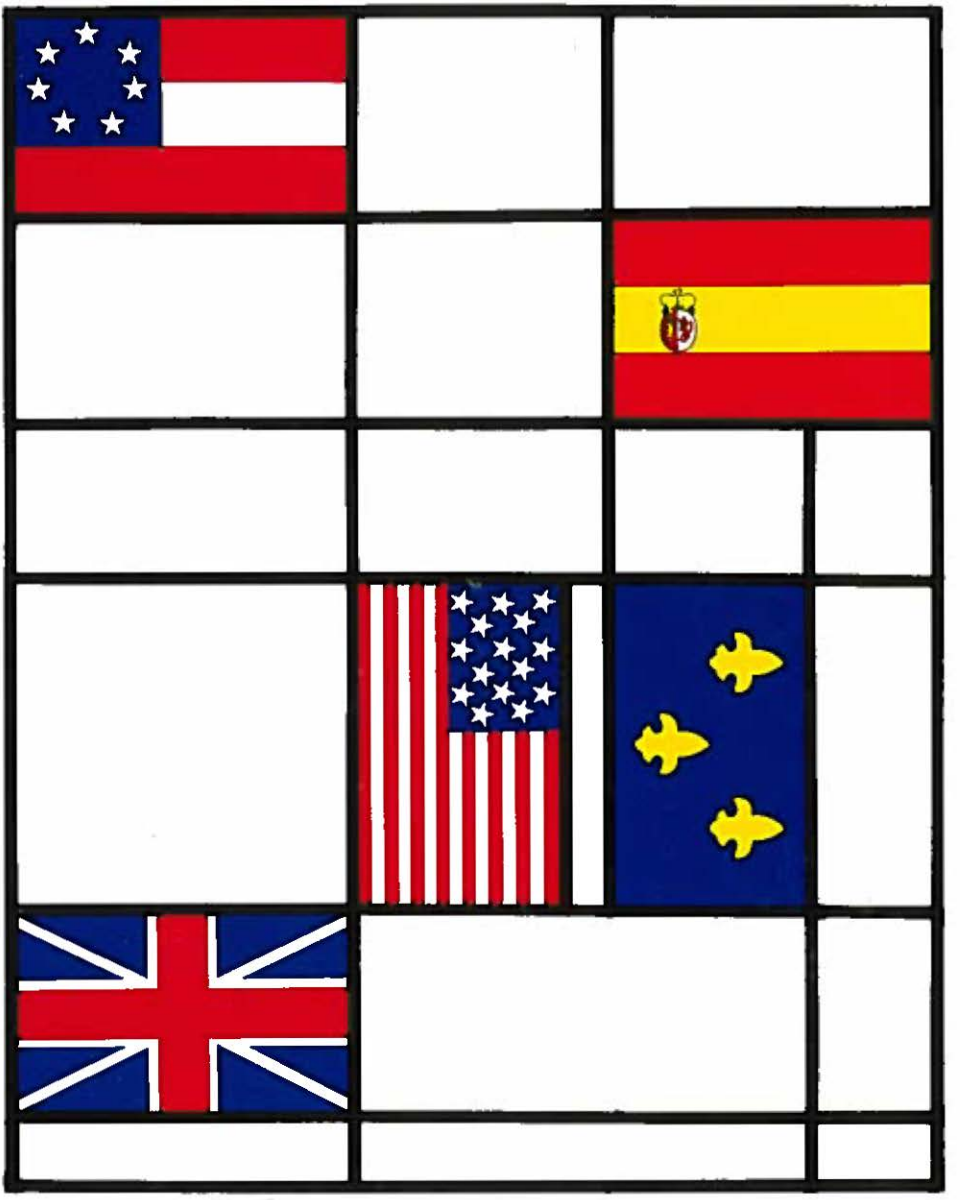
GCHR Gulf Coast Historical Review

Vol. 6 No. 2



GC HR Gulf Coast Historical Review

Vol. 6 Spring 1991 No. 2

Cover design by
Marilyn Thomason

From the Editors. . . .

It is probably a sign of incipient paranoia, but why does disaster seem close at hand when we reach the final stages of preparing an issue of the *GCHR*? Last fall you may recall we worried about hurricanes, and now we are at war in the Middle East. Fortunately, neither has much to do with this journal directly, though both weigh heavily on one's mind. Coincidentally perhaps, this issue brings three articles on military affairs and one on a decidedly non-military affair, Oscar Wilde's visit to Mobile.

Of the three military articles, the first deals with the story of the ill-fated *Tecumseh*, sunk in the Battle of Mobile Bay. It recounts that ship's brief history from construction to destruction, and its long career as a sunken symbol of the last great naval battle of our Civil War. The second article, also on a naval topic, deals with the peacetime efforts of the U.S. Navy to control and develop America's international radio service in the early twentieth century. It highlights the bureaucratic problems the navy faced along the Gulf Coast in its little known and ultimately unsuccessful effort. The third examines all the available evidence to try to reconstruct the battle of Mauvila which pitted Soto's technologically superior force against Taskalusa's warriors. Soto's victory and Taskalusa's loss ultimately cost both Indians and Consquistadores dearly.

Oscar Wilde in Mobile may seem a strange companion for such articles, but the English aesthete came to the Gulf Coast not only to deliver the lectures that paid for his trip, but also to meet Jefferson Davis, his hero and the embodiment of the "Lost Cause," at Beauvoir. Wilde's visit to Mobile was a rousing success, unlike his interview with Davis who remained unimpressed by the flamboyant Englishman. Even the aesthete was influenced by wars, their heroes, and the passions they stir.

After many requests, and thanks to the industry of Ms. Kathy Corner, a Master's degree candidate in history at the University of South Alabama, we have an index included with this issue to the authors and titles of the works which have appeared in our first six volumes, or twelve issues, including this one.

As usual we have a large book review section with such a variety that everyone should find a title or two of interest. Last, but by no means least, "From the Archives" visits the archives department of the Museum of the City of Mobile.

We have learned of the tragic death of Sir Jack D. L. Holmes in Birmingham recently. His scholarly output of works relating to our region's colonial history assures that his memory will endure. We join with his many friends and colleagues in extending sympathy to his family.

This fall the fourteenth Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference will be held in Pensacola at the Hilton Hotel on October 3-5, 1991. These conferences have been part of the scholarly life along the coast since their inception in 1970, and this one on "Discovery and Exploration on the Gulf Coast" will be no

exception. For more information please contact Dr. William S. Coker, Chairman, History Department, University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL 23514. We look forward to seeing many of our readers there and to publishing the papers given at the conference in a future issue.

We hope you enjoy this issue and that when our next appears in the fall, we will be living in a world at peace.

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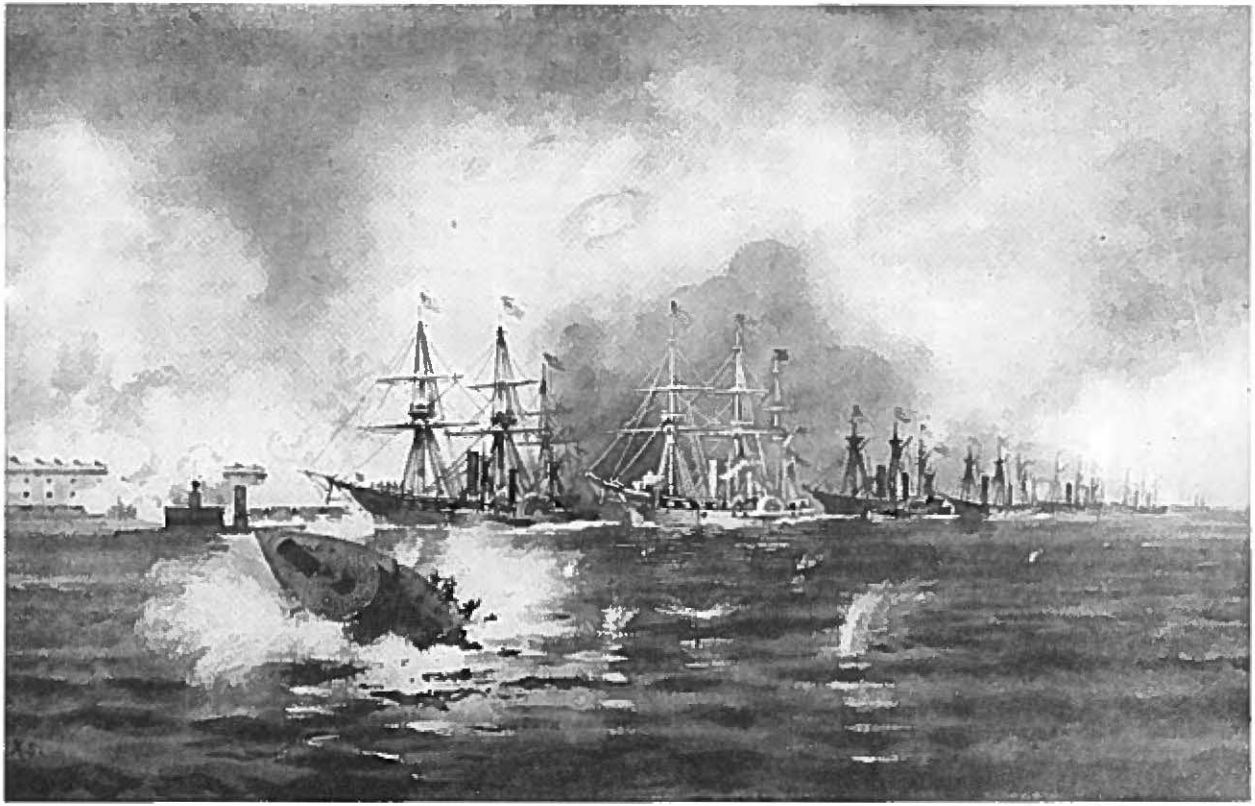
Table of Contents

Vol. 6 Spring 1991 No. 2



Battle of Mobile Bay by Xanthus Smith

Smithsonian Institution,
Jack Friend Collection

The *Tecumseh:* Sunken Treasure in Alabama Waters

H. Joseph Curtis

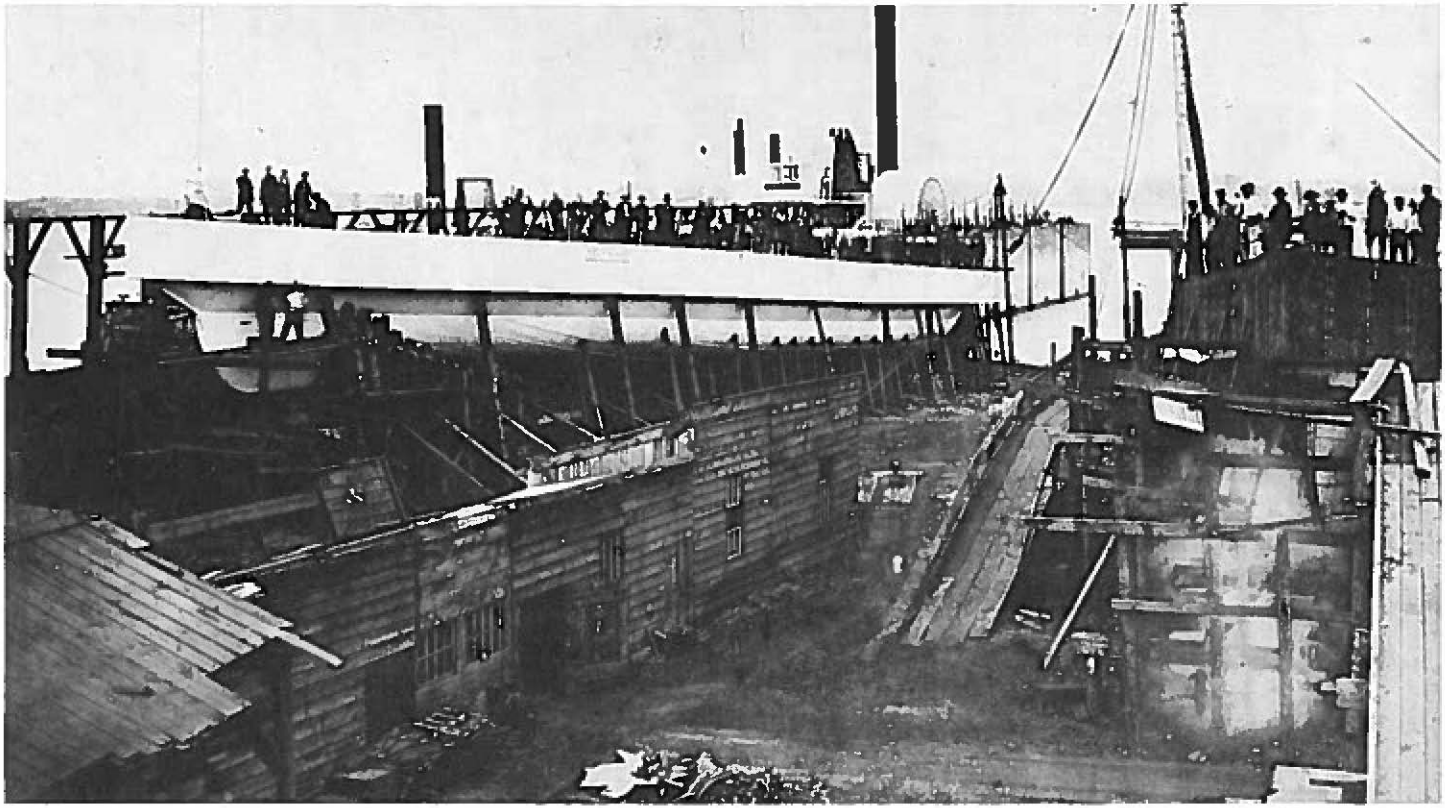
While the Battle of Mobile Bay produced clear, definite results for both the Confederacy and the Union, the fate of one of the fallen vessels remains a matter of ambiguity and controversy. The Federal ironclad *Tecumseh* hit a Confederate torpedo and sank at 7:30 A.M. on August 5, 1864, forty-three minutes after firing the battle's first shot. Witnesses from both sides watched in disbelief as, bow first, and with her revolving propeller exposed, the monitor disappeared beneath the waves within approximately three minutes. The Union fleet, despite a huge numerical advantage, temporarily froze amidst the bombardment from nearby Fort Morgan. With the sounding of Admiral Farragut's now famous command, though, the remainder of the fleet pressed forward, miraculously dodging the remaining torpedoes, outlasting the formidable ram *Tennessee*, and capturing the meager wooden ships of the Confederate fleet with relative ease. [1]

Though Fort Morgan survived under siege for eighteen more days, the outcome was inevitable following this single day of naval combat. As Union faithful rejoiced in their victory, however, the tragedy of the *Tecumseh* could not be overlooked. Less than twenty percent of her crew escaped. Though no other Union ships were destroyed that day, the Confederate torpedoes took quite a toll in the areas between forts Morgan and Gaines, around Fort Powell, and northward toward the city of Mobile. During the next year, ten other vessels, "men-of-war and transports, were sunk by torpedoes in Mobile Bay: some of them even after the Confederates had evacuated the city." [2]

The Battle of Mobile Bay was significant for a number of reasons including the Union's desire to more effectively blockade the port at Mobile. Also we see in retrospect that with this battle the era of wooden fighting ships came to an end. Clearly ships of wood were helpless against ships of metal in an even fight. This was proven in the lengthy struggle on August 5 to defeat the *Tennessee*. Admiral Franklin Buchanan's ship was slower and more difficult to maneuver than those of his enemy, but only the presence of three Union monitors prevented Farragut's wooden ships from suffering severe damage. [3]

The annals of Civil War history have not granted the Battle of Mobile Bay the respect many Alabamians believe it deserves. Bruce Catton's 297 page book, *The Civil War*, gives the entire battle less than a paragraph. Robert Selph Henry, in *The Story of the Confederacy*, refers to the battle as ". . . a victory of no immediate consequence, except that it more effectively closed the last but one of the major ports of the Confederacy, but a fight whose bold and picturesque features heartened the North." [4] One of the boldest features, certainly, was the mystique of the story of the *Tecumseh*.

The contract for the *Tecumseh* was signed on September 15, 1862, with the Z. & C. Secor Company of New York City. She was to be an iron hull, single turret type monitor. [5] She would be built on the plans of the Canonicus Class monitors, the sea-going monitors of that period. [6] She was built to the



USS Tecumseh *under construction*
Jersey City, New Jersey, 1864

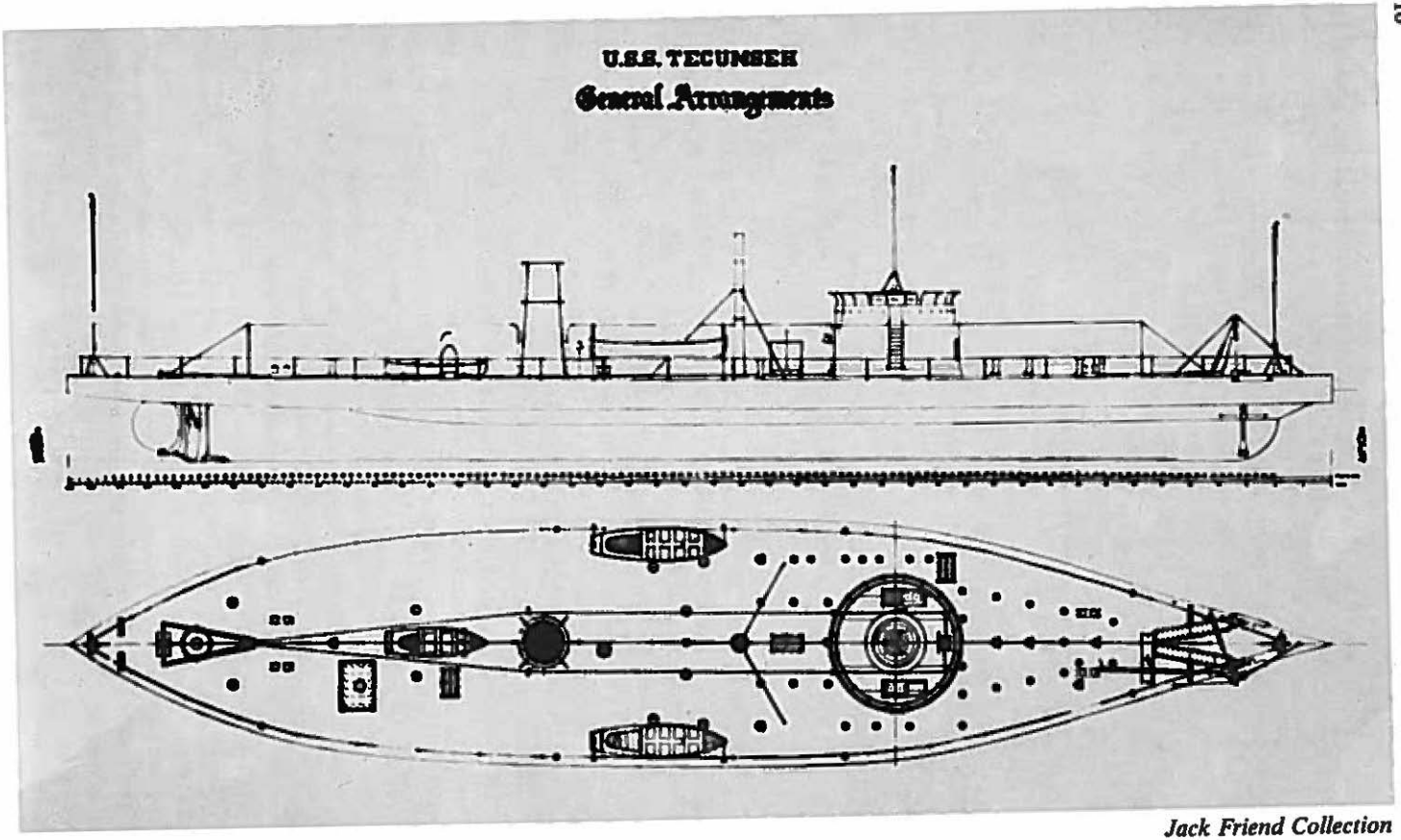
Museum of the City of Mobile

length of 225 feet, an extreme breadth of 43 feet, 8 inches, and a draught, mean load, of 13 feet, 6 inches. The *Tecumseh*'s armor was formidable: one and a half inches on the deck (two layers, three-fourths of an inch each), five inches on the sides (five layers, one inch thick each), and ten inches on the turret and pilot house (ten layers, each one inch thick). Her displacement was 2,100 tons and her tonnage, 1,034 old tons. She was equipped with Ericsson vibrating level type, 640 horsepower engines and a single, four-blade propeller. Finally the ironclad was armored with two fifteen-inch, smoothbore, muzzle-loading Dahlgreen guns built of cast iron. The total cost for the ship was $636,941.76. [7]

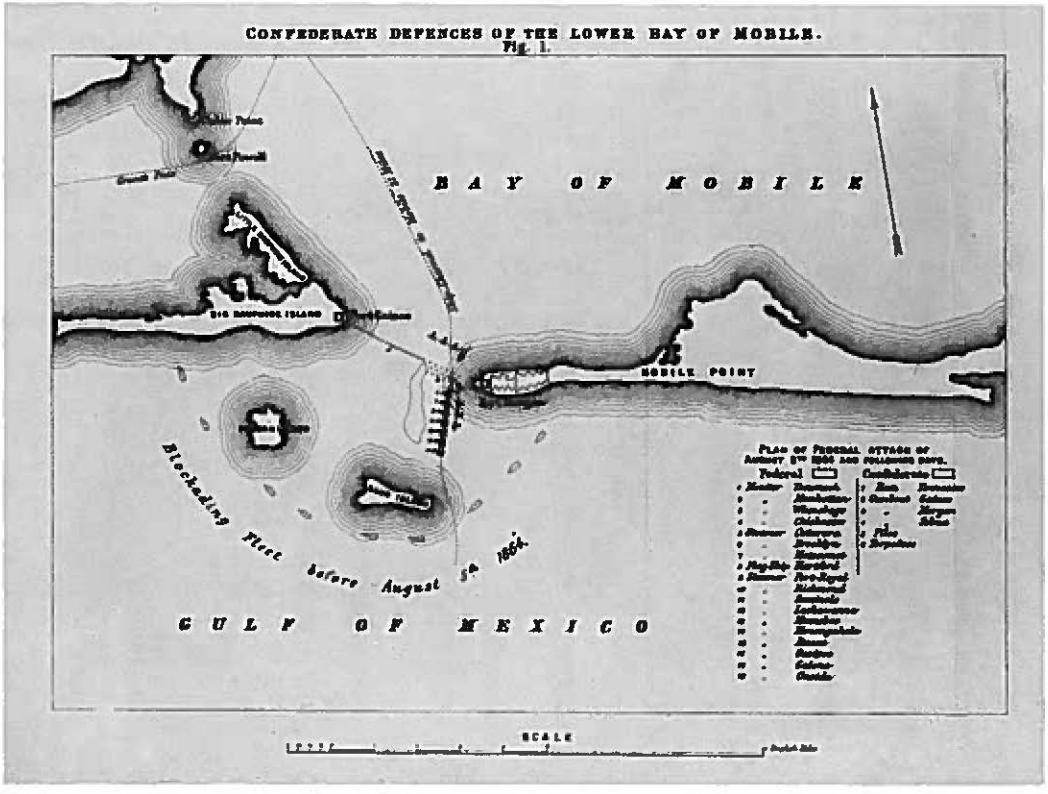
On September 12, 1863, almost exactly a year from the date she was ordered, the *Tecumseh* was launched from Jersey City, New Jersey. Her commissioning took place at the New York Navy yard, April 19, 1864, with Tunis A. M. Craven, United States Navy, as her commander. Her first assignment was in Virginia as part of the James River Flotilla. Craven reported her fire there on June 21 had been "delivered with great precision, most of our shells exploding within the works of the enemy . . . ." [8] Needed for duty along the northern Gulf of Mexico, and with a speed of only seven knots, the *Tecumseh* had to be towed to Union-held Pensacola arriving there sometime during July. [9]

The commander of Union naval forces in the western Gulf of Mexico was Rear-Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, already noteworthy in the war for having captured New Orleans in April 1862. [10] In February 1864 Farragut and part of his fleet moved into the Mississippi Sound directly south of Alabama, within three miles of Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines, in order to survey the armament, troops, and ships protecting those Confederate forts on either side of the mouth of Mobile Bay. It had been his desire for some time to take the forts and capture Mobile, one of the last major Confederate ports open to desperately needed European trade. He was concerned about the *Tennessee*, readied for battle and waiting just south of Mobile at Dog River bar. [11]

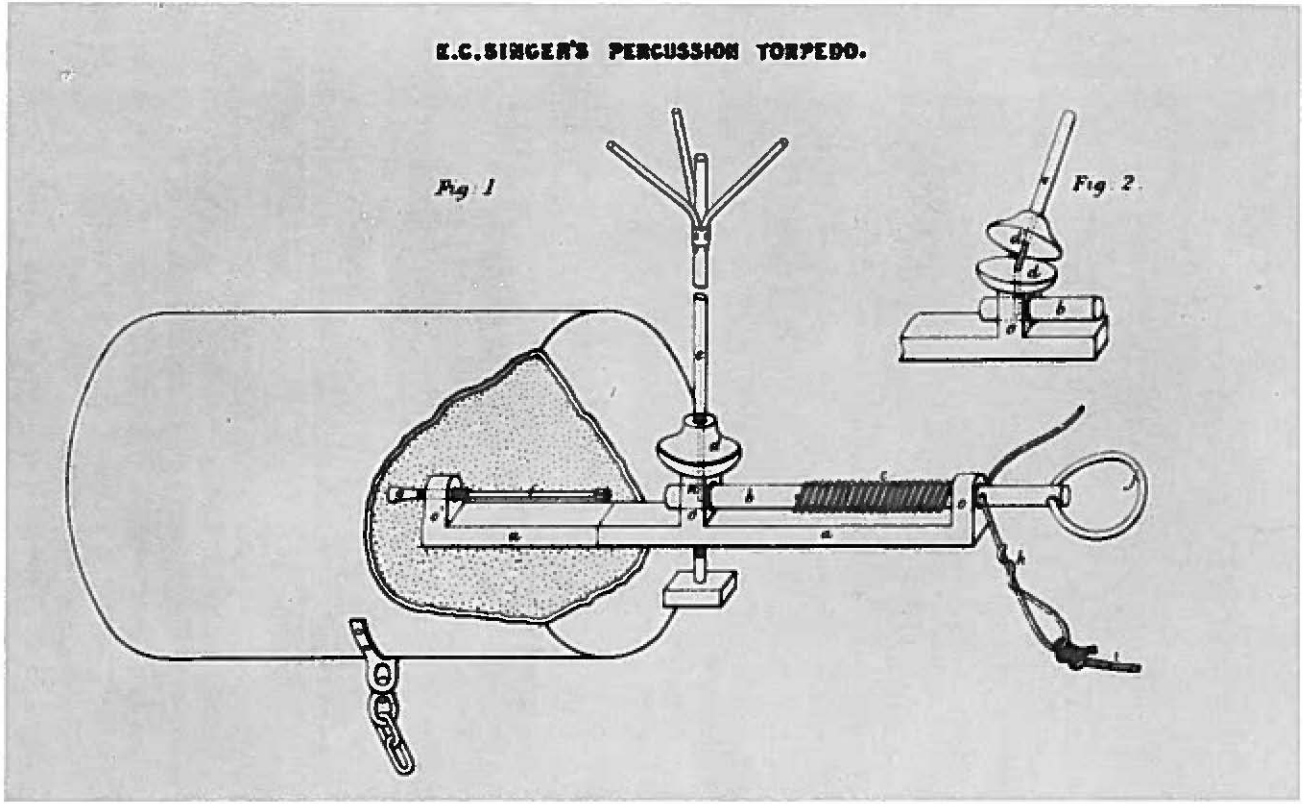
Through spring and on into summer, Farragut and his slowly growing fleet remained off the Alabama coast, chasing blockade runners and surveying the strength of Admiral Buchanan's naval force. In June Farragut wrote home that he was irritated and bored with the assignment, indicating, "[I] wish from the bottom of my heart that Buck would come out and try his hand on us." [12] He also had seen the Confederates placing three rows of torpedoes, mines which floated up from anchorage on the bottom of the bay, across all but a narrow (226-yard) opening in the channel. He sent divers in to find them on the night of August 3, but they were unable to locate them in the darkness. [13] Finally, on August 4, the fourth and last ironclad for which Farragut had been waiting, the *Tecumseh*, arrived from Pensacola. The very next morning, tide and weather conditions were perfect for his attack: "a flood-tide to help his ships past the Confederate guns and a westerly wind to blow the smoke of battle away from the fleet and in the direction of Fort Morgan." [14] For Farragut, a native Tennessean, and Buchanan, born and raised in Maryland, the day of reckoning had arrived.



