

Confederate Account of the Battle

The following account was taken from THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, Vol. XXIX, No.2, October 1950.

According to the Floridian and Journal of Tallahassee, as copied in the Florida Union, news of the landing of the Federals at St. Marks light-house reached Tallahassee at 9 O'clock Saturday night (4 March 1865).

"The alarm was given and the note of preparation sounded throughout the whole city and county, and was extended to the other counties. The militia was ordered out, and a unanimous and invincible response was made to the call. Every man and boy capable of bearing arms was at his post. Never, since the first commencement of the war, have the people exhibited a greater spirit. One company of cavalry marched nearly sixty miles in twenty-four hours. Others marched on foot, thirty and forty miles to overtake their companies who had gone ahead, and in a very short time a sufficient force was on the way to the scene of action to meet any force the enemy had there."

Union BGEN John Newton was to find that he was poking a nest of hornets.

In view of the scanty and incomplete muster records of the Confederate forces of Florida which have survived, and the meager references elsewhere to the units which responded to this emergency, it is impossible at this time to list them in any degree of completeness. Among them, however, may be enumerated the following:

1. Battalion Fifth Florida Cavalry, LCOL George W. Scott:

Company C, Captain D. W. Gwynn

" F, " Dozier

" G, " W. H. Milton (Marianna)

2. Second Florida Cavalry, Colonel Caraway Smith:

Company A, Captain Clinton Thigpen

" I, " S. G. Parramore

" K, " Jesse A. Jones

3. Gamble's Battery:

(Kilcrease's Company), Captain Patrick Houston

4. Dunham's Light Artillery (Milton Artillery):

Captain Henry F. Abell

" Joseph L. Dunham*

5. Company of Cadets, West Florida Seminary:

Captain V. M. Johnston Active Captain D. W. Gwynn

6. First Florida Reserves, Colonel J. Jacqueline Daniel:

Company A, Captain Isaac B. Nichols

" B, " J. B. Spencer

" C, " W. W. Poe

" E, " W. D. Thurberville

" F, " W. A. Barwick

" G, " Hawkins

" I, " Green B. Hodges

It has not been possible to determine the unit designations of the following organizations, viz.:

1. Lieutenant Whitehead's Section Artillery (Gadsden County)

2. Gadsden Grays

3. Colonel Samuel Love's militia

It is suspected that all of these were from Gadsden County, and that the following companies belonged to one or the other:

Captain Du Pont's Company (men over 50) Gadsden Grays*

" Scott's "

" Smith's "

" Johnston's " (probably the V. M. Johnston above) (placed on detail at Tallahassee)

* Information from battlefield monument

It appears from General Newton's reports that he believed that while General Sam Jones was mobilizing the available forces in Middle Florida he made an appeal to Governor Brown of Georgia for aid, as Newton speaks of the arrival of 1000 troops from Georgia. Jones did request that rolling stock of the Savannah, Albany and Gulf Railroad be run over to the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad via the newly reopened Lawton-Live Oak connection. It is more likely that Newton's information really referred to the arrival of the Second Florida Cavalry which, dismounted, arrived opportunely on the field at Natural Bridge, and probably determined the outcome. They probably arrived from the east by train. The attempted firing of the Aucilla trestle appears to have been discovered by a troop train.

Early on the 5th, Brigadier General William Miller went to Newport with a company of cadets from the West Florida Seminary and a small body of militia. This small force was steadily strengthened throughout the day. Fortunately on the night of the 4th and morning of the 5th, in anticipation that an invading force might attempt crossing on the bridge which there spanned the river, a breastwork commanding the bridge had been thrown up (13).

With Newton's advance, Scott fell back with his detachment of the battalion of the Fifth Florida Cavalry, and two pieces of artillery, to the East River Bridge, from which he removed the planking, unlimbered his guns and prepared to offer some resistance. This stand could not long be maintained, as it was not desired to give the Federals occasion to discover a ford some distance above the bridge. Here one of the cannon was lost as already related. Four Federal dead were later found at this point. Scott retreated to Newport, and after crossing the bridge, damaged it sufficiently by fire to render it impassable. Buildings at Newport, including a foundry, as well as saw and grist mills, were set ablaze in order not to obstruct the line of fire. The reception General Miller accorded Weeks at this point has already been described, and lead General Newton to conclude that passage of the river at that point was impracticable. General Sam Jones went to Newport on the night of the 5th. General Miller, anticipating that General Newton would make a night movement toward Natural Bridge, sent LCOL Scott with his cavalry to await them there.

