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FLORIDA AFTER SECESSION: ABANDONMENT BY THE CONFEDERACY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

by JOHN F. REIGER *

IN THE EARLY months of 1861, some Florida citizens seemed to feel that the approaching conflict would be diversion rather than tragedy. On January 12, the day after the state seceded, a detachment of Florida and Alabama troops seized the navy yard at Pensacola. They were accompanied by a jovial throng of townspeople who found the event greatly entertaining. Other Floridians believed that the government would not fight to preserve the Union, or if it did fight, that the efforts would be cowardly and short. Throughout the state, prominent men offered to drink all the blood spilt in any struggle with the North.¹

The people of Florida were confident simply because they believed the new Confederate government was capable of defending their coasts and of protecting their families. As a result, young men did not hesitate to offer their services to the Confederacy once the conflict finally materialized. The first three troop requisitions Governor Madison Starke Perry received were quickly filled by enthusiastic volunteers.

Although the Confederate government eagerly called Florida men into service and sent them north to Virginia, it appeared reluctant to provide for the military defenses of the state. On June 1, 1861, the governor telegraphed Leroy P. Walker, the secretary of war: "We have batteries erected at several points on the coast, requiring at least two regiments to garrison. If Florida is to take care of herself, say so."²

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1. Caroline Mays Brevard, *A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times*, edited by James A. Robertson, 2 vols. (Deland, 1925), II, 51.
2. Madison S. Perry to Leroy P. Walker, June 1, 1861, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, I, 469. Hereinafter referred to as *Official Records, Armies*.

The coastal regions of the state were already under, or coming under, Federal domination. Fort Pickens, commanding the entrance to Pensacola Bay, Fort Taylor at Key West, and Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas were all in Union hands. The Federal blockading fleet was being augmented daily, and Floridians knew that gunboats could easily ascend the Apalachicola and St. Johns rivers, thereby cutting the state into controlled pockets.

Even then, the Confederate war department failed to act. On October 29 the new governor, John Milton, told the secretary of war, Judah P. Benjamin: "Florida wants arms. She has never received a musket from the Confederate States Can I get some?"³ After waiting three weeks without result, he decided to write Jefferson Davis personally concerning the dismal situation in Florida:

At all important points, we are threatened with attack; nowhere prepared to meet the enemy; and when, as governor of the State, I have applied for arms and munitions of war, I have been . . . [told that] a requisition should be made by the officer in command of the military department, yet none is in command. . . . We need troops and munitions of war, and officers of military education, experience, and ability, and, if not promptly aided, Florida may be lost to the Southern Confederacy. Her citizens have almost despaired of protection from the Confederate Government.⁴

At this time, General Robert E. Lee was inspecting the defenses of Fernandina and Amelia Island. He found conditions there "poor indeed," and expressed the "hope that our enemy will be polite enough to wait for US."⁵ Military leaders from other parts of Florida reported similar conditions. General Braxton Bragg, commander at Pensacola, angrily protested that all

3. John Milton to Judah P. Benjamin, October 29, 1861, *ibid.*, Ser. 1, VI, 299; Benjamin had replaced Walker as secretary of war on September 19, 1861
4. Milton to Jefferson Davis, November 19, 1861, *ibid.*, Ser. I, VI, 325.
5. Robert E. Lee to Annie and Agnes Lee, November 22, 1861, in Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee* (Boston 1961), 89.

his men and arms were being sent north to Virginia: "It is a depleting process I cannot stand."⁶

Even before hostilities actually began, inhabitants of coastal towns and interior regions easily reached from the sea expressed anxiety about the vulnerability of their areas. The situation in Apalachicola was typical. On April 3, 1861, a committee of four of the town's leading citizens pleaded with the secretary of war for "means to repel aggressions from . . . [our] seaboard."⁷ Because the townspeople believed they had been deserted by their government, it was only natural that when Apalachicola was occupied by the Federals a year later, they manifested indifference, even hostility, toward the Confederacy and its goals. When Commander Henry S. Stellwagen of the United States navy landed at the town and had an interview with its inhabitants, he was told that they "have had no part in it [the rebellion]. The innocent suffer with the guilty." Stellwagen thought that if force was not used on the people of Apalachicola, they "would be in favor of the Union."⁸

