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Historic Notes and Documents: Harriet Ward Foote Hawley: Civil War Journalist

by Sarah Whitmer Foster and John T. Foster Jr.

Between January 2, 1863, and February 7, 1864, Harriet Ward Foote Hawley wrote seven newspaper articles about her experiences in the South during the Civil War—four of which were written in Florida. For a woman to have done this in the period was extraordinary. While many women recorded their experiences during the Civil War, very few did so for newspapers. Historian James M. Perry described the era's press corps as a group of "fascinating men." Such a statement is not completely accurate, however. Historian J. Cutler Andrews identified a few women who covered the conflict. Among over three hundred Yankees, Andrews found four—Mary Clemmer Ames, Jane Grey Swisshelm, Sarah Jane Lippincott who used the pen name "Grace Greenwood," and Laura Catherine Redden who used the name "Howard Glyndon." Surprisingly, Andrews found three women writing for Southern newspapers—an E.L. McE. who wrote for the *Knoxville (Tenn.) Daily Register*, a person with the pen name of "Virginia" who wrote for the *Mobile (Ala.) Daily Advertiser and Register*, and a "Joan" writing for the *Charleston (S.C.) Daily Courier*. The literature about journalists, therefore, suggests that while

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women were reporting, anything published by a woman in Florida during the Civil War must be regarded as remarkable.¹

In the fall of 1863, Harriet Ward Foote Hawley left Florida. Yet, after she returned to the Carolinas and then to the North, the state remained on her mind. Her husband, Joseph R. Hawley, was a senior Federal officer at the Battle of Olustee. This essay includes large portions of Harriet Hawley's articles, part of her coverage of the state before and after the battle, and some of Hawley's activities in Union hospitals that won her acclaim during her own lifetime. The style of the articles foreshadows those written about Florida by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Hawley's famous cousin. Interestingly, however, a biography and chapters about her life in four different works never mention her journalistic contributions.²

As Federal troops began occupying coastal areas of Florida, places such as Fernandina and St. Augustine, a refugee problem emerged. While African Americans could be free by going to Federal fortifications, their flight to freedom also meant that they brought little food or clothing. A similar situation had occurred earlier on the South Carolina's Sea Islands forcing the army to seek outside help. When the army called on civilians to supply and distribute food and clothing, and for teachers to assist African Americans clamoring for a basic education, abolitionists formed freedmen's aid societies. These private organizations recruited

1. *Hartford Evening Press*, 14 January, 6 March, 16 and 28 April, 24 June 1863, and 29 January, 17 February 1864; James M. Perry, *A Bohemian Brigade: The Civil War Correspondents, Mostly Rough, Sometimes Ready* (New York, 2000), x; J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War* (Pittsburgh, Penn., 1955), 48; idem, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, N.J., 1970) 94-95. According to Perry, Andrews's works "represent a lifetime of work . . . and no one can write about this subject without referring to his book, again and again."

Of this group of women, Jane Grey Swisshelm is also remembered as a courageous proponent of women's rights. It is interesting that "Virginia" wrote, "You may, perhaps, think a woman is not competent to grasp the issues now presented to our people. I admit it; the same time I think a woman proves many times a more attractive correspondent than a man. Her perceptions are keener—she picks up items of interest almost intuitively, and can often times glean many items from a mass where a man would detect nothing"; quoted in Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 94-95.

2. Maria Huntington, *Harriet Ward Foote Hawley* (Hartford, Conn., 1886). For the absence of attention to Harriet Hawley's journalistic activities see Frank Moore, *Women of the War* (Hartford, Conn., 1866); Linus P. Brockett, *Woman's Work in the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1867); Stephen Walkley, *History of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteer Infantry* (Hartford, Conn., 1905); Herbert W. Beecher, *History of the First Light Battery, Connecticut Volunteers* (New York, 1901); Sylvia G. L. Dannett, *Noble Women of the North* (New York, 1959).

teachers, collected and shipped donated clothing, and raised monetary contributions. To report their activities, a number of aid societies published periodicals—most notably the *National Freedmen* and the *American Freedmen*, both of which published letters from teachers in the South, including Florida. Perhaps the most frequent correspondent was Chloe Merrick, later the wife of Florida Governor Harrison Reed. While traditional Southern women in Florida had few opportunities to publish their experiences, Yankee women in the state were not as limited and their letters have been cited by a number of scholars—most notably Jerrell Shofner and Joe Richardson.³

On June 25, 1831, Harriet Ward Foote was born in Guilford, Connecticut, into a prominent family. Her father, George Augustus Foote, was the tenth child and the youngest brother of Roxana Foote. More than three decades before Hawley's birth, Roxana had married Lyman Beecher, a nationally recognized clergyman. Among their children were Harriet and Henry Ward. For the daughter, the path to fame came through the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. Her brother's career soared earlier after becoming a pastor in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1847.⁴

