

Florida State University Libraries

Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations

The Graduate School

2005

Rearguard of the Confederacy: The Second Florida Infantry Regiment

Shane M. Turner



THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

REARGUARD OF THE CONFEDERACY: THE SECOND FLORIDA
INFANTRY REGIMENT

By

SHANE M. TURNER

A Thesis submitted to the
Department of History
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Degree Awarded:
Summer Semester, 2005

The members of the Committee approve the Thesis of Shane M. Turner defended on June 24, 2005.

Jonathan Grant
Professor Directing Thesis

Elna Green
Committee Member

Michael Creswell
Committee Member

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.

This work is dedicated to all men and women who have served in defense of the State of Florida. Someday, all of your stories will be told.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Don Hillhouse, Colleen Clark and Bill Pieszak of the U.S. Park Service, the curator and staff of the Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia, the curator and staff of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, and the director and staff of the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, for assistance provided to him while undertaking research.

The author also wishes to thank Doctors Jonathan Grant, Elna Green, and Michael Creswell for the guidance and assistance given to him during the preparation of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	Page vi
Introduction	Page 1
1. “From The Flowery Fields Of Florida:” Organization Through Reorganization—January 1861-July 1862	Page 5
2. “Then We Turned North:” The Invasions Of Maryland And Pennsylvania—August 1862-July 1863.....	Page 35
3. “We Would Stand By Our Colors:” Bristoe Station To Appamattox—August 1863-April 1865.....	Page 59
Conclusion	Page 77
APPENDICES	
A “The Second Florida”	Page 80
B Illustrations	Page 82
REFERENCES	Page 89
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	Page 94

ABSTRACT

Among the popular Confederate accounts of the America Civil War, the men who served in the Army of Northern Virginia occupy positions of special celebrity and admiration. In print, on stage, in song, and on screen, the experiences of leaders and ordinary men who served in that army have attained almost mythological status. So many books have been published telling the histories of the men and units of that army that one might be led to falsely conclude that all the stories that are worth telling have already been told. Such is not the case. Both lay and professional historians have, in the more than 140 years since the end of the conflict, produced new interpretations and published yet-untold stories every year. Yet, much remains to tell. One such story is that of the Second Florida Infantry Regiment.

From the spring of 1861—when the regiment was formed—until the spring of 1865—when it surrendered—the men of the regiment had endured four full years of military life. They underwent discipline and chaos, slumber and sleep deprivation, abundance and hunger, and living and dying together. The Second Florida took part in nearly every campaign and fought in nearly every major battle in which the Army of Northern Virginia was engaged. The blood of many a member touched the soils of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and was liberally sprinkled across the hills and fields of Virginia; such was the price of the glory they attained.

Beyond the battlefield, the campaigning, and the marching, other than the active warfare, there are aspects of the Civil War—portions of a day, a night, and even whole months—that are not normally entered into the records of what happened to the men who fought in that great conflict. The members of the Second Florida, like all members of the Confederate Army, had many experiences apart from the active waging of war. There were months of encampment in winter quarters, and whole or parts of days, nights, and sometimes weekends at the beginning, end, and even during a campaign when they were inactive. These experiences are actually what filled the majority of the infantry soldier's life. The Civil War was not only about fighting and killing. It was also about hunger, boredom, cold, varying degrees of wetness, religion, and even love.

This study tells the story of what the Second Florida Infantry Regiment did during the campaigns and battles in which the regiment took part, investigates the every-day experiences of the men of the unit, and explores the reasons the men had for staying with the regiment until the end of the conflict. There are several specific issues involving the lives of common soldiers during the Civil War about which historians have written little. Included in these topics are: how medical and sanitary conditions affected Civil War era armies; how the diet of soldiers affected a their health and unit morale; what the men did while not on the battlefield, and how they interacted with each other; and the role of religion in the lives of the men. In telling the military history of the regiment, this work includes several items that are absent from any other published history of the unit.

INTRODUCTION

The ability of the human spirit to take stress and resist breaking makes it one of the most valuable resources a military unit can have. This spirit—the will to continue despite adversity, a sense of unity within the unit, and dedication to a cause—is known as *esprit de corps*. The members of the Second Florida Infantry Regiment experienced such a spirit as they grew from “boys in grey” into men who were “comrades in arms.” They underwent discipline and chaos, slumber and sleep deprivation, abundance and hunger, living and dying together during the American Civil War. They departed Florida in July of 1861 with nearly 1,000 men receiving showers of flowers and the cheers of their friends and family, confident in their leaders, confident in themselves, and confident that victory would be soon in coming. They returned to Florida in the spring of 1865 with fewer than 70 men to the bare chimneys of their homes and the demoralized stares of their countrymen, filled with remorse for their fallen comrades, and baffled by the fact that they had lost. Defeat came as a surprise for them, even though they underwent great hardship during the last months of the war. A high *esprit de corps* held these men together, motivated them to continue to fight despite what proved to be insurmountable odds, and to give their lives willfully while serving with this unit.

It is easy to look back upon the events of the Civil War and determine that the Confederate States of America had no real chance of winning against the Federal Government. To the participants of the conflict, the outcome was a different certainty. Early in the war, the Southerners believed that a decisive victory and independence were around the corner. Even as the war dragged on, and the going began to get increasingly tough, they believed victory was imminent. Following the crushing defeat at Gettysburg, morale within the Second Florida remained very high, and even through the Siege of Petersburg the soldiers of the unit held onto the belief that victory could still be theirs. This idea was one of the most important aspects of their *esprit de corps*. If they did not believe that they could win, they would not have had any reason to fight or to continue the war. Through the end of the war, those members who remained with the unit believed in the South’s ability to gain independence from the Union. Confederate soldiers held various theories as to how independence would be won, and these theories

strongly influenced their morale. These theories can be categorized into three groups: First, the inherent superiority of the South; second, that recognition and assistance from a European power would be forthcoming; and third, the pacifists in the North would eventually overrule those forces that were perpetuating the war to restore the Union and negotiate a peace settlement.

With their families being robbed and murdered, their homes being destroyed, and their “way of life” forever changed after the Emancipation Proclamation, it would seem that the men serving in the Second Florida Infantry would have had little reason to stay and fight in Virginia. There must be, then, some over-arching reason, some unique motivating factor that bonded them to their cause and to each other. The sources demonstrate that this factor was their personal identification with another group of men who, just four generations previous to their own, fought a war to gain independence—the men who fought in the American Revolution. Time and again, the members of the Second Florida referred to their connection with the Continental Army, even pointing out that during the Peninsula Campaign, in 1862, that they were treading upon the same ground as had General George Washington’s army during the victory at Yorktown.¹ This perceived link with the “spirit of 1776” aided to the formation of an *esprit de corps*, as they were identifying themselves with a closely linked group which had been victorious.² It also helped sustain their morale in times of tribulation, as they recalled how the Continental Army weathered similar hardships, and in the end achieved a glorious victory.³ Indeed, the tales of hunger and woe that flowed from the pens of members of the Second Florida resemble those described by Joseph Plumb Martin.⁴

Beyond the overarching belief that their cause was somehow linked with that of their forefathers, there was a bond linking the men of the Second Florida with each other. Even as the war entered its final stages, when the going did not just get tough, it became almost unbearable, the men did not want to give up, because to do so would betray the

¹ Francis P. Fleming, *Memoir of Captain C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C.S.A.* (Jacksonville, Florida: Times Union Publishing House, 1881) 33.

² James M. McPherson, “On the Cause of Liberty,” *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America’s Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002) 212.

³ McPherson, “On the Cause of Liberty,” *The Loyal, True, and Brave*, 213.

⁴ Joseph Plum Martin was a member of a Connecticut infantry regiment, serving in the Continental Army, who in his later years wrote a memoir of his experiences during the American Revolution.

sacrifices of their comrades who had already given their lives, and would bring shame to them and their families.

For the men of the Second Florida Infantry, there were months of encampment in winter quarters, and whole or parts of days, nights, and sometimes weekends at the beginning, end, and even during a campaign when they were inactive, or posted on picket duty, and thus had time to spend at their leisure. These experiences filled the majority of the infantry soldier's life. Aside from the preparation and eating of food, the men involved themselves in activities such as conversing or singing with friends, writing letters to friends and loved ones, playing games, attending religious services, travel, courting the fairer sex, imbibing spirits, or engaging in any number of superfluous activities. One Confederate soldier appropriately remarked that, "None can imagine, who has never experienced a soldier's life, the languor of mind—tediousness of time, as we resume—day after day the monotonous duties devolved upon."⁵ The men of the Second Florida had to find ways in which to relieve their boredom, and find it they did.

The outcome of most Civil War campaigns was decided on the field of battle. However, medical procedures carried out prior to the engagement determined, in large part, who reached the battlefield. Often, the number of men engaged in battle represented only a fraction of the number of men the two armies had on paper. One aspect of their experience was that of group and personal health and sanitation. Beyond just taking a bath, health and sanitation included all of the conditions in which they lived and died: quarters, clothing, food, water, personal hygiene, latrine facilities, interaction with disease carriers, and even interaction with animals. Ignorance of microbiology, misunderstandings about common ailments, as well as their treatments, improper food-handling and preparation techniques, an inadequate diet, and casual attitudes towards group and personal hygiene all combined to create a situation in which many men sickened. Most recovered completely or with only minor complications, while some were rendered unfit for duty; still others simply died.

⁵ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1943) 151.

The Civil War soldier was burdened with a life of long, hard service for his country. While in that service, he was required to march, be posted to guard or picket duty, practice drill, and carry out any number of official or unofficial activities that occupied his time. Still, with all these ordeals, the men of the Second Florida found themselves with a great deal of free time. Some men spent that time in pursuit of religion, some in pursuit of entertainment, and some in pursuit of pleasure. Whatever the activities in which the men of the regiment engaged, they found enjoyment and a means to put out of mind the bleak reality of soldier life. As one member of the Florida Brigade wrote, “Amid all our trials and undesirable hardships we are still cheerful and try to spend our time as pleasantly as circumstances will admit.”⁶ It was one veteran, writing years after the war, who best expressed the importance of free time activities to the common soldier. “The soldier may forget the long, weary march . . . he may forget the horrors and blood of the battlefield . . . but the cheerful, happy scenes of the campfire he will never forget.” “Around the fire crystallize the memories of the soldier’s life.”⁷

To examine the history of the Second Florida Infantry Regiment is, in effect, to hold a magnifying glass to the Army of Northern Virginia. By learning of the every-day experiences of its members, we can better understand the important contribution of Floridians to the Southern cause for independence. In doing so, we gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the hardships they endured, learn what motivated the men to fight, what motivations there were for discontinuing the fight, and most importantly, why, despite all of the reasons for leaving, they remained with the unit until the “bitter end.”

⁶ Junius Taylor, Letter “February 26, 1863,” *Pine Hill Plantation Papers*, Special Collections, Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁷ Philip van Doren Stern ed., *Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1961) 371.

CHAPTER 1: “FROM THE FLOWERY FIELDS OF FLORIDA:” ORGANIZATION TO REORGINIZATION—JANUARY 1861-JULY 1862

On January 10, 1861, the State of Florida officially withdrew from the union of the United States of America and declared itself to be "a sovereign and independent nation."¹ Floridians believed that the Southern states had an inherent right to independence, and because of the superiority of the Southern way of life over the Northern way of life, the South would naturally prevail in the event of armed conflict. Newspapers proclaimed that the war would be short, and “the justice of our [Southern] cause...” will be “proven.”² Newspapers derided the Yankees as “ramheads, ragamuffins, and scoundrels” and the “invading” Union armies as a bunch of “thieves, cutthroats, loafers, penitentiary graduates, infidel Dutch, God-forsaken Irish,” and worse.³ Some papers published articles comparing the North and South on their merits and their abilities to wage war.⁴ Of course, the South was a far superior region in all respects. However, the abilities listed were all intangibles. The tangibles—such as munitions factories, populations, and one the most important intangibles, the ability to organize—were ignored.

Historians have long debated the South’s reasons for fighting. Among the more recent scholarship, David Brion Davis argues that slavery was central to the states’ rights, and thus central to the cause for the war. He points to the violent actions of pro and anti-slavery groups in the Kansas Territory, prior to the war, as indicative of the role slavery played in moving other Americans to participate in the war. The expansion or restraint of slavery into the territories acquired by the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican War was, Davis points out, the main cause for the growth of sectional strife.⁵ On the other hand, Donald Livingston insists that economic issues and an aggressively intrusive federal government were the coercive elements that led to secession. At that time, the majority of capital in the country was controlled by Northern banks. Many Southern farmers, who

¹ “Florida Ordinance of Secession,” Florida Convention of the People Collection, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida

² *Pensacola Weekly Observer*. June 9, 1861.

³ *Pensacola Weekly Observer*. June 9, 1861.

⁴ *Pensacola Weekly Observer*. June 2, 1861.

⁵ David Brion Davis and Steven Mintz, eds, *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery Through the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

took out loans, found the banks foreclosing on their accounts and seizing their land. Livingston claims that Southerners viewed such actions as a conspiracy by Northerners to undermine Southern culture and gain economic control over the South. The activities of abolitionists were seen as another means by which Northerners were attempting to undermine their way of life. Most Southerners viewed John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and the fact that several prominent abolitionists provided him with funds, as undeniable proof of such conspiracies. Thus, as Livingston argues, slavery was only an issue because Northerners made it one.⁶ The truth lies, as with most cases, somewhere in the middle. Most recent histories accept that slavery was an important issue, but not the only issue over which the Civil War was fought. In his book *Battle Cry of Freedom*, James McPherson convincingly reasoned that slavery, while perhaps not the reason each man—North or South—fought in the conflict, was the one factor without which the war never would have been fought.⁷

After the state seceded, one full infantry regiment was raised for home defense—the First Florida Infantry Regiment—and encamped at Pensacola. Other Southern states started sending representative units to Virginia, where it was believed the decisive campaign would be fought. That April, military leaders in Tallahassee, not wanting Florida to miss out in the glory of having troops engaged in what they thought would be a magnificent victory against the Union, decided to raise a second regiment of infantry for the purpose of representing the State of Florida in that campaign. Each of the ten companies that composed the Second Florida was raised as a representative unit from a particular county.⁸ Apart from these ten companies, there was one other company of Florida troop—already in Confederate service—that would join them in Richmond, and another—yet to be raised—that would join them the following year.

While historians have debated why the states seceded, few have written about why soldiers actually fought. The historian Pete Maslowski put forth the claim that common Civil War soldiers were, “notoriously deficient in ideological orientation.”⁹

⁶ Donald Livingston, *A Constitutional History of Secession* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 2002).

⁷ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Random House, Inc., 1988).

⁸ *Walter Raleigh Moore Collection*, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹ Pete Maslowski, “A Study of Morale in Civil War Soldiers,” *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 316.

Sixty-four percent of the soldiers he studied made more statements relating to what he termed “lower ideals”—glory, honor, and/or adventure—than “higher ideals”—love of country, belief in a better future, or certain issues such as slavery.¹⁰ He argues that this lack of higher ideals demonstrates how poorly educated the average soldier was. That he fought for lower ideals is contrary to the assertions of most romantic historians.

However, Maslowski does not take into account that, romantics aside, honor was a high ideal to Southerners during this time. The crack of two dueling pistols heard at dawn gave testament to the importance of honor within Southern culture. Another historian, Michael Barton argues that Civil War soldiers, especially Southerners, were motivated by higher ideals. According to Barton’s study, *Patriotism, Religion, and Other Values*—including honor—dominated the many core values and education principles contained within the diaries and letters of Civil War soldiers.¹¹

Neither Maslowski nor Barton address the importance of defending one’s own family and home as a motivation to fight. They and Drew Gilpin Faust focus on soldiers’ patriotism as a motivating factor.¹² While fighting for one’s home and fighting for one’s country go hand in hand, they do not necessarily mean the same thing. For some Florida soldiers, such as Charles Seton Fleming, patriotism was of great importance, as is demonstrated in his correspondence. However, most soldiers—if not all—actually took up arms because they personally believed that to remain neutral jeopardized their homes and loved ones. G. H. Dorman summed up the feelings of all soldiers when he stated that his fellow Floridians were, “pouring out their lifeblood for the love of home and the dear ones behind.”¹³ Walter Raleigh Moore, commander of the Second Florida during the last months of the war, wrote to his wife:

When I look at them [Yankees] it makes my blood boil. To think that . . . the cruel brutal vandals seek to disperse our Armies, that they may with savage, brutal soldiering get to our homes to lay waste to our country, desecrate and destroy our homes . . . the picture’s (sic) too horrible, I

¹⁰ Maslowski, “A Study of Morale in Civil War Soldiers,” *The Civil War Soldier*, 315-16.

¹¹ Michael Barton, “The Values of Civil War Soldiers,” *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 425-435.

¹² Drew Gilpin Faust, “The Civil War Soldier and the Art of Dying,” *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 498-500.

¹³ G. H. Dorman, *Fifty Years Ago: Reminiscences of '61-65* (Tallahassee, Fla.: T. J. Appleyard, 1912) 10.

cannot dwell upon. My hand refuses to pen the outrages that would be perpetrated. I wish that every man . . . could realize the fate that awaits us if the enemy gets possession of our country. The females . . . will certainly be the greatest sufferers if the fortunes of war should turn against us.¹⁴

The statements of Dorman and Moore demonstrate why the members of the Second Florida fought, and continued to fight, in the far off land of Virginia. In the same sense that Americans who fought in Europe during the Second World War were protecting their homeland from being conquered, Floridians who served in Virginia felt they were keeping the Yankees from destroying their homes.

Once the companies had formed and equipped, they needed to assemble in order to begin their service as Confederate soldiers. On July 1, 1861, the companies received orders to congregate at a location near Jacksonville.¹⁵ One-by-one the companies arrived at the encampment, called the “Brick church.”¹⁶ By July 12, all ten companies had arrived. While at their Jacksonville encampment, the regiment elected its field officers. George T. Ward of Leon County was elected Colonel and thus became the Second Florida’s first commander.¹⁷

With the regiment in the service of the Confederate Government, the unit set out to join the Confederate forces in Virginia. On the morning of July 15, the entire regiment broke camp, marched to the train depot in Jacksonville, and from there departed for Richmond.¹⁸ At various stations along the way, they attended ceremonies hosted by local citizens, which served to boost the men’s morale and give them courage for the coming fight. It was in these early days when some of the regiment’s men, having new uniforms and in the better health than they would be for the rest of the war, received their first wound—from an arrow fired by Cupid. Men who had wives or sweethearts were especially motivated for the coming conflict, as they were fighting not just for glory, or

¹⁴ Walter Raleigh Moore, Letter March 8, 1863, *Walter Raleigh Moore Collection*, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

¹⁵ Francis P. Fleming, *Memoir of Captain C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C.S.A.* (Jacksonville, Florida: Times Union Publishing House, 1881) 27.

¹⁶ J. J. Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, vol. XI of *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History, in Twelve Volumes, Written by Distinguished Men of the South and Edited by Gen. Clement A. Evans of Georgia*, ed. Clement A. Evans (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899) 43. Although, Fleming refers to this location as the “brick yard,” Fleming, *Memoir*, 28.

¹⁷ Fleming, *Memoir*, 29.

¹⁸ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 43.

even to defend their homes, but to defend their womenfolk from whatever dastardly deeds the Yankees might otherwise inflict upon them.¹⁹

They arrived in the Confederate capital the day of the first battle at Manassas, and thus did not participate in the engagement. The men of the regiment were disappointed to have missed the fight, and even more disappointed that instead of being deployed to the zone of combat, they were encamped near Richmond for nearly two months.²⁰

Not all of the soldiers of the Second Florida were untested in the art of soldiering. In autumn of 1860, two rival militia infantry companies formed in Pensacola, the Pensacola Guards (or “Guards”) and the Pensacola Rifle Rangers (or “Rangers”), the rivalry being a friendly one. After forming, the Rangers elected Edward Allesworth Perry to be the company’s captain.²¹ It took the members of the Rangers only a short while to master the art of close-order drill. By January 1861, the company often gave public drill demonstrations.²² Public performances of close order drill is an excellent method of strengthening a unit’s *esprit de corps*, as it shows spectators—and more importantly, the members of the unit—how well the men work together. Units that perform drill well develop a sense of unity and superiority to those units that do not perform as well.²³

Florida’s secession availed the Rangers with their first experience in real soldiering. The day after secession, the Guards and the Rangers received orders to take possession of the Navy Yard at Pensacola.²⁴ On the morning of January 12, 1861, the two companies entered the yard without firing a shot. The Rangers participated in the occupation of the yard and the subsequent stand-off with a detachment of Union troops who occupied Fort Pickens in Pensacola Bay. In March, after the Confederate States of

¹⁹ Fleming, *Memoir*, 26.

²⁰ Fleming, *Memoir*, 29-30.

²¹“Since the Blue and the Gray Have Mingled Together, And War is a Thing of the Past, an Old Confederate of Company ‘A’ in a Reminiscent Mood Tells of Those Terrible Times When the Bugle Sounded the Call to Arms of Those True and Loyal Sons of that Famous Florida Company ‘A,’” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, May 26, 1894) 1 (This article will be henceforth referred to as “Since the Blue and the Gray”).

²² “We met the guards on yesterday,” *Pensacola Weekly Observer* (June 9, 1861) 1. The date of this article, found on microfilm at Strozier Library, Florida State University, shows the handwritten date of June 9, 1861. However, from the content of the letter, it is more likely that the article was actually written in May.

²³ Several companies toured the United States, in the years preceding the war, demonstrating drill. In modern times, units give public demonstrations of drill and participate in drill competitions as a means of developing their morale and *esprit de corps*.

²⁴ “Since the Blue and the Gray,” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, May 26, 1894) 1, 8.

America formed, Confederate regular troops arrived in Pensacola to relieve the few militia troops stationed there.²⁵

During their time in Pensacola, some members of the Rangers engaged in a type of activity which served to relieve them from the boredom of ordinary soldier life—playing pranks. One officer who made himself disliked by the enlisted men by his strict disciplinarianism one night found that four of the turkeys he owned vanished. Instead of their normal rations, the men of the company feasted on turkey that Sunday.²⁶ Some of the men the Floridians encountered from inland areas had never seen saltwater before. After a long march to reach Pensacola, an Alabama soldier, as soon as his company was dismissed, ran to the bay, and filled his bucket with the “cool, sparkling water.” He put the pail down, in order to borrow a cup from a friend, and upon receipt thereof, dipped the tin cup into the bucket, and then took a gulping drink. “He sputtered and gasped for breath, astonishment and indignation depicted in his countenance.” When he recovered, he shouted, “Who the ---- put that salt in my water?” eliciting uproarious laughter from everyone present.²⁷ Another time, while out fishing, a member of the company captured two electric eels. He put the two specimens in a water-filled bucket. “These little fish afforded much sport for a couple of days . . .” The fellow who caught the eels invited people to touch a particular spot on the eel’s forehead, and when he did so, “he required no invitation to take it away.” Over the next few days, “roars of laughter could be heard from different quarters, and the cry would be, ‘There’s another victim.’”²⁸ Such activities bonded the men together, as they were all done in good-natured fun, and were something that they could all find humor in. They also served, later in the war, as a means by which the men could raise their spirits, recounting the stories to each other and other members of the Second Florida.

On March 27, the Rangers marched back into Pensacola and temporarily disbanded. The unit quickly reformed, this time calling itself the “Pensacola Rifle Rangers.” In early May, they received orders to travel to Richmond, Virginia, as they were to go on active duty as a regular unit. Late in the afternoon of May 5, 1861, the

²⁵ “Their First Campaign,” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, June 2, 1894) 1, 4.