During the night the only semblance of panic which arose was checked by prompt action of General Miller, who, on learning that the officer in charge of the small force left at the fort in St. Marks, probably alarmed by the advance of the fleet up the river, was preparing to blow up the magazine, burn the gun-boat Spray, and put fire to some 600 bales of cotton at the port, set off at once for St. Marks, fortunately arriving before these designs were consummated. His orders put an

end to all thought of surrender at that place. He returned to Newport before dawn, and proceeded to Natural Bridge, which he reached an hour after sunrise.

Reinforcements continued to move throughout the night on the railroad, which General Jones ordered to detrain at the turpentine-still (probably Woodville rather than Wakulla station), a point closer to Natural Bridge than Newport. The plank road as well was thronged. The small force at Newport was ordered up also, being later replaced there by Lieut. Whitehead's section of artillery. This hastily assembled force of reserves, a few cavalymen, and a section of artillery arrived at Natural Bridge a short time before four o'clock in the morning of the 6th. The entrenchment at that point had been thrown up earlier, in anticipation of such an emergency, just as that at Newport is reported to have been (13).

On arrival the troops were placed so as to extend the line, which originally was across the road, just in front of the bridge, so that the right and left flanks finally rested on the river below and above. On the left was Dunham's battery and the Gadsden Grays, with Colonel Love's militia in reserve near the left center. The West Florida Seminary cadets occupied the center, in front of the bridge. To the right was Scott's battalion of the Fifth Florida Cavalry. Captain Houston's battery was to the left of the right center, to the right of which was stationed Colonel Daniel's regiment of reserves. The line thus formed a crescent, the concavity toward the bridge, which permitted a converging fire at the point where the Federal forces meant to cross.

Hardly had the line at Natural Bridge been formed before skirmishing began at 4 a.m., which continued until 10 or 11 o'clock, during which period two attacks were repulsed. The fighting intensified subsequently, probably at the time of Townsend's advance, and continued heavy for three or four hours. Although each of the three Federal attempts to cross the bridge were made with marked spirit, they were repulsed each time with considerable loss. According to General Jones, after the two initial attacks the enemy formed under a cover of a thick hammock and kept up an obstinate fight at intervals for ten or twelve hours.

Early in the afternoon Colonel Caraway Smith arrived with a battalion of the Second Florida Cavalry dismounted, which was placed so as to extend the line further down the west bank of the river. After a brisk fire from the four pieces of Confederate artillery, slackening of the Federal fire indicated their withdrawal. Thereupon Captain H. K. Simmons of the Second Florida Cavalry was ordered to penetrate the hammock, and ascertain the position of the Federal forces. Observing felled trees and a breastwork, he, in disregard of caution, ordered a charge and was killed on the breastwork. This ended the fight.

The Federal retreat was covered by felling timber across the road, which had to be cleared before the Confederate cavalry could pass. Although pursuit was continued for 12 miles, removal of these obstacles so delayed the pursuers that Newton managed to withdraw without a rear guard action and the Confederates returned to Newport.

When it was ascertained that the Federal force had re-embarked and withdrawn, the Confederate forces took up their line of march for Tallahassee on Thursday the 9th. On arrival in the capital city, they were addressed by Governor Milton in the hall of the House of Representatives, and in complimentary orders by General Sam Jones, were allowed to retain their arms and equipment.

According to General Jones, the Federal force landed at the light-house was estimated at between 1500 and 2000 men. General Newton believed that he was opposed at Natural Bridge by a force likewise consisting of from 1500 to 2000 men. He stated that according to rumor, the Confederates were reinforced about noon by 1000 veterans from Georgia. While no specific confirmation on this point has been encountered, it is surmised that if these may have actually arrived in Tallahassee, they were detained there to man the local fortifications. It appears more likely that the report which came to his ears of Confederate reinforcements arriving about noon, related to the arrival of Colonel Caraway Smith's men of the Second Florida Cavalry, who were indeed veterans. Newton also stated that he originally calculated on an available Confederate force of from 600 to 700 men, whose numbers through impressments might be increased to 1000. That the Confederate position at Natural Bridge was well selected is confirmed by Newton, who stated that 200 resolute men, aided by artillery, could hold it against five times their number.

