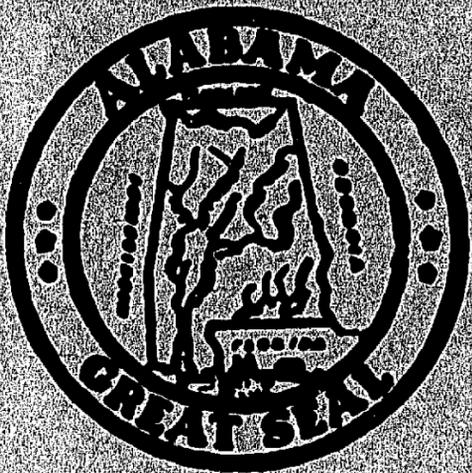


**THE  
ALABAMA HISTORICAL  
QUARTERLY**



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**VOL. XXXVI**

**FALL & WINTER**

**Nos. 3 & 4**

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**ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT**

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Milo B. Howard, Jr., Editor

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NAVAL OPERATIONS ON THE APALACHICOLA  
AND CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERS, 1861-1865

by

Maxine Turner

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## I. INTRODUCTION: THE APALACHICOLA-CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER SYSTEM

The twentieth century has taught historians the term *cold war*. It hardly seems applicable to the heroic deeds of the American Civil War. It implies threats of action rather than actual engagements. It calls up images of men stationed in remote places where nothing ever happens except an occasional incident which heightens tension. It implies also the development of new weapons, government contracts, cost overruns. It seems to be a peculiarly contemporary term, yet there was a theatre of operations during the Civil War to which the term *cold war* could be applied, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River System.

As it related strategically to the Union and Confederacy during the Civil War, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River System included the area drained by the Chattahoochee River from Columbus, Georgia, to its confluence with the Flint River at Chattahoochee, Florida, and the Apalachicola River from Chattahoochee, Florida, to the port of Apalachicola, Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico.

To the Confederacy this entire area was of considerable importance. The port of Apalachicola had been an important commercial point prior to the war. As early as 1854, Apalachicola wharves loaded about seventy square-rigged vessels a year and shipped 160,000 bales of cotton. Finished cotton products from Columbus, Georgia, mills and raw cotton and other agricultural products from Alabama and Georgia were shipped along the river system by steamers to Apalachicola. Ocean-going vessels came into the port with coffee and other products for the area to the north.

The hundred-mile course of the Apalachicola River northward to Chattahoochee, Florida, is extremely winding. The river is bounded in many places by swamps and marshes and at many points deep creeks enter the river. Confederate blockade runners found anchorage in these tributaries during the early days of the war. There they received cargo before going downriver to the port.

Along the Apalachicola are locations which the Confederates fortified or considered as places to sink obstructions.

The first of these was Fort Gadsden, an elevated post twenty miles above Apalachicola. However, the Confederates were never able to provide heavy guns there, and the post was held by a picket guard. Two miles upriver from Fort Gadsden was Owl Creek which provided anchorage for small vessels until a Union raid there in 1863.

Twenty-eight miles north of Apalachicola, the Chipola River enters the Apalachicola from the west. Navigable almost to the town of Marianna, Florida, a cut-off from this stream through Gum Swamp allowed river steamers to pass the obstructions which were placed in the Apalachicola in 1862. This series of obstructions was located at the Narrows, a five-mile series of sharp bends in the river thirty-five miles north of Apalachicola. Mocassin Slough, which runs roughly parallel to the river on the east, provided another by-pass for the obstructions for steamers enroute south.

Half way between the towns of Apalachicola and Chattahoochee was the busy landing of Iola. Eight miles north of that point was Ricko's Bluff, at first a transfer point for mail to the south and later a fortified garrison. It was important to the Confederates both as a fortification and as a supply depot for troops stationed farther to the south along the river. Between Ricko's Bluff and Chattahoochee, a railroad connected the river with Quincy, Florida, which was later the headquarters of the Confederate Military District of Middle Florida.