²⁶ “Their First Campaign,” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, June 2, 1894) 1.

²⁷ “Their First Campaign,” *The Florida Mirror* 1, 4.

²⁸ “Their First Campaign,” *The Florida Mirror* 4.

company departed for Virginia, and finally arrived in Richmond during the last week of May.²⁹ The evening before they left Pensacola, during a ceremony to bid farewell to the unit, a dignitary gave a speech to the “boys” in which he “impressed upon them the greatness of the work in which they were engaged.” The newspaper proclaimed that the Florida troops would return from Virginia “covered with the laurels of victory.”³⁰ No doubt, this bolstered the troops morale, and reinforced their notion of superiority.

While in Richmond, nearly every week-day, at 5 p.m. Captain Perry took command of the company and led them in a public drill practice. Their practices became an attraction for many of the city’s residents.³¹ Despite their daily drill routine, the leaders of the company decided that the Rangers should become a mounted unit, and they sought to purchase horses. However, the scarcity of horses prevented the unit from becoming cavalry. When the Second Florida arrived in Richmond, Colonel Ward approached Captain Perry with the proposal of the Rangers becoming a company in his regiment. Perry and all of his officers agreed that this was the right course of action, and so Ward and Perry submitted the proposal to the Secretary of War. The Secretary agreed, and on July 29, 1861, the Pensacola Rifle Rangers moved their camp and officially became a part of the Second Florida Infantry.³²

The Second Florida’s first duty assignment, guarding the Federal prisoners captured at Manassas, was not a detail the men particularly enjoyed.³³ Some unsavory members of the regiment quickly found methods of relieving the boredom of guarding the prisoners. Captain George Gibbs, commander of the prisoner of war camp in Richmond, wrote a letter to his superiors in the War Department complaining of the “grog shops” where many of the soldiers assigned to him obtained liquor. While not on duty, members of the regiment stole off to the “grog shops” and either returned drunk, or, having whiskey in their canteens, became drunk while on duty. Gibbs wrote, “I regret too to say that it is my duty almost every day to report such cases to Colonel Ward.”³⁴

²⁹ “On to Richmond,” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, June 16, 1894) 1, 4.

³⁰ *Pensacola Weekly Observer* (June 9, 1861).

³¹ “Company ‘A’ in Camp,” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, June 23, 1894) 1 (This article shall henceforth be referred to as “In Camp”).

³² “In Camp,” *The Florida Mirror*, 1.

³³ Fleming, *Memoir*, 29-30.

³⁴ *The Civil War CD-ROM: The War of the Rebellion : A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, developed by Philip Oliver, Version 1.55* (Carmel, Ind. : Guild Press of Indiana,

On September 7, eleven prisoners escaped. The break out was blamed on one of the members of the regiment, who was apparently drunk while on duty. At least one, if not all, of the escapees were later caught. However, the Second Florida was taken off of guard duty a few days later.³⁵ The guardhouse incident is the only documented account of any serious trouble materializing when members of the regiment imbibed. Typically, when members of the regiment drank, it was in small amounts, and while they did get drunk, sometimes often, there are no other accounts of them causing anything more than general mischief.

Guard duty did not consume all of the regiment's on-duty time while in Richmond. They spent a great deal of time practicing drill. Thanks to the efforts of Major Cross, a drill officer assigned to the unit, and Lieutenant C. S. Fleming, who took over as drill master after Major Cross was reassigned, the members of the Second Florida became adept at the practice of military close-order drill.³⁶ One Richmond resident wrote that they “. . . were particularly distinguishable on the dress parade for their evident lack of military education, but after much patience and perseverance on the part of their officers they were drilled into a useful soldiery.”³⁷

Despite some problems, the members of the Second Florida were in high spirits, and believed that once in combat they would prove themselves. In the meantime, E. Kirby Smith, a hero of the battle at Manassas and native of Florida, wrote to L. P. Walker, the Confederate Secretary of War, requesting that the Second Florida be placed in the brigade he believed he was to command.³⁸ However, that was not to be. Instead of a brigade in Virginia, Kirby Smith received command of a small army in the Western Theatre, and later commanded all Confederate forces west of the Mississippi River.

Once the regiment set up camp in Virginia, dysentery made an early appearance and diarrhea soon followed; neither left until the end of the war. These two diseases

1997) Series 2, Vol. 3, “Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners of War and State from February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862,” # 2 (Hereafter, *The Civil War CD-ROM* shall be referred to as *OR*).

³⁵ *OR*, Series 2, Vol. 3, “Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners of War and State from February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862,” # 2

³⁶ Fleming, *Memoir*, 30.

³⁷ Richard Wheeler, *Sword Over Richmond: An Eyewitness History of McClellan's Peninsula Campaign* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 48.

³⁸ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51/2, “Confederate Correspondence, Orders, & Returns Relating to Operations in Maryland, Eastern North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia (Except Southwestern), And West Virginia,” #9

arose from exposure to certain strains of bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and/or chemicals. Not surprisingly, the men of the unit did not understand that drinking tainted water or eating putrid meat exposed them to digestive disorders. The main venue by which men ingested the germs that caused dysentery and diarrhea was water. Most latrine facilities were placed near a water source. Rainwater frequently flooded the latrines, and the tainted water flowed into the drinking water supply.³⁹ Even when it did not rain, men often drank water that was stagnant, and thus tainted.⁴⁰ The problem was such that one Confederate doctor related that, “no matter what else a patient had, he had diarrhea.”⁴¹

Poor sanitation was the most important cause for disease among the members of the Second Florida. The concept that a tiny organism existed, which could infiltrate into a person’s body and wreak havoc upon the body’s organs and tissues, had yet to be developed. Although most infectious diseases had been identified by their symptoms, their causes were still subject to wild speculation. The proper treatment or containment methods also were not—that had to wait until a microscope with the ability to see germs could be invented in the decades following the Civil War. While some treatments worked, such as quinine for malaria, the only disease which did not proliferate at pandemic levels was smallpox, due to a vaccine which, while not always effective, was administered to enough soldiers that the virus was unable to propagate as it would have on an untreated group.⁴² There were two main reasons why so many men died as a result of improper sanitation: they were exposed to poor sanitary conditions while in camp, and they included among their number many men who were either unfit for service or were already infected when they began service.

Most soldiers who enlisted in the Second Florida, or in any other unit which served during the Civil War, expected that the war would be a glorious and romantic affair offering them adventure.⁴³ Instead, they found gore and revulsion. Even the most celebrated works of popular history, such as Ken Burns’ “Civil War” series, fail to

³⁹ Paul E. Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles Thomas Publishing, 1968) 16-17.; Gordon E. McCallum, *Health and Sanitation Practices of the Civil War* (Licensed Battlefield Guide’s Library, Copied by Bill Pieszak) 5.

⁴⁰ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 61.

⁴¹ McCallum, *Health and Sanitation*, 8.

⁴² Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 4-6.

⁴³ Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue, eds, *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 315-316.

portray accurately the daily squalor in which the soldiers lived. Perhaps, more striking about the camps than the dust in the summer or the mud in the spring and fall was the pungent odor, a mixture of burning wood in campfires, rotting flesh in the commissary, the smell of unwashed clothes of men who went weeks—if not months—without bathing, and open latrine ditches. One soldier vividly described the situation:

...an army, any army, does poison the air. It is a city without sewerage, and policing only makes piles of offal to be buried or burned. Animals die as they do not die in cities and, if buried, they are apt to be insufficiently so. Then animals are slaughtered for beef and so, what with the fragments of food and scraps of decaying substances, all festering under a mid-summer sun, an army soon breeds . . . the most fatal of fevers...⁴⁴

Medically, the sleeping arrangements were, in the nineteenth century, nearly identical to those of mankind's cave-dwelling days. With only one or two blankets to defend against rain and cold, the men were exposed enough to contract respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia. Some men who were gifted in the art of sneaking off after final roll call managed to find haystacks, barns, or even household porches to provide nighttime shelter.⁴⁵ Even though they had tents, because they were not entirely enclosed, malaria and other insect-borne maladies abounded during the summer months.⁴⁶

Insect-borne diseases became a problem due to an imprudent attitude towards personal hygiene. The men regarded vermin that infested camps and their persons as a nuisance and not as a threat to their health.⁴⁷ The vermin most men of the regiment had to cope with were lice—called “greybacks” by the men. Nearly every soldier had to deal with them, even the officers. At first, the men saw them, as a mark of shame similar to being thought to be a coward. However, as time went on, and all ranks fell victim to the plague of “greybacks,” it became a matter of jest. After the initial shock of having lice wore off, the men tried to manage them. The soldiers all washed at the same time and boiled their clothes together, rather than one at a time, to avoid transferring the lice to

⁴⁴ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 17.

⁴⁵ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 329.

⁴⁶ McCallum, *Health and Sanitation Practices*, 7.

⁴⁷ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 6.

one-another. This practice proved somewhat effective in dealing with the problem, but, lice were an ever-present nuisance, as bathing remained a rare occurrence.⁴⁸

The Floridians were especially susceptible to the cold. T. M. Palmer, the surgeon in charge of the hospital to which all Florida troops were admitted, wrote that the Floridians suffered a higher percentage of deaths from sickness than any other state's troops serving in Virginia. Yet those same troops had experienced good health while still in Florida. He blamed their inability to cope on two factors: First, because the men were used to warm weather, the cold of Virginia was beyond their ability to cope; and second, many men were not fit for service.⁴⁹

The major reason that infectious diseases entered the encampment of the Second Florida, and indeed all other units, was the improper procedures by army doctors when screening recruits. Often, men were allowed in the army who were carriers of disease or who were too susceptible to the rigors of army life.⁵⁰ One soldier, William Short, was allowed to join the army, despite his history of digestive problems. During the time he served with the unit, he experienced chronic bowel problems, often discharging blood.⁵¹ As bad as Private Short's problems were, other soldiers never even made it into battle, falling victim to the less chivalrous aspects of warfare. It was not unheard of for a man to be declared fit for service by a surgeon one day, and on the morrow "drop dead."⁵² Many soldiers simply did not trust the doctors, and did not report for sick call, either bearing their affliction out or using some form of home remedy.⁵³ Sometimes the soldiers recovered, but often they did not.

Another factor which contributed to the spread of disease within the regiment was the nature of Southern society at that time. The members of the regiment were primarily from agricultural backgrounds, and thus had not come into contact with diseases such as measles during childhood. When the regiment was encamped together, and the men started breathing the same air, sharing each other's meals, drinking out of each other's

⁴⁸ John C. Reed, "On the Plague of 'Greybacks,'" *The Loyal True and Brave*, 146-147.

⁴⁹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42/2, "Confederate Correspondence, Orders, and Returns, Relating to operations in Southeastern Virginia and North Carolina, From August 1, 1864, to September 30, 1864," # 2.

⁵⁰ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 41.

⁵¹ William B. Short, *William B. Short Collection*, Elenore S. Brockenbough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

⁵² Short, Letter "May 24, 1863," *Short Collection*.

⁵³ Wiley. *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 257-258.

canteens, those who were from urban areas, who had already experienced boyhood disease—some of whom were carriers—infected those from rural areas. In these first months of the war, Brigadier General John Gordon wrote of his concern that so many “country boys” were coming down with boyhood diseases. “They ran the whole catalog of boyhood diseases except teething . . .”⁵⁴ In the months of July through September 1861 the Confederate forces stationed near Richmond suffered 8, 617 cases of measles. In January, some regiments were completely immobilized by measles and other maladies. However, by February 1862 the situation stabilized, and only eight men fell ill with the disease.⁵⁵

Most men who served with the regiment were barely older than 18 when they joined the unit in 1861. Given their age, most had not yet experienced such sicknesses as measles, chickenpox, mumps, or rubella. Thus disposed, the camp of the Second Florida was an epidemic waiting to happen, with hundreds of men living in close quarters, sharing food, water, and latrine facilities. The six-month period between July 1861, and February 1862, saw many cases of sickness, especially measles. In August 1861, Private Eugene Frederick Lykes, a member of the Second Florida Infantry, wrote to his wife in Hernando County that only one member of his company had come down with any kind of sickness.⁵⁶ Less than a month later, in another letter to his wife, Private Lykes expressed concern that so many members of the regiment, including a number of men in his own company, were getting sick with measles and flu. Some became so ill that they had to be discharged from the army, as the officers believed them incapable of recuperating in time to participate in coming campaigns.⁵⁷

There are no statistics showing exactly how many men of the Second Florida fell ill during its first months in Virginia. However, this number must have been substantial, as 31 members of the regiment succumbed to disease between July 1861 and March 1862.⁵⁸ One might assume that the loss of so many men to disease would have

⁵⁴ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 118.

⁵⁵ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 118.

⁵⁶ Eugene Frederick Lykes, Letter “16 August, 1861,” *Eugene Frederick Lykes Letter Collection*, Elenore Brockenbourgh Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

⁵⁷ Lykes, Letter “13 August, 1861,” *Lykes Letter Collection*.

⁵⁸ D. William Shepherd, ed., *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War: A Reprint of Part II: Florida in the War Between the States, 1861-1865, Extracted from Soldiers of Florida Published by the State of Florida in 1903* (Panama City, Fla.: Norfield Publishing, 1998) 79-99.

demoralized the rest of the unit. The historian Paul Steiner argues that the loss of so many men, even friends and relatives within the regiment, did not cause any real loss of morale. The men were accustomed to seeing people die from disease since childhood, and the high infant and child mortality rates during the nineteenth century caused them to be mentally prepared for the loss of a brother or a friend as a result of disease.⁵⁹

If any single word could describe the diet of the average member of the Second Florida Infantry, with regard to the impact it had upon his health, it would be “abysmal.” The Rebel diet consisted for the most part of flour biscuits or cornbread, beef or pork—often heavily salted, as a means of preservation—some sort of sweetener—such as sugar, molasses, or sorgum—and coffee. A great problem within the army was the absence of fresh vegetables. Potatoes and peas, as well as corn and green vegetables, were sometimes issued. However, they came at irregular intervals, and by the time they were evenly distributed, the average soldier’s share was hardly enough to prevent diseases such as scurvy.⁶⁰

Although the Second Florida had to wait to experience its first combat, it did not wait long in Virginia before being deployed. The Secretary of War issued orders, on September 14, 1861, for the Second Florida to “. . . proceed to Yorktown, Va., with as little delay as practicable, and report for duty to [Brigadier-] General [John Bankhead] Magruder . . .” who commanded the Army of the Peninsula, guarding the eastern approach to Richmond.⁶¹ Early in the morning of September 17, 1861, the regiment broke camp and began the march from Richmond to Yorktown, arriving that evening. The following morning, they made camp “. . . about three-quarters of a mile south of Yorktown, and about three hundred yards west of the monument which marked the spot where Lord Cornwallis surrendered to Washington.”⁶²

The troops were proud to be walking on the same ground where one of the most important battles of the American Revolution was fought. They were proud because they perceived themselves as the rightful successors of Washington’s army. As letters written

⁵⁹ Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War*, 38.

⁶⁰ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 93, 95, 97.

⁶¹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51/2, “Confederate Correspondence, Orders, & Returns Relating to Operations in Maryland, Eastern North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia (Except Southwestern), And West Virginia,” #12.

⁶² Fleming, *Memoir*, 31.

throughout the war by Confederate troops attest, they identified with those men who, not ninety years previous, fought for and won their independence from the British crown.⁶³

For several months, General Magruder worked to prepare several fortification lines, one just outside of Richmond, one stretching across the James Peninsula just east of Williamsburg, and one crossing the peninsula just east of Yorktown. On October 3, 1861, with the Yorktown line completed, Magruder issued General Orders, No. 89, which directed the deployment of troops under his command into the defensive positions around Yorktown. He planned to place the bulk of his command at the Yorktown line. Should a large army land and besiege that line, he would hold either until reinforcements arrived, or fall back to one of the other two lines which were to be better fortified. In this deployment, the Second Florida was “. . . to be held in reserve in rear of Young’s grist-mill.”⁶⁴ This put them near the center of the Yorktown line. In January, General Magruder assigned the Second Florida to Brigadier General G. J. Rains’ Division.⁶⁵ For the members of the Second Florida posted along the Yorktown line, the rest of the winter of 1862 passed without incident.

The Second Florida had its longest period of inactivity in the Yorktown defenses. Despite regular drill practice, the men had much free time. One Confederate soldier appropriately remarked that, “None can imagine, who has never experienced a soldier’s life, the languor of mind—tediousness of time, as we resume—day after day the monotonous duties devolved upon.”⁶⁶ The men of the Second Florida had to find ways in which to relieve their boredom, and find it they did.

The members of the regiment used the majority of their free time in the procurement, preparation, and consumption of food. The troops in Virginia were well fed for a time. For the first several months of the war the Confederate government was able to supply troops with more-or-less the same capacity that the United States government

⁶³ James M. McPherson, “On the Cause of Liberty,” *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America’s Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002) 212-213.

⁶⁴ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 4, “Siege of Yorktown,” #13. Janet B. Hewett refers to this location as “Camp Grafton.” Janet B. Hewett, ed., *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, “Part II—Record of Events,” Vol. 5, s#17 (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995) 211.

⁶⁵ *OR*, Series 1, Vol 9, “Correspondence Orders, and Returns Relating Specially to Operations in Southeastern Virginia From January 11 to March 17, 1862,” # 9.

⁶⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 151.

supplied rations to its armies.⁶⁷ Once the Second Florida took its place in the defenses around Yorktown, they received enough supplies to live “substantially well.”⁶⁸ Sergeant Eugene Lykes of Company E, Second Florida Infantry described the rations provided to the regiment as consisting of “fair pork and bacon and biscuits.”⁶⁹ “Coffee is sometimes very good and then it is very bad. Sugar is common. Brown rice is good. Flour is middling.”⁷⁰ “Sutlers” were commissary merchants who brought wagonloads of supplies of all sorts—such as food, clothing, cooking utensils, etcetera—were a common sight early during the conflict. They brought their wares into, or close to the camps, and the soldiers would purchase items from them. During the first winter of the war, Eugene Lykes wrote that the prices of the sutlers were very fair, and that sometimes they could purchase fresh pork “at 12 & 13 cents per pound.”⁷¹ However, the sutler was not always a respected or even trusted person. A source of chronic irritation to officers and men was the frequent overcharging for food and other stock items. So long as the government still had the capacity to pay the soldiers on a regular or semi-regular basis, sutlers continued to “. . . flock about Rebel camps.”⁷²

Meat and meal were staples of the Rebel diet. One Confederate soldier summed it up thus: “. . . I will let you know what I live on . . . beef & bread bread an beef upper crust under crust an crum Som Sugar & molasses when that is said all is said.”⁷³ Of all kinds of meal, cornmeal was the most common. However, the meal was of a very poor quality, and many wrote home of wishing to never partake of such victuals again.⁷⁴ Beef was the more common of the kinds of meat consumed, though bacon was a very close second.⁷⁵

There were several methods of preparing meal or flour. The first was to make cornmeal into a kind of paste and wrap it around a ramrod and let it roast over an open fire. The second method was to place the bread dough on a flat surface in a slanting

⁶⁷ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 90.

⁶⁸ Eugene Frederick Lykes, Letter “Oct 16, 1861,” *Lykes Letter Collection*.

⁶⁹ Lykes, Letter “Oct. 16, 1861,” *Lykes Letter Collection*.

⁷⁰ Lykes, Letter “Oct. 16, 1861,” *Lykes Letter Collection*.

⁷¹ Lykes, Letter “Oct. 16, 1861,” *Lykes Letter Collection*.

⁷² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 100.

⁷³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 97.

⁷⁴ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 98.

⁷⁵ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 97.

position near a fire. During this period, when the men had plenty of skillets, they often made biscuits or cornbread. Some sources also tell of wrapping batter in corn husks and burying them in hot embers.⁷⁶

Meat was generally prepared in one of three ways. The method of broiling a piece of beef, pork, or other meat by impaling it upon a ramrod and placing it over a fire was so common it could be termed standard. Sometimes meat was made into a pie or a soup or stew, depending on the availability of flour and/or vegetables. Bacon was deep fried in a skillet, so that the remaining fat could be used as shortening, or used to make “slosh”—a pseudo gravy concoction of water, meal, and bacon grease into which the men dipped their biscuits.⁷⁷

The greatest food-related health problem during this period was not the availability of food, but rather the food preparation techniques used by Confederate soldiers. Newspaper and army medical reports attributed a large proportion of the cases of sickness to “improper preparation of food by volunteers.”⁷⁸ The soldiers’ culinary skills never improved. Members of the regiment either got used to the diet or got sick. With the frequent shortages of fresh fruits and vegetables, living on half-rancid meat and deep-fried wheat flour or corn meal bread, most certainly sent more men to the hospital or to the grave than did Yankee bullets by the end of the war. Irregularity was a major problem among troops in Virginia throughout the war.⁷⁹ In order to stay healthy, members of the Second Florida had to supplement their diet with non-rationed items.

Within the Second Florida, foraging for supplies would have been almost unheard of for much of the first year, though fishing along streams or other means of hunting wild game did supplement their diet while stationed near Yorktown. Florida’s many waterways and inherent ties to the sea made most Floridians adept fishermen.⁸⁰ Parcels containing food, sent by family members back home, did help to supplement the diet of the members of the regiment. Eugene Lykes, in August of 1861, wrote home, asking that

⁷⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 103-104.

⁷⁷ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 103-105.

⁷⁸ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 103.

⁷⁹ William B. Short, Letter “May 24, 1863,” *William B. Short 56th Virginia Infantry Letters to Wife, Feb-Aug, 1863*, Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

⁸⁰ “Their First Campaign,” *The Florida Mirror* (Saturday, June 2, 1894) 1.

his brother send him a pound of butter.⁸¹ While it is uncertain whether Lykes ever received his butter, letters from members of other units stationed in Virginia indicate that, early in the war, packages from home were received on a regular basis.

Without a doubt, the most common activity in which the men engaged, during their free time, was making conversation or singing with other members of their regiment or with men of other units. When the men gathered to cook and eat meals, they were apt to “shoot the breeze,” and at nighttime informal groups formed around campfires. There they would talk, tell jokes, and sing. Their favorite songs were doleful ballads such as “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” “Home, Sweet Home,” “Lorena,” and “All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight.” Still, there were many lighthearted songs that the men sang to enliven their spirits, including such songs as “Dixie,” “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” and the song which was destined to become Florida’s official state song, “Suwannee River.”⁸² Aside from singing alone, the men brought musical instruments with them and played for the men around the campfires, either as accompaniment for vocal songs or playing instrumental tunes. Banjos, fiddles, flutes, and harmonicas were the favorite instruments of common soldiers, as they were easy to carry, and were not difficult to obtain, as opposed to brass instruments which became scarce early in the war.⁸³

There were occasions when singing or musical performances were a little more formal. Some units staged lavish musical performances, attended by many prominent civilians and officers. There is no record of any of the Florida units staging such a performance. However, it is not unlikely that they occasionally serenaded particular officers or local civilians. An artilleryman recorded an event in his diary that very likely was experienced by most if not all of the Confederate forces stationed in Virginia, whose units included men with some talent for singing or playing musical instruments. John Farrell records in his diary that, “The ladies of the house (Dr. Sheppard’s place) having discovered that there was some musical talent in the company invited a great many of us in and we had some very nice music, singing, and spent a very agreeable morning, indeed.” He goes on to say that later that same day “we gave the ladies a serenade after

⁸¹ Lykes, “16 Aug, 1861, Richmond,” Lykes *Letter Collection*.

⁸² Dorman, *Fifty Years Ago*, 12; Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 152, 156.