General Newton declared that his expedition started from the light-house with 893 men, but detachments at Newport and at outposts up and down the river, together with losses in action, had reduced his force to 500 when the imagined Georgia reinforcements to the Confederates arrived. All Federal troops at Natural Bridge were black, of the Second and Ninety-ninth U. S. Colored Infantry (the last described by the Confederate newspaper as the 19th Louisiana), with white officers.

It is doubtful if General Sam Jones had an accurate knowledge of the number of men who rallied to his call. Any estimate made at this date can only be a very rough approximation, based on the identifiable units in Soldiers of Florida (10). From this the following data have been secured:

		Possible			
Unit	Co.	Strength	Wounded	Killed	Notes
5th B.	C	97	1		Complete roster
	D	12			" "
	F	50		Treplett	
	G	50	1	Simmons	Mustered out, Apr.-May, '65
Gambl		40	1		Mustered out, Apr.- May '65
Dunham	Abell	12	2		"
	Dunha	21	"		"
Cadet					No data
1st					
	A	17			As mustered out
	B	22	1		"
	C	11	1		"
	E	L3	1	Grubbs	"
	F	9	2		
	G	7	1		
	I	12	1		
2nd Cav.					
	A	30	3		
	I	109	6		"
	K	93	2	*	"
Total		595	23	3	

**Soldiers of Florida list 2 men named Henry K. Simmons as killed on March 4 (sic). One as Capt. Co. G, 5th Florida Cavalry Battalion, the other as Private Co. K., 2nd Florida Cavalry. They probably are the same individual, who received a battlefield promotion and transfer.*

This does not consider the unidentified units, the Gadsden Grays, Co1, Love's militia, or three other companies of Gadsden County militia, all of whom may have comprised one unit. Their combined strength probably did not exceed 100 men. In the absence of data regarding the cadets, their number may be set at 25.

Since the Second Florida Cavalry did not arrive until the later stages of the action, we may subtract their strength of 232 men from the total of 583 given, and add 125 as the approximate strength of the other units, for a total of 476, as an estimate of the strength of General Sam Jones' force for the greater part of the

battle. In round numbers there may perhaps have been a total of from 600 to 700 Confederates engaged. What gives plausibility to this figure is the circumstance that all of the reported Confederate casualties, 3 killed and 23 wounded are included in the units for which figures are tabulated. COL Daniel was wounded by being dashed against a tree by his horse (14). It appears that the casualty figures relate solely to the action at Natural Bridge. It is not known what losses occurred elsewhere.

It would thus appear that there was actually no great disparity in the number of the contestants involved, and that each side grossly overestimated the number of its opponents.

General Newton reported the following casualties, which probably cover the whole expedition, viz.:

Unit	Killed		Wounded		Missing		Total
	Officers	Men	Officers	Men	Officers	Men	
Staff	1		1				2
2 nd FL Cav.		1		2	13		16
2 nd US Colored		10	6	41	1		58
66 th US Colored	1	8	2	37	1	23	72
Total	2	19	9	80	1	37	148

Newton stated that all of his wounded, excepting eight fatally wounded who were left at a house two miles from the field, were brought away. In some respects the data of this table do not check with other information. Lieut. Carrington (143 N.Y.) and Capt. Tracy (2nd U.S. Co., A.A.A.G.) are the staff officers given respectively as killed and wounded. The name of the officer of the Ninety-ninth killed is not given, but Lieut. Col. Pearsall of that regiment was wounded. Of the Second Regiment, Major Lincoln, and Lieutenants Murphy and Seymour subsequently died from wounds, while Col. Townsend was wounded but recovered. The Federal casualties were roughly 16 per cent of their force, or one for every six men. Assuming that the forces engaged were roughly equal in numbers, the Federal casualties were about seven times greater than those of the Confederates.