Jack Friend Collection



V.E.K.R. Von Scheliha,
A Treatise on Coast Defense
(1868; Reprint, 1971), Sidney Schell Collection



Type of torpedo which sank the Tecumseh

Von Scheliha,
A Treatise on Coast Defense

Tunis A.M. Craven, Commander of the USS Tecumseh — *T.W. Johnson/U.S. Naval Institute*

At 5:30 A.M., Farragut's ships were readied for battle. The *Tecumseh* would be in the lead, followed by the other three monitors. Behind them would come his fourteen wooden ships, lashed together in pairs, so that if the easternmost ship were damaged, the smaller ship on the left would be able to pull it on into the bay. Farragut himself was lashed into the riggings of his flagship, the *Hartford.* With the *Tecumseh*'s first shot at 6:47 the battle was underway. As the Union ships moved slowly forward Admiral Buchanan held the *Tennessee*'s

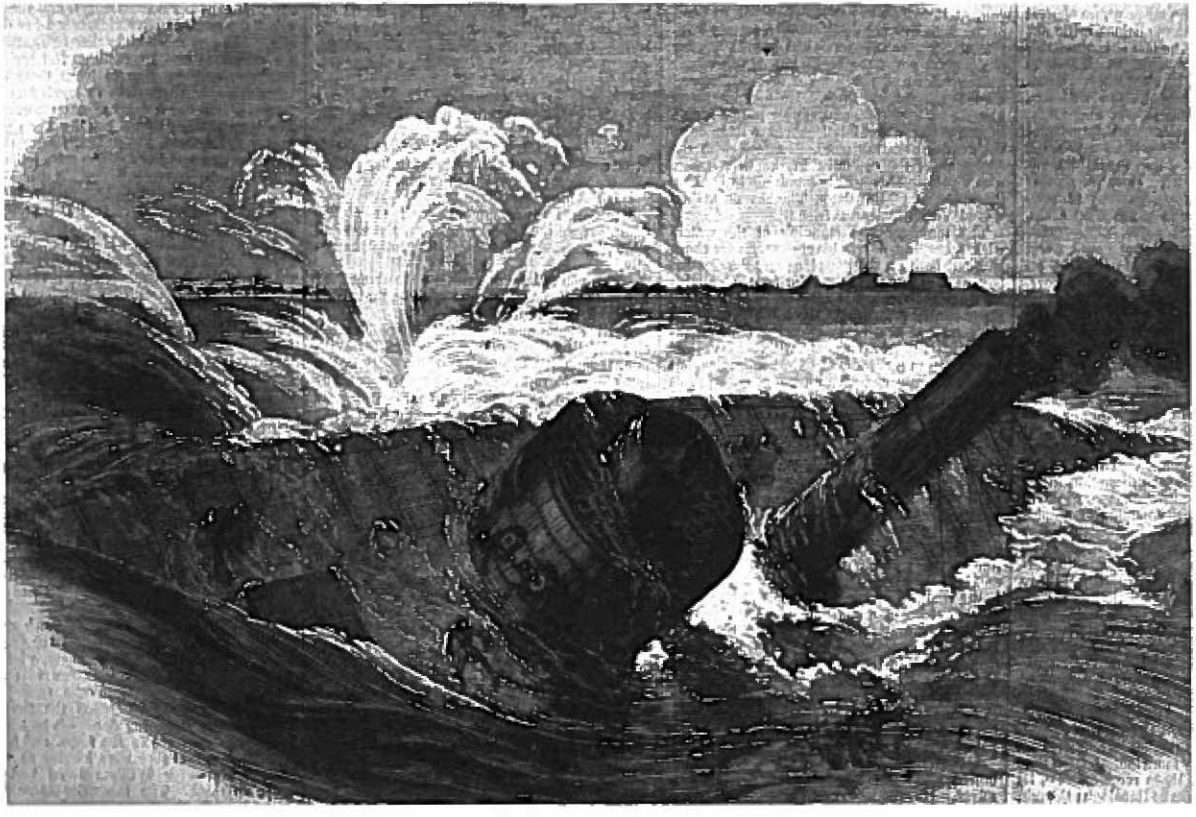
fire, waiting for the approaching *Tecumseh*. Commander Craven had been ordered by Farragut to stay eastward of the buoy which he believed to be at the end of the torpedo line. As she moved forward, Craven suddenly ordered his ship to make a sharp turn to port (left), taking her directly toward the *Tennessee*, waiting just westward of the black buoy which marked the end of the torpedo field—a course which would take the *Tecumseh* directly across the area of torpedoes. [15] During this maneuver while beside the fort and about one hundred fifty yards offshore, Craven's ship hit the torpedo that would sink her almost immediately. Gardner Cottrell, one of the two officers who survived (Craven went below after the explosion and died there), and another survivor, C. F. Langley, stated in a report, "a torpedo was exploded directly under the turret blowing a large hole through the bottom of the vessel with great rapidity." [16] J. Thomas Scharf writes, "When the ships [*Tecumseh* and *Tennessee*] were less than a hundred yards apart, a muffled explosion was heard, a column of water like a fountain springing from the sea shot up beside the Federal monitor; she lurched violently, her head settled . . . and then the waves closed over her, leaving of her officers and crew less than a dozen men swimming about for their lives, while two officers and five men had climbed into a boat that had been washed from her deck." [17] The fighting stopped momentarily, as the Union *Metacomet* sent out a boat to rescue survivors. Once their efforts were complete, and Farragut felt the heat of Confederate fire and sensed fear, confusion, and indecision among his men, he "damned the torpedoes," his fleet pressed on, and soon the issue was settled.

Figures on the size of the *Tecumseh*'s crew and how many were lost vary widely. Scharf, in his *History of the Confederate States Navy*, lists the crew at 141 with 120 killed. [18] The Smithsonian Institution's records show 195 men on board with ninety-three casualties. [19] Mr. J. H. Friend of Montrose, Alabama, a management consultant and avid historian and conservationist, feels 114 were on the *Tecumseh*, with approximately 93 killed. Mr. Friend has spent the past ten years working on a book on the Battle of Mobile Bay, which promises to be the most extensive and heavily researched document on the battle ever printed.

Perhaps the most romantic footnote on the *Tecumseh* is the following account:

> A week afterwards (of her sinking), when the divers went down to examine the wreck they found nearly all the crew at their posts, as they sank. The chief engineer, who had been married in New York only two weeks before, and who had received from the flag-ship's mail his letters while the line was forming, stood with one hand upon the revolving bar of the turret engine, and in the other an open letter from his bride, which his dead eyes still seemed to be reading. [20]

For more than a century, no more was heard of the *Tecumseh*'s present state, and her exact resting place was unknown. On February 1, 1967, however, members of the Smithsonian Institution, using a magnetometer-like instrument,



Robert Weir's sketch of the Tecumseh *sinking*

Harper's Weekly,
September 10, 1864

did determine her exact location. [21] The headline of the March 10, 1967 edition of the Mobile *Register* announced, "Smithsonian Seeking to Salvage Tecumseh." It was reported that the ship was in thirty-eight feet of water and almost completely covered with mud and silt. The article told of the Smithsonian's application through the Mobile Army Corps of Engineers to raise the ship, and announced that, "any protests against the dredging and salvage work must be filed in the district office by March 18." Already, though, there was controversy. The same article reported that Mr. J. O. Wintzell, Jr. of Mobile had filed suit in Mobile Circuit Court, "asking that the Smithsonian be barred from raising and taking possession of the ironclad." Wintzell claimed to have discovered the *Tecumseh*'s location and to have registered it with the state of Alabama in February 1965. Wintzell "contended the state gave him salvage rights." [22]

For two years the Smithsonian did a vast amount of work in and around the ship. "Identifiable human remains" were found inside the upside-down vessel. Among items the team removed were, "a large brass engine room gong, which is still in working condition; several pieces of English ironstone dinnerware recovered from the ship's wardroom; a bronze floor ventilator, and part of a pewter cruet holder," [23] as well as the ship's anchor. A piece of the ship's hull and a piece of the ironstone dinnerware are on display in the Museum of the City of Mobile. Several links of anchor chain are encased at the Fort Morgan Visitor's Center. The Smithsonian developed an extensive four-phase plan for the complete salvage of the *Tecumseh*, the final step of which would have been moving her to the Potomac River for permanent display in the National Armed Forces Historical Museum Park. [24] According to Mr. Sidney Schell, a Mobile attorney who has done extensive diving and research on the *Tecumseh* and who is currently involved in efforts to explore and possibly raise the Confederate ironclads *Huntsville* and *Tuscaloosa*, the Smithsonian planned to raise the *Tecumseh* and place it in Washington in time for the nation's Bicentennial celebration in 1976. When red tape and expense became overwhelming and it was apparent this could not be done by that time, the Smithsonian's interest waned and it stated that private financial support would have to be found to fund the project. [25]

In January 1971 an archaeological recovery firm from Pompano Beach, Florida, Expeditions Unlimited, Inc., filed suit against the Smithsonian claiming breach of contract. The company had a written agreement with the Smithsonian guaranteeing them exclusive media rights. Suit was filed when it was learned that a portion of these rights had been granted to others, and in December 1972, the company was awarded a judgment of $212,305. [26] After this unpleasant series of events, the Smithsonian gave up title to the *Tecumseh* to the General Services Administration, which later relinquished ownership to the Alabama Conservation Department.

An article in the June 16, 1983, Mobile *Press* told of the frustration of some who wished to see the ship raised. Mobile attorney and former state senator Robert Edington had sought financial assistance for the project from the Mobil and Exxon oil companies, each of which were drilling for natural gas in the bay, but his appeal was to no avail. [27] Lack of funds has been a consistent

theme in discussions regarding the ship's future. In his 1969 consultant's report, Friend estimated the cost of raising the *Tecumseh* at $10 million. That now outdated figure did not include the considerable additional expense of preserving the ship. [28]

How to preserve the ironclad if it ever is raised is another difficult question. Mr. Lawrence Oaks, director of the Alabama Historical Commission, was quoted in 1983 as saying discussions about the *Tecumseh* had gone on for "years and years as to the ways to best preserve it." [29] To be raised she would have to be taken apart, her iron and wood preserved separately, and then reassembled in a permanent location. The expense of each phase would be tremendous, and the process slow and tedious. [30]

For all that has been written and said regarding the *Tecumseh*'s future during the past twenty-four years, very little has changed. The most curious change has come not at the hands of divers or investors, but of nature. Sidney Schell reports that the *Tecumseh* now rests in only twenty-five feet of water, thirteen feet less than her depth in 1967. He has found an approximately twenty by eighty foot section of the ship to be exposed; far less was above the mud before the Smithsonian's expedition. Visibility, he says, is fairly good, and the ship is in quite good condition—but the current in the channel is powerful, making diving safe only during neap tides. [31] As long as the ship rests on the bottom of the bay, she is fairly well protected from harmful elements and treasure hunters. In his 1983 interview Edington noted, "It's illegal to dive [at the *Tecumseh* site] without a state permit, and the state doesn't grant any." [32] Still, she is subject to vandalism. "Our archaeological heritage," says Jack Friend, "is disappearing daily." He emphasizes our state's need for stronger antiquities laws, for the preservation of both land and water sites and artifacts throughout Alabama. [33]

Will the *Tecumseh* ever be raised? Possibly, but not in the foreseeable future. Do most residents of the area want her raised? While many do, sentiment certainly exists for leaving her where she is. Many Alabamians take pride in her presence in Mobile Bay where she is an unseen Union monument located between the proud Confederate forts. Numerous obstacles must be dealt with if the *Tecumseh* is to be recovered. For many, optimism persists—but the realities of expense, nature, and public opinion will be difficult to conquer.

Notes

[1] Doris Rich, *Fort Morgan and the Battle of Mobile Bay* (Bay Minette, AL, 1972), 37-41.

[2] J. Thomas Scharf, *History of the Confederate States Navy* (New York, 1977), 764.

[3] Ibid., 563.

[4] Robert Selph Henry, *The Story of the Confederacy*, rev. ed. (Gloucester, 1970), 404.

[5] *Tecumseh* Display, Fort Morgan Visitor's Center.

[6] Robert MacBride, *Civil War Ironclads* (Philadelphia and New York, 1962), 33.

[7] *Tecumseh* Display, Fort Morgan Visitor's Center.

[8] Rich, 33.

[9] J. H. (Jack) Friend, Personal Interview, April 14, 1989.

[10] Scharf, 301.

[11] Rich, 25.

[12] Ibid., 29.

[13] Friend, April 14, 1989.

[14] Scharf, 559.

[15] Ibid., 559-61.

[16] Rich, 39.

[17] Scharf, 561.

[18] Ibid., 561.

[19] "Smithsonian Seeking to Salvage Tecumseh," Mobile *Register*, March 10, 1967.

[20] Scharf, 561-62.

[21] *Tecumseh* Display, Fort Morgan Visitor's Center.

[22] Mobile *Register*, March 10, 1967.

[23] Ted Pearson, "Old Tecumseh Rests so Close to Shore, but so Far Away," Mobile *Register*, March 16, 1969.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Sidney Schell, Personal Interview, March 31, 1989.

[26] "$212,305 Awarded to Recovery Firm in Tecumseh Suit," Mobile *Press Register*, December 30, 1972.

[27] Garry Mitchell, "Tecumseh May Stay in Mobile Bay Grave," Mobile *Press*, June 16, 1983.

[28] Friend, April 14, 1989.

[29] Mobile *Press Register*, December 30, 1972.

[30] Friend, April 14, 1989.

[31] Schell, March 31, 1989.

[32] Mitchell, "Tecumseh May Stay," Mobile *Press*, June 16, 1983.

[33] Friend, April 14, 1989.

The Reverend Mr. Curtis is pastor of The Loxley United Methodist Church in Loxley, Alabama.

The Battle of Mauvila, Causes and Consequences

Jay Higginbotham

The battle of Mauvila was in some respects the most decisive encounter in North American history. [1] Despite its importance, however, the struggle between the forces of the native chief Taskalusa and the Spanish conqueror Hernando de Soto is not well known outside the Deep South and is rarely mentioned in American history textbooks. Often described in prose and poetry, the battle suffers from a lack of serious inquiry. [2] Crucial questions have yet to be argued, or even posed.

Among the unanswered questions is the *casus belli*, generally held to have been an ambush plotted by Taskalusa. As popularly recounted, Soto's expeditioners marched across the southern woodlands, encountering no formidable opposition until they met Taskalusa at the village of Atahatchi (head-town of Taskalusa's paramount chiefdom). Here, Taskalusa sized up Soto quickly and determined to annihilate his party. Having dispatched secret messengers to vassals throughout his chiefdom to gather in ambush at Mauvila, Taskalusa lured the Spaniards to the small, stockaded town four to five days march away. Once inside the walls of Mauvila, Taskalusa suddenly attacked, but the Spaniards rallied in time to thwart the plot and rout the enemy. [3] Despite wide acceptance of this explanation, questions remain: Did Taskalusa (with or without the collaboration of his council) really concoct such a plot or was this idea merely what the conquerors preferred to believe?

Essentially, the battle of Mauvila was the culmination of policies and actions begun years before the outbreak of violence. The result was a clash between alien peoples, neither of whom had truly discovered the other. At the root of the conflict was the right of conquest assumed by the Christian hierarchy. La Florida, like Mexico and Peru, was open to claim. No matter that it was already occupied, the land was still *res nullius* because it was inhabited by pagans. Out of this mentality, the Pope had ceded the New World to the Catholic monarchs, entrusting to them the conversion of the natives who henceforth must accept the new sovereigns. Refusal to do so, following the juntas of Burgos and Valladolid, was just cause for war. [4]

By the year 1537, however, when Soto received his *asiento* from the crown, the authority of conquerors had become less absolute than during the conquest of Cuba or Mexico. By then, Dominican reformist Bartolomé de Las Casas, among others, had pricked the hierarchy's conscience at least to the point of trying to set some limits to the conquerors' conduct. The noted *Requerimiento* of 1513, by whose terms the Indians could avoid massacre by recognizing the king as overlord, had been less successful in reducing cruelty than had the efforts of Las Casas, but even this artifice had served to propel reform. [5]

No mention is made of the Requerimiento in Soto's asiento (by then the practice of reading a legal document to uncomprehending natives had become obviously a mockery). However, more tangible items were the instructions that

Engraving of Hernando de Soto *Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1559-1625),* Historia general de las Indias Occidentales

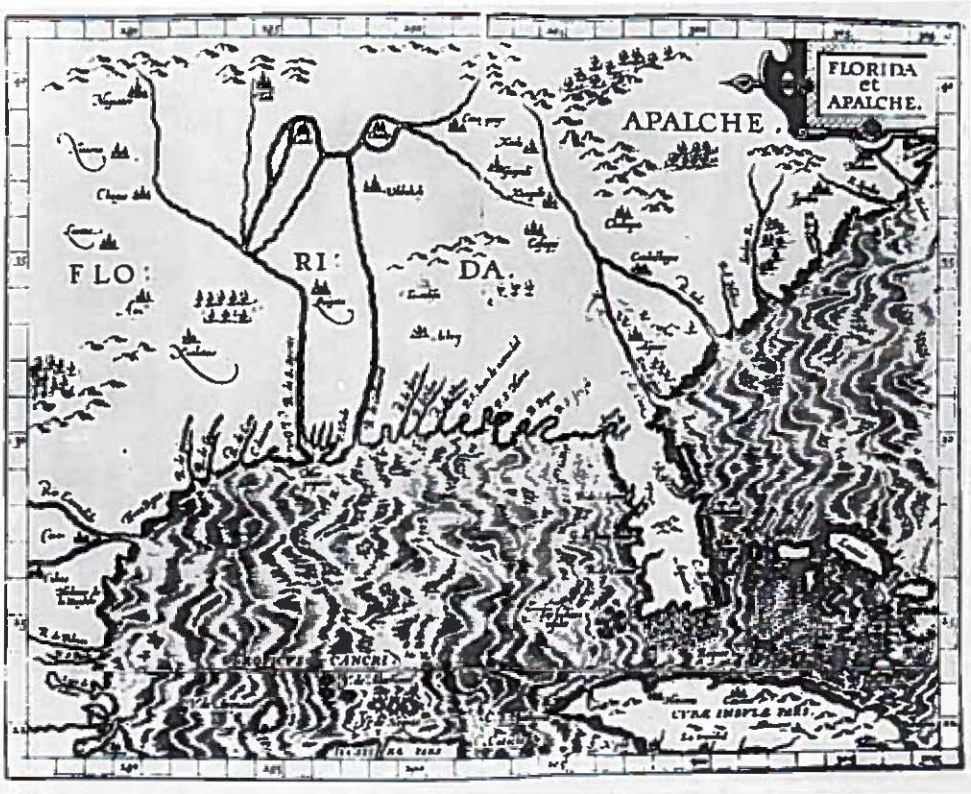
Soto, as *adelantado*, governor, and captain-general, was to conquer, subjugate, and colonize two hundred leagues of coast, to build three stone forts, and to receive fifteen hundred *ducats* annually from profits and duties. Soto could keep half of all treasure seized from sepulchers and temples, but if no treasure were found, the crown would not be obliged to pay Soto anything. [6]

Aside from reserving the crown's customary shares, the terms of the asiento gave Soto every incentive for finding treasure. To lessen bloodshed, it was stipulated that "any ransom taken for a chief belongs to the crown if the conquerors made war." However, "if you [Soto] capture the chief, you receive one-seventh and the rest shall be divided among your men, provided that the crown shall first take its *quinto* [fifth]." Perhaps the final provision gave Soto more pause: "But if the chief is killed in battle, or afterwards executed, the crown shall take half the treasure, after first reserving our fifth." [7]

This last proviso bade Soto pursue a less violent course than he had followed in Nicaragua or Peru (he was officially not at liberty to pillage as he pleased). To help ensure that the asiento's provisions were followed, the crown had included in the expedition Juan de Añasco, royal accountant, and Juan Gaytán, royal treasurer. Moreover, a less sanguinary mission would be clearly in Soto's interest. His primary directives were to "pacify" the Indians, settle the land, build forts and towns, create *encomiendas*, and find treasure. All these objectives would better be realized if the natives remained tranquil and cooperative since only they could lead him to gold; thus, it made sense to avoid strife whenever possible. But to accomplish his purposes without using force was a delicate task: the Indians were often wary, sometimes hostile, even before the Spanish came near enough to seduce them. [8]

Nonetheless, Soto had a well-developed strategy for avoiding hostilities. Customarily, he dispatched emissaries before reaching a town or village. To make these envoys appear less threatening, he sent only one or two, accompanied by several friendly Indians. From Talisi, for example, Soto sent Juan de Villalobos and one companion, along with some native guides, to the village of Atahatchi. One purpose of this journey was to check the paths and give Soto advance information on times and distances, but the principal reason was to make contact with the chief and by gift-giving and friendly overtures to dissuade him from fleeing. Once the confidence of the Indians was gained (at least enough to keep them from running away) the stage was set for the next step, which was to take the chief as hostage. Ideally, the chief (the Coosa chief being one example) was an unsuspecting prisoner. The Spaniards would treat him firmly but so politely that he would not try to escape because he believed that he might do so at any time. In effect, the chief, mystified and paralyzed, was a surety without realizing it. With the chief in tow receiving unusual consideration (gifts, caresses, honors), Soto was in position to extract the "favors" that he most wanted and needed. [9]

Soto's strategy worked well in most cases and would have succeeded even further had it not been for two demands the natives could not readily meet. Willing to provide guides, food, and the rights of free entry and passage, the natives balked at the exorbitant demands for slaves and women. These demands



Late sixteenth century map

Corneille Wytfliet,
Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Augmentum *(1597)*

had caused some difficulties earlier on the expedition, but at Coosa they provoked unusual tension. Although Soto's overtures worked well with the Coosa chief at first (this chief apparently volunteered to lead Soto out of his own chiefdom to Talisi), ominous signs soon appeared: Soto's demands for women and carriers stretched Coosa's capacity to the limit. When numerous Indians fled, Soto's cavalry tracked them down and cast them in collars and chains. Soto acquired his servants (one of whom was the Coosa chief's sister), but the use of force aroused the chief's misgivings. Hence, secret messengers were sent to warn other towns that large numbers of their women and men were in danger of being confiscated as concubines and carriers. [10] Not surprisingly, the Indians at Talimachusi abandoned their village, and at Ulibahali a group of armed warriors confronted Soto, threatening to rescue the Coosa chief. The Coosa chief waved the warriors away, narrowly averting violence, but passing through other villages—among them Itawa and Tuasi—Soto continued to commandeer more women and carriers. As Soto's demands increased, word of his coming spread rapidly. By the time Soto reached Talisi, the Talisi chief had fled his village. This chief was eventually coaxed back into town and given presents, but no sooner had he arrived than Soto demanded more women and carriers. [11]