⁸³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 157.

roll call.”⁸⁴ One member of the Second Florida reported that the town where the regiment was stationed had an “excellent singing society . . . and the soldiers are invited to attend and take part in the society.”⁸⁵ Music became so well intertwined in the everyday lives of the soldiers that General Robert E. Lee made the comment: “I don’t believe we can have an army without music.”⁸⁶

Those men, who did not sing, talked. Group discussions, “bull sessions,” included topics such as politics, the progress of the war, personal experiences, gossip, and funny anecdotes.⁸⁷ Sometimes the conversations waxed philosophical. However, the men typically talked about more base subjects, such as rumors about various officers and politicians, and the telling of whatever fables they could concoct.⁸⁸

Included in most discussions was the use of colorful language. One Rebel soldier, in a letter to his wife, wrote that, “One of my greatest annoyances is my proximity to one tent of the company next to me . . . in which are 9 or 10 [of] the most vile, obscene blackguards that could be raked up . . .” “. . . there is the dirtiest talk I ever heard in my life.”⁸⁹ Another soldier, in a letter to his wife, wrote, ‘Oaths, blasphemies, imprecations, obscenity, are hourly heard ringing in your ears until your mind is almost filled with them.’⁹⁰

The men of the Second Florida who could read sought to catch up on the latest news, peruse works of literature, or read whatever else they could get their hands on. Items such as the *Southern Illustrated News*, *Southern Field and Fireside*, and other periodical journals enjoyed immense circulation among Confederate troops during the war.⁹¹ Soldiers with a more aristocratic background procured copies of higher literature, such as *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Paradise Lost*.⁹² One Confederate diarist wrote

⁸⁴ John Farrell, Diary “June 2nd, 1862,” *Farrell, John Crenshaw’s Battery, Co. D. Diary Collection*, Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA.

⁸⁵ Hugh Black, *Letters of Captain Hugh Black to His Family in Florida During the War Between the States, 1862-1864*, Unpublished Manuscript, Special Collections, Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, 44.

⁸⁶ Farrell, “June 2nd, 1862,” *Farrell Diary Collection*.

⁸⁷ James I Robertson, Jr., “Fun, Frolics, and Firewater,” *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 129.

⁸⁸ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 161-162.

⁸⁹ Robertson, “Fun, Frolics, and Firewater,” *The Civil War Soldier*, 131.

⁹⁰ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 48.

⁹¹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 161.

⁹² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 161-162.

that one day he spent “all day coughing and reading that d----d Yankee lie *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.”⁹³ Newspapers provided a major source of information, and it was not uncommon to see men of the regiment reading newspapers printed in places other than Florida, even including Northern newspapers. When a soldier received a newspaper, there was always a group of men eagerly waiting for him to finish reading it, so that the prized item could be passed on to the next person.⁹⁴

A favorite activity of members of the regiment was corresponding with friends and relatives. Although newspapers were abundant, they typically did not provide soldiers with important information regarding the conditions of family members and friends back home. Virtually every literate soldier wrote letters home and received letters in return. Even when the only surface a soldier had upon which to write out a letter was his knapsack, as was the case for one member of the Second Florida, Sergeant Eugene Lykes, the soldiers still managed to correspond with friends and relatives.⁹⁵

It was during their months on the James Peninsula that the Second Florida got its first tastes of what would come to be one of their greatest influences during the war—religion. Many of the men who went off to fight in the Civil War were wont to lead their lives abiding by the Christian ideals of that movement. Even so, many members of the regiment “found religion” while serving in Virginia. Revival meetings started taking place in the military camps located in Virginia within the first six months of the war. During these months of inactivity, chaplains, revivalists, and *colporteurs*, were able to reach many men.⁹⁶ However, there were many that they did not reach. Early in the conflict, before the men understood the true horror of battle, most men found greater delight in secular activities. A member of the Second Florida, Hugh Black, wrote: “We have a good opportunity for embracing religion, but there is but few who avail themselves of this opportunity . . .”⁹⁷

Sports and sit-down games, such as checkers, were immensely popular. Cards were certainly the most popular of all games. The historian Bell Irvin Wiley parodied a

⁹³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 162.

⁹⁴ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 161.

⁹⁵ Lykes, Letter “Oct 5, 1861, Yorktown,” *Lykes Letter Collection*.

⁹⁶ Herman Norton, *Rebel Religion: The Story of Confederate Chaplains* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1961) 46.

⁹⁷ Black, *Letters of Captain Hugh Black*, 44.

scriptural passage by stating that, “Wherever two or three Confederate soldiers were gathered together, there would a deck of cards make its appearance in the midst of them.”⁹⁸ While the soldiers often played just for the fun of it, the vast majority of card games were for stakes.⁹⁹

Gambling, despite its ubiquitous nature, was frowned upon by the more pious men. One Confederate soldier wrote that, “. . . of all the evil practices that abound in Camp, gambling is the most pernicious and fraught with the most direful consequences.”¹⁰⁰ So many members under Magruder’s command enjoyed gambling that some members of the Army of the James took to calling it the “Army of the Games.”¹⁰¹ A possible reason so many men gambled is that many of them joined hoping to experience adventure and excitement. Gambling is certainly thrilling, and the accounts of visitors to Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada attest to how persons who are otherwise pious and prudent can fall prey to the impulse to “test their luck.”

There were men who would soon become members of the regiment who did see action during the winter of 1861-1862. The Governor’s Guards was a company of cavalry organized in Tallahassee by the prominent plantation-owner George Washington Parkhill, with Parkhill as their captain. In late July 1861, after their original term of service expired, Captain Parkhill reorganized the company as a unit of infantry, renaming it the Howell Guards in honor of Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ wife, whose maiden name was Howell. They received orders to travel to Richmond, and left at noon on August 12.¹⁰²

On the evening before they left, the Reverend John E. DuBose, a Presbyterian minister, gave a sermon suffused with the superiority myth. He repeatedly compared the Florida troops to Israelite warriors and the Confederate leaders to Joshua. The South, like the Israelites, were about to gain their “promised land.” Independence, for the South, was its “long expected inheritance.”¹⁰³ It was up to the men of the Second Florida to destroy the Union armies sent against them, fighting not out of spite or hatred, but because it was

⁹⁸ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 161.

⁹⁹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 161.

¹⁰⁰ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 36.

¹⁰² Susan Bradford-Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years* (Macon, Ga.: J. W. Burke, 1926) 157-158.

¹⁰³ John E. DuBose, “Capt. Parkhill’s Company, ‘The Howell Guards,’ On the Eve of their Departure for the Seat of War, August 26, 1861,” Sermon (Tallahassee, Fla.: Dyke & Carlisle, 1861) 1.

their duty to fulfill the will of God that “a guilty nation [the United States]...” reap “...the legitimate consequences...” of its “...unholy invasions of the rights and privileges of associate States...infidelity, licentiousness...” and many other sins.¹⁰⁴ According to him, “the soldier who is at peace with God and is resigned to His will, has nothing to fear.”¹⁰⁵ This gave the men of the regiment courage to face the trial by fire that was approaching. He extolled them on the virtues of courage and devotion to duty on the battlefield, saying that a true soldier, “in whose breast the fire of patriotism burns...seeing danger...shirks not from it because duty forbids it.”¹⁰⁶

The company reached Richmond on or about August 20, and was mustered into Confederate service on that date.¹⁰⁷ After spending just over a month in the training camp at Richmond, on September 27, the War department issued orders for the Guards to proceed to Evansport, Virginia.¹⁰⁸ The Howell Guards spent the rest of the year serving in a capacity that none of them could have expected. Upon arrival at Evansport, they learned that they were no-longer to serve as infantry, but were made to man a battery of heavy artillery. They came under the command of Brigadier General Samuel G. French, who was erecting batteries along the Virginia shore at the mouth of the Potomac River in an attempt to cut off naval and commercial traffic to Washington, D.C.¹⁰⁹ They worked for several days to build fortifications for their two cannons, a 32-pound rifle and a 32-pound smoothbore, at Old Ship Point Battery.¹¹⁰

On October 15, the steamer *Seminole* tried to bombard their position, but, returning fire, they managed to severely damage the vessel, forcing her to give up the fight. The next day the *Pawnee* tried to pass the battery, and was set on fire by a shot

¹⁰⁴ DuBose, August 26, 1861, Sermon, 2.

¹⁰⁵ DuBose, August 26, 1861, 7.

¹⁰⁶ DuBose, August 26, 1861, Sermon, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 228. The men mustering in date for the members of the Howell Guards is listed in all printed records as August 20, 1861. Hewett lists the company as still being at Tallahassee until August 27. However, Susan Bradford's diary entry for August 1, 1861, states that the unit was scheduled to leave for Virginia on August 12. Furthermore, her diary entry for August 12, 1861, describes the unit's departure. Bradford-Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years*, 158.

¹⁰⁸ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 228.

¹⁰⁹ “Cockpit Point, Freestone Point, Shipping Point Virginia,” americancivilwar.com, <http://americancivilwar.com/statepic/va/va100.html>, accessed 30 December, 2004.

¹¹⁰ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 228. However, other sources refer to this as “Shipping Point,” Americancivilwar.com.

from the Guards' rifled gun.¹¹¹ This boosted their morale and strengthened their *esprit de corps*, as they were able to claim these two victories against Union ships. The man who fired the shot which disabled the *Pawnee* was an instant celebrity within the unit, and was celebrated for his ability.¹¹²

During the pre-dawn hours of November 1, Union troops managed to erect a battery on the opposite shore, and began to fire upon the Guards' position. To alleviate the situation, the Guards received a third gun in mid-February, a 32-pound rifle made by the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond. Unfortunately, the new gun exploded the first time it was fired, killing one man, and wounding two others.¹¹³ This was demoralizing to the members of the company. It was one thing to be wounded or killed by the enemy, but there was no honor in being injured by one's own weapon.

For the rest of the winter, the men of the Howell Guards remained in their fortifications, exchanging shots with the batteries on the opposite shore, and cutting off traffic along the Potomac River.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, the men of the Second Florida left their position at Young's Mill on December 17 and encamped near Wynn's Mill the same day. Two days later, those members of the regiment well enough to do so, moved to a post on the Yorktown side of Wormley's Creek. They returned to Wynn's Mill on December 26, and there went into winter quarters.¹¹⁵ Even though morale was high, and fewer men were becoming sick—as their bodies adjusted to the cold—6 members of the regiment deserted before year's end.¹¹⁶

The Second Florida saw its first combat when, at the opening of spring, General George B. McClellan's brought his Army of the Potomac up the James Peninsula and besieged Yorktown. Colonel Ward took command of a brigade, which consisted of the Second Florida and the Second Mississippi Battalion.¹¹⁷ On April 5, the Second Florida saw its first real action. That morning, at about 10 A.M., Union forces approached Redoubts Numbers 4 and 5, where Ward's brigade was stationed. He sent out

¹¹¹ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 229.

¹¹² Bradford-Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years*, 170.

¹¹³ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 229.

¹¹⁴ Bradford-Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years*, 170.

¹¹⁵ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 211-212.

¹¹⁶ Shepherd, *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 79-99.

¹¹⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, "Siege of Yorktown," #12. It is not entirely clear as to when Ward was given the title of brigade commander, but General Magruder's reports of April actions refer to "Ward's Brigade."

skirmishers to delay their advance, but the overwhelming enemy force obliged them to return to the protection of the fortifications. General Magruder praised Colonel Ward for his “coolness and gallantry” during the opening action.¹¹⁸ However, by day’s end, a unit of Union sharpshooters had taken a position within a peach orchard from whence they could snipe at any man of the regiment who exposed himself above the parapet. Later that month, General Magruder again reorganized his army, placing the Second Florida in Brigadier General Jubal Early’s Brigade, Major General D. H. Hill’s Division.¹¹⁹

After a month of almost continual sniping conducted by the sharpshooters in front of their lines, General Early ordered Colonel Ward’s command, which included the Second Florida Infantry and the Second Mississippi Battalion, to drive them back. General Magruder wrote of their action that day, stating that “The quick and reckless charge of our men, by throwing the enemy into a hasty flight, enabled us to effect, with little loss, an enterprise of great hazard against a superior force . . .”¹²⁰

This action was their “baptism by fire.” Even though the regiment suffered four casualties, they were wounded, and not killed.¹²¹ Their actions that day brought the regiment praise from their army commander, which elevated their morale. Flush with this victory, however minor, the regiment galvanized their *esprit de corps*, as they could say they were among the Army of the James’ first troops to be engaged. Still, there were five desertions during this period.¹²² It is likely that even though they had experienced combat, because it was not an intense engagement, they did not yet bond together. It took participating in a major battle to cement their bond to one another and to their unit.

By an act of the Congress of the Confederacy, known as the Conscript Laws, the status of the enlistment terms changed for the members of the Second Florida, and all other twelve-month volunteer units, from twelve months to three years. The act also gave each unit the right to reorganize by the election of officers. This election was scheduled for the third of May.¹²³ The vote was not to take place on that day, however. General Joseph Johnson, commander of all Confederate forces defending Richmond, recognized

¹¹⁸ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Siege of Yorktown,” #12

¹¹⁹ F. Ray Sibley, Jr., *The Confederate Order of Battle: The Army of Northern Virginia: Vol. 1* (Shippensburg, Pen.: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1996) 3.

¹²⁰ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Siege of Yorktown,” #12.

¹²¹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Siege of Yorktown,” #12.

¹²² Shepherd, *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 79-99.

¹²³ Fleming, *Memoir*, 34.

that Yorktown could not be held against the Army of the Potomac's overwhelming force, and issued orders to evacuate Yorktown. On the night of May 3, 1862, Magruder's army evacuated its defensive positions, leaving a small number of men behind to cover their retreat by discharging a cannonade against the Union positions. The regiment, being in the rearguard, was one of the last units to march out of Yorktown. From there, they proceeded down the Williamsburg Road, towards Richmond.¹²⁴ The regiment marched all night and day, without rest, to reach Williamsburg. On May 4, 1862, the Second Florida passed through the city of Williamsburg, and made camp a few miles beyond.¹²⁵ However, their repose was short lived. The vanguard of the Union army caught up with troops under the command of Major General James Longstreet, and Hill's Division received orders to reinforce Longstreet.¹²⁶

In the battle of Williamsburg, the Second Florida gained a reputation for gallantry, and yet it lost something very precious—its leader. The regiment broke camp, marched back through Williamsburg, and reached the field of battle during the afternoon. The Second Florida Infantry and the Second Mississippi Battalion, both still under the command of Colonel Ward, were sent to reinforce General Longstreet's troops on the right, while the rest of Hill's division took up positions on Longstreet's left.¹²⁷

Brigadier General Cadimus Wilcox's brigade was in need of support, so when he saw Colonel Ward's command coming down the road he directed Ward where to deploy his two units. Ward organized his men into line of battle and advanced to where Wilcox's men were engaged, on the edge of a field of felled timber. When Wilcox saw that the Second Florida and Second Mississippi Battalion were in position, he ordered one of his units to withdraw, having expended all of its ammunition.¹²⁸ The Second Florida engaged in an intense firefight with Union troops on the other edge of the field. Within minutes of reaching their position and opening fire, Colonel Ward was struck by a bullet that pierced his heart, killing him instantly.¹²⁹ The men were momentarily stunned

¹²⁴ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 144.

¹²⁵ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 144.

¹²⁶ Fleming, *Memoir*, 34.

¹²⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, "Battle of Williamsburg," "Report of Maj. Gen. D. H. Hill, C. S. Army, commanding division, of operations April 6 to May 9," # 12.

¹²⁸ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51/1, "Battle of Williamsburg," "Report of Brig. Gen. Cadimus M. Wilcox, C.S. Army, commanding brigade," # 107.

¹²⁹ Fleming, *Memoir*, 35.

that their Colonel had been killed, but Lt. Colonel Rogers quickly assumed command and led the regiment through the rest of the battle.¹³⁰

Right after the death of Colonel Ward, it became apparent that the Union Army was attempting to flank the Confederate right. The regiment fell back to its original position, reformed, and then took up a position partway across the field, along a rail fence. About mid-afternoon a party of volunteers from the regiment set out under heavy fire to recover the body of Colonel Ward, which was lying where he fell, in the area between the Union and Confederate lines. They succeeded in recovering the body, but while attempting to return, Lieutenant C. S. Fleming was seriously wounded and later captured.¹³¹ The total casualties for the battle of Williamsburg were 4 killed, and 31 wounded, and 5 missing.¹³²

Williamsburg proved to be the real turning point for the Second Florida. The amount of desertions from the regiment, following Williamsburg shows how it solidified the men's attachment to each other, and steeled the resolve of most men to stick to the unit until the conclusion of the conflict. After May 1862, until the end of the war, only six men deserted.¹³³ This was the moment when they ceased to be a group of young men eager for a fight, and henceforth were battle-tested veterans. More important than any acclamation they could have received from newspapers or in Generals' reports, the men of the unit knew that they had what it took to be soldiers. They had marched into the fray, saw men being killed and wounded by shot and shell, and did not run. Williamsburg proved to them and to the world that they were with honor, and the word "Williamsburg" was emblazed at the top of the unit's banner.¹³⁴

The Confederate forces withdrew from their defensive position near Williamsburg and retreated up the James Peninsula towards Richmond. The greatest privations of the war were experienced during retreats. For weeks, as heavy rains turned the roads into mud, the Confederate troops were cut off from supplies.¹³⁵ General Hill's Division, in the rearguard, fared the worst. Reports show that most of the men in his command were

¹³⁰ Sibley, *The Confederate Order of Battle*, 4.

¹³¹ Fleming, *Memoir*, 36.

¹³² *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11, "Battle of Williamsburg," "Return of Casualties in the Confederate Forces," # 12.

¹³³ Shepherd, *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 79-99.

¹³⁴ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27/1, "Gettysburg Campaign Appendix," "Embracing documents received too late for insertion in proper sequence," # 43.

¹³⁵ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 91-92.

issued dry ears of corn for three days.¹³⁶ They finally were able to make camp and eat once they were safely within the defensive ring around Richmond. Their food situation improved only slightly, as they were each issued only small amounts of flour and salted meat.¹³⁷

On May 10, 1862, the regiment finally held the previously-scheduled election. Captain Perry was elected to the position of Colonel, L. G. Pyles was elected Lt. Colonel, and George W. Call was elected Major. All the companies in the unit changed their captains, except for Companies B and C.¹³⁸ Twenty-four soldiers, mostly officers, resigned from the unit at reorganization. Those who resigned typically were officers who were not reelected to their positions. Lt. Colonel Rogers was one such officer. Some other soldiers, including Captain Theodore W. Brevard—destined to be the last man promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Confederacy, resigned from the Second Florida in order to help raise new units. Five soldiers resigned in order to join the Confederate Navy.¹³⁹

During the time the Second Florida was engaged on the James Peninsula, the Howell Guards were not inactive. The erection of batteries on the opposite shore eventually caused the Evansport position to become untenable, and so the batteries were evacuated on March 7, 1862. The Howell Guards was the unit left to cover the retreat. Although they took no pride in retreating, the men did take heart in that they were called upon to carry out this action. Being in either the rearguard or vanguard of an army was always considered an honor, as they were rugged troops that the army commanders trusted to be able to carry out their assigned missions.¹⁴⁰

Once the rest of the units had made it to safety, they spiked the guns and destroyed any equipment that could have been of use to the enemy. The company marched to Fredericksburg, and there manned a battery from March 15 to April 18, when the army fell back from Fredericksburg towards the defensive ring around Richmond. The company was then designated a company of infantry, and temporarily attached to the Fifth Alabama Battalion, and then to the Fifty-fifth Virginia Volunteers. On June 20, the

¹³⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 92.

¹³⁷ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 91-92.

¹³⁸ Fleming, *Memoir*, 36.

¹³⁹ Shepherd, *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 79-99.

¹⁴⁰ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 227-228.

Howell Guards received a new designation, as Company M, Second Regiment, Florida Volunteers, and was ordered to join with the regiment, then encamped “two miles below Richmond.”¹⁴¹

In the month before the Howell Guards joined with the regiment, the Second Florida experienced its moment of greatest glory and greatest sacrifice. Brigadier General Early was wounded in the battle of Williamsburg. Brigadier General Samuel Garland, Jr. took over the brigade, and so Early’s Brigade came to be known as Garland’s Brigade, D. H. Hill’s Division, Department of Northern Virginia, the Second Florida being the second largest unit in that brigade, numbering approximately 435 men fit for duty.¹⁴² During the last week of May the brigade commenced work preparing a defensive position on the north side of the Williamsburg road.¹⁴³ However, while they were preparing defenses, General Joseph Johnson was preparing a plan of attack, whereby he hoped to achieve the decisive victory over the Union army that everyone hoped would win the war. On May 31, 1862, that assault was launched, commencing the battle of Seven Pines.

Garland formed his brigade early that morning in an open field directly in front of his prepared defenses, with the Second Florida on the extreme left. When a signal gun fired, Garland ordered the Second Mississippi Battalion, acting as the Brigade’s skirmishers, forward. They entered the woods, soon followed by the rest of the brigade, keeping the right flank within a short distance of the Williamsburg Road. Recent rains had formed large ponds of water throughout the woods, forcing the men to wade through knee deep water as they moved forward. The thick undergrowth of the woods made it difficult for the skirmish line to keep its proper distance ahead of the brigade’s battle line, as each man had to blaze his own trail. When they encountered resistance, the skirmishers became mixed up with the other units. The brigade drove back the Union skirmishers, and soon reached the edge of the woods. Several Union infantry regiments and a battery of artillery, Battery A of the First New York Artillery—better known as the

¹⁴¹ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 228.

¹⁴² Sibley, *The Confederate Order of Battle*, 4, 6.; *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines, Va.,” “Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel Garland, Jr., C.S. Army, commanding Third Brigade, Third Division,” # 12.

¹⁴³ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines, Va.,” “Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel Garland, Jr., C.S. Army, commanding Third Brigade, Third Division,” # 12.

“Napoleon Battery”—were holding a prepared defensive position at the top of a long slope beyond the wood line.¹⁴⁴ The rise was covered with abatis.¹⁴⁵ To avoid going through the abatis while under heavy fire Garland ordered his troops to move by the left flank, to try to skirt around the abatis and get to the enemy’s flank. This movement could not work, as the brigade’s advance through the thick woods caused it to emerge disorganized. So, General Garland gave the only order he knew would work, that the units press straight through the abatis, towards the dug-in Union troops.¹⁴⁶

The Second Florida, leading the attack, suffered terribly from the murderous fire coming down at them. The Second Florida and then the Thirty-eighth Virginia reached the top of the hill, drove off the Union defenders, and captured all of Battery A’s cannons. During the attack, which lasted only a few minutes, ten out of the regiment’s eleven company commanders were either killed or wounded. Moments after Garland’s men succeeded in taking the enemy position, another Confederate brigade, overtook them from the rear, passed through, and proceeded forward. Because many of Garland’s regiments had lost most of their field commanders, several of his men were confused and advanced with the other brigade, fighting for the rest of the day’s action with the wrong units. The Second Florida still had most of its field officers, so only a few of the men of the regiment became intermixed with the other brigade. However, the regiment did advance with the other brigade, and continued to fight late into the day, reaching as far as the edge of the Union encampment. They finally ran completely out of ammunition, and the commander of the brigade they were fighting with gave them orders to retire and replenish their ammunition.¹⁴⁷

During the fight that day, the regiment captured the colors of the Eighth New York, several dozen prisoners, almost an entire artillery battery, and won for itself immortal glory. Yet, high was the price of glory that day. The regiment suffered 37 men

¹⁴⁴ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 146.

¹⁴⁵ Abatis was the 19th century version of barbed wire. Made out of sharpened tree branches stuck into the ground in an interlacing pattern, its purpose was to slow down an attacker, and allow the defender to get off more shots before the attacker reaches them.