A few words may be said about the consequences of the sabotaging raids instigated by Major Weeks. General Newton relates that the party for the Ocklocknee returned without making a serious attempt to reach the bridge. He complained that although the men sent were picked, had good knowledge of the country, and could have, with little risk to themselves, obstructed the railroad for several days, so far as known neither of the bridges was damaged nor the railroad obstructed. Newton however, either did not know or would not tell the whole story. The clipping from

the *Floridian and Journal* in his hands contained a paragraph to the effect that on Tuesday last (presumably March 7th) it was discovered that an attempt had been made to burn the Aucilla trestle on the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad. The damage was slight, insufficient to stop the trains, and the telegraph line was cut at the same point. This was supposed to be the work of deserters and may have been part of the program of the enemy to prevent troops from being brought from the east to take a hand in the late fight. Strickland and one of his companions who were landed at the mouth of the Aucilla River were captured in Federal uniform with the aid of dogs, shortly after discovery of the fire at the railroad bridge. They were brought to Tallahassee, court-martialed, convicted and shot on the 18th (9). Strickland had deserted from the Confederate service and became a leader of those in Taylor County disaffected with the Confederacy (7).

The Quincy paper (4) also relates that two deserters were captured, summarily court-martialed, convicted and shot on the spot. One surmises that the spot was Newport, and that the men were also from Major Weeks' command.

A great deal of hardship resulted in Wakulla County from the Confederate set conflagration at Newport. The same clipping previously cited relates that the loss of Mr. Dan Ladd's grist mill made corn meal scarce, and that destruction of the work-shops and saw-mill was a great loss to the government, as nothing from either was saved. The bridge was easily repaired, as it had not been burned.

Although General Sam Jones did not, in his report to General Johnston, cite any individual or unit for conspicuous service during the action, the Tallahassee and Quincy papers were generous in their praise, not overlooking any unit.

The reports available do not reveal just when Newton re-embarked his force at the light-house, but it does not appear that he tarried there. His earliest report on his subsequent activities is dated from Key West on the 15th, the day of his return. He later stated that after the expedition was over, the troops were distributed to the posts at Cedar Keys, Punta Rassa and Key West, that at Fort Myers being broken up.

Despite the whole-hearted spontaneity with which the people of Middle Florida rallied to repel the invasion, the success of their efforts could not change the worsening trend of events in areas beyond their horizon, nor postpone the inevitable. General Lee surrendered on the 9th of April, and General Johnston surrendered on the 26th of the same month. On the 8th of May, Admiral Stribling reported to Secretary of the Navy Welles, that the blockading officer at St. Marks reports that the authorities at Tallahassee are ready to surrender on the terms of Johnston's capitulation, and awaited arrival of officers appointed by General Sherman. A few days later (May 10), Brigadier General Ed. M. McCook

arrived in Tallahassee from Macon for this purpose, and received the surrender of 8,000 Confederate troops in Florida. Thus did Tallahassee, the only capital of a Confederate state east of the Mississippi River not captured by force of arms, render submission.

The opinion was entertained in Tallahassee at the time of the expedition, that General Newton, on finding that his passage of the St. Marks River was blocked, might continue his flanking movement along the east bank, ascending to the head of the rise just south of the St. Augustine road near the Jefferson County line, and attempt entry of Tallahassee via the St. Augustine road. Brevard (8) relates that in anticipation of such a movement, "the troops coming to reinforce the Confederates at the bridge were ordered placed in the forts around Tallahassee, especially in the fort on the hill commanding the St. Augustine road and the hill country to the east." This earthwork, well preserved, lies in Old Fort Park, Tallahassee.

Through one of those ironies of fate, the occurrence of which does not seem wholly devoid of malice, Brigadier-General Newton, shortly after these events, did come to Tallahassee, and from the Headquarters of the District of Florida in that city, he himself issued General Orders No.1 on June 19, 1865, wherein is stated that in compliance with General Order No. 81, Department of the Gulf, he, as senior officer present, assumes command of the District of Florida (11), a post which he retained until the end of the following July. Major Edmund C. Weeks, during carpet-bagging days, is stated to have resided in Tallahassee (12).

SOURCES

1. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series I, vol. XLIX, part I, pp. 57-69. (Report of) Operations in the Vicinity of St. Marks, Fla. February 21-March 7, 1861*. Also pp. 1029, 1043. Letters of Major-General Sam Jones.
2. *Ibid. Series I, vol. XLIX, part II, pp. 1134-1136. Report of Major-General Sam Jones to General J. E. Johnston.*
3. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War Of the Rebellion. Series I, vol. 17, pp. 813-821. (Report of) Joint Operations in the Vicinity of St. Marks, Fla., February 23 to March 7, 1865.*
4. *The Quincy Semi-Weekly Dispatch, Quincy, Florida, Wednesday, March 15, 1865. "Another Victory in Florida. Battle of Natural Bridge."* In P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.
5. *The Columbian, Lake City, Florida. Wednesday, March 15, 1865.*
6. *The Florida Union, Jacksonville, Florida, March 18, 1865. "Battle of Natural Bridge."* Copied from the *Floridian and Journal*. Library of Congress. Transcript in Florida State Library.

7. W. T. Cash: "Taylor County and Civil War Deserters." *Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol. XXVII (July 1948) pp. 28-58.
8. Caroline Mays Brevard: *A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times*. Ed. by J. A. Robertson. 2 vols. Pub. 4, Fla. State Hist. Soc. DeLand, Florida, 1925. vol. II, pp. 109-112; 116-121.
9. Ellen Call Long: *Florida Breezes; or Florida, New and Old*. Jacksonville, Fla. 1882. p. 369.
10. *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian, Civil and Spanish American Wars*. Prepared and Published under the Supervision of the Board of State Institutions. Live Oak, Fla. n. d. (circa 1903).
11. *General Orders Issued in the District and Department of Florida, June 19, 1865 to December 31, 1865; 1866; 1867; 1868*.
12. Col. J. J. Dickison: "Military History of Florida." In: *Confederate Military History*, edited by General Clement A. Evans. vol. XI, p. 135. Atlanta, Georgia, 1899.
13. William Watson Davis: *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*. vol. 131. *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*. Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1913. p. 315.
14. Rowland H. Rerick. Ed. by Francis P. Fleming: *Memoirs Of Florida*. 2 vols. Southern Historical Assn., Atlanta, Ga., 1902. vol. I, p. 283.

NOTE: It does not appear that any issues of the *Floridian and Journal of Tallahassee* (a semi-weekly) for February and March, 1865 have survived. (See Elmer J. Emig: "A Check List of Extant Florida Newspapers, 1845-1876." *Florida Historical Quarterly* XI (Oct. 1932) pp. 77-87). One of General Newton's reports in (1) is accompanied by an undated clipping from this newspaper.

THE CADETS OF THE WEST FLORIDA SEMINARY IN THE BATTLE OF NATURAL BRIDGE

Florida State University in Tallahassee has evolved from an institution created by the State Legislature on January 24, 1851, first known as the Florida Institute, and after 1 January 1857, as the West Florida Seminary. This occupied a building on the site of the Westcott Building of the present university. The Institute, and its successor, the Seminary, were operated for male students until 1 October 1858, subsequent to which time girls were accommodated in a separate department known as the Female Institute, housed in a building located to the rear of the Lively School (the old Leon High School), and were counted in the total enrollment of the Seminary.

Dr. Wm. G. Dodd, Dean Emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University, has supplied the following data of the enrollment in this early

institution, derived principally from the 1869 report of the President of the Board of Education, Mr. J. T. Bernard (Board of Trustees) to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The enrollment in the institution in the first thirteen years of its existence, as far as can be determined from surviving reports and records, is as follows:

School Year	Students Enrolled			Comment
	Male	Female	Total	
1856-57	76	—	76	
1857-58				No data
1858-59			130-200	Opened Oct. 3 with 130 enrolled, more than one half girls. Attendance increased to about 200 at midyear.
1859-60			120	A local paper reports enrollment of "upwards of 120".
1860-61			250	About 250 of both sexes.
1861-62)
1862-63) No data
1863-64)
1864-65	34	24	58	
1865-66	57	29	87	
1866-67	48	30	78	
1867-68	42	24	66	
1868-69				School closed, although one of the buildings was used for a private school.

During the war period, the Legislature of 1863 passed an Act changing the name to the Florida Military and Collegiate Institute, and providing, in order to exempt the teachers at the Institute from conscription, that the Governor be authorized to commission such teachers as officers in the state service. According to Dr. Dodd, this Act was vetoed by Governor Milton. However the minutes of the Board of Trustees preserve a letter written by Captain V. M. Johnston, acting principal of the school, dated 7 August 1864, which in part is as follows:

"I then propose that the Board authorize me to secure the exemption of the school from military duty, except for those of a military age, at the discretion of the Governor or General Commanding the Department of Florida in cases of great emergency. I propose lastly, to secure additional arms and accouterments for the use of the school, uniforms for the Cadets. and, indeed, to do everything that is necessary to make this

school a first class Military Academy, an honor to the Board, and the pride of the State."

Respectfully,

(signed) V. M. JOHNSTON

The minutes of the Board show the following action to have been taken on 23 August 1864:

"Upon motion the following resolution was adopted- Resolved: That the President of the Board be authorized and requested, after conference with the Governor of the State, and with Captain Johnston to take measures to obtain from the authorities in Richmond permission for youths under 18 years of age to pursue their studies at the Military Academy until such emergency shall occur as to require their services in the field, under an assurance that such youths shall be armed and disciplined and held subject to any requisition for military duty".

In continuance of this subject, the minutes for February 6, 1865, contain the following entry:

"Resolved: that the bill of Captain Johnston of \$115.00 for expenses incurred by him in Richmond etc., in fulfilling the instructions of the Board be allowed, and authorized to be paid".

Miss Sue Archer relates in a paper (2) describing the role of the Cadets in the battle, written in 1911, that the Cadets of the Seminary came from homes in Tallahassee and vicinity, Quincy, Bainbridge and Thomasville, as well as Jefferson County, and were about 60 in number. Since this number materially exceeds that given in the previous table as the total enrollment for 1864-65, we regretfully conclude that on this point Miss Archer is in error.

The Cadet Company is uniformly referred to in the pension petitions later mentioned, as Company I, without specifying the regiment to which attached. I, being the ninth letter of the alphabet, implies that such regiment, which may have been a local militia organization, such as Home Guards, had eight other previously organized companies.

It is well and uncontrovertibly known that some of the students, organized as a company of West Florida Cadets, participated in the resistance to the Federal expedition commanded by Brigadier General John Newton, which culminated in Newton's repulse at the Battle of Natural Bridge. From various circumstances: the meagerness of the surviving records of the Seminary or Institute; the equal lack of surviving Confederate military records relating to the successful repulse of this invasion; the muteness of the Cadet participants themselves; and the present absence of survivors, make it impossible at this late date, to prepare an adequate

account of the unusual and unique part which this handful of teen-age boys played in this action. As a consequence the tale of their participation has begun to assume the character of folk-lore. An effort to check this trend, by the collection of all available information relating to their heroic exploit, appears desirable.

It is stated by a pension applicant that the Cadets were rendering responsible military service to the Confederate States Army and the State of Florida for 17 (7) to 18 (12) months prior to the close of the war, and that many of the older Cadets joined the Tallahassee contingent of Home Guards to go to Olustee in February, 1864 (7). Subsequent to Olustee, a military hospital was established in Tallahassee in the Masonic building (on the site of the present Masonic hall) and in the Baptist Church to the west of it, to accommodate the Federal prisoners secured in that action. These were guarded by Cadets, who also rendered other military service when no other troops were available in Tallahassee (7).

It will be recalled that the Seminary records indicate that a total of 34 unnamed male students were enrolled in the session of 1864-65. Since the curriculum provided primary as well as secondary instruction, it is likely that this enrollment was limited to boys under military age, perhaps from 8 to 17 years inclusive. Miss Archer (2) gives a list of 43 names, purporting to be those of the Cadets who participated in the battle. J. R. Blocker (3), who was a member of Captain Gwynn's company which skirmished with the Federal advance at East River, says that on the retreat of this force to Newport on March 5th, they were there reinforced by 12 men from the *Spray* and from 20 to 30 Cadets. As already shown, Miss Archer's list is in excess of the contemporaneous enrollment of male students in the Seminary. Making allowance for boys under 12 years of age, Blocker's statement of from 20-30 (say 25) Cadets, appears credible. It is likely that many of those Miss Archer named belonged to other units of the Home Guard.

