articles, and some did appear in print. The *Chicago Tribune* published what was almost a word for word copy of the *Tampa Times* article. It even added information to the effect that a ship sailing from Tampa to Cuba would be in protected waters for nearly the entire distance, an item that thereafter was emphasized in Tampa.

Telegrams sent to the War Department and to Congressman Sparkman endlessly repeated these and other facts. Figures taken from the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey Reports were cited to prove that Tampa's harbor and channel were larger and deeper than those of the other cities. In all of this it was odd that not one word appeared about the practicality of establishing a camp in Tampa or elsewhere in the state. It was clear that all

5. The story of the campaign for nomination as the base is best followed in the daily issues of the Tampa and Jacksonville newspapers, March 31 to April 16, 1898. A more complete description is given in Schellings, *op. cit.*, Chap. III.

concerned were thinking in terms of a base of supplies, visioning large quantities of freight and little else. No mention was made of the availability of land and water supplies for troops.

Even the Jacksonville *Times Union and Citizen*, always on the lookout for Florida's economic benefit, failed to note that aspect. It gave its support to Tampa as the site of the supply depot, declaring on April 1 that the Gulf coast city enjoyed a clear superiority in position, harbor, and freight facilities. It did alter its stand somewhat on April 5, but merely added a recommendation that a base be established at Miami as well as the one at Tampa. The idea was that a Cuban expedition would be supplied from Tampa, while a Puerto Rican invasion could be based on Miami. This, by the way, was a claim of ability that even Miami itself did not make. That city had expressed regret that the war had not been delayed for a year to two until its harbor was in shape to handle large ships. Jacksonville, however, was satisfied to advocate the choice of both Tampa and Miami on the ground that freight destined for either city would have to pass through Jacksonville first.

During the two weeks which passed before any decision was made it was clear that the War Department itself was quite puzzled as to just where it could mobilize the fifteen thousand regular army troops. Adjutant General H. C. Corbin busied himself telegraphing around to discover a possible camp site. He wired to Key West, and was only discouraged by the repeated statement that water supplies there were in short supply. Eventually Chickamauga National Park was settled on for one camp, but the question of a base remained unsettled until April 15.

On April 13 the *Tampa Times* announced that Mr. Frank Q. Brown had departed for Washington to use his influence. Brown was vice-president of the Plant System, and it was apparent that the newspaper thought quite highly of his ability. Their faith in him was apparently justified. Three days later, the *Times* came out with a 6 A.M. extra edition, announcing that Brown was "the best emissary Tampa ever sent anywhere." The story could have been followed daily in the *New York Times*. That paper, on April 14, reported Brown's arrival in Washington, saying that he had come to attend a conference at the White House, a meeting at which Secretary Alger was also present. The meeting was held on April 15, and on the next day, the *Times*

reported that a decision on the base had been made. Troops were to be sent to New Orleans, Mobile, and Tampa, and the base itself was to be at Tampa.

It was true. On April 15, Adjutant General Corbin sent out orders directing seven regiments of infantry to proceed to Tampa, and also dispatched Major J. W. Pope to that city to select the exact campground. In Tampa, Mr. Brown was given full credit for the decision. The 6 A.M. edition gave the details of the story, and also carried the news that several merchants in Tampa had already sent wires to Representative Sparkman pleading that he use his influence to have the troops camped near the center of town, in order that the merchants might be able to serve the soldiers properly.

Major Pope arrived in Tampa on April 18, two days before the first troop train reached the city. With limited time at his disposal, he was glad to be able to make use of the services of City Engineer Neff, who aided him in selecting grounds for the camp. The area chosen was known as Tampa Heights for its elevation of a few feet above the level of the rest of the city. It was generally north of the town, lying between Nebraska and First Avenues. Plentifully shaded and high enough to provide good drainage, it was to be the best of the many camp sites that were to be established in Tampa.⁶

After securing the ground, Pope made arrangements for a supply of drinking water. The city water works agreed to run pipes to the area, and to install meters. A nominal amount was charged for the water supply. Later charges that water was sold to the Army in Tampa a two cents per gallon were based on an incident occurring afterwards in Port Tampa, in an arrangement between the Army and the Plant System.

