

2006

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Recommended Citation

Sheppard, Jonathan C. (2006) "This Seems to Be Our Darkest Times: The Florida Brigade in Mississippi, June-July 1863," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 85: No. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol85/iss1/5>

“This Seems To Be Our Darkest Times”: The Florida Brigade in Mississippi, June-July, 1863

By Jonathan C. Sheppard

In June 1860, as the United States advanced toward the secession crisis, headmaster Samuel Pasco watched his Waukeenah Academy students exhibit the knowledge they had acquired over the past term to a crowd of proud parents and friends. During the program, the boys demonstrated their proficiency in subjects such as geography, spelling and reading, chemistry, grammar, arithmetic, and translation of Latin.¹ Following the formal examinations, the students acted and sang various orations and songs for their guests.

The highlight of the day's event was provided by George Washington Adams and Charles Ulmer, who recited Thomas Campbell's "Lochiel's Warning." In the well-known ballad, a wizard warned Lochiel of the impending military disaster awaiting the Scots at Culloden. Defying the wizard's caution, Lochiel boasted of the prowess of his clansmen, "Their swords are a thousand, their bosoms are one! They are true to the last of their blood and their breath, and like reapers descend to the harvest of death."²

Jonathan C. Sheppard is a doctoral student at Florida State University. He wishes to thank Dr. James P. Jones for his helpful comments and suggestions and Dr. Ben Wynne for the map and useful suggestions.

1. Monticello [Florida], *The Family Friend*, July 28, 1860.
2. Thomas Campbell, "Lochiel's Warning," lines 43-45. Fought in 1746, the Battle of Culloden pitted Highlanders under the Stuart pretender Prince Charles, against the Hanoverian forces of the Duke of Cumberland. The Scots lost the battle, during which they suffered more than 2,000 casualties. Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson argue in their work *Attack and Die*:

Just over a year later, following another summer's examinations, Pasco resigned his position to enlist in the Confederate Army, and Adams and Ulmer, along with many other classmates, followed their teacher into Company H of the 3rd Florida Infantry. Pasco and his former students faced their "harvest of death" in July 1863 near Jackson, Mississippi, in a battle that has escaped the notice of most scholars, but that defined the war experience of those Florida Confederates.

The capital of Mississippi attracted the attention of the Union Army twice in mid-1863. In May, General Ulysses S. Grant's forces occupied the city briefly during their march on Vicksburg. Following the fall of that city on July 4, Grant dispatched General William T. Sherman to Jackson to drive Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's army from the vicinity of the Union's newly won prize. The Vicksburg Campaign, long recognized as a turning point in the Civil War, has rightfully been the topic of many works, while the Jackson siege has received little attention.

In 1863, as the eastern armies clashed at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, western forces of both nations dueled in Mississippi. The Confederates could not underestimate Vicksburg's importance, for as long as the rebels held the river town, foodstuffs and other war material passed from Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas to the east bank of the Mississippi. Not only did the Federal forces wish to close this avenue of supply, but with the capture of Vicksburg and the down river stronghold of Port Hudson, the Mississippi would be safely in Union hands along its entire length. When Grant's forces began their offensive several miles south of Vicksburg in mid-May, the Confederates rushed reinforcements from Tennessee to contest the move.

The historiography of the Vicksburg Campaign has analyzed the strategic importance of Vicksburg, delved into the problems the campaign created for the Confederate high command, and explored the political implications the campaign held for the

Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage that southern culture before the Civil War was Celtic in its origins, and it showed in their battlefield behavior. "Lochiel's Warning," regarding the futility of the battle and the bravery of the Scots, probably held a romanticized version of heritage for many southerners. See McWhiney and Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (Tuscaloosa, 1982), 170-1919. The harvest of death would claim Charles Ulmer at the Battle of Missionary Ridge, November 25, 1863. Adams died less than a year later on Kennesaw Mountain.

Union. Edwin C. Bearss, National Park historian and prolific Civil War scholar, penned a three-volume study of the Vicksburg campaign in which he carefully examined the months of military action over the extensive geography that characterized the campaign to argue the importance of Vicksburg for the outcome of the war.³

Following in the footsteps of Bearss, Terrence J. Winschel, Chief Historian of the Vicksburg National Military Park, produced several books that explained the value of Vicksburg to the Confederacy and its subsequent capture by Union forces in traditional terms of supply and transportation.⁴ More recently, well-known historian Albert Castel questioned the importance of the city to the Confederates and downplayed the result of its capture by Grant's army to the realm of a psychological victory.⁵ In 2004, Michael B. Ballard authored a well-researched, one volume study of the campaign that provided an understanding of the political and military causes for the campaign, and added a social dimension lacking in previous works. For Ballard, Vicksburg was important because "both sides decided it was."⁶

The consequent siege of Jackson, which lasted from July 10-17, has received scant attention from Civil War historians, an omission that occurred because the event took place after Vicksburg fell, and thus had no impact on the main objective of the campaign. Yet Johnston's force provided a threat of such significance that Grant ordered his principle lieutenant, Sherman, and 30,000 soldiers to deal with it. The only complete work on the battle remains Edwin C. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863*.⁷

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3. See Edwin C. Bearss, *Vicksburg is the Key, Volume I* (Dayton, Ohio, 1985), *Grant Strikes a Fatal Blow, Volume II* (Dayton, Ohio, 1986), and *Unvexed to the Sea, Volume III* (Dayton, Ohio, 1986).
 4. See Terrence Winschel, *Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign* (El Dorado Hills, California, 1998), *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar* (Abilene, Texas, 1999), and with William L. Shea, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi* (Lincoln, 2003).
 5. See Albert Castel, "Vicksburg: Myths and Realities," *North and South* 6, No. 7 (2003): 61-69.
 6. See Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened The Mississippi* (Chapel Hill, 2004). For the importance of Ballard's work in the historiography of the campaign, see Mark Grimsley, "Michael B. Ballard. Vicksburg: The Campaign that Opened the Mississippi," *The American Historical Review* 111, No. 1 (2006): 182.
 7. See Edwin C. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863* (Baltimore, 1981).