The most accurate information available today is derived from the state pension records. Eligibility for state pensions was determined by certain maximum property qualifications. Applications had to be endorsed by two companions in arms from the same unit. Consequently applications could be vouched for by men who themselves were ineligible. The following partial roster of the Cadets is secured from the pension records, the individuals being either applicants or endorsers:

MEMBERS OF COMPANY I, WEST FLORIDA CADETS MAKING OR ENDORSING PENSION APPLICATIONS:

PENSION APPLICATIONS

No.	Name	Year	Applicant	Endorser	Comment
1.	Henry Ware Demilly	1852	+		
2.	D. Sheppard Shine	1851	+		
3.	Franklin P. Damon	—	+		*
4.	C. L. Beard	1849	+		*
5.	Egbert Nims	1847	+		
6.	James B. Dickson	1850	+		
7.	John Wesley Wethington	1847	+	Of 3,8	*
8.	William W. Perkins	1852	+	Of 1,2,5,9	*
9.	W. F. Quaile	1850	+	Of 1,2,5	
10.	Wm. A. Rawls			Of 3,6,8,9	*
11.	Luther Tucker				Mentioned 7
12.	G. Lavan Baltzell			Of 4	Mentioned 7 *
13.	W. H. Anderson			Of 4	
14.	John Milton, Jr.			Of 6	*

*On Miss Sue Archer's list (2).

The names of four others are somewhat uncertainly mentioned by John Wesley Wethington in the endorsement of Franklin P. Damon's application. These are Pros Demilly, Charles Pearce, Tom Myers and Herman Damon, who are also on Miss Archer's list. There may also be added the name of Tom Archer, brother of Miss Sue Archer, by her statement (2), as well as that of George Lewis, by statement of his daughter, Miss Mary Lewis. Thus of approximately 25 Cadets who may have taken part in the Battle of Natural Bridge, we can rescue the names of about three-fourths from oblivion.

John Wesley Wethington of Jefferson County was, according to Miss Archer (2), the Cadet Captain. He was already a veteran, having enlisted at Monticello in 1861 in the 3rd Florida, had been wounded, captured and exchanged. He had earlier participated in the battle of Olustee.

About 9 p.m. on the night of March 4th, 1865, Tallahasseeans were aroused by whistle blasts at the railroad station made by a locomotive sent special from St. Marks with news of the Federal landing at the light house. The authorities immediately set out to muster all available men, who were mainly Militia or Home Guards. According to Miss Archer (2), the first group to respond, at about daybreak, was Captain (sic) William Miller's company from Marianna. It is not clear whether this Miller is the same individual referred to in other reports as Brigadier-General William Miller. This is likely an error, however, as she probably had Captain W. H. Milton in mind. Miss Archer (2) states that Governor Milton ordered out the Cadets, which news caused great consternation to their families, as the most were but children. Mothers and sisters went to the station to say good-by. At the station, Captain Johnston of the Seminary appears to have screened the boys according to age, retaining those less than 12 years of age. It would be inferred from pension petition statements, that at this time they were actually inducted into the service of the CSA. Mrs. Eppes (18) says none were permitted to go without written permission of their parents. The Cadets appear to have accompanied

General Miller's force to Newport, as these appear to have been the earliest units to rendezvous at that point. On the morning of the 5th they covered the retreat of Colonel Scott with Captain Gwynn's skirmishers of the Fifth Florida Cavalry across the river bridge in the face of Major Weeks' advance. The stiff resistance there encountered forced General Newton to conclude that passage of the river at that point was impossible.

When it became apparent that General Newton would attempt to flank the Confederate position by advancing to Natural Bridge, the Cadets, who by now appear to have been under direct command of Captain D. W. Gwynn, were among the force from Newport sent during the night to Natural Bridge on the double quick. Here, according to Miss Brevard (15), the Cadets occupied a position in the center of the line, in front of the bridge, in close contact with Scott's Battalion of the Fifth Florida Cavalry to their right. Not one of the Cadets was wounded in the action (18).

In the first flush of enthusiasm following the repulse of the Federal force, the services of the Cadets received high acclaim. Thus the *Columbian* of Lake City, quoting from the *Floridian and Journal of Tallahassee*, says (17):

"The Cadets from the Florida State Seminary were in the fight and behaved in the most gallant manner. Their praise is on the lips of all who took part in the fight".

Some, at least, of the Cadets appear to have returned after the battle in the first Tallahassee bound train on the night of the 6th. Miss Archer (2) relates how the enthusiastic colonists at Bel Air flagged the train to dispense refreshments to the earliest of the returning troops, and decorate the boys with garlands. Others were detained to convey prisoners to Tallahassee (9).

It is likely that it was at the exercises held in the Capital building on the 9th that the presentation of a flag was made to the Cadets. This company flag, according to Miss Archer, was made by Miss Elizabeth Douglas, and presented by Miss Mattie Ward. "Presentation, because of inclement weather, instead of (being made) on the east front of the capital, was held in the Hall of Representatives. Captain Houston and his company were drawn up in a line in the rear of the hall and the cadets in front. *** No one knows what has become of this flag" (2).

The statements on several pension applications would indicate that the Cadets were discharged from Confederate service about May 15th, after the arrival of Brigadier-General Ed. M. McCook, USA, in Tallahassee to receive the surrender of the Confederate forces in Florida. It was stated by one of the applicants (7) that General McCook closed the school and relieved the Cadets of their arms "because they were in the service", and had just returned from actual fighting. The buildings of both schools were used as barracks by McCook's troops until September, 1865.

It was not until many years later that any expressions belittling the Cadets were voiced. Mrs. Eppes (18) describes the pride of those who participated, and the chagrin of those who did not. She further relates that:

Charley says, "We stayed right behind General Miller and his staff all the time."

"Why was that, Charley'!" I asked.

"So we could protect him," was the proud answer.

I did not dare to tell the dear little fellow that the commanding officer was supposed to occupy the safest position.

Of a graver nature is the allegation of the anonymous "Old Confederate" (4) who on hearsay disparaged the Cadets, and claims that the Cadets, on reaching the battleground, and meeting with four men bearing a stretcher on which were the remains of Captain Simmons, broke and ran. This allegation is incredible in view of the circumstance that Captain Simmons' death was a late event in the battle, occurring after Newton had withdrawn his force from before the Confederate entrenchments, and that all other accounts agree that the Cadets occupied a place in the trenches from the beginning of the engagement. Hence this statement is regarded as both apocryphal and libelous. Probably in after years no one in Tallahassee was better informed on the details of this engagement than Miss Caroline Mays Brevard, who quickly rose (14) to refute this slander.

It is regretted that at this late date a more comprehensive account cannot be prepared of the valor of this small company of teen-age boys, or that the names of all cannot be presented. The recollection of their heroism merits careful preservation as the most cherished tradition of the lineal successor of the West Florida Seminary, the Florida State University.

SOURCES

- 1. Report of the President of the Board of Education, J. T. Bernard. 1869. With report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Florida Senate Journal, January, 1870.*
- 2. Miss Sue Archer. "Reminiscences of the Battle of Natural Bridge." Daily Democrat (Tallahassee) vol. IV (64) November 7, 1918. (Paper read at the March 6, 1911 meeting of the Anna Jackson Chapter, UDC.)*
- 3. J. R. Blocker, Carabelle, Communication from. Daily Democrat (Tallahassee) vol. IV (40) October 10, 1918.*
- 4. "An Old Confederate", Communication from Daily Democrat (Tallahassee) vol. IV (??) October 18, 1918.*
- 5. Henry Ware Demilly, Application State Board of Pensions.*

6. *D. Sheppard Shine, ibid.*
7. *Franklin P. Damon, ibid.*
8. *C. L. Beard, ibid.*
9. *Egbert Nims, ibid.*
10. *James B. Dickison, ibid.*
11. *John Wesley Wethington, ibid.*
12. *William W. Perkins, ibid.*
13. *W. F. Quaille, ibid.*
14. *Caroline Mays Brevard, Communication from Daily Democrat (Tallahassee) vol. IV (54) October 26, 1918.*
15. *Caroline Mays Brevard: A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times. Ed. by J. A. Robertson, 2 vols. Pub. 4, Fla. State Hist. Soc. DeLand, Florida, 1925. vol. II.*
16. *Caroline Mays Brevard, "A Neglected Battlefield." The Daily Capital (Tallahassee) Woman's Club Edition, December 18, 1905. (Paper read at the 8th Annual Convention, Daughters of the Confederacy, Florida Division).*
17. *The Columbian, Lake City, Florida. Wednesday, March 15, 1865. "Battle of Natural Bridge." Copied from the Floridian and Journal. P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.*
18. *Susan Bradford Eppes: Through Some Eventful Years. Macon, Georgia, 1926.*