Two events, one within the state and the other without, left Florida inadequately defended in early 1862. The first was the ill-conceived action taken by the Convention of the People of Florida which met in Tallahassee on January 14. Because at this point in the war, the future of the Confederacy still looked bright, and because the majority of the delegates believed that the central government would eventually get around to protecting Florida, it was decided to abolish the state militia, effective March 10.⁹ The delegates thought this action would be popular because it would mean lower taxes. Many Floridians, however, were more concerned with their protection than their pocket-books. The Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel* reported that while the convention was in session, a large segment of the public felt a "restless anxiety" over its deliberations, and some even requested its adjournment.¹⁰

6. Braxton Bragg to Adjutant-General, C.S. Army, November 29, 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, VI, 772.

7. B. F. Simmons, S. W. Spencer, J. J. Griffin, and J. L. Dunham to Walker, *ibid.*, Ser. I, 1, 456.

8. Henry S. Stellwagen to Wm. W. McKean, April 4, 1862, *Official Records, of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, 1894-1922), Ser. I, XVII, 203-04. Hereinafter referred to as *Official Records, Navies*.

9. John E. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War* (Gainesville, 1963), 114.

10. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, January 28, 1862.

The second event, or series of events, that left Florida almost completely defenseless was the Confederate setback in Tennessee. Grant's advance against the southern strongholds on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers had been successful, and unless he was stopped, and soon, Mississippi and Alabama would fall under Union control. As a result, Florida troops were ordered north in an attempt to buck up sagging defenses. Bragg was told to withdraw all his men from Pensacola and Mobile. Similarly, Brigadier General J. H. Trapier, commander at Tallahassee, was directed in early March to transfer his regiment to Tennessee, leaving in Florida only those troops "necessary to defend [the] Apalachicola River, by which the enemy's gunboats may penetrate far into the State of Georgia."¹¹

These developments embittered Governor John Milton. In a letter to the secretary of war he complained that "the effect of the order [moving Confederate forces out of Florida] is to abandon Middle, East, and South Florida to the mercy or abuse of the Lincoln Government. . . . I cannot . . . believe that an order to have that effect would have been issued without previous notice to the executive of the State, that proper measures might have been advised for the protection of the lives, liberty, and property of the citizens of . . . Florida."¹²

The people of Florida felt forsaken. Brigadier General Samuel Jones, in charge of the evacuation of Pensacola, reported to General Braxton Bragg that because of the order to remove Confederate troops northward, "the people of Pensacola and Mobile and all Alabama and West Florida . . . are greatly alarmed."¹³

Those in east Florida became increasingly apathetic toward the Confederacy and its war aims and began to accept the idea of being occupied, sooner or later, by Federal forces. Mayor H. H. Hoeg of Jacksonville, for example, advised his fellow citizens that "Inasmuch as all the Confederate troops, arms, and munitions of war upon the St. John's River and in east and south Florida generally are ordered away, and that the east and south are to be abandoned, it is useless to attempt a defense of the

11. Lee to J. H. Trapier, March 1, 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, VI, 403.

12. Milton to Benjamin, March 5, 1862, *ibid.*, 402.

13. Samuel Jones to Bragg, March 6, 1862, *ibid.*, 841.

city . . . and, therefore, upon approach of the enemy, it should be surrendered."¹⁴

By the middle of March 1862, the towns of Florida's east coast were in Federal hands; Apalachicola had been visited by Yankee troops; Pensacola was being evacuated; and practically all Confederate forces had already left, or were in the process of leaving, for the North. With Fernandina, Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Apalachicola, Pensacola, and Key West in Federal control, or unable to defend themselves if the Federals were to move even a small force against them— "all Middle Florida is seized with panic," a resident of the region exclaimed, for "we can now be approached from the east, south, and west."¹⁵

Throughout 1862, the military situation in Florida continued to deteriorate, especially in the coastal regions. Now, a new menace arose—slave rebellion. Amidst a total free population of 78,679 lived 50,566 slaves, with 26,247 in middle Florida, 16,202 in east and south Florida, and 8,117 in west Florida.¹⁶ With many of the men gone, some Floridians believed that a black insurrection was a real possibility.