Soto remained at Talisi for seventeen days, consuming that village's food supplies. By this time news of the adelantado's party had reached Taskalusa's chiefdom where the crucial question—"Are these strangers friend or foe?"—must have been urgently discussed. [12]

Spanish torture Indian hostages *Theodore de Bry (1528-98)*

For use in forming a response, Taskalusa and his council had but two pieces of intelligence: first, reports from distant villages of the strangers' unusual behavior, which was a blend of warmth and cruelty; and secondly, the experience of area chiefs and subchiefs a decade earlier with two members of Narváez's expedition. According to Ranjel, Soto's scribe, natives had killed these expeditioners, evidencing a noxious relationship. [13]

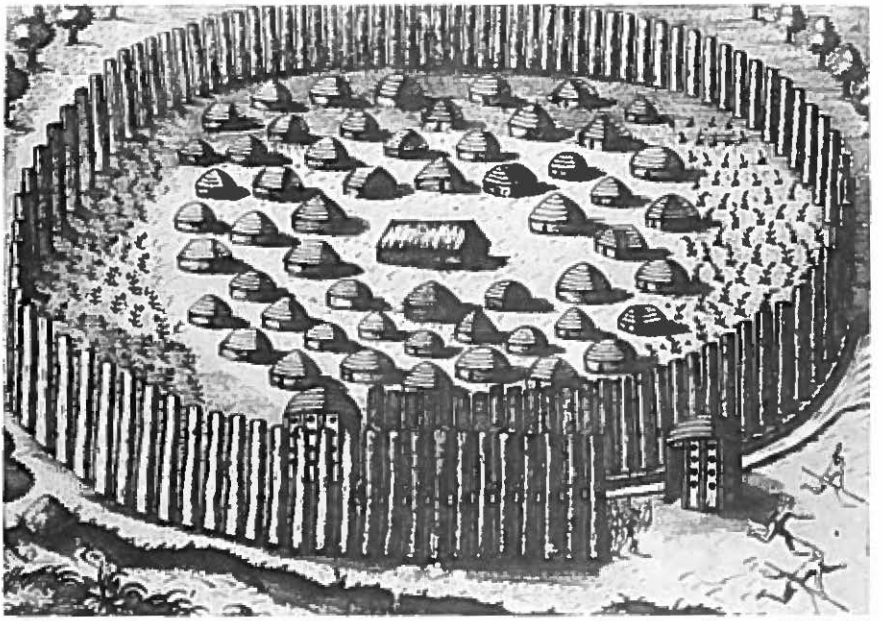
The natives' impression of the Spaniards at this point was conflicting. Granted, there was much that the Indians did not know, but since the strangers would soon be approaching, some action was necessary. Cautiously, the decision was made to dispatch emissaries, including Taskalusa's son, in order to gain further information and perhaps to woo the strangers toward peace. [14]

Soto's reception of these emissaries was a composite of cordiality and threat, evincing the adelantado's usual technique of greeting natives: Be friendly but forceful; display your strength; do not show weakness or hesitancy; let the Indians know you are capable of violence, yet are normally genial and desirous of peace. [15]

Soto had gifts, smiles, and good words for Taskalusa's envoys but took great pains—with horses, trumpets, and arquebuses—to frighten them. The signs that the envoys took back to Taskalusa were as confusing as ever. Still, Taskalusa was not certain if Soto were friend or foe, but he was shortly to receive a first-hand impression. Several days later Soto entered Atahatchi in the same grand style that he had entered other villages. After the formalities of greeting (gift-giving, speeches, eating, and dancing) in which Soto displayed his force and warmth, a key incident occurred. When it was time to retire for the night, Taskalusa attempted to leave the village to sleep with his own people outside the stockade. This move, however, would violate one of Soto's cardinal principles: never let the chief from your sight or immediate grasp. Soto had no choice but to detain him. [16]

This restraint on his liberty stunned Taskalusa, causing him to regard the Spaniards with deep distrust. In addition, before the evening concluded, further demands were made of him. Unabashedly, Soto asked for more carriers and women. Taskalusa demurred: he would provide four hundred carriers at once, but no women at this point. Women, in addition to more carriers, would be provided at Mauvila, a stockaded town several days' march away. [17]

The following morning, as the expedition left Atahatchi heading south along the Alabama River, Taskalusa was subjected to a further indignity. Sporting buskins and draped in a scarlet cloak, he was induced to ride upon a horse rather than in his litter. While the reason for placing Taskalusa on a horse was partly jocose (the Spaniards no doubt roared with laughter seeing the unease with which a chieftain dressed in exotic costume mounted an alien beast) there was dual purpose in the ploy. In part, the move was to show the chief, or appear to show him, honor; another facet was to instill fear, as well as to demonstrate openly who was in control. Soto assumed this action bolstered his carrot-and-stick strategy, but, Taskalusa was neither honored nor intimidated; doubtless, he felt the insult deeply. [18]



Indian fortified town *Theodore de Bry (1528-98)*

This affront further heightened tension, but two days later, near the village of Piachi, a more serious incident occurred. After Soto's party crossed the Alabama River, the Indians killed two Spaniards in the forests between Piachi and Mauvila. Fearing what the act might spawn were it to go unpunished and suspecting that Taskalusa might have encouraged it, Soto demanded that the chief surrender the murderers. Taskalusa refused. However, when Soto threatened to burn the chief if he did not comply, Taskalusa promised to deliver the assassins at Mauvila. [19]

As envoys to Mauvila, Soto sent Gonzalo Cuadrado and an unnamed companion, and two days later Soto himself approached the town on horseback with Taskalusa still at his side. Unlike Atahatchi, Mauvila was strongly stockaded, large in comparison to other native villages, and situated on a plain. [20] After the Mauvila chief received the group, the usual ceremonies began, but Cuadrado, who had scouted the town for two days, warned Soto that ominous signs were evident. The stockade had been strengthened, grounds had been cleared for battle, and martial exercises could readily be observed. Worse still, Cuadrado reported, numerous armed warriors were hiding in the town. [21]

Apparently, Soto did not heed the warnings. Supremely confident of Spanish prowess as well as of the correctness of his strategy, he was certain the Indians were cowed. Moreover, his trump card, the hostage Taskalusa, was still in hand. Circumstances soon changed. During the greeting ceremonies all had gone well. Speeches had been delivered, promises exchanged. But even as the dancers swayed across the plaza, before the first meal had been served, Taskalusa slipped away from his Spanish escort into a nearby cabin. Alarmed, Soto tried frantically to retrieve him, tempting him to return by lies, promises, and soothing words.

When no effort succeeded, Soto's aides—Cristóbal de Espíndola, captain of the guard, Luis de Moscoso, *maestre de campo*, and Baltasar de Gallegos—shifted to methods more forceful. Tension heightened, a shoving and shouting match erupted outside Taskalusa's cabin, climaxing as Gallegos struck an Indian guard a mortal blow. Witnessing this bloodletting, hundreds of Indians rushed from the cabins, and Soto and his captains barely escaped through the gates to the plain outside of town. Despite the efforts of both Soto and Taskalusa to avoid open warfare, the battle erupted. [22]

Outside the walls, his captains gathered about him, Soto surveyed his situation. At least five Spaniards were dead, scores more severely wounded, and the carriers had deserted to the natives, taking most of the expedition's equipment with them. Knowing the custom of blood revenge, Soto suspected that the natives, once one of their own had been slain, were not likely to be appeased, especially when they outnumbered their assailants. [23] He quickly ordered the cavalry to surround the town, preventing the Indians' escape, but Soto was left with only two choices: he could lay siege and perhaps starve the Indians into submission, or with his full force assembled he could attack. [24]

Debate flared among the captains on this question. A siege would lessen Spanish casualties and perhaps save the equipment the Indians had seized. On the other hand, a group of Christians—priests as well as Indian (and perhaps Spanish) women and servants—were trapped in a cabin inside the stockade, their lives in jeopardy. [25]

The decisive factor in determining what action to take was perhaps Castilian impulse, a passion for glory under arms. Their companions had been slain, their verve and valor challenged. Could true conquerors abide themselves failing to attack their enemies?

Soto did not wait long. Trumpets sounded, arquebuses fired; the second phase of the battle began. Eventually, the stockade was penetrated, the hostages rescued, and the town set aflame. After a battle of several hours the natives were virtually exterminated. But the conquerors also suffered dearly. Soto lost two kinsmen and several of his senior fighting men, in addition to most of his equipment, although he did not realize at this point the full consequences of his actions. [26]

Whatever understanding may have escaped Soto and his contemporaries, a wealth of questions persist for modern observers: Could a bloodbath have been avoided? At what point did the drift toward violence become irreversible? Who bore chief responsibility for the carnage? Perhaps the most intriguing question remains: Could the Spanish have executed the terms of the asiento and still have achieved their objectives without inciting violence?

Notwithstanding the conqueror mentality, it seems likely that Soto created intolerably volatile circumstances by not perceiving the natives' most basic needs and fears. [27] For example, the Indians, with minimal regard for territory, were puzzled and frightened but not greatly offended when the Spanish invaded their general locales. Conceivably, Soto could have planted colonies throughout the Alabama River system without provoking the Indians to the point of war. Obliging

at first, many natives might have treated the expedition as a trading party, perhaps volunteering as carriers had they not been abused; they would have endured much pain (though not death) as long as they felt the Spanish genuinely respected and esteemed them. As for Soto's demands for concubines, many native women seemed pleased to cohabit with the Spanish as long as they were treated well. The offenses here were impatience and lack of restraint. The Spanish demanded more women than could be supplied, and when volunteers were wanting, they took them by force. The same can be said for the carriers; Soto conscripted them, resorting to chains, ropes, and collars. Instead of requesting servants, he demanded them and then drove the Indians to exhaustion on extended marches, disciplining them with whips and dogs when they were unable to perform. Moreover, he took them far from their homes; few returned alive. As if maltreatment were not enough, both carriers and concubines died in great numbers from diseases, requiring continual replacement; the natives probably attributed their loss to Spanish mistreatment. [28]

Such pain and suffering inevitably increased tension, but was the outbreak of violence the culmination of spiralling emotions or must it be attributed to a precontrived ambush by Taskalusa? This latter idea, the stated view of Garcilaso as well as of most modern observers, would seem unlikely. None of Garcilaso's informants possessed any special insight into the minds of the natives. Moreover, veterans (such as those whom Garcilaso interviewed) tend to remember their wars romantically, often adorning less heroic conditions. "Deception by devils" made the Spanish difficulty in subduing the Indians easier to justify. [29] But would aborigines of the late Mississippian period have offered elaborate welcome dances and gestures of submission while planning an ambush? Such long-term deception seems uncharacteristic of aboriginal thinking during this early stage of Spanish-Indian contact. More puzzling, if Taskalusa and council intended deception, would they not have devised sounder tactics? Why, for instance, did they not strike at a more opportune moment, perhaps just after the Spanish had entered the town when conceivably they could have rescued Taskalusa with little loss of life? Or why not at night? Why did they wait for a shoving match, after failing to take advantage of more propitious circumstances? And why did they barricade the stockade's entrance after driving Soto and his advance guard from town? In all events, were not the natives' responses essentially defensive? [30]

Far from concocting an ambush, it seems probable that Taskalusa reacted spontaneously to a baffling situation, to an unexpected turn of events; that he was defeated precisely because he was bewildered, without a plan of attack other than reflexive threat and random retaliation.

Still, the chroniclers consistently report that thousands of clubmen were hiding themselves and their weapons inside the stockade at Mauvila. [31] Why were these clubmen there if not for some strategic purpose?

It seems reasonable that they were there to intimidate, to dispirit by a show of strength, with an instinctive hope that should the Spanish realize how numerous and menacing they were, they would never attack but might withdraw without taking Taskalusa with them. As to why the warriors remained hidden (if indeed

Soto meets Taskalusa: twentieth century illustration *USA Archives*
by Roderick D. MacKenzie

they did), this tactic was the Indians' way, but it might also be possible they felt intuitively that by remaining partially hidden, they could pique Spanish apprehension, that the Spanish might inflate the number of warriors in hiding. [32]

Apart from undetermined motivations, the battle of Mauvila was the culmination of artless efforts to eschew open conflict, especially on the part of the Spanish whose concerns were more pointed (for absence of war was conducive to gaining their material objectives). The irony was that the Spanish could easily have succeeded had they acted differently. But to have acted differently would have required a much broader consciousness than Soto and his expeditioners possessed. For Soto, it was less a matter of making rational choices than that his policy was shaped by a perception that the natives were not wholly human, hence had no position which must be respected. The strategy of avoiding warfare through intimidation, used to large extent by both parties but especially by the Spanish, failed of its own weight. Instead of preventing aggression, it led step-

by-step to an increase of tension so intolerable that a conflagration was certain to ignite. [33]

As a result of the battle of Mauvila, the natives were decimated. How many regional chiefs and Indian leaders were killed is not known, but the number must have been considerable. In addition, the intense hand-to-hand combat may have helped spread disease more rapidly than usual, as contaminated survivors made their way back to their respective areas. [34] In consequence, the social systems of local populations were severely damaged, taking a lethal toll on the Indian nobility. Some smaller chiefdoms may have vanished; others persisted in fragile affiliations. If Taskalusa survived (only Elvas claims that he did), he was never heard from again, and his hitherto wide influence was broken. [35]

Despite their victory the Spanish were also devastated. Soto lost several of his principal *caballeros* and captains of foot; many more suffered disabling wounds. A full month was needed to recover, and the conquerors lost valuables and much equipment, including the nine *arrobas* of pearls that they were bringing from Cofachiqui. In addition, morale was broken, and dissension grew. Mutiny, which royal treasurer Juan Gaytán was suspected of fomenting, threatened to fragment the expedition. As a result, Soto felt forced to alter his plans. Instead of continuing to his Gulf Coast rendezvous with Francisco Maldonado to receive fresh supplies from Cuba, Soto delayed, fearing that his men might flee to Havana in Maldonado's ships with such dismal reports on La Florida's potential that he could never field another expedition. In these circumstances Soto made his most fateful move: he turned back into the wilderness, a decision that was to cost him his life and two hundred of his expeditioners their lives. Abandoned also was his plan to promote access to the interior by planting a base that would also help to open a path from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Coast. [36]

As a result of the carnage at Mauvila, Soto's legacy lingered for centuries among the southern Indians. Two decades later, when Tristan de Luna attempted a similar enterprise with a much larger force and well-equipped colonists, the Indians were so wary of Spaniards that they refused to come near them, predisposing the expedition to failure. [37]

The battle of Mauvila was in every sense a Pyrrhic victory for the Spanish, a battle that like numerous others of the Conquest was self-defeating. The consequences to both victor and vanquished offer a telling example of the folly of such coercive strategies for deterring hostilities. Despite the advantages (fully recognized even then) of avoiding open warfare, violence between Spaniard and Indian erupted to the misfortune of all; rather than reducing the possibility of war, the threat of force virtually assured it.

Notes

[1] Yet the conflict which erupted on October 18, 1540, somewhere in southwestern Alabama was not a clash between armies; nor was it a battle in which organized bodies of men confronted one another in a military manner. See James Lockhart, *The Men of Cajamarca* (Austin, 1972), 17-22; Mario Góngora, *Los Grupos de conquistadores en Tierra Firme, 1509-1530* (Santiago de Chile, 1962).

[2] Albert James Pickett, *History of Alabama* (Charleston, 1851), 36-41; William Gilmore Simms, *Vasconcelos: A Romance of the New World* (1853; reprint, New York, 1882); Lily Peter, *The Great Riding: The Story of De Soto in America* (Fayetteville, 1983), 144-55.

[3] Garcilaso de la Vega, *La Florida del Inca* (Lisbon, 1605), 190v-93v; Garcilaso de la Vega, *The Florida of the Inca*, trans. and ed. John Grier Varner and Jeanette Johnson Varner (Austin, 1951), 325-57; Pickett, *History of Alabama*, 29-46; Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, 1976), 112-14.

[4] Mario Góngora, *Studies in the Colonial History of Spanish America*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge, 1975), 33-43, 48; Lesley B. Simpson, ed., *The Laws of Burgos, 1512-1513* (San Francisco, 1960), 11-39; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York, 1984), 3-4, 132-33, 168-75.

[5] *Asiento de Hernando de Soto*, April 20, 1537, Archivo general de Indias (AGI), *Indiferente general*, 415; Antonio del Solar y Taboada and José de Rújula y de Ochotorena, *Extremadura en América*, vol. 2, *El Adelantado Hernando de Soto: Breves noticias, nuevos documentos para su biografía y relación de los que le acompañaron a la Florida* (Badajoz, 1929), 91-117; John R. Swanton, *Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission*, introduction by Jeffrey P. Brain, foreword by William C. Sturtevant (Washington, 1985), 76-79; Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-68* (Gainesville, 1976), 7*n*, 220-23; Lewis Hanke, "The Development of Regulations for Conquistadores," in *Homenaje al Dr. Emilio Ravignani* (Buenos Aires, 1941), 73-75; Lewis Hanke, *The Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (Boston, 1965), 23-36.

[6] Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 245-49; *Asiento*, AGI, *Indiferente general*, 425; Soto was apparently present in 1514 when the *Requerimiento* was first read to the natives. Pablo Álvarez Rubiano, *Pedrárias Dávila* (Madrid, 1944).

[7] Soto's appetite for treasure may have been whetted by Inca gold, but only three men from his expedition are known to have served with him in Peru, namely Moscoso, Tovar, and Ruíz Lobillo. José Antonio del Busto Duthurburu, "Los Peruleros en la conquista de la Florida," *Mercurio Peruano* 50 (1965): 313-26.

[8] *Asiento*, AGI, *Indiferente general*, 415; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 184v, 190-90v.

[9] Ibid., 186v-87v.

[10] Rodrigo Ranjel in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia general y natural de las Indias, islas y Tierra-Firme del Mar Océano* (Madrid, 1852), 2: 171; Luis Fernández de Biedma, "Relación de la isla de la Florida," in *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida y tierras adyacentes* (Madrid, 1857), 53; Biedma's original manuscript is in the Archivo general de Indias, *Patronato* 19, under title of "Relación de la isla de la Florida, 1539." Clayton A. Robarchek, "Primitive Warfare and the Ratamorphic Image of Mankind," *American Anthropologist* 91 (December 1989): 904.

[11] James A. Robertson, trans. and ed., *True Relation of the Hardships Suffered by Governor Fernando de Soto and Certain Portuguese Gentlemen during the Discovery of the Province of Florida. Now newly Set Forth by a Gentleman of Elvas*, (De Land, FL, 1932-33), 2: 119.

[12] Oviedo, *Historia general*, 172.

[13] Ibid., 174; Biedma, *Relación*, 53.

[14] Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 121-23.

[15] Ibid., 122-23; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 188.

[16] Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 126; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 173. Biedma supposed this detention to be the cause of "*la ruindad*" which later befell the expedition. Biedma, *Relación*, 53. The confinement, however, began after the last meeting between Taskalusa and his council. It is implausible that Taskalusa, without the complicity of his council, would have attempted such a complex plot.

[17] Ibid., 53; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 173.

[18] Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 189-89v.

[19] Biedma, *Relación*, 53; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 126-27; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 189-90.

[20] Biedma, *Relación*, 53-54; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 127; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 174; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 190-91.

[21] Biedma, *Relación*, 54; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 128; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 174; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 191-92.

[22] Biedma, *Relación*, 54; Taskalusa's admonition to Soto to depart in peace further tarnishes the ambush theory. Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 128; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 174; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 193-94v; While recognizing the advantage of using friendly overtures, Soto could be vicious when he felt the occasion warranted it. Diego de Trujillo, *Relación del descubrimiento del reino del Peru*, ed. Raul Porras Barrenechea (Sevilla, 1948), 91-93, 119-20.

[23] Biedma, *Relación*, 54; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 130-31; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 174-75; Christopher Boehm, "Ambivalence and Compromise in Human Nature," *American Anthropologist* 91 (December 1989): 927-29; See also Christopher Boehm, *Blood Revenge: The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies* (Philadelphia, 1986).

[24] Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 195-96.

[25] Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 132-34. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *War and Civilization* (New York, 1950), 12-23, 104-11.

[26] Biedma, *Relación*, 55; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 134-37; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 175; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 196-209v; Probanza de Alonso Vásquez, 1560, Archivo general de Indias, *Patronato*, 51.

[27] Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 45-49, 76-77; Melvin Konner, *The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints on the Human Spirit* (New York, 1982), 196-97.

[28] The lack of territorial imperative refers only to broad regional lands, not to confined, more personal village sites. See also George E. Lankford, "Saying Hello to the Timucua," *Mid-America Folklore* 12 (Spring 1984): 17-18; Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 133-45; Robert K. Dentan, "Notes on Childhood in a Nonviolent Context: the Semai Case," in *Learning Non-Aggression*, ed. Ashley Montagu (Oxford, 1978), 94-143.

[29] David Henige, "The Context, Content, and Credibility of *La Florida del Ynca*" *The Americas* 43 (July 1986): 2-3, 7-12, 14-19; Manuel Maria Martínez, "Fernando de Soto y el Fidalgo de Elvas," *Revista de Indias* 27, (July-December 1967): 109-10, 409-14; Despite modern acceptance of the ambush theory, Garcilaso is the only chronicler describing such a scheme. While a surprise attack may be inferred from Ranjel, neither Elvas nor Biedma allude to long-range treachery. Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 191-94v; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 174; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 128-31; Biedma, *Relación*, 54.

[30] Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston, 1976), 158-60; Lankford, "Saying Hello to the Timucua," 17-19; Robarchek, "Primitive Warfare," 904, 907, 911-12; Cf. Ned J. Jenkins and Richard A. Krause, *The Tombigbee Watershed in Southeastern Prehistory* (Tuscaloosa, 1986), 23.

[31] Biedma, *Relación*, 54; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 134-37; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 174; Garcilaso elaborates on these warriors-in-hiding (Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 191v-93v), but see also Henige, "*La Florida del Ynca*," 2.

[32] Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 128. This may seem deceptive also, but primitive behavior embraces instinctive threat and bluff, altogether different from ambush, a much more artful function. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness*, 158-75, 219, 416; Cf. Napoleon Chagnon, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People* (New York, 1977).

[33] Ibid., 219-21; Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 148-67; For descriptions of other Spanish-Indian outbreaks of violence, see Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, ed. Genaro García, trans. and annotated by A. P. Maudslay (New York, 1956), 104, 125-35, 177-82, 295-312, 368-77; John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (New York, 1970), 23-45, 100-17; David S. Brose, "From the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex to the Southern Cult: You can't tell the players without a program," in *The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis*, ed. Patricia Galloway [Lincoln, 1989], 31-32, alludes to the chiefs' lack of coercive power.

[34] Henige, "*La Florida del Ynca*," 14-16; Alfred W. Crosby, "Conquistador y Pestilencia: The first New World Pandemic and the Fall of the Great Indian Empires," *Hispanic American Historic Review* 47 (August 1967): 321-37; Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Numbers Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville, 1983), 262-71.

[35] Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 134-35; Biedma does not mention Taskalusa after the battle, but Ranjel says his fate was never determined (Oviedo, *Historia general*, 175), as does Garcilaso (*La Florida del Inca*, 205v); No extant Luna document mentions Taskalusa. Herbert I. Priestly, trans. and ed., *The Luna Papers* (De Land, FL, 1928), 2 vols.

[36] Biedma, *Relación*, 55; Elvas, *True Relation*, 2: 138-39; Oviedo, *Historia general*, 175; Garcilaso, *La Florida del Inca*, 207, 209v.

[37] A century and a half later, the natives still harbored resentment over the massacre. *Memoire de François Le Maire*, Jan. 15, 1714, Archives nationales, colonies, C13C, 2, 109; Priestly, *The Luna Papers*, 1: 177-83, 211; 2: 213, 295, 307, 315.

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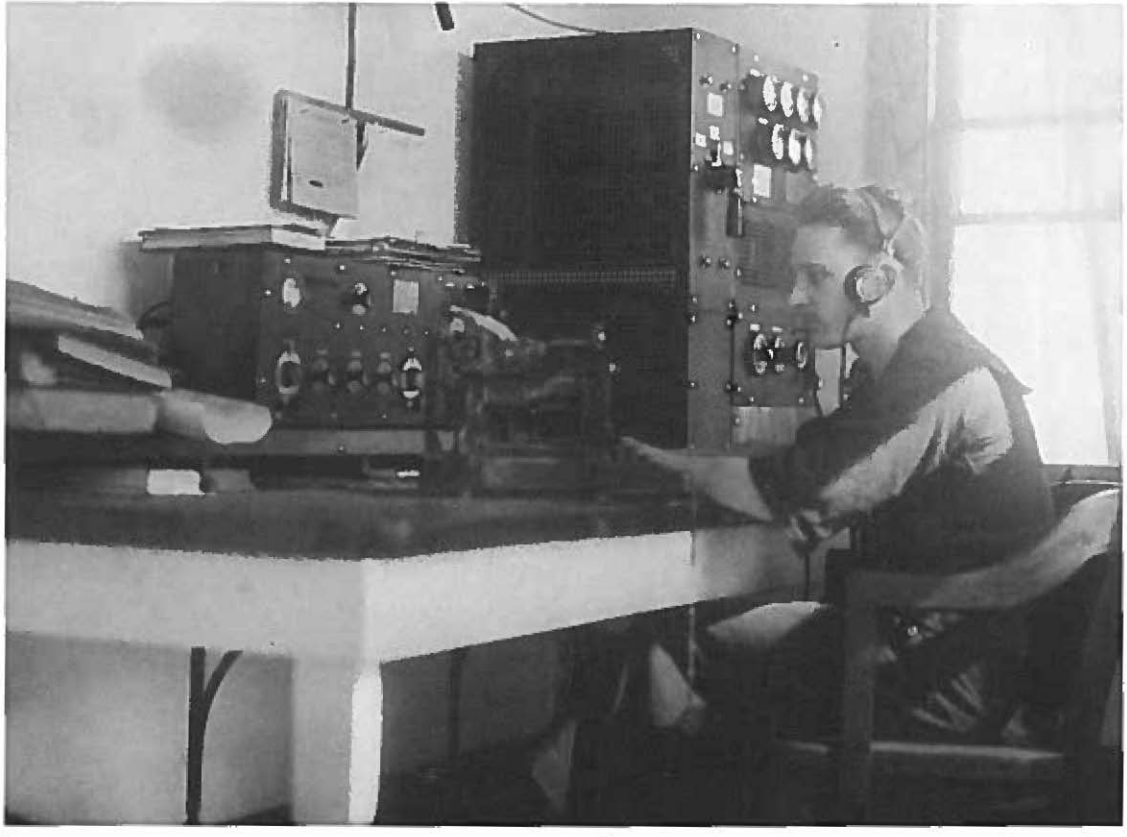


U.S. Navy radio operator at his post, Mobile, c. 1920 *USA Archives*

The Navy as Entrepreneur: Naval Radio Stations on the Gulf Coast Before the Depression

Vincent Ponko

Very early in the development of wireless telegraphy, or radio as it was termed after 1912, the United States Navy embarked on a program designed to give it a commanding position in the regulation and operation of this form of communication. To achieve its goal, the navy seized suitable opportunities to enhance its operational resources; it took steps to acquire the sites it needed to use equipment and personnel in an advantageous way; and it carved a competitive niche for itself among the unregulated, somewhat chaotic, movements for sound supremacy that characterized the radio environment in the early twentieth century. In time success induced it to yearn for a captive market like a private capitalistic enterprise might have been tempted to do. The navy proposed that the federal government give it monopoly power over radio activities in the United States. Thus, it was an active participant in the competition for the rewards of radio work before the Depression and in its behavior the navy may be termed an entrepreneur.