After the summer of 1863, the Mississippi capital represented more than a point on a map for the soldiers of John C. Breckinridge's divisions, especially those of the Florida brigade. Transferred to Mississippi from Tennessee in late-May, to assist in the defense of Vicksburg, the siege of Jackson provided lessons in victory, defeat and sacrifice. Jackson represented a defeat for the South, as advancing Federal troops captured the capital following a stand off that lasted less than a week. But for the Floridians who repulsed a Federal attack on the Jackson fortifications on a sweltering afternoon, there was a moment of victory. The Florida regiments, the 1st and 3rd, Consolidated, and the 4th, along with the 47th Georgia, captured nearly one-hundred and fifty prisoners and three battle flags. For the Floridians, Jackson also represented a place of sacrifice—sacrifice, not for the sake of the Confederacy, but for the sake of their comrades in the ranks.

The siege began almost two months earlier on May 23, 1863, when the soldiers of Colonel William Scott Dilworth's brigade began striking their tents and preparing their equipment for a move. The destination of their division was the subject of rumors that spread like a wildfire throughout their Fairfield, Tennessee, encampment. A visit by Major General John Breckinridge, the divisional commander, to the brigade's headquarters ignited further speculation. Although the ultimate destination remained a mystery, the men in the ranks soon learned that orders called for them to be at the Wartrace (Tennessee) Depot early the next morning.⁸

The five regiments of the brigade arrived at the station well before the appointed time of 7 a.m., but it was close to 3 p.m. before the train left the station and steamed south. After a stop in Chattanooga to switch trains, the engines continued through Tunnel Hill on the northern most spur of Missionary Ridge, before turning southeast onto the Western and Atlantic Railroad that would carry Breckinridge's soldiers towards Atlanta.⁹ As the

8. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: 1880-1901). Series I, Vol. XXIII., Part II, 849. (Hereafter *Official Records*) Also Samuel Pasco, *Private Pasco A Civil War Diary* Transcribed by William Pasco and William Gibbons. (Oak Brook: McAdams Multigraphics, 1990), 35. May 23, 1863. (Hereafter *Pasco Diary*).

9. Six months to the day on which the Floridians passed Missionary Ridge on their way south, many of the same soldiers would be killed or captured on the slopes of the ridge.



Senator Samuel Pasco. *Photo courtesy of the Florida State Archives.*

train steamed through the hills of north Georgia, the men speculated correctly as to their ultimate destination. Samuel Pasco, a brigade clerk who rode in the same car as Colonel Dilworth, wrote in his diary on May 25, “We then started towards Atlanta and now we all believe Mississippi to be the destination of our Division.”¹⁰

10. *Private Pasco*, 36. May 25, 1863.

The trains could not approach the city itself because the bridges over the Pearl River had been destroyed in early May when Grant's army occupied the city. As equipment was unloaded from the cars and tents were pitched, rain began to fall. The weather prompted Private Michael O. Raysor to write home complaining of the Floridians' situation: "This country is not as good as Tennessee I am sorry we left their [sic] but I can't help it soldiers has to do what they are told to do."²³

At the time of its movement to Mississippi, John C. Breckinridge's division consisted of four infantry brigades and four artillery batteries. The twenty-two regiments of infantry constituted the famed "Orphan" or Kentucky Brigade commanded by Brigadier General Benjamin Helm, the Louisiana Brigade of Brigadier General Daniel W. Adams, and the Florida Brigade of Colonel William Dilworth. Brigadier General Nathan "Shanks" Evans' veteran brigade of South Carolinians was attached to the division for a short time in early June.

Evans' brigade served as a substitute for the Tennessee Brigade of Brigadier General John C. Brown, which was ordered to remain behind in Tennessee. This was done in the order of May 23 to General Breckinridge from Lieutenant General Braxton Bragg's headquarters, which specifically stated, "You will prepare all the infantry of your division, except the Tennessee regiments, to move immediately by rail. . . ." ²⁴ Also as a result of this order, Dilworth's brigade was stripped of the 20th Tennessee, leaving it with four severely under-strength regiments.

The artillery, which consisted of the 5th Company of the New Orleans-raised Washington Artillery, also included batteries from Kentucky and Tennessee. Evans' brigade had its own South Carolina artillery.²⁵ The effective strength of the division four days after its arrival in Mississippi stood at 7,409.

23. Michael O. Raysor to My Dear Wife, May 31, 1863. Michael O. Raysor Papers, 1861-1864, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, FL.

24. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIII., Part II, 849. Also Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 952.

25. At Chickamauga the three batteries of Breckinridge's division, the Washington Artillery Company, the Kentucky Battery, and the Tennessee Battery, fielded 14 guns, including, 8 12-pounder Napoleons, 2 James Rifles, and 4 12-pounder Howitzers. This order of battle probably had not changed since the campaign in Mississippi. One witness however claims that Breckinridge's division fielded 18 guns at Jackson.

John C. Breckinridge, the divisional commander, was a pro-secessionist Kentucky politician-turned-soldier. He was best known as having served as vice president in the Buchanan administration, and for his unsuccessful bid for the Presidency in 1860. In the election, campaigning “as the candidate of the Southern wing of the Democratic party,” he finished a distant second in the electoral vote behind Republican Abraham Lincoln.²⁶ Despite his loss in the Presidential race, Breckinridge remained in Washington until the conflict began, representing his native state in the Senate.

When Kentucky declared neutrality in the conflict, Breckinridge began speaking out against the intentions of the Union, an act that caused indignation among Federal authorities.²⁷ In October 1861, he escaped to Confederate lines near Bowling Green. Less than a month later he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Confederate Army.²⁸ After commanding a corps in Albert Sidney Johnston’s Army of the Mississippi at Shiloh, he commanded a division in Louisiana in mid-1862, where he was unsuccessful in liberating Baton Rouge from Federal control.