Harriet Ward Foote's father, George Augustus Foote, had not married until he was forty, and when he did so chose a much younger woman, Elizabeth Spencer. Being the eldest of ten children, Harriet had endless responsibilities—a situation compounded by her mother's difficulties in managing a household. Regardless, Harriet received a grammar school education along with her brothers to which was added lessons in French. The Footes believed in education for all their children. Her father held a series of local public offices and eventually served five terms in the state legislature as a member of the Whig Party. This fueled Harriet's "keen" interest, as one newspaper put it, in political affairs. As her political interests grew, she became a "radical abolitionist."⁵

3. Sarah W. Foster and John T. Foster Jr., "Chloe Merrick Reed: Freedom's First Lady," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (January 1993): 318-24; Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (Gainesville, Fla., 1974); Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1877* (Athens, Ga., 1986).
4. Abram E. Foote, *Foote Family* (Rutland, Vt., 1907), 93; Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York, 1994).
5. Huntington, *Harriet Ward Foote Hawley*, 5; *Hartford Courant*, 4 March, 1886; Edward J. Foote, "A Woman in the War," 1, unpublished manuscript, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.

In the early 1850s, Harriet met her future husband, Joseph Roswell Hawley. After their first meeting, he wrote:

She is a woman of very superior intellectual and moral endowments—*very* I say, and I emphasize the word. [She] is without the advantages of a steady course of thorough education, yet by study at home, by reading and by mingling with the best society she has a well-cultivated mind A girl who can go through the ordinary text books on algebra and geometry, read French steadily for months, and acquire something of a smattering of Latin and Greek at home, and at the same time discharging most admirably all the duties naturally devolving upon the eldest child in a family of *ten* children shows no ordinary power of will. She is the very impersonation of truth.⁶

Joseph Hawley had strengths of his own. Born in North Carolina in 1826, Joseph moved with his family to New York and then to Hartford, Connecticut, when he was quite young. He graduated from Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y., and was then admitted to the Connecticut bar in 1850. Soon afterwards, he became a partner in John Hooker's law practice, socially connecting him to the Beechers when John Hooker married Isabella, Harriet Beecher Stowe's sister. When Hawley married Harriet Foote on December 25, 1855, he found himself connected to the family yet again.⁷

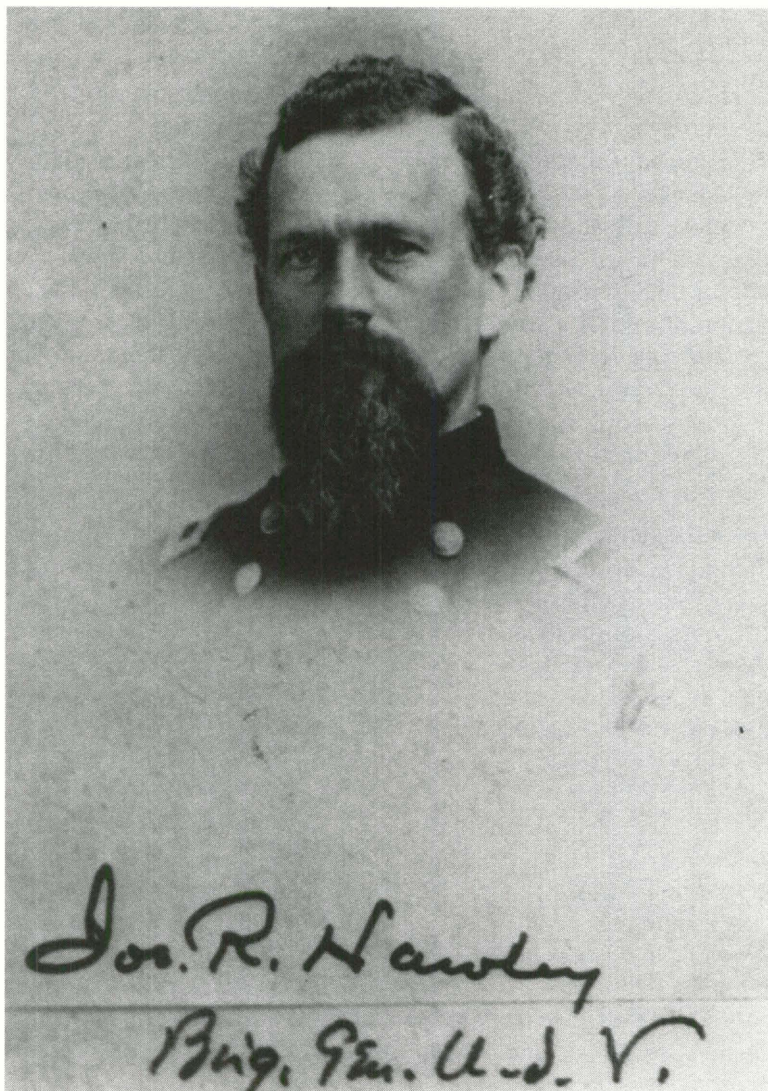
The actual practice of law held, as one biographer put it, "no charms for Mr. Hawley" so he "gravitated to journalism." In 1852, he became editor of an abolitionist newspaper, the *Charter Oak*, a publication recast in 1856 as the *Hartford Evening Press*—the Republican Party's "organ and advocate." Given the Hawleys' commitment to social reform, it is not surprising that the newspaper condemned the "practice of slavery as a sin in the forum of any clean conscience, and its continuance a shame to the United States."⁸