¹⁴⁶ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines, Va.,” “Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel Garland, Jr., C.S. Army, commanding Third Brigade, Third Division,” # 12.

¹⁴⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, “Battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines, Va.,” “Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel Garland, Jr., C.S. Army, commanding Third Brigade, Third Division,” # 12.

killed, 152 wounded, and 9 missing.¹⁴⁸ Of the 435 men of the Second Florida who went into battle, 198 of them became casualties, a loss of 46 percent. Considering the accolades the regiment received for its actions that day, one might wonder why it was Williamsburg, and not Seven Pines that the Second Florida displayed most prominently on their flag. There are likely two reasons for this. Williamsburg meant more to the men, as it was their moment of real bonding. Perhaps, more importantly, their flag was not with the regiment for part of the battle. The commander of the Forty-Ninth Virginia Infantry Regiment, while leading his men into the abatis, coming up behind Garland's Brigade, found a battle flag laying in the brush. He picked it up and began waving it around, urging his men forward. When a messenger from his brigade commander ordered him to give the flag to someone else, lest he be targeted by a Yankee sniper, a young man approached him and offered to carry the flag. "He . . . stated he belonged to the Second Florida, had lost his regiment, and would like to join mine for the fight, and with my permission would gladly bear the flag . . ." "Without a word I handed it to him, and nobly did he bear it; and, curiously enough, it turned out to be the flag of his own regiment . . ."¹⁴⁹ Capturing the battle flag of an enemy was considered a great honor, and the loss of one's own flag was a mark of shame. So, the men celebrated the capture of the enemy battle flag, and just did not talk about what happened to their own flag during that battle, lest anyone know that, for a time, it was lost.

General Johnson's plan was poorly carried out by his division commanders at Seven Pines, and even though they won the field that day, they failed to gain a decisive victory. Johnson, himself, was severely wounded, and General Robert E. Lee assumed command of the combined forces on the James Peninsula. After the battle of Seven Pines, the regiment rested at an encampment two miles south of Richmond, where, on June 20, the Howell Guards joined it as Company M.¹⁵⁰ With Lee's appointment came several changes. In late June, Lee reorganized the units under his command into a single army, naming it the Army of Northern Virginia. The Second Florida was assigned to Brigadier General Roger A. Pryor's Brigade, Longstreet's Division (then commanded by

¹⁴⁸ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, "Battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines, Va.," "Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel Garland, Jr., C.S. Army, commanding Third Brigade, Third Division," # 12.

¹⁴⁹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/1, "Seven Pines," "Report of W. Smith, Colonel Forty-ninth Virginia Volunteers," # 12.

¹⁵⁰ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 230.

Brigadier General Richard H. Anderson), Longstreet's Command, Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁵¹

General Lee devised a plan of attack, an assault on McClellan's exposed right flank, whereby he might force the Union Army to abandon its attack on Richmond. He hoped that, by driving the superior enemy off of the James Peninsula, he could win a decisive victory that would cause Northern military leaders to decide the South could not be beaten. On June 26, 1862, Lee launched his counterattack, a succession of engagements known as the "Seven Days Battles." The regiment departed its encampment and marched to Mechanicsville to participate in the attack. However, they arrived that day at the close of the battle of Beaver Dam Creek, too late to participate in that engagement. The regiment moved up to the front line and rested that evening in their battle line in order to be ready for the renewal of Longstreet's attack in the early morning hours of the twenty-seventh.¹⁵² As the first rays of sun softened the morning shadows on the morning of June 27, 1862, the battle of Gaine's Mill began. The Second Florida was one of the first units engaged that day, going into action with 250 men, and was actively employed by General Longstreet throughout the day.¹⁵³

By evening the attack became a pursuit, as the Union Army crumbled and retreated in the face of the numerically inferior Confederate forces. The Second Florida suffered 8 killed and 52 wounded during the battle, one of whom was Captain Parkhill, who was killed in the first few hours while leading his company.¹⁵⁴ On June 30, 1862, during the battle of Frayser's Farm, the Second Florida was again actively engaged. The regiment succeeded in capturing yet another battery of Union artillery. However, during the charge on the battery, Colonel Perry was severely wounded, and Captain A. Moseley, of Company H, took command of the regiment.¹⁵⁵ The casualties sustained by the regiment in the battle of Frayser's Farm were 14 men killed and 67 wounded.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/2, "Seven Days Battles," "Organization of the Confederate Forces During the Engagements Around Richmond," # 13.

¹⁵² Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 230.

¹⁵³ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, "Correspondence, Orders, and Returns Relating to the Peninsular Campaign, Virginia, From March 17 to September 2, 1862," "Union Correspondence, etc., # 14.

¹⁵⁴ Shepherd, *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 78.

¹⁵⁵ Sibley, *The Confederate Order of Battle*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Shepherd, *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 78.

For fifteen days the Second Florida engaged in the attack and pursuit of McClellan's army down the James Peninsula, and had suffered a total of 23 men killed, and 118 wounded.¹⁵⁷ On July 10, 1862, the regiment returned to its encampment near Richmond.¹⁵⁸ McClellan had abandoned his assault on Richmond and withdrew to defenses along the southeastern portion of the James Peninsula. This left for the Confederates large "spoils" of hardtack and meat, which to the starving Confederates was as good as a banquet feast. Coffee left behind by retreating Federals supplied Confederate soldiers in the region for months.¹⁵⁹

Lee failed to achieve the decisive victory he had hoped would bring a swift conclusion to the war. General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson coordinated his attacks poorly with Longstreet's, and the Confederate troops failed to dislodge the Union defenders from their positions at Malvern Hill. However, the Confederates were showing to the world that, while outnumbered, they were an army with a great deal of offensive capability. Although public support for the war waned slightly in the North, the Lincoln Administration remained firm in its passion to restore the Union. The historian James McPherson argues that Lee's failure to crush McClellan on the Peninsula ensured a long, drawn-out war.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11/2, "Seven Days Battles," "Report of Surg. Lafayette Guild, Medical Director Army of Northern Virginia, with Return of Casualties," # 13.

¹⁵⁸ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 230.

¹⁵⁹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 92, 102-103.; Stern, *Soldier Life*, 319.

¹⁶⁰ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 490.

CHAPTER 2: “THEN WE TURNED NORTH:” THE INVASIONS OF MARYLAND AND PENNSYLVANIA—AUGUST 1862-JULY 1863

When the hope of a quick and decisive victory proved illusive following McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign, the minds of the soldiers turned to the hope that some major power, specifically Britain and/or France, would come to their aid. The members of the Second Florida thought that Great Britain would come to the aid of the Confederacy, as it was the prevalent belief in the South in the period prior to and during the Civil War that if cotton exports to Europe were cut off, the textile industry in England would use its enormous political influence to push the British government into military intervention in order to reestablish the influx of Southern cotton. Newspapers such as the *Memphis Argus* told planters to “keep every bale of cotton on the plantation,” and an unofficial policy of non-exportation of cotton was implemented.¹

Unfortunately, there is little in the way of primary sources regarding this subject which comes from members of the Second Florida. Certainly, some members believed that foreign support was important for gaining independence, and it is likely that most—if not all—of these members held on to the hope that “King Cotton” diplomacy would bring about foreign intervention.² However, it would be foolish to assume that all members of the Second Florida rested every hope for independence upon foreign recognition.

Most likely, members of the regiment rested their hopes on achieving a victory on Northern soil. In doing so, they would prove to European powers that the South had enough of a chance of winning that it would be worth-while to lend military and economic assistance. What the South needed was a Saratoga.

The regiment remained in its encampment for the rest of July and part of August.³ During that time Lee reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia into two corps. The Second Florida remained in Pryor’s Brigade, but the brigade was transferred to Brigadier General Cadimus M. Wicox’s Division, 1st Corps (Commanded by Major General

¹ Frank Lawrence Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America*, Second Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959) 25.

² Charles M. Hubbard, *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (Knoxville, Ten.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998) 21-24

³ Janet B. Hewett, ed., *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, “Part II—Record of Events,” Vol. 5, s#17 (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995) 230.

Longstreet), Army of Northern Virginia.⁴ During August two more Florida regiments, the Fifth and Eighth Florida Infantry, arrived in Virginia. They were also assigned to Pryor's Brigade, and joined the Second Florida at its encampment near Richmond.⁵ Lt. Colonel William Ballantine, recovered from the wound he incurred at Seven Pines, assumed command of the regiment that month.⁶

In late-August, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's 2nd Corps advanced northward to Manassas Junction, Virginia, where he encountered Union General John Pope's Army of Virginia on August 28, 1862, resulting in the second battle of Manassas. Jackson sent word for Longstreet to join him, and soon almost the entire Army of Northern Virginia became involved. The Second Florida broke camp and began their first offensive campaign.

Exposure to the elements was a fact of everyday life in the Second Florida Infantry Regiment. Most members of the regiment arrived in Virginia with their own tents and a large amount of personal equipment. Once they had participated in their first campaign the soldiers discarded or left all superfluous equipment in camp. When on campaign, they took to the habit of carrying as little equipment and personal effects as possible.⁷ Each soldier carried one flannel blanket and one rubber or gum-lined blanket called an "oilcloth" or a "gumblanket." There were times, when these two blankets provided members of the regiment with their only protection from the elements, besides that offered by their uniforms themselves. James Nixon wrote of how, when the wind and rain picked up one night, he wrapped his blanket around him and stood under a tree until the storm passed. He then slept alone on the wet ground.⁸ More commonly, two men slept together. They spread out one oilcloth on the ground, one blanket over both of them—two if it was cold—and the second oilcloth on top to protect against precipitation.⁹

⁴ F. Ray Sibley, Jr., *The Confederate Order of Battle: The Army of Northern Virginia: Vol. 1* (Shippensburg, Pen.: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1996) 23.

⁵ Francis P. Fleming, *Memoir of Captain C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C.S.A.* (Jacksonville, Florida: Times Union Publishing House, 1881) 63.

⁶ Fleming, *Memoir*, 67.

⁷ Philip van Doren Stern, ed, *Soldier Life: in the Union and Confederate Armies* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1961) 297.

⁸ James Nixon, Letter "July 26 / 63," *James Nixon Letters*, Special Collections, Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁹ J. B. Johnson, *A Limited Review of What One Man Saw of the Battle of Gettysburg*, Unpublished Manuscript (Licensed Battlefield Guide's Library, Copied by Bill Pieszak) 2.

When the men had adequate time, they used a few small pieces of wood to prop up the oilcloth as a makeshift tent, and spread clean straw underneath the ground cloth to make a bed.¹⁰

The men did not take their overcoats with them on the campaign, as they were too heavy to carry. The knapsack suffered a similar fate, being discarded as it was uncomfortable and the items carried therein—changes of clothes, tents, and personal items—were judged unnecessary while on campaign. The men thus rolled their personal items up in their blankets, tied the ends together with twine, and wore them over the shoulder with the fastened ends hanging under the opposite arm. The extra clothes were discarded—the men wore one outfit until they could obtain another set of clothes—and the haversack served as the means of transporting items such as extra rations and a tin cup, which was secured by the strap of the haversack’s fastener.

Cotton undergarments replaced woolen underwear, as they were easier to wash and vermin did not proliferate so much. Having an inner layer of cotton and an outer layer of wool proved effective at keeping the soldiers cool during the summer. As they sweated, the cotton would dampen, and at the same time draw the heat of the skin’s surface away, and, depending upon the type of knit, the wool allowed the heat to escape while trapping the cool moisture of the sweat. Although there are no references concerning the exact nature of the uniforms worn by the members of the unit, it would be safe to assume that they recognized the value of layering cotton and wool fairly early in the war, if not at the beginning. They were, after all, from one of the most hot and humid regions in North America. Shoes, however, were more of a problem than advantage.¹¹

While boots were part of the official uniform, and looked nice when on parade, they lost their popularity after one or two long marches, as they chafed the ankles, and were difficult to put on and take off. The soldiers found broad-bottom shoes called “brogans” to be much more suited to long marches, and they could put on and take off these shoes with much greater ease.¹²

Being in the vanguard of a column was actually preferred to being in the rear, as those in the back had to “eat the dust” that everyone in front of them kicked up. During

¹⁰ Stern, *Soldier Life, Soldier Life*, 299, 329.

¹¹ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 295-97.

¹² Stern, *Soldier Life*, 295.

the summer months, when most campaigning took place, Virginia's dirt roads and fields were dry and the soil was loose, allowing for thick clouds of dust to be sent into the air by even small columns of troops. The dust was inhaled by those who had to pass through it and caused many respiratory problems.¹³ As difficult as it was to march on dry roads, it was worse after heavy rains. So many men marching over the same stretch churned the roads into muddy expanses. After severe rain storms, the regiment sometimes had to march through mud that was, in some places, waist deep. One Floridian recounted: "I do not know how many times I fell and went head and ears under."¹⁴

It was during long marches that the soldiers experienced problems with blisters, which had a tendency to become infected. Any soldier who was unlucky enough to be wearing a pair of shoes which had yet to be broken in was prone to develop severe blisters.¹⁵ The lack of washing facilities and poor personal hygiene was the primary cause of infections to blisters, wounds, and other injuries in which the skin was opened up.¹⁶ Washing and changing clothes was so rare an occurrence that one trooper thought it significant enough to mention in his diary; "Joe and I took a wash and changed clothes today."¹⁷ One reason why washing was so rare was that cold water did not get rid of the vermin that lived in the clothing, and they neither had the time to build fires large enough to boil their clothes nor the cauldrons in which to do it.¹⁸ Smelling bad certainly was not something in which soldiers found delight, nor was it pleasant for those who encountered the troops.

During campaigns, food was always scarce. At the beginning of marches, the regiment typically drew rations for three days, cooked them, and then stored the cooked

¹³ James I. Robertson, Jr., "On the Hardships of Soldiering," *The Loyal True and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers*, Edited by Steven E Woodworth (Wilmington: Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002) 153-155.

¹⁴ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 4. Johnson was able to get his only bath during the entire campaign the next day when he threw himself into the raging torrent of an overflowing stream, holding onto a tree branch as the water washed away the mud.

¹⁵ Robertson, "On the Hardships of Soldiering," *The Loyal True and Brave*, 156.

¹⁶ Robertson, "On the Hardships of Soldiering," *The Loyal True and Brave*, 157.

¹⁷ William F. Lewis, Diary "Saturday, 26 October, 1864," *William F. Lewis Collection*, Elenore Brochenbrough Library., Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia. It should be noted that this is the only time in his entire diary that he makes any reference to washing or changing clothes.

¹⁸ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 296.

food in their haversacks.¹⁹ While on campaign, the regiment's main source of meat came from a small herd of cattle which the soldiers drove along with them.²⁰ As the war entered its second year, packages from home grew increasingly scarce, and a large proportion of those packages that did arrive contained inedible food. Food parcels that did manage to reach Virginia intact were often left on storage room racks while the intended recipient was off on an overland campaign, and therefore, were not able to supplement their diets. While on the march, the unlucky game animal to cross the unit's path found its way into the bellies of hungry soldiers. Rabbit and hare were a favored treat. Whenever one was spotted, within short order a number of men were chasing the frightened animal across a meadow or through the woods. It became such that when on the march, if a particularly loud commotion was heard coming from ahead, soldiers would say, "There goes old General Lee or a Molly Cotton Tail."²¹ Birds were not safe from hungry Rebels, as some soldiers wrote that they ate sparrows, and even robins.²² Even armadillos, called "iron clad possum," also found their way onto the plates of several soldiers. As armadillos are very common in Florida, members of the regiment knew they were edible.²³

Skillets and utensils were issued to the soldiers, but after the first few months of campaigning, soldiers resorted to using only one skillet for the entire mess.²⁴ The rest were discarded or used for bartering. Those skillets and kettles that were retained were usually transported in the company or regimental baggage trains. Hollowed out tree stumps and the butts of rifles were used to grind dried corn into grits. Twigs, slivers of wood, pocketknives, or whatever else was on hand served as cooking and eating utensils.²⁵

In one sense, hunger was an important factor in increasing the unit's morale before a battle. Hunger drives people to actions beyond their normal capacity. It often caused Confederate soldiers to make seemingly suicidal attacks against Federal troops.

¹⁹ Bell Irvin Wiley. *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943) 104-106.

²⁰ Nixon, Letter "July 26 / 63," *James Nixon Letters*.

²¹ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 312.

²² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 101, 160.

²³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 101-102.

²⁴ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 103.

²⁵ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 104-106.

They knew that if they could take the Federal position, or, more importantly, capture their commissary wagons, they would get to eat what they captured.²⁶ Often, the men missed out being able to eat the food they were preparing, as they were called into battle. Such men became infuriated, and sought vengeance by taking the fight to the enemy.²⁷

The Second Florida arrived late on the second day of the battle, and with the rest of Pryor's Brigade was held in reserve. On the afternoon of August 30, the rest of the brigade assisted in the repulse of a Union attack, and then participated in the all-out attack against Pope's shattered army. The Second Florida was still held in reserve. The regiment advanced with the rest of the army, and even sustained some casualties from enemy artillery. However, the regiment did not take an active part in the fighting.²⁸ The following morning, men of the regiment spent several hours, "examining knapsacks that we had captured, and appropriating what we wished of their contents"—mainly food.²⁹ Following the battle, General Lee again reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia. The Second Florida, with Pryor's Brigade, was transferred into Major General Richard H. Anderson's Division, 1st Corps, Army of Northern Virginia.³⁰

In early September, Lee crossed the army over the Potomac River into Maryland. He did not expect a war-winning decisive victory. Rather, he hoped to do three things. His first goal was to capture Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and there make a direct appeal to the Northern population to end the war. If that did not work, Lee's plan was to draw McClellan's Army of the Potomac into a battle, on ground of his choosing, and there achieve a great victory. By defeating the Union army on Union soil, he hoped to accomplish his other two goals: that Maryland—a slaveholding state—could be persuaded to join the Confederacy, and more importantly, gain recognition and assistance from a European power.³¹

General Lee, while cutting most of his supply lines, did not want to completely sever his lines of communication and cut himself off from ammunition supplies. When

²⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 102.; Stern, *Soldier Life*, 319.

²⁷ Bell Irvin Wiley, "Heroes and Cowards," *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 171.

²⁸ Fleming, *Memoir*, 65-66.

²⁹ Fleming, *Memoir*, 66.

³⁰ Sibley, *The Confederate Order of Battle*, 27-28.

³¹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989) 534-535.

he invaded, he hoped that the Union high command would recall the 12,000 man garrison at Harper's Ferry, so that he would not have that force in his rear. Due to a disagreement between McClellan and other war leaders, the garrison remained in position—a strategic blunder which may have saved the Union. To prevent the garrison from threatening his rear, Lee divided his forces, sending more than half of his men to capture it. On September 13, in a field near the Frederick, Maryland, an extra copy of Lee's strategic plan was discovered by two Indiana soldiers. They quickly forwarded the dispatch to General McClellan. With Lee's plans revealed, McClellan prepared to move on the Confederates in western Maryland, before they could strike into Pennsylvania. A pro-Confederate civilian happened to be on hand when McClellan received the dispatch, and through contacts, that day managed to inform Lee that his plan was discovered. Correctly, Lee assumed that McClellan would not act promptly, and thus used the time to concentrate his forces in Maryland.³²

The Second Florida crossed near Leesburg, Maryland.³³ They passed through Frederick City, crossed over South Mountain into Pleasant Valley and then participated in the siege of Harper's Ferry. On September 15, the garrison at Harper's Ferry surrendered. Pryor's brigade left that same day to reinforce Lee's main force, located along Antietam Creek. They marched almost non-stop to reach Sharpsburg, Maryland.³⁴

On the morning of September 17, 1862, General McClellan's Army of the Potomac launched a series of uncoordinated attacks against Lee's army. Pryor's Brigade arrived on the battlefield about 9 am. Only about 100 men of the Second Florida were able to complete the forced march.³⁵ They were rested until 11 am, when they were rushed to the scene of action, immortalized as "Bloody Lane." The regiment took up a position on a hill directly behind the sunken road, which the troops under of General D. H. Hill's Division were defending.³⁶ The brigade halted in a position where it was

³² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 536-537.

³³ Edward C Williamson, ed. "Francis P. Fleming in the War for Southern Independence: Letters from the Front." *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (July 1949) 45-46.

³⁴ Fleming, *Memoir*, 67.

³⁵ J. J. Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, vol. XI of *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History*, in *Twelve Volumes, Written by Distinguished Men of the South and Edited by Gen. Clement A. Evans of Georgia*, ed. Clement A. Evans (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899) 148.

³⁶ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 19, "The Maryland Campaign," "Report of Maj. Gen. Daniel H. Hill, C. S. Army, Commanding Division, Of Operations July 23-September 17," # 27.

vulnerable to rifle and artillery fire, and Lt. Colonel Ballantine had his men lay down to avoid being hit. Noticing that they were not fighting, Brigadier General Robert Rodes rode over to the regiment and inquired why they were not engaged. Ballantine replied that General Pryor had not given him orders where to go. Major General Anderson had been wounded while directing the deployment of his men, and when General Pryor took over command of the division, and did not rise to the occasion. He forgot to issue orders to his own brigade as to where it should deploy. General Rodes directed Ballantine where he should send his men, and then rode off. Lt. Colonel Ballantine rose to the occasion, ordered his men up, and moved the regiment into a position where they could provide support fire to the men in the sunken road. The rest of the brigade recognized what was happening and quickly formed on the Second Florida's right flank. Colonel John Hatley, of the Fifth Florida, then assumed command of the brigade, and ordered it forward.³⁷

They entered the sunken road shortly before 1 pm, with the Second Florida slightly to the left of it, and those men who were outside the trench when halted quickly fell back to the cover of the road. Pryor's brigade was in the sunken road but a short time when the commander of the Sixth Alabama, of Rodes' Brigade, mistakenly issued orders for his unit to fall back. Other regimental commanders, thinking that the order was for the entire brigade, commanded their units to fall back as well. Within moments, the entire line at the sunken road broke in confusion. A stampede ensued, with many men, including those of the Second Florida, running away to the rear.³⁸ Exactly what happened to the Second Florida, or any of the units of Pryor's Brigade, following their inglorious flight from "Bloody Lane" is unclear.³⁹ Despite their short time in combat, the Second Florida suffered 6 killed and 43 wounded, about 50 percent of the regiment's strength that day.⁴⁰

³⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 19, "The Maryland Campaign," "Report of Brig. Gen. R. E. Rodes, C. S. Army, Commanding Brigade, Of The Battles of Boonsborough and Sharpsburg," # 27.; *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 19, "The Maryland Campaign," "Report of Maj. Gen. Daniel H. Hill, C. S. Army, Commanding Division, Of Operations July 23-September 17," # 27.

³⁸ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 19, "The Maryland Campaign," "Report of Brig. Gen. R. E. Rodes, C. S. Army, Commanding Brigade, Of The Battles of Boonsborough and Sharpsburg," # 27.

³⁹ There are no surviving after action reports by Maj. Gen. Anderson or any of his brigade commanders.