Breckinridge ran afoul of General Braxton Bragg, then commanding the renamed Army of Tennessee, following the Kentucky Campaign. Army of Tennessee historian Thomas L. Connelly writes that Bragg “had been critical in October of Breckinridge’s failure to reach Kentucky in time to be of service.”²⁹ Bragg’s campaign into the Bluegrass State rested on the theory that pro-secessionist Kentuckians would take up arms and fill the ranks of his army. To accomplish this, he relied on the native Kentuckians within his army, namely Brigadier General Simon Bolivar Buckner, to appeal to the pro-secessionist elements. Bragg had also hoped that the politician Breckinridge and his division, then serving in Louisiana, would be able to join him in the offensive. Breckinridge’s force reached Knoxville by early October and was ready to advance into Kentucky in support of Bragg, when word arrived that Bragg was in retreat.³⁰

26. Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary, Revised Edition* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1987), 82.

27. Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 55.

28. Boatner, *The Civil War Dictionary*, 82.

29. Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 81.

30. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, 189.



General John C. Breckinridge. *Florida State Archives.*

Kentuckians failed to rally to the Confederate colors despite the pleas of Buckner and provisional Confederate Governor Richard Hawes, who had been installed into office by Bragg with an elaborate ceremony in Frankfort. Without popular support,

and after the defeat at the Battle of Perryville, Bragg was forced to withdraw from the Bluegrass State. By late October his demoralized, tired, and hungry forces was trudging through the rugged East Tennessee mountains, moving towards Knoxville. Bragg, not willing to admit his own responsibility in the defeat, pointed to the Kentuckians in his force, particularly Breckinridge, as the source of the problem.

The feud worsened in late December and early January, following the Battle of Murfreesboro. Bragg bore the brunt of sharp criticism for his decision to retreat further into Middle Tennessee after the second day of battle. In another round of finger pointing, Bragg accused the Kentuckian of misconduct during the assault on January 2. Throughout the spring while the Army of Tennessee recuperated in camps around Tullahoma and Wartrace, the battle of words continued in the official battle reports. Samuel Pasco articulated the thoughts felt by many soldiers on the matter, when on May 1 he noted "Gen'l Bragg's official Report of the Murfreesboro battle came out to-day; it is a tissue of misrepresentations against the good name of the noble Breckinridge and will create great indignation among the troops of this army who idolize Breckinridge."³¹ The conflict between the two did not calm until Bragg was ordered to send reinforcements to Mississippi. Because there was no one whom he wished to be rid of more than Breckinridge, his May 23 orders banished the Kentuckian and his division from the Army of Tennessee.

Also reassigned from the Army of Tennessee during the spring was the former commander of the Florida Brigade, Brigadier General William Preston. Like Breckinridge, Preston was a Kentucky politician who joined the Confederate Army.³² Following Murfreesboro, where he led his brigade admirably, he earned the ire of Braxton Bragg by siding with Breckinridge during the spring feud. In late May, in another calculated move to rid the Army of his "enemies," Bragg transferred Preston to service in western Virginia.

Following the removal of Preston, Colonel William Dilworth assumed temporary command of the brigade. A native of Camden County, Georgia, Dilworth practiced law in Jefferson County,

31. *Private Pasco*, May 1, 1863, 31-32.

32. Boatner, *The Civil War Dictionary*, 668. For more on the Preston-Breckinridge-Bragg feud, see Thomas L. Connelly's *Autumn of Glory*.

Florida, in 1861. Popular with county residents, Dilworth represented them in the Florida Secession Convention where he voted in favor of Florida leaving the Union. In the summer of 1861 when the 3rd Florida Infantry formed, Dilworth was elected Colonel. The campaign in Mississippi would be his trial by fire because he had not led his regiment in the Kentucky Campaign or at Murfreesboro. After missing the Battle of Murfreesboro while in Florida searching for regimental absentees, Dilworth returned to his regiment, which had been consolidated with the 1st Florida Regiment following the Kentucky Campaign.³³ As the senior Colonel, he succeeded Preston as brigade commander.

Besides the 1st and 3^d Florida, the 4th Florida Infantry was also present in the Florida Brigade. This regiment, formed in the summer of 1861, arrived in Tennessee just prior to the invasion of Kentucky, but did not participate in the campaign. The regiment suffered heavily in its first action at Murfreesboro, and at the time of the movement to Jackson was under the field command of Colonel Wylde L. L. Bowen, a twenty-four-year-old native of Tennessee who resided in Columbia County at the outbreak of war, where he edited a newspaper.³⁴ The final regiment of the brigade, the 60th North Carolina, had not performed very well in its first battle at Murfreesboro.³⁵ The smallest brigade in Breckinridge's division on June 3, the four regiments of the Florida Brigade mustered 1, 284 effectives.³⁶

On June 5, newly promoted Brigadier General Marcellus A. Stovall, assigned by General Bragg to the brigade on May 25, arrived in Jackson and assumed command from Colonel Dilworth.

33. *Private Pasco*, November 27, 1862. Dilworth remained in Florida throughout December and January. He returned to the front on February 2, 1863, and assumed command of the 1st and 3rd Regiments. The consolidated unit's previous commander, Colonel William Miller of the 1st Florida, was incapacitated at Murfreesboro.

34. 1860 U.S. Census, (Free Schedule), Columbia County, FL; p. 175, family 54, dwelling 54, lines 18-22 National Archives Microfilm M653, Roll 109. See also M. Whit Smith letter in Wylde L. L. Bowen, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Florida, 1861-1865*. National Archives Microcopy M-251, National Archives, Washington D.C.

35. Washington Ives of the 4th Florida noted in a letter home, that on December 31, as the brigade was making an attack against the Round Forest, the 60th North Carolina "turned and ran like sheep." See *Civil War Journal and Letters*, 35.

36. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 945.