Blountstown Bar lay seventy-eight miles north of Apalachicola. The gunboat *Chattahoochee* was partially destroyed and sunk there by a boiler explosion in 1863. Six miles farther north is Alum Bluff where citizens of Columbus, Georgia, planned to obstruct the river. A Confederate battery placed there for a time in 1862 was later moved to Rock Bluff, eight miles to the north, where a second obstruction was laid.

The town of Chattahoochee, Florida, lies one hundred miles north of Apalachicola at the confluence of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers. Below that point in the river system, Confederate efforts were centered upon obstructions sunk in the river and protected by batteries or picket guards.

Prior to the war there was a United States Arsenal at Chattahoochee, Florida, and the town itself was a point of some importance as a stop-over for steamers which traveled the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers to Apalachicola. After the Florida volunteers seized the Arsenal in 1861, Chattahoochee became a Confederate post and an official ordnance station.

From Chattahoochee, the Flint River lies northeast, descending along a winding course through the rich agricultural section of southwestern Georgia. Neither Bainbridge along the river nor Albany, the head of navigation at the time of the war, played a prominent role in the operations in the river system.

The Chattahoochee River was quite important to the Confederacy as a line of communication. Above Chattahoochee, Florida, on the river, the Confederates concentrated upon building ships which could go downriver to the Gulf to raise the blockade. At Saffold in Early County, Georgia, a point thirty-three miles north of Chattahoochee, Florida, the Confederate Navy Yard was an installation for constructing and repairing vessels.

Northward from Saffold along the Chattahoochee were many plantation landings where cotton was ginned and stored for shipment. These stores of cotton were a major impetus for initial Confederate defense efforts. Fort Gaines, Georgia, was a fortified point along the Chattahoochee; and Eufaula, Alabama, and Georgetown, Georgia, were thriving towns at the time of the Civil War.

At the fall line on the Chattahoochee River is the city of Columbus, Georgia. In 1861 it had a population of about ten thousand and was already called the largest industrial center south of Richmond. In addition to having the river as a commercial outlet, it was connected with the West Point and Montgomery Railroad, which in turn provided connections with Montgomery, Atlanta, Augusta, Richmond, and other Confederate centers. Columbus was of particular strategic importance as long as the Confederate capital was in Montgomery.

Soon after the onset of war, Columbus industries began to expand and new industries were created to supply the Con-

federacy. Cotton mills turned out uniforms, tents, knapsacks, and shirts. Two factories produced shoes, and Columbus mills were soon working day and night to provide meal and flour for the Confederacy. A music store manufactured drums and fifes for the army in addition to oil cloth for belts and cartridge boxes.

The Columbus Naval Iron Works became by far the most important installation in Columbus. Chief Engineer James H. Warner came to Columbus in 1861 to consolidate industries that had been manufacturing equipment for steamboats. Confederate Ordnance Chief Josiah Gorgas called this Columbus industry the nucleus of the Confederate Ordnance Department. Throughout the war, this industry produced guns and engines for vessels under construction in all parts of the Confederacy. In addition, the iron-clad *Muscogee* and a small torpedo boat were constructed there. The Columbus Naval Iron Works kept the river steamboats in repair during the war and repaired the gunboat *Chattahoochee*.

Other Confederate industries in Columbus produced swords, rifles, harness, ammunition, paper, glass, peanut oil, and wagons. The city was also a major Quartermaster Depot and, later in the war, a Confederate hospital center. Columbus was at the center of strategic plans for both Confederacy and Union in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River System. From the beginning of the war, Union blockaders knew of Columbus and its importance to the Confederacy, but from the first they were hampered in their efforts to reach the city.

Apalachicola was a station in the command of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron. This division of the Union blockade extended from Cape Canaveral on the eastern coast of Florida to St. Andrew's Bay, some forty-eight miles by land from Apalachicola. Apalachicola was considered one of the principal ports in west Florida, along with St. Andrew's, Deadman's Bay, St. Mark's, Cedar Keys, Tampa, and Pensacola.