⁴⁰ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 19, "The Maryland Campaign," "Report of Surg. Lafayette Guild, C. S. Army, Medical Director Army of Northern Virginia, of killed and wounded at Boonsborough (South Mountain or Turner's Pass), Crampton's Gap, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg (Antietam), and Shepherdstown (Blackford's

General Lee, his invasion of Maryland a failure, crossed the Potomac River back into Virginia. The regiment's morale was low. They felt ashamed that they allowed themselves to be panicked and swept up in the flight of troops away from Bloody Lane. It is likely for this reason that no account of the battle—letter, diary, memoir, or other—discusses the Floridians' actions during the battle of Antietam. Their food situation did not help matters. Day and night, they marched southward to reach the safety of Culpepper, Virginia. Only when they stopped for a few hours at night did they draw rations, and when they did, those rations consisted mainly of “green corn and apples.”⁴¹ One soldier wrote to his wife during the retreat about eating almost nothing but apples for several days, and some days nothing at all. An officer wrote that some of his men even gathered up the dirt and corn from where a horse had been fed, “so that when he reached his bivouac he could wash out the dirt and gather the few grains of corn to satisfy in part at least the cravings of hunger.”⁴² Even after the army returned to Culpepper, Virginia, it took some time for rations to be issued regularly.⁴³ The men's morale picked up quickly when they received news that the Florida troops would be honored by having their own brigade.

Colonel Perry, recovered from his wound, returned to the regiment. Within days of arriving back in Virginia, General Lee issued Special Order number 238, establishing the Florida Brigade, consisting of the Second, Fifth, and Eighth Florida Infantry Regiments. Colonel E. A. Perry was promoted to Brigadier General and given command of the newly created brigade. Perry's Brigade, also known as the “Florida Brigade,” was assigned to Anderson's Division, 1st Corps, Army of Northern Virginia.⁴⁴

Lee intended to establish his winter quarters near Winchester, Virginia. However, Major General Ambrose Burnside's Army of the Potomac moved south toward Richmond in late November. This required the immediate movement of Lee's troops across the Blue Ridge Mountains, and southeast to head off the Union Army at Fredericksburg. Lee positioned his army along the hills overlooking the city of Fredericksburg as the Union Army attempted to cross the Rappahannock River. Perry's

or Boteler's) Ford,” # 205.

⁴¹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 93.

⁴² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 93.

⁴³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 92-93.

⁴⁴ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 149.

Brigade held a position on the left of the Confederate lines, and although the Second and Fifth Florida Regiments were not actively engaged during the battle of Fredericksburg, on December 13, 1862, the Eighth Florida took up a position within the city in an attempt to slow the Union Army's crossing of the river. The men were proud that their fellow Floridians were involved in the risky venture of delaying the Federals' crossing. However, they were disappointed when the Floridians' role in the battle was ignored, and full credit for delaying the Federals was given to a brigade of Mississippians.⁴⁵

There was one event that took place during the Fredericksburg campaign in which the men of the Second Florida took great pride. The State government in Tallahassee commissioned a new battle flag, made out of silk, to be presented to the regiment. The flag had on it a distinctive sunburst pattern, unique to any Confederate regiment. The flag arrived and was presented to the regiment while in its position on the front line. Under fire from Union artillery, the men listened as the presenter read a letter from the Governor. The members of the Second Florida took pride in having such a unique flag. Their old flag was transported back to Florida, and presented to the family of their fallen leader, George T. Ward.⁴⁶

After the battle of Fredericksburg, the regiment was stationed overlooking a ford across the Rappahannock River, which General Robert E. Lee thought the Federals might use as a means of attacking his left flank. For several days the regiment was positioned there without any tents or otherwise adequate winter shelter. Their only protection from the cold was provided by the winter coats that they took off of Union soldiers killed in battle. One of the Florida troops there wrote, "We are still here in the woods without anything to protect us from the bitter blasts and snows of winter, and there is no knowing how long we may stay here."⁴⁷ General Edward A. Perry wrote to officials in the Confederate War Department requesting that tents be sent right away. The government told Perry that they would have to wait for an unspecified amount of time before anything

⁴⁵ Fleming, *Memoir*, 71.

⁴⁶ John Milton, "Presentation of Confederate Battleflag to Family of Colonel George T. Ward," *United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁴⁷ Junius Taylor, Letter "February 26, 1863," *Pine Hill Plantation Papers*, Special Collections, Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

could be done. A letter written by one of the unit's soldiers referred to it as a "dreadful situation."⁴⁸

There was one positive aspect to their period stationed along the Rappahannock River. Members of the regiment, on picket duty or during their free time, encountered Federal pickets or troops out enjoying their own free time. In these circumstances, they often, secretly, exchanged foodstuffs. William Kitchens, in his memoirs, recalled that while on picket duty along the Rappahannock, "[w]e had a fine time talking to the yanks and carrying on a bartering trade; supplying tobacco for coffee . . . We would take a piece of plank and underneath it would tack some rudders and make sails out of newspapers and it would go straight across. All we had to do was lay our tricks on the plank and send them on, they would change the rudder and sail and send it back with their tricks."⁴⁹ This way, the soldiers found a way to divert their minds from the numbing cold. The Second Florida eventually went into encampment approximately five miles northeast of the city of Fredericksburg.⁵⁰

During the winter months, the men did not have as many duties to perform, had more food, received more regular pay, and thus, found a greater variety of diversions than during periods of campaigning. The men often amused themselves by staging snowball fights. On at least one occasion, the entire Florida Brigade took part in a snowball fight. The following excerpt from a letter written by a member of the Florida Brigade gives an account of a snowball fight which occurred during the winter of 1862-63:

Yesterday evening we had a grand battle with Snowballs. In the morning Mahone's Brigade which is a third larger than ours came over and bartered us for a battle. We accepted the challenge and fought bravely for about an hour, but they were so much stronger than us that we had to fall back inside our lines. After shelling our camp they retired shouting like a set of demons.

But the Florida boys were determined not to give up at this, so we sent over and got Generals Featherstone's and Posey's Brigades to help us out

⁴⁸ Unknown Author, Letter "Camp Genl. Perry's Brigade, Near Fredericksburg, VA, February, 26th, 1863," Special Collections, Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁴⁹ William H. Kitchens, *Experiences of William Henry Kitchens in the Civil War: Written by him on or about the year 1915 at Griswaldsville, Twiggs County, Georgia*, Unpublished Manuscript, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida, 3-4.

⁵⁰ Edward C Williamson, ed. "Francis P. Fleming in the War for Southern Independence: Letters from the Front." *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (July 1949) 50.

in the evening. About 4:00 P.M. our three brigades formed a line of battle with colors flying and marched, with the two generals cheering us on, making a charge upon the lines of Mahone's Brigade. We drove them from their Camp but they fell back upon Wilcox's Brigade and asked them to help them. General Wilcox mounted his horse and soon got his Brigade in line of battle and came down upon us like an Alpine avalanche. We stood our ground amid a hurricane of Snowballs for about fifteen minutes; then our Generals gave the orders for us to fall back in front of our lines, but our opponents charged us so impetuously that we could not make a stand. They ran us through our encampment into a pine thicket on the other side where we made a stand and kept them at bay until darkness put an end of the conflict. So we had to make a draw battle of it, they entirely having the advantage over us, for we were cut off from our camps.⁵¹

During the winter months, the Army of Northern Virginia experienced an increase in drinking and gambling. This can easily be explained, as the soldiers were stationed in one general location, and had fewer duties, they had a greater freedom of movement and amount of free time. Just outside of Fredericksburg, a notorious gamblers' den existed, called "Devil's Half-Acre." Despite many efforts to break up the activities of this place, for weeks soldiers from just about every unit in the Army of Northern Virginia frequented the establishment.⁵² Enterprising men who desired a drink found ways of indulging. One group of soldiers who managed to procure a cask of whiskey, which they managed to "secure by some . . . trick," buried the barrel near a spring from which members of the unit took water. Their officers were dismayed that everyone who went to get water came back "in a state of buoyancy."⁵³ One especially ingenious private found a means by which to conceal his illicit brew. One day the colonel of his regiment noticed him elevate his rifle and "take a long pull at the muzzle." When the officer asked him what he was doing, the soldier replied, "Colonel, I was looking in the barrel of my gun to see whether she was clean." When the officer walked away, the soldier "completed draining his gun barrel of the whiskey thus smuggled in from a near-by town."⁵⁴

A mischievous activity less damaging to the liver in which the men of the regiment engaged was playing pranks. Eventually, the regiment was moved into winter quarters, and men lodged in cabins or tents equipped with chimneys. A common joke

⁵¹ Taylor, Letter "February 26, 1863," *Pine Hill Plantation Papers*.

⁵² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 37.

⁵³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 42.

⁵⁴ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 42.

was to put boards over the chimney. The occupants of the tent or cabin, overcome with smoke, would rush outside in confusion, and there be greeted with the laughter of their tormentors.⁵⁵

Although slightly dangerous, some of the most humorous practical jokes involved gunpowder. Sometimes pranksters would lace the firewood of another group with gunpowder.⁵⁶ Another enterprising prankster would place several rounds of ammunition in a paper bag and lower it down the chimney and into the fire of an unsuspecting tent or cabin full of soldiers. The resulting series of small explosions was the cause of momentary chaos inside the tent and mirth for those outside.⁵⁷

Some members of the regiment found time to socialize and even engage in courtship activities with ladies. One member of the Second Florida, Francis P. Fleming, mentioned how he mingled with “several very pretty, charming and interesting young ladies, with whom, as you may imagine, we enjoyed ourselves” during a Christmas eve gathering. He facetiously wrote to his aunt: “How do you think you would like to have a Virginia niece?”⁵⁸

Not all soldiers’ activities with ladies were wholesome. Prostitution, while not referenced in any accounts, letters, or memoirs of members of the Second Florida, was most certainly something solicited by at least some of the men. There are no sources mentioning prostitution written by members of the regiment. This is likely because of two sensibilities and one reality. First, in the years following the war, there developed a mystique that the soldiers who served in Lee’s army were above reproach; that all Confederate soldiers, regardless of rank, were good, Christian, gentlemen. However, as is evidenced by the surviving letters, in which soldiers accused their comrades of having been gamblers, drunkards, foul-mouthed, Sabbath breakers, and men with propensities for all manner of vulgarities, it would not be any stretch of the truth to assume that at least some members of the Second Florida, at one time or another, engaged in sexual activities with a lady of questionable virtue. Second, the sensibilities of Victorian men

⁵⁵ James I Robertson, Jr., “Fun, Frolics, and Firewater,” *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 130.

⁵⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 163-164.

⁵⁷ Robertson, “Fun Frolics, and Firewater,” *The Civil War Soldier*, 131.

⁵⁸ John P. Ingle Jr., ed., “Soldiering With the Second Florida Infantry Regiment,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, LIX (January, 1981) 48-49.

and women were such that overt references to sex, especially involving prostitution, were suppressed. A letter, diary, or other source that referenced such things, in the hands of a person who possessed these values, would likely have been destroyed, or at the very least altered, especially in cases when these documents were published.⁵⁹ Still, some letters fell into hands of people with lessened sensibilities, and were thus spared the flame or censor's pen. From what few letters exist, it seems as though Petersburg and Richmond were hotbeds of prostitution, with women regularly coming out near where the troops were encamped and setting up temporary places of debauchery. Despite the progress made by chaplains and other revivalists in getting men in the army to lead more pious lives prostitution, like gambling, flourished right until the end of the conflict. Still, there is a reality of the business of prostitution that is also a cause for the scarcity of material relating to prostitution, both from members of the Second Florida, and from Confederate soldiers in general—prostitutes go where the money is. The Confederate government's chronic problems paying soldiers in its service rendered Confederate soldiers too poor to make regular visits to prostitutes. It is likely for that reason the number of prostitutes that swarmed around Union camps was so much greater than those near Confederate camps, as the federal government had far fewer difficulties paying its soldiers' salaries.⁶⁰

During the later part of April 1863, the Union Army renewed its attempt to capture Richmond by crossing the Rappahannock upstream from Fredericksburg. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia left its winter quarters in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, and prepared to meet General Joseph Hooker's Army of the Potomac near a small crossroads called Chancellorsville. Lee divided his army, sending General Jackson's Second Corps on a long flanking movement around the Union Army to deliver a surprise attack on Hooker's right flank.

The Second Florida took a very active role in the Chancellorsville Campaign. On May 1, Perry's Brigade marched up the Turnpike until reaching the line of battle. Perry's Brigade formed its battle line to the right of Wofford's Brigade, with McClaws's Division on the right. At about 5 pm, General Perry received orders to move his brigade forward. They pressed forward approximately one-and-a-half miles without encountering

⁵⁹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 51.

⁶⁰ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 50-60.

any Union troops. They there decided to rest for the night. Early the next morning the brigade renewed its attack. The Union troops fell back without firing a shot at them. They took a few prisoners, and captured some commissary stores in abandoned encampments. Just before 4 pm, the Second Florida encountered enemy skirmishers. In the face of “a brisk fire from both infantry and artillery,” they advanced, halted and fired one volley at the skirmishers. Then they continued to gain ground until evening when the darkness led to a pause in the fighting.⁶¹

On May 3, Anderson’s entire division attacked the Union line of battle. The firefight was intense, but soon the Union line gave way. Pushing forward, Perry’s Brigade was the first one to penetrate the Union breastworks. The Second Florida was sent to the left to cover the brigade’s left flank from attack. Since they were in a very heavily forested area, they ran headlong into Union skirmishers, neither side seeing the other until they were only a few yards distant. The skirmishers broke and ran to the safety of the main Union battle line, located on a hill in the woods just beyond Second Florida and extending to their right into a field in front of the town of Chancellorsville. General Perry ordered the brigade to charge the Union position, and the Federals broke into confusion at the sight of the three Florida regiments bearing down upon them and fled in panic. Some of the fleeing men became so confused that they actually ran directly into the Second Florida, which was forward and to the left of the other regiments. The Second Florida took as many as 100 prisoners in that charge.

The next morning at 4 am the Second Florida took up a position one-half mile to the left of the Grady House. They moved forward with the Fifth Florida on the right. They encountered enemy skirmishers, but they soon gave up ground to the Floridians. The two regiments pressed forward nearly two miles before being recalled to the main battle line that evening. The Army of the Potomac withdrew across the Rappahannock, under the cover of darkness, before the attack could be renewed. On May 6, at 1 pm the brigade was recalled to its encampment near Fredericksburg.⁶² The Second Florida

⁶¹ Fleming, *Memoir*, 73.

⁶² *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 25/1, “The Chancellorsville Campaign,” “Reports of Brig. Gen. E. A. Perry, C. S. Army, commanding brigade,” # 39.

suffered 3 men killed and 29 wounded.⁶³ The Floridians were proud of their role played and conduct exhibited in the battle. Brigadier General Perry issued an address to the men of his brigade, stating: “The Brigadier-General Commanding, desires to express to the officers and men of his command, the pride and satisfaction afforded him by their good conduct throughout the series of engagements which have resulted so successfully to our arms. The manner in which you executed the part assigned you, gives assurance that you have at heart the good name of our State, and the cause for which you are fighting.”⁶⁴ In late May 1863, Lee reorganized his army yet again. Anderson’s Division was transferred to the newly-created 3rd Corps, commanded by Major General Ambrose P. Hill.⁶⁵

After his great victory at Chancellorsville, Lee again moved his army northward. Again, the Confederate leadership hoped to achieve a victory on northern soil. This time, Lee avoided Harpers Ferry, and cut himself free of supply lines. He hoped to invade into Pennsylvania, and again set his sites on Harrisburg. Using the Blue Ridge Mountains as a screen, he avoided making contact with Union forces, and slipped across the Potomac River.⁶⁶ General Perry fell sick with typhoid fever, and so Colonel David Lang, of the Eighth Florida, commanded the brigade during the campaign.⁶⁷ The regiment crossed into Maryland at Shepardstown, passed through Sharpsburg and over the fields of the previous year’s battle.⁶⁸

By late June, Hill’s Corps was in Pennsylvania. Lee had divided his forces to confuse the enemy and to maximize foraging possibilities. And, forage they did. A Floridian, Council A. Bryan, wrote to his wife that during the invasion, “I employed myself eating chicken. I seriously do not think that the set (sic) of chickens was left in the part through which we passed.”⁶⁹

By dividing his forces, Lee put himself into a predicament. He neither knew where the enemy was nor where all of his men were. General J.E.B. Stewart, commander

⁶³ OR, Series 1, Vol. 25/1, “The Chancellorsville Campaign,” “Report of Surg. L. Guild, C. S. Army, Medical Director, of the killed and wounded,” # 39.

⁶⁴ Fleming, *Memoir*, 77.

⁶⁵ Sibley, *The Confederate Order of Battle*, 51-52.

⁶⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 650-651.

⁶⁷ Fleming, *Memoir*, 80.

⁶⁸ Edward C Williamson, ed. “Francis P. Fleming in the War for Southern Independence: Letters from the Front.” *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (July 1949) 146.

⁶⁹ Council A Bryan, Letter July 22, 1863, *Council A Bryan Papers*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

of the Army of Northern Virginia's cavalry, took almost his entire command on a glory-seeking ride around the Union army. This left Lee without intelligence as to the disposition of Union troops. Through various spies and agents, Lee finally received word that the entire Army of the Potomac was north of the Potomac River. Once he realized that the Union Army was closing in, he told his corps commanders to converge on the tiny crossroad town of Gettysburg. Unwittingly, Lee was playing into the plans of the Army of the Potomac's new commander, General George G. Meade. Meade planned to find Lee's army, and then position his forces between Lee and the Potomac River. As the Confederates would be cut off from retreat back into Virginia, this would place Lee in a position where he would be forced to attack the Federals, on the ground of their choosing, or surrender.⁷⁰ As circumstances had it, the Confederates did attack the Union forces, who held good defensive positions.

On July 1, as they approached Gettysburg, the regiment fought a series of small skirmishes with enemy militia companies, but easily drove them off.⁷¹ Anderson's Division arrived in Gettysburg on the evening of July 1, 1863, finding that a major battle was taking place. However, it was too late in the day to engage in the fighting, so the Second Florida, along with the rest of Perry's Brigade camped west of the Emmitsburg Road in Spangler's Woods.⁷²

The next morning, as the battle lines were about to form, several Floridians were sitting around, playing cards. The call to battle sounded, and the men at once tore them up and threw them into the smoldering coals of the campfires.⁷³ Bell Irvin Wiley promotes the idea that, with the prospect of meeting their maker with the sin of gambling weighing on their hearts, most men discarded, at least for the duration of their exposure to danger, their implements of gambling. However, Wiley also contends that those who served in the Army of Northern Virginia, save for those who were very pious, were gambling men. When the carnage of battle was over, the men went back to gambling.

⁷⁰ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 649-654.

⁷¹ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 1.

⁷² *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27/1, "The Gettysburg Campaign," "Report of Col. David Lang, Eighth Florida Infantry, commanding Perry's brigade," # 44.

⁷³ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 5-6.

Aside from combat, gambling, which carried some degree of risk, was, for them, their only source of excitement.⁷⁴

General Anderson formed his division into a line of battle, with orders to advance in conjunction with the troops of Longstreet's corps, on his right flank. At 4:30 pm, Longstreet's men finally moved forward, and so Anderson's Division attacked towards Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill. The Second Florida double-timed forward, coming under intense fire from artillery and infantry. The regiment drove back the First Massachusetts Infantry, inflicting very heavy casualties on them. Then the Second and Fifth Florida worked together to lay down a cover fire, while the other regiment outflanked, in turn, the Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania and the Eleventh Massachusetts. The entire brigade then charged through the field beyond the Emmitsburg Road and down a gentle slope and halted at the bottom of a ravine, the slope of Cemetery Ridge rising directly ahead of them. The brigade reformed and pressed on up the slope, believing that nothing stood between them and victory.⁷⁵

As they approached the crest, at a distance of less than fifty yards, the Nineteenth Maine Infantry, which had been lying out of sight behind a stone wall, rose and fired directly into the oncoming Floridians. The colors of the Second fell as did the entire color guard of the Eighth Florida. The entire brigade shuddered as a leaf in the wind. The brigade exchanged volleys with the Nineteenth Maine, and just when it looked that Anderson's men would prevail, a battery of Union artillery rolled up, unlimbered, and poured a deadly fire of canister shot into the lines of the division

Fresh Union reinforcements forced back Wilcox's Brigade, which had been on Perry's Brigade's right flank. Federal troops, having driven back Wilcox's men, attempted to cut off the Floridians' line of retreat. Colonel Lang recognized that his men were about to be surrounded, and ordered a fighting withdrawal back to the Emmitsburg Road to reform. Finding that the open ground offered no protection to reform the brigade, Lang brought his mauled brigade back to its original position in Spangler's

⁷⁴ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 35-37.

⁷⁵ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27/1, "The Gettysburg Campaign," "Report of Col. David Lang, Eighth Florida Infantry, commanding Perry's brigade," # 44.

Woods.⁷⁶ During the attack, Lt. Colonel Ballantine was wounded and later captured. Captain Moseley, who would have taken over the regiment passed out from heat exhaustion, and so Captain C. S. Fleming assumed command of the Second Florida.⁷⁷

In the early morning hours of July 3, Colonel Lang was instructed to support the planned assault on the center of the Union line. Perry's and Wilcox's Brigades took up a position in a depression in front of the more than 100 cannons massed for the preparatory bombardment. They laid there for hours as shells fired by the Confederate and Union batteries passed overhead. After the artillery duel ended, the Brigades of Pickett's Division and two divisions of A. P. Hill's Corps emerged from the woods, formed into lines of battle, and passed over Lang's men and into the field beyond.⁷⁸

During this assault the Floridians experienced the true meaning of honor within Southern culture. One of the Floridians, J. B. Johnson, wrote about two incidents he witnessed that contrasted the cowardice of some soldiers of other units to the actions of the Floridians that day:

As the lines passed over us going to the front, a man dropped on me in the little trench we were in. I thought he was killed or wounded. I caught a glimpse of his face and asked him if he was wounded. He said, "No sir, but I can't go forward. I know I am disgracing my family, but I can't go." I gave him a slight punch with my sword and told him to roll off and go to the rear if he couldn't go forward. He rolled over and asked which was the rear. I pointed him the way, and he unbuckled his cartridge belt; leaving that and his musket, he started. And I thought it would take a pretty swift bullet to overtake him.

When the lines passed over us and gone a considerable distance, I saw coming toward me a lieutenant; the dense smoke concealed him until he was near; his left arm had been shattered at the elbow, the bone was protruding, and the blood spurting from the arteries. I knew he would soon bleed to death unless something was done for him. I took a handkerchief (sic); tied it loosely around the arm then took a bayonet and putting it between the arm and handkerchief twisted it until the blood stopped. He seemed so much absorbed in listening to the charge in front, that he paid no attention to the arm. I asked him how the battle was going when he left, and he said, "The front line is fighting as bravely as men

⁷⁶ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27/1, "The Gettysburg Campaign," "Report of Col. David Lang, Eighth Florida Infantry, commanding Perry's brigade," # 44.

⁷⁷ Fleming, *Memoir*, 79.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 2-3.

ever fought, but the second, damn them, are not; and I belong to the second line.⁷⁹

Another Floridian, Council Bryan, supports the officer's assessment of the second and third lines of Pickett's Division. Shortly after the battle, he wrote that, "a more cowardly set of fellows never disgraced our uniform than the 2d & 3rd (sic) lines of that Division . . ."⁸⁰ When called upon to support the faltering assault, the Floridians gave a better account of themselves.

Twenty minutes after the Virginians passed Lang and Wilcox received orders to support the attack. From the moment they stood up they came under fire from long range Union artillery. Perry's Brigade crossed the Emmitsburg Road and approached the main battle line. The dense smoke from the firefight at the ridge caused the brigade drift away from its intended destination. Instead of following Pickett's men, they marched to the right of them, almost toward the same position they had attacked the previous day. In the confusion of the smoke, at the base of the Cemetery Ridge, the Sixteenth Vermont, having just flanked and routed one of Pickett's regiments, turned about, and crashed headlong into the left flank of the Second Florida.⁸¹ D. M. Pogue was carrying the regimental banner when, at the moment the Vermonters attacked, a cannonball tore off his left foot. He handed the flag to another man who took just a few steps before being forced to surrender.⁸² In one swoop, the Vermonters captured eighteen of the regiment's men.⁸³

The scene turned critical, as the smoke caused the men not to know the enemy's location. Some men passed out from exhaustion, and those who were not falling back were either being shot or taken prisoner. Once again the brigade had to retreat.⁸⁴ The

⁷⁹ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 3.