Formerly the Colonel of the 3rd Georgia Infantry Battalion and a merchant in civilian life, the forty-five year old Stovall was a veteran of Murfreesboro.³⁷ The following day, the brigade received another addition, the 47th Georgia Infantry.³⁸

Throughout June, Breckinridge's division remained encamped on the outskirts of Jackson, with orders from General Joseph E. Johnston, commander of the Confederate Department of the West, to "establish lines of pickets on the various roads converging to Jackson."³⁹ The Floridians were assigned to the area southwest of the town where, by the order of General Breckinridge, each regiment spent one day out of four on the picket line.⁴⁰

As spring ebbed, cannons from Grant's army and Federal gunboats shelled the Vicksburg defenses daily.⁴¹ From their encampments around Jackson, more than forty miles from the river city, the Floridians reported hearing the rumble of cannon fire from the siege lines. "We heard heavy firing in the direction of Vicksburg all last night and day until 10 o'clock," wrote William D. Rogers of the 1st Florida.⁴² To Samuel Pasco the sounds were reassuring, and he wrote in his diary, "We are glad to hear the guns again this morning for it silences the groundless rumors of the fall of our stronghold."⁴³

As the supplies of the Vicksburg garrison dwindled, Jefferson Davis renewed a feud with Joseph Johnston that had originated in the months following First Bull Run.⁴⁴ Davis became exasperated as both he and the Confederate War Department repeatedly urged Johnston to move in support of the besieged city. Yet the general balked at each request from Richmond, pleading numerical infe-

37. Boatner, 810.

38. *Private Pasco*, June 5, 1863, 39.

39. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 942.

40. *Private Pasco*, June 5, 1863, 39; Michael O. Raysor to My Dear Wife, June 25, 1863, Raysor Letters.

41. William L. Shea and Terrence J. Winschel, *Vicksburg Is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 156.

42. William D. Rogers to Father and Mother, June 23, 1863, William D. Rogers Letters, 1862-1865, M89-22. Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, FL.

43. *Private Pasco*, June 7, 1863, 40.

44. For two works on the Jefferson Davis-Joseph Johnston feud and its impact on the Civil War in the western theater, see William C. Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Man and His Hour* (New York, 1991) and Craig L. Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography* (New York, 1992).

riority to Grant's army.⁴⁵ As a Vicksburg historian recently wrote, during the campaign Confederate "authorities sent what they could, but it was never enough—Johnston needed more, more, more."⁴⁶

However, during the last half of June, Johnston attempted to vindicate himself with some form of action after receiving word from General Pemberton that "his provisions would enable him to hold out no later than July 10."⁴⁷ If politicians doubted Johnston's nerve, his soldiers maintained their belief in his ability, as Private Michael Raysor told his wife that "Gen Johnson [sic] is not idle he will have Grant out of here before long."⁴⁸ Yet despite this eleventh hour attempt to relieve Vicksburg, the feud between the President and general turned particularly bitter and would remain a nuisance for the Confederates during the remainder of the war.⁴⁹

Even before official orders had been issued, gossip circulated through the camps on the outskirts of Jackson that the army would be moving to relieve the Vicksburg garrison. Returning from furlough on June 21, William Rogers found the men of his company ready to move out. "I had to turn in my knapsack as soon as I got here," Rogers wrote. He went on to note that the soldiers were traveling light, with only an extra shirt a pr [pair] drawers a pr [pair] socks which we have to carry folded up in our Blankets. From that it looks like they intend us to do some heavy marching."⁵⁰

The same day Samuel Pasco noted in his diary that "[d]rivers are called for the supply train which I suppose betokens an early departure."⁵¹ But another week passed before orders arrived at brigade headquarters from Breckinridge, moving the brigade to Clinton.⁵² "The reveille disturbed our slumbers at 3 and we at

45. Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, 217-218; Shea and Winschel, *Vicksburg Is the Key*, 168.

46. Terrence J. Winschel, "A Tragedy of Errors: The Failure of the Confederate High Command in the Defense of Vicksburg" *North and South* 8, no. 7 (2006): 47.

47. Craig L. Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 215.

48. Michael O. Raysor to My Dear Wife, June 25, 1863, Raysor Letters.

49. The feud between Johnston and Davis continued long after the war ended.

50. Rogers to Father and Mother, June 23, 1863, Rogers Letters.

51. *Private Pasco*, June 23, 1863, 42.

52. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part I, 985.

once rose and loaded the waggons [sic]. We marched out into the road at day break but it was sunrise before Gen'l Stovall appeared to lead the brigade," wrote Samuel Pasco on July 1.⁵³

Over the next few days, as the eastern armies clashed at Gettysburg, Johnston's columns experienced some of the harshest marching conditions they faced throughout the war as they moved to relieve Vicksburg. "The heat was intense, and the water was most execrable as well as scarce. I have never forgotten that experience. We had to drink the stuff that was absolutely alive with animal life, and sometimes we had to drink it when animals without any life were upon its surface," wrote Charles Hemming of the 3rd Florida.⁵⁴

Michael Raysor wrote to his wife from Bolton Station, "Only two days coming here and the hottest days I ever felt a great many men fainted it was so hot and I heard that some died. But thank God I stood it first rate and am well and hearty."⁵⁵ Pasco also wrote of the harsh conditions on the first day's march: "We had a terrible march; many dropped fainting by the roadside; three it is said died. I never felt such intense heat; water was scarce; the air was filled with thick clouds of dust and the General stopped but once on the march to rest and then only for a few minutes."⁵⁶

By July 5, unaware that Vicksburg had capitulated the previous day, the Florida Brigade camped on the battlefield of Champion's Hill, one of the engagements which Grant's army won on its march to Vicksburg. Johnston spent the first few days of July "probing for a soft spot in the Union line, trying to find an opening, a way to break through to Pemberton with his four infantry divisions,"⁵⁷ and found that the 30,000 Union soldiers under the command of Major General William T. Sherman "had fortified and barricaded every road in the area between Big Black Bridge and Snyder's Bluff, and were prepared to hold these strongholds against double their numbers."⁵⁸ No attempt at a breakthrough would take place,

53. *Private Pasco*, July 1, 1863, 43.