The couple settled at Nook Farm convenient to the intellectual and activist communities of Hartford—the town to which Harriet

6. Foote, "A Woman in the War," 3.

7. Idem, *Foote Family*, 203.

8. *National Cyclopaedia of Biography*, 63 vols. (New York, 1893), 1: 457; *Hartford Courant*, 1 February 1868.



Joseph R. Hawley. *Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection, Tallahassee.*

Beecher Stowe and family would come, followed by Samuel L. Clemens and his young wife. Hartford was also a wealthy city. Some claimed that for its size in the mid-nineteenth century, it was the “richest in America.” A good deal of its prosperity came from industries that made specialized products. As one writer observed,

“on the south side of town stood the enormous Colt’s Armory where, under a blue onion dome, workers assembled revolvers and Gatling guns.” An article in the *Evening Press* of October 23, 1863, lauded the effectiveness of Spencer repeating rifles: “We are greatly impressed with its merits, and . . . we indulged in the prediction that it would prove of rare and matchless value as a military weapon. Its immense range, its unsurpassed accuracy, and above all its unprecedented rapidity in firing, were elements of superiority which we felt convinced would give it a leading place among infantry and cavalry weapons.” Within months, Connecticut troops fighting in the South would have Spencer rifles, including the 7th Connecticut Infantry at the 1864 battle of Olustee.⁹

When the Civil War began, Joseph Hawley was, as a biographer wrote, “among the first to enter the service of the Union in response to President Lincoln’s call for 75,000 men for a campaign of three months.” Although he had no military experience, Hawley was elected captain and, a short time later, appointed lieutenant colonel of the 7th Connecticut Volunteers. This placed Hawley among the political officers common among Northern troops, but he proved his merit on the battlefield as well. Fighting in thirteen engagements, he was cited for bravery at the first Battle of Bull Run and later at Olustee.¹⁰

In the fall of 1861, Hawley and his unit were dispatched to the Carolina Sea Islands. When his fellow officers invited their wives to come south, he sought Harriet’s presence. She wished to join him, but her health was too unstable. Early in 1862, she wrote, “I must work, and work steadily and hard, I can’t live without it, but I should like to feel that I was doing some real good to somebody. If I were sure of my health I would ‘compass Heaven and Earth’ to get some situation as nurse somewhere for the poor fellows who are spending their lives for us. It makes me sick to think that I can do nothing; to think how we are going quietly on here at home when our best and bravest are suffering and dying.”¹¹

The nature of Harriet Ward Foote Hawley’s illnesses remains only partially known. During ill health in 1862, she resided with Isabella and John Hooker, giving her many opportunities to hear

9. Pete C. Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street* (Columbus, Ohio, 1999), 34; *Hartford Evening Press*, 23 October 1863.

10. *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. (New York, 1931) 8: 421.

11. Huntington, *Harriet Ward Foote Hawley*, 12.

and see Harriet Beecher Stowe, since the author was building a house in Nook Farm, using a contractor recommended by the Hookers.

In November 1862, Harriet Hawley left Hartford for the Sea Islands. For those unaware, Harriet reminded them with an article in her family's newspaper on January 14, 1863, signed with all of her initials, H.W.F.H.

Correspondence of the Press.

New Year's Day at Beaufort, S.C., Jan. 2, 1863

If you at the North had half as happy a New Year's Day as we you enjoyed it a great deal. I dare say many of you remembered that it was 'Emancipation Day—but we saw and felt it with every breath we drew.

It would have taken a heavy storm indeed to have kept us from accepting this invitation—but no morning ever rose more magnificently beautiful—cloudlessly clear, air cool and bracing, yet not so cool but that a delicate woman might remain out of doors the whole day. It seemed early when we started for the camp of the Black Regiment [First South Carolina Volunteers.]

Arriving at the landing, the regiment was drawn in to receive us, and we were most kindly greeted by Col. [Thomas Wentworth] Higginson. The scene here was most beautiful. The grand live oaks standing out clear against the blue Southern sky—in the foreground the black soldiers in their bright red trousers, and nearer the water groups of Negroes of all ages, all styles of costume. The principal guests and the ladies being seated, prayer was offered by the Chaplain of the regiment, and then the President's Proclamation was read by Dr. Brisbane, a man who, as Col. Higginson said, in his early manhood had given freedom to his own slaves, it seemed fitting should now in his maturer years, be permitted to read the tidings of freedom to others. A beautiful stand of colors was then presented to the regiment by Rev. Mr. French and as Col. Higginson received the unfurled banner in his hand, and turned to reply, a single quavering voice, evidently that of an aged Negro, burst out into song "America," "My Country 'tis of thee, Sweet land of Liberty," &c. Instantly

other voices among them joined in—the audience on the platform, much moved, would have joined also, but, waving his hand and saying, “Leave them to themselves,” Col. Higginson silenced us, and the song went on, swelling louder and fuller till the whole regiment had joined and all the great crowd also. Tears filled many eyes around me—for myself, I could hardly check the sobs, as I thought—for the first time—now—they have a Country—it is to them now a “land of Liberty.”