The port of Apalachicola is separated from the Gulf by a series of islands. To the east, opposite the city of Carrabelle, is Dog Island, which is separated from St. George's Island by a channel known as East Pass. St. George's Island

extends southwest from the mainland opposite Apalachicola. Although it is now a narrow, continuous body of land, at the time of the Civil War the western tip of the island formed a separate body of land called Sand Island. During the war, Union blockading steamers piled coal there.

A narrow passage between Sand Island and St. Vincent's Island formed West Pass, the main entrance to Apalachicola in 1861. St. Vincent's Island lies in a north westerly position from St. George's, completing the semicircle of islands opposite Apalachicola. The westernmost tip is separated from Indian Peninsula on the mainland by Indian Pass. During the war, both St. Vincent's and St. George's Islands had sufficient vegetation to support herds of wild cattle and hogs but little else. Until well into the twentieth century they were rather desolate stretches of land where Union sailors had had their exercise liberty during the war. The two islands were held by the Confederates until December 1861.

The islands bounding Apalachicola border three rather shallow bodies of water: St. Vincent's Sound to the west, Apalachicola Bay adjacent to the city, and St. George's Sound to the east. The depth of these waters, along with the soundings at each of the three passes, varies a great deal. Before the war, ships which entered the bay from the Gulf stood off St. Vincent's Bar near West Pass and were relieved of cargo and re-laden by means of lighters from the wharves. Although the Union had hoped to use Apalachicola as a sheltered roadstead for vessels, they found the depth of the bay insufficient even for the blockading vessels that were stationed there. This was a continuing source of frustration to Union commanders off Apalachicola during the war.

Throughout the Civil War the Confederates who occupied the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee River System knew that the blockade was off Apalachicola. Like all of the South, they felt the strictures of the blockade, and they worked to build vessels that could move down the rivers to raise it. Meanwhile, the Union naval force off Apalachicola was aware of the agricultural and industrial production in the areas of Georgia, Florida, and Alabama drained by the river system. The Union lacked means of ascending the rivers in their heavy

draft vessels, and the South could not muster a naval force to raise the blockade. As that situation prevailed, each side made efforts to strike a telling blow at the other.

## II. 1861: PREPARATIONS FOR WAR

The year 1861 was primarily a time of preparation for operations in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee area. Although Florida volunteers took possession of the United States Arsenal in the area in early January, the Confederate Government faced the responsibility of manning and defending the territory which they occupied. Although Lincoln declared a blockade of southern ports in April, the Gulf Blockading Squadron faced the task of making the blockade of the port of Apalachicola effective.

As a matter of Confederate policy the defense of its coast line was a consideration of great importance. The cotton producers requested protection of their stores at Apalachicola and the citizens requested protection of their homes, but their interests represented only one location along a four-thousand-mile coast line and adequate defense could not be supplied overnight. The Confederates were hampered by lack of men, lack of arms and ammunition, and lack of artillery and officers to direct its use.

While the Union dispatched vessels to Apalachicola in June, they were ill-equipped to enter and maneuver in the shallow coastal waters. Expeditions of small boats into the waters of Apalachicola Bay and St. Vincent's and St. George's Sounds went out of the protecting range of the batteries on blockading vessels. Lacking proper equipment to tow prizes to sea, the Union force was compelled to burn prizes which were captured near Apalachicola. They were left with the expedient of standing outside the waters adjacent to the port trying to apprehend blockade runners as they entered and left one of the four passages to Apalachicola.