Other problems were solved with comparative ease. Tampa was eager to please the Army, and full cooperation was offered whenever possible. The electric company agreed to string wires out to the camp, and the street car company began to lay track out to Tampa Heights. The city started to put down a wooden sidewalk, and to pave Florida Avenue out to the area. In addition, Pope was able to secure adequate supplies of forage for the animals that would accompany the troops, and ground for several

6. Schellings, *op. cit.*, Chap. IV., and Appendix I for maps of the camps.

large corrals was secured. Ten thousand dollars, the first of hundreds of thousands, were deposited to Pope's account in a Tampa bank to enable him to make spot purchases for cash.⁷

While Pope represented the Quartermaster Corps, and was responsible for many of the services and supplies required by the Army, he was not the only man in Tampa busy preparing for the coming of the troops. Officers from the Ordnance, Commissary, and Engineer Departments were also in town. They competed with Pope for the most desirable warehouses, for the best labor, and for the wagon transport available for hire in the city. This competition helped greatly to keep every one in Tampa busy and happy. Within a few days every man who desired to work had a job; every building that could be rented was under lease, and teamsters came to Tampa from other towns with their wagons and animals. Long before the city held its full quota of soldiers it resembled a boom town at its busiest.

The first arrangements were scarcely completed when the first troop train arrived. On April 20, between nine and ten A.M., a Plant System train in two sections pulled into the station. It carried five companies of the Fifth United States Infantry with their baggage, wagon transport, animals, and supplies. The men remained aboard the cars until noon, meanwhile becoming the center of attention for a growing crowd. Cold drinks and sandwiches were supplied by the citizens, and a lot of good natured banter passed between the soldiers and the civilians.

The Fifth was quickly followed into town by other units. The arrival of the First United States Infantry was typical. A full regiment, it arrived on fifty cars, sufficient to carry the twenty-three officers, 482 men, and the animals, transport, and baggage. By the time it reached Tampa on April 29, it was clear that whatever original plans had existed had been scrapped. The city, and Major Pope, too, had expected seven regiments, or a total of approximately three thousand men. By April 22, more than that number had reached the city. On that day twenty-seven troop trains had arrived, and these had brought word that many more were on the way. The camp at Tampa Heights was soon overflowing, and Major Pope was compelled to rush around selecting additional tracts of land for new camp sites. These were

7. National Archives, *Record Group 92*, File No. 108663.

located at DeSoto Park, Palmetto Beach, Fort Brooke, Port Tampa, Ybor City, and one was even placed directly behind the Tampa Bay Hotel. Several of the sites chosen left a great deal to be desired, though all seemed to be acceptable at the time. Difficulties that appeared later included such things as the fact that some grounds were subject to flooding, and that a large corral containing over a thousand horses and mules was directly behind one camp.⁸

General James Wade arrived in town on April 21 with orders to take command of the camp. Casting about for a building suitable for headquarters, he found the Tampa Bay Hotel ideal. The Plant System had closed the hotel for the season on April 9, but decided to reopen it to accommodate the officers, newspaper correspondents, and visitors. Needless to say it was quickly filled, and did not lack for guests until the major portion of the Army had departed. Some of the visitors were foreign military attaches, whose glittering uniforms added a touch of color to the scene. The hotel became so much of a military scene that one correspondent declared that "even the ladies were up in arms." The correspondents, in Tampa in expectation that the army would sail very shortly, quickly became bored with the inaction, the heat, and the dust. As a result, whenever they tired of writing about the troops they turned to describing the city. While some were favorably inclined toward the bustling little town, many took a distinctly scornful attitude, and as a result several became the particular targets of comment in the Tampa newspapers. Richard Harding Davis and Poultney Bigelow were the favorite targets of the *Tampa Times* because of the articles they wrote. In any event the publicity that the city received brought its name before the eyes of the entire country, and Tampa benefited thereby.