54. Charles Hemming, "THE WAR OF 1861 AND ITS CAUSES," Charles C. Hemming Papers, PK Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, FL.

55. Michael O. Raysor to My Dear Wife, July 3, 1863, Raysor Letters.

56. *Private Pasco*, July 1, 1863, 44.

57. Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr., *The Pride of the Confederate Artillery: The Washington Artillery in the Army of Tennessee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 107.

58. Edwin C. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1981), 55.

as on the morning of July 6, orders came from Johnston for his divisions to countermarch east toward their starting position at Jackson.

“There is no confirmation yet of the news of the fall of Vicksburg,” wrote Samuel Pasco on July 7, “but our movements evidently show that it is believed at Head Quarters.”⁵⁹ The private further noted, “Waggons and vehicles of every description have filled the road since daybreak. Citizens are taking their families and servants to a place of security and all our army is falling back towards Jackson.”⁶⁰ The army was indeed in retreat toward the capital on July 7, as “Johnston realized that General Grant, having eliminated Pemberton’s army, would turn upon his force.”⁶¹

Johnston speculated correctly as to Grant’s plans, for as the Confederates began their retreat on July 7, General Sherman had already launched his expedition towards the Mississippi capital. In fact, the city of Vicksburg had not been in Union possession twenty-four hours when Sherman’s force, numbering around 46,000 men, began the advance eastward from their lines around Vicksburg.⁶² Sherman’s veteran soldiers, like their Confederate counterparts, carried only the necessities of a campaign, which included their blankets, ammunition, and five days rations.⁶³ Their swift marching would allow the Federals to reach the outskirts of Jackson on July 10, only three days behind Johnston’s men.

The Florida Brigade arrived in Jackson during a rainstorm on the night of July 7. The 3rd Florida had an especially tiring day in the retreat, as it was delayed after being deployed to “picket duty on two roads while our trains were passing.”⁶⁴ To make matters worse for the soldiers, they were without their tents, which meant a night spent under a steady rain. Pasco wrote of the night, “I was soon thoroughly chilled but exhausted by the fatigue of the march I fell into a sound sleep.”⁶⁵

During the ensuing days, the men of Johnston’s army strengthened the line of fortifications constructed around Jackson before Grant’s advance through the town in May. Soldiers built embra-

59. *Pasco Diary*, July 7, 1863, 45.

60. *Ibid.*

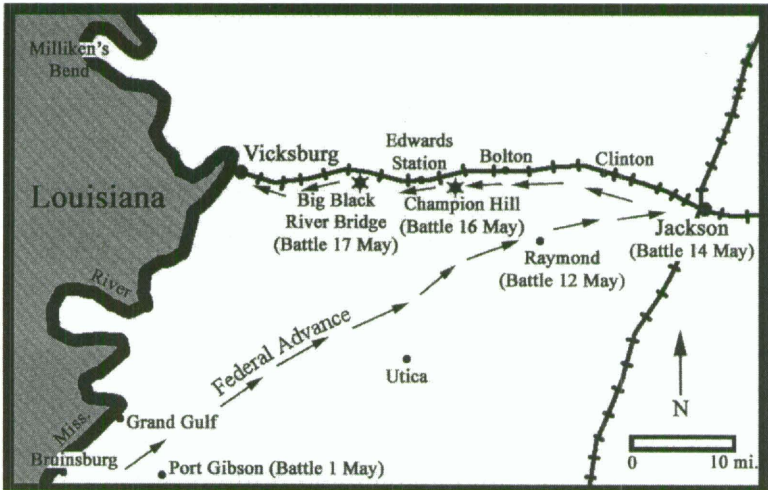
61. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863*, 63.

62. *Ibid.*, 57-58.

63. *Ibid.*, 57.

64. *Pasco Diary*, July 7, 1863, 45.

65. *Ibid.*



Federal Advance on Vicksburg, 1863. Map courtesy of Dr. Ben Wynne.

tures of cotton bales and constructed rifle pits and breastworks along the length of Johnston's semicircular-shaped line that enclosed the city. The Floridians worked equally hard on their portion of the fortifications, as Samuel Pasco wrote "the line of breastworks has been greatly extended by our Brigade during the day and our Regiment will have to work half the night on them."⁶⁶

By July 10, when Sherman's soldiers reached Jackson, they confronted a formidable Confederate line. North of Jackson Major General W. W. Loring's division anchored the right flank on the Pearl River. To the left the line extended southwest, secured by William H. T. Walker's division, whose left flank joined the division of Major General Samuel French. The entrenchments of French's division ran almost due south, and Breckinridge's troops covered the southern line of fortifications. The former Vice President's left flank rested on the Pearl River. The Florida brigade held the center of Breckinridge's line, flanked on the right by Cobb's battery and the left by the Tennessee battery.⁶⁷

On July 10, as the Union force approached Jackson, Companies C and H of the 3rd Florida were detached to picket duty in front of the Confederate lines. The day turned out to be

66. Ibid., July 9, 1863, 46.

67. Hughes, Jr., *The Pride of the Confederate Artillery*, 108.

memorable, not because of the arrival of the Union army, but because of the find made by members of the picket line. Pasco wrote in his diary that evening:

a lot of tobacco was found deserted about a half mile to the front and rather the Federals should enjoy it our men overhauled it all and carried away a good deal. Some private property left there to be sent off on the train which did not come in from Brookhaven yesterday. Nearly everything was taken off or destroyed to prevent the Federals from getting it.⁶⁸

Herrmann Hirsch, a member of Pasco's Company H, wrote in a letter to an acquaintance in Mobile that at the depot there was also an abundance of "flour, Sugar, Bacon, Rice, Peas, & Salt & everybody made full use of it."⁶⁹ However, the good fortune for the soldiers from Florida did not end with the raid on the depot. Later that evening, as Pasco wrote in his journal:

Cavalry were driving some beeves by our line and a refractory bull refusing to go with the common herd was shot down and turned over to the skirmishers. [Brigadier General Daniel] Adams' men and ours stripped off the flesh quicker than a lot of hungry buzzards could have done and beef in all forms was soon very abundant; steak, heart, liver, kidney, broiled, toasted, fried, and barbecued.⁷⁰

Charles Hemming, a teenage soldier in Company A, 3rd Florida, had quite a different experience on picket duty in front of the Confederate entrenchments. Years later, when writing his memoirs, he recalled that:

One day, before the pickets' lines had been drawn so close together, the boys told about a spring that they had found between the lines, and several of us went out to fill our canteens. The path we pursued was narrow and winding. Lo and behold, as we emerged from the brush to the opening where the spring lay, we ran across several

68. *Pasco Diary*, July 10, 1863, 46.