⁸⁰ Bryan, Letter "July 22, 1863," *Council A Bryan Papers*.

⁸¹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27/1, "Gettysburg Campaign Appendix," "Embracing documents received too late for insertion in proper sequence," # 43.

⁸² D. M. Pogue, Letter "April 9, 1906," *United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁸³ Shepherd, ed., *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War*, 79-99.

⁸⁴ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27/1, "The Gettysburg Campaign," "Report of Col. David Lang, Eighth Florida Infantry, commanding Perry's brigade," # 44.

Second Florida lost a substantial number of men at Gettysburg, suffering 11 killed, 70 wounded, and 50 missing.⁸⁵

The Confederates expected Meade to launch a counterattack, but like McClellan, Meade failed to administer a *coup de grace*. The Second Florida held its position until the night of the fourth of July, when the Army of Northern Virginia made its withdrawal, marching all night through the rain and muddy roads. On the fifth, the regiment crossed back into Maryland, and on the seventh arrived in Hagerstown, Maryland, where they stayed until the tenth. On the eleventh the regiment formed a battle line on Salisbury Ridge, along Antietam Creek. The recent rains caused the Potomac River to swell and become impassible. For nearly two weeks they waited, expecting a Union attack at any time, before the river again became fordable. During this time, the already meager rations were stretched to their limits. The following is an excerpt from J. B. Johnson, a member of the Fifth Florida Infantry Regiment, and illustrative of the food situation for the Second Florida during the retreat from Gettysburg:

The second morning we were in line, we were informed by the commissary officer that the commissary was empty, and that they could not issue any more rations, and they would advise us to go to the wheat stacks and take the wheat and boil it like rice and it would make a good substitute. This was a great wheat country and little stacks of wheat were in every direction. Every tin can that could be found was called into use, and they began to boil the wheat. I tried some and the longer I chewed it the bigger it got. Looking back over the hills, I saw some hogs feeding, my hunger increased; and though we had the strictest orders against trespassing upon the enemy's property, I could not resist the temptation. I called one of the soldiers to me and told him to go kill one of those hogs and bring him in. When he shot the sound of the rifle reverberated from hill to hill and I thought no rifle ever made as much noise before. It sounded like a signal gun. The man caught the hog by the leg to drag it in. I saw him stop, and there came into sight over the hill a number of horsemen, I started for them to face the trouble and save the man. I saw they were our corps and division commanders, A. P. Hill and Anderson, with their staffs, before reaching them they turned and rode off, and the soldier dragged the hog to meet me, I asked him what they had said to him, he replied they asked my why I had killed the hog, and I told them Captain Johnson had ordered me to do it and I could see you coming, and they said take it in and rode off, I was greatly relieved at the outcome of a

⁸⁵ OR, Series 1, Vol. 27/3, "The Gettysburg Campaign," "Report of Surg. Lafayette Guild, C. S. Army, Medical Director, with Return of Casualties in the Army of Northern Virginia," # 44.

flagrant violation of orders. I wrote Col. Lang, who was on the right end in command of the brigade, a note telling him if he liked pork to come down and take supper with me. I thought I had one on him, but he replied, if you prefer mutton come up and take supper with me. I preferred mutton, and no meat was ever enjoyed more, though we had neither bread nor salt but a plenty of good water and mutton.⁸⁶

The loss of so many men and the capture of their regimental banner was a terrible blow to the men's morale. Their inadequate rations further dampened their spirits. James Nixon wrote that one of the main topics of discussion within the Floridians was “. . . what they could eat if they had it . . .”⁸⁷ Every letter the men wrote in the weeks following the battle exudes lamentation for their fallen comrades. Council Bryan stated, “I am disgusted [with] this state of affairs.”⁸⁸ Even though they were unhappy, the men of the regiment did not leave their unit. They believed that this was a setback, but not a fatal blow to their quest for independence.

During the night of the July 14, the Army of Northern Virginia withdrew across the Potomac River. The Second Florida was part of the rearguard, and thus had to fend off several attacks by Union cavalry before they could themselves cross the pontoon bridge.⁸⁹

Thus ended the Army of Northern Virginia's last major invasion of the North in an attempt to gain foreign recognition for the South. Their hopes of achieving ultimate victory, unlike so many of the regiment's men, were not left on the fields of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Like George Washington, Lee managed to evacuate his troops to safety before a final *coup de grace* could be delivered. This only served to further strengthen the connection that the members of the regiment drew in their minds between themselves and members of the Continental Army. Even though they were twice rebuffed, with terrible casualties, they did not lose heart. They remembered how their predecessors were “whipped in nearly every battle and yet after . . . years of trials and hardships achieved their independence.”⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 4-5.

⁸⁷ James Nixon, Letter “July 26th / 63,” *James Nixon Civil War Letters*, Special Collections, Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁸⁸ Bryan, Letter “July 22, 1863,” *Council A Bryan Papers*.

⁸⁹ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 4-5.

⁹⁰ McPherson, “On the Cause of Liberty,” *The Loyal, True, and Brave*, 213.

While members of the regiment never completely gave up hope that a European nation would come to their aide, their optimism waned, with regard to “King Cotton” diplomacy. The initial embargo, later superseded by the increasingly-effective Union Blockade, did affect European textile mills. However, that impact was lessened by two things that the southern cotton growers did not take into account. The 1860 cotton harvest was exceptionally bountiful. A “bumper crop” was taken in, and the extra cotton flooded the market, and lowered prices. Recognizing that war loomed on the horizon, European mill owners took advantage of the reduced price and greater abundance in 1860 to stockpile cotton. As the war dragged on, and stockpiles diminished, European merchants sought alternative sources of cotton. India and Egypt became cotton-producing countries, and so, European stockpiles were never depleted. When Southerners realized the futility of an embargo, it was already too late. The Union blockade had grown to a level of effectiveness that prevented the Confederacy from exploiting its one commodity at a level previously possible. Although more than a million bales of “white gold” did manage to get through the blockade to British ports between 1861 and 1865, that amount was less than one-thirtieth of what was exported to Britain in 1860 alone.⁹¹

Southerners, including members of the Second Florida, read in newspapers published in the South and in England that foreign intervention was imminent. The *Charleston Mercury* proclaimed, “The cards are in our hands, and we intend to play them out to the bankruptcy of every cotton factory in Great Britain and France or the acknowledgement of our independence.”⁹² And yet, the cards were not in their hands. Although a majority of the newspapers within England openly supported the South, their sentiments did not match those of the majority of Englanders. A British historian, W.E.H. Lecky, argues that, throughout the war, a majority of the British population remained “steadily on the side of the North.”⁹³ In the end, “King Cotton” turned out to be nothing more than a “bloody peasant.”

⁹¹ Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 262-266.

⁹² Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 24.

⁹³ W.E.H. Lecky, *Democracy & Liberty*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899) 485.

CHAPTER 3: “WE WOULD STAND BY OUR COLORS:” BRISTOE STATION TO APPOMATTOX—AUGUST 1863-APRIL 1865

Following the battle of Gettysburg, the men of the Second Florida Infantry shifted their hopes for independence through assistance from foreign powers to the exploitation of Northern war-weariness. The new theory was that Northerners were growing increasingly tired of fighting a war that produced so many casualties and yet so few tangible results. Despite the loss of Vicksburg and severing of the two halves of the Confederacy—at least on paper—more than seventy percent of the territory within the Confederacy was still controlled by Rebel forces.

While the Army of Northern Virginia was soundly defeated at Gettysburg, the victory was not decisive. Although robbed of most of their offensive capability, the Confederate forces in Virginia remained a potent force. Members of the regiment saw the draft riots in New York City as proof that the populace of the North was not solidly behind the war. When former general George B. McClellan ran for president against Abraham Lincoln as the “peace candidate,” receiving strong support in the media, the hopes of the Confederates were raised. If Lincoln could be defeated and McClellan elected, the Confederacy could negotiate a peace settlement and thereby gain its independence. The men recognized that they did not have to defeat the enemy in order to win; all they had to do was prevent the enemy from defeating them.¹

After reentering Virginia, the regiment marched south to Culpepper Court House where it remained for about three months.² The Floridians were disappointed that newspaper accounts of the battle at Gettysburg gave full credit for the July 3 assault to the Virginians of Pickett’s Division. The members of Perry’s Brigade were upset that, “no matter how bravely they act they get no credit for it at home or abroad . . .” One Floridian wrote: “When the secret history of the war is known, then we will get justice I hope.”³ They did get justice. Colonel Lang and General Anderson wrote several letters

¹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989) 760-65, 772.

² Janet B. Hewett, ed., *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, “Part II—Record of Events,” Vol. 5, s#17 (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995) 231.

³ Council A. Bryan, Letter “July 22, 1863,” *Council A Bryan Papers*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

to the editors of the newspapers that gave erroneous accounts of the battle. The newspapers then published corrected accounts of the battle, calling their actions “not only creditable, but gallant.”⁴

Their food situation improved only slightly. Not enough meat was available in Confederate storehouses, and the Commissary General was forced to cut back beef and pork rations.⁵ General Robert E. Lee stated during this time that the average soldier subsisted on a daily ration of only eighteen ounces of flour or corn meal, four ounces of bacon, and the occasional supply of rice, sugar, or molasses.⁶ During the retreat from Gettysburg, in order to transport wounded men, regimental baggage trains were forced to abandon most of the equipment carried in the wagons. This left nearly all of the regiments in the army without any cooking wares. Such was the situation that one unit commander wrote his superiors stating: “I cannot fight any more until I get something to cook in.”⁷ Soldiers who could not obtain the proper item utilized a halved canteen or a tin plate as a makeshift skillet. One member of the Second Florida wrote: “I have an old tin plate that was picked up in the camp in that we cook meat, and bread, some times boil meal in it that is the best and easiest way to cook it.”⁸

As the war entered its third year, foraging evolved from an aside—an infrequent, and often illegal method of procuring food—into a more general, and acceptable method of supplying the army. Foragers often went out in groups of twos, but sometimes split up to cover more ground. The presence of sutlers grew less frequent. Often they were only seen in the form of what was called a “cider cart”—a large barrel with wheels attached and drawn behind one or two horses. These cider carts were most often filled with sweet apple cider.⁹ The sutlers began to disappear as the scarcity of supplies and foodstuffs increased and the soldiers’ purchasing power—caused by the Confederate government’s

⁴ Francis P. Fleming, *Memoir of Captain C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C.S.A.* (Jacksonville, Florida: Times Union Publishing House, 1881) 84-86.

⁵ George M. Lelane, Diary “30th of March, 1864,” *Geo. M. Lelane Diary Collection*, Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

⁶ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1943) 90-91.

⁷ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*.

⁸ Walter Raleigh Moore, Letter “March 8, 1865,” *Walter Raleigh Moore Collection*, US Army Military History Institute, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹ Philip van Doren Stern, ed, *Soldier Life: in the Union and Confederate Armies* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1961) 311.

inability to pay their wages—decreased.¹⁰ Further reductions occurred as sutlers were accused—often rightly—of selling items at greatly inflated prices, giving cause for some officers to ban them from their camps, and even led to attacks by soldiers, who ran the would-be entrepreneur out of camp, minus his wares.¹¹ It was also not unheard of for an enterprising slave, or free black man or woman, to enter camp with a cartload of pies or other delicacy to sell to the soldiers. Although the pies were often of very poor quality, they still “. . . filled up a hungry man wonderfully.”¹²

The men of the regiment became more fatalistic, and recognized that no matter how many battles a man might live through, there was always the chance that they could be killed in the next one.¹³ This caused the men to turn to religion as a source of comfort. Thousands of men converted as a result of the work of the many chaplains, ministers who held revivals at nearby churches, and *colporteurs*. One of those men was R. H. Tate, of the Second Florida. After listening to a sermon given to the regiment, he wrote: “. . . I am the most miserable man in the world for I am now standing on the brink of Eternity without the Love of God. My eyes have been opened and I see that I am not prepared to meet death and there is know (sic) telling when I may be launched in to an eternal hell.”¹⁴ Colonel David Lang, of the Florida Brigade, mentioned, in September of 1863, how in the months after the army’s defeat at Gettysburg, “a great revival of religion” took place in the army.¹⁵

Religion alone—unlike patriotic duty—was not a dual morale inducer; it motivated men to fight, yet it did not compel them to remain with their unit after a defeat. It is likely that in being coupled with patriotism, religion played a role in motivating the men of the Second Florida to stay and fight. They were not destined to win simply because they were inherently superior, but also because their ultimate triumph was ordained by God and to return home would in-effect be forsaking God’s divine providence.¹⁶ One member of the Florida Brigade who seems to have held this belief was Isaac Barineau. In

¹⁰ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 318-319.

¹¹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 100-101

¹² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 311.

¹³ Fleming, *Memoir*, 79-80.

¹⁴ R. H. Tate, Letter “May the 7, 1864,” *R. H. Tate Letters*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

¹⁵ David Lang, Letter “Sept. 13th, 1863,” *David Lang Letters*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

¹⁶ John E. DuBose, “Capt. Parkhill’s Company, ‘The Howell Guards,’ On the Eve of their Departure for the Seat of War, August 26, 1861,” Sermon (Tallahassee, Fla.: Dyke & Carlisle, 1861) 10-11.

a letter to his sister, he wrote: “. . . with the help of God we will be able to destroy the Yankee Army.”¹⁷

Even after Gettysburg, they did not lose hope. They recalled that their forefathers were “whipped in nearly every battle and yet after . . . years of trials and hardships achieved their independence.”¹⁸ One member of the regiment, Charles S. Fleming, echoed this sentiment in a letter he wrote to his mother: “Our fathers fought the English seven years, and we can fight the Yankees longer.”¹⁹

The two armies faced each other across the Rapidan River, neither moving against the other. Instead, both armies sent troops west to fight in the campaigns in Tennessee. General Lee wanted to prevent any further Army of the Potomac troops from being used as reinforcement, and to rid the area of Union occupiers. On October 9, the Second and Third Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia crossed the river.²⁰ Union General George Meade took notice of the movement of Lee’s troops and attempted to move his Army of the Potomac to a position where they could not be reached by Lee’s men. However, on October 14, the Union rearguard was cut off at Bristoe Station by the vanguard of Lee’s army, the men of Anderson’s Division.²¹

A. P. Hill sent Anderson’s men to attack what he thought was a force of infantry nearby, but they turned out to be cavalry, who sped away after only minor skirmishing. A. P. Hill saw another group of men he positively identified as infantry, and ordered one of his other divisions, that of Major General Henry Heth, to attack them. They walked into an ambush, and were shot down as they approached Union troops concealed in a railroad cut. Hill called for Anderson to bring up his division and deploy to support Heth. Union skirmishers moved forward from the gap to disrupt the deployment of the division, but Perry’s brigade stopped them, and then, with another brigade, drove them back. Perry’s brigade took a position from whence they could continue the attack, but it was too

¹⁷ Isaac Sidney Barineau, Letter “August 6th, 1863,” *Barineau Letters*, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

¹⁸ James M. McPherson, “On the Cause of Liberty,” *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America’s Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002) 213.

¹⁹ Fleming, *Memoir*, 91.

²⁰ *OR*, Series 1, Vol 29/1, “The Bristoe, Virginia, Campaign,” “Report of Lieut. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill, C. S. Army, commanding Third Army Corps,” # 48.

²¹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol 29/1, “The Bristoe, Virginia, Campaign,” “Report of Lieut. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill, C. S. Army, commanding Third Army Corps,” # 48.

late in the day, and the sunlight quickly fading, were unable to attack. They remained in line of battle during the night, but in the darkness the Union forces escaped.²² The Second Florida suffered comparatively light casualties, with no men killed and only 5 wounded.²³ They were indeed fortunate that A. P. Hill had them chasing ghosts that day, or it would have been their division that was cut to pieces.

Lee abandoned his pursuit of the Union army, and his troops retired southward to Rapidan Station.²⁴ The Second Florida encamped at Rapidan Station, Virginia, remaining there until December. When it became apparent that the Union army was not going to attempt another assault on Richmond that winter, Lee put his troops into winter quarters, those of the Second Florida being near Orange Court House.²⁵ General Perry returned to the brigade, having recovered from his sickness.

During months the Second Florida was in winter quarters, the men had more food available, as they were not relying on over-stretched supply lines to provide their meals, and packages from home could be delivered. In a letter to his mother in Florida, dated November 26, 1863, C. S. Fleming stated that he had, “. . . plenty of good beef and flour, and occasionally half a pound of bacon to eat, which is good enough living for any rebel soldier . . .”²⁶ The next month, December 30, 1863, Fleming again wrote his mother and therein alluded to his Christmas dinner as, “. . . a very nice roasted turkey . . . which . . . a parcel of rebel soldiers knew wat (sic) to do with, about as well as any set of men.”²⁷ The citizens of Richmond sent a New Year’s dinner to the Army of Northern Virginia, but supplies were such that each regiment received only one whole turkey, and the men of each company selected a representative to “draw straws” to decide which company would receive the turkey.²⁸ Although the men of the Second Florida were not always properly supplied during their months in winter quarters, they were certainly better supplied

²² OR, Series 1, Vol. 29/1, “The Bristoe, Virginia, Campaign,” “Report of Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson, C. S. Army, commanding division,” # 48.

²³ OR, Series 1, Vol. 29/1, “The Bristoe, Virginia, Campaign,” “Return of killed and wounded in the Confederate forces, October 10-21,” # 48.

²⁴ Fleming, *Memoir*, 89.

²⁵ Hewett, *Supplement to the Official Records*, 228, 231.

²⁶ Fleming, *Memoir*, 89.

²⁷ Fleming, *Memoir*, 90.

²⁸ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 333.

during these months than during the time of active campaigning. The unit's morale was augmented by the relative increase in rations.

As was the case during the two previous winters, revival meetings occurred more frequently, and the activities of chaplains increased. Finding themselves with a great deal of free time, once again, the soldiers found diversions from the dreariness of camp life. The inability of the Confederate government to pay the men resulted in fewer gambling dens or visits to prostitutes. Instead, the men turned to religion. One Confederate soldier wrote in his diary the passage: "I have enjoyed religion. My Bible has been a source of pleasure and a cause of courage. I cannot enumerate the gifts of God received during the past year."²⁹ Indeed, ". . . the campfire often lighted the pages of the best Book, while the soldier read the orders of the Captain of his salvation."³⁰ Several organizations formed to print and distribute Bibles to soldiers. Although contemporary accounts complain, and historians agree, that there were never enough Bibles on hand to feed the religious appetite of the Confederate Armed Forces, there seems to have been no real shortage within the Second Florida.³¹ Every denomination, and even several inter-denominational organizations, published their own set of tracts. Tracts sometimes contained little more than a few of the Psalms, or one of the Gospels, but for the most part they contained treatises written by eminent Southern theologians, each concentrating on a particular subject. Despite chronic paper shortages, approximately 200,000,000 pages of printed tracts were printed and distributed by war's end.³² Although they were often at want for bread, the religious publications and the work of army chaplains kept them well stocked with the "bread of life."³³

The most important work of the army chaplains was to build within soldiers a good religious foundation, whereby they could become better soldiers. Part of this work included reassuring the soldiers that those who had a solid Christian foundation had

²⁹ George M. Lelane, Diary "Jan 1, 1864," *Geo. M. Lelane Diary Collection*.

³⁰ Stern, *Soldier Life*, 381.

³¹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 176. It may be that since by 1863, the regiment had been greatly reduced in number, the Bibles owned by those members who died passed into the hands of those who previously lacked their own copy, or they simply borrowed a Bible from a friend.

³² Drew Gilpin Faust, "Christian Soldiers: The Meaning of Revivalism in the Confederate Army," *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*, Edited by Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 329.

³³ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 177.

nothing to fear from the enemy. God would protect them, and even if He decided to let them die, they could rest assured that salvation was theirs. C. Seton Fleming believed in divine protection. He wrote: "God has led us through and given us victory and I do not fear His deserting us, as long as we trust in Him." "I hope that God will continue to protect me as He has heretofore done; but if it is His will that I be killed, we must bow to it. He does everything for the best."³⁴ Colonel David Lang, of the Florida Brigade, in a letter to his cousin, wrote that, "Our chaplains preach three times a day to large congregations and we can perceive a manifest improvement in the moral condition of the men. I think it is making good soldiers of some very trifling material."³⁵ Religion, seemingly, did have some a positive effect upon the members of the Second Florida.

While in winter quarters, the dignity of the members of Perry's Brigade was tested. A newspaper in Augusta, Georgia published an article that gave an account of the July 2 assault, made by Anderson's Division, during the battle of Gettysburg. A Floridian gave the following account of the article and the actions it spawned:

It said that Wright's Brigade had been badly cut up, that the Florida Brigade on their right had given way, and the enemy entering the gap made by their retreat had gotten in the rear of the Georgia brigade, and cut it to pieces. This was all false and our brigade, very indignant at it, called a meeting and selected me as the one to hunt the author, and demand satisfaction. I went first to P. W. Alexander's quarters, who was the principal army correspondent. He said to me, "I don't know the author, but I advise you to go to Wright's headquarters. He is from Augusta, Georgia."

I rode over to Wright's Brigade, Wright himself was sitting in front of his tent talking to several generals from other commands. He was an old man with very long hair. I got down and walked up and saluted. Wright said, "Young man, what can I do for you?" I replied, "General Wright, I have here a paper from Augusta, Georgia, criticizing the Florida Brigade, in an article on the battle of Gettysburg. If you can assist me in finding the author I will be obliged to you." "Why do you wish to find the author, sir?" "Because," I replied, "it is as false as hell itself." He turned red, and I saw he was very angry. He said, "Young man, that was not intended for publication, it was a private letter to my wife, from information I had." Now right here, he almost sprang from his seat. There were some high officers listening.

³⁴ Fleming, *Memoir*, 97.

³⁵ David Lang, Letter "Sept. 13th, 1863," *David Lang Letters*.

I turned to Captain Gerardy, his Adjutant General, and said, "Captain Gerardy, will you answer me a few questions?" Yes sir," he said. "Well, where was General Wright when we charged Cemetery Ridge on July 2nd (sic)?" "I think he was sick and at the hospital," he replied. Do you remember to have seen and talked to me that day at the furthest point your brigade advanced, did we not discuss the advance of the enemy's reinforcements, and that it would be useless to attempt to hold the position, and when the order was given to fall back, did not our two brigades come out together?" "Yes," he said. "That will do," said General Wright. "I was misinformed. I will write a correction for publication. You can call for it tomorrow." I saluted and returned to our brigade to report.³⁶

This case illustrates the importance of honor to the members of the Second Florida. They would rather fight a duel than let such an insult to their character go unchecked. They could have complained to their division commander that the commander of another brigade was writing malicious letters about them. Instead, Southern honor demanded they "seek satisfaction." By writing a retraction, General Wright satisfied them. Their honor was intact.