The arrival of the thousands of soldiers and the resultant boom in business attracted attention all through Florida. Farmers were advised to remember the new market when they went to Tampa to sell their produce. The farmers of the area around Tampa had a banner season despite the fact that dry weather ruined

8. See Schellings, *op. cit.* For the story of difficulties at this and other camps, see Chaps. V to X.

many crops that year.⁹ But most of the attention was evidenced in the actions taken by other towns in attempting to secure camps in their localities, even if it meant taking them away from Tampa.

The first reaction came simultaneously with the news that troops were going to the west coast city. Mr. J. E. Parrott, vice-president of the Florida East Coast Railroad, sent a protest to Brigadier General Graham in Atlanta. He declared that troops stationed at Jacksonville, St. Augustine, or Miami would enjoy facilities superior to those offered in Tampa. He particularly urged that the Army utilize Miami, praising the grounds and water there as being unsurpassable. Receiving no reply to his first wire of April 16, he repeated it on April 26, again stressing Miami as a potential camp. He must have misunderstood the mission of the Army, for his wires indicated that he still thought that the troops were in Florida to protect the state, and that if they were to go to Cuba, that they would sail from Key West.¹⁰ Parrott might have added that he wanted a share of the freight and passenger traffic for his railroad, which was the only one serving Miami. He was unsuccessful in his attempt to secure a camp, but later on in the summer Henry Flagler did succeed, and ultimately Miami received its camp.

The next sign of activity in the quest for camps came from Jacksonville. At first the *Times Union and Citizen*, under the impression that Tampa would be merely the base of supplies, had backed that city's efforts to secure that nomination. Then, when it became evident that a sizable camp was also involved, the newspaper began to advance claims on behalf of Jacksonville. It suggested, as early as April 22, that the west coast city was becoming crowded, and that some of the troops enroute to Tampa might very well be halted and camped at Jacksonville. It pointed out that in such a case the soldiers could be moved swiftly to Tampa when it came time for them to embark, or could be sent quickly to Miami if that city were to be used as a base for a Puerto Rican expedition. Despite the editorial and an article written by a Captain C. E. Garner, no action was taken by the city itself until April 29. Apparently that much time was required

9. Typical items in the Florida papers on this were similar to the item reprinted in the *Tampa Tribune*, May 1, 1898, taken from the *Ocala Banner*: "10,000 troops at Tampa ought to boost the price of farm products a notch or two. . . ."

10. National Archives, *Record Group 98*, Files Nos. 1420, 1833.

to permit the stories of Tampa's new-found prosperity have the right effect on Jacksonville's city officials and businessmen. On April 29, however, a mass meeting was held, and, after a discussion of the matter, Mayor R. D. Knight was able to secure pledges from several landowners that sufficient ground would be available to the Army free of charge. The mayor also instructed city officials to look into the practicality of having the city offer free water, electricity, and sewerage service as an inducement.

When it was decided that the above services could be offered without charge, a committee was appointed to visit General Shafter in Tampa and present the proposal to him. They did so, and arranged to have a group of army officers visit Jacksonville and inspect the proposed campsites. The report of the officers was highly favorable, and on May 21, General Shafter wired Secretary Alger that, due to crowded conditions in Tampa, he was halting some troops at Jacksonville, and establishing a camp there.