Operations in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee area began on January 5, 1861, five days before the secession of Florida. Governor John Milton ordered a group of Florida volunteers to seize arms, ammunition, and buildings in the possession of the United States at the Arsenal at Chattahoochee, Florida. The mission was accomplished at seven o'clock the following morning when the Union force in command of a sergeant

offered no resistance.<sup>1</sup> The volunteers took possession of a large store of muskets, rifles, and pistols at the installation which, in July, 1862, was made an official Confederate Ordnance Station.<sup>2</sup>

Citizens of Alabama who had shipped cotton to Apalachicola and citizens of Apalachicola, fearing that war would be declared, began to call upon the Confederate Government for attention to the defense of the port. In March, a letter from General A. C. Gordon of Henry County was forwarded to Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker. Gordon reported that no cotton was being sold or shipped at Apalachicola even though the amount stored there was valued at a million dollars (at ten cents per pound). Asking that the attention of the President be called to the lack of defense at Apalachicola, the General concluded:

Something should be done, and that very soon, for the protection of that place and property. Alabama will suffer more than Florida will if that place should fall into the hands of an enemy. A large portion of the people of Southern Alabama ship their cotton to that port for market, and apprehend danger to their interests there.<sup>3</sup>

D. P. Holland, a resident of Montgomery, reported to Secretary of the Navy, Stephen R. Mallory, that the port of Apalachicola was without defense, having only two hundred muskets, sixty rifles, and no artillery of any kind. He added that the commercial importance of the city would probably make it "more than a point of ordinary interest to the United States Government. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, vol. I, p. 332. Hereinafter cited as *Army O. R.*

<sup>2</sup>William A. Albaugh, III, and Edward N. Simmons, *Confederate Arms* (Harrisburg, 1957), 197. Although Albaugh and Simmons place the U. S. Arsenal at Apalachicola, *Army O. R.* and *Navy O. R.* maps designate U. S. Arsenal at Chattahoochee, Florida. A Union landing party reported on March 12, 1862, that "not a soldier, a cannon, or apparently any weapon of war" remained at Apalachicola. Confederate evacuation had been ordered earlier in the month and Apalachicola was not re-occupied by the Confederacy.

<sup>3</sup>*Army O. R.*, I, I, 448.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 450.

The citizens of Apalachicola itself were more immediately interested in the defense of the port. They addressed a letter to Walker asking for help in its defense. Walker's private secretary answered their letter, assuring them of the Secretary's "deep concern" for their problem and informing them that "the proper defense of every assailable point of our coast is a matter most pressing upon the consideration of the Department." While adding that an artillery officer would be sent to Apalachicola as soon as possible, the secretary reminded the citizens "that the departments are but just organized, and that the pressure upon the Department of War is necessarily very great."<sup>5</sup> For the spring of 1861, therefore, the people of Apalachicola were left largely to their own devices. They organized themselves into four volunteer companies comprised of two-thirds of the men able to bear arms. By public subscription they purchased two thirty-four-pound cannons from the state of Florida.<sup>6</sup> The summer months, during which work at fortifying Apalachicola progressed very slowly, allowed the Union time to lay the foundation for its blockade of the port.

The Union blockading operations off Apalachicola began on June 11, 1861. Under orders from Flag-Officer William Mervine of the newly-organized Gulf Blockading Squadron, the *USS Montgomery* arrived off Apalachicola about noon of that day. The 787-ton screw steamer had a complement of sixty-six men and five guns under the command of Commander T. Darrah Shaw. Having no chart to direct his ship in the unmarked waters, Shaw directed a very careful entry through West Pass with frequent soundings. The vessel almost ran aground before coming into position to command the entrance to the port.<sup>7</sup>

Shaw's first mission was to announce the blockade. He had with him Mervine's announcement which read:

To all whom it may concern:

I, William Mervine, flag-officer, commanding the

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, I, I, 485.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, I, VI, 286.

<sup>7</sup>*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, 1894-1922), Series I, vol. XVI, p. 546. Hereinafter cited as *Navy O. R.*

United States naval forces composing the Gulf Squadron, give notice that by virtue of the authority and power in me vested, and in pursuance of the proclamations of his Excellency the President of the United States, promulgated under the date of April 19 and 17, 1861, respectively, that an effective blockade of the port of Apalachicola, Florida, has been established and will be rigidly enforced and maintained against all vessels (public armed vessels of foreign powers alone excepted) which shall attempt to enter or depart from said port.<sup>8</sup>

To Mervine's statement Shaw added this further note:

I, T. Darrah Shaw, commanding the *USS Montgomery*, now off the port of Apalachicola, do hereby promulgate the enclosed declaration of blockade of the said port, made by William Mervine, esq., flag-officer, commanding U. S. Blockading forces in the Gulf of Mexico, under the following terms, viz:

No American coasting vessels are to be allowed to enter or depart from said port from the time of your arrival on the station. All foreign and neutral vessels now in the port of Apalachicola will be allowed ten days from the 11th of June, instant, for their departure.

All mercantile letters coming to me unsealed will be forwarded to their destination at the earliest practicable moment.<sup>9</sup>

Shaw was able to carry out the first part of his mission later in the afternoon of June 11. A pilot boat under a flag of truce brought a pilot and three men from Apalachicola to the *Montgomery*. The Commander answered their inquiry concerning his mission with a request that they deliver his and Mervine's announcements to the town. The master of the pilot boat agreed to carry copies to the mayor, the post master, the collector of customs, and the commercial reading rooms.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 531-33.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 546.

The second part of Shaw's mission, that of establishing and maintaining a blockade of Apalachicola, was not so easily dispatched. In his first report to Mervine he pointed out the difficulties of the *Montgomery's* position. He cited the impossibility of preventing steamers from slipping unseen through the shoal water to the east and west of the *Montgomery's* station at the main entrance to the port. He further pointed out that most of the traffic at Apalachicola was made up of light draft steamers, and he requested that a vessel of that type be sent to aid his ship.<sup>11</sup>

The blockade at Apalachicola was not immediately strengthened, and the Confederates continued their efforts to reinforce their hold upon Apalachicola. With the help of citizens of Apalachicola they were erecting batteries on St. Vincent's Island. The lieutenant commanding the project sent a request to Governor John Milton of Florida for additional guns on August 10. The fortification had at that time four thirty-two-pounders, but the lieutenant requested four additional thirty-two-pounders and two twenty-four-pounders for the defense of the road to St. Joseph's. He pointed out the "exceedingly small supply of ammunition" and the "immediate need for 1,000 friction primers."<sup>12</sup>

After receiving the report, Governor Milton went to inspect the fortifications on St. Vincent's. He wrote to the Secretary of War on August 16 asking that an artillery officer be sent to aid the force at Apalachicola. The Governor concluded his request:

Of all places in this State Apalachicola is most important to the commercial interests of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, and at present it is in a condition almost defenseless. Now is the time to prepare for its defense. A few weeks hence may be too late.<sup>13</sup>

The Governor's message had not reached the Secretary of War before the blockade off Apalachicola was strengthened.

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 547.

<sup>12</sup>*Army O. R.*, I, I, 472.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 471-72.

It is possible that the impetus which sent the *USS R. R. Cuyler* to Apalachicola was touched off in the city itself. On July 30 a citizen of Lansingburgh, New York, wrote a letter to the Secretary of State which was forwarded to Gideon Welles in the Department of the Navy who sent it to Flag-Officer Mervine on August 5. The information contained in this circuitously routed message came from a woman in Apalachicola who had written to her uncle in Lansingburgh. She told him that the blockade had been a farce in that one small vessel guarded four passages from Apalachicola to the Gulf, making it rather easy for vessels to escape to sea. The woman's directions to her uncle that he reply to her letter through a firm in New York City indicated to the Union that there was still communication by sea with Apalachicola. Strengthening the blockade at that point, it was thought, might also "diminish Lord Lyon's instances of ineffectual blockade."<sup>14</sup> Whether or not the department acted on the strength of this intelligence is not stated, but it was exactly two weeks after Welles sent his message to Mervine that the *Cuyler* joined the *Montgomery* off Apalachicola.

The addition of the *Cuyler*, a twelve-hundred-ton screw steamer with 111 men and ten guns, tripled the number of men and guns stationed at Apalachicola. Within ten days Captain F. B. Ellison had action to report at his new station. The Union force was still hampered, however, by the lack of vessels and equipment suitable for operation in the shallow water of the area. These circumstances served to dim the accomplishment of the blockading force in capturing its first prize vessel.

On the night of August 26, five boats from the *Cuyler* and the *Montgomery* were sent on a reconnaissance mission toward a large ship at anchor in Apalachicola Bay. The Union force discovered the ship *Finland* and the schooner *New Plan* and were able to capture the two vessels without opposition. Since the *New Plan's* papers were in order, it was released after the crew had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States.

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<sup>14</sup>*Navy O. R.*, I, XVI, 613.

The *Finland*, however, was thought a lawful prize and the Union seamen began efforts to remove it from the bay. They found the sails and spars housed and spent all night bending sails and sending spars aloft. At dawn they began, against unfavorable winds and tides, to attempt towing their prize to the Union blockading station at East Pass. Nightfall found the *Finland* grounded on St. Vincent's Bar, four miles from the Union anchorage, and forty men were left behind to free the ship.<sup>15</sup>

Efforts to tow the *Finland* from the bar lasted all night. At dawn a steamer with a large schooner in tow appeared heading into Apalachicola and steered directly toward the Union prize. Unable to free the *Finland* from the bar and unable to call upon the *Cuyler* or *Montgomery* for defense, the seamen had to fire the *Finland* and take to their boats.<sup>16</sup> So precarious was the position of the Union seamen that they were routed by nine men from the Apalachicola Guards who came upon the scene in a schooner towed by a steamer. That detachment boarded the burning *Finland* and recovered the life boats and a few useful articles that could be salvaged.<sup>17</sup>

Though the shots from the Apalachicola riflemen had caused no injury, Ellison recorded an injury to their pride that the Union inability to enter the Bay allowed the "rebels to make this demonstration with impunity."<sup>18</sup> Ellison also deplored the loss of the *Finland* as a prize, for he had planned to send her to New York for adjudication. Had the Union vessels been able to enter the Bay, they could have protected the prize with their batteries against the threat of the steamer and schooner. Had they had kedge anchors and hausers they might have been able to operate more effectively. He added that with a steamer or gunboat of twelve foot draft or less the Union force could have captured the two Confederate vessels easily. Nevertheless, the incident caused increased concern among the Confederates on St. Vincent's.

Ten days after the *Finland* incident, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Mallory forwarded to Secretary of War Walker

<sup>15</sup>Eufaula *Spirit of the South*, September 10, 1861.

<sup>16</sup>*Navy O. R.*, I, XVI, 646-47.

<sup>17</sup>Eufaula *Spirit of the South*, September 10, 1861.

<sup>18</sup>*Navy O. R.*, I, XVI, 646-47.

a dispatch from the garrison on St. Vincent's. The commander of the garrison reported his fear that the Union planned to send light draft steamers into the Bay to attack and burn Apalachicola. To meet the threat he requested powder, primers, and artillerists. In an interchange of messages the same day, Walker and Mallory agreed that Navy Lieutenant Augustus McLaughlin would be sent to Apalachicola with shells, shot, and guns if the War Department would supply two thousand pounds of powder, transportation, and two additional guns. Tredegar Iron Works promised two thirty-two-pounders within a short time, and ten days later, September 16, a midshipman was dispatched from Richmond to New Orleans and Apalachicola to make delivery.<sup>19</sup>

These efforts failed to satisfy the citizens of Apalachicola, however, and they wrote to the Secretary of War on October 1, listing their grievances. They pointed out that they had bought guns, sent requests to Richmond for attention to their needs, helped construct fortifications on St. Vincent's, and had organized themselves into volunteer companies. When the department had sent men and guns to their aid, the colonel in command had removed the battery from the city to St. Vincent's Island. This left the city itself with only one artillery company and two companies of undrilled infantry. Even though the St. Vincent battery had four short and two long thirty-two-pounders, the approaches to Apalachicola by land and through East Pass were left unguarded. This left the residents of Apalachicola, after nine months of southern occupation, with a "deep sense of insecurity, and anxiety for the safety and protection of their families and property."<sup>20</sup>

While the Confederates at Apalachicola made immediate efforts for the defense of the port itself, plans were laid farther northward in the river system for offensive measures to meet the Union blockade. After delivering cannons, ammunition, and instructions to the Apalachicola batteries, Lieutenant McLaughlin moved up the river to confer with Chief Engineer James H. Warner, who had been sent to Columbus, Georgia, to lease private machine works and organize them for the use of the Confederate Navy.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 838-39.

<sup>20</sup>*Army O. R.*, I, VI, 286-87.

Warner and McLaughlin went to Saffold, Early County, Georgia, about 150 miles south of Columbus on the Chattahoochee, to negotiate a contract with David S. Johnston for the construction of a wooden gunboat. They signed an agreement on October 19, 1861, in which Johnston agreed to construct the vessel in 120 days for the sum of \$47,500. The gunboat was to be 130 feet long, thirty feet across the beam, and 10 feet deep. Two engines providing a fire surface of 800 feet were to power two propellers.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the first really significant efforts in the Confederate naval operations of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee river system were begun. However well-laid these plans were, progress in their actual execution was to be negligible during the remainder of 1861. Warner was transferred to Pensacola to design the machinery for the *Mississippi*, an assignment which lasted until the spring of 1862.<sup>22</sup> Work on the gunboat went many months past the 120 days specified in the contract.

Meanwhile, the Union blockading force continued to labor under the disadvantages of operations in the shallow coastal waters. The commander of the *Cuyler* was much disturbed by his inability to engage shallow draft vessels which passed near his position. In reporting one such instance on September 13 he asked that his superior consider "the size and draft of water of his ship, without a launch or boats sufficiently large to carry out an anchor, without even a kedge on board, or any of the ordinary means and applicances for getting the ship off, in the event of grounding. . . ."<sup>23</sup> Within a month the flag-officer of the Gulf Blockading Squadron took action to remedy the situation by sending the *Marion* to relieve the *Cuyler*. A month later the *Hatteras* was sent to relieve the *Montgomery*.

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<sup>21</sup>P. Klein, Reporter, *Report of Evidence Taken Before Joint Special Committee of Both Houses of Confederate Congress to Investigate Affairs of Navy Department* (Richmond, n.d.), 440-41. Although the vessel is not named in the contract it is most probably the gunboat *Chattahoochee*. Lt. A. F. Crossman wrote to Gideon Welles on December 17, 1862, "The Navy Yard, where the rebel gunboat was built and where three more gunboats are building is only 150 miles to the southward from Columbus." *Navy O. R.*, I, XVII, 347-48.

<sup>22</sup>Diffie William Standard, *Columbus, Georgia, in the Confederacy*, (New York, 1954), 43.

<sup>23</sup>*Navy O. R.*, I, XVI, 669.

This new combination of vessels for the Apalachicola blockade was more suited to the area of operations. The *Hatteras*, commanded by Commander George F. Emmons, was an eleven hundred-ton side-wheel steamer with a complement of 101 men and five guns. The *Marion*, commanded by Lieutenant George W. Doty, was a 566-ton sloop carrying eighty men and fourteen guns. Besides this increase of maneuverability off Apalachicola, there was a slight increase in strength, four men and four guns more than the combined strength of the *Montgomery* and the *Cuyler*.

While the *Marion* and the *Hatteras* reported no captures during their first weeks of duty, the blockade of Apalachicola nevertheless had become more effective. Of five schooners that cleared the port in late November, only one, the *W. P. Benson*, returned safely — and it was captured on its second run out. The *W. A. Rain* was taken with a cargo of cotton on the outward voyage. The *Onward*, *Franklin*, and *Phoenix* were able to clear the port with cotton and turpentine, but they were all captured on their return voyages.<sup>24</sup> A report of the harbor collector concerning this traffic was sufficient to set off a rapid exchange of telegrams among Governor Milton, Secretary Mallory, and Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin.

On November 25, 1861, Milton, signing himself "Governor and Commander in Chief," ordered Colonel R. F. Floyd at Apalachicola to allow no vessel with cotton to leave the port. He ordered any vessel attempting to do so sunk and any person attempting to ship cotton imprisoned. Floyd reported two days later that he had ordered three hundred bales of cotton back up the river and that he had forbidden shipment of turpentine as well. On the twenty-ninth Milton wired Mallory for an opinion regarding the shipment of turpentine. His brief answer was, "I know of no objections to the departure of the vessels." Mallory had evidently asked the opinion of Benjamin on the matter, for he telegraphed Milton the same day (November 30):

I learned that vessels at Apalachicola are detained from going to sea with cargo by some unknown military authority. It is not lawful nor is it the policy of the Govern-

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 855-56.

ment to prevent the departure of vessels with cargo, unless there is danger of their capture by a blockading vessel of the enemy.<sup>25</sup>

On December 5 he modified the concluding subordinate clause of his message, saying that there was no law or reason to prevent vessels from running the blockade with cotton "unless there is reason to believe the cotton is really intended for the enemy under the guise of neutral."<sup>26</sup>

For the remainder of December, 1861, Apalachicola remained quiet. Doty reported that he thought the garrison on St. Vincent's was withdrawn about December 20 and Emmons' reconnaissance a week later indicated that only a picket guard was left at the dismantled fort.<sup>27</sup> Emmons heard heavy guns firing in the town of Apalachicola, but when he surveyed the city from the seventy-seven-foot light house on St. George's, all appeared quiet and he "saw nothing afloat inviting attack."<sup>28</sup>

Writing many years after the war, S. P. Richardson who had served the Confederacy at Apalachicola officially as an Army major and unofficially as a chaplain wrote that there were about twelve hundred men at Apalachicola at the end of 1861. According to his account, they did not feel extreme pressure from the Union blockade. In fact the approach to military life which he described seems rather casual.

He had been urged by the men of his congregation to enter the Army as a chaplain whereupon he jestingly told them that he would go only if they elected him major so that he could "command them and preach too." To his astonishment "they met and elected me major, and I had to go; for here came my commission, and with it orders to Apalachicola."

Life in the garrison was not altogether unpleasant for the Confederates. Richardson describes the following incident:

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 856-57.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 857.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, I, XVII, 121.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

The general and all the field officers but myself drank. We had fine bands and they frequently serenaded us. . . . One day the Lieutenant Colonel came to me and said that I loved music and that the band had to be treated. I told him that I would not treat my father if he were to rise from the dead; but to show him that it was not money but principle with me, I said that if he would serenade me as a Christian I would treat them as Christian.

A band came with a singer to Richardson's quarters one evening and played "Before Jehovah's awful throne, ye nations bow with sacred joy" and he afterward treated them with oysters.<sup>29</sup> Richardson gave only passing mention to the garrison's military duties, concluding "we finally had to abandon the place."

Despite Confederate efforts to protect Apalachicola, the end of 1861 found them withdrawn from their fort on St. Vincent's back into the city where they had begun defense preparation the previous spring. Although the blockade of the city had been greatly hampered by the use of vessels unsuitable for the area, traffic to and from the port had been drastically reduced. The Confederate hold on Apalachicola in 1862 was to be short-lived; and, as the Union blockade tightened, their offensive and defensive plans were to be centered to the north along the river. Perhaps the contest between the two forces in 1861 can be best condensed into these terms: The story of that year is not told in terms of what injury each force did to the other but rather in terms of each one's inability to strike a decisive blow because of factors which hampered its effective operation.

<sup>29</sup>S. P. Richardson, *Light and Shadows of an Itinerant Life* (Nashville, 1901), 173.