In support of its entrepreneurial activities, the navy had at least one privilege not shared by existing private companies or other governmental agencies in the field, such as the Post Office and the army. By virtue of a 1904 executive order, the navy held a monopoly on all government messages transmitted beyond the boundaries of the United States, especially those sent over water. Ship to ship as well as ship to shore, and shore to shore contacts over water provided a path which was ideal for radio communication. Recognition that the navy occupied the premier governmental place in such activity gave it a position of prestige which it might not have otherwise had among those needing or wanting to send messages between such locations. Messages could not be sent to ships at sea by telegraph, while cable connections could be interrupted by various problems; the airwaves seemed the medium best suited for communication in such an environment and the navy benefitted from this factor. As an outcome of its radio program, for example, the navy broadened its mission by also obtaining permission to receive and transmit messages to and from private ships at sea when such traffic seemed needed and was not in competition with commercial stations. [1]

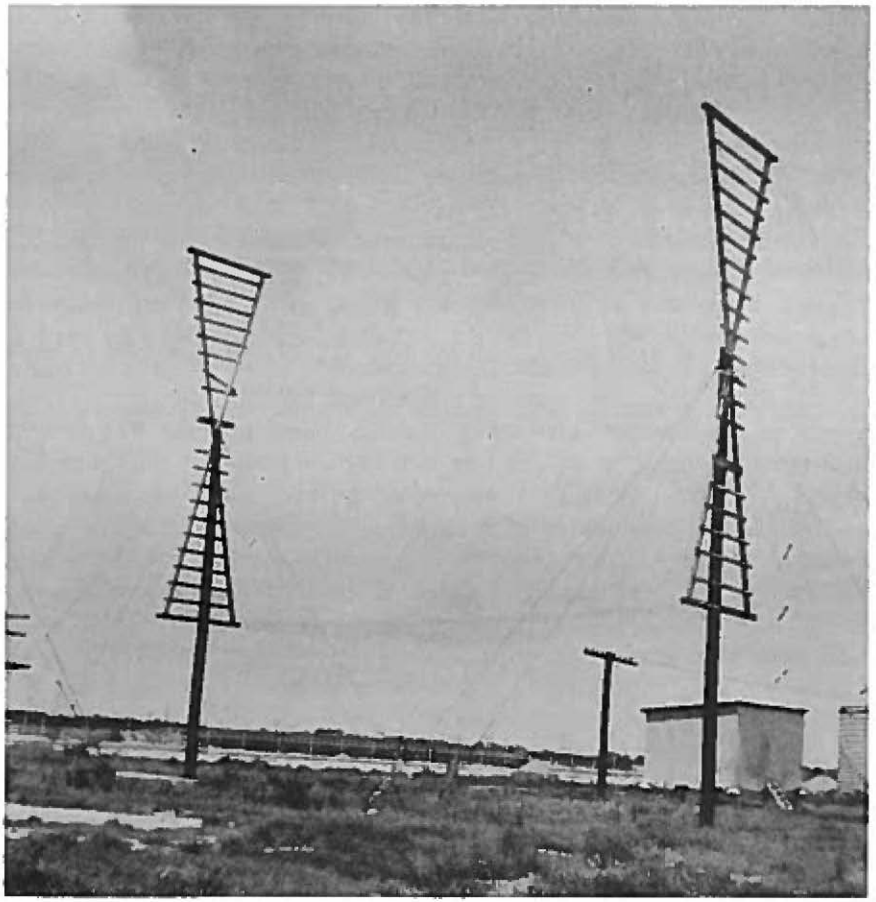
The designation of the navy as the government's agent in such situations seemed to be a green light for additional radio activity under naval auspices. One subsequent move which further enhanced the navy's position in the radio field was its obtaining approval to handle commercial messages for a fee in addition to emergency messages and its own traffic, as well as that of other government agencies. No longer was the navy only a source of emergency service to private interests. This also provided an impetus for coastal communities and shipping interests to request the construction of naval radio stations at various places on the coast to handle business as well as official messages.

At the same time, however, the navy's radio program brought it into conflict with the army cable, telegraph, and radio system run by the Signal Corps, as well as with the Post Office and private radio organizations such as the Marconi interests represented in the United States by the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company. When the army appeared ready to challenge the navy's position by establishing army radio stations in the Pribilofs in the Bering Sea as well as at Unalaska in the Aleutians and on Kodiak Island off southern Alaska, the navy obtained an executive opinion that such action would be contrary to the 1904 decision of President Roosevelt. The army suspended its plans. Aspirations of the Post Office to replace the navy as the government's radio transmitter for messages beyond the boundaries of the United States were handled in the same way. Inter-departmental rivalry did not change the navy's thrust as far as radio was concerned, it only sharpened it. In the early twentieth century, the navy built, manned, and operated radio stations which suited its plans and met the requests of consumers insofar as possible. [2]

Before the end of World War I, the euphoria of maintaining a radio system available to other government agencies and open to the public masked the disadvantages of such an operation. The establishment of a network of radio stations on the coast close enough to be in contact with each other, using the equipment then available, was costly and difficult to administer. Expansion of the system during World War I, when the navy obtained control of private stations as an emergency wartime measure, such as those built by the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company, along with the many patents in existence at that time, complicated the situation. [3] World War I brought the navy to glorious heights in the radio arena, but the service did not establish a fiscal or organizational foundation for further advancement.

Money to pay for the construction, maintenance, and operation of naval radio stations was budgeted by Congress with the approval of the president. Revenue from commercial traffic helped the navy to obtain congressional support for the funds it wanted and needed, and commercial traffic provided experience for naval radiomen. To help solve the problem of organization, the navy turned to its system of naval districts, placing a radio communications office in each one tied together by a central office as were the districts themselves. This network gave a unity to the whole system while allowing the various districts to undertake specific missions as necessary. One result was the network in Alaska within the Thirteenth Naval District; another was the Gulf Coast area relationship in the Eighth Naval District. Key West, which is considered in this article as part of the Gulf Coast network, was under the Seventh Naval District.

One feature of the development of naval radio on the Gulf Coast which differed from Alaska was the association of such stations with established naval shore stations having recognized military missions. The naval radio station at Key West was started in 1905 within the jurisdiction of the shore facilities in existence there from the middle years of the nineteenth century. When the shore station closed in November 1930, the radio station continued in commission. Naval radio personnel operated equipment which was upgraded periodically in



Loop antenna, Key West, 1927 *National Archives*

response to technological advances to keep in touch with ships traveling in surrounding waters, especially those of the United Fruit Company, and its presence aided ships as well as people in times of distress. Records indicate that its humanitarian efforts were particularly notable and effective during tropical storms and hurricanes. It accomplished especially good work in this regard when a hurricane hit the region in early September 1935. [4]

The naval radio station at Pensacola was placed in commission on February 3, 1905. In the beginning its equipment had an improvised aura about it. Two ship masts brought from Key West were used to support the antenna. After one of these was blown down during a storm in June 1905, a wood lattice mast was erected to replace it. This system of one pole mast and one lattice mast existed into the 1920s.

In 1921 a radio compass facility was established at Pensacola to aid in flight training. Sixteen years later a radio range beacon facility was built. From its inception the naval radio station, as well as the radio compass facility, experienced

equipment as well as housing changes. The remaining pole mast, for example, was damaged on September 23, 1926, when an army airplane from Montgomery flew into it and wrecked the top section. The plane fell to the ground, burned, and its two crew members were killed. Records indicate that the mast was not replaced at that time, but that the top portion had to be rebuilt. In the late 1930s, the commandant of NAS Pensacola, Captain W. F. Halsey, USN, inspected the radio operation and gave it a very good rating.

One distinctive feature of the Pensacola naval radio station was its compliment of homing pigeons. In reporting documents used in 1926, homing pigeons were indicated as a normal part of a naval radio station establishment, but Pensacola was alone in using them routinely and extensively. The purpose of the homing pigeon detachment was to remain in communication with seaplanes on training or other flights. Thus, Pensacola had a pigeon loft for 150 birds with what was termed an isolation loft for 25 more. It would appear, however, that only 75 birds were "on station" at any one time with 50 to 60 being used daily. Detailed records were maintained about the medical treatment given each bird and information was provided about medicine to be administered under certain circumstances. Birds were classified as to type, with some set aside as breeders, and notes were kept about their success or failure in returning from a mission. In 1926 there were ten pairs of breeders, thirty-four birds were raised while seven older birds used as breeders strayed, and twenty-two birds were lost either in accidents or because they failed to return from missions. This was the year the homing pigeons logged some 65,280 miles.

To obtain the quality of work desired from its homing pigeon contingent, the kind and quality of the food fed to the birds was regulated carefully. Medical treatment, as noted, was also available for injuries and as a preventive measure for sickness and lack of zest. In 1926 it was reported that homing pigeons were very successful in saving lives and should be carried by planes operating at great distances.

By October 1, 1929, however, the use of pigeons at Pensacola was discontinued. Radio, as well as other technical devices such as altimeters were found suitable for installation in aircraft. This technology which allowed wireless contact between an aircraft and its base, combined with the high cost of maintaining a pigeon corps, doomed these valiant birds to retirement for the good of the service. [5]

The loss of its pigeon fleet did not reduce the importance of Pensacola to the navy's radio communication system. In July 1933 the communications office of the Eighth Naval District was transferred from New Orleans to Pensacola and the Pensacola station acquired administrative and command as well as operational functions. This transfer was not made lightly because the New Orleans station was at least as old as Pensacola. The naval radio station at New Orleans seems to have had its beginnings in 1904, but in any case it was operational by 1905. In 1915 it was destroyed by a hurricane and had to be rebuilt. Recommissioned in 1916, its equipment was upgraded during the 1920s and it performed excellent service when hurricanes hit the coast, especially back to back ones in August and September 1926. It also transmitted time signals, weather

Pigeon loft, Pensacola Naval Air Station *National Archives*

reports, and storm warnings. With the transfer of the district communications office to Pensacola, the station was decommissioned on June 30, 1933. [6]

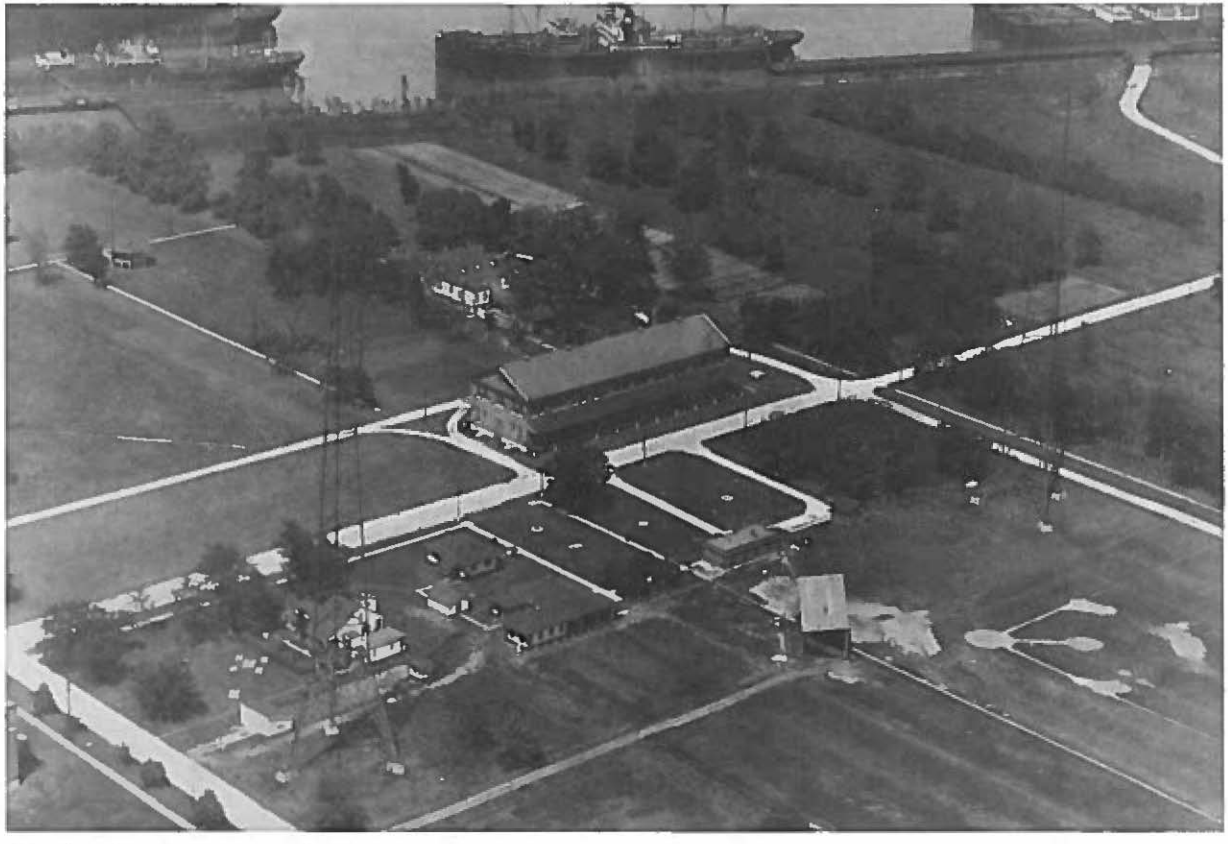
Following the coast westward into Texas, naval radio stations operated at San Isabel, Brownsville, and Galveston. The station at Brownsville was located on the army's Fort Brown military reservation and began operations in the early 1920s. It occupied two buildings belonging to the army and functioned under an agreement specifying that its equipment could be used at set times for army purposes. Through this cooperation, the army maintained radio communications with Fort Sam Houston and other army posts, as well as the navy's radio network. This agreement seemed only fair because it would appear that the masts, antennas, and other equipment were in place already when the navy took over and other services were furnished by the army. The navy, however, did construct quarters for its personnel, including a separate unit for the chief radioman. As a naval radio station, Galveston's mission was to service navy, as well as commercial vessels. It was capable of contacting San Diego, San Francisco, Key West—and at one point even reached the USS *Henderson* which was 7,350 miles away. [7]

At Galveston the navy maintained a radio compass facility commissioned on November 1, 1925. This apparatus was erected on the site of "Battery Hogan" at the army's Fort San Jacinto. It performed valuable service in advising ships of their positions and giving navigational guidance. Naval as well as commercial vessels benefitted from this service. With the equipment it had, the station was able also to broadcast weather and hydrographic information, as well as storm warnings. [8]

The naval radio station at Port Isabel was established in 1915 to help maintain proper communications with naval vessels in Mexican waters just before the United States entered World War I. In 1916 it was guarded by an army detachment from Brownsville. Army protection after World War I was replaced by a Marine Corps guard. The marines allowed themselves to become involved in local feuds because some married Mexican women. This disturbed the normal routine of the station. Despite being open to commercial business as early as 1916, the behavior of the station's personnel and the government's amicable relations with Mexico led to its consolidation with the station at Fort Brown in 1923. [9]

Other naval radio stations active for a time on the Gulf Coast were located in Louisiana at Pass à Loutre, Grand Island, Burrwood, Sabine Pass, and Port Ends, South Pass; at Port Arthur, Texas; and at Mobile, Alabama. The first five facilities were radio compass (or direction finder) stations; Port Arthur and Mobile could transmit and receive. [10]

The naval radio operation at Mobile had a short life span, but its existence reflects in a perverse sort of way the early competitive predilections of the navy in the field of radio and the thrust for monopoly which this attitude produced. Before World War I naval radio stations were in competition with private establishments located along the coast. When the navy moved into Mobile it found a private radio station there and the navy acquired an existing operation. A private radio station, unlike a naval one, was run as a profit-making business. Enlisted personnel of the navy were not trained to handle the complicated record



Naval radio station, New Orleans, 1926 *National Archives*

keeping operations confronting them. Their anguish was reflected in a communication sent by a radioman first class from Key West who asked for help in a untangling a situation in which at least four different charges seemed applicable to one message. This message had been sent to a Norwegian ship and the radioman was not sure of the amounts, or whether he should report all four possibilities, or, if not all four, what ones he should list as being applicable. The reply he received told him essentially to look up the answer in the materials which had been sent to him on the subject, a reply which must not have been much comfort to him. [11]

This type of problem led the chief of naval operations to write at one point to the commandant, Seventh Naval District, saying:

> Attention is invited to the fact that on the commercial abstract submitted by the naval radio station at Key West for the month of December, 1929, there were forty-one errors in rates as abstracts on Class E traffic, and consequently a similar number of errors and short collection of tolls on U.S. naval ship abstracts due to incorrect information furnished such ships. [12]

The memorandum then went on to give some examples in detail. The illustrations involve an intermingling of rates for radio messages, charges for day or night land line use such as the services of Western Union, as well as differing costs based on international conventions then in force. This memorandum provoked a reply from the commandant of the Seventh Naval District which constituted both a defense of Key West as well as an expression of frustration regarding the complicated detail which seemed to permeate the radio communication's system of the navy to the detriment of operational effectiveness. [13]

The disproportionate burden of record keeping problems for the naval radio network is brought into even bolder relief when the monetary amounts involved are examined. The navy was charged with the task of collecting relatively small amounts of money (many times under $1.00) from individuals, companies, and foreign governments who failed to pay their communications bills. On February 11, 1932, the commandant, Seventh Naval District, wrote to the chief of naval operations saying that payment was being requested from the Western Union Telegraph Company, Miami, for a message sent by a Lieutenant J. W. Imlay, but that there was no record of a naval officer named Imlay and no authorization had been given for such a message. This information prompted the chief of naval operations to conduct an investigation which resulted in the discovery that Imlay was an army officer attached to the Army Air Corps, Fort Crockett, Texas. The commandant of the Seventh Naval District was instructed to return the bill to Western Union with the suggestion that payment should be solicited from the War Department. [14]

In 1930 the Department of Agriculture (Bureau of Animal Industry) refused to pay a Western Union charge of $0.50 incurred by the naval radio station at New Orleans in trying to deliver a message to a Dr. O. T. Cole. As a government agency, the Department of Agriculture (Bureau of Animal Industry) claimed that its messages were to be free of charge. The navy explained that it could not

reach Dr. Cole by telephone and that since its facilities were actually outside New Orleans proper, in Algiers, it had no messenger service. Therefore, in order to deliver the message, it had to use the "land line" of Western Union with the consequent $0.50 charge. [15]

In other instances, however, the chief of naval operations could not escape the task of bill collector so easily. It was necessary for the him to dun shipping companies even for amounts under one dollar, to seek and act upon legal advice in situations where shipping companies were in bankruptcy or liquidation, and to deal with other countries when foreign vessels were involved. Sometimes the officers in Washington must have felt that the amounts involved were not worth the effort and wished they could close an account the way a radioman in charge at Key West tried to balance his books. Unable to account for one dollar and eleven cents ($1.11) within the hodge podge of tolls he was expected to keep track of, the radioman sent a check for this amount to the director of naval communications. It was returned with the comment that the director of naval communications

> appreciates the commendable spirit shown by the Radioman in Charge in making up this discrepancy in tolls, but it is not the policy of the Naval Communication Service to hold personnel financially responsible for errors of this nature. [16]

As an entrepreneurial enterprise in the commercial sense the navy failed to establish the infrastructure to support its goal of gaining monopoly status. As far as the naval radio stations on the Gulf Coast were concerned, it also failed to generate the commercial business which produced enough revenue to support its claim that it was and could operate as an integral part of a business communications network. Nor did the stations on the Gulf Coast exhibit the push for commercial service which characterized, for example, naval radio stations in Alaska. In August 1926 the assistant district communications officer of the Thirteenth Naval District, which included Alaska, published a statement in a newsletter sent to all the stations within his jurisdiction which read that even though

> we are a Government organization and receive our pay whether we handle a message or not is no reason why we should not have some business sense, have their business interests at heart, and do everything humanly possible within our facilities that we can think of to help them build up their business with efficient communication service. And when you do this each man doing duty in Alaska is doing his best to help build up Alaska. [17]

The records of the naval radio stations on the Gulf do not reflect the same sort of enthusiasm for the support and promotion of business interests. Traffic did flow between naval radio stations and ships in the Gulf, and communications from business firms were expedited by naval radio facilities, but records indicate that the volume of such business was not of great significance. [18]

Naval radio station, Galveston, 1926 *National Archives*

From a public relations standpoint, the navy fared much better. Its service to ships at sea and the areas surrounding its location, in good times and in bad, was recognized and applauded on various levels. The work of radio compass stations in aiding navigation, for example, was held in high regard. [19]

High esteem, however, was not enough to give the navy a commanding position in the halls of Congress. After World War I, arguing from its experience that centralized control over radio was best for the nation, the navy failed to get congressional confirmation for the monopoly over radio traffic in the United States which the navy had exercised during the war. Convinced that in the absence of a naval monopoly, the national welfare required that a private firm controlled by citizens of the United States exercise control of a monopolistic nature over radio, the navy gave its encouragement and support to the establishment of the Radio Corporation of America. This company, to which the navy transferred its power and aspirations, came into being in October 1919. [20]

In 1924 the navy sold the radio station at Galveston to RCA for $3,000.00. This facility had been confiscated from the American Marconi Wireless Company at the start of World War I, and purchased in November 1918, for $6,200.00. RCA took over on February 1, 1925, updated the equipment and began to operate the facility as one of a number of shore and ship services it began to establish. As RCA's growth in this field began to undercut the navy, and with the need for the number of radio stations lessening as technological advances increased the range of a station, the Navy disestablished most of its facilities on the Gulf Coast. By the start of the Depression, there were only two official naval radio stations in operation on the Gulf Coast. [21] Similar reductions occurred in other areas as the navy shifted its position on radio in the direction of its own needs and away from competition with RCA and other governmental agencies.

Tower of Tropical Radio Telegraph Co., Battle House Hotel, Mobile, 1928

USA Archives

The virtual demise of radio operations on the Gulf Coast, however, did not allow the navy to avoid responsibility for the stations which became inactive. Stations which were disestablished could not just be left to rot. Some method had to be found to keep them in reasonable repair for future use or some return, however small, had to be made on the original investment.

In order to maintain for possible future use the land and building on which Gulf Coast radio stations once stood, the navy tried leasing those facilities to private parties. In the middle of the 1920s, for instance, the site and buildings at Port Isabel were rented. This arrangement lasted for about ten years, but after 1936 Port Isabel was in the hands of a caretaker. In 1923 the facilities at Mobile were turned over to an organization called the Tropical Radio Company for operation. The Tropical Radio Company was a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company. [22]

Thus even though the naval radio stations on the Gulf Coast might not be active, they were not and could not be forgotten. In the midst of the routine and detail, involving navigation on the high seas, it is interesting to learn that the navy also used its radio equipment to explore the limits of the universe. On August 21, 1924, the navy sent a message to all of its stations saying:

> Navy Desires Cooperate Astronomers who Believe Possible That Mars May Attempt Communications by Radio Waves With This Planet While They Are Near Together. To This End All Shore Radio Stations Will Especially Note And Report Any Electrical Phenomena [*sic*] Unusual Character And Will Cover As Wide Band Frequencies As Possible From 2400 August Twenty-first to 2400 August Twenty-fourth Without Interfering With Traffic 1800. [23]

It is not known at this time what prompted this communication, but its purpose was serious and reflective of the high regard in which radio was held. It tended to confirm what naval radiomen had known for years: radio could be used to generate messages and movements with the potential to benefit or to harm to the United States. However, for better or for worse, naval radio was out of the public arena by the 1930s. It would have been wrong of old hands though to forget that they nurtured radio to full flower on the national scene and continued to engage in radio work even after they had lost the entrepreneurial battle. As an early media entrepreneur, the navy must be given credit for the development of radio in the United States—and it cannot escape some responsibility for the subsequent behavior of its progeny.

Notes

[1] Captain L. S. Howeth, USN (Ret.), *History of Communications-Electronics in the United States Navy*, with an Introduction by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN (Washington: Bureau of Ships and Office of Naval History, 1963), 211; Secretary of the Navy, General Correspondence, RG 80, 1897-1915, file 23695 (20)-(22), (24)-(26), (27)-(30), (36). See also Paul Schubert, *The Electric Word The Rise of Radio* (1928; reprint, New York, 1971), 3-160. Henceforth all citations from the collections in the National Archives, Washington, labeled Secretary of the Navy, General Correspondence, will be cited as RG 80, with the period of years covered and the appropriate file number.

[2] In the early twentieth century, for example, naval radio stations were authorized to transmit commercial messages in Mexican waters when communication by land was impossible. RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (371:45) (692:23). The Post Office challenge is discussed in Philip T. Rosen, *The Modern Stentors Radio Broadcasters and the Federal Government, 1930-34* (Westport, CT, 1980), 25-33. For an account of the establishment of the Alaska Naval Radio networks see Vincent Ponko, "Naval Radio Stations in Alaska: Gone But Not Forgotten," *Military Affairs* 51 (July 1987): 113-23.

[3] Secretary of the Navy to Bureau of Steam Engineering April 27, 1917, RG 80, 1916-1926, file 28761 (93).

[4] Green Binder For Key West Radio Station, Section B, General History, and Section C, Administrative: Records of the Bureau of Ships, Records of the Radio Division, Reports from Naval Radio Stations, RG 19, file 1081, Federal Archives and Records Center, Suitland, Maryland. Henceforth, the collection labeled Bureau of Ships, RG 19, held at the Federal Archives and Records Center will be cited as RG 19 with the appropriate file number and other possible pertinent distinctions.

[5] Each bird received 67.5 pounds of food annually, and the collective total came to 5400 pounds per year. Green Binder for Pensacola Radio Station, Section B, General History; Section C, Administrative; and Section M, Homing Pigeons, RG 19, file 1081. Bureau of Aeronautics to Manager, Naval Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, March 13, 15, 1929, May 3, 1929, H1-18(12); A. W. Radford, "Three Months at Eleven Thousand Feet Above Alaska," *The Aeronautics Review* 7 (1929): 19-30.

[6] Green Binder for New Orleans Radio Station, Section B, General History, RG 19, file 1081.

[7] Green Binder for Brownsville Radio Station, Section B, General History and Section C, Administrative Section, RG 19, file 1081.

[8] Green Binder titled Galveston Radio Station, Section B, General History, and Section W, Traffic, RG 19, file 1081.

[9] Green Binder titled Port Isabel Radio Station, Section B, General History, RG 19, file 1081; RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (692).

[10] Howeth, *History of Communications*, Appendix L, 587-88.

[11] RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (442-28), (952), (1505); RG 80, 1926-1940, NR10/L10-7 (380815).

[12] RG 80, 1926-1940, NR40/L10-7 (300124).

[13] Ibid.

[14] RG 80, 1926-1940, NR40/L10-7 (320211).

[15] RG 80, 1926-1940, NR46/L10-7 (300527).

[16] RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (1602) (26-1, 2), (1737); RG 80, 1926-1940, NR 40/L10-7 (300818).

[17] *The Alaskan Vibroplex* (August 1926), RG 80, 1926-1940, NR82/A9-4 (260831).

[18] RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (294), (371: 20, 45), (840), (1893).

[19] RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (1291), (1466), (1647), (2050).

[20] Erik Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel, A History of Broadcasting in the United States.* (New York, 1966), 1: 54-55; Kenneth Bilby, *The General David Sarnoff and the Rise of the Communications Industry.* (New York, c1986), 47-48. Erik Barnouw has written two additional volumes which take the broadcasting story to 1970. Volume 2 called *The Golden Web* covers 1933 to 1953 and was published in 1968; Volume 3 called *The Image Empire* starts in 1953 and was published in 1970. At the Seventh Symposium on Naval History, held at the United States Naval Academy in 1985, a paper was delivered by Peter Rossi titled " 'World Wide Wireless': The U.S. Navy, Big Business, Technology, and Radio Communication, 1919-1922." It has since been published as part of a collection by the United States Naval Academy of papers given at the Seventh Symposium. I was not present when the paper was presented orally and at the time this was written its printed version was not available to me.

[21] RG 80, 1926-1940, NR50/N1-13 (311021); RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (1466). For a summary of the navy's opposition to the building of coastal radio stations by RCA see Rosen, 29-30.

[22] RG 80, 1926-1940, NR 51/L4-3 (17); RG 80, 1916-1926, file 10191 (127: 25-1).

[23] RG 80, 1916-1926, file 12479 (2051).

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An Aesthete at Large: Oscar Wilde in Mobile

William Warren Rogers and Robert David Ward

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde arrived in New York City on January 2, 1882. His fame—or notoriety—had preceded him across the Atlantic with far greater speed than that of the SS *Arizona.* [1] Taking note of Wilde's presence on this side of the ocean, the Mobile *Register* explained that "Oscar Wilde is an Irishman. He is not the first wild Irishman that has come to this country." [2] Mobile had a tradition of hosting Irish entertainers. Joe Murphy, an Irish character-comedian who specialized in songs and anecdotes of the Emerald Isle, had just played to good reviews and a full house at the Mobile Theatre. Among the earliest such visitors was Tyrone Power who had performed in Mobile in 1834 and admired the city. [3]

When Wilde left the United States in December 1883, he had lectured in the New York and Boston areas and gone on speaking forays to Washington and Baltimore, the Midwest, the Far West, and Canada. In April he wrote, "I have received a good offer for two months light lecturing in the South which I am most anxious to visit." [4] When the twenty-seven-year-old wit, poet, and as yet unproduced playwright appeared in Mobile, he was mid-way through his southern tour which had begun at Leubrie's Theatre in Memphis on June 12. The much traveled lecturer was accompanied by his black valet, W. M. Traquail, who took care of his flamboyant and controversial wardrobe. The logistics were handled by Frank Gray, Wilde's southern advance man.

Intellectually curious Mobilians knew about the young Irishman's flashing aphorisms and epigrams and his brilliant conversation (the American tour was well covered nationally and in surprising detail by Alabama newspapers). Born in Dublin on October 16, 1854, Wilde was the son of eccentric and gifted parents. His father, William Robert Wilde, earned international fame as an eye and ear surgeon, while his mother, Jane Francesca Elgee, took the *nom de plume* "Speranza" and wrote extensively in support of the cause of Irish nationalism. [5] Their precocious son graduated from Trinity College, Dublin and attended Magdelen College, Oxford. His interests there were varied and included Catholicism (although he was a Protestant), Free Masonry, and especially the pre-Raphaelite and aesthetic movements. He won the coveted Newdigate Prize for poetry and graduated in 1878.

Wilde was influenced by William Morris, Walter Pater, John Ruskin, James A. McNeill Whistler, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and the Rossetti brothers. The pre-Raphaelites wanted to move art back beyond the Renaissance to a more natural expression of painting, sculpture, and literature. Aestheticism was the most popular branch of the movement. Everything Victorian was rejected. Commercialism was denounced for its vulgar and needlessly uninspired mass production of necessities. The aesthetes argued that individual effort and artistic taste could be expressed in such familiar items as houses, wallpaper, cabinets, clothing, china, and artificial flowers. Art could be achieved at the practical level of daily existence. At the creative level, aesthetes seemed to advocate art for

Oscar Wilde's gift to Jefferson Davis, June 1882

Beauvoir, The Jefferson Davis Shrine

art's sake, no matter how outlandish. By adopting uncompromising extremes, they attracted ridicule, derision, and, above all, attention. [6] For a young man of Wilde's inclinations, it was a welcome battle against the Philistines.

After Oxford, Wilde went down to London and quickly became known for his affectations. He embraced the sunflower and the lily as perfect models of design. Defying conventionality Wilde and his companions adopted distinctive mannerisms and dress (knee breeches were favored over trousers), and spiced their conversations with mawkish words ("consummate," "utterly," and "intense" became clichés). They attracted followers and set the style, but their modish excesses were lampooned mercilessly by the newspapers and literary magazines. With his long hair, long legs, large teeth, dreamy posturing, sing-song speech patterns, and arch cleverness, Wilde was a perfect target. He was a special target of George du Maurier's savage cartoons in *Punch*. Du Maurier's two caricatures, Maudle and Postlewaite, were based on Wilde. Several plays satirized the aesthetic movement, and especially successful was the light opera *Patience* by Gilbert and Sullivan. Reginald Bunthorne, the fleshly poet, and Archibald Grosvernor, two of the main characters, with their foppish ways were Oscar Wilde in thin disguise. [7] For his part, Wilde enjoyed the notoriety. He relished being a celebrity.

Richard D'Oyly Carte, a New York producer, managed the American run of *Patience* which opened successfully at Boothe's Theatre in New York in September 1881. Carte, who also handled lecture tours, contacted Wilde with an offer to speak in various American cities. Supposedly the lectures would promote attendance for *Patience*, while the play would publicize the lectures. Wilde needed money to live up to his growing fame. He accepted.

Wilde never denied that making money was the most basic of his several motives for the American journey. As the Mobile *Register* put it, "Oscar Wilde thinks a depleted pocket-book is not aesthetic, and he has come to this country to fill that article." He would find, the *Register* predicted, "that the crop of idiots has been a large one in this country, and that the fool killer has pretermitted his usual rounds." [8] Mobilians, like many of their countrymen, doubted that Wilde's lectures were worth the money he received. They faulted themselves and others for being gullible, but did not begrudge the Irishman his profits. According to *Harper's Weekly*, the "American pilgrimage of this young gentleman has been a huge and prolonged joke, all except the dollars he is reported to have collected, which are serious, and, we believe, authentic." [9] When the visitor received $1,100 for a lecture in Chicago, the *Register* remarked, "There is a good deal of method in Oscar's nonsense." [10] In east Alabama the Seale *Russell Register* was amazed that "the elongated Oscar W. Idle" could make so much money. [11]

Colonel W. F. Morse, Carte's assistant, became Wilde's business manager and worked out the details of the tour. Morse hired J. H. Vail to accompany the lecturer in the demanding role of secretary. Once Wilde reached the South, Peter Tracy of Memphis became his temporary agent. After some experimentation, Wilde refined his lectures, limiting himself to two set speeches: the Decorative Arts and the House Beautiful. Well organized, the talks contained few original thoughts, but they were intelligent, persuasive, and bore the indelible stamp of

Wilde's personality. He used the Decorative Arts speech most frequently. It became a vehicle to urge the democratization of taste and to praise the talents and products of ordinary makers of household furniture, carpets, and glassware at the expense of the gaudy furnishings favored by millionaires. [12]

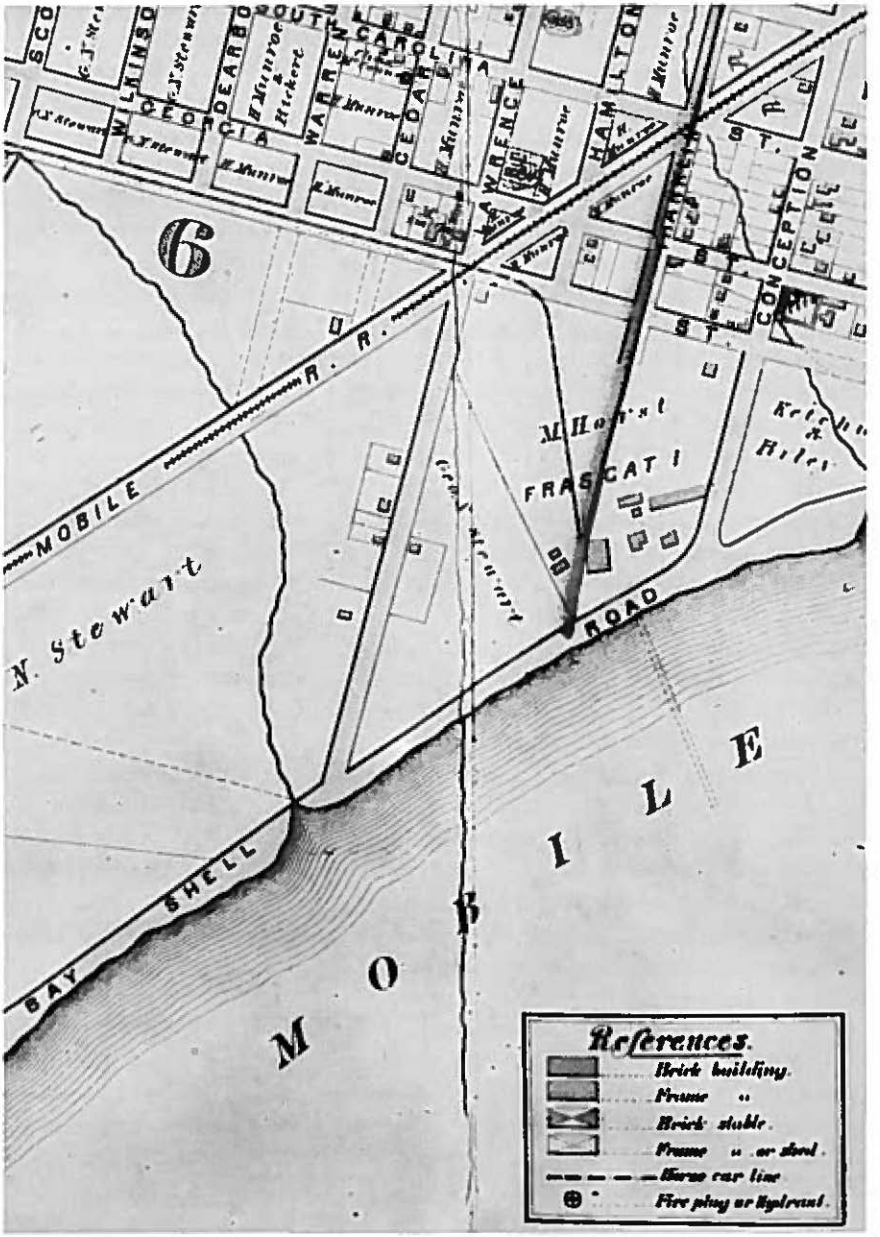
The delivery and attire of the apostle of aestheticism was a combination of scholarship and showmanship. In person-to-person encounters, the bizarre looking visitor matched the Southerners in charm and courtesy, and he was unfailingly kind and entertaining. Creating a sensation during his swath through the South, Wilde was lionized and displayed at social gatherings as though he were a trophy. As in the North, the willing aesthete enjoyed being guest of honor at numerous balls, receptions, and parties. Half-seriously, Wilde wrote a friend that he had been forced to employ various secretaries: "One writes my autographs all day for my admirers, the other receives the flowers that are left really every ten minutes. A third whose hair resembles mine is obliged to send off locks of his own hair to myriad maidens . . . , and so is rapidly becoming bald." [13]

The Irishman was so overwhelmed with attention that some critics believed Americans were making fools of themselves. Other literary visitors, Charles Dickens among them, had accepted American hospitality, but once returned to Great Britain, were scathing in their criticism of the United States. New York, the *Register* remarked, always extended lavish treatment to foreign celebrities, "not remembering that the return they have often made is to ridicule those who bow down before them." [14] The precaution was understandable, but Wilde, as he delivered his "Impressions of America" lecture throughout England in 1883, did not bite the hand that had fed him. [15]

He also captured a large measure of ridicule and criticism—some of it mean-spirited but much of it good-natured or expressing the non-plussed reaction of his audiences. Wilde's clothes, correctly interpreted by Americans as costumes, his physical appearance, and the tone and inflection of his speaking style were fair game. These characteristics, more than the content of his addresses, were what attracted the audiences and drew most of the reviewers' comments.

If Alabama and the South were America's cultural backwater, the variety and diversity of the fare presented at the Mobile Theatre stood in stark contrast. In 1882 the theatre was located at Conti and Royal streets. It was the seventh theatre structure since the city's first had opened in 1824. Manager Thomas Cooper DeLeon, a well known editor, playwright, and author, continued a tradition that included the regular presentation of dramas, melodramas, comedies, light operas, and individual entertainers—musicians, speakers, singers. [16]

Given *Patience*'s popularity, the comic opera was not long in coming to Mobile. Meanwhile, across the state, amateur players presented *Patience* with varying degrees of professionalism. According to the Montgomery *Advertiser*, the opera was "the musical craze of the season." It was "a burlesque on estheticism or Oscar Wildism, and as such addressed itself to what is uppermost in the public mind." [17] In fact, the amateur players at the state capital performed it so often one editor commiserated, "The good people of Montgomery have much Patience." [18] Mobile did not stage any performances by local talent, and as



Frascati Park and environs

G.M. Hopkins, City Atlas of Mobile *(Baltimore, 1878), USA Archives*

the *Register* loftily remarked, "Well, we may not be very aesthetic, but we can inform [Wilde], at any rate, that our amateurs have not given 'Patience,' as has been done by Philistines of neighboring cities." [19] Even so, as early as March, a professional troupe, Rice's Opera Comique Company, presented Gilbert and Sullivan's hit, and Mobilians got their first view of Bunthorne, Grosvenor, and the lovesick milk maids. The reaction to the "famous satire on the aesthetic asininity was apparently a most pleasant one, to the very large and fashionable audience which quite filled the theatre last night," a critic wrote. [20] Rice's forty artists were matched in number and polish in April when Charles E. Ford's English Opera Company gave matinee and evening performances of *Patience*. Three presentations within two months bespoke the opera's drawing power.

After his successful appearance in Memphis, Wilde traveled by train through Mississippi, lecturing once at Vicksburg. At New Orleans he stayed at the St. Charles Hotel, became the toast of the town, and delivered a well-received and well-attended lecture at the Grand Opera House. He then went to Texas where he spoke in Fort Worth, Galveston, San Antonio, and Houston. Returning east, he lectured on June 26, in Spanish Fort, near New Orleans. [21]

The editor of the *Register* asked, "Can't he be prevailed to come [here] . . . and lecture at Frascati [Park] ?" By May hot weather had settled in and Mobilians sought leisure and entertainment out of doors. Some boarded the Mobile and Ohio train that left every half hour when trotting races were scheduled for the new race course at Prichard's Park. Others went to events at the Agricultural and Mechanical Association's fair grounds. Yet Frascati Park (sometimes called Garden) was the most popular resort. The open air pavilion and park south of the city was a place where there was "always a breeze and always a stretch of restless waters to rest the vision." [22]

Frascati was named for the ancient summer resort south of Rome where the nobility maintained lavish gardens and villas. In the late 1860s a group of Mobilians began developing Frascati as a public park. In 1882 it was owned by Apolonia Horst, the widow of Martin Horst, and operated by a Mr. Kennedy who offered refreshments, a sandy beach, and swings. Kennedy lured customers with music, baseball (the Atlantic and Forrest nines were the local rivals), military exhibitions, and whatever entertainment he could engage. The pavilion was put to many uses, especially theatrical productions. [23]

The city had maintained its interest in Wilde's activities, and it was certain he would attract an audience. Mobile, the largest and oldest city in the state, had a population in 1880 of 29,139 (16,885 whites and 12,247 blacks, as well as 4 Chinese and 3 Indians). Because it was a port, Mobile's population included 3,000 foreign-born citizens and was the state's most cosmopolitan and sophisticated city. [24] The local milieu included a mix of French, Spanish (to a lesser degree), and English cultures. Most of the blacks and whites were native born, although the city's maritime importance had attracted a number of settlers from New England and the Atlantic coast.

It is not surprising that the city would have an unnamed poet who, taking a cue from the London and New York critics, wrote a poem entitled "The Aesthetic Young Man":

I am an esthetic young man
Reclining upon a divan
With eyes full of soul
That always will roll
When a sunflower near me they scan.

My hair it is curly and long
Like that of the masters of song,
And as Oscar teaches
I now wear knee breeches
Whenever I move in a throng.

Though my thoughts are so often unthunk
My winks are not always unwunk;
When I meet my soul's brother,
Then some how or other
Our drinks are by no means undrunk.

I'm an utterly too too young man
On the latest Anglican-plan;
I pose at my glass,
And act like an ass
At least just as much as I can

I talk about high art you know,
And Ruskin and Swinburne, and though
Some say I am silly
To carry a lily,
To that, all my greatness I owe

I dote on all sorts of old things,
Broken china and harps without strings,
The utterly doleful
Is always most soleful
And songs best that nobody sings.

And so I'm esthetic you see,
That's just what's the matter with me.
Wherever I rove,
Folks admire me, by jove!
To an utterly too too degree. [25]

That Wilde was also taken seriously in Mobile was seen in lengthy newspaper articles, usually reprinted from northern journals (for example, the Boston *Herald*) evaluating him as a poet. Wilde's agent, Frank Gray, not one to ignore an opportunity, traveled to Mobile and arranged for his client to speak there.

Mr. Wilde's Views of the Southern Cause.

Mr. Oscar Wilde is reported by the New Orleans Picayune as entertaining very sensible views about the Southern Confederacy. Mr. Wilde said he had an intense admiration for the chief of the Southern Confederacy. He had never seen him, but had followed his career with much attention. "His fall, after such an able and gallant pleading of his own cause, must necessarily arouse sympathy, no matter what might be the merits of his plea. The head may approve the success of the winners, but the heart is sure to be with the fallen."

"The case of the South in the civil war was to my mind much like that of Ireland to-day. It was a struggle for autonomy, self-government for a people. I do not wish to see the empire dismembered, but only to see the Irish people free, and Ireland still as a willing and integral part of the British Empire. To dismember a great empire in this age of vast armies and overweening ambition on the part of other nations, is to consign the peoples of the broken country to weak and insignificant places in the panorama of nations; but people must have freedom and autonomy before they are capable of their greatest result to the cause of progress. This is my feeling about the Southern people, as it is about my own people, the Irish. I look forward to much pleasure in visiting Mr. Jefferson Davis."

Mobile Register, *June 28, 1882*

Part of Wilde's favorable reception in the South was due to his announced admiration for Jefferson Davis and all things connected with the late Confederate States of America. His public statements prompted Varina Howell Davis to invite Wilde to visit them at Beauvoir, their home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast near Biloxi. Beauvoir lay on the route to Mobile. Little is known about the incongruous meeting between Wilde and his hosts, the frail, sickly seventy-five-year-old Davis and his fifty-seven-year-old wife. The editor of the *Register* was puzzled:

> It is scarcely conceivable that two persons can be more different . . . . [We] confess to sufficient curiosity to know the bent of their coming, protracted interview. It may be that Mr. Wilde is built of far differtent timber from the general estimate, based upon hearsay; and that Mr. Davis may be amply repaid for his hospitality, in better coin than the empty fact of knowing a celebrity of two continents. [26]

On June 27 Wilde left the Crescent City on the New Orleans, Mobile, and Texas railroad (part of the Louisville and Nashville system), and on reaching Biloxi, was taken to Beauvoir in a carriage. No records exist of the dinner conversation that evening, although Varina Howell Davis was widely admired as a good conversationalist. Later, Wilde took a walk along the nearby beach. At some point Mrs. Davis made a quick sketch of him, and Wilde accepted the likeness. Reciprocating, the guest presented a photograph of himself to the elder statesman of the lost cause. It was inscribed, "To Jefferson Davis in all loyal admiration from Oscar Wilde . . . ." [27] Some Alabama newspapers thought that Davis had demeaned himself by receiving Wilde as a guest, but others approved. [28]

Peter Trace arrived in Mobile on Tuesday afternoon to check on arrangements for the lecture and to confirm Wilde's reservations at the thirty-year-old Battle House, the city's finest hotel. Wilde took a train from Biloxi on Wednesday morning to keep his engagement in Mobile that evening. [29] To say that the citizens were anxious to hear him was to deal in understatement. The city had graciously accepted a visit from Ulysses S. Grant in 1880, but here was an Irish visitor outspoken in his defense of the South. [30]

Soto & Primo's, a combination drugstore and ticket agency at the corner of Royal and Dauphin streets, quickly sold the three hundred reserved seats at Frascati, although patrons were assured that there were still good accommodations in the balcony. Curiously enough, all seats, whether reserved or balcony, bore the same price of 75 cents. Interest "here is certainly on the *qui vive*," according to the *Register*. In fact, "public curiosity . . . seems to be 'utterly intense.' " [31] For citizens "who have looked below the singular surface of aestheticism, there will be great curiosity to hear the apostle speak his own views and explain the origin and workings of the 'art religion.' " And for those who would attend in order to sneer, a pleasant surprise might be in waiting "because his decorative arts [lecture] is supposed to be good." As for the largest class, those who planned to "go for curiosity," there could be "no more tittillant attraction. Oscar Wilde's name has been the theme of every pen—almost of every

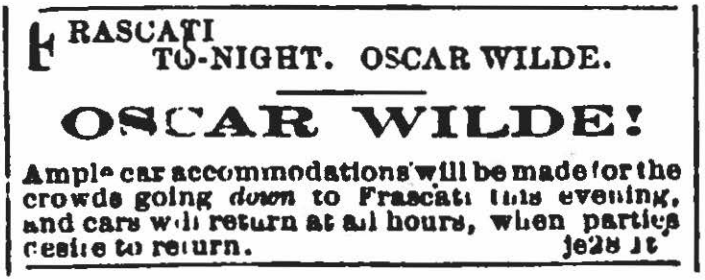
tongue—in both continents, for many months." It all meant that few "among us will care to miss the only occasion possible of seeing this much-talked-of aesthete." [32]

Wilde arrived, checked into the Battle House, and attended an afternoon reception in his honor given by Fanny Williams Tompkins—member of a pioneer Mobile family, leader in the Mobile Reading Club, and patron of the theatre. Her husband, John R. Tompkins, was a native South Carolinian who had become a successful lawyer in Mobile, and at the time was a state solicitor. Tompkins shared his wife's love for the theatre, and it was appropriate for them to entertain Wilde at their home located on the corner of Church and St. Emanuel streets. [33]

Oscar Wilde.

The advent of Mr. Oscar Wilde, which is announced for next Wednesday evening, at Frascati, will be hailed with deep interest, by all classes of our population. To those who have looked below the singular surface of aestheticism, there will be great curiosity to hear its apostle speak his own views and explain the origin and workings of the "art religion." To the other class, who will go to sneer, a pleasant surprise may be in waiting: for the press elsewhere speaks of Mr. Wilde's exposition of "Decorative Art," as being well thought out and strongly stated. To that still larger class, in all communities, who "go for curiosity," there could be no more titillant attraction. Oscar Wilde's name has been the theme of every pen—almost of every tongue—in both continents, for many months. The pencil has been almost equally busy; and caricatures, cartoons and likenesses have stimulated general curiosity still more. Few, therefore, among us will care to miss the only occasion possible of seeing this much-talked-of aesthete; be the reason what it may, which takes them down to Frascati, in the moonlight of next Wednesday.

Mobile Register, *June 22, 1882*


FRASCATI
TO-NIGHT. OSCAR WILDE.

OSCAR WILDE!

Ample car accommodations will be made for the crowds going *down* to Frascati this evening, and cars will return at all hours, when parties desire to return. je28 1t

Mobile Register, *June 28, 1882*

The grounds at Frascati opened at seven, early enough to accommodate the expected "immense gathering of all classes." Anticipating "the cultured, the fashionable, and the curious," a reporter predicted "an audience larger and more brilliant, than any ever yet seen at our summer theatre." Extra transportation facilities were pressed into service, and in keeping with the occasion, "even the mules pulling the street cars were aesthetic, having sunflowers stuck in their headgear." [34] Wilde said later, "at Mobile an enterprising little boy made twenty-five dollars selling sunflowers to the people who came to my lecture. That boy will be a congressman yet—who knows. It was a fortunate and harmless speculation for him. I wish all other speculations were as harmless and as innocent." [35]

The lecture began at 8:30, and in both dress and delivery, Wilde did not disappoint. A reviewer wrote the next day: "We confess to have gone to Frascati . . . with decided prejudice against Mr. Wilde, but candor compels us to admit that such prejudice was unfounded. We expected to hear an extravaganza pronounced by a buffoon, but instead we heard a very chaste and finished lecture from quite a cultivated gentleman." The auditor admitted that to make a fair judgement he had severed "the manner from the matter." He added, "We must put the grotesque dress, the long hair, the drawling voice, the poor elocution in one heap, and the lecture itself in another." Once that was done, Wilde's ideas became "as useful as they are attractive. He goes far beyond the mere tinsel and gew-gaws of life in his ideas of the beautiful; he preaches the doctrine, that the good, the substantial, and truly elegant should enter into the fabric of our social life." [36]

During his tour Wilde himself became a cottage industry. He derived publicity but no profits from several comic performers who followed in his wake giving parodies of his lectures. Six months before Wilde came to Mobile, A. B. Treat, an enterprising merchant of Water Street, advertised furniture that blended the asthetics of the lily and the sunflower. The ad's effectiveness was described by an observer who saw a disciple of Wilde saunter into Treat's store and ask in "an utterly-utter tone of voice . . . to look at a chamber set 'of the Renaissance style, you know—something decidedly on the aesthetic order.' " Treat replied, "We have specimens of high art, sir, in that line, too superlatively beautiful for description, worthy to be enshrined in the *boudoir* of a queen, and calculated to embrace the soul of the beholder with raptuous emotions of artistic delight."

The deal was struck, and both merchant and customer were pleased. [37] After Wilde left Mobile, two other businessmen used his presence for commercial gain. In an advertisement that set new highs in non-sequiturs, one firm noted, "Oscar Wilde's lecture was nothing extra, but Humphrey & Bostwick have just received a large lot of Baker's cocoa, vanilla chocolate and Mack's milk and chocolate." More sensible was M. P. Levy and Company of North Water Street. The firm urged customers to come in and "buy one of its handsome summer suits offered at cost to make room for their fall and winter stock." The customers should remember that even so bizarre a figure as Wilde could compel admiration because " 'Dress makes the Man' aesthetically speaking. Therefore you who desire to be well dressed and admired, now is your time to call . . . M. P. Levy and Co. . . . ." [38]

Wilde's tight schedule made it impossible for him to remain long in Mobile. He left the next day on the Mobile and Montgomery railroad (also a part of the Louisville and Nashville Line) to keep a lecture engagement at McDonald's Opera House in Montgomery, two hundred miles to the north. He would repeat his Mobile success at the state's capital before traveling to cities in Georgia (Columbus, Atlanta, Savannah, and Augusta), South Carolina (Charleston), North Carolina (Wilmington), and Virginia (Norfolk and Richmond). Wilde returned to New York, and remained in the Northeast until December 27, 1882, when he sailed for England on board the *Bothnia.*

What did it all mean? Wilde's visit to Alabama was a brief but unusual interruption in the life of an impoverished state struggling to recover and to survive—and perhaps one day to prosper. By and large, Mobilians and other Alabamians liked their improbable visitor. It was clear that Wilde had respect and affection for the region. He said, "The very physique of the people in the South is far finer than that in the North, and a temperament infinitely more susceptible to the influences of beauty." [39] As he put it, "I like the Southern people, although you have let the Northern people get ahead of you in art. I think that you are more adapted to the cultivation of art . . . . You are of a warmer temperament and of a more imaginative turn of mind." [40]

Alabamians, like other Southerners, admired courage, and it took courage to dress in outrageous costume and appear in public, particularly when many in the audience were reflexively hostile. There was an additional ingredient of bravery when it was done by a single individual, a young stranger who was unafraid to speak his mind. Having little money themselves, Alabamians admired the ability to make money, and Wilde's financial success, however he accomplished it, earned their respect. The South's historic love of oratory was another advantage for Wilde. Confident that they had brought public speaking to full flower, Alabamians admitted that while Wilde was different, he had style. In emulation and tribute to Wilde, the Tuscaloosa *Clarion* punctured the egos of candidates for office, the "many too utterly utter dignitaries who [see themselves] most supremely and irreproachable well adapted, qualified, [and] transcendently capable of filling . . . every place in the gift of people." [41]

After Wilde left Mobile, the city settled back into the heat and lethargy of summer. The Forrest and Atlantic baseball teams continued their rivalry. The military companies marched and counter marched. Yet the citizens did not forget the idiosyncratic visitor from Ireland. A broader world had spoken from the stage at Frascati that night, and Mobilians became, if only for a while, a part of the cultural avant garde. Oscar Wilde's brief presence among them would remain a topic of conversation for a long time to come.

Notes

The authors wish to thank Charles John Torrey III of the Museum of the City of Mobile and George Schroeter of the Mobile Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Department for their valuable research assistance.

[1] See Mary Louise Ellis, "Improbable Visitor: Oscar Wilde in Alabama, 1882," *Alabama Review* 39 (October 1986): 243-60; Lloyd Lewis and Henry Justin Smith, *Oscar Wilde Discovers America* (New York, 1936); and Kevin O'Brien, *Oscar Wilde in Canada* (Toronto, 1982); letters written by Wilde in America may be found in Rupert Hart-Davis, ed., *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* (New York, 1962), and the same author's *More Letters of Oscar Wilde* (London, 1985). Of the numerous book length studies devoted to Wilde, none consider his southern tour in much detail. The most recent and best biography is Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (New York, 1988). For Wilde's arrival see *Harper's Weekly* 26 (January 14, 1882): 27; New York *Daily Tribune*, January 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 1882; New York *Daily Tribune*, January 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 1882; New York *Herald*, January 3, 10, 13, 1882; *New York Times*, January 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 1882.

[2] Mobile *Daily Register*, January 6, 1882.

[3] Ibid., January 3, 1882; Tyrone Power, *Impressions of America, during the years 1833, 1834, 1835* (London, 1836), 1: 123.

[4] Hart-Davis, *More Letters from Wilde*, 46.

[5] Patrick Byrne, *The Wildes of Merrion Square* (London and New York, 1953); Horace Wyndham, *Speranza A Biography Of Lady Wilde* (London, 1951); Eric Lambert, *Mad With Much Heart A Life of the Parents of Oscar Wilde* (London, 1967).

[6] From a large field of scholarship see Robin Spencer, *The Aesthetic Movement: Theory and Practice* (London, 1972); Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Noveau* (New York, 1969); and Andrew Rose, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (Oxford, 1977).

[7] Richard Kelly, *George Du Maurier* (Boston, 1983); Hesketh Pearson, *Gilbert & Sullivan, a Biography* (New York, 1935); David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan, the Creative Conflict* (Rutherford, NJ, 1986).

[8] Mobile *Daily Register*, January 9, 1882.

[9] *Harper's Weekly* 26 (July 22, 1882): 461-62.

[10] Mobile *Daily Register*, March 7, 1882.

[11] Seale *Russell Register*, May 10, 1882. See also issue of May 4, 1882.

[12] The text of the Decorative Arts and the House Beautiful speeches varied, but see Richard Butler Glazner, ed., *Decorative Art in America* (New York, 1906), and Kevin O'Brien, "The House Beautiful: A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde's American Lecture," *Victorian Studies* 27 (June 1974): 395-418.

[13] Hart-Davis, *Letters of Oscar Wilde*, 86.

[14] Mobile *Daily Register*, January 17, 1882.

[15] The last sentence in "Impressions of America" declared, "It is well worth one's while to go to a country which can teach us the beauty of the word FREEDOM and the value of the thing LIBERTY." See H. Montgomery Hyde, ed., *The Annotated Oscar Wilde . . .* (London, 1982), 379-82.

[16] The Mobile Theatre of 1882 opened in 1855. See file on Mobile's theatres in Museum of the City of Mobile; George Matzenger, *Mobile Directory For The Year 1882* (Mobile, 1882), 261; Erwin Craighead, *From Mobile's Past Sketches of Memorable People and Events* (Mobile, 1925), 228; Edward Devereaux, "History and Theatrical Activities at the Mobile Theatre, 1860-1875" (M.A. thesis, Michigan State College, 1952); Francis Bailey, "History of the Stage in Mobile, 1824-1850" (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1934).

[17] Montgomery *Advertiser*, February 19, 1882.

[18] Tuscaloosa *Clarion*, May 30, 1882.

[19] Mobile *Daily Register*, June 22, 1882.

[20] Ibid., March 15, 1882.

[21] Vicksburg *Daily Commercial*, June 15-16, 1882; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, June 17-18, 25-27, 1882; San Antonio *Evening Light*, June 22, 1882; Houston *Daily Post*, June 24-25, 1882. See also Norman W. Alford, "Oscar Wilde in Texas," *Texas Quarterly* 10 (Summer 1967): 193-98.

[22] Mobile *Daily Register*, June 13, 1892.

[23] See Frascati file at the Museum of the City of Mobile, especially a five-page typed manuscript dated February 27, 1975, by James A. Erskine. See also Mobile *Daily Register*, April 30, 1882. The paper ran daily coverage of events at the park.

[24] *Tenth Census, 1880, Social Statistics of Cities*, 2: 191.

[25] Mobile *Daily Register*, February 4, 1882.

[26] Ibid., June 23, 1882.

[27] Hudson Strode, *Jefferson Davis: Tragic Hero The Last Twenty-Five Years 1864-1889* (New York 1964), 459-61. The autographed picture of Wilde is on display at Beauvoir and appears with this article.

[28] The Selma *Morning Times*, June 27, 1882, faulted Davis for receiving Wilde, while the Montgomery *Advertiser*, June 29, 1882, praised the ex-president for his action.

[29] Mobile *Daily Register*, June 28, 1882. See Battle House file at the Mobile Public Library, Local History and Geneaology Department, for numerous newspaper accounts. See also James F. Sulzby, Jr., *Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts* (Tuscaloosa, 1960), 41-48; Elizabeth Barrett Gould, *From Fort to Port, An Architectural History of Mobile, Alabama, 1711-1918* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 148-49.

[30] William Warren Rogers, Jr., " 'The Past is Gone,' Ulysses S. Grant Visits Mobile," *Gulf Coast Historical Review* 5 (Fall 1989): 7-19.

[31] Mobile *Daily Register*, June 23, 25, 1882.

[32] Ibid., June 22, 1882.

[33] Manuscript Census, 1880, Population, Mobile County, 26. In 1882 John Tompkins was 49 and Fanny (spelled Fannie in the census) was 45; *Mobile Directory 1882*, 49, 265; Craighead, *From Mobile's Past*, 55. See p. 10 where Craighead, who knew Fanny Williams, wrote, "What a lovely woman."

[34] Mobile *Daily Register*, June 28-29, 1882.

[35] Charleston *News and Courier*, July 8, 1882.

[36] Mobile *Daily Register*, June 30, 1882.

[37] Ibid., January 31, 1882. Merchants in other cities also exploited Wilde's name. For example see advertisement in New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, June 25, 1882: "Oscar Wilde creates a sensation wherever he appears, but LELAND has caused a greater, by selling Straw Hats at 15c."

[38] Mobile *Daily Register*, July 1-2, 1882.

[39] Atlanta *Constitution*, July 5, 1882.

[40] Charleston *News and Courier*, July 8, 1882.

[41] Tuscaloosa *Clarion*, May 30, 1882.

William Warren Rogers is Professor of History at Florida State University and Robert David Ward is Professor of History Emeritus at Georgia Southern University.

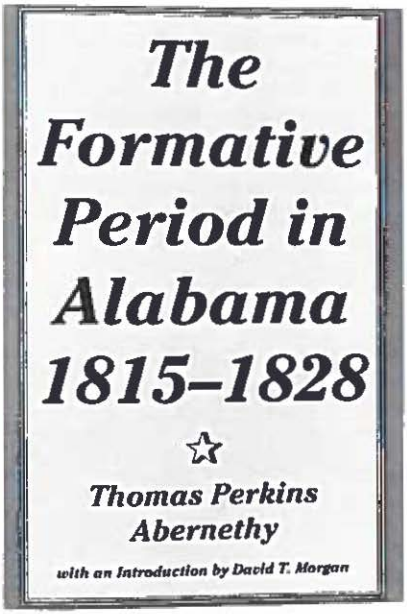
Oscar Wilde's Lecture.

There was a large attendance at Frascati last evening to see and hear Oscar Wilde. Mobile æstheticism and Mobile curiosity turned out in force. Even the mules pulling the street cars were æsthetic, having sunflowers stuck in their head gear. We will give an account of the lecture in our next issue.

Mobile Register, *June 28, 1882*

Book Reviews

Thomas Perkins Abernethy. *The Formative Period in Alabama, 1815-1828.* Introduction by David T. Morgan. 1922, 1965. Reprint, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990, pp. 220. $17.95. ISBN 0-8173-0068-6



Thomas Abernethy prepared *The Formative Period* under the supervision of the great frontier historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Abernethy carefully addressed a broad range of forces—geographical, economic, ethnic, political—which shaped the history of the Mississippi Territory. His discussion of the rivalry between the Tombigbee settlements in the eastern half of the territory and the Mississippi River settlements to the west is a revealing glimpse into the life of a primitive, sparsely settled world. In setting forth Alabama's transition to separate territorial status and eventual statehood, he shows how both local and national concerns affected the state-making process.

The Formative Period does not deal extensively with the life and culture of Mobile, Tuscaloosa, or other towns. Like his mentor, Abernethy was more interested in the economic and political structures of inland frontier society. Thus he takes pains to detail the patterns of settlement which followed the War of 1812, and to show how the different ambitions of planters and plain folk led them to settle on different soils—which minimized class-based economic competition. Yet, Abernethy does present several potentially explosive aspects of the land-use question. Title to lands, for instance, was sometimes unsure; certainty could disappear in a maze of colonial grants, Indian titles, and federal laws. Settlers were infuriated by the activities of organized bands of land speculators, who bid up prices. And even a man with plenty of money and clear title might not be able to handle the delicate matter of "squatters."

The Formative Period effectively describes planters, their political stances, and the frustrating and unpredictable difficulties of transporting cotton. To a modern reader Abernethy's treatment of the plain folk is equally interesting. In presenting a class of yeoman settlers who sought economic freedom in subsistence farming, Abernethy anticipates the work of Steven Hahn, whose *Roots of Southern Populism* (1938) covers up-country culture in detail.

Abernethy is at his best dealing with frontier politics. He makes it clear that the average voter in Alabama was often willing to follow the lead of wealthy or well-educated neighbors. Planters generally sought to placate the mass of citizens while pursuing their own interests. The 1819 constitution, which remained in force until the breakup of the Union, allowed for manhood suffrage and apportioned the state according to white population—clearly "popular" provisions. But the same document gave the preponderance of governing power to the legislature, whose membership was recruited largely from the planter class.

The disadvantages of blatant power-mongering were illustrated by the fate of the "Georgia" faction. William Wyatt Bibb, Charles Tait, and other leaders came to Alabama after distinguished careers in Georgia as allies of William H. Crawford, who made sure that his friends received the lion's share of federal patronage in Alabama. The Georgians occupied rich lands in the Huntsville and Montgomery areas, and were likewise involved in the affairs of the state's earliest banks. This combination of political and economic control invited hostility, especially after the financial crises which followed the Panic of 1819.

Israel Pickens, who served as governor from 1821-1825, was the politician who most effectively exploited resentment of the Georgia men. With the support of debt-ridden Alabamians, he backed the creation of a "people's bank" designed to generate a much-needed circulating medium of exchange while remaining under popular control. The resulting Alabama State Bank commenced operations in 1824—the same year that Andrew Jackson swept the state's presidential vote. Jackson's convincing win came despite the opposition of many planters and editors, who supported either Crawford or John O. Adams. Modern readers might conclude that the political ruin of the Crawfordites was complete. Abernethy shows that such was not the case.

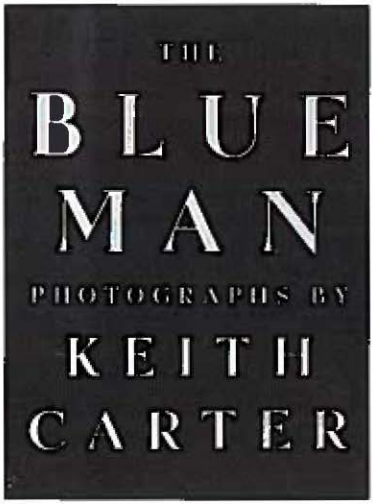
By 1828 when Jackson again carried Alabama, many of his former critics had changed their minds. The state bank was no longer an issue, and the people were superficially unified. Yet new forces were stirring by the end of the decade—brought to the forefront by Dixon Hall Lewis, a politician who sought to commit Jackson men to a rigid states'-rights sectionalism. Lewis subsequently had an influential career, in spite of the fact that he was tied by family and philosophy to the original Georgia faction! The ironies of Alabama history were not lost on Abernethy.

The Formative Period does have its weaknesses, notably in its treatment of black and Indian cultures. With respect to both, Abernethy's early twentieth-century assumptions are obvious and his conclusions suspect. Yet David T. Morgan's introduction places these shortcomings in perspective, and provides a fine discussion of an "Alabama Classic."

Paul M. Pruitt, Jr. The University of Alabama

Keith Carter. *The Blue Man.* Afterword by Anne W. Tucker and Keith Carter. Houston: Rice University Press, 1990, pp. 144. $34.95. ISBN 0-89263-272-0

The scholar who opens *The Blue Man* by Keith Carter expecting purely documentary photographic images will be disappointed. To be sure, there are plenty of images here that could well be described as documentary. But there are many that most certainly are not, and this latter group forces us to question what our eyes have seen in the more straightforward images, which is exactly what they are intended to do.



Keith Carter is interested in the deep rural areas of East Texas. The people there, with their rich racial mix, their storytelling traditions, their close relationship to the soil and to the animals around them attract the steady gaze of Carter's camera. But as Carter himself warns us in the interview with Anne Tucker, Wortham Curator at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the pictures are often just a bit off center. There is a lurking element of violence in the love. There is obsession with the past buried in images of the present.

Most of the images are unmanipulated. People show the camera their garden, or their house, or we see the evidence, both good and bad, of man's passage, but in one notable series, Carter has acquired a canvas backdrop such as might have been used by the sort of itinerant photographer who traveled the country before World War I. The canvas boasts clouds and cherubs pointing the way to heaven, social progress, or whatever. In front of this canvas Carter has placed or encouraged a wild variety of animals. A racoon sniffs the nose of a large and mildly surprised bloodhound, a hawk and an owl peer at the camera, a fawn nuzzles a donkey. Is he suggesting a peaceable kingdom? Possibly, but the dead snapping turtle dripping mud and the coyote staring around the side of the curtain suggest that the series is more complex than that. Most complex of all is an image titled "Elizabeth and Snake Tyler County" which features the nude back of a woman who is holding a snake at arm's length. Biblical allegories are obvious except the woman seems so earnest and decent, and there is mud on her feet.

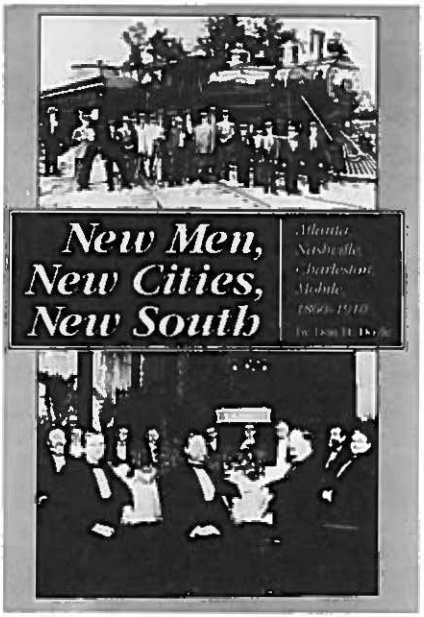
Certainly religion plays a part in what Carter is trying to suggest, but like every other facet of life in Carter's East Texas cosmology, religion is touched with violence. A photograph titled "Jesus and Guns Hardin County" captures a welter of tacky signs proclaiming "Jesus Saves" and "Three Rivers Gun Sales" in the same visual breath. Even here, however, nothing is as simple as it seems. A photograph of a river baptizing is straight in its depiction of earnestness and decency in the faces of the minister and the pre-teen boy involved in the ancient ritual.

Carter uses contradiction, elegy, irony, humor, and celebration, all tools of the articulate, educated outsider. Yet he somehow manages to adopt an insider's point of view. He makes it clear that these are his people. Jack Witt, who sits on a bucket with two fawns cradled in his arms, and Fox Harris, who walks on stilts outside his voodoo garden of African symbols are people who seem worth knowing more about. The young women who stand with their backs to the camera showing their beautiful hair, done up for Sunday services, are people who matter.

The Blue Man will give the reader no new facts about East Texas. For the careful reader, however, it will provide a wealth of insights about life at a very basic level in a specific and interesting culture. If the book works the way its creators intended, it may also spark the viewer's imagination.

F. Jack Hurley — Memphis State University

Don H. Doyle. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990, *xxii*, pp. 369. Cloth, $39.95. ISBN 0-8078-1883-6/Paper, $12.95. ISBN 0-8078-4270-2



Don Doyle, professor of history at Vanderbilt University, has made a major contribution to the study of American urban and southern history with this book. Doyle compares the history of Nashville to that of Atlanta, Charleston, and Mobile from the end of the Civil War into the Progressive period.

Resting upon a prodigious amount of research in newspapers, city directories, manuscript collections, manuscript censuses, and unpublished doctoral dissertations, the book focuses upon the role of cities and their business leaders in the evolution of the New South. Doyle persuasively argues that urban entrepreneurs who "built the factories, banks, railroads, and cities . . . were the central forces in the making of the modern South" (p. *xi*). Doyle concedes that planters controlled life within rural districts because they owned the land, but he adds that "they mounted no effective political or ideological challenge of any significance to the new order of cities and factories that the urban business class busily constructed after the war" (p. 317). Such an emphasis on the urban phase of southern history for this era is long overdue.

What interests Doyle the most is the emergence, after roughly 1880, of a distinct southern urban business class composed of wealthy and prominent members of the business community. Central to the process of building a sense of class unity for these people were their activities in downtown business clubs, merchants' exchanges, chambers of commerce, and similar organizations. Their wives also made an important contribution to the creation of the "business class" with their own clubs and voluntary associations.

Mobile receives perhaps less attention than the other cities, but its distinctive character emerges. It was more like Charleston than Atlanta or Nashville, but, according to Doyle, it was less aristocratic, less pretentious, and less exclusive than the older Atlantic seaport. Doyle argues that this was because Mobile lacked the strong antebellum upper class which persisted in Charleston after the war. Above all, the flavor of society in Mobile after the war was that of a city devoted to Mardi Gras mirth and festivity. Yet, as time went by, Mobile businessmen attuned to New South ideals began to put even the celebration of Mardi Gras to practical uses. The Mardi Gras empress of 1900 talked of the need for a railway depot and harbor improvements while urging onlookers to put aside the cares of daily life.

Doyle is likely to receive some criticism for his analysis of the differentials in urban growth rates between his four cities. Charleston is portrayed as a city with too many "old fogies" and Mobile as one with too many men who thought too much about the pleasures of Mardi Gras. But Doyle correctly notes that the slow growth of both cities compared to that of Nashville and especially Atlanta was also due to many factors beyond the control of local business leaders, such as the destruction of the factorage system after the Civil War, the erratic behavior of the market for southern cotton (which remained essential to the economies of the seaport cities), and the proliferation of railroads which provided direct rail access for southern interior cities to northern markets. Doyle is unable to say to what extent the decline of Charleston and Mobile was due to those impersonal factors or to the weaknesses of the business leadership in those cities.

This is a fine book that ought to be read by all students of southern and American urban history. Moreover, residents of the four cities will find it enjoyable and informative reading. It is also a handsomely produced book, with numerous, well-chosen photographs.

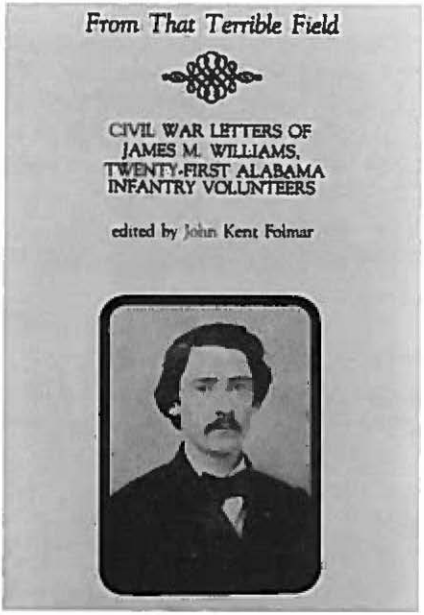
James Michael Russell University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

John Kent Folmar, ed. *From that Terrible Field: Civil War Letters of James M. Williams, Twenty-First Alabama Infantry Volunteers.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981, *xvi*, pp. 187. $18.95. ISBN 0-8173-0068-6

From that Terrible Field is an interesting and useful addition to an already extensive literature of that genre. James M. Williams enlisted at the outbreak of war and served as a junior officer until 1865. Employed in Mobile, he spent most of the war as part of the harbor defences of that city. However, his unit

became part of the mass assembled at Shiloh to contain the damage done by Grant at forts Donaldson and Henry. Hence, about a quarter of the letters involve incidents in the Shiloh-Corinth campaign of the summer of 1862.

The largest, and most interesting, sections deal with the defence of Mobile Bay. Williams progresses from being part of a group of young men out on an extended lark on the seashore to the very serious commander of one of the main harbor forts in the 1864 campaign. His decision to evacuate Fort Powell saved his command, but made him the Confederate scapegoat for the failure to stop Admiral Farragut. Williams spent the rest of the war commanding water batteries on the delta region around Mobile, and finally won local Confederate acceptance of the correctness of his decision at Fort Powell. Interestingly in this regard, Williams argues that the naval defeat of 1864 was due to local Confederate greed. A sufficient number of mines to stop Farragut would have made the port of Mobile too dangerous for use by blockade runners and therefore were not used.



Three facets elevate these letters above the level of the normal Civil War junior officer complaining of bad food, incompetent senior commanders, and homesickness for the bride he left behind. The first is Williams' background. He was born in Ohio and left a large family in Iowa to accept a position in Georgia in 1858. By 1861 this transplanted Yankee had joined a local militia company and married a southern girl. Williams remained a Southerner for the rest of his life. His wartime letters reflect the fervor of the new convert. In fact, as noted by the editor, Williams appears to be the only southern officer who ever served for any length of time under General Braxton Bragg who had a good word to say about Bragg's generalship. A minimum of correspondence was maintained with his family in Iowa. There are several references to letters exchanged via Havana by both Williams and his wife.

A second notable characteristic of these letters is their insight on the politics of army command. Perhaps half the letters deal with this topic. Williams counts the days until there will be new elections for the unit's officers, and estimates his chances at displacing his immediate superiors at that time. He lobbies senior officers for support, studies Hardee's *Tactics*, and sometimes disregards orders in order to gain unit popularity.

Finally, the letters provide insight into and appreciation of medical aspects of army life. For example, the physical deterioration of the Confederate officer corps is well known. The Twenty-First Alabama was not a particularly active

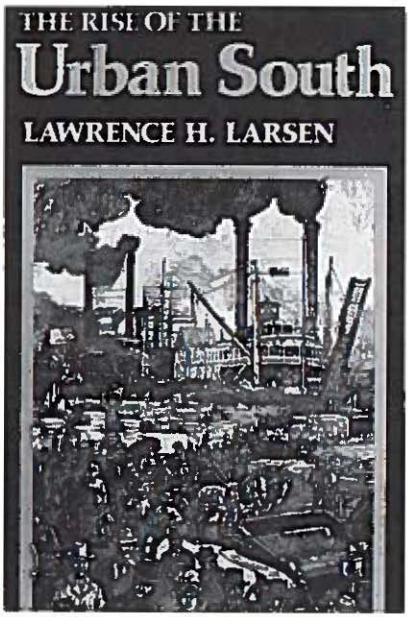
unit. Yet reference after reference is made to fellow officers who are sick, wounded, incapacitated, or dead. The dysentery problem is also underscored in the letters. The full impact of dysentery on field soldiers becomes apparent to the reader through the numerous descriptions in Williams's letters to his wife of his chronic bouts with the disease and the physical exhaustion which accompanied it.

The University of Alabama Press has done an excellent job. Most maps are appropriate and clear, and placed in the book near the pertinent letters. Background material and biographical references are concise and useful. This reviewer has only one criticism. A few maps and some illustrations appear to have been photocopied from some other work. In such cases the material is almost too dark to be useful. Otherwise this volume will be attractive reading for Civil War buffs, Gulf Coast residents, and anyone interested in the human drama of love and war.

Homer Blass Liberty University

Walter J. Fraser, Jr. *Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990, *xiii*, pp. 542. $29.95. ISBN 0-87249-643-0

Lawrence H. Larsen. *The Rise of the Urban South*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1985, *xi*, pp. 220. $22.00. ISBN 0-8131-1538-8



Ten years in the making, Walter J. Fraser's *Charleston! Charleston!* best exemplifies the genre of urban biography. The book is an ambitious, exhaustive account of the famous seaboard city from its inception in the spring of 1670

to the fall of 1989, when Charlestonians commenced digging out after their city had sustained almost a direct hit from Hurricane Hugo. Tales of piracy and slave insurrections, threats of invasion (by Native Americans, the British, and the Yankees), the travails associated with occupation by enemy armies, chronic economic woes, and an ongoing series of natural and man-made disasters (fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and epidemics) dot the pages of this hefty tome. Fraser's love affair with the city's built environment and his unabashed admiration for the pluck Charlestonians have demonstrated in the face of adversity dominate the story line. The author's chatty, informal narrative style readily calls to mind the sights, sounds, and smells of long-ago Charleston. Reading *Charleston! Charleston!* is tantamount to signing up for a three-century walking tour of the city!

Yet, as an academic historian Fraser must produce more than an entertaining, anecdotal travelogue. To achieve the goal of an "original synthesis" (p. *xi*) for professional scholars and the educated public, he has ploughed through an enormous amount of secondary literature and carefully mined the vast holdings of primary documents housed in the libraries, archives, and museums located in the Carolinas and the nation's capital. The thirty-page select bibliography, is a treasure trove for future scholars. Inspired by the school of historical writing known as "new social history," Fraser paid careful attention to the city's multicultural heritage. He also consciously compared and contrasted the experiences of Charleston's "inarticulate" with those of the urban elite. Finally, mindful of the pitfalls of local history, Fraser plotted Charleston's uneven pattern of growth and change alongside the historical twists and turns of the region and the nation.

In the end, however, *Charleston! Charleston!* will disappoint scholars. By emphasizing storytelling at the expense of professional concerns, Fraser has produced an unbalanced mix between gossip and events weighty in historical importance. Was it necessary to titillate the readers with tales of Judge J. Waties Waring playing "footsie under the table" (p. 396) with his future second wife, Elizabeth Hoffman Waring, while they were married to others? Does Fraser, the historian, really believe that the animosity white Charlestonians demonstrated toward the Warings resulted more from the personal (the flaunting of social convention occasioned by the judge's hasty divorce and remarriage) than the political (the judge's "landmark civil rights decisions" [p. 397])? Is it plausible that the cross burned on the judge's lawn, the gunfire and rock-throwing incident, and the oaths muttered at Elizabeth Waring reflected the outrage of white Charlestonians for the Warings' progressive stance on race relations?

Fraser's preoccupation with the details of Charleston's history causes him to neglect the central task of interpretation. While Fraser collects an impressive array of information about the city and its inhabitants, he does not provide a critical context for evaluating the data's significance. One example will suffice. Although Fraser unearthed significant statistical information detailing the inequalities of wealth in late eighteenth-century Charleston, the reader is *clueless* as to whether the degree of social stratification in the city was typical or atypical

of the era. Did similar conditions exist in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, or was Charleston's experience an anomaly? Here Fraser misses an opportunity to educate his readers about colonial social conditions.

While Fraser's study of Charleston is disappointing because it lacks an analytic framework, Lawrence Larsen's study of southern urbanization in the Gilded Age is unsatisfactory because it is based on faulty and contradictory reasoning. From the outset, it is not clear what the author seeks to prove in *The Rise of the Urban South*. For example, Larsen argues that any appraisal of city building in the South must "be considered on its own terms" (p. *x*). This perspective, he suggests, allows historians to conclude that limited progress in urban and industrial development occurred in the post-Reconstruction era. Yet, throughout the text, Larsen compares urbanization in the North and South, and speculates that except for "population differences . . . southern cities were not much different from their counterparts above the Mason and Dixon line" (p. 59). If regional variations in urban development did not exist, then how is it possible for Larsen to argue that "the South lacked the resources to achieve urban and hence economic parity with the rest of America [in the Gilded Age]" (p. 163)? Finally, Larsen's conclusions only add to the reader's bewilderment. Although leaders of the New South movement failed to advance an urban ethos (a point which demonstrates both "continuity and progress in southern city building" [p. 164]), they provided a future generation of civic boosters with the rationale for city building—"By 1985 the region had achieved many of the goals of the New South" (p. 164).

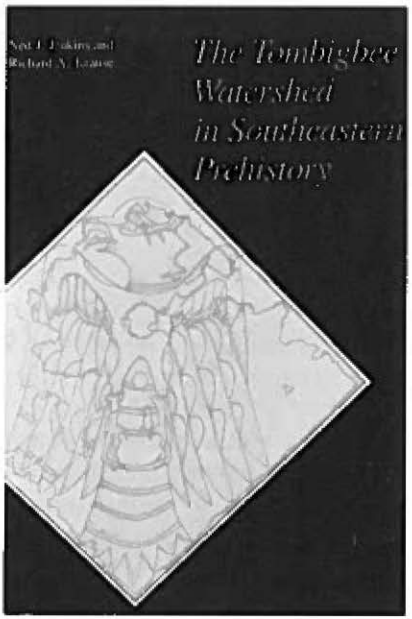
Readers interested in learning more about the history of the Gulf Coast should consult additional works. Fraser's study contains only passing references to the economic rivalry that existed in the antebellum era between the Gulf Coast cities, Mobile and New Orleans, and Charleston. Although Larsen's more comprehensive study of regional urban development includes some material on four Gulf Coast cities (Mobile, New Orleans, Key West, and Pensacola), the information contained in the monograph is fairly standard. No new data and no new analysis of city building along the Gulf Coast awaits the reader. *Charleston! Charleston!* will delight a reader interested in a thorough and entertaining account of the historic city. Unfortunately, although the premise of *The Rise of the Urban South* is noteworthy, the product is not.

Kathleen C. Berkeley University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Ned J. Jenkins and Richard A. Krause. *The Tombigbee Watershed and Southeastern Prehistory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986, *xii*, pp. 156. $18.95. ISBN 0-8173-0281-6

The Tombigbee River drains much of northern Alabama and northeastern Mississippi, eventually flowing into Mobile Bay after joining the Alabama River. The Tombigbee bisects the Gulf Coastal Plain, providing an important archaeological cross-section of Native American cultures of the Coastal Plain and adjacent Gulf Coast.

Rather than covering the entire Tombigbee Watershed, much of *The Tombigbee Watershed in Southeastern Prehistory* summarizes knowledge gained through work conducted in the Gainesville Reservoir of west-central Alabama. It was done during the 1970s as part of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway archaeological projects funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The body of information in this volume was previously published in a five volume set by the Office of Archaeological Research (OAR) at the University of Alabama. In addition the considerable amount of archaeological research carried out in both the upper and lower portions of the Tombigbee Watershed are not included. Also, few references are cited after the period of active fieldwork in Gainesville Reservoir.



The book reflects the two authors' respective research interests. The introduction and conclusion, written by Krause, defines archaeological concepts and terminology used in the data presentation, while the remaining three chapters are Jenkin's cultural-historical summary of the region presented in the OAR reports. Specialists in the field of archaeology will be most interested in the definitions and details of terminology; while the amateur and general public will be principally interested in the core of the book which outlines the Gulf Formational, Woodland, and Mississippian states of Southeastern prehistory.

This book presents the authors' interpretations of aboriginal lifestyles over twenty-five hundred years (1000 B.C. to A.D. 1450) for much of Mississippi and Alabama. Each of the three time periods mentioned above is discussed in terms of cultural variation through the area, trade, material culture, subsistence practices, ceremonialism, settlement patterns, and relative cultural chronologies.

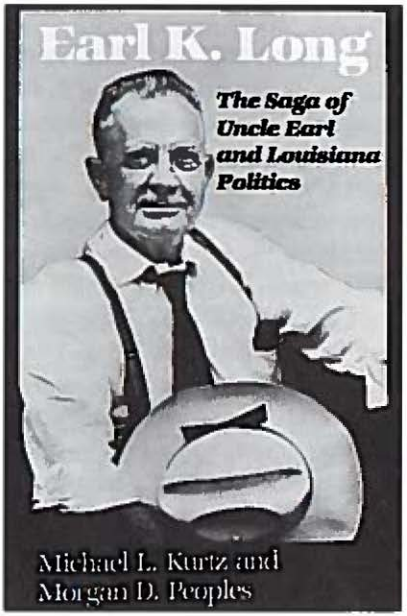
The authors contend that the evolution and development of prehistoric cultures within the Tombigbee Watershed is characterized by a continuity of populations throughout the region's prehistoric period with two notable exceptions. Around 100 B.C., the first change in cultural continuity was marked by local populations which were replaced by peoples (Miller culture) from the northwest, possibly western Tennessee. The second break occurred around A.D. 1000 when local populations became more like their Mississippian neighbors. Short-distance movement of Mississippian people into the area precipitated cultural changes. Not all archaeologists are convinced of the Miller and Mississippian population movements, but Jenkins and Krause present a well-reasoned argument which deserves further testing and evaluation.

In the concluding chapter the authors are concerned with taxonomy, archaeological concepts, and cultural events and processes for the Gulf Formational, Woodland, and Mississippian stages. Economic variables are emphasized within a general framework of systems theory and general evolutionary theory.

The Tombigbee Watershed in Southeastern Prehistory is an important reference for those interested in Southeastern and Gulf Coast archaeology between 100 B.C. and A.D. 1450. The modest price for this cloth bound copy makes it an attractive publication for those who do not wish to wade through the much larger and more costly documentation from which it was derived.

David Dye Memphis State University, Department of Anthropology

Michael L. Kurtz and Morgan D. Peoples. *Earl K. Long: The Saga of Uncle Earl and Louisiana Politics.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990, pp. 312. $24.95. ISBN 0-8071-1577-0



This book is an example of how those belonging to the school of historical quantification are winning in their battle to dominate scholarly dialogue, while those who approach history as good story-telling have received yet another setback at the hands of a university press.

The question is simple: should historians, in attempting to teach us history, write as engagingly and colorfully as possible, spicing up their manuscripts—particularly biographies—with well-worded quotations and anecdotes, thus making their work attractive to the masses? Or, should historians write for other historians, loading their works with lengthy first-person narratives and endless documentation for which fact-obsessed thesis committees lust? Sadly, the trend in history circles for some time now has been a decided emphasis on the latter to the detriment of the former.

It does not matter if your subject is the legendary Earl Long, brother of Huey Long, perhaps the single most powerful Southerner of this century who himself had a history of physical confrontations with political opponents. Earl Long called people by such epithets as "pip squeak," "pin head," or "miscreant," headed Louisiana's government during three explosive, non-consecutive terms, ramrodded bills and laws through a compliant legislature, stood for a moderate civil rights program during a time when most whites in Louisiana believed "mongrelization of the races" theories, ran off with a French Quarter stripper, and was forcefully confined by his own family to a state mental institution while

still in office. None of this matters. The new history calls for quantification at the cost of all else, and if we lose such a panting, wild-eyed, double-fisted drinker as Uncle Earl in the process, that is an acceptable price to pay for the state of scholarship we live in. "Just give me the facts, ma'am."

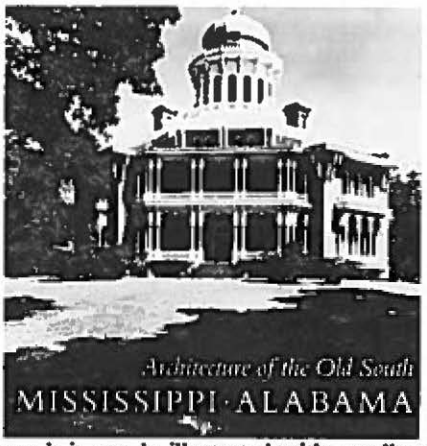
While Michael L. Kurtz and Morgan D. Peoples have done a first-rate job of research and seem to know their subject—or at least the "official" Earl—better than many Louisiana historians, they have inadvertently squeezed all of the life out of one of the most improbable leaders ever to govern a state that has a distinct taste for political juggling and animals acts. Something that could have been a historical hayride of political fun for all of us turns out instead to be a standard political biography making Earl Long as exciting as Arthur H. Vandenberg.

Although the authors give us the only complete profile of Long to date, sketching in useful details of his political exile in the 1940s and relying heavily on accounts of the governor's supposed connections with the criminal underground from the voluminous files of the FBI, they stop short of the "warts and all" approach so engagingly presented by the late A. J. Leibling in his *Earl of Louisiana.* But perhaps Leibling haunts this work anyway—as a figure of intimidation.

After all, how can any historian follow a book that is certainly the political equivalent of *A Confederacy of Dunces*? After Leibling was done with Long—or was it the other way around?—there were few historians up to the task of telling the complete Long story. To their credit, Kurtz and Peoples try, and as a factual, well-informed work this book serves as a reference source or a companion piece to other books about Louisiana, foremost among them A. J. Leibling's *Earl of Louisiana.*

Garry Boulard — New Orleans

Mills Lane. *Architecture of the Old South: Mississippi and Alabama.* New York: Abbeville Press, 1989, pp. 203. $55.00. ISBN 1-55859-008-0



This volume is the fifth in a series by Lane that delineates the progress of architecture in the states of the "Old Confederacy." Although they have a common theme, each can be read as a separate entity. Therefore, one does not have to go back to the first volume to enjoy the fifth. Quite wisely, Lane has enlisted the help of scholars who have specialized in certain areas and possess unusual expertise. In this case Robert Gamble has assisted for Alabama and Ronald W. and Mary Warren Miller for Mississippi. The work is amply illustrated with excellent photography by Van Jones Martin and precise drawings by Gene Carpenter and Deborah Lewis.

After a brief glimpse at the architecture of the Colonial period, which we can experience only through drawings that have survived from the eighteenth century, Lane takes us on a chronological ramble through Alabama and Mississippi to examine the buildings built between 1800-1860. In turn, he deals with the frontier, the Federal Period, the Greek Revival, and the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles. He repeatedly emphasizes that Deep South architecture did not create itself out of a vacuum, but was the product of international trends, influenced by the regions from which the clients emigrated, the sources available to the designers and, particularly along the Gulf Coast, the climate.

The book is enhanced by thumbnail sketches of the lives of both local builders whose talents and knowledge varied widely, and professionals—the "experts from out-of-town." Much space is given to the sources and inspirations employed, such as the pattern books of Asher Benjamin and Minard Lefever and, on a more philosophical level, the writings and doctrines of the New York Ecclesiological Society.

While the buildings discussed include those designed for governmental, institutional, and religious uses, most are residential. The book's most serious shortcoming is its treatment of residential architecture. Nowhere is there a site plan that indicates that the residence illustrated was only one part of a complex that contained all the elements needed for the lifestyle that the principal component dominated. Nowhere are we shown the relationship between the residence and its dependencies—the kitchen, the servants' quarters, the smokehouse, the ice house, the privies, the stables, the well, and the house garden. Nor is mention made of the fact that the interiors were usually decorated with a wild assortment of colors and patterns, expressed in stencil work, striping, ornamental wallpapers, and patterned carpets. Hence, we receive an impression of the architecture as it has been adapted for use today and not as it was created.

Nevertheless, the book is well worth adding to one's library. It reminds us of how fortunate we are to have been visited by first class professionals such as Gallier and Dakin, Button, Sloan, Wills and Dudley, and others.

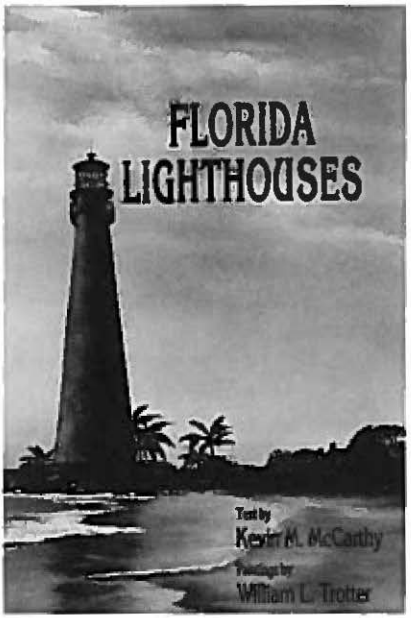
They have left us a rich legacy of nineteenth-century architecture. It is a legacy worthy of our study, admiration, and wholehearted preservation efforts.

Nicholas H. Holmes, Jr. Mobile

Kevin M. McCarthy. *Florida Lighthouses.* Paintings by William L. Trotter. Maps by Marjorie A. Niblack. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990, pp. 134. Cloth, $ 19.95. ISBN 0-8130-0982-0/Paper, $9.95. ISBN 0-8130-0993-6

There are images which attach themselves to us so early in our childhood that we cannot remember not recognizing them. Who can recall not knowing what a fire engine or airplane is or what a policeman does? There must be even more primordial memories and images which shape our consciousness, but these are pretty basic. Lighthouses seem to be in this category. Does anyone recall not knowing what a lighthouse was or what it did? Furthermore can anyone imagine their being unfriendly or malevolent? Nonsense. They are the amicable,

dependable guardians of our shores. All this from one who never had to depend for his life on a particular light to guide him into the channel past shoals, reefs, or sandbars. Surely everyone is kindly disposed to lighthouses but most of us tend to take them for granted, like fire trucks, and thus miss the stories they have to tell. *Florida Lighthouses* helps fill this void, at least for the Sunshine State. At one time the bays, bayous, sandbars, barrier islands, rivers, and reefs of the state were marked by thirty lighthouses, along with one lightship off the St. John's River. These lighthouses are some of the oldest permanent structures in the state and, to the surprise of the uninitiated, they do not all look alike. Many were sturdy stone or brick versions of the traditional lighthouse, but others are built of an iron or steel framework which sits lightly on sand or coral and offers little wind or water resistance.



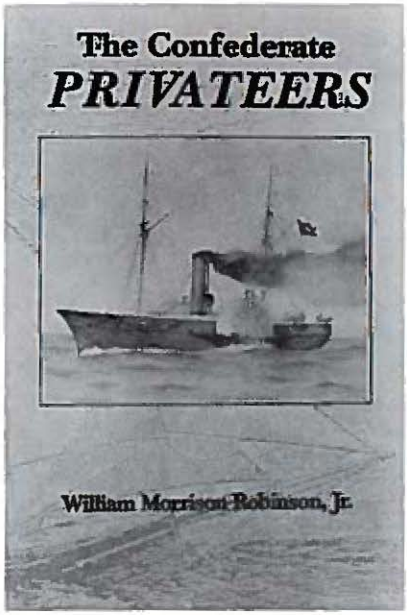
If lighthouses come in a variety of shapes and designs, most were located in a remote spot where their keepers and assistant-keepers toiled for months in isolation. Some had families with them, others visited theirs on shore once a fortnight, and still others endured their lonely vigil uninterrupted for months on end. Today most of the state's functioning lights are automatic and no keeper lives on the premises. But in the days of whale-oil or kerosene lights, when sailing vessels ruled the seas and steam's challenge was just beginning, the skills of the lighthouse keeper were as essential to navigators as was his light. Professor McCarthy has a brief chapter on each of Florida's lighthouses in which he outlines the structure's history and tells some interesting anecdotes about it and its keepers. There is a valuable map showing how to get to the structure (when that is possible as some are on islands which are now wildlife sanctuaries closed to the public). Also, each chapter reproduces a superb color painting of the structure in its prime done by William Trotter. Mr. Trotter's illustrations are unquestionably the best part of the book and I only regret that they were not reproduced larger. They are jewel-like and behind each lighthouse are the skys of Florida. What skys they are, too! Some with storm clouds, most with the range of blue that makes the state so famous. The illustrations make the book.

If someone were to take this small volume as a guide and visit every lighthouse, it would take weeks, given Florida's size. Even visiting four or five would take a while, again due to distances in the state. It may seem an extravagance to buy a book just for the one lighthouse near where you grew up, or to read it cover to cover in your easy chair miles away from that or any coastal lighthouse. If it is, this reviewer pleads guilty. I may not be able to remember when I did

not know what the Jupiter inlet lighthouse did, but after reading *Florida Lighthouses*, I'll never pass another without reflecting upon the history and dedication embedded in such a structure, and, if in Florida, reaching for my copy of *Florida Lighthouses.*

Michael Thomason University of South Alabama

William Morrison Robinson, Jr. *The Confederate Privateers.* 1928. Reprint, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990, pp. 388. $24.95. ISBN 0-87249-691-0



William Morrison Robinson's book on Confederate privateering, first published in 1928, is the classic study on the subject. Little had been written of Confederate privateering when Robinson's book appeared and not much has been added since.

The use of privately owned vessels to attack and to seize the commerce of an enemy state has gone on for centuries. During the wars of the Revolution and 1812, the Americans sent extensive numbers of privateers to sea. In 1856, opposition to privateering resulted in the Declaration of Paris in which the major European powers abolished it. The United States refused to adhere to the declaration. Robinson believed that as a result of this refusal the Confederacy was "not in the remotest way restrained from resorting to privateers."

The reader will soon discover Robinson's southern bias. He began his book with an impassioned defense of the decision to fire on Fort Sumter. The South, he wrote, was "goaded . . . into just reprisal." When Washington refused to negotiate the evacuation of Sumter, South Carolina and Georgia considered authorizing privateers. By early May 1861 the Confederate Congress had recognized a state of war between North and South and passed regulations governing letters of marque, prizes, and prize goods.

Robinson implied that simple gain came after "high patriotism" as the incentive behind privateering. Yet, generous economic provisions encouraged it. It was, however, inhibited by the decision of the major European maritime powers to prohibit belligerents from bringing prizes into home or colonial ports. This slowed Confederate attacks on distant Union shipping. The first Confederate privateering commission went, on May 10, 1861, to the thirty-ton schooner, the *Triton*, of Brunswick, Georgia. One of the smallest of the privateers, she had a crew of

twenty and mounted one six-pounder swivel gun. The largest of the privateers was the *Phenix*, a steamer of 1,644 tons. She had a crew of 243 and mounted seven guns.

Although privateers sailed from virtually all Confederate ports, the primary centers for this activity were Charleston and New Orleans. Initially there was great enthusiasm for privateering. Fortunes would be made with only one lucrative capture. As Robinson noted, this was sufficient to cause crewmen from some captured Union merchant vessels to join the Confederate side. The first year of the war was the best time for the privateers, and the rapid growth in the size of the U.S. Navy made it increasingly hazardous. Union warships shut down the privateering centers, one by one. In July 1861 New Orleans was closed. Not too long after this, Union troops and ships also ended privateering from Hatteras.

All the privateers had difficulty securing proper armament, and much of it remained makeshift. Robinson noted that the *Jefferson Davis*, for example, was armed with five cannon cast in England in 1801. Another problem was the Union threat to try captured privateersmen as pirates. Robinson discussed at length the trial in New York of the crew of the privateer *Savannah*. He believed that there were no executions because the Confederate government threatened to execute high-ranking Union prisoners. Ultimately, the Union government treated captured crewmen as prisoners of war. Privateering also led to new methods of war.

One of the most fascinating chapters in the book treats privateer ironclads and submarines. The privateer ram *Manassas* at New Orleans was, in effect, the first Civil War ironclad. Robinson also discussed the *Pioneer*, a privateer submarine. While never in battle, she helped influence construction of the *Hunley*, which sank the USS *Housatonic*. Robinson also treated raids by private adventurers who, with only small arms, captured Union vessels. One spectacular example of this was the commandeering of the Baltimore packet *St. Nicholas* by Confederates disguised as passengers. Robinson also discussed the river wars in the West, where Confederates harassed Union supply craft and tugs; privateering in the Pacific against Union shipments of gold by sea, and the whaling industry; the few Union efforts at privateering; and the cruise of the privateer schooner, the *Retribution*. With the Civil War the privateer passed from the world scene. Warfare had become a state preserve. Robinson's book is a partisan, yet lively and fascinating treatment of one of privateering's final and most colorful chapters.

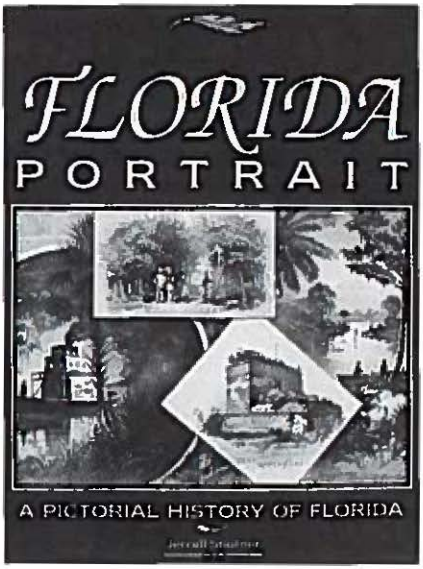
Spencer C. Tucker Texas Christian University

Jerrel Shofner. *Florida Portrait: A Pictorial History of Florida*. Tampa and Sarasota: Florida Historical Society and Pineapple Press, 1990, pp. 255. $29.95. ISBN 0-910923-80-0

Yet another "coffee table" book on the history of Florida? Readers should not be surprised at the increasing volume of studies on the peninsula state as scholars grapple with the task of chronicling and interpreting the past of an

area changing before their very eyes. Nor should they dismiss Jerrel Shofner's *Florida Portrait: A Pictorial History of Florida* as lacking merit as a popular history of Florida and her people past and present.

Professor Shofner, Chair of the Department of History at the University of Central Florida, is a well-known Florida historian and author of *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida During the Era of Reconstruction* and five other books. With words and pictures he endeavors to tell the Sunshine State's story from pre-history to the Space Age and beyond. A recurring theme in *Florida Portrait* is the existence of not one but many Floridas during the span of centuries: Spanish colonial outpost, American frontier state, member of the Confederacy, a part of the New South seeking its identity, real estate and "booster" mecca during the 1920s, haven for Latin Americans searching for a new life, and finally an urbanized high-tech gateway to the future.



The author is skilled in detailing the complex nature of his subject's economic, social, and political development in fourteen narrative chapters. After reading these pages, one comes away wishing for more discussion and analysis of how the promise of economic growth, beginning with Governor Napoleon B. Broward's 1905 scheme to drain the Everglades, ultimately turned into a threat to the very quality of life that so many people moved to Florida to enjoy in the first place. Also, some additional comment on the growing ethnic and cultural diversity and the tensions generated in cities like Miami would have been appropriate. But such criticisms should not detract from the overall quality of the text.

In any pictorial history the illustrations are as important to the book's effectiveness as the words used in the narrative. Since the choice of images for inclusion depend on availability and thematic considerations, final selections tend to be slightly subjective. The question of what to put in and what to leave out continually plagues and perplexes the would-be compiler. *Florida Portrait* makes use of many collections and draws from them prints, paintings, and above all photographs of Floridians past and their world. Many of these photos have rarely or never before been published. Photographic editor Milly St. Julien performs yeoman service in her role, and as author of the illustration captions.

Produced under the auspices of the Florida Historical Society, Professor Shofner's *Florida Portrait: A Pictorial History of Florida* offers a word and picture "family album" for Floridians seeking a sense of place in a state where so many citizens are fairly recent arrivals. Non-residents will find it a worthy

introduction to the life and times of the peninsula state. While not the final word on the subject, the book offers an entertaining read for the general public and is a useful addition to this genre of Florida historical writing. Those with an interest in the history of the Gulf Coast will find it worthy of more than a passing glance.

Robert A. Taylor University of South Alabama

S. Frederick Starr. *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans, 1800-1900.* Photographs by Robert S. Brantley. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, pp. 308. $35.00. ISBN 0-2621-9283-7

The French Quarter and the Garden District, both designated as National Historic Landmarks, are without question New Orleans' two most significant historic neighborhoods. While the Quarter and its buildings have been discussed in books and articles for decades, the Garden District has been less intensively scrutinized in print.

With the appearance of S. Frederick Starr's *Southern Comfort*, this situation has changed dramatically. The book encompasses the fields of social, economic, and architectural history to provide the reader with a complete portrait of the development of the Garden District.

The book proceeds chronologically with a relatively even division between architectural and social history throughout. It is a coffee-table book in size and layout. While the format allows for printing large format photographs, it also leaves large amounts of blank margins. Good use is made of illustrations housed in the New Orleans Notarial Archives, but unfortunately most of these are not well reproduced, and none of them are illustrated in color.

Starr's thesis is that there was very little that is particularly southern in the backgrounds of either Garden District homeowners or their architects, most of whom came from the Northeast or from England. While Starr shows that the owners of the largest houses were not from the planter class, their livelihoods were, in many cases, tied to that doomed economic system, with the result that many enjoyed their great residences for a short time before being forced into bankruptcy or emigration to another state.

The book contains some important architectural discoveries which, unfortunately, are offset by a number of errors and unsubstantiated claims. For example, we are given proof that James Gallier, Sr., did indeed design the fine Gothic Revival house at 2607 Prytania Street, built in 1850 for the Englishman Charles Briggs. Starr's research located the mortgage which Briggs had to obtain

in order to complete the debt he owed to Gallier's firm for constructing the house. Never before seen interior details of the house are also published, as well as its rather convoluted design history which actually began with a different client. Considering the extensive use that the author made of primary documentation, largely from nineteenth century notarial acts, it is surprising that he chooses to make a number of attributions of buildings to architects without the citation of any primary sources as support. In the case of the district's best Second Empire style house, the residence of Bradish Johnson at 2343 Prytania Street, he claims the design of the house to be the work of the architect Lewis E. Reynolds, but then fails to provide any reasons for the claim other than the apparent similarity of the staircase of that house with other Reynolds's works.

Another problem which hinders the presentation of the book's subject matter is the selection of historic visual documentation. For all of the space devoted to the development of nineteenth-century house plans, the author chose to illustrate none of the examples which are readily available to architectural historians at one or more of the city's research institutions. The Gallier and Sully office archives, in the collection of the Southeastern Architectural Archive of Tulane University, would have provided ample selections, some of which would have had the benefit of the original room labels to explain the uses of each section of the house. The omission of original architectural drawings also detracts significantly from the chapter on James Robb, whose remarkable Italianate villa was the talk of the district.

Floor plans are provided for a number of houses, including the Perkins and Buckner houses by Lewis E. Reynolds, the Grinnan house by Howard, and the Trufant house by Sully, but none is accompanied by a scale by which to judge the dimensions of the rooms, nor are any of the rooms labeled. In analyzing the plans of the Buckner and Robinson houses, Starr incorrectly identifies the parlors of the Buckner house, and, later in the book, captions a photograph of a chandelier in the house as being in the parlor when in fact it is located in another room. Other less significant errors, such as incorrectly captioned photographs, are also present, but they could have been the fault of the publisher.

In spite of the flaws, most of which would not be recognized by a lay reader, *Southern Comfort* is still a useful addition to the literature on New Orleans and its architecture. The references to primary sources alone will prove to be of great benefit to those who wish to pursue their own studies into the history, be it social or architectural, of this important neighborhood.

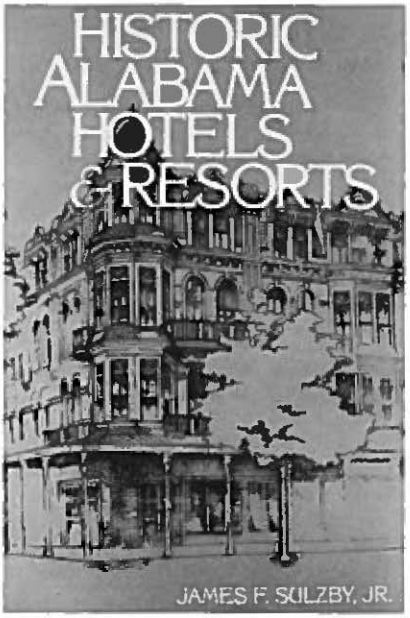
John C. Ferguson Historic Districts Landmark Commission, New Orleans

James F. Sulzby, Jr. *Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts.* 1960. Reprint, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989, pp. 294. $14.95. ISBN 0-8173-5309-7

In the three decades since its first publication in 1960, Jim Sulzby's *Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts* has become a classic of Alabamiana. Fifty-six famous Alabama hotels, stagecoach inns, taverns, and resorts are featured in

chapter essays illustrated with photographs and drawings, many of which are rare prints Sulzby collected. The bibliography reveals extensive research in newspapers, county probate records, local histories, and promotional pamphlets, as well as interviews with many of the descendants of the hotel owners.

An Alabama resort's success depended on its social life. Gala dinners, dances, and barbecues were favorite entertainments. For instance, the Blue Springs Hotel on the banks of the Choctawhatchee River was known throughout east Alabama for "Blue Springs Day" held every Fourth of July. The Blount Springs Hotel featured such bands of the era as the Mobile Brass Band and Gramb's Band of Birmingham. Touring theater companies also played at the resorts.



Many of the hotels and inns were located on springs known for restoring health, among them the Alabama White Sulphur Springs, Bailey Springs, Bladon Springs, Chandler Springs, Cook's Springs, and Talladega Springs. The Cullum Hotel was located on several mineral springs, one of which was so rich in bicarbonate of soda and so similar to the Vichy Springs of Auvergne, France, that it was known as the Alabama Vichy Spring. The hotel advertised this spring water as capable of removing freckles and tan, leaving one's skin as soft as baby's skin.

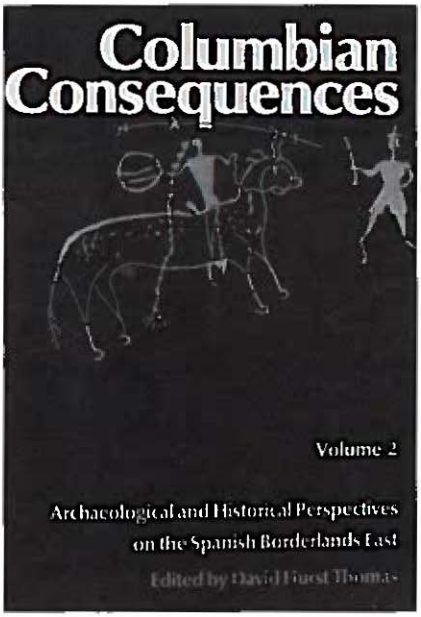
The hotels were located close to rivers where steamboats transported guests to within a comfortable carriage ride or on main stagecoach roads or near railroad stations. The hotels advertised in state and national newspapers and by publishing and distributing brochures. Some of the hotels were built as part of a promotion for a new town. The sixty-room Nottingham Hotel at Alpine was constructed in 1887 as part of the fanfare for a town which never developed and an iron furnace which was never built. The hotel struggled alone for several years in the ghost town before finally closing. One of the earliest hotels in east Alabama was the United States Hotel in Dadeville. The Dennis family built the hotel in 1836 and continued to operate it until 1900, when it was converted into a rooming house. It was demolished in the late 1950s.

Most of the hotels were gone when Sulzby researched and wrote the book. In the chapter on Alabama's White Sulphur Springs, Sulzby noted that it is "the last remaining old resort hotel building of noteworthiness still standing in Alabama." Today even this hotel has vanished, although a few outbuildings and at least one house remain on the property.

Reviewing the book in 1961, long-time Howard College/Samford University history professor William Pratt Dale II wrote that *Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts* "provided a physical setting for the memories of each reader, whether they be personal experience or 'twicetold tales' " [*The Alabama Review* 14 (January 1961): 77]. With the passing of three decades, people with personal memories of these places are gone, too, and Alabamians will value even more Sulzby's book and its evocation of the lost days of watering holes, taverns, and drummer hotels. An excellent addition to private libraries, *Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts* should also be in the collections of all public and school libraries in Alabama.

Leah Rawls Atkins Auburn University

David Hurst Thomas, ed. *Columbian Consequences.* Vol. 2, *Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990, *xv*, pp. 586. $60.00. ISBN 0-8747-390-7



Columbian Consequences is the latest volume in the David Hurst Thomas (ed.) archaeology home library (only Time-Life has more volumes). The book collects expanded versions of thirty-two papers that were presented in three symposia at the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) meetings in 1989. The integrity of the symposia is maintained in the tripartite division of the book. In addition to the symposia papers, overview chapters introduce each part, each containing an extended bibliography and a brief chronology of important events. Because it is impossible, in such limited space, to list chapters and authors individually, this review focuses on the general content and coherence of each part.

The purpose of the book is "to explore the range of contemporary thought about New World encounters and . . . provide an interested *public* with an accurate and factual assessment of what did—and did not—happen as a result of the Columbian encounter. Specifically, we probe the social, demographic, ecological, ideological, and human repercussions . . ." (Thomas, p. *xiii*; emphasis mine). Within the constraints of subject matter which is discussed below, *Columbian Consequences* is enormously successful in recreating the first centuries of Hispanic/Native American, and in one instance African, interactions.

Part 1 is titled "Spanish Entrada into the American Southeast," but might just as well have been titled progress report of the De Soto Industry. (Is it Soto, de Soto, or De Soto?) Jerald Milanich, who has spent the past decade examining the consequences of European invasion, provides an impressive introductory chapter. His points highlight the more substantive chapters that follow which discuss warfare, native societies, the impact of diseases, and the routes of the various Spanish expeditions. Soto, justifiably, receives the most attention, including one discussion of continuing scholarly disagreements concerning his route through Alabama. The chapters in this part are best characterized as descriptions of history as it wound its way through Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Alabama.

Part 2, titled "The Impact of Hispanic Colonization in the Southeast and Caribbean," begins with an excellent introductory essay by Kathleen Deagan, the doyenne of Spanish Colonial archaeology. This part is the least coherent of the three, due largely to the nature of the subject and limited number of practitioners. Where Milanich was able to introduce an internally consistent body of research, and Thomas raises editing to a fine art, Deagan presides over a spotty collection that contains only eight chapters.

Fortunately, strength is not measured in numbers alone. Each of the chapters ventures beyond local geographical confines into issues of global concern (e.g., world systems, thermodynamics, transculturation). Of special note are contributions from two renowned Hispanic/Caribbean scholars, José Maria Cruxent and Manuel García-Arevalo, whose work has previously been available only in Spanish. In addition Jane Landers must be singled out for her pioneering research on the African presence in Spain and the colonies.

Part 3 examines "The Missions of La Florida," which were distributed through Florida, the Georgia coast, and the southeastern coast of South Carolina to Port Royal Sound. In it Thomas exhibits his surgical skills as an editor by leading the reader through a sequence of papers that define the mission system. We begin with John Griffin's overview of the history of mission studies. Next there are studies on the collapse of native societies and survival of some native peoples, followed by a modern Franciscan perspective on Franciscan missions (both Michael Gannon and Conrad Harkins being O.F.M.), and the package is completed in archaeological studies of settlements, architecture, and diet. Reading these eleven chapters in sequence is like reading a book about the historical context of the La Florida missions.

Ironically, the structure of the *Columbian Consequences* mirrors Spanish colonial history. Part 1 follows a winding historical course defined largely by topographical and native-cultural geography. Part 2 reflects the fragmentation inherent in episodes of colonization in which trial-and-error characterizes efforts to occupy a new environment. Finally, part 3 presents the well-structured content of proselytizing or of ethnographic and archaeological reports. The book also merits attention for specific applications of new research orientations. These include Darwinian evolution, zooarchaeology, bioarchaeology, paleoethnobotany, stable-isotope analysis, and the synthesis of historical and archaeological perspectives.

The Smithsonian Press deserves special recognition for the remarkable speed with which this volume was produced while maintaining high quality. All that is missing is a front cover holograph of David Thomas illuminated by the glow of his laptop—an image imprinted forever on the memories of those who sat through the twelve hours of SAA seminars.

Columbian Consequences is a seminal volume in what is certain to be a voluminous Quincentenary literature. Yet, it is one whose value will outlive the many upcoming anniversaries. It is required reading for anyone interested in America's Hispanic past.

William F. Keegan Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida

From the Archives. . .
Museum of the City of Mobile

Roy V. Tallon, Registrar

The modern city museum system began on November 13, 1962, when Mobile's City Commission created the Mobile Museum Board. The Phoenix Firehouse Museum was opened to the public in 1964 and the Carlen House in 1970. In 1976, the principal museum was opened in the graceful 1872 Italianate Bernstein-Bush house. The majority of the museum's archival material is now located there. Over the years it has become one of the city's largest repositories with holdings covering virtually any subject dealing with Mobile's past.

The archives houses books, family papers, manuscripts, broadsides, autographs, journals, rare sheet music, very early Edison amberol recordings, newspaper files, prints, photographs and negatives, maps and plans, city directories, rare Mardi Gras float and costume designs, and copies of municipal records and publications.

Given its scope, what follows merely touches on some of the highlights of the collection. In the Colonial-Early American period, among the original materials are documents signed by Louis XIV, George III, George Washington, and Andrew Ellicott. There is a remarkable 1720 journal kept by Bertet de la Clue, a young French naval officer, giving an eyewitness account of his ship's arrival at Dauphin Island and meeting Bienville. There is a complete set of W P A Transcripts of the Mobile Land Records 1715-1812, commonly referred to as the Translated Record. Finally, the archives contains the papers of the exiled French general, Bertrand Clausel of the Vine and Olive Colony.

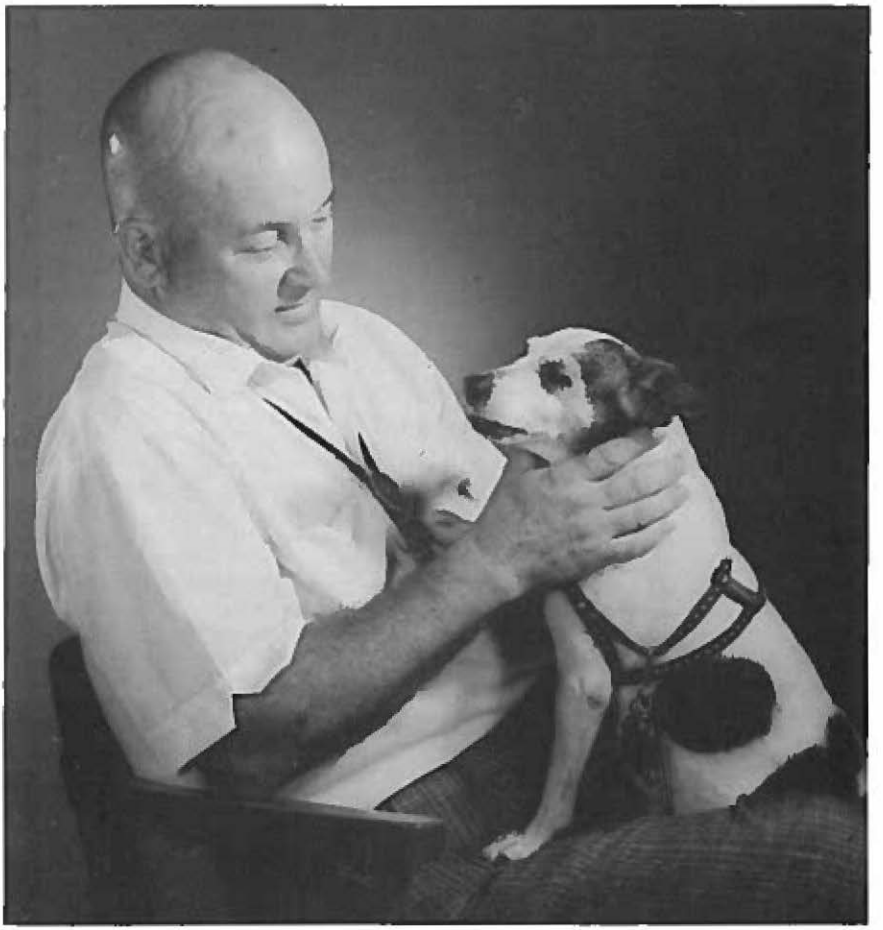
The Civil War collection is especially extensive. It includes the papers of Maj. Gen. Dabney H. Maury, Commander of the District of the Gulf from 1863 and of the Confederate forces in Mobile until they surrendered on May 4, 1865. His collection deals with the city's defenses and other related matters. A second important collection contains two leather bound diaries, military papers, and a photograph of Confederate Lieut. William T. Munford who was a member of the 1st Louisiana Artillery from 1861 to 1865. He saw action in lower Louisiana and Mississippi and was garrisoned at Battery Gladden near Mobile until its evacuation in 1865. The diaries cover his entire military service and contain important information about the engagements that preceded the surrender of Mobile. In addition, the archives contains material pertaining to the career of Admiral Raphael Semmes, musters and lists of Mobile military units, and a wide variety of documents and letters from Confederate and Union soldiers.

The archives also houses the largest single collection of books, journals, minutes, and papers relating to Mobile's nineteenth century volunteer fire companies. There are also papers of the Creole Social Club which was founded as a women's auxiliary of the Creole Fire Company No. 1.

Museum of the City of Mobile

In 1980 the City Museum received nearly five thousand items which comprise the Julian Lee Rayford Collection. Rayford (1908-1980) was a versatile person—a folklorist, writer, sculptor, and artist—fondly known to his friends as "Judy." Born and reared in Mobile, he attended schools in Mobile and Birmingham. He subsequently studied at a variety of major institutions of higher education throughout the country. He gained national attention with his writings and works. Many Mobilians remember him because of his interest in Joe Cain and Mardi Gras. Rayford bequeathed his collection to the museum.

The Mobile Museum archives is open from 9:00 A.M to 5:00 P.M. daily, closed on weekends and all city holidays. Because of limited space and required staff assistance, researchers are asked to write or telephone in advance to the Museum Director. The address and telephone number are: Museum of the City of Mobile, 355 Government St., Mobile, AL 36602, (205) 434-7569.



Julian Lee Rayford and "Rosie" *Thigpen Photograph, Rayford Collection*

Index

The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* has compiled an index to its first six years or twelve issues. It is in two separate parts: the Author/Editor Index and the Title Index. The first lists items alphabetically according to the author's last name. Book reviews are listed under both the author of the book being reviewed and the writer of the review itself. Articles or books with more than one author of editor are listed under each writer's name. This portion of the index is useful in determining if a writer ever had a review or article published in the *GCHR* and perhaps in noting the total contributions of a given writer to the journal over its first six years.

The Title Index lists all articles in alphabetical order by title. Book reviews are not listed separately but are in this index according to the title of the book. Titles which begin with the article "the" or "a" or "an" are alphabetized by the next word, i.e., *The Civil War on the Western Gulf* is alphabetized under "C" for "Civil War."

Articles (including "Features," "Letters to the Editor," and "From the Archives") are shown in quotations while the titles of books are in italics. Within each entry the volume number is listed first, the issue number is in parentheses, and the page numbers follow the colon. We hope these indices will make it easier for readers to locate material published in our first six volumes. Feature articles in the *GCHR* are also indexed by author, title, and subject in *America: History and Life*, available in many research libraries in printed and on-line form.

Author/Editor Index

Title Index