69. Michael B. Dougan, "Herrmann Hirsch and the Siege of Jackson," *Journal of Mississippi History* 53, no. 3 (1991): 25.

70. *Pasco Diary*, July 10, 1863, 46-47.

Federal soldiers who were there for the same purpose. None of us had any arms, nor was the greeting between us unkind. We chatted a little, filled our canteens, and went back to our respective commands.⁷¹

In another instance, the veteran recollected that “I was out on the picket line with some of the boys one night, and the pickets of the Union army were so close that we could hear them . . . pulling corn in a small field that intervened between us.”⁷²

By July 11 General Sherman had succeeded in positioning his force around Jackson’s fortifications. Major General John Parke’s IX Corps lay north of the city while Major General Frederick Steele, commanding Sherman’s old XV Corps, moved against the line held by Walker’s Confederates. Major General Edward O. C. Ord’s XIII Corps, which had been reinforced by several divisions of the XVI Corps, was positioned on the southern flank of Sherman’s advance. The previous day Sherman had ordered his army to “gain ground to the front whenever they can do so without too great a sacrifice of life.”⁷³ After intensive skirmishing on July 11, as the Federal commanders attempted to carry out Sherman’s orders, he called for an extensive bombardment of Jackson beginning at 7 a.m. the following morning. “Each gun,” Sherman dictated, “will fire not to exceed thirty rounds, shot and shell in proper proportions. The shots will be directed against any groups of the enemy’s troops, or in direction of the town of Jackson.”⁷⁴

Dawn of July 12 once again found Companies C and H of the 3rd Florida deployed on the picket line, relieving Companies A and F. “I got a position on the extreme left of the Company,” wrote Pasco, “and took my post in a fence corner with the rails thrown down at either end.”⁷⁵ A Union battery, acting on Sherman’s orders to fire into the Confederate lines, he continued, “took its position in a field beyond us and soon opened a destructive fire . . . Adams’ pickets fell back and soon after we had to follow. The shot and shell fell in all directions ploughing up dirt in front of us and on either side as we retreated.”⁷⁶

71. “WAR OF 1861 AND ITS CAUSES,” 62.

72. *Ibid.*, 60.

73. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 496

74. *Ibid.*, 502-503.

75. *Pasco Diary*, July 12, 1863, 47.

76. *Ibid.*

Hermann Hirsch, who was on picket duty with Pasco, remembered in a letter written two weeks later that as the skirmishers fell back, "one of my Companie was struck by a cannon ball in the hip & his side got badly shattered."⁷⁷ In the excitement and rush to reach their own lines, none of eighteen-year-old Thomas Linton Pettus's comrades had time to provide aid to the mortally wounded soldier.

Charles Hemming recalled of the bombardment, "Their batteries were posted in such a way as to rake the lines where our pickets were established, and, like all soldiers, we took the best shelter we could get. I was behind a little standing oak tree that did not measure more than three inches in diameter."⁷⁸ When the barrage slackened, Pasco recalled the skirmishers were dispatched 200 yards from the main lines, and it was here they received the attack of a Federal brigade.⁷⁹

The Florida Confederates faced troops under the command of Colonel Isaac Pugh, a veteran of the western campaign, with more than two years service behind him in July 1863.⁸⁰ Pugh's brigade, which was a part of Jacob G. Lauman's Division, XVI Corps, consisted of four, veteran Midwestern regiments: the 41st and 53rd Illinois, 3rd Iowa, and 33rd Wisconsin.⁸¹ The brigade was reinforced that day with the addition of the 28th Illinois.⁸²

The previous day Pugh's divisional commander, Brigadier General Jacob Lauman, had been ordered by General Ord to move toward the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Rail Road tracks just south of Jackson in order to conduct a reconnaissance.⁸³ General Ord instructed Lauman, an able commander who had served with Grant's army since Belmont, to "make a reconnaissance, and, if it is necessary to form a line and attack to drive the force in front, do so. . . ."⁸⁴ Lauman's instructions contained no directive to attack the Confederate main line, but for reasons unknown, he superseded his written orders and com-

77. Dougan, "Herrmann Hirsch and the Siege of Jackson," 19.

78. "WAR OF 1861 AND ITS CAUSES," 61.

79. *Pasco Diary*, July 12, 1863, 47.

80. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, 674.

81. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863*, 84-85.

82. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part II, 604.

83. *Ibid.*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 503.