Because of the reluctance or inability of the Confederate government to supply Florida with the necessary arms to defend herself, Governor Milton requested the people to donate their private weapons, especially shotguns. He encountered difficulty, however, in obtaining these arms, because many slaveholders wanted to retain them in case of rebellion.¹⁷ In a letter to President Davis, written in October 1862, Milton summed up conditions in Florida:

Disaster after disaster has occurred, until the State is exposed to and threatened with immediate subjugation, and many of our citizens have become indignant and almost reckless as to the fearful results. How could it be otherwise, when they know that from the want of proper exertions to

14. Proclamation of H. H. Hoeg to his "FELLOW CITIZENS," March 7, 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. 1, XII, 600.

15. Ellen Call Long, *Florida Breezes; or, Florida, New and Old* (Jacksonville, 1883; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1962), 339.

16. Milton to Davis, October 10, 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, LIII, 260.

17. Milton to Trapier, February 22, 1862, John Milton Papers, Florida Historical Society Collection, University of South Florida Library, Tampa. Hereinafter referred to as Milton Papers.

prevent it the wives and children of many of our brave soldiers who are in Virginia and Kentucky have been captured and taken off from the State. . . .¹⁸ In view of threatened invasion and the rapidly approaching destruction of the State . . . , I do appeal to you for forces and munitions of war to defend the State . . . from the loss of . . . property, and possibly greater loss from servile insurrection.¹⁹

Another factor that added much to the worsening situation was the Federal blockade. This attempt to starve the South into submission caused widespread want in Florida and, in some cases, near starvation. As the war went on, the United States navy increasingly took advantage of the Confederacy's lack of interest in defending the state's coasts and inland waterways. Beginning in 1862, gunboats began raiding towns along the Apalachicola and St. Johns,²⁰ gradually gaining control of east, south, and west Florida, as well as the coastal regions. From that year on, only middle Florida was reasonably safe from Federal occupation and able to continue as an integral part of the Confederacy. Because it remained largely free from occupation throughout the war, only this region continued its faith in Confederate and state officials.

By the summer of 1862, much of the earlier enthusiasm for the Confederacy had been dissipated by the realities of war and blockade. A large part of Florida was either permanently occupied, sporadically occupied, or completely defenseless; the Federal blockade was successful in causing widespread suffering; and the earlier glow of southern victories was flickering out in one military disaster after another.²¹ Apathy was now commonplace. On June 21, 1862, the Gainesville Cotton States suggested that because of the extensive indifference to the war effort, "more especially should we urge the importance of the matter to the people of this state." Governor Milton despaired that great

18. Actually, most of these "captives" were refugees who willingly entered the Federal lines.

19. Milton to Davis, October 10, 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, LIII, 260-61.

20. Long, *Florida Breezes*, 363.

21. For example, the fall of Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and a few days later, Fort Donelson on the Cumberland (February 1862); the setback at Antietam (September 17, 1862); the capture of New Orleans and Vicksburg by July 1863; and the crucial defeat at Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863).

efforts are “necessary to enlighten the minds of citizens near the coast and other portions of the State . . . [in order] to overcome the repugnance to military service and create a spirit of patriotism.”²²

Although editors did their best to allay apathy and replace i with patriotism, their efforts were in vain. In July 1863, the Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel* bemoaned the lack of enthusiasm among the state’s inhabitants for carrying the war to a successful conclusion: “We can’t force the people to organize If . . . [they] refuse to take the necessary steps to enable them to aid the regular forces in the state to repel invasion and defend their homes and families from destruction and degradation, the Lord have mercy on them!”²³

Six days after this editorial appeared, Governor Milton informed the secretary of war that the latter’s requisition for 1,500 men would be impossible to fill, “unless they should volunteer freely, . . . which I have much reason to believe they will not do.”²⁴ By this time, many Floridians seemed receptive to the idea of having their “nation” rejoin the Union. Those known to be in favor of the United States government—like those of similar views in other southern states—were dubbed “Union men” by loyal Confederates. In September 1862, Governor Milton noted in a communication to President Davis: “You are apprised that in Florida a very large minority were opposed to secession, and in many parts of the State combinations existed to adhere to and maintain the United States Government, and even now in some portions of the State there are men who would eagerly seize any opportunity that promised success to the United States.”²⁵

For obvious reasons, pro-Union sentiment was always most evident in areas occupied or easily penetrated by Federal forces. Sometimes, however, citizens in these regions had to be “persuaded” to return to their allegiance to the United States. Most of the inhabitants of the naval base of Key West fell into this category. Although the island had never been out of Federal hands, in the early days after secession, a clear majority of, its

22. Milton to James A. Seddon, December 6, 1862, Milton Papers.

23. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, July 14, 1863.

24. Milton to Seddon, July 20, 1863, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. IV. II, 649.

25. Milton to Davis, September 23, 1862, *ibid.*, 92.

citizens were pro-Confederate. When Florida seceded, all Federal civil officials except the collector of customs and the district judge, William Marvin, resigned their posts.²⁶ Two months later, even with the United States navy in the vicinity, most inhabitants of Key West were still reticent about accepting the *fait accompli* of Federal domination. The commander at Fort Taylor, Captain John M. Brannan, reported to his superior that "flags of the Southern Confederacy have been raised upon the stores of various citizens." He doubted that "any resident of Key West will be allowed to hold office under the Federal Government unless supported by the military and naval forces."²⁷

In spite of this pro-Confederate sentiment, or perhaps because of it, certain factors soon came into play that successfully caused most of the citizens either to favor unequivocally the Union cause, or at least to accept the United States as the rightful authority. Judge Marvin and his followers worked diligently to destroy Confederate sentiment and to make "the general policy of the [Federal] Government" acceptable to a majority of the island's citizens.²⁸ By April 1861, a Federal officer reported that Marvin's influence was proving effective in "eradicating the treasonable spirit which has lately had full . . . sway here."²⁹

The efforts of the Union men were aided by the strong actions of the new United States commander of the island, Major William H. French. In early May he forbade, under the threat of heavy penalties, the display of Confederate flags. He also disbanded the "Island Guards," a pro-Confederate paramilitary organization, suppressed the local secessionist newspaper, *Key of the Gulf*, putting its editor "under military surveillance," and suspended the writ of habeas corpus. These actions, he thought, had "given universal satisfaction to the Union-loving citizens, besides others whose interests are compromised by the acts of secessionists."³⁰

Because of French's disciplined rule, the editor of the *Key*

26. *New York Times*, March 13, 1862, quoted in William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 247.

27. John M. Brannan to Lorenzo Thomas, March 13, 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, I, 360.

28. Montgomery C. Meigs to William H. Seward, April 13, 1861, *ibid.*, 374.

29. *Ibid.*

30. William H. French to George L. Hartsuff, May 8, 1861, *ibid.*, 411-12.

of the Gulf and quite a few others of Confederate sentiment left the island. A newspaper with the appropriate title of the *New Era* replaced the secessionist sheet. The new periodical was a powerful force in generating pro-Union feeling. Its announced editorial policy was "the abolition of slavery, defeat of the Confederacy, but not in the subjugation of the South, and the Union."³¹ The *New Era*, therefore, was pro-Union but not vindictively anti-southern. Support for the United States, exhibited by a large minority of the island's inhabitants, went further than just talk: "106 of the most respectable citizens at Key West," who, believing that they could "assist in preserving the honor of our flag, upholding the laws, and quelling rebellion," formed themselves into a volunteer company and offered their services to the Union commander.³²

On the island a pattern emerged that appeared in other regions dominated by Federal forces. This was a rather suspicious transformation of ardent secessionists, under the surveillance of the United States military, into Union-loving citizens—a process that often took place overnight. On his arrival in Key West, French had found a clear majority of the islanders secessionist, but after Federal occupation was firmly established, many of these same citizens suddenly "became very loud and offensive in their so-called loyalty to the Union."³³ Key West was unique only because United States forces occupied it continuously throughout the war. Most of the larger towns of the state were on the coast or in areas easily reached by Federal gunboats. Thus, these regions increasingly came under Union military control and Union influence.