The men of the regiment, whose enlistments were to expire on July 13, 1864, unanimously decided to stay and fight until the war concluded. At a special meeting of the regiment, now numbering only 115 men, they drafted a formal resolution declaring themselves "... determined never to give up that cause [independence], and regard as traitors . . . all citizens . . . of the Confederate States who are willing to give it up without first exerting all their influence and sacrificing their property and their lives, if need be, to maintain it."³⁷ The resolution also called for new recruits to be raised in Florida to replenish their brigade, but for them to retain their identity as the Second Florida Infantry Regiment. Their devotion to duty earned them praise from newspapers, such as the *Richmond Enquirer* article captioned, "They Come! They Come! Gallant Little Florida has the Floor."³⁸ The Confederate Congress honored the regiment by passing a joint resolution of thanks on February 6, 1864.³⁹

³⁶ Johnson, *A Limited Review*, 5-6.

³⁷ Fleming, *Memoir*, 91-92.

³⁸ Fleming, *Memoir*, 92-93.

³⁹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 33, "Confederate Correspondence, Orders, and Returns relating to operations in North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, from January 1 to April 30, 1864," "Joint Resolution of thanks to certain Florida troops," # 60.

In one of C. Seton Fleming's last letters to his mother, he touched on the subject of his devotion to his country's independence, "which I wish my country would make haste and get; but if she had rather take her time for it, I have long since made up my mind to stick to her until she does; and will do so, unless some Yankee bullet, or other unavoidable accident, decides differently; and it gives me pleasure to know that the Army of Northern Virginia is full of men entertaining just such sentiments."⁴⁰

Union General Ulysses S. Grant took over as Commander in Chief of Union forces. During the spring of 1864, he directed the Army of Potomac to cross the Rappahannock River and proceed toward Richmond. Grant was a different kind of leader than the Confederates had previously faced. The Confederate tactic of winning the war by preventing a Union victory was not going to succeed against Grant. He was not going to stop his attempts to take Richmond until Federal troops occupied the city. When he was rebuffed in one attempt, instead of pulling back to regroup, he simply maneuvered around the Confederate flank. Grant knew that his forces vastly outnumbered the Confederates, and that he would eventually break through their lines.⁴¹

Lee moved his army to intercept, fighting the battle of the Wilderness on some of the same ground of the previous year's battle of Chancellorsville. On the May 5, Perry's Brigade was in the midst of the fighting. In all, the brigade suffered 250 casualties. General Perry was wounded so severely that he returned to Florida to recover, and Colonel Lang took over the brigade. One loss that was particularly demoralizing for the Second Florida was its acting Adjutant, Raymond Jenckes Reed, who was mortally wounded. One of the regiment's officers wrote, "I miss him more than I could have missed any one else of our little band."⁴²

True to his designs, the next day, Grant began maneuvering, trying to get around the Confederates. Lee countered, and on May 13 two armies met again at the battle of Spotsylvania Court House. Perry's Brigade, was held in reserve, and thus did not actively participate. However, some members of the Second Florida were wounded by stray small arms and artillery fire.⁴³ On May 21, 1864, the Union Army began another

⁴⁰ Fleming, *Memoir*, 89.

⁴¹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 721-722.

⁴² Fleming, *Memoir*, 95.

⁴³ Fleming, *Memoir*, 95.

drive to the southeast. Lee moved by the right flank to prevent Grant from getting around him.

The Floridians incorrectly viewed Grant's movements as acts of desperation. C. S. Fleming wrote: "The Yankees have fought more desperately during the last battles . . . they appear to think that this is the last struggle of the war, and that if they are defeated now, all will be lost with them."⁴⁴ Another Floridian remarked that the "majic (sic) influence of old rye" was the only thing motivating the Yankees to attack, and that once the whisky supply runs out they would refuse to follow orders from such incompetent leaders.⁴⁵

Perry's Brigade was positioned near Hanover Junction, Virginia on May 26, when the First, Second, and Sixth Florida Battalions arrived. The three battalions were reorganized into the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Florida Infantry Regiments, composing a new Florida Brigade.⁴⁶ General Lee then ordered that Perry's Brigade be merged into the new Florida Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Joseph Finegan.⁴⁷ Finegan's Brigade did not have to wait long before seeing its first action.

At daybreak, on the morning of June 3, 1864, Grant launched an all-out assault on the Confederate positions during the battle of Cold Harbor. For the most part, the attack was a disaster. Most attacking units never even reached the Confederate position. However, there was one point at which they succeeded in breaking through the line. Troops under the command of Major General Francis Barlow overran the front line defenses of Major General John C. Breckinridge's division. By chance, Lee had placed Finegan's Brigade in reserve, about 100 yards behind the point where Union troops broke through. The Union troops pressed forward, and when they were about 75 yards from the position of the Florida Brigade, Colonel David Lang jumped on top of the breastworks they were behind and shouted, "Charge, boys, charge!" The entire brigade rose, fired a

⁴⁴ Fleming, *Memoir*, 97.

⁴⁵ David Lang, Letter June 6, 1864, *David Lang Papers*.

⁴⁶ J. J. Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, vol. XI of *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History, in Twelve Volumes, Written by Distinguished Men of the South and Edited by Gen. Clement A. Evans of Georgia*, ed. Clement A. Evans (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899) 157.

⁴⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 36, "Confederate correspondence, Orders, and Returns relating to Operations in Southeast Virginia and North Carolina, from May 20, 1864, to June 12, 1864," "Special order No. 133," # 69.

volley at the oncoming Yankees, and then charged across the field, driving the Union troops back out of their defenses and back to where they had started their attack that morning. The Florida Brigade then occupied the position on the front line vacated by Breckenridge's troops.⁴⁸

As the day was drawing to a close, a group of Union sharpshooters managed to position themselves such that it could enfilade their breastworks. General Finegan ordered that at dusk 200 men of the Second, Fifth, and Eighth should "deploy, advance, and drive the sharpshooters of the enemy out."⁴⁹ However, Finegan did not know that the sharpshooters were well supported by infantry. Captain C. S. Fleming, still in command of the Second Florida, gave a short speech to his men, now numbering only 45, and at the appointed time led his men over their breastworks in his last charge. He was killed only 30 yards from where he started. The attack succeeded in driving back the Union sharpshooters, but a reserve unit drove the Floridians back to the cover of their breastworks.⁵⁰ Walter Raleigh Moore took over command of the Second Florida and led the tiny regiment for the remainder of the war.⁵¹

The surviving members of the Second Florida lamented the loss of Captain Fleming. His bravery and devotion to duty, throughout the war, was celebrated and admired by many throughout the Army of Northern Virginia. One officer wrote of him: "No one in the Second Florida—nay, even in the Brigade and our Division—has been so universally lamented, for he was a favorite with all who knew him."⁵² His death exemplified the regimental members' devotion to duty. Even though he knew the attack to be suicidal, and requested confirmation of the orders, when ordered to charge, he did his duty. A witness to Fleming's demeanor just prior to the attack remarked that he "appeared . . . as one who was looking death calmly in the face, and was ready to meet it."⁵³

⁴⁸ G. H. Dorman, *Fifty Years Ago: Reminiscences of '61-65* (Tallahassee, Fla.: T. J. Appleyard, 1912) 7-8.

⁴⁹ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 158.

⁵⁰ Fleming, *Memoir*, 101-102, 106.

⁵¹ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 46/2, "Confederate correspondence, Orders, and Returns relating to Operations in Northern and Southeastern Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, from January 1, 1865, to March 15, 1865, # 11.

⁵² Fleming, *Memoir*, 105.

⁵³ Fleming, *Memoir*, 102.

For those who survived Cold Harbor, the glory of having saved Lee's army was theirs. The chief army correspondent, P. W. Alexander, witnessed the affair, and reported: "They charged the enemy like a whirlwind."⁵⁴ The Floridians were delighted that they finally received recognition for their actions. This helped to raise morale, and bolstered their *esprit de corps*, as people began referring to them as the "Whirlwind Brigade."⁵⁵

After Cold Harbor, the Florida Brigade marched to Malvern Hill, but was urgently requested to travel to Petersburg to strengthen the defenses there against what was about to become the siege of Petersburg. After making a 25-mile forced march in less than ten hours they were placed in the front line, the earthworks having already been constructed. For three days the regiment withstood a constant bombardment.⁵⁶ On June 23, along with the rest of the Florida Brigade, the Second Florida moved from the earthworks to make a flanking movement. After marching down the Weldon Railroad for six miles, the brigade drove off a force of Union troops that was tearing up the tracks. The Florida Brigade arrived at daybreak, and was placed in the line of battle. Charging the Union line, they pushed back the Federals in a running firefight for four miles, capturing seven pieces of artillery, many horses, a few prisoners, and "1,300 negroes."⁵⁷ The Second Florida suffered only one person wounded in the attack.⁵⁸

This was the regiment's introduction to a certain victual that helped improve their health. A northern industry evolved out of the need to prevent scurvy and other maladies within the Union Army. The answer was a cube of freeze-dried and compressed vegetables, which when boiled in water swelled up or dissolved—depending upon the amount of water added—to make either a kind of vegetable loaf or soup that was both palatable and nourishing. The item, called "desiccated vegetables," could be considered the grandfather of modern military field rations. The supplies captured by the Floridians

⁵⁴ *Savannah Republican*, June 26, 1864.

⁵⁵ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 207.

⁵⁶ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 159.

⁵⁷ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, "Confederate Correspondence, Orders, and Returns relating to Operations in Maryland, Eastern North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia (Except Southwestern), and West Virginia," # 42.

⁵⁸ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 159.

in this raid included these and other foodstuffs that they used to supplement their diet.⁵⁹ Undoubtedly, having vegetables—however fresh—increased the troop’s morale, as the added nourishment helped them ward off sickness.

In early June, Grant gave permission for a Pennsylvania regiment, which included several coal miners, to begin work on a mine to undercut the Confederate’s Petersburg defenses. The goal was to pack the section of the shaft underneath the defenses with gunpowder, and by detonating it, blow a gap in the Confederate line.⁶⁰ It happened that the shaft intersected the Confederate trenches just to the north of the Florida Brigade’s position. On July 30, Union troops detonated the explosives, creating a large crater where that section of the line once stood. Federal troops rushed through the crater, but were beaten back by a Confederate counterattack. The Floridians witnessed the entire event, but did not participate in the fight, as their division commander expected another attack along their section of the line. The battle of the Crater, as the assault became known, infuriated the Confederate troops, and steeled their resolve to defeat the Yankees. It was a man without honor who would set about such a “disastrous piece of undermining work.”⁶¹

In late August, A. P. Hill’s Corps attempted to drive back the Union troops along the Weldon Railroad. On the morning of August 21, 1864, the Florida Brigade advanced to within 100 yards of the Union breastworks on the railroad, but was forced to fall back under a destructive fire. The brigade suffered terribly that day in the several charges it made in a vain attempt to dislodge the Federal defenders.⁶² The Floridians returned to their original position on the front line at Petersburg.

In the course of a lull in the bombardment, soldiers in blue and grey who were on picket duty sometimes met at a spring located between the lines. Some of the Floridians became familiar enough with their Yankee counterparts that one day they met at the spring and began to play a game of cards. When the officers realized what was happening, they ordered the artillery to open fire on them if they did not return to their positions. The Florida soldiers on picket there yelled out, “Rats to your holes!” The

⁵⁹ Steven E. Woodworth, ed., *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America’s Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002) 140-141.

⁶⁰ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 758-759.

⁶¹ Dorman, *Fifty Years Ago*, 10.

⁶² Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 159.

group playing cards ran for cover and had to lay low until nightfall until they could return to their respective commands. “Rats to your holes” became a catchphrase that the Floridians used, and the incident was told and retold by members of the regiment to keep themselves amused.⁶³

In December, the Second Florida, along with A. P. Hill’s entire corps began a forced march of 50 miles, reaching the Union rear near Belfield on the third day. On December 10, 1864, the regiment engaged in skirmishing with Union troops. Their only casualties were a few men who sustained flesh wounds. The Union troops, nearly 20,000 in all, were forced to retreat. They returned to their original positions on December 14. Most of the members of the unit had no shoes, and rags tied around their feet provided their only protection against the frozen and jagged ground. They thus suffered from exposure to the cold and cuts on their feet.⁶⁴

In February 1865, the Florida Brigade received orders to go into winter quarters, but before reaching their encampment they were recalled to Hatcher’s Run to help defend against an attacking Union force. The Florida Brigade charged the Federals, who routed, and chased them until evening, when darkness ended the battle.⁶⁵ During the winter of 1865, General Finegan retired, and Colonel Theodore Brevard took over command of the Florida Brigade.⁶⁶

As Grant tightened the noose around Petersburg, the regiment’s food situation grew gradually worse. By late 1864, the daily ration of flour or meal had shrunk to one pound.⁶⁷ Line and company officers shared in the hardships suffered by their men. A lieutenant in a South Carolina regiment assigned to the same corps as the Second Florida wrote that even officers’ rations were “1/3 lb. of bacon and 1 1/8 lbs. of meal.”⁶⁸ He also stated that he could purchase, from those few sutlers that remained, butter for twenty-five dollars per pound, and whisky for three dollars per drink.⁶⁹ R. H. Tate, of Company E, Second Florida, wrote his wife a letter, in which he states: “I am getting so tired of living

⁶³ Dorman, *Fifty Years Ago*, 10.

⁶⁴ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 159.

⁶⁵ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 160.

⁶⁶ Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 163.

⁶⁷ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 90-91.

⁶⁸ George M. Lelane, Diary “30th of March, 1864,” *Geo. M. Lelane Diary Collection*.

⁶⁹ Lelane, Diary “31st [of March, 1864],” *Geo. M. Lelane Diary Collection*.

such as it is, we get a little musty corn meal and a little bacon.”⁷⁰ However, their inadequate rations and bare feet did not dissuade them from their duties with the army. Members of the Second Florida looked back to their Continental Army counterparts, and recalled how they experienced similar deprivations at Valley Forge.

Even though the army was still connected via rail with food supply depots, the transportation situation in the Confederacy was in such a condition that trainloads of food were delayed so long that by the time they arrived at their intended destinations their cargos had already spoiled.⁷¹ After Sherman’s march to the sea severed the troops in Virginia from food production sources in Florida, North Carolinian warehouses were being filled to capacity. Even so, the governor of North Carolina refused to send any of those supplies to Virginia, where they would have done the most good.⁷²

Scarcity of food caused men to rationalize deserting. The men also knew that home guard troops were only barely keeping Union forces from occupying the whole of Florida. Letters and newspaper reports from home revealed to the Floridians in Virginia that, despite their heroic sacrifices, their land was being devastated, their homes burned by raiding parties, and their family members were being robbed and in some cases murdered.⁷³ This news caused some members of the regiment to go absent without leave, return home though whatever means they could find, and try to look after their families.

Many men succumbed to the temptation to give up the fight. Gary Loderhose tabulated that 121 men of the Ninth Florida Infantry Regiment deserted during the Florida Brigade’s time along the Petersburg line. During the single year that the Ninth Florida served in Virginia, more than 300 men left the regiment illegally. From spring of 1864 through the end of the war, thirty-eight percent of Finegan’s Brigade deserted.⁷⁴ However, it seems as though the members of the Second Florida did, on the whole, resist that urge. Although eleven men deserted from the unit between 1861 and 1862, during

⁷⁰ R. H. Tate, Letter “July 24th, 1864,” *R. H. Tate Letters*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁷¹ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 95-96.

⁷² Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 113.

⁷³ Loderhose Gary, *Far, Far From Home: The Ninth Florida Regiment in the Confederate Army* (Carmel, Ind.: Guild Press, 1999) 70-71.

⁷⁴ Loderhose, *Far, Far From Home*, 76.

the last three years of the war, only six men deserted.⁷⁵ It is not indicative that members of the Second Florida were better men, nor were they any more or less devoted to the cause for independence. Rather, the harsh experiences of the first two years of the war toughened the men. Those who remained from the Second Florida were better able to cope with their miserable living conditions than the newer troops from Florida.

Troops whose homes were not all that far removed from their place of service—Virginians, North and South Carolinians—continued to have their diets supplemented by packages of foodstuff sent from home.⁷⁶ The Florida troops, however, did not have such a luxury. With the vast distance, the ever worsening transportation system, and eventually the halving of the eastern portion of the Confederacy by Sherman's march through Georgia, food sent from home often arrived in a state unfit for consumption, or more commonly did not arrive at all.⁷⁷ One could argue that the men of the Second Florida did not desert as they had nowhere else to go, as it would have been impossible to travel all the way back to Florida on foot. Yet, the high desertion rates suffered by the newer Florida units disprove that theory, as does the fact that at least one member of the regiment did desert and go over to the Union.⁷⁸ It appears that going home was of less importance to those who deserted than—as the reports indicate—the fact that they were hungry, and thought that by becoming prisoners at the hands of the Federals they would at least be fed.⁷⁹

Those who did stay with their units, including the men of the Second Florida, remained for two reasons. To abscond would betray the sacrifices of their comrades who had already given their lives. Furthermore, to do so would bring shame to them and their families. One member of the regiment expressed his reason for remaining with his unit: “. . . we ought not to be discouraged when our friends fall in battle for it is impossible for

⁷⁵ D. William Shepherd, ed., *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War: A Reprint of Part II: Florida in the War Between the States, 1861-1865, Extracted from Soldiers of Florida Published by the State of Florida in 1903* (Panama City, Fla.: Norfield Publishing, 1998) 79-99.

⁷⁶ Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, 99.

⁷⁷ There were only two rail lines leading out of Florida during the war which could have been used to deliver supplies to Virginia. The first was severed when Federal troops occupied Jacksonville, and the other when Sherman captured Atlanta.

⁷⁸ *OR*, Series 1, Volume 40 & 42.

⁷⁹ *OR*, Series 1, Volume 40, “Union Correspondence, Orders, and Returns Relating to Operations in Southeastern Virginia and North Carolina, From July 5, 1864, to July 31, 1864,” # 9.

us to gain our independence without losing some of our brave Boys.”⁸⁰ During the dark days of the siege of Petersburg, G. H. Dorman, encountered a situation that exemplifies the experiences of those who remained with the unit:

On one occasion . . . our grub began to get quite short. Driver came to me one day . . . and said . . . ‘We have already seen a lot of trouble, and there is a great deal more ahead. We are actually suffering for something to eat. And look at my almost bare feet! We can get out of this . . . Let us cross the line tonight and get out of it.’ Of course times did look bad ahead, but I said: ‘Billie, we can not think of doing such a thing. If we are permitted to live to ever see this thing ended, how could we ever go back and face our people at home?’ After a serious talk over the matter the conclusion was reached between us that we would tough it out and stand by our colors ‘till the last day . . .’ Later on I was wounded and sent home, and when the Great Struggle was ended . . . Bill Driver was one of the few . . . that surrendered with General Lee at Appomattox (sic).⁸¹

In the morning hours of April 2, 1865, Lee’s lines at Petersburg were finally broken, and he was forced to retreat. On April 6, the Florida Brigade acted as the rearguard for the Army of Northern Virginia. They held off waves of attackers as the rest of the Confederate Army crossed the High Bridge at Saylor’s Creek. Although it succeeded in delaying the Union advance, half of the brigade, the Fifth, Eighth, and Eleventh Regiments, became separated, cut off from the bridge, and forced to surrender to troops under the command of Brigadier General Armstrong Custer.⁸² Among the men captured was Colonel Brevard; accordingly, Colonel David Lang again took command of the Florida Brigade.⁸³

The Florida Brigade was followed closely by pursuing Union troops, and on the morning of April 7, 1865, they halted and fortified for an attack at Farmville. The Federals charged but were repulsed. The Union troops then attempted to get around the left flank of the brigade via a ravine that ran to the brigade’s left, and rear. However, as they prepared to attack, members of the Tenth Florida discovered them. The Florida Brigade charged down into the ravine, threw the Union troops into confusion, and forced

⁸⁰ Barineau, Letter “August 6th, 1863,” Barineau Letters.

⁸¹ Dorman, *Fifty Years Ago*, 9.

⁸² Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 160.

⁸³ *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 46/1, “The Appomattox Campaign, “No. 269, Tabular statement of officers and men of the Confederate Army paroled at Appomattox Court House,” # 95.

them to surrender. That day they took more than 1,000 prisoners.⁸⁴ However, this was to be their last victory. From Farmville, the Second Florida marched to Appomattox Court-House, arriving there on April 9, 1865. That same day, the men of the Second Florida were called upon by their commander-in-chief, General Robert E. Lee, to do the unthinkable; surrender. At Appomattox Court-House, on April 12, 1865, the remaining 66 men of the Second Florida marched down the road, filed between two rows of Union troops, stacked their arms, and rolled up their banners in the formal surrender ceremony.

Today, it is obvious that the South could not win its independence, and that after Gettysburg, the overland campaign of 1864 and the siege of Petersburg only delayed the inevitable. However, the outcome was foreseen to be different by those members of the Second Florida as they suffered through four years of almost continual hunger, extreme temperatures, disease, and exhaustion. They looked back two generations and recalled how the troops of the Continental Army suffered, and believed that General Lee would, like Washington, somehow manage achieve ultimate victory. Although some men did desert, most of them remained, because honor and their devotion to each other forbade it. Emboldened by the ideals instilled in them by their society and their religious convictions, motivated by their belief in their own invincibility, they fought against obstacles which in the end proved to be insurmountable. Like thousands of Frenchmen who, with the cry "*Vive l'Emperor!*" went to their grave, the members of the Second Florida met their demise singing *Dixie*, victims of their own *esprit de corps*.

⁸⁴ OR, Series 1, Vol. 46/1, "The Appomattox Campaign, "No. 269, Tabular statement of officers and men of the Confederate Army paroled at Appomattox Court House," # 95.

CONCLUSION

Upon completing this project, a kernel of doubt remained as to whether the conclusions and historical accounts related were completely accurate. That doubt, however, gives rise to the realization that without doubt, all conclusions would be based upon arrogant speculation. History is not a hard science. Without the presence of doubt, without the author giving no thought to the possibility of his being wrong, the very foundation of historical writing would be anchored not on solid ground but rather in loose sand. Still, the author must be willing to make an educated guess, to postulate to the very best of his ability, utilizing however little or however much information is available. Without the educated guess, historical writing would be both bland and uninteresting.

The best sources available for creating a narrative account of the Second Florida Infantry Regiment's history and for formulating conclusions about the various aspects of the lives of the men who served in its ranks are sometimes flawed. They are still the best available sources. Issues of bias or editing out of certain facts must be weighed and the pieces analyzed to form conclusions that best represent the truth, and that is what has been done in the preparation and presentation of the information the reader has encountered in this thesis. While no author should guarantee complete accuracy, the author must believe that the arguments and conclusions presented in this thesis are as close as one could get to the truth without actually having been there oneself.

The conclusions of the thesis are these: the health and sanitation practices of the day were more deadly to the members of the Second Florida Infantry than were the enemy's bullets; the food and water consumed negatively impacted the health and morale of the men; the activities undertaken by the men during their free time was a vital factor in their being able to cope with the stress of soldiering and kept up morale; and, despite great hardships, the men of the regiment who persevered through to the end did so because they were devoted to the cause of independence and to each other, and they never envisioned that their struggle for independence would end in defeat.

According to muster roles, during the course of the war, 887 men served with the Second Florida Infantry Regiment. Of those men, 17 deserted, 32 transferred to other units, 28 resigned—most of them later joined other units—38 became prisoners of war,

34 received discharges for disabilities, and 31 died of disease.¹ Only 7 percent, 66 men, remained with the regiment when they surrendered. However, the statistics do not account for 641 of the regiment's men. The rest were convalescing in hospitals, still at a previous encampment and too sick to continue the march, on medical or hardship leave, were absent without leave—but not reported as such, or lying in their eternal slumber—their deaths not having been noted in the official records being kept.

The fruits of their labors were indeed defeat, but only in war. In body and in spirit, the men of the Second Florida Infantry Regiment were not defeated. They returned home to a state ravaged by war, relics of a way of life that had passed into the pages of history. Still, they were able to rise above the ashes of defeat and create for themselves successful careers.