84. *Ibid.*, 503-304.

manded Pugh's brigade to make an advance against the Confederate entrenchments.⁸⁵

Following an advance through the cornfield in which Charles Hemming had heard Union soldiers picking ears, and past the downed fence that had been the position of Pasco's skirmish line, Pugh ordered a halt to his brigade's movement.⁸⁶ In his own words, "I did not like the appearance of the field, and I did not intend to advance farther without orders."⁸⁷ The Colonel called for his superior to come and view the situation first hand. Lauman surveyed the field and promptly ordered for Pugh to continue towards the enemy's fortifications.⁸⁸

As Pugh's regiments advanced, the eighteen cannons of Breckinridge's division and rifles of Dan Adams's brigade began firing at the Federals. Benton Ellis, a member of 3rd Florida, Company C, recalled the awful scene that followed: "They advanced by platoons, and when well into the old field, our artillery opened up on them - I think it was Cobb's battery . . . I never saw such slaughter as our guns made, - they were nearly all killed, captured or wounded. I never saw so many dead men in all my life."⁸⁹ The description Charles Hemming gave matched that of Ellis when describing the devastation: "When the line opened and the battery turned loose, hundreds were mowed down like grass before a scythe."⁹⁰

While the artillery accounted for most of the Union casualties that day, the skirmishers of the 1st and 3rd Florida in advance of the fortifications played a role in the victory. According to Samuel Pasco, the skirmishers "threw out our left to flank them."⁹¹ Perpendicular to the Union advance, the Rebels "began firing . . . and kept it up until we had them opposite to us, but they paid no attention to the Pickets' firing, but continued the charge towards our main line and artillery."⁹² The Union troops advanced that afternoon to a point

85. Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, 472. For more on the activities of Jacob Lauman and Issac Pugh during the war see Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing But Glory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York, 2005).

86. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part II, 603-604.

87. *Ibid.*, 604.

88. *Ibid.*

89. "Short Record of Thomas Benton Ellis, Sr.," 6. Thomas Benton Ellis Collection, Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

90. "WAR OF 1861 AND ITS CAUSES," 63.

91. *Pasco Diary*, July 12, 1863, 47.

92. "Short Record of Thomas Benton Ellis, Sr.," 6.

within 120 yards of the Confederate line. There the men in blue were halted by the blasts of double canister from the cannon of Breckinridge's division.⁹³ Unable to resist or advance, the survivors of the useless attack began a pell-mell retreat to the rear. In the ensuing chaos, the Floridians gained the honor for their battle flags.

"We cut them off and captured a good many," wrote Samuel Pasco of the pursuit of the enemy by the skirmishers of the 1st and 3rd Florida. "Our company was much complimented for its conduct," the former schoolteacher noted.⁹⁴ A part of the Florida Brigade, led by Major Rice Graves, Breckinridge's Chief of Artillery, advanced with soldiers from the trenches to provide the hammer to the skirmishers' anvil, enabling the Florida Brigade to capture a great number of prisoners. As the retreat began, Charles Hemming gave this description of the scene that transpired:

Then the order was given to charge, and we leaped across the breastworks in the face of the advancing column, just in front of our regiment. Capt. Saxon, the commander of our sharpshooters, was the first to cross the trenches. All the boys were moving quickly to the front, and in a few minutes, when we got to where the Federals were, they threw down their guns, and we took in three battle flags and a hundred and fifty prisoners within the space of fifteen minutes. As they would fall and throw down their guns they would cry out, "Do not hurt me!" But we did not hurt prisoners; that was not the kind of war we waged.⁹⁵

Benton Ellis noted that many Rebels seized trophies other than battle flags from Union prisoners, as "soldiers at once began to appropriate their guns knapsacks and Haversacks and also their pocketbooks, and as much as they wanted."⁹⁶ Ellis went on to write "I exchanged my old Enfield for a new one, took a rubber blanket and a fine new hat - that was all I wanted. The Haversacks were filled with good rations, and when we got to Camp, we made good sure enough cough [coffee], and with the hard tack and ham, we had a fine dinner."⁹⁷

93. Hughes, Jr., *The Pride of the Confederate Artillery*, 114-115.

94. *Pasco Diary*, July 12, 1863, 47.

95. "THE WAR OF 1861 AND ITS CAUSES," 63. Captain Walter Terry Saxon was the commander of Company C, 3rd Florida Infantry.

96. "Short Record of Thomas Benton Ellis, Sr.," 6.

97. *Ibid.*, 7.

As the sun set that evening, Union commanders tallied their official casualties at 510 out of the 880 soldiers who had made the attack. These losses included 67 killed, 294 wounded, and 149 captured.⁹⁸ Besides these losses, the Florida Brigade captured the colors of the “28th, 41st, and 53rd Illinois’ Regiments.”⁹⁹ These prizes were sent directly to Joseph E. Johnston’s headquarters, and the commanding general penned the following reply to General Breckinridge:

Do me the kindness, also, to express to the First and Third Florida, Forty-seventh Georgia, and Fourth Florida Regiments the pride and pleasure with which I have accepted the splendid trophies they have presented me. Assure them that I equally appreciate the soldierly courage and kindly feelings to myself which have gained me these noble compliments.¹⁰⁰

For his part in the fiasco, Jacob Lauman was immediately removed from command by General Sherman.¹⁰¹ Casualties in Breckinridge’s force that day were small, and numbered exactly fifty during the seven day siege.¹⁰² Yet one of these, Tom Pettus, lay somewhere between the lines, unable to move in his wounded condition. That night, Pettus’ condition remained at the forefront of Pasco’s thoughts, for Pettus was one of the former students under his charge.¹⁰³

Samuel Pasco, writing of the episode in 1909, remembered that throughout the night, “the wounded men between the lines begged piteously for water and a number of the Union soldiers were, at great risk, relieved and brought into our lines.”¹⁰⁴ The next morning, the 3rd Florida prepared to send out a small party to give water to the wounded. Writing in his diary, Pasco said he “felt

98. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part II, 547, 604.

99. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863*, 87.

100. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 1001.

101. *Ibid.*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 506.

102. *Ibid.*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part II, 654.

103. Clarence W. Smith, “Private Pasco,” *Private Pasco*, 184. Reprinted from Ben LaBree, ed. *Camp Fires of the Confederacy*. “A volume of Humerous Anecdotes, Reminiscences, Deeds of Heroism, Etc.,” (Louisville: Courier Journal Printing Company, 1898) 199-202.