H.W.F.H. went on to add another column of detail and ended her description: “I shall not need the sprig of the live oak which I broke from one of the trees which overshadowed the platform, to make me remember that day. It would not be easy for me to forget it. I thank God I saw it as I did.”¹²

The 7th Connecticut would spend much of 1863 on garrison duty, first in Fernandina and then in St. Augustine. Harriet shared her experiences with readers in Hartford in late winter and in June:

“Life at Fernandina.”

Dear Press: When you sit down to write at 9 o'clock in the morning, beside an open window, with a bunch of English violets and geraniums and 'other spring flowers' beside you, which you picked out in your yard half an hour before, what is the particular use of dating your letter February 19th? Of course you mean it's the last of May or June, especially when you reflect upon the radishes you had for breakfast, and order the “summer cabbages” to be cooked for diner. Really, there ought to be some new nomenclature for the months down here—its absurd to talk of January and February and 'such things,' for there is none in reality. It is five weeks now since we came to Fernandina, and it seems quite like home already, forlorn as it looked at first. It is a barren, sandy place; indeed I am told that there is not and never has been a single plantation on the whole island, though the light sandy soil is certainly well adapted to gardening. The town looks like a second rate New England factory village, minus the factories, which had 'failed' and almost deserted. There are

12. *Hartford Evening Press*, 14 January 1863.

few trees of any size, nothing better than "chaparral" to be seen anywhere, and I miss the glorious old "live oaks" of Beaufort.¹³

After describing the settlements at Fernandina, Harriet continued:

We have a railroad, we have an earth work, and a "light battery," we have a fort, Fort Clinch, and a heavy battery, I believe, and a gunboat, the "Mohawk," lies just off the shore to help protect us, and we have concerts, as you will see by the elegantly got up program which I enclose, of one which came off Tuesday evening.¹⁴ It was really excellent, and made us all laugh heartily. The officers are talking about getting up a ball to celebrate Washington's birthday; and, indeed, which with our napkins and soup plates, our French coffee pot and our carpet in the parlor, we women are sometimes likely to forget that we may be ordered off any day, and to think and to feel as if we were at home. But we have a good time, I assure you. The walls of Senator [David Levy] Yulee's mansion echo with a healthy frequency to the laughter of Yankee women; and though we have but few ladies here, yet they are sensible and agreeable, and with the officers of the gunboat and our own, we have plenty of very pleasant society. For myself, with my housekeeping cares and my visits to the hospital, my time is more than occupied.¹⁵

And about medical facilities in Fernandina, she wrote:

Last week we were visited by Mrs. General Lander, "superintendent of nurses in the southern department."¹⁶ Her visit was of course, official, but she found time to make herself very interesting and agreeable. She praised our

13. *Ibid.*, 6 March 1863.

14. The Mohawk was a 163-foot, steam-powered gunboat launched on 11 June 1853. It was purchased by the navy in 1859 and sent to Samuel F. DuPont's South Atlantic Blockading Squadron in 1862; *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1969), 4: 408.

15. *Hartford Evening Press*, 6 March 1863.

16. Jean Davenport Lander, wife of General Frederick West Lander; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue* (Baton Rouge, La., 1964), 275.

hospital, as she well might, since it is in the best house in town, and the pleasantest situation, and the hospital nurses and steward are most excellent and faithful. I must here thank the kind ladies of Hartford for their boxes of stores which they had sent the 7th C.V. [Connecticut Volunteers] a short time ago. Mr. Woodruff the steward tells me they were by far the nicest things that have ever been sent them. I wish the ladies could see how comfortable the sick boys look in their carpet shoes and their new dressing gowns. They would feel repaid for their trouble, I am sure. Heaven bless the "Soldier's Aid Societies."¹⁷

She then ended her article: "The regiment was inspected last week, by Lt. Col.