E. A. Perry was elected and served as Florida's Governor from 1884-1888. He died less than a year after leaving office, his wounds never having fully healed.² After the war, F. P. Fleming initially intended to join with a band of former Confederates who moved to Brazil. However, he decided to stay, and opened a law practice in Jacksonville. He took over from E. A. Perry as Florida's Governor, serving until 1893. W. D. Ballantine served on several Governors' staffs, and lived to a ripe old age.³ W. R. Moore went on to serve on several State Commissions after the war, including the Gettysburg Memorial Commission. He died in 1898, in Suwannee County.⁴ T. W. Brevard served two terms in the Florida Senate, and had a successful law practice. He died in 1882, and is buried in the Tallahassee City Cemetery.⁵ N. W. Eppes—educated at West Florida Seminary, now Florida State University—returned to Tallahassee and married Susan Bradford. He managed the Bradford plantation and served several terms as Leon County's Commissioner of Public Instruction. He was murdered in 1904, many believed, because of his knowledge of corruption within the state government.⁶ William Watson

¹ D. William Shepherd, ed., *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War: A Reprint of Part II: Florida in the War Between the States, 1861-1865, Extracted from Soldiers of Florida Published by the State of Florida in 1903* (Panama City, Fla.: Norfield Publishing, 1998) 79-99.

² David W. Hartman, *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers, 1861-1865*, Vol. 2 (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995) 142.

³ Hartman, *Biographical Rosters*, 142.

⁴ Hartman, *Biographical Rosters*, 161.

⁵ Hartman, *Biographical Rosters*, 169.

⁶ Hartman, *Biographical Rosters*, 250.

became a prominent steamboat captain. Several others became successful layers, doctors, preachers, and businessmen, while most simply returned to their farms.

One member of the regiment survived the war only to die ignominiously. Lewis Powell, of Company I, was wounded and captured at Gettysburg. He escaped from a Maryland hospital, but did not return to his unit. Instead, he joined Mosby's raiders. When he recognized that the South was going to lose the war, he went into Maryland and took the oath of loyalty, under an assumed name. While in Baltimore, he became embroiled in John Wilkes Booth's plot to kidnap President Lincoln. When the plan changed to assassination, "Paine was to kill Secretary of State, William H. Seward, who was sick in bed." Powell knocked out the guard at the door, rushed upstairs, and stabbed Seward with a knife. He was eventually caught, and was hanged along with Mary Surratt and other conspirators on July 7, 1865.⁷

For many years after the war, the surviving men of the regiment held reunions. Discussing old times, they shared laughs and even a few tears. In 1927, the last surviving member of the Second Florida, James C. Smythe of Company D, at the age of 101, passed from this world. Appropriately, he was interred at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia, where so many other members of the Second Florida are interred.

In June 1864, the Richmond *Enquirer* made the following observation: "Many of Florida's noblest sons are resting under the sod of Hollywood, and around the hills of Richmond. Though their graves are far removed from the homes of their nativity, they are not wanting in friends to bestow upon them the tributes of remembrance and affection."⁸

⁷ Hartman, *Biographical Rosters*, 227.

⁸ Francis P. Fleming, *Memoir of Captain C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C.S.A.* (Jacksonville, Florida: Times Union Publishing House, 1881) 106-107.

APPENDIX A: "THE SECOND FLORIDA"

"The Second Florida"

by H. C. Grouenstein, Company K

From the flowery fields of Florida
In the year sixty-one,
When the bugle's first shrill notes
Athwart the list'ning heavens ran;
When the war cry fiercely echoed
"Come forth you gallant few,"
'Twas then the Second Florida
Dipped her colors in the dew.

At midnight, twilight, morning,
Their hearts beat high and warm,
For a braver, better band than this
Ne'er marched on Dixie's soil.
To be first and foremost in the fray
Was the feeling of each man;
And we wreathed a crown at Williamsburg
Which we carry in our van.

"Forward," cries our gallant Perry;
"Be sturdy in your lines,"
"Charge onward, boys, the victory's yours,
And the field of Seven Pines."
'Twas then we made the welkin ring,
For we knew his voice full well,
'Mid the iron hail of ball and grape—
Of canister and shell.

How long will we remember, boys,
The times that tried men's souls—
Cold Harbor and Mechanicsville—
The stories yet untold.
And thither again at Gaines's Farm,
We met them hand to hand;
With bayonets fixed we hurled our foe
Like devils from the land.

Next we met at Manassas,
 This famous battle plain;
Brave Pope, with all his Yankee horde,
 The rebel boys to train.
Now with his heavy columns,
 He shows us a new trick,
Acquitted himself nobly
 In his Bull Run Double Quick.

When the Deafening guns at Sharpsburg
 Pealed forth their warlike air;
When the clash of steel uniting
 O'er the youthful and the fair;
When the hearts of stoic men, praying,
 Would that God would send us night—
There, too, this band of heroes
 Struck for liberty and right.

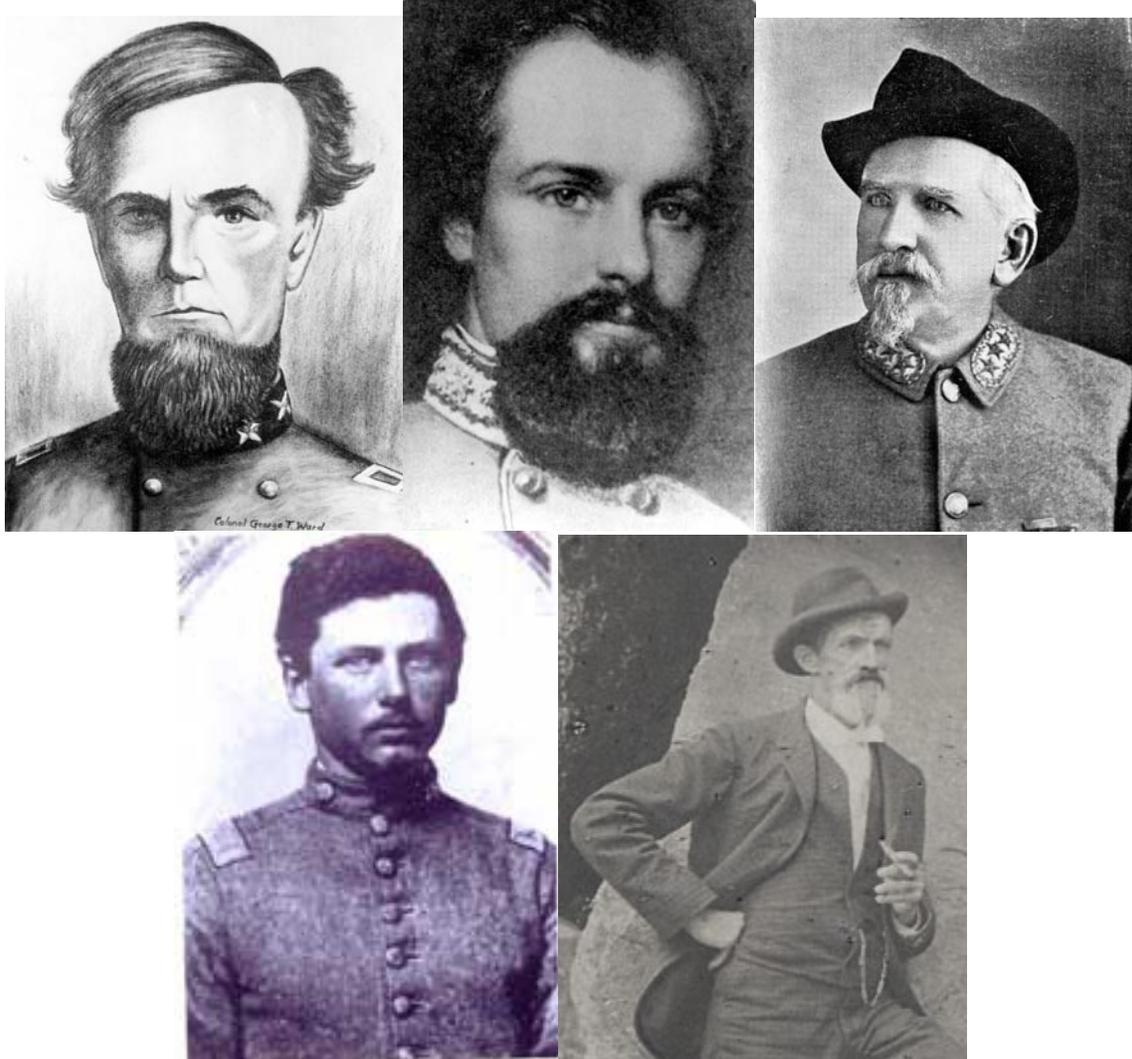
The spirits of a Ward,
 A Call and Butler, too,
Will face us to our enemy
 And bear our standard through.
Then we never can cease fighting
 'Till our foes are all laid low,
Avenge the death of our gallant dead
 On the fiends who laid them low.

— Camp near Fredericksburg, VA, March 23, 1863¹

¹ H. C. Grouenstein, *Miscellaneous Civil War Collection*, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

APPENDIX B: ILLUSTRATIONS

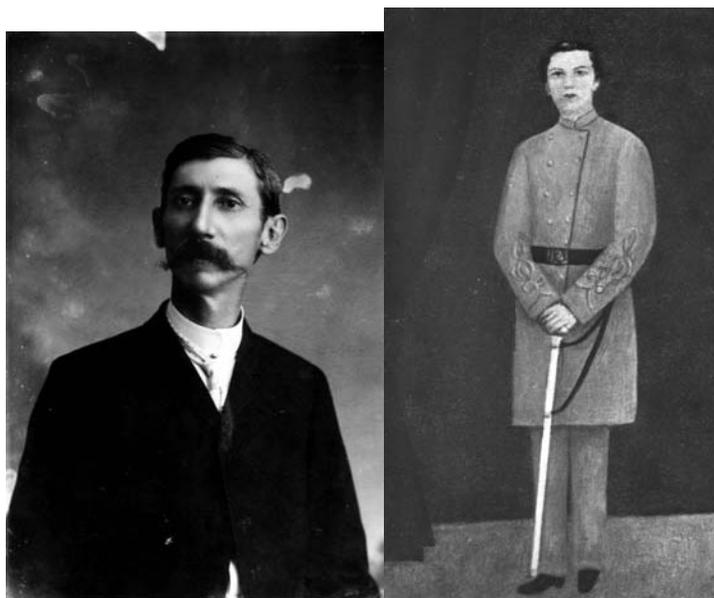
THE COMMANDERS



Top Row: George T. Ward, Edward A. Perry, William D. Ballantine
Bottom Row: C. Seton Fleming, Walter R. Moore¹

¹ *Print collections, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.*

THE SOLDIERS



Francis P. Fleming and Nicholas W. Eppes.²



Members of Perry's Brigade, most likely of the Second Florida, captured at Gettysburg.³

² *Print collections*, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida.

³ Bell I. Wiley, *The Common Soldier of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 21.

LIFE IN CAMP



Reenactors recreating the camp life typical to Army of Northern Virginia soldiers, while on campaign.⁴



At a reenactment participants demonstrate Civil War era close order drill.⁵

⁴ Photo by Shane Turner.

THE UNIFORM



Civil War reenactors demonstrate the uniform typical of the Second Florida Infantry.⁶

SANATION/HYGIENE



Soldiers bathing in 1864 near Petersburg, Virginia.⁷

⁵ Photo by Shane Turner.

⁶ Photo by Trish Turner.

⁷ Wiley, *The Common Soldier*, 55.

FOOD



At a reenactment, one can see food preparations similar to those of Civil War soldiers.⁸



The infamous "Hardtack."⁹

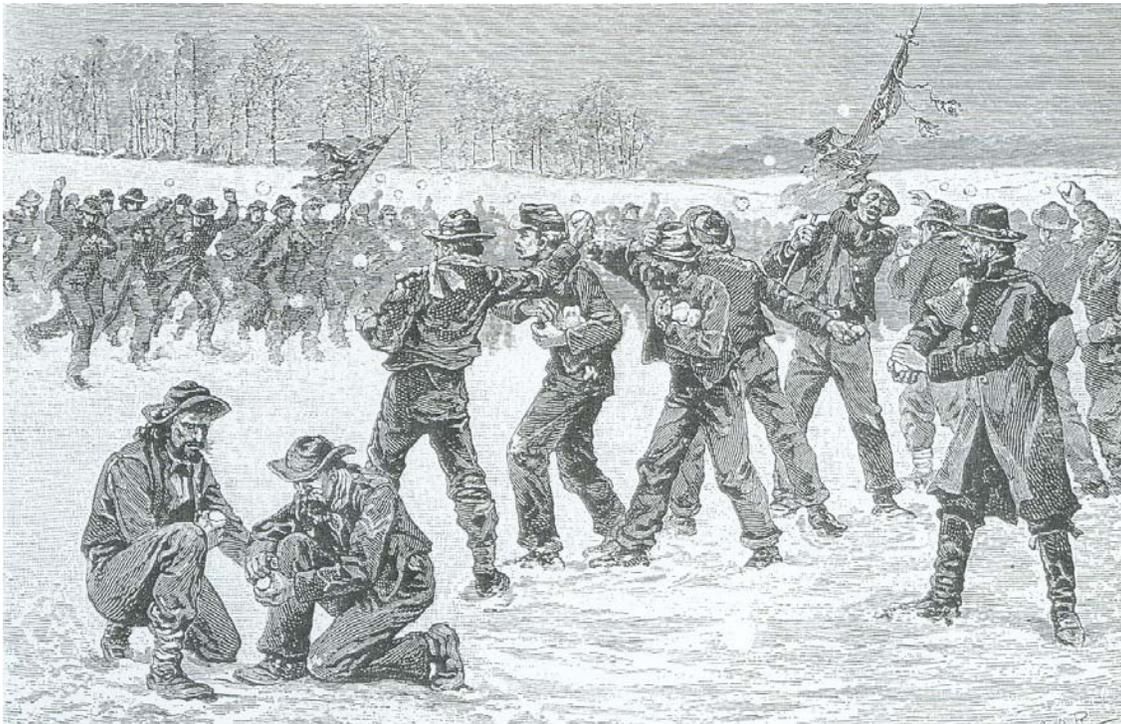
⁸ Photo by Shane Turner.

⁹ Wiley, *The Common Soldier, The Common Soldier*, 85.

FREE TIME ACTIVITIES



Civil War reenactors, as their real life counterparts did, enjoy a “bull session.”¹⁰



The great snowball fight between the brigades of Anderson’s Division.¹¹

¹⁰ Photo by Shane Turner.

¹¹ Wiley, *The Common Soldier*, 55.

PEACEFUL REST



Oakwood Cemetery, where far too many of Florida's sons found their final rest.¹²



The grave markers of George T. Ward and C. Seton Fleming.¹³

¹² Photo by Shane Turner.

¹³ G. T. Ward is buried at the Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg, Virginia, and C. S. Fleming rests in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia. Photos by Shane Turner.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Books

Bradford-Eppes, Susan. *Through Some Eventful Years*. Macon, Ga.: J. W. Burke, 1926.

Fleming, Francis P. *Memoir of Capt. C. Seton Fleming, of the Second Florida Infantry, C. S. A.: Illustrative of the History of the Florida Troops in Virginia During the War Between the States, with Appendix of the Casualties*. Jacksonville, Fla: Times-Union Publishing House, 1884.

Hewett, Janet B. ed. *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. "Part II—Record of Event." Vol. 5, s#17. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1995.

Martin, Joseph Plum. *A Yankee Doodle Boy: A Young Soldier's Adventures in the American Revolution Told by Himself*. New York: Holiday House, 1995.

Walter, Jakob. *The Diary of a Napoleonic Foot Soldier*. Eddited and with introduction by Marc Raeff. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 1991.

Documents

The Civil War CD-ROM: The War of the Rebellion : A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, developed by Philip Oliver. Version 1.55. Carmel, Ind.: Guild Press of Indiana, 1997.

Florida Old Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Home: Information and Facts. Genealogy Department, Orange County Library System.

H. H. Waters. "Circular On Measures Regulating The Distillation Of Alcohol And Other Spirituous Liquors." *Confederate Imprints*. 1861-1865. Microfilm. New Haven, Conn.: Research Publications, 1974. Reel 39

Sam'l Preston Moore. "Circular No. 10." *Confederate Imprints*. Microfilm. New Haven, Conn.: Research Publications, 1974. Reel 17.

Manuscripts

Barineau Letters, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection. U.S. Army Military History Institute. Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Black, Hugh. *Letters of Captain Hugh Black to his Family in Florida During the War*

- Between the States.* Special Collections. Strozier Library. Florida State University. Tallahassee, Florida.
- Bremond, Miss Sylvania Letter Collection.* Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library. Museum of the Confederacy. Richmond, Virginia.
- DuBose, John E. *Capt. Parkhill's Company, "The Howell Guards," On the Eve of their Departure for the Seat of War, August 26, 1861.* Sermon. Tallahassee, Fla.: Dyke & Carlisle, 1861.
- Eugene Frederick Lykes Collection.* Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library. The Museum of the Confederacy. Richmond, Virginia.
- Farrell, John Crenshaw's Battery, Co. D. Diary Collection.* Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library. Museum of the Confederacy. Richmond, Virginia.
- Geo. M. Lelane Diary Collection,* Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library. The Museum of the Confederacy. Richmond, Virginia.
- James Nixon Civil War Letters.* Special Collections. Strozier Library. Florida State University. Tallahassee, Florida.
- Johnson, J. B. *A Limited Review of What One Man Saw of the Battle of Gettysburg.* Licensed Battlefield Guide's Library. Copied by Bill Pieszak.
- Kitchens, William H. "Experiences of William Henry Kitchens in the Civil War: Written by him on or about the year 1915 at Griswaldsville, Twiggs County, Georgia." Unpublished manuscript. Florida State Archives. Tallahassee, Florida.
- Pine Hill Plantation Papers.* Special Collections. Strozier Library. Florida State University. Tallahassee, Florida.
- R. H. Tate Letters.* Florida State Archives. Tallahassee, Florida.
- United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection.* Florida State Archives. Tallahassee, Florida.
- Miscellaneous Civil War Letters.* Strozier Library. Florida State University. Tallahassee, Florida.
- Walter Raleigh Moore Collection.* U.S. Army Military History Institute. Army War College. Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

William B. Short Collection. Elenore S. Brockenbrough Library. The Museum of the Confederacy. Richmond, Virginia.

William F. Lewis Collection. Elenore S. Brochenbrough Library. Museum of the Confederacy. Richmond, Virginia.

Wood Civil War Letters. Special Collections. Strozier Library. Florida State University. Tallahassee, Florida.

Newspapers

Pensacola Weekly Observer. June 2, 1861.

Pensacola Weekly Observer. June 9, 1861.

Savannah Republican. June 26, 1864.

The Florida Mirror. May 26, 1894.

The Florida Mirror. June 2, 1894.

The Florida Mirror. June 16, 1894.

The Florida Mirror. June 23, 1894.

Secondary Sources

Articles

Ingle, John P., Jr., ed. 1981. "Soldiering With the Second Florida Infantry Regiment." *The Florida Historical Quarterly.* 3: 335-9.

McCallum, Gordon E. "Health and Sanitation Practices of the Civil War." Washington, D.C.: Civil War Round Table. Publication information incomplete. Copied by Bill Pieszak.

Williamson, Edward C., ed. 1949. "Francis P. Fleming in the War for Southern Independence: Soldiering With the 2nd Florida Regiment." *Florida Historical Quarterly.* 1: 38-52.

Williamson, Edward C., ed. 1949. "Francis P. Fleming in the War for Southern Independence: Letters from the Front." *Florida Historical Quarterly.* 3: 143-153.

Books

- Barton, Michael and Larry M. Logue, eds. *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.
- Davis, David Brion and Steven Mintz, eds. *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery Through the Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Dickison, J. J. 1899. "Military History of Florida." In Volume 11 of *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History, in Twelve Volumes, Written by Distinguished Men of the South* by Clement A. Evans, ed. Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co.
- Hartman, David W., ed. 1995. "Second Florida Infantry Regiment." In *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers 1861-1865*. Vol. 2. Wilmington, North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Co.
- Hubbard, Charles M. *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy*. Knoxville, Ten.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998.
- Lecky, W.E.H. *Democracy & Liberty*. Vol. 1. London: Oxford University Press, 1899.
- Livingston, Donald. *A Constitutional History of Secession*. New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 2002.
- Loderhose, Gary. *Far, Far From Home: The Ninth Florida Regiment in the Confederate Army*. Carmel, Ind.: Guild Press, 1999.
- McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989.
- Norton, Herman. *Rebel Religion: The Story of Confederate Chaplains*. St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1961.
- Owsley, Frank Lawrence. *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America*. Second Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959.
- Shepherd, D. William, ed. *Florida Soldiers in the Civil War: A Reprint of Part II: Florida in the War Between the States, 1861-1865, Extracted from Soldiers of Florida Published by the State of Florida in 1903*. Panama City, Fla.: Norfield Publishing, 1998.
- Sibley, Jr., F. Ray. *The Confederate Order of Battle, vol. I, The Army of Northern Virginia*. Shippensburg, Pen.: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1996.

Stern, Philip van Doren, ed. *Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies*.
Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1961.

Steiner, Paul E.. *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865*.
Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1968.

Wheeler, Richard. *Sword Over Richmond: An Eyewitness History of McClellan's
Peninsula Campaign*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.

Wiley, Bell Irvin. *The Common Soldier of the Civil War*. New York: Scribner's Sons,
1973.

Wiley, Bell Irvin. *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*.
New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1943.

Woodworth, Steven E., ed. *The Loyal, True, and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers*.
Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002.

Thesis Paper

Nichols, Richard S. "Florida's Fighting Rebels: A Military History of Florida's Civil
War Troops." Master's thesis, Florida State University, 1967.

World Wide Web Sites

"Cockpit Point, Freestone Point, Shipping Point Virginia." Americancivilwar.com.
<http://americancivilwar.com/statepic/va/va100.html>.

"Leon Trotsly's Military Writings." Marxists.org.
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1918-mil/ch07.htm>.

"Maxims of Napoleon Bonaparte : On War." Napoleonguide.com.
http://www.napoleonguide.com/maxim_war.html

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shane Micah Turner was born December 14, 1978, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. At the age of nine, his family moved from Florida to Manassas, Virginia. His home was within walking distance from the Manassas National Battlefield Park. It was during the year-and-a-half that he lived in Manassas that he developed an interest in history. His family eventually returned to Florida, and he spent the rest of his childhood in Apopka, Florida. In 1998, he graduated with honors from Lake Brantley High School.

Shane began studies at the University of Central Florida 1998 as an aerospace engineering student. He quickly realized, however, that engineering was not his true calling. After testing the waters of several career fields, he eventually decided to become a historian. His first publication was an article in the Fall, 2001, edition of Alpha Gamma Chi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta's, *Epochs*, entitled, "The Land of Fusang: The Possibility of Pre-Columbian Contact Between Asia and the Americas." In May, 2002, he received the Honors in the Major award for his thesis entitled, *The Land of Fusang : Myth, History and the Narrative of Hwui Shan*. He graduated with his BA degree from UCF in May of 2002, with major in history and a minor in German language.

Florida State University's Department of History accepted Shane as a graduate student in 2002. During his time at the university he worked as an archivist in the Institute on World War II and the Human Experience, traveled to several states on research, and gained certification as a secondary school history instructor. Upon graduation, in August, 2005, he plans to obtain a position teaching history at the high school level, and then after three years to continue his quest for a PhD. He hopes one day to teach at a military academy.