The second most important naval base in Florida was Pensacola. Shortly before hostilities broke out, Confederate officials in the vicinity of the town began having trouble with individuals who continued to furnish United States forces fuel, water, and provisions as though secession had never occurred. To clarify the situation to these people, headquarters issued an order prohibiting "all intercourse with Santa Rosa Island, Fort Pickens, or the United States fleet."³⁴ Despite this, the people of west Florida con-

31. Key West *New Era*, August 16, 1862.

32. French to Hartsuff, May 20, 1861, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. 1, I, 426.

33. Jefferson Beale Browne, *Key West, The Old and the New* (St. Augustine, 1912), 92.

34. *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, I, 464.

tinued to manifest their contempt for the Confederacy by ignoring all its military regulations. The situation became so bad that in March 1862, the Confederate commander declared martial law in the city and issued a circular announcing that "The gallows is erected in Pensacola, and will be in constant use on and after the third of April, 1862."³⁵ Because Confederate forces defending Pensacola were needed elsewhere, the city was evacuated on May 9.³⁶ When, on the following day, a Federal officer demanded an unconditional surrender, 150 persons, "with but one . . . exception, manifested unbounded joy at the arrival of a representative of the United States authority."³⁷ When the Stars and Stripes rose over the city, many citizens cheered, and Mayor Brosenham was deemed "zealous and apparently loyal."³⁸

By late 1863, the population of Florida west of the Apalachicola River was seething with pro-Union ferment. On October 15 Governor Milton wrote General Pierre G.T. Beauregard: "A very large proportion, if not a majority, of the citizens left in West Florida are represented to be disloyal— at all events, advocate reconstruction Should the enemy occupy Apalachicola, I do not hesitate to express the opinion that, co-operating with Tories and deserters and the negroes that would go to them, they would not require a large force to lay waste, if not subjugate and occupy, all of Florida west of the Apalachicola River."³⁹

Like south and west Florida, east Florida too had its share of Union men. Soon after hostilities began, loyal Confederates expressed concern over the large number of Unionists known to be living in Jacksonville and vicinity. A letter appearing in the *St. Augustine Examiner* discussed this problem and suggested that an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy should be required of all males above the age of sixteen. Anyone refusing to take

35. Proclamation of Colonel Thomas M. Jones, March 30, 1862, in Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, etc.*, 11 vols. (New York, 1861-1868), IV, 72.

36. Thomas M. Jones to John H. Forney, May 14, 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, VI, 660-62.

37. Moore, *The Rebellion Record*, V, 49.

38. L. G. Arnold to Charles G. Halpine, May 15, 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, VI, 659.

39. Milton to Pierre G. T. Beauregard, October 15, 1863, *ibid.*, Ser. I, XXVIII, Pt. 2, 452.

the oath would be requested to leave the state, because "He who is not for us is against us."⁴⁰

The fears expressed in the letter were confirmed when Jacksonville was occupied by Federal forces in March 1862. Lieutenant T. H. Stevens, commander of the United States troops, found that "the inhabitants are seeking and waiting for the protection of our flag; they do not fear us, but their own people, and from the occupation of this important point I am satisfied, if our opportunities are improved, great results will follow."⁴¹ The Union men of Jacksonville, believing that it was now safe to reveal their affection for the United States, held a rally in the town square.⁴² With C. L. Robinson, a local entrepreneur and a well known Republican, as their chairman, they drew up a resolution which held that "government is a contract, in which protection is the price of allegiance," that "no State of the United States has any legal or constitutional right to separate itself from the government and jurisdiction of the United States," that "the ordinance of secession . . . is void," and that "the State of Florida is an integral part of the United States."⁴³ The proclamation was presented to the Federal commander, who was requested "to retain at this place a sufficient force to maintain order and protect the people in their persons and property."⁴⁴

This last request went unfulfilled, for in early April it was learned that the Federals planned to abandon the town. The Unionists were hysterical for they knew that when the Confederates returned their property, and perhaps their lives would be in grave danger. They pleaded with the Federal commander to allow them to accompany the expedition to Fernandina, and he agreed.⁴⁵ With all the belongings they could carry, they hurried down to the wharfs, "each carrying some article too precious to forsake. Books, boxes, valises, portraits, pictures, packages of clothing, pet canaries and mocking birds were most frequently seen. Stout-hearted and stylish officers, relieving Dinahs of their little charges, and leading two, three, and four-year-

40. *St. Augustine Examiner*, June 22, 1861.

41. T. H. Stevens to Samuel F. DuPont, March 13, 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, XII, 600.

42. *New York Times*, April 2, 1862.

43. *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, VI, 25152.

44. *Ibid.*, 252.

45. H. G. Wright to A. B. Ely, April 13, 1862, *ibid.*, 125.

olds along the docks, added a humane and praiseworthy ludicrousness to the melancholy scene."⁴⁶

A very large percentage of the population of other cities in east Florida was also Unionist in spirit. When the Federals entered St. Augustine in March 1862, they "were received with open arms by the town authorities and citizens, and by the hands of the latter, the Stars and Stripes were raised over Fort Marion."⁴⁷ Only twenty per cent of the city's inhabitants fled at the Federal approach.⁴⁸

In the outlying areas of east Florida, Union men were also present in great numbers. In April Governor Milton was informed that "the country bordering the Saint John's River is infested by numerous and dangerous traitors."⁴⁹ During the same month, the *New York Times* reported that "the triangle formed by Fernandina, Baldwin and Jacksonville is said to be especially full of loyal people."⁵⁰ After two more years of defeat, suffering, and occupation, a Federal officer could categorically state that "the people on the east side of the St. John's are called Florida Yankees and the majority of them are Union men."⁵¹

Beginning in late 1863, the Union cause in Florida acquired a new dimension. The presidential election was approaching and the Republican party, which was split into two factions—one that wanted a conciliatory policy toward a defeated South and the other that demanded a rigorous program of reconstruction—was searching for a candidate. The two most often mentioned were the incumbent, Abraham Lincoln, and his secretary of the treasury, Salmon Portland Chase. The latter, for reasons of principle, believed that radical policies were indispensable for winning the war. One thing that would aid him in this quest would be a southern state ready to rejoin the Union under his leadership.

Because of numerous reports coming out of Florida of a

46. Moore, *The Rebellion Record*, IV, 443.

47. *New York Daily Tribune*, March 20, 1862.

48. C. R. P. Rodgers to DuPont, March 12, 1862, *Official Records, Navies*, Ser. I, XII, 596.

49. R. F. Floyd to Milton, April 11, 1862, *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, LIII, 233.

50. *New York Times*, April 2, 1862.

51. John C. Gray, Jr., to John C. Ropes, May 27, 1864, in John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes, *War Letters, 1862-1865* (Cambridge, 1927), 342.

sizable proportion of the citizenry ready to reconstruct a loyal state government,⁵² both Chase and Lincoln decided to send agents to Florida to help the people in reconstruction and, at the same time, to build political support for themselves. The two candidates and their agents hoped that Florida would be reconstructed in time to send delegates to the Republican National Convention in Baltimore in June 1864.

Chase's agents were Lyman D. Stickney and Homer G. Plantz; Lincoln's was John Hay, his secretary. Plantz, Chase's private secretary,⁵³ was sent to Key West as Federal district attorney. After being on the island for eleven days, he informed Chase that "the first thing which struck me in my contact with the people was the absence of all manifestations of National or even State feeling. Political apathy prevails." With his goal of political reconstruction, Plantz was frustrated to find that "what everybody wants is to be let alone; not to be required to take sides on any questions; and, better and chiefly, not to have any questions to take sides about."⁵⁴

The apathy that prevailed in Key West was evident in other parts of Florida as well. John Hay, while working in east Florida a few months later, also encountered it. When he posted copies of Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction⁵⁵ in Jacksonville in February 1864, a "few citizens gathered around . . . with something that looked like a ghost of an interest."⁵⁶ At first, Hay was encouraged by this indifference. He felt that

52. *New York Times*, April 2, 1862, declared: "the loyal sentiment is found to exist in all its purity and fervor"; also *ibid.*, April 1, 1862, February 4, 1863.
53. The activities and experiences of these men are important to our discussion only in so far as they help reveal the presence of Union feeling in Confederate Florida. Because Stickney's reports were sometimes intentionally exaggerated for the benefit of the secretary of the treasury, they are not utilized.
54. Homer G. Plantz to Salmon P. Chase, December 1, 1863, Selected Letters of Salmon P. Chase, 1834-1867, microfilm copy, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.
55. Issued December 8, 1863, the proclamation offered a pardon to all southerners who would take an oath of allegiance, and it provided for restoration of loyal governments in seceded states when a number equal to one-tenth of those qualified to vote in a state in 1860 "shall take a prescribed oath" and organize a government.
56. Diary entry, February 10, 1864, in John Hay, *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay, Selected and With an Introduction by Tyler Dennett* (New York, 1939), 159.

apathy could be transformed into hostility for the Confederacy and, finally, support for the Union.

On February 11 Hay went to the Jacksonville guardhouse and recited the proclamation to Confederate army prisoners confined there.⁵⁷ After reading the notice, he retired to an office supplied for the purpose of signing up prisoners:

They soon came, a dirty, dirty swarm of grey coats & filed into the room, escorted by a negro guard. Fate had done its worst for the poor devils. Even a nigger guard didn't seem to excite a feeling of resentment. They stood for a moment in awkward attitudes along the wall. . . . But I soon found they had come up in good earnest to sign their names. They opened . . . in a chorus of questions which I answered as I could. At last a big good-natured fellow said, "There's questions enough. Let's take the oath." They all stood up in line & held up their hands while I read the oath.⁵⁸

From his success in Jacksonville, Hay was optimistic about the possibility of reconstructing the state under Lincoln's ten per cent plan:

The fact that more than 50 per cent of the prisoners of war were eager to desert & get out of the service shows how the spirit of the common people is broken. Everybody seemed tired of the war. Peace on any terms was what they wanted. They have no care for the political questions involved. Most of them had not read the oath & when I insisted on their learning what it was, they would say listlessly, "Yes, I guess I'll take it." Some of the more intelligent cursed their politicians & especially South Carolina, but most looked hopefully to the prospect of having a government to protect them after the anarchy of the few years past.⁵⁹

Hay's exertions in favor of Lincoln, along with the "Pomeroy Circular"⁶⁰ and Union victories under the supreme leadership of

57. Diary entry, February 11, 1864, *ibid.*, 160.

58. *Ibid.*, 161.

59. Diary entry, February 12, 1864, *ibid.*, 161-62.

60. Distributed by a group of congressmen under the direction of Senator S. C. Pomeroy of Kansas, the paper flatly declared Lincoln's leadership a failure and proposed Chase for the nomination. When its contents became public, the circular caused Chase great embarrassment.

the President, all helped defeat the Chase faction in Florida. But while Hay might have been successful in frustrating the Chase backers, he labored in vain to reconstruct the state. Optimistic in mid-February, two weeks later he was "very sure that we cannot now get the President's 10th."⁶¹ In late March he returned to Washington, his mission a failure.⁶² What had destroyed Hay's hopes for reconstructing Florida was the Rattle of Olustee. Three miles east of Lake City on the afternoon of February 20, 1864, two small armies, each composed of approximately 5,500 men, met in desperate conflict. The fight continued until darkness and ended in an overwhelming Confederate victory.⁶³

According to Major General Quincy A. Gillmore, Federal commander of the Department of the South, the purpose of the Union advance into middle Florida was fourfold: (1) "To procure an outlet for cotton, lumber, timber, turpentine, and other products"; (2) "To cut off one of the enemy's sources of commissary supplies"; (3) "To obtain recruits for my colored regiments"; and (4) "To inaugurate measures for the speedy restoration of Florida to her allegiance, in accordance with instructions which I have received from the President by the hands of . . . John Hay."⁶⁴ Thus, Hay had worked in Jacksonville with knowledge that the advance of United States forces into middle Florida was an integral part of the total plan to reconstruct the state. The disaster at Olustee compelled the Union army to confine its activities to east Florida, thereby making it impossible for Hay to enter most regions of the state in order to obtain the required ten per cent of the 1860 voters. Olustee also resulted in a temporary boost in the sagging morale of Confederate Florida. It would take months of worsening privation and successive Federal victories to return Florida to its pre-Olustee level of Unionist sentiment.

61. Diary entry, March 1, 1864, Hay, *Lincoln and the Civil War*, 165.

62. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1864, 166.

63. *Official Records, Armies*, Ser. I, XXXV, Pt. 1, 298, 337.

64. Quincy A. Gillmore to Henry W. Halleck., January 31, 1864, *ibid.*, 279.