Green, and I fancy it must have appeared well, as no fault was found, which, from a 'regular' inspecting a 'volunteer' regiment, is equal to a good deal of praise for any one else."¹⁸

In early April 1863, Harriet Hawley described events in Jacksonville. "Do you know all about Jacksonville? How it was taken by the federal forces a year ago, more or less, and all the good Union people in it (of whom there were really a good many) were encouraged to come out and declare themselves, and hold an enthusiastic Union meeting, whereupon the town was immediately evacuated by our forces, and the Unionists were forced to leave at ten minutes notice. Of course the rebels then came straight back and burned most of the town." In disbelief, she went on to report that history had repeated itself. Federal forces had returned, and residents of the town "declared themselves Unionists and took the oath. And then came the order to evacuate the town again."¹⁹

Feeling that the situation was "especially cruel," she retold much of the story two weeks later. Responding to the needs of over a hundred refugees, Hawley and teachers from the National Freedmen's Aid Society, including Florida's future First Lady Chloe Merrick, organized a sewing group. As Hawley put it, we meet "every Wednesday. We raised a little money among our-

17. James H. Woodruff was from Southerington, Conn.; Stephan Walkley, *History of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteer Infantry* (Hartford, Conn., 1905), iii.

18. *Hartford Evening Press*, 6 March 1863.

19. *Ibid.*, 16 and 28 April 1863.

selves, with which to buy our materials, and the women and girls are making them up, to give to those who are most destitute.”²⁰ As the group worked, several women broke the monotony with public readings, and the rest joined in spontaneous singing.

A few months later, Joseph Hawley’s unit moved, and Harriet was, of course, with them. She described the new location—St. Augustine—for the residents of Hartford.

The time drifts slowly by, with little to mark it. The men are putting up their barracks nicely, and doing what they can to make themselves comfortable generally, and keep up their health during the hot season. Both men and officers occasionally fish a little, by way of adding to their fare. I speak advisedly when I say “fish a little,” since you can’t afford to fish very much when you catch bass that weigh over thirty pounds and are between four and five feet long. Clams and crabs, too, are plenty, and curlaws are sometimes shot, but vegetables are scarce and dear.

The amusements of the place are not very numerous or various. You can take a horseback ride of about six miles, if you will use skill and judgment in turning the requisite times, but in that ride, you will see every inch of ground within our lines. You can walk on the beautiful (but narrow) sea wall, and occasionally vary that, as our officers do, by turning their heads to look after the pretty girls they pass, and so walking off and “barking” their noses or their shins, as the case may be. And there are two bright red buggies in the place, so that you can drive out occasionally, as I do. I find these rides rather exciting, for as my horse will “shy,” in spite of all I can say to him, I am continually expecting to find myself, horse and red buggy, in somebody’s front parlor, with an enraged Minorcan swearing at me in Spanish, and making me pay an enormous sum for breaking his windows. I am practicing the strictest economy in view of that event, and also beginning to study Spanish. Of course you will frequently visit the fort, for it is really a very beautiful one. It is built of the native “coquina” stone—a most curious natural concrete of shells and lime—which you will at first find it very hard

20. Ibid.



Chloe Merrick, contemporary to Harriet Ward Foote Hawley. *Courtesy of the St. Augustine Historical Society, St. Augustine, Fla.*

to believe was not manufactured for the purpose. (I am in hopes some time to see the quarries where it is dug, by way of increasing my own faith on the subject.) The fort is in fine order now, and you can hardly spend an afternoon more pleasantly than in the delicious sea breeze on the ramparts—especially if you were born by the sea, and so never tire of watching the waves and the beautiful white gulls; of looking for sharks' black fins in the water, and watching the great clumsy pelicans as they fly slowly over the water, search for their prey. As you walk home on the sea wall, you may chance to see one of those exquisitely beautiful little creatures called by the sailors as "the Portuguese man-o-war," and which I cannot describe further than to say that it seems to be a compound of the Iris, the rainbow and the nautilus, with Bernice's Hair attached to it. But I forgot to say that you must see the remains of the old "treasure chest" before you leave the post, for in that chest, of solid mahogany, was brought from Spain, the money to pay for building the fort. Yet it seems not to have contained a sufficient amount, for both Indians and Negroes were forced to work, as slaves, on the fortress before it was finished.

The Spaniards had a right to be rather proud of their fortress, for it is even now said to be a good specimen of military architecture. The walls are twenty-one feet high, terminating in four bastioned angles at the several corners, each of which is surmounted by corresponding towers, and the whole is enclosed by a wide and deep ditch with perpendiculars of solid mason work.²¹

The article also revealed her compassion: "Another one of the boys has gone home—forever—John Hull of Company B. A good and faithful soldier, he was wonderfully patient and cheerful through his long and very painful illness. Death was a happy release to him at last, and he sleeps well though his grave in the soldiers burying ground is far from home in quiet Farmington. The regiment is in excellent health and spirits, though some of who it may be feared will not soon, if ever, recover."²²

21. *Hartford Evening Press*, 24 June 1863.

22. John Hull, Private, and resident of Farmington, Connecticut, died on 2 June 1863; Walkley, *History of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteer Infantry*, xv.

In July 1863, part of the 7th Connecticut was sent to South Carolina to participate in an attack on Fort Wagner. By August, the remainder of the regiment was holding musical shows in St. Augustine to collect funds. The *Hartford Evening Press* reported, "The proceeds were given for the benefit of their comrades wounded in the first assault. The 'artists' were: H. Lardner, first violin; O. W. Cornish, guitarist; W. Clark, second violin; H. Longden, balladist, W. Wheelock, banjoist; H. Taylor, bones, J. H. Barrio, basso."¹¹⁸ In the fall, the 7th Connecticut reunited, and Harriet Hawley returned to the Sea Islands.

Letters from Harriet Hawley exist from her stay in Florida as well. The early ones document a concern for making a home as well as other concerns. On January 14, 1863, Harriet wrote two of her siblings from Fernandina: "I shall buy a little crockery, hire a good cook, and, by the aid of Joe's excellent servant Harris, I propose to set up housekeeping and have a very good time." A few sentences later she added, "But isn't it stranger than any poet's dream that now, in the midst of this war, I should have a little quite time, keeping house down here, in Florida, where I always wanted to go, with my husband! I can hardly realize it. But I wish you were all here, especially Mother, to enjoy this delicious climate."²³

Later in the war, she turned to being a nurse, and running a household disappeared as a topic. Her interaction with patients and their needs filled many letters. She wrote Isabella Hooker in May 1864: "I know no words to describe the amount and intensity of the suffering I see around me at every moment. As I wrote that, I stopped to look at the peaceful face of a poor fellow who has just died, eight feet from my chair. One leg had been amputated above the knee, ten days ago—and he had suffered terribly and was much wasted. Thank God, at least this poor body can suffer no more. Pray for us, you good Christians at the North. You do not dream of what these men undergo." At times, she went to the hospital against her husband's instructions or as she put it "against Joe's express[ed] orders."²⁴

23. *Ibid.*, 25 August 1863. The men in the musical performance were drawn from companies A, B, C, H, and F. They were Sergeant Oscar W. Cornish, Corporals John H. Barrio and Henry H. Taylor, and Privates Walter F. Clark, Henry H. Longden, William H. Wheelock and Henry F. Lardner; Walkley, *History of the Seventh Connecticut*, xxxvi, xviii, l, xiii, xxi, liv, viii.

24. Harriet Foote Hawley to George A. Foote and Eliza Spencer Foote, 14 January 1863, in Foote, "A Woman in the War," 46.

On February 5, 1864, Harriet watched her husband and his unit depart Hilton Head again for Florida. They were, according to her, in “good spirits, as usual, though many regiments were very small, owing to the fact that the veterans, with many of the officers, are taking their thirty days furlough.” As the force headed to Jacksonville and then on to Olustee, Harriet noted that some 330 men, with 13 officers, were missing from the 7th Connecticut alone. The situation made a “very perceptible difference in its effectiveness.”²⁵ The observation was prophetic since it appeared in the *Evening Press* before the Battle of Olustee.

While her statement may have prepared citizens for bad news from Florida, much of the remainder of the coverage did not reflect the gravity of the situation. On the day of the battle, the 20th of February, the *Hartford Evening Press* ran a story about St. Augustine with idyllic sections: “Climate here is genial and beautiful. Since we have been here the thermometer has ranged between 65 and 80 degrees, which is the usual temperature for winter.” Then the author added, “We have evidence here continually that the Confederacy is crumbling to pieces. Deserters are coming in almost daily. Today eight deserters came in, and were brought to the Provost Marshal, who administered the oath of allegiance to them. They are stout, able bodied men, but their clothing bears testimony to the terrible destitution of rebel soldiers—there is not one decent or comfortable garment among the eight men.” Six days later, the *Hartford Evening Press* reported that the Florida expedition was finding success and that the north-eastern corner of the state had been “virtually abandoned” by the Confederacy.²⁶

Accurate coverage of battle began appearing in the *Evening Press* on February 27 and continued as a topic into May. The first reports of the Federal defeat at Olustee were transmitted via telegraph and the printed in the *New York Times*. Two days later, the Hartford newspaper reprinted a letter sent to the *Providence Journal* by an artillery officer. It also carried a report that the Federal commander at Olustee was in custody: “General [Truman] Seymour, who commanded the expedition has been placed under arrest by

25. Harriet Foote Hawley to Isabella Hooker, 31 May 1864, in Foote, “A Woman in the War,” 114; Harriet Foote Hawley to Kate Foote, 22 March 1865, in Foote, “A Woman in the War,” 137.

26. *Hartford Evening Press*, 17 February 1864.

order of General [Quincy Adams] Gillmore. General Seymour is severely censured for not throwing out scouts and skirmishers as our troops advanced. As it was, our troops were led into a trap. Hamilton's artillery led the van and suffered severely. The rebel sharpshooters picked off their horses, and the guns had to be abandoned."²⁷

Coverage continued on March 1, 2, 8, and 9, and ended with the official reports of Joseph R. Hawley on April 29 and another officer's on May 2, 1864. Perhaps the best summary appeared on the fourth anniversary of the battle when Hawley wrote a brief article for the *Hartford Courant*.

Four years ago this morning it was very pleasant weather at Barber's plantation about thirty-five miles west of Jacksonville, Florida, and less than 5,000 soldiers of all arms started upon a wild march straight westward to Lake City and the Suwannee River. There were eight infantry regiments, one infantry regiment mounted, a small battalion of cavalry, and three batteries comprising sixteen guns all under the command of Brigadier Truman Seymour. The histories are strangely at fault concerning this ill-fated expedition. Not one of the officers called into council on the previous evening approved the advance. The perils were foreseen. The formation on the march was excellent, until within an hour of the fight, when there was a general halt intended to be for the night, but a few stray shots on the picket line led to sending out the advance to see what was there, and the main body followed slowly and almost without orders. The advance struck the enemy and reported, if report was necessary in the quiet pinewoods where every shot multiplied into long sounding echoes. The brave and impetuous Seymour then dashed his regiments and brigades into action as fast as they arrived, without waiting for a compact order of battle and its scientifically delivered blows.²⁸

Histories of the battle do suggest that Alfred Colquitt, one of the two southern generals present, went forward with his brigade

27. *Ibid.*, 20 February 1864.

28. *Ibid.*, 29 February 1864. Hamilton's Artillery was Captain John Hamilton's Battery E, 3rd U.S. Artillery.

of veterans. When he called for reinforcements, Joseph Finegan responded by sending most of the reserves. This placed almost the entire southern army on the battlefield while Seymour committed his units piecemeal. By doing this, the Federal officer permitted his opponents to achieve numerical superiority. Hawley went on to conclude, "The battle with its terrible sacrifices was useless, save that the rebel losses of a few hundred counted a little toward that costly wearing away that finally brought the rebellion to its knees. The whole expedition was ablunder."²⁹

The 7th Connecticut was one of the first Federal infantry units to arrive at Olustee and did not leave until late in the afternoon. It must be mentioned, too, that in deploying the regiment, Joseph Hawley issued a wrong order. Realizing the error, he rapidly corrected it. Short on veterans and long on new recruits, the 7th Connecticut and the 7th New Hampshire fell into confusion. At least one company responded as ordered and, with Spencer rifles, had the firepower of a regiment. Watching in Confederate lines, George G. Grattan, Colquitt's aide de camp, recalled: "Being armed with long range Spencer rifles, their fire was very effective, and threw some of our troops into confusion." All of the senior officers in the Georgia 64th were killed or wounded. As a consequence, Grattan continued "that regiment being left without a field officer, and having never before been in action, became somewhat broken."³⁰

None of this changed the overall pattern of Federal deployment. Hawley's 7th, and the 7th New Hampshire which followed it into combat, were facing much of Colquitt's brigade. Veteran regiments, the Georgia 6th and the 28th, which had served at South Mountain and Antietam, formed a line on both sides of the Georgia 64th. The Southerners placed more troops on the battlefield first, an advantage they never lost.³¹

The battle left behind an ugly situation that came to the attention of Harriet Hawley. One Federal soldier, John Rowley, had had a bitter conflict with another man in his unit. He used combat at Olustee as an opportunity to murder Jerome Dupoy by shooting him in the head. Unluckily for Rowley, his actions were

29. *Hartford Courant*, 20 February 1868.

30. Charles O. Jones, *Historical Sketch of the Chatham Artillery* (Albany, N.Y., 1867), 181; *Hartford Courant*, 20 February 1868.

31. Henry F. W. Little, *The Seventh Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers* (Concord, N.H., 1896), 221. Grattan's account is in Jones, *Historical Sketch of the Chatham Artillery*, 180.

rumored in the 7th Connecticut, and he was, as one article put, “arrested, charged, and put in the guardhouse.” Harriet remembered Rowley as a student in a small school where she had briefly taught in the Sea Islands. Learning of his imprisonment and conviction, she sent a small package to the felon. It contained a Bible and the assurance that she would remember him in “her daily thoughts and prayers.” Given that the man eventually confessed, it is possible that these efforts offered him some comfort. In any case, he was executed for his crime.³²

Early in 1864, it was clear to the Hawleys that the 7th Connecticut again would be assigned to active combat. Rather than returning to Hartford, Harriet applied for a nursing position under Dorothea Dix. She was given charge of Ward A in the Armory Square Hospital in Washington, D.C. A newspaper reported, “Mrs. Hawley reached this hospital the morning after the wounded began to arrive from the battles of the Wilderness. Her ward was one of the largest, containing at one time 97 patients, and to add to its horror there was no separate operating room. In one day during that terrible April forty-eight patients died.”³³

Rather than fleeing from this nightmare, Harriet continued from April until September 1864. She recuperated for several months and resumed her duties in November, working through the winter. The strength to do this, in part, may have come from her stay in Florida. Not unlike her cousin Charles Beecher, who some thought came to Florida preparing to die, both left the state in much better health than when they arrived. In late winter, Joseph Hawley was given military control over Wilmington, N.C. When his wife joined him, it proved to be no blessing. Perhaps as many as nine thousand former prisoners of war from Andersonville ended up in the city. Carrying a host of illnesses, these men overwhelmed the medical staff, infecting them as well. As the *Hartford Courant* explained, “The chief of the medical staff died; of five professional nurses from the north, three sickened and two died.” Harriet Hawley continued her duties under horrific conditions.³⁴

32. Ibid.

33. Doris E. Cook, “Chaplain Jacob Eaton and Mrs. Hawley: A Civil War Episode,” unpublished manuscript, Special Collections, Connecticut State Historical Society, Hartford.

34. *Hartford Courant*, 4 March, 1886. Armory Square Hospital was of the major military hospitals in Washington, D.C. It is perhaps best remembered as a place where Walt Whitman wrote letters and comforted the wounded.

Throughout her medical career, it is clear that Harriet Hawley paid considerable attention to the dying—having the compassion of a hospice worker. A letter of January 1865 reads:

My boy, who has the lock jaw, is slowly dying; perfectly resigned and happy. I had a good little talk with him just now; it is a comfort to talk with anyone who seems to stand and look as it were into the other world so calmly and happily.

Captain Nichols, of one of our Connecticut regiments, is dying in the next ward. I have just been to say a few comforting words to his poor aunt, who reached him this morning. She brought him up and has been more than a mother to him. One of my men died last night very suddenly, indeed. The doctor was as much surprised by it as I. Such things are exceedingly painful, for they leave with a mingled grief and remorse and self reproach, that I have not done more for the poor fellow—had not realized how sick he was.³⁵

Harriet Hawley went on to struggle with her own health as First Lady of Connecticut and the wife of a well-known political figure. Joseph Hawley, besides eventually serving as governor, also held a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and then in the U.S. Senate. Yet, Civil War veterans never forgot Harriet's concern for them during the war years. One military historian claimed, "she gave her time, yea, her life, for the cause she loved and the men who sustained upon the battlefield the flag of our country."³⁶

When Harriet Hawley died on March 3, 1886, she was honored for being more than a former First Lady of Connecticut and the wife of a United States Senator. Civil War veterans memorialized her as a heroic figure. When news of her death reached the U.S. Senate, the body adjourned out of respect for her. When it came time to escort Hawley's remains through Washington, D.C., six U.S. Senators served as pallbearers. In recognition of her service to the nation, on the day of her funeral, flags flew at half-mast at

35. Harriet Foote Hawley to unknown, 15 January 1865, in Foote, "A Woman in the War." Captain Nichols did not belong to either the Sixth or Seventh Connecticut Infantry.

36. Herbert W. Beecher, *History of the First Light Battery Connecticut Volunteers* (New York, 1901), 723.

the Connecticut Capitol and the Hartford City Hall. Flowers at the funeral came from a former First Lady of the United States, Mrs. James A. Garfield, as well as from Senator Leland Stanford of California and the well-known brother of William Tecumseh Sherman, Senator John Sherman. Perhaps the most touching remembrance came from the veterans of the 7th Connecticut Volunteers, who sent a floral pillow. The women of the Congregational Church, including the wife of Samuel L. Clemens, arranged the multitude of floral tributes. Underneath the flowers on her coffin were silk flags befitting a fallen soldier. A newspaper article reported: "The casket was bore to the hearse by members of the 7th Connecticut. The congregation remained standing and as the body passed down the aisle the veterans of the Grand Army saluted and remained at a salute until the bearers had left the church." Not surprisingly, the writer added, "It was one of the most touching incidents of the day."¹³² Decades after her death, her grave was adorned like that of a Civil War hero by her fellow veterans.

Not the least of Harriet Ward Foote Hawley's accomplishments was her skillful journalistic evocation of war conditions and of the South. A few other women recorded their experiences in magazines for a Northern audience as well, among them Hawley's colleague in Fernandina, Chloe Merrick. Merrick's prose, however, was less winsome, concentrating mostly on serious reportage about the cause and about teaching freedmen. Harriet Hawley's prose, in contrast, distinguished itself in evoking in detail the exotic and sensory delights of Florida. In this she is almost certainly the inspiration for her famous cousin's publicity efforts on Florida's behalf. Harriet Beecher Stowe read her cousin's dispatches at home in the *Hartford Evening Press*, observing the contrast in tone and emphasis of Chloe Merrick's publications in the *National Freedman*.³⁷ Stowe would publish her observations and comments on Florida in Henry Ward Beecher's newspaper in New York City. Rather than a cousin copying the celebrated author, the reverse was true; Stowe, in fact, would eventually emulate her cousin.

37. *Hartford Courant*, 8, March 1886. The announcement of Harriet Ward Foote Hawley's death and her obituary appeared in the *Hartford Courant*/*National Freedman*