104. Samuel Pasco, “Untitled Handwritten Manuscript, 1909.” United Daughters of the Confederacy Scrapbooks, 1900 - 1935, Vol. 1, M96-18. Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, FL.

convinced that Tom Pettus was still in the woods and asked . . . permission to go with the party."¹⁰⁵

Permission was granted and Pasco joined the relief detail, which included some of Pettus' classmates from the Waukeelah Academy. The picket line advanced to provide cover for the group and, as Pasco noted in his diary, "the Yankees fired at us but we kept cautiously along. Several of their wounded were there and we supplied them with water as we advanced."¹⁰⁶ Pasco's 1909 account recalled that an Illinois soldier whom the 3rd Florida men provided with water "called to his comrades not to fire at these men for they were helping the wounded."¹⁰⁷ Apparently the firing ceased, and the detail continued their mission of mercy. As they approached the fence which had marked the previous day's skirmish line, they found Pettus. Clarence William Smith, a member of Company H, penned an account of the rescue. Upon reaching Pettus, Smith wrote, the wounded man, "recognized his comrades and begged for help and water."¹⁰⁸ Carried by Pasco and two members of Company C, Pettus was evacuated "towards our line, the bearers not stopping until a skirt of woods, near by, was reached."¹⁰⁹ There the wounded man was placed onto a blanket and transported into the Confederate lines. Despite the valiant effort by his comrades, Pettus' "condition was hopeless, and though he received the best care and attention that was possible under the circumstances, he lingered till the next day and died."¹¹⁰

On July 14, after two days under the hot sun, the smell arising from the Federal corpses in front of the Florida Brigade's lines had become unbearable. General Breckinridge wrote to General Johnston, pleading, "The enemy's dead in front of my position are becoming quite offensive, and I cannot have them buried because of their skirmishers firing on my burial parties. They have even fired on my litter-bearers while their own wounded were being brought in."¹¹¹ That afternoon a truce was negotiated to allow for the burial of the bodies. During the short reprieve, Pasco noted that at 4 p.m.:

105. *Private Pasco*, July 13, 1863, 48.

106. *Ibid.*

107. Pasco, "Untitled Handwritten Manuscript, 1909."

108. Smith, "Private Pasco," 185.

109. *Ibid.*

110. Pasco, "Untitled Handwritten Manuscript, 1909."

111. *Official Records*, Series I, Volume XXIV, Part III, 1002.

the bugle was sounded and the brief period of peace was ended, and after a sufficient time had elapsed for all to get within the lines, blank discharges from artillery announced that we might go on with the work of destruction once more and the snapping of musketry along the lines recommenced very soon. Sixty three were buried by our Brigade.¹¹²

Two days later, on the night of July 16, 1863, General Johnston evacuated the Mississippi capital, as he feared “an all-out bombardment of the city would begin the next morning.”¹¹³ Pasco wrote that “The Bridge was ready to be burned as soon as all the troops could cross and ours was the last Brigade . . . Shells were laid by the road side & guards placed to keep us off them, large piles of cotton were burning and we were leaving ruins behind us.”¹¹⁴ The Florida Brigade and Breckinridge’s division reached Morton, Mississippi, four days later, where it remained encamped until August 26.¹¹⁵

For the soldiers of the Florida Brigade and Breckinridge’s division, their mission to Mississippi had been a failure. The Confederacy no longer controlled the Mississippi River and Ulysses S. Grant’s army captured more than 30,000 soldiers and vast numbers of weapons on July 4. Less than two weeks later, William T. Sherman forced Joseph E. Johnston’s army from Jackson, and captured the Mississippi capital for a second and final time. Coupled with the repulse of Robert E. Lee’s army at Gettysburg, Vicksburg’s fall marked the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.

Encamped at Morton on July 22, Michael O. Raysor, who had less than six months to live, wrote, “Times look gloomy but I hope they will brighten before long this seems to be our darkest times.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, the brief triumph the Floridians witnessed at Jackson, was but a fleeting instant in a long saga of defeat. Nonetheless, the battle of July 12 was the Florida Brigade’s finest hour. On that afternoon they fought like the hardened veterans they had become and assisted in blunting a Union assault on their

112. *Pasco Diary*, July 14, 1863, 48-49.

113. Bearss, *The Siege of Jackson, July 10-17, 1863*

114. *Pasco Diary*, July 16, 1863, 49.

115. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1863, 57.

116. Michael O. Raysor to My Dear Wife, July 22, 1863, Raysor Letters.

lines. Not unlike other scenes on battlefields across the South, the Floridians also demonstrated their sense of comradeship and honor. At Jackson it occurred when Samuel Pasco, leading a group of his former students, rescued one of their badly wounded classmates from suffering beneath the hot sun.

The Floridians were at their zenith in the summer of 1863. Their regiments were, for the most part, still large in number, and could perform effectively on the battlefield. However, the summer and the disease that came with it would take its toll, and at Chickamauga, fought in mid-September, the three regiments would field a total of five hundred men. During the siege of Chattanooga, the 60th North Carolina and 47th Georgia regiments were transferred, and three additional regiments from Florida, the 1st Cavalry, dismounted, and the 6th and 7th Infantry Regiments joined the brigade. At Chattanooga the reformed brigade suffered losses from which it could not recover. More casualties were incurred during the Atlanta Campaign, and at Nashville in December 1864, the unit buckled under the brunt of the Federal attack. When the Florida Brigade surrendered on April 26, 1865, only 250 men remained.

One of the flags the brigade carried on that date was that of the 1st and 3rd Infantry Regiments, Consolidated. Received sometime after the fall of Atlanta, the silk flag used sheet music as solid backing for its white stars.¹¹⁷ Painted on the silk were the names of the engagements in which the regiments had participated, and the list read like a bloody resume. Squeezed between the words “Chickamauga” and “Missionary Ridge,” both large-scale engagements fought to decide the fate of Tennessee, is the word “Jackson.”¹¹⁷—a simple reminder of a small triumph won during a period of defeat, on a hot, Mississippi afternoon.

117. Howard Michael Madaus and Robert D. Needham, illus. “The Battle Flags of the Confederate Army of Tennessee” (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1976) 120. c Florida, Consolidated, is in possession of The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA.