CHAPTER 3
AN EASY ADJUSTMENT TO THE POST WAR NATION: PENSACOLA BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870

With the Civil War concluded Pensacola along with the rest of the vanquished Confederacy faced a trying period, but it retained many of its pre war characteristics. Forts Pickens and Barrancas, and the Navy Yard still functioned with a strong federal presence and a need for civilian labor. Along with the military, the rebuilding effort continued to demand fresh timber, and West Florida was ideal for the industry because of the abundance of longleaf pines. The lumber mills offered employment at a time when the plantation system was in shambles, but the timber industry required transportation to make it profitable. The port of Pensacola provided some, but the area needed railroads that connected with the rest of the South. Along with economic recovery, Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties had to deal with the original population returning to the area after leaving in 1862 and a sizeable number of freedmen. Like the rest of the South, these two elements created a combustible combination when mixed together. To make matters worse, the white population had to deal with the advent of Republican rule which was merely an inconvenience until 1867 when the U.S. Congress instituted its own plan for Reconstruction. Between 1865 and 1870, Pensacola adjusted to the Post Civil War Era with less hardship than many areas of the South because of a strong military presence and the lucrative timber industry.

In 1865, events in Washington D.C. decided the fate of Pensacola and the defeated Confederacy. Since 1863, President Abraham Lincoln had planned on a lenient treatment for the rebellious states after the war. His Ten Percent Plan allowed for Southern states to rejoin the Union if ten percent of the population eligible to vote in 1860 took an oath of loyalty and created a new state constitution. Congress opposed this plan and passed the Wade-Davis Bill in 1864

which called for fifty percent of eligible voters in 1860 to take a more stringent "iron clad" oath before starting a new state government. Using his great political skills, President Lincoln disposed of the legislation by using the pocket veto in order to prevent a congressional override.[1]

On April 14, 1865, a bullet fired by John Wilkes Booth ended the life of President Lincoln leaving the fate of the South in the hands of Vice President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee who desired to continue his predecessor's plans of Reconstruction. Johnson issued his plan in May which offered nothing in the way of rights for the freedmen and left the fate of the South in control of the whites. This plan began to backfire almost as soon as it was implemented. The former Confederate states attempted to gain an upper hand in their Reconstruction and had no intention of giving the freedmen a fair chance in politics. In Florida, Provisional Governor William Marvin announced during the state constitutional convention of October 1865 that "it does not appear to me that the public good of the State, or of the nation at large, would be promoted by conferring at the present time upon the freedmen the elective franchise." The governor also added that the Negroes had "no desire to possess this privilege." The Florida Constitution of 1865 denied the vote to the freedmen.[2]

After writing a new constitution, Florida held elections for the governor and state legislature. On November 29, the eligible voters chose David S. Walker as governor and W.W.J. Kelley from Pensacola as lieutenant governor. Walker, an experienced politician, had served in the state senate before the war and held an appointed office during the conflict. With a new government dominated by former Confederates, Florida began to take advantage of the generous terms of Reconstruction. In December 1865, the state legislature followed the pattern of the rest of the South and began to pass "black codes." This series of laws essentially created a new form of slavery by denying basic freedoms to the freedmen and enacting overly harsh punishments for petty offenses. Such rules forbade blacks from owning firearms, marrying between the races, testifying against whites in court, vagrancy, and other similar offenses. Punishments ranged from fines and imprisonment to involuntary servitude and even death. The black codes succeeded in

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[1]David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1995) 471-472, 510. The Ironclad Oath required that a Southerner state that they had never willfully assisted the Confederacy.

[2]Donald, *Lincoln*, 597-598; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 538-540; John Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida* (1888, reprint; Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1964), 13-15.

keeping the freedmen in a "position distinctly inferior to the white."[3]

After the Civil War, the federal government had to deal with three million newly freed blacks living in a devastated land. To assist in reuniting separated families, preventing starvation, and making sure that Negroes received fair treatment in negotiating labor contracts, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in 1865. This organization led by Major General Oliver Otis Howard dispatched agents to all areas of the South to aid in the blacks' adjustment to freedom. Bureau agents issued rations, started hospitals, and organized courts as well as administered loyalty oaths and processed land claims. The organization also assisted destitute whites. In Florida, Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn oversaw operations for the bureau and administered to all areas of the state.[4]

Pensacola did not have a typical Reconstruction, because timber rather than plantations surrounded the area. Also, the city lacked a railroad connection to Tallahassee which cut off West Florida from the other half of the state. Nevertheless, Pensacola went through several trials with the Freedmen's Bureau and the military having to maintain the peace. Blacks that had flocked to the city during the war needed employment, and the original white population wanted to take up their old lands and carry on as if nothing had happened. Fortunately, the longleaf pine forests were ready to supply the timber industry, and the federal government decided to keep a strong garrison at Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard. Unlike the rest of Florida, Pensacola had the means to swiftly rebuild its economy and escape poverty with the military there to prevent open hostilities against the loyalist government.[5]

The Civil War left Pensacola in a thoroughly dilapidated condition. In May 1865, much of the city stood in ruins with many buildings in ashes. Former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory's home was in shambles as were the houses of other rebels that had left in

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[3]Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), 46-47; Joe M. Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (1969), 374-375.

[4]Joe M. Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 41 (1962-1963), 223-225.

[5]Clay H. Armstrong, *History of Escambia County*, (St. Augustine: The Record Company Printers, 1930), 114-115.

1862. Grass and weeds covered the streets, and the wooden sidewalks were in serious need of repair. The lumber mills that occupied the area were burned wrecks, because Gen. Braxton Bragg ordered their destruction before the 1862 evacuation. The Alabama-Florida Railroad was useless due to the Confederate removal of the iron track during the abandonment. The only buildings that remained in good order were the United States Customs House and the post office.[6]

Brigadier General Alexander Asboth continued to command the Union forces stationed at Pensacola which amounted to four regiments, one composed of black troops. However, his authority in 1865 limited his powers to the Army, and he could exert only moderate influence on the civilian population that had started to take "preliminary steps for the reorganization of the civil government." The Navy personnel stationed at the yard still had to deal with the damage to the facility that the Confederates had inflicted. After three years of Union possession, the sailors and marines had restored the yard just enough to perform necessary tasks for the Gulf West Blockading Squadron. Much work remained undone in order to return the installation to its condition in 1860.[7]

On May 24, 1865, the citizens of Pensacola and West Florida met in the city to create a new local post war government. Most of the people were freedmen who had lived within the Union lines during the conflict and now wanted to rule themselves. General Asboth observed the convention but did not attempt to take control of it. He believed that the meeting lacked sufficient leadership and requested advice from the West Mississippi Division. General Asboth received orders to stay out of the city's civil affairs and was advised that keeping order and fairness at the convention fell to Florida's provost marshal. Former Captain Joseph D. Wolfe of the Twenty-Fifth United States Colored Infantry presided at the meeting. Documents do not reveal what sort of government the current populace formed, but it did not last with the advent of Presidential Reconstruction and the passing of the Florida Black Codes. This government just

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[6]*New York Times*, 5 August 1865.

[7]*New York Times*, 5 August 1865; Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth, Fort Barrancas, 23 May 1865, Special Orders No. 126, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, 889.

like others to come fell victim to the turbulent times of the Post Civil War Era.[8]

Restoring Pensacola involved much more than establishing a new government and rebuilding the town. The population needed food and jobs, and the people could not easily obtain these necessities immediately following the war. Fortunately, the Freedmen's Bureau established its West Florida district headquarters in Pensacola which oversaw Escambia, Santa Rosa, Walton, Washington, and Holmes Counties. In 1865, General Truman Seymour, the Union commander at the battle of Olustee, served as the assistant commissioner for West Florida. In Pensacola the bureau dispersed rations, supervised labor, established schools, and cared for the infirm.[9]

Besides providing for the destitute, the Freedmen's Bureau accepted the task of classifying land as either abandoned or owned. Because most of the landowners fled in 1862, the vast majority of property in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties fell under the abandoned category. This presented a problem for those returning to the area that owned land. At first, the United States Treasury Department assumed responsibility of abandoned property, but it lacked the means to properly care for it. With Southerners demanding the return of their land, the Freedmen's Bureau took the burden, because its agents could deal with restoration claims along with other civil affairs.[10]

As the summer and fall of 1865 passed, Pensacola's original population trickled back to the city. Those that owned property could not just return and carry on as if the war had never occurred. Before the bureau examined restoration claims, it made certain that the applicant had taken an "amnesty oath" of allegiance to the United States and swore that he had never willfully supported or taken up arms in favor of the Confederacy. The Army bore the responsibility of distributing "amnesty oaths" and printed approximately 1,158 forms according to the number of

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[8]Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth to Lt. Col. C.T. Christensen, Fort Barrancas, 21 May 1865, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, 867; Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth, Fort Barrancas, 23 May 1865, Special Orders No. 126, *Official Records*, ser. 1, vol. 49, pt. 2, 889; Armstrong, *History of Escambia County*, 114.

[9]William J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, "Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands," National Archives, RG 105, Florida (hereafter cited as BRFAL); Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 10-11.

[10]Treasury Department, Washington D.C., 6 March 1866, BRFAL.

voters from Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties in the 1860 election. In order to participate in politics and file land claims, Southerners had to swear their unwavering allegiance to the Union. Of course under Presidential Reconstruction, these oaths meant very little and many former Confederates signed them and regained some of their status.[11]

Property claims ranged from applicants requesting the return of a plot of land or even machinery that they had left behind. Gabriel Bertrand applied from his new home in Mobile where he had fled from the Union in 1862 and provided adequate proof of ownership and loyalty. Another case involved a citizen who had left Pensacola for Alabama. Former resident John Campbell owned a city lot but had abandoned it when the Confederates gave up the city. Like Bertrand, Campbell had taken an oath of loyalty to the Union and denied assisting the rebellion. One of the more unusual claims involved an engine and boilers which the Union confiscated from a lumber mill during the war. The applicant, Henry Hyer, learned that the federals sent his machinery to Washington D.C. as abandoned property, and he had to write to the Bureau of Yards and Docks to get it returned. When dealing with these claims, the Freedmen's Bureau did not cause any major impediments to applicants as long as they proved that they were loyal citizens.[12]

This lenient method of property restoration fell under Lincoln and Johnson's plan for Reconstruction and was opposed by some of the Radical Republicans in Congress who thought rebel property should be permanently confiscated. Under these lenient conditions, Pensacola's former population managed to start anew just as if they had not followed their Southern brethren to Alabama in 1862. Even former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory returned to his home in Pensacola after being released from Fort Pulaski in late 1865.[13]

The Freedmen's Bureau began to set up schools for the former slaves, because a basic

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[11]Brig. Gen. John Newton to Commanding Officer Sub District West Florida, Tallahassee, 28 August 1865, *Military Dispatches, Headquarters, District of Middle Florida, August 10, 1865-September 25, 1865* (Jacksonville: Historical Records Survey, Works Progress Administration State Office, 1938), 38; Gabriel Bertrand, Pensacola, 21 August 1865, Proclamation Oath, BRFAL; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 185.

[12]Gabriel Bertrand to Commissioner of Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Pensacola, 21 August 1865, BRFAL; John Campbell to Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard, Pensacola, 28 September 1865, BRFAL; Henry Hyer to Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Pensacola, 30 June 1865, BRFAL.

[13]Foner, *Reconstruction*, 230-231; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 35, 42.

education could help them in negotiating labor contracts and to better function in society. Teachers moved from the North and often endured hostile communities to fulfill this mission. The bureau established several schools in Pensacola and provided funds for others. Establishing a school was no simple task. Teachers could not rely on the state governments for aid, and their pupils had no means to make up the capital. Often the Freedmen's Bureau contributed a building and provided furnishings necessary to start a school. The case of William Fiske who opened a school in Pensacola on April 23, 1866 is an example. At first, he had only five students which quickly grew to twenty-eight, and the room the bureau provided was inadequate. To keep the school going, he charged his pupils a monthly fee of $1.50, but he often made other arrangements with the students unable to pay. In May 1866, Fiske asked the bureau to build a larger structure and in return promised that he could double the number of students in attendance. The Freedmen's Bureau succeeded in maintaining an adequate number of schools to provide for Escambia County's black population of about 2,500.[14]

While the bureau issued rations, assessed land claims, and established schools, its main purpose was to keep the peace between the former rebels and freedmen. In 1866, the black codes made it easy for discontented whites to suppress their former slaves, and often the Freedmen's Bureau had to correct the injustices. In Escambia County, blacks and loyal whites made few complaints of oppression; but in the more rural areas of Santa Rosa and Walton Counties where there were fewer federal soldiers, more trouble arose. At Milton, Jefferson Gillem, a local black resident, reported that the city marshal assaulted him by throwing a brick through the window which struck his chest. Before leaving, the marshal stormed the residence and "threatened to kill Gillem if he did not quit the place." When the victim asked the Santa Rosa County Court for justice, it simply dismissed his complaint. The bureau could not allow civil officials to oppress citizens and ordered an investigation of the incident. There were no reports of beatings by law enforcement officials in Pensacola, but oppression occurred as the result of the black codes. After the Civil War a group of blacks founded the First Baptist Colored Church of Pensacola and paid $1,500 to build a sanctuary. The congregation elected all black deacons and ministers. This

[14]William Fiske to Capt. F. Cole, Pensacola, 18 May 1866, BRFAL; W.J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, BRFAL.

action offended the white city government which took control of the church using the Florida black codes as its basis. Initially, the local bureau agent interfered and refused to hand over the keys, but the discontented whites tricked a deacon into giving them up. The new church leaders quickly shutdown services and closed the freedmen's school that operated out of the building.[15]

Despite some cases of oppression against white Republicans and blacks, the Freedmen's Bureau was generally successful in keeping the peace in Pensacola and Escambia County. People filed few complaints with the bureau office, and agents reported peaceful conditions. The principle factor that kept Pensacola quiet was the military. With several regiments and ships stationed at Fort Barrancas and the Navy Yard, the armed forces could easily put down any uprising and keep the peace. The Freedmen's Bureau and the Army made Escambia County a relatively safe area when compared with other parts of Florida and the South.[16]

Between 1865 and 1867, all of the former Confederate states passed their own version of the black codes to keep freedmen subordinate to whites. Northern Republicans were outraged with these injustices and believed that Presidential Reconstruction was a failure. When Congress met in 1867, the Radical Republicans in both houses decided to create new laws for the South which prevented former rebels from running the state governments and enfranchised the freedmen. This party faction led by Representative Thaddeus Stevens and Senator Charles Sumner intended to bring civil equality to blacks and to prevent the South from attempting to reinstate slavery in any form. Their efforts resulted in the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 which abolished the current state constitutions and created new requirements for readmission to the Union such as ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment that guaranteed civil rights and United States citizenship to any person born in the country. President Andrew Johnson vetoed the bill and attached a scathing letter for the Radicals. The Republicans held the necessary majorities in both houses to override the President, and they passed the act during the first week of March 1867.[17]

The Reconstruction Acts divided the South into five military districts. Florida fell with

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[15]Truman Seymour to Capt. F. Cole, Pensacola, 9 May 1866, BRFAL; Rev. E.G. Ciscero to Col. A.L. Zularsky, Pensacola, 3 August 1866, BRFAL.

[16]Truman Seymour to Assistant Adjutant General of Florida, Pensacola, 24 November 1866, BRFAL.

[17]Foner, *Reconstruction*, 275-277; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 564-566.

Georgia in the Third District commanded by Major General John Pope, and Colonel John T. Sprague handled the affairs of the state. Brigadier General (brevet) Truman Seymour succeeded Gen. Asboth as commander in Pensacola and took over the city government. The city faced numerous problems including civil rights and disenfranchised rebels, but the summer of 1867 witnessed the arrival of a yellow fever epidemic. This old scourge caused more chaos and damage to Pensacola than the events in Washington D.C. and Tallahassee.[18]

The 1867 epidemic had a much greater impact than the one in 1863 because of the larger population and increased commerce. During the spring months, public authorities attempted to keep the fever out of Pensacola. They established a quarantine station in May and forced ships with sick crew members to stay out of the port. None of these measures succeeded, because the medical field treated yellow fever as an infectious disease spread by human contact. The general fear and chaos that disrupted the city arose from these ideas. The yellow fever epidemic of 1867 did more than cause a public health problem; it forced Pensacola and parts of Escambia County to evacuate and basically halted Reconstruction in West Florida. Whites and blacks alike briefly forgot about politics in favor of their own health.[19]

The epidemic hit unexpectedly in the final days of June when the British steamer *Fair Wind* arrived at the Pensacola quarantine station. The ship passed the initial inspection, and the health officers reported her as "remarkably clean, well ventilated, and well appointed." While quarantined, one of the vessel's crew died suddenly of "consumption," but the station saw no threat to public health and allowed the *Fair Wind* to sail on to Pensacola. During the next few weeks, the ship's crew began to show symptoms and three crewmen died. The military ordered the vessel back into quarantine on July 20 to no avail, since other ships in the harbor started reporting cases of disease. The city traced the fever's arrival to the *Fair Wind*, because she had sailed from Jamaica which had reported a "malignant epidemic." Regardless of where the scourge came from, Pensacola faced problems that made the Reconstruction Acts look like

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[18]Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 177, 61; J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Memorial of Henry Sanford Gansevoort* (Boston: Franklin Press, Rand, Avery, and Co., 1875), 72, 245.

[19]Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic at the Naval Station, Pensacola, Florida, A.D. 1867," *Medical and Surgical Reporter*, XVIII, March 14, 1868, 227.

trivial issues.[20]

Up to that point, the fever had limited itself to the ships' crews and left the mainland unaffected. That changed on July 24 when the merchant vessel *Texan* arrived from New Orleans which was beleaguered by the disease. The Pensacola quarantine station certified the ship as healthy and allowed it to dock, but soon after one of the *Texan*'s crew fell ill. Within days, people began reporting cases of yellow fever, and by August 9 two victims had died. The city officials traced the disease to the *Texan*'s sick crew member and declared that the scourge had taken hold of Pensacola.[21]

With new cases occurring daily, the city and military took precautions to limit the disease. Gen. Seymour ordered the soldiers at Fort Barrancas to transfer to Fort Pickens, and Pensacola's doctors recommended that the population evacuate to Alabama. Not willing to abandon his command, Gen. Seymour and a handful of troops stayed on the mainland to occupy the barracks. The Navy Yard also quarantined itself and prohibited any outside communication. While many of the area's residents fled, people still remained in the numerous towns of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties to wait out the epidemic.[22]

The number of cases in Warrington and Woolsey was unknown, but the disease claimed twenty-four lives and infected the towns' two doctors. On the other side of the bay at Milton, people fared better and avoided the epidemic. In Pensacola and the Navy Yard, yellow fever ran rampant causing the majority of marines and numerous citizens to fall ill. The Army's safe haven at Santa Rosa Island succeeded in avoiding a massive outbreak amongst the soldiers but did not escape unscathed. On August 14, a lieutenant died at Fort Pickens which created fear that the fever had crossed the bay. After several days of worry, Col. Henry S. Gansevoort, who commanded the evacuated troops, decided that the threat had passed. At this point, the healthy portion of Pensacola's residents had fled leaving the city in a semi-abandoned state with only the

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[20]Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 227; Pearce, "Yellow Fever Epidemics in Pensacola," 456-457.

[21]Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 227.

[22]J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 242-243; Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228.

ill to care for it.[23]

For Gen. Seymour and his handful of men staying at the Barrancas barracks, the epidemic turned into a siege. The soldiers occupied the third floor and isolated themselves from the civilian population. On August 23, an Army transport from New Orleans landed several people, and one of them took ill at the barracks. The victim died that night at the hospital. This death created another scare for the Army, but the isolated troops did not report any new cases of yellow fever. With the majority of its personnel on Santa Rosa Island, the Army fared well during the epidemic and saw few victims.[24]

While Gen. Seymour's command evaded the scourge, the men at the Navy Yard suffered greatly during the summer of 1867. Most of the marines contracted the disease and at one time only twenty out of one hundred reported for duty. The epidemic ravaged the installation to the point where the Navy suspended all operations and closed the facility until the disease passed. Race also played a role during the crisis at the yard. During August and early September, some of the officers wrote Washington D.C. asking that the white soldiers be replaced with Negro troops. The requests did not originate from wanting to protect the lives of whites by using blacks as a sort of biological "cannon fodder" but to lessen the number of victims.[25] During the epidemic, not one reported case of yellow fever among blacks resulted in death. The officers felt that Negro troops could run the Navy Yard and that the fever would not have as devastating an effect. Officials in Washington D.C. did not feel the same way, and they turned down the requests.[26]

During the epidemic, the Freedmen's Bureau continued to aid the destitute whose numbers grew rapidly in those summer months. The organization issued rations mostly to blacks

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[23]Pearce, "Yellow Fever Epidemics in Pensacola," 456-457; Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228; J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 244-245.

[24]Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228.

[25]During Reconstruction physicians observed that the mortality rate for yellow fever in blacks was only a quarter of the number of white deaths. From Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. Kiple, "Black Yellow Fever Immunities, Innate and Acquired, as Revealed in the American South," *Journal of Social Science History* 1 (1997): 427.

[26]J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 245, 251-252; Author Unknown, "Report of the Outbreak of the Yellow Fever Epidemic," 228.

and poor whites of Warrington who depended on the Navy Yard for their livelihood. With the facility closed, the people had to turn to the bureau for aid. Throughout the summer, local agents only had to worry about assisting the needy and avoiding yellow fever. Racial tension eased as the disease pounded the area, and the bureau received no complaints of violence or intimidation in Escambia County.[27]

The arrival of fall and cooler weather announced the departure of yellow fever from Pensacola. As the epidemic ended, the town's population gradually returned and resumed their lives. The exact number of fatalities cannot be determined but somewhere between 150 and 200 is a fair estimate. The onslaught of the disease brought a temporary halt to the process of Reconstruction; schools shut down, local government functioned on a minimal level, and commerce stopped temporarily. Just as other cities do after a disaster Pensacola returned to life, and the dominant issues in politics once again took center stage as Florida prepared to re-enter the Union.[28]

With the yellow fever epidemic over, problems of racial tension and labor returned to Pensacola. The Freedmen's Bureau, which had assisted those affected by disease, resumed its role of protecting the rights of blacks. The Negro population faced fewer problems in 1867, and Gen. Seymour attributed this mostly to the presence of the military. The general believed that the city magistrates would not enforce the Civil Rights Act and would allow oppression if the troops were withdrawn. Whether or not Gen. Seymour's concerns were credible the Army had a positive effect on the city's morale, and the freedmen enjoyed a secure environment. Between the fall of 1867 and the summer of 1868, Pensacola was consistently peaceful. The bureau received very few reports of injustices, and the military ensured swift enforcement of violations. Other parts of West Florida were not so fortunate, trouble still plagued areas where the Army had little influence such as Santa Rosa and Walton Counties. In Pensacola, the presence of troops kept the white population in order.[29]

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[27]Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 1 October 1867, BRFAL; Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL.

[28]J.C. Hoadley, ed., *Henry Sanford Gansevoort*, 252.

[29]Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL.

Within the safety of Escambia County, blacks worked a variety of labor and sought education. Most freedmen found employment at the Navy Yard and the area's numerous lumber mills. Others worked menial jobs in Pensacola such as house servants, but a few owned businesses within the city. While blacks did not have to worry about employment, they did have to worry about their schools. The Freedmen's Bureau noted that most of the schools in Pensacola, Warrington, and Milton lacked adequate teachers and funds to provide a proper education. Out of those three cities, Pensacola's freedmen displayed the most knowledge and made a greater impression on the bureau agents. The most common problem reported was that extremely unqualified teachers led classes. The challenge of providing quality education to blacks persisted up to and beyond the dissolution of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1869 as people requested better teachers and newer buildings.[30]

Despite the tougher conditions imposed on the South by the Reconstruction Acts, whites still managed to commit injustices against blacks. One case handled by the Freedmen's Bureau involved the firing of "colored citizens who had dared to exercise their freedom in voting for the candidates of their choice." The new idea of black suffrage caused businesses to manipulate elections by threatening the loss of employment if the Negroes voted for the wrong person. The bureau reacted by speaking to local black congregations and informing them of their rights. During the fall of 1867, agents primarily worked to establish equality between the races and considerably reduced the dispersing of rations. The need for workers in West Florida's lumber mills and the Navy Yard provided enough jobs for the region. Late 1867 and early 1868 were tranquil months for Pensacola and Escambia County, but the advent of creating a new state government with blacks actively participating ensured an end to the peaceful times.[31]

On January 20, 1868, Florida held a constitutional convention where Radical and Moderate Republicans determined the state's future. The military divided Florida into nineteen "election districts" for the selection of delegates. The first of these consisted of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties which sent three delegates, George W. Walker, George J. Alden, and

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[30]W.J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, BRFAL; Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL.

[31]W.J. Purman to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Marianna, 7 June 1867, BRFAL; Truman Seymour to Lt. Allan H. Jackson, Pensacola, 5 October 1867, BRFAL; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 178-180.

Lyman W. Rowley. The First District's participants played a minor role while people such as Charles H. Pearce, Thomas W. Osborn, and William J. Purman dominated the convention. At first the Radicals dominated the proceedings, but in a late night coup on February 10 the Moderates gained control. The bickering Republicans finally approved a constitution in April which guaranteed black suffrage and ratified the Fourteenth Amendment which would restore Florida to the Union. The convention also called for an election in May to vote in new civil officials. However, the constitution was not legal until the voters approved it. Until that time, Col. John T. Sprague continued to handle the state's affairs as military commander.[32]

In May 1868, Florida's voters decided the fate of the new constitution and selected office holders simultaneously. The Moderate Republicans nominated Harrison Reed for governor and William Gleason for lieutenant governor. The Radicals had little chance of defeating the more numerous Moderates but put up Samuel Walker and William Christy for the state's top offices. The Democrats also nominated candidates but had no chance of defeating the split Republicans. With the Negro population eligible to vote and many whites disenfranchised, trouble was sure to plague this election. On May 12, Florida's freedmen cast ballots for the first time in state history ratifying the constitution and electing Harrison Reed as governor. Along with a new executive, the voters also chose a new legislature which met for the first time on June 9 and officially ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. After seven years of rebellion and chaos, Florida had permanently rejoined the United States of America.[33]

The election caused disruptions throughout the entire state. In Tallahassee, wealthy planter Joseph John Williams was so frustrated with the number of freedmen at the polls that he started the Ku Klux Klan in Florida under the name of the Young Men's Democratic Club. Fortunately for Pensacola, a lack of transportation across the state kept the organized hate groups out of West Florida, but problems still persisted. Former Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory and the editor of the Pensacola *Observer* William Kirk got into a pair of duels that local police stopped before either party fired a shot. The quarrel originated in a series of

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[32]Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida*, 49-52; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 177-187.

[33]Ralph L. Peek, *Lawlessness and the Restoration of Order in Florida: 1868-1871* (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1964), 92; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 192.

editorial attacks printed in the city's newspapers. Since his release from prison, Mallory had become an outspoken proponent of Negro education and readily accepted the freedmen's right to vote. In one of his 1867 speeches, the former Confederate stated that since the "Negro was now entitled to vote, it was the interest of the State that he should be educated and enlightened, and made to comprehend the priceless value of the ballot." On May 7, 1868, Kirk initiated the first challenge to Mallory and was arrested for inciting a duel. After spending several days imprisoned in Fort Barrancas, Kirk again sought out the former secretary and the two met on election day. Fortunately, someone informed a local constable who arrived just as Kirk and Mallory were about to take aim. This high profile duel was not the only one in Pensacola during the week preceding the gubernatorial election. Citizens reported that police prevented several other confrontations. Besides the contests for honor, West Florida had a less tumultuous election than other regions of the state.[34]

Florida during 1868 was a hotbed for lawlessness and violence. With the ratification of the new constitution and freedmen taking public office, whites began to rebel against the new society that they felt the Republicans had thrust upon them. On December 24, 1865, in the small town of Pulaski, Tennessee, several local citizens started the Ku Klux Klan. By 1868, the organization had spread across the South with a unified structure. The first hint of the Klan started in Florida after Governor Reed's election. Leon County residents led by Joseph John Williams started the Young Men's Democratic Club. This small group adopted the same charter that Klan chapters used but had no affiliation with the larger organization. Similar clubs started springing up in almost every Florida county from the Apalachicola River to Jacksonville. While several clubs stayed peaceful, others were ruthless such as Jackson County which had 153 murders between 1868 and 1871. Florida's Young Men's Democratic Clubs occasionally united to obstruct Republican rule. During September 1868, Governor Reed purchased a large quantity of arms and ammunition from New York which arrived at Jacksonville and were transported by train to Tallahassee. The weapons never arrived at their final destination. Club members from

[34]House, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Committee to Enquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1870, no. 22, pt. 13, 227; William H. Davison, Diary, May 7, 12, 1868, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida; St. Augustine *Examiner*, 20 April 1867; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 192.

each county worked to board the train and tossed the cargo alongside the tracks. Pensacola avoided this kind of organized violence for several reasons, mostly because of the large military presence and the lack of a rail connection to Tallahassee. While Escambia County lacked a Young Men's Democratic Club, the area still had lawlessness in 1868.[35]

Although Pensacola avoided organized violence, isolated incidents frequently occurred. In September 1868, an unidentified man shot a black police officer three times. The assailant would have killed him on the spot if another person had not intervened. Whether or not the wounded officer survived is a mystery, but the city's white population did not care if he recovered. William H. Davison, who worked for the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad Company, recorded in his diary that "Mr. Nigger will go back to Philadelphia where he belongs if he gets well." Such incidents did not intimidate Pensacola's black population from participating in activities. On July 4, 1868, Harrison Reed took the oath of office and became governor of Florida. Pensacola blacks celebrated the day in large numbers drinking and playing baseball at the town square. As in much of the vanquished Confederacy, fear and intimidation were constant companions of West Florida's blacks. On the day after the black policeman was shot, another black officer refused to arrest a white man and only did so when ordered by Captain George Wentworth. However without a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan or a Young Men's Democratic Club, Pensacola avoided the violence that plagued parts of North Florida after the Civil War.[36]

In 1868, the United States faced a Presidential election that promised to cause conflict and upheaval in the country. Although Radical Republicans failed to impeach Andrew Johnson, Republicans at large were bent on bringing new leadership to Washington. Radicals reached a compromise with the Moderates and nominated Ulysses S. Grant who was enormously popular with the people. To challenge the Republicans, the Democrats nominated New York Governor Horatio Seymour. The struggling party faced an insurmountable task, because the Southern states with black enfranchisement often voted Republican and the Democrats lacked a popular candidate.[37]

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[35]William P. Randel, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy* (New York: Chilton Books, 1965), 134-139.

[36]William H. Davison, Diary, 4 July 1868, 26, 27 September 1868; Peek, *Lawlessness in Florida*, 93.

[37]Foner, *Reconstruction*, 339-343.

During late summer and autumn 1868, the election dominated news and events in West Florida. Organizations frequently met, and editorials constantly attacked and promoted candidates. Because the Democrats ran on an anti-Reconstruction platform, whites and blacks divided over the candidates. The division was most evident in the local newspapers. Republican William Kirk edited the *Pensacola Observer* and the Democrats controlled the *West Florida Commercial*. Because the Republican party had the upper hand in Southern politics, the *Pensacola Observer* did not publish ravenous attacks against Democrats. The *West Florida Commercial* constantly printed malicious editorials against the Radicals and the deprivation of ex-Confederate voting rights.[38]

From the Democrats' perspective, the Presidential election was a chance to end Radical Reconstruction and reinstate a state government similar to one before the Civil War. The *West Florida Commercial* frequently published editorials that attacked the "carpet-bag office holders" in Tallahassee. The newspaper took a harsher stance against local Radicals and stated that

> Do they ever contemplate the pinching want and misery they have been the means of causing to this class of our people? When they swing their canes upon our streets with a hell-raky air, and puff their havanas in ladies' faces, and look into the sorrowful eye of some starving widow, does no still small voice whisper in their ear and say, 'thou hast done it?' Do they ever think of the supreme contempt and loathing with which they are regarded by the masses over whom they rule?

Such Editorials also turned the election into a struggle between the races by charging whites that supported the Republicans as people who had turned against their own color. The *West Florida Commercial* compared scalawags to venomous serpents that had betrayed their old friends and stated that they threatened the "manhood" of anyone who listened to them. Other editorials encouraged all eligible white residents to register for the vote to prevent the election of a black candidate. The Democrats' fiery articles only served to fuel the flames of resentment against Radical Reconstruction and the civil rights of the freedmen.[39]

For the West Florida Republicans, winning the Presidency did not seem as important as winning local offices and seats in the state legislature and senate. However, national Republican

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[38]West Florida *Commercial*, 12 October 1868; Pensacola *Observer*, 19 October 1868.

[39]West Florida *Commercial*, 12 October 1868, 26 November 1868.

victories gave them cause to celebrate. On October 14 after learning of several victories in other states, they held a torch light procession that started from the Navy Yard and traveled through the streets of Pensacola. The participants carried banners emblazoned with political mottoes and statements including one that equated progress with the construction of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad. The South voted heavily in favor of the Republican ticket in 1868 with the exceptions of Georgia and Louisiana where the Ku Klux Klan dominated civil affairs. While editorials promoted racial division, violence did not affect the election in Pensacola. The presence of federal soldiers and the peaceful assemblies of Republicans show that intimidation did not deter people from exercising their political rights.[40]

On November 28, Pensacola's Republicans rejoiced in Grant's victory during a large celebration at the Navy Yard. Local officials present included the mayor, S.C. Cobb, Judge William Kirk who also edited the *Pensacola Observer*, and other politicians. The jubilant crowd cheered the arrival of a steamer that carried Pensacola's delegates and paraded through Warrington and Woolsey "stopping at each Republican's house and greeting it with three rousing cheers." Without proper law and order that other areas of Florida lacked, the Republicans could not have held such a celebration.[41]

After the Presidential election, Escambia County citizens voted for a new state senator. Despite appeals from the *West Florida Commercial* to overthrow the Reconstruction government, Republicans dominated Pensacola politics. S.C. Cobb headed the local party with the support of aldermen, the *Pensacola Observer*, and state representative Salvador T. Pons. After the Reconstruction Act of 1867 which disenfranchised numerous whites, Florida began to elect black public officials. These freedmen politicians included Secretary of State Jonathan C. Gibbs, Representative Charles H. Pearce, and Representative Josiah T. Walls. All three were forceful personalities in Florida politics and worked to maintain the progress achieved by Congress. While Representative Pons played a minor role in the legislature, his status as a black politician deserves merit. He served in the Florida house between 1868 and 1869 before returning to Pensacola politics where he served as an alderman and mayor. Republican

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[40]Pensacola *Observer*, 19 October 1868.

[41]Pensacola *Observer*, 1 December 1868.

dominance of both state and local offices in Escambia County gave the party a significant edge in the senatorial race.[42]

The Republicans had two candidates running for the state senate in 1868. One of the two was George W. Wentworth who served as a colonel in the U.S. Army; the other was William Kirk. Because he did not have any promotions in the local newspapers, little is known about Wentworth's campaign. Kirk ran on a more moderate platform which catered more to Democrats than to his own party. He believed that the "colored man is capable of exercising his citizenship without aid." Kirk still supported the national policies of the Republicans except on the issue of race. On December 29, Escambia County elected George Wentworth as state senator, and he was sworn in at Tallahassee on January 9, 1869.[43]

For Pensacola and the Southern states, the election of 1868 was a major crossroad. The nation could have voiced its disapproval of Reconstruction by electing a Democrat to the Presidency. Instead, the voters overwhelmingly approved of Grant based on a combination of his war record and Republican success. On the state and local level, Republican dominance equaled a secure environment. Pensacola residents not only voted but also publicly voiced their support for Grant without fear. This indicates that Escambia County was adjusting easier to Reconstruction than other parts of the South where lawlessness and intimidation manipulated politics.[44]

After 1868, Pensacola elected numerous blacks to state and local offices and continued to do so until the late 1880's. In 1874, former state representative Salvador T. Pons became the city's only black mayor in the nineteenth century and also served as the city's clerk until 1880. During Reconstruction, freedmen were elected to the city council and the Escambia County commission. They also held other offices such as tax collector, justice of the peace, and superintendent of schools. The majority of Pensacola's black politicians were not professionals.

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[42]Pensacola *Observer*, 22 October 1868; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 172; Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Black Public Officials: 1867-1924* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 116.

[43]Pensacola *Observer*, 15, 29 December 1868; Florida Senate, *A Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the State of Florida at the Second Session of the Legislature Begun and Held at the Capitol in the City of Tallahassee. January 5th A.D. 1869* (Tallahassee, 1869), 16.

[44]McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 583-587.

Most found work as a laborer or a tradesman such as Richard Gagnet (Escambia County commissioner and tax assessor between 1873 and 1876) who was a tailor and John Pons (Escambia County commissioner and Pensacola councilman between 1868 and 1870) who worked as a barber.[45]

Pensacola also elected several black politicians to the Florida legislature. Between 1868 and 1877, four freedmen served terms, Salvador T. Pons, Zebulon Elijah, Charles Rouse, and John Sunday, Jr. These men had careers that varied from day laborer to merchant and earned respect from some of the whites. Stephen Mallory commented that Salvador Pons was an "honest and fit representative of Escambia County." Of the four legislators, none had any education outside of freedmen's schools and apprentice training. With representation in state and local politics, Pensacola's black community had a voice in their government.[46]

The military presence was only one reason for Pensacola's somewhat peaceful reconstruction. West Florida's timber industry was another factor. Other areas of the state including Tallahassee had soldiers and still experienced more violence and intimidation than Pensacola. The difference between Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties and the rest of Florida was that longleaf pine forests covered one area and plantations dominated the other. Pensacola benefitted immensely from a national and international lumber trade. The city's port provided companies with a huge outlet for shipping their product almost anywhere in the Atlantic and Gulf. With much of the South devastated by the Civil War, the demand for good timber and turpentine never ceased. Between the seemingly infinite source of trees and a steady market, West Florida's lumber mills functioned year round providing whites and blacks alike with jobs. The rest of the state was not as fortunate because of a low demand for staple crops. Freedmen that were former slaves on plantations often returned when their quest for prosperity failed. Planters frequently used the sharecropping and crop lien systems to keep blacks in peonage. After several seasons, sharecroppers were heavily indebted to the plantation owner and could not legally abandon their obligations. Because of the flourishing lumber trade, West Florida avoided the same fate of the rural counties and had a productive labor force that eased the trials of

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[45]Brown, *Florida's Black Public Officials*, 157-159, 91, 116.

[46]*Ibid*., 145-148, 116, 130.

Reconstruction.[47]

As a port community, Pensacola heavily promoted the timber industry, and the city benefitted in several ways from the growing amount of customers. States along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts required fresh lumber for the construction of buildings or ships. Textile mills still needed cotton, but the Union blockade during the Civil War ruined much of the international trade. Because of a lack of railroads, Pensacola relied on ships to transport lumber and advertised the city's deep water port that provided easy access to large vessels. Local officials wanted the port to boom with merchant traffic and hoped that Pensacola would become known as the "Liverpool of the South." With the lumber companies bringing in more ships, commerce and other industries would find it profitable to operate out of the city.[48]

West Florida's lumber mills were positioned throughout Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. The companies used the city mainly as a distribution point. After the Civil War, sawmills went up in Molino (located twenty miles north of Pensacola), Millview, Milton, and Bagdad. To transport timber, the mills utilized five local streams (Perdido, Escambia, Blackwater, Yellowwater, and Choctawhatchie), and they floated logs to various points along the bay. Not every sawmill relied on this method. In 1868, the Perdido Lumber Company began construction of a small railroad for the sole purpose of moving timber to Pensacola Bay. The completion of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad in 1874 led to an increase in the construction of lumber mills in Millview. Previously, companies relied on the streams to transport timber.[49]

The largest local producer of freshly cut timber in 1868 was the Pensacola Lumber Company which owned mills in Molino. The business boasted that it could cut 60,000 feet of lumber daily and had offices in Boston and New York. Along with a broad domestic market, the company took foreign orders. Because of its size, the Pensacola Lumber Company was more than just a sawmill but a thriving town that supported its 400 employees. The residents lived in

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[47]Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 136-138; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 106-108; W.D. Chipley, *Pensacola: The Naples of America* (Pensacola: Publisher Unknown, 1877, Reprint, 1962, Pfeiffer Printing Co.), 20.

[48]Pensacola *Observer*, 6 October 1868.

[49]Pensacola *Observer*, 6 October 1868; Jeffrey A. Drobney, *Lumbermen and Log Sawyers: Life, Labor, and Culture in the North Florida Timber Industry, 1830-1930* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 28-29; Dudley Sady Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1965), 109-110.

Molino and depended on the managers for food and other essential items. By 1869, the owners deemed it necessary to have their own justice of the peace and applied to Gov. Harrison Reed to appoint one. While the Pensacola Lumber Company dominated the West Florida timber market, it was not the only sawmill. The industry had flourished before the Civil War, and the conflict caused many owners to abandon their companies. After the war, some reclaimed their mills and resumed production while new entrepreneurs took over the unclaimed facilities. In Blackwater, Simpson and Company dated back to 1820 and the founder's son ran its two mills when the war ended. However, the Escambia Mill, which was built in the 1850's, changed hands several times between 1865 and 1870.[50]

The construction of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad provided early incentive for lumber companies to start building near Millview. One of the first sawmills there was built in 1868 and boasted a production capacity of 35,000 feet per day. As the railroad grew nearer to completion, other companies located in the area. Between 1868 and 1874, West Florida witnessed a shift in the positions of its sawmills. Transporting lumber to Pensacola by rail offered more advantages than floating it down streams. Despite the modernization, the Pensacola Lumber Company continued to function out of Molino and did not build new facilities at Millview.[51]

Working at sawmills provided freedmen and white laborers with daily wages and a constant flow of cash. Unlike sharecropping, workers could avoid debt and had money to spend which boosted Pensacola's economy, and they avoided the annual cycle of harvesting too little and having to rely on the landlord to finance the next year's crop. However, some of the labor was very dirty and hazardous. Late nineteenth century lumber mills generally used circular saws to cut timber sometimes resulting in lost appendages. Manufacturing turpentine posed fewer hazards but appealed only to the most desperate workers. To properly harvest resin from trees, a laborer cut small boxes at the base of the stump that allowed sap to drip. After several months,

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[50]Pensacola *Observer*, 6 October 1868; J.J. Maguire and Thomas A. Paine to Harrison Reed, 12 July 1869, Molino, Governor Harrison Reed Papers: Appointments and Resignations of Escambia County 1868-1872, Florida State Archives, R.A. Gray Building, Tallahassee, Florida, RG 101/S.577, Box 2, Fn. 2; Benjamin Robinson, *Historical Sketch of Pensacola* (Pensacola: Advance Gazette, 1882), 59-61, 63.

[51]Robinson, *Historical Sketch of Pensacola*, 59-61.

these boxes filled to the brim and "gummers" scooped up the contents. Gumming was the messiest job in the turpentine industry, because workers got covered in the very sticky resin. While most of Pensacola's mills manufactured naval stores such as masts and planking, very few produced turpentine. Most laborers worked either in the forests cutting and moving timber or in the sawmills producing lumber.[52]

The prosperous timber industry in West Florida provided steady employment that prevented constant poverty and indebtedness. With a wage labor system, workers could purchase goods at company stores or from businesses in cities. Between 1865 and 1870, the demand for fresh timber continued and West Florida's economy grew. New mills were built and abandoned ones were reopened as the market increased. As long as other states and countries purchased lumber, Pensacola had a constant stream of ships and money entering the city. However, the following decade ushered in several changes to the economy and labor.

Without its port, Pensacola would have been an isolated city after the Civil War. Retreating Confederates destroyed the Alabama-Florida Railroad in 1862 leaving the city disconnected from the rest of the South. During the first years of Reconstruction, the line still remained a path of wooden ties overgrown by weeds and lacking iron rails. Despite the absence of a railroad, West Florida residents were able to travel to Southern cities by ship and then by train. In a time when people and freight began to move across the country with previously unheard of rapidity, a slow voyage along the Gulf Coast left Pensacola's citizens and commerce at a disadvantage. The city needed to rebuild the Alabama-Florida Railroad and create lines that linked with Tallahassee and Mobile. Until 1868, the only ways to reach Pensacola were by roads and ships.[53]

During the first year of the Civil War, the Alabama-Florida Railroad acted as Pensacola's lifeline with the Confederacy. Gen. Braxton Bragg relied on it to bring supplies and reinforcements to his lines during the siege against the Union forces at Fort Pickens. To effectively cut off Pensacola, the South destroyed the line in 1862. Removing the rails worked, and the Union did not progress past the city limits. After the conflict, the city was still

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[52]Drobney, *Lumbermen and Log Sawyers*, 156-159.

[53]New York *Times*, 5 August 1865; Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 109.

disconnected from the rest of the South. The line ended at Pollard, Alabama but connected with another that expanded to Montgomery and Mobile. A connection to the latter city contributed little, because Mobile was another port city just fifty miles west of Pensacola. However, the link to Montgomery provided connections to the entire South and a direct route to Chicago. With a booming lumber industry, Pensacola required the rebuilding of the Alabama-Florida Railroad to ensure economic prosperity and to give its residents access to the Great Lake states and the West.[54]

In July, 1868 the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad Company took over the project of rebuilding the city's connection to the rest of the country. The Florida legislature passed an act establishing its legitimacy and allotted the company $300,000 in capital stock that could be increased to $700,000 if necessary. The act further stated that investors could purchase stock for $100 per share. Once people bought $100,000 worth of stock, the company could purchase real estate and other property. Investors quickly purchased the minimal amount of stock, because the company was ready to begin construction in October. The legislature put pressure on the builders to complete the task by giving them just two years to finish. This was not an unreasonable amount of time, since the railroad was only fifty miles long and already had an established route.[55]

Activity in Pensacola increased on October 12, 1868, as two ships arrived carrying the first shipment of iron. A week later on October 19, construction crews laid the first rails of the newly named Pensacola and Louisville Railroad. The city celebrated the reconstruction of their link to the North with ceremonies, speeches, and processions. At the construction site, a large steam locomotive with "Progress" and "Pensacola & Louisville Railroad" painted on the sides graced the scene, and in the city local officials such as W.W.J. Kelly made several speeches attended by an audience composed mostly of freedmen and other Republicans. At the time, the Presidential election of 1868 was approaching, and politicians did not waste opportunities to

[54]Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 113-114; Chipley, *Pensacola: The Naples of America*, 21.

[55]Pensacola *Observer*, 19 October 1868.

promote their cause.[56]

Chicago eagerly awaited the railroad's completion, because the line would provide a closer connection to a Gulf port. Pensacola was situated directly south of Chicago, and the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad provided the shortest distance. With a close link to a large city, Pensacola's port could expect more traffic and freight. While most of Chicago's goods went to the East and West, some were destined for Caribbean markets, and ships caused pick them up at Pensacola.[57] Construction crews completed the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad in 1869. Residents no longer had to rely on ships or roads to travel unless their destination was in Florida. With the rebuilding of the former Alabama-Florida Railroad, Pensacola was once again connected with the rest of the nation and one step closer to its condition before the Civil War.[58]

Along with rebuilding Pensacola's major line, developers decided to link the city with the lumber community of Millview. Unlike the owners of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, the planners had no intention of creating a connection with a metropolitan area. Instead, they wanted to provide a swift means of transportation to Pensacola Bay for the area's sawmills. The line itself would not extend further than ten miles and would provide a link to Perdido Bay. The idea for the project was not new. It was discussed as far back as 1849. As with the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, the Florida legislature approved the company charter and gave it corporation status for twenty years, because "considerable progress" had been made to "facilitate the enterprise." The legislature also allotted $100,000 of stock to the new Pensacola and Perdido Railroad Company.[59]

Because Pensacola did not depend on the new railroad for commerce and transportation, construction proceeded very slowly. To oversee the company, the initial stockholders established a board of directors that met weekly and appointed executives, including a president, secretary, and treasurer. The railroad's president, Richard L. Campbell, assumed his position on September

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[56]Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 113; Pensacola *Observer*, 19 October 1868.

[57]Pensacola *Observer*, 12 November 1868.

[58]Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 114.

[59]Pensacola *Observer*, 10 October 1868.

9, 1868, and accepted the task of purchasing iron rails and engines and other materials. The company hired engineer William H. Davison, originally from Boston with a degree in civil engineering from Harvard University to supervise construction.[60]

Rain and a labor shortage impeded construction of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad. Davison frequently commented on how storms prevented any work on certain days and that he often had few or no workers. The engineer's daily routine consisted of working mornings in the office and laying track in the afternoon. When he had hired hands, they were usually freedmen, and Davison had harsh views of African Americans. He generally referred to them as "darkies" and viewed their training as "breaking them in." The engineer's racism was probably not the cause of the labor shortage, because most whites in the late nineteenth century saw blacks as inferior. The Pensacola and Perdido Railroad may not have had high enough wages to compete with the lumber mills.[61]

When compared to the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, construction of the Pensacola and Perdido Railroad proceeded at a snail's pace. By 1870, crews had not come close to completing the ten mile line, and the company had to start mortgaging property to continue work. Whether or not the railroad was finished did not seriously affect West Florida's economy. Lumber mills could still easily transport timber to Pensacola Bay and the city stood to gain little. The Pensacola and Perdido Railroad was more of an extravagance designed to promote the growth of Millview which the company owned. The line offered Escambia County some benefits such as employment of local residents and incentive for new sawmills to build in West Florida. However, the railroad did not make a major contribution to the reconstruction of Pensacola, because it only added to an already established element of the city's economy.[62]

With the completion of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad, the city had a stronger

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[60]Pensacola and Perdido Railroad Company, "Minute Book of Directors and Stockholders Meetings: 1868-1895, Volume 49," McLaughlin Family Papers, John C. Pace Library Special Collections, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida, 3-8; William H. Davison, "Quarantine Station, Pensacola," P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, George A. Smathers Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 1.

[61]William H. Davison, *Diary*, 4 September 1868, 7 October 1868, 24 February 1868.

[62]Pensacola and Perdido Railroad, "Minute Book of Directors and Stockholders Meetings," 12; Johnson, "The Railroads of Florida 1865-1900," 110.

connection with Alabama than Florida. Pensacola's commerce and residents could move about the Heart of Dixie more easily than their home state. Since 1857, the Florida legislature had evaluated building a railroad starting at Chattahoochee and ending in Mobile. This proposed line would provide a connection for Pensacola and Tallahassee and would link all of North Florida (including Jacksonville) with the Panhandle. Without a railroad, the only way to travel to the state capital was by taking a ship around the Florida Coast to St. Marks and then traveling twenty-five miles north by train. An overland journey proved too difficult with the lack of civilization and the numerous streams and rivers to cross. In January, 1869 the Florida legislature made the railroad a priority, because "it is essential to the unity, prosperity, and development of the state." Before the Civil War, the state sponsored a survey to establish a route and secured the necessary land grants. The legislature estimated the railroad's distance at 154 miles and expenses not to exceed $2,500,000. All that the project needed was a company to start construction and some "friendly legislation."[63]

Without a major railroad contact between Pensacola Bay and Marianna (the western most city connected to Tallahassee by rail) was limited. The Panhandle counties had few residents and relied mostly on the plantation system. In December 1868 the state established a mail line between the two cities. This route allowed a post rider to carry correspondence to the remote areas of North Florida. It did not make up for the lack of a railroad, but it connected Pensacola with other areas of the state.[64]

A flourishing lumber trade and the construction of the Pensacola and Louisville Railroad linked Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties more closely with Alabama than Florida. Pensacola's economy had closer ties with the neighboring state and could benefit if Florida ceded the Panhandle to Alabama. City residents realized that Montgomery could provide stronger support to the railroad system, and many supported the annexation. Pensacola had grown tired of waiting for Tallahassee to push construction of a line that stretched across the northern part of the state. As long as the port was in Florida, Alabama would not invest resources, because Pensacola's

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[63]Florida Senate, *A Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate*, 11; William H. Davison, *Diary*, 12 October 1868.

[64]Pensacola *Observer*, 1 December 1868.

taxes did not go to the Heart of Dixie. The city's government and commerce knew that being in Florida stifled their prosperity, and they were eager to switch their loyalty from Tallahassee to Montgomery.[65]

In December 1868 Alabama Governor William H. Smith initiated negotiations with Florida to annex the Panhandle and appointed a three man commission to visit Tallahassee. The three, J.L. Pennington, Charles A. Miller, and Andrew J. Walker, were authorized to seek the acquisition of all of West Florida past the Apalachicola River. Florida Governor Harrison Reed was favorable towards annexation and allowed J.L. Pennington to address the legislature before it decided on whether to appoint delegates. The Florida House voted in favor of ceding the Panhandle but stated that its decision was subject to the approval of the state's citizens and the United States Congress. The Alabama commission was ecstatic over these developments and informed Gov. Smith about their impending success.[66]

In Pensacola, both conservatives and radicals celebrated the legislature's decision. An editorial in the pro Democratic *West Florida Commercial* stated that if "Alabama should fail in her wish of obtaining what is rightfully, naturally, geographically, and by the unanimous wish of all West Floridians hers alone, then we must believe that all hopes must end." In the Republican dominated *Pensacola Observer*, editors stressed the "necessity" of "opening the port of Pensacola to the interior." When facing issues of economic prosperity, both political factions united to do what they thought was best for West Florida.[67]

For five months, the Alabama commission negotiated with Gov. Reed's appointed delegates, William J. Purman, E.C. Dyke, and N.C. Moragne. In May 1869, they reached a deal acceptable to both states and submitted it to the two legislatures. The proposed agreement ceded West Florida to Alabama in exchange for $1,000,000 in bonds at eight percent interest that could be redeemed in thirty years. The rest of the deal involved the transition of governments, and Florida demanded that the current judges retain their offices until their terms expired and that the

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[65]Pensacola *Observer*, 24 December 1868; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207.

[66]Hugh C. Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35 (1957), 221-222.

[67]West Florida *Commercial*, 12 January 1869; Pensacola *Observer*, 24 December 1868.

annexed counties retain tax money reserved for internal improvements. Along with the court officers, Gov. Reed's delegation insisted that the Panhandle receive the same number of seats in the Alabama legislature as they had in Florida and that Montgomery builds a railroad from Pensacola to Quincy (located twenty miles west of Tallahassee). Before the agreement became official, the U.S. Congress and a majority of West Florida residents had to approve it.[68]

Florida had the advantage during the negotiations and the Alabama commission had to agree to a stiff price. In May, 1869 Gov. Reed seemed willing to cede part of his state, but Gov. Smith and several legislators questioned the deal. They felt that the price was too high despite gaining another deep water port and numerous waterways leading to the Gulf. Their concerns caused delays in finalizing the annexation, and these delays proved fatal to the agreement. In West Florida, the population overwhelmingly supported the deal with 1,162 votes in favor and 661 opposed. By June 1869 Gov. Reed and the rest of Florida's population began to have misgivings about annexation. The governor decided that his state did not want to sacrifice one fifth of its land and believed that ceding such a large area violated the Florida Constitution. He realized that the main issue was the lack of a railroad between Tallahassee and Pensacola, and he called for a special session that month to discuss building a line. With the government finally taking action, West Florida residents let the matter fade, and the proposed annexation was never approved.[69]

Harrison Reed's actions appeased the dissatisfied residents of Pensacola, but the governor had to make the railroad a reality. As the years passed, no company took control of the project and West Florida remained cut off from the rest of the state. The annexation issue returned in 1873 after the area's citizens grew frustrated waiting for their railroad. Lacking a connection with the state capital and the East Coast caused dismay for Pensacola, because the city continued to reside in a state that did not take an interest in its prosperity or contributions. With a railroad to Montgomery, West Floridians had stronger ties both economically and

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[68]Commissioners on the Part of the State of Florida and Commissioners on the Part of the State of Alabama, "An Agreement," *Documents Accompanying the Governor's Annual Message, 1869*, (Tallahassee, 1869), 3-7.

[69]Bailey, "Alabama and West Florida Annexation," 224-226; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207-208.

socially with Alabama.[70]

Between 1865 and 1870, Pensacola took giant strides in Reconstruction. The city changed for the better and was a relatively safe place for freedmen to make homes and start careers. Much of Pensacola's progress stemmed from two sources, the military and the timber industry. These two factors provided employment, order, and prosperity at a time when most of the South endured lawlessness and depression. Residents had jobs, and freedmen were not victims of organized violence. While Pensacola embraced Reconstruction quicker than other areas, the city faced its share of trials during the transition. The Freedmen's Bureau frequently had to deal with unfair treatment of blacks, and cases of racial violence occasionally occurred. However without a flourishing economy and strong military presence, Pensacola would likely have endured hardships similar to those of the rural counties. As 1870 arrived, the city faced both a brighter future and new challenges.

[70]Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 207.