General Fitzhugh Lee, erstwhile consul-general at Havana, was appointed to command the new camp, and upon arriving in the city promptly named the camp "Cuba Libre", much to the delight of the Cubans in the state. The troops assigned to Jacksonville were organized into the Seventh Army Corps, and eventually numbered over thirty thousand.¹¹

Tampa had required relief from the sheer weight of numbers even before May 21, and Shafter had already set up one additional camp at the little town of Lakeland. Located thirty miles east of Tampa, and on a direct railroad line, the new camp housed some four thousand men at a time. They or their replacements remained there for several months, with great benefit to the surrounding area. All the men stationed at Lakeland apparently enjoyed their stay, the most serious complaint being that the farmers apparently sold all of their older horses at high prices to the officers of several volunteer regiments.¹²

Many other towns attempted to secure camps, but only two were successful, Miami and Fernandina, each of whose efforts were backed by a railroad desirous of sharing in the traffic created by a camp. The Florida East Coast Railroad was successful when Henry Flagler, its president, went to work on the problem,

11. See Schellings, *op cit.*, Chap. VII.

12. *Ibid.*

and Miami secured its camp in June. It held seven thousand soldiers, but only for a period of six weeks. At the end of that time the troops were removed and sent to join the Seventh Corps at Jacksonville.¹³ Fernandina received troops in July, after the Florida Central and Peninsular Railroad campaigned vigorously for it. Its troops came from Tampa, as that camp began to lose its importance, but as in the case of Miami, the Fernandina camp lasted for only six weeks, hardly long enough to repay the railroad for its trouble.¹⁴

Many other towns tried unsuccessfully to have the Army encamp troops in their vicinity. The War Department and various congressmen were deluged with letters pressing for consideration. General Shafter and his successors at Tampa were visited by numerous delegations and committees appointed by towns and cities for the purpose of offering what were thought to be irresistible inducements. Several towns continued their campaigns well into the winter, believing that a winter camp would be needed for those soldiers still being kept in the service. In addition to the more or less official groups that sought to influence the selection of camp sites, several individuals offered tracts of land ranging from two acres to two hundred if the Army would send troops. All were refused unless the land offered was located within an area already in use as a camp.¹⁵

Among the other towns in the state that engaged in the scramble for a camp were St. Augustine, Orlando, Fort Ogden, and Punta Gorda, all of whom applied via letter, newspaper, and committees beginning on May 18. They were joined by Ocala and Lake City on May 20, by Tallahassee on May 24, and by Gainesville on May 25. Pensacola made its bid beginning on May 25, after an earlier hope of being named as the base instead of Tampa. It did succeed in having the garrison at Fort Barrancas increased by the assignment of the Third Texas Volunteer Infantry there. Pensacola came to regret the presence of the Texans, who were a undisciplined group greatly disappointed by their inability to join either the Cuban or the Puerto Rican invasions. The city was compensated somewhat by the tremendous activity incurred

13. See *ibid.*, Chap. VIII, and W. J. Schellings, "Soldiers in Miami, 1898," *Tequesta* (1957), 69-76.

14. Schellings, *op cit.*, Chap. VIII.

15. Each town's attempt was recorded in the newspapers, especially the *Times Union and Citizen*.

in the modernization of both the fortifications and the naval base. It probably benefited more in the long run through the permanent improvements to its base facilities and its harbor and channel than it would have by the presence of troops for a short period.¹⁶

All of the principal coastal towns did receive some spur to their economies through the work done on the building of either temporary or of permanent defenses. While Tampa and Key West were the scenes of the greatest activity in this line, Miami, Fernandina, Jacksonville, St. Augustine, and Pensacola saw considerable work done. Even places such as old Ft. Clinch were rehabilitated to a degree, for its guns of Civil War vintage were cleaned up, and a small garrison installed there. St. Francis Barracks, which had been abandoned just prior to the war, was regarrisoned, and detachments of troops or, in some cases, Naval Reserve contingents, were sent to a number of places on the coasts.

Tampa, however, with the possible exception of Key West, saw the greatest amount of work. As soon as it had been announced that a camp of some importance was to be set up at Tampa, the Army Engineers had been compelled to revise plans. The first plans had envisaged small batteries that could have offered more in the way of token protection than a real defense. On April 19 Lieutenant Colonel Benyaurd was directed to drop all other matters and to take personal charge of the work at Tampa. The old plans were scrapped, and Benyaurd proceeded to draw up new ones. Ample funds were deposited to accounts in his name in the Tampa banks, and orders were issued to strip large caliber Hotchkiss guns from the existing works at Ft. Barrancas and Ft. Morgan. These were rushed to Tampa, for, as General Wilson wired Benyaurd, Tampa was going to be a "very important place."¹⁷

Benyaurd's greatest difficulty was encountered in trying to secure a large enough force of laborers. Because of the competition for the supply of local labor being offered by the other departments of the Army in Tampa, Benyaurd found it necessary to recruit labor in Jacksonville, Mobile, and even New Orleans. No expense was spared, and since nearly all the material needed for the actual construction work was purchased locally, the im-

16. Schellings, *op cit.*, Chap. IX.

17. National Archives, *Selected Records . . .*, *passim*.

pact on the city was felt in many areas and for quite a time after the war. The plans in Tampa ultimately provided for permanent works to be constructed at an estimated cost of \$950,000. Nearly one third of that sum was actually spent in the fiscal year from July 1, 1898 to June 30, 1899. That money was spent under Benyaurd's direction in Tampa, and did not include the sums spent elsewhere for guns and other materials.¹⁸

The work on the fortifications was merely one of the many changes taking place in Tampa. It might be said that the city witnessed so many changes in a few months that it would have been difficult to recognize the town afterward. The number of troops arriving in the city had increased each day, and every arrival had meant an enlarged campsite, or an entirely new one. It had meant a new surge of activity in the business of the merchants and contractors of the city. It meant, too, the construction of many new buildings as additional warehouse space was required. It meant the arrival of many hundreds of people, from mere visitors in town to look at the camp, to hucksters and persons of a less desirable sort. All of them, however, added to the sense of excitement that had permeated Tampa since April 16, when it had received word that troops were coming.

After that date, the people of Tampa had begun to share fully in the national fever for war, and after April 20, when the war resolution passed Congress and was signed by the President, the city was wholly converted to the cause. During the hectic days just prior to war, the town had witnessed several scenes that combined portents of the future with near tragedy. For example, when Fitzhugh Lee passed through town enroute to Washington from Havana, he had made what the *Tampa Times* termed a very "belligerent" speech, and had been applauded wildly by a crowd. That same day, and for some time afterward, a number of Spanish families in Tampa expressed concern for their safety, fearing the excesses of the Cuban portion of the population. Despite the assurances of Mayor Gillette that he would see to their protection, a number of these families departed for New York. A few days later another group of Spaniards accepted the offer of the Spanish Government to pay for their passage to Havana. A total of 157 made the trip on the Plant Line steamer "Olivette."

18. Schellings, *op cit.*, Appendix III, Tables I-V.

Those last few days before actual hostilities saw an odd mixture of popular enthusiasm for war on the part of the people and of stubborn, unrelenting opposition to war on the part of the press. As late as April 8, the Jacksonville *Times Union and Citizen* reviewed the situation at length. The paper saw a picture darkened by the editor's pessimism. He predicted that in ten years time Florida would be merely a "way station on the road to Cuba." Other editors were equally gloomy, though perhaps not quite so willing to predict the future. The Miami *Metropolis* kept up its opposition to the end, denouncing the "loud-talking jingoists" who would keep quiet when offered the opportunity to volunteer. The Ocala *Banner* found much to say in favor of the Spanish administration in Cuba when it reviewed matters on April 15. It indirectly placed a good part of the blame for the war on the shoulders of Consul-General Fitzhugh Lee.

When the war resolution passed Congress with the Teller Amendment attached the situation changed. The editors were quick to abandon their opposition, and to join wholeheartedly in an effort to stir up even more enthusiasm for the war. Relieved by the pledge to the effect that the United States would not annex Cuba given in the Amendment, the Florida press began urging people to volunteer for service.

The opportunity to volunteer was not long in coming. Individuals advertised for men to join private regiments to be formed after the fashion of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. T. D. Lancaster announced in Ocala that he was taking applications for membership in a brigade of Georgia and Florida "cowboys" which he wanted to raise for service in Cuba. J. H. Norton, described by the *Times Union and Citizen* as an "incapacitated insurance man," sent out a call for 1,000 men to serve in a regiment which he would lead. Other efforts were made to raise regiments of Cubans, and hundreds did come to Florida to join such a regiment formed at Tampa. But perhaps the best offer of service came from one man in Tampa. D. Migueli, of West Tampa, wrote to "Mr. Merritt, Major General," saying that he desired to enlist and serve under that officer. He explained that he was an American citizen and so thought it proper that he serve under the American flag rather than the Cuban.¹⁹

19. National Archives, *Record Group* 98, File No. 1451.

Most attention was given to the men of Florida's National Guard Regiment. Organized in twenty companies, each located in a particular town or county, these units had been attempting to recruit to full strength ever since the sinking of the battleship "Maine." When war began, and the President called for volunteers, Florida was assigned a quota of one regiment of Infantry. Under the provisions of the call, however, the National Guard Regiments could not enter service as such, but had to volunteer either as individuals or as units in a special regiment raised and officered by the state. The principal difficulty that appeared was simply that all twenty companies wanted to volunteer, and only twelve were required for the regiment.

Governor Bloxham, given the task of deciding which units would enter service and which would not, was in a difficult position. He solved it temporarily by ordering all twenty companies to proceed to a state camp at Tampa. There the men were inspected by the State Inspector General, J. B. Anderson, and State Adjutant General Patrick Houstoun. Efforts were made to persuade the men to consolidate the twenty companies into twelve, but no unit wanted to lose its individual identity, and all thought that they deserved to be selected.²⁰

Physical examinations weeded out some of the men. The remainder elected their company officers and non-coms, and the Governor appointed William F. Williams as colonel. On May 29 the Governor, unable to delay any longer, named the units that would enter federal service as the First Florida Voluntary Infantry. The men of the remaining eight outfits were given the alternative of joining one of these selected for service, or returning home. A few did join other companies but the majority decided to wait, hoping that there would be another call for volunteers later on. A few units, such as the Tampa Rifles, were so angry that they decided to disband entirely.

The companies chosen for service were: The Ocala Rifles, the Leesburg Rifles, Orlando's Shine Guards, Palatka's Gem City Guards, the Jacksonville Light Infantry and the Jacksonville Rifles, the St. Augustine Rifles, Pensacola's Escambia Rifles, the Chipley Light Infantry, the Gadsden Guards, the Bradford County Guards, and the Suwannee Rifles. Sworn into federal service,

20. Schellings, *op. cit.*, *passim.*, and especially Appendix IV.

the new regiment was moved into a new camp at Palmetto Beach, and began to drill as a unit for the first time.

The regiment attracted quite a bit of attention. Each company had within its ranks at least one man acting as correspondent for the home town newspaper, and those journals regularly devoted a column of front page space to news from the boys in camp. It might be noted that the boys from Florida were not at all hesitant in criticizing conditions both in Tampa and in the army, particularly after they realized that they were not going to be sent to Cuba.

All in all, the months of April and May were exciting and almost but not quite warlike in the city of Tampa. As more and more soldiers arrived, and none left, the city bulged at the seams. Between the troops, the visitors coming in daily on the regularly run excursion trains, and the at times too numerous correspondents, a scene of utter confusion emerged. The stores were sold out of merchandise every payday, and the Army was creating more business than the town could handle. The merchants and contractors were happy, and the city itself was in constant turmoil. Tampa fought off all attempts to take the camp away, and boasted of its ability to care for twice the number of troops. As the *Tampa Tribune* declared, "Don't rush the troops off. Tampa likes them." That described the feelings of the entire city, at least through the early months of the existence of the camp, and the state as a whole joined in. At that time, before any of the later difficulties began, Florida would gladly have subscribed to the description of the Spanish American War as a "Splendid Little War."