

Volume 23, No. 11

Wednesday, November 10, 2010 Assembly

Editor: Stephen L. Seftenberg

Steve Seftenberg, our Secretary and Editor of *Haversacks and Saddlebags*, will discuss Abraham Lincoln's three-hour speech at Peoria, Illinois, on October 16, 1854, attacking the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The Act, sponsored and rammed through by Senator Stephen A. Douglas, repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited the spread of slavery into the Louisiana Territory North of 36° 30'. As a lawyer and a legal draftsman, Steve will outline why he admires the incredible combination of historical knowledge, lawyerly logic and literary genius found in this speech. This speech marked Lincoln's re-entry into politics and catapulted him into the national debates over slavery and laid the groundwork for his 1860 campaign for the Presidency.

### October 13, 2010 Program

Eliot Kleinberg is that rarest of Floridians: a native. Born in South Florida, he has spent some three decades in both broadcast and print news, including 20-plus years at the Palm Beach Post in West Palm Beach. In addition to covering local news, he also writes extensively about Florida and Floridiana. He has written 10 books, all focusing on Florida, including *Black Cloud*, a 75th anniversary book on the great 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane; two *Weird Florida* books, and *Palm Beach Past*, a collection of his weekly local history column in the Post. His tenth book and first novel, *Peace River*, is based at the end of the Civil War.



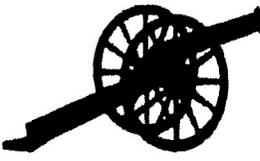
Eliot Kleinberg entertains another audience!

Eliot was born in Coral Gables in 1956, graduated the Miami-area public schools in 1974, and received two degrees from the University of Florida. His career as a radio and television reporter and editor, from 1979 to 1984, included work in Miami and at the Cable News Network. He was a reporter for the Dallas Morning News from 1984 until 1987, when he returned to Florida and joined the Palm Beach Post. He is a member of the Florida, South Florida and Palm Beach

County historical societies. Eliot lives in Boca Raton with his wife and two sons.

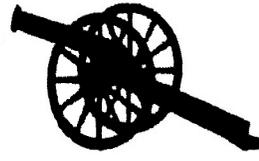
The average reader of THE PALM BEACH POST is “new” to Florida (an informal poll of the Roundtable audience showed that less than 15% have lived in Florida more than ten years!) and knows little or nothing of Florida's history. To prove his point, Eliot asked three questions: (1) Who “owned” Florida longer, Spain or the United States? Spain held Florida from 1513-1819 [except for 1763-1783] (286 years) while Florida was part of the U. S. from 1819-2010 (197 years). (2) On which side did Florida fight in the American Revolution? England seized Havana in 1763 and after trading Havana for Florida, yielded it back to Spain in 1783. Little-known fact: three signers of the Declaration of Independence were held in jail in St. Augustine until the end of the war! (3) On which side did Florida fight in the Civil War? Obviously, the state government was for secession – Florida was the third state to secede!

Kleinberg's thesis is that for newly settled residents, learning about Florida's history is doubly important: if you know about Florida's past, you will feel more at home. Eliot's talk will be centered on Florida's role in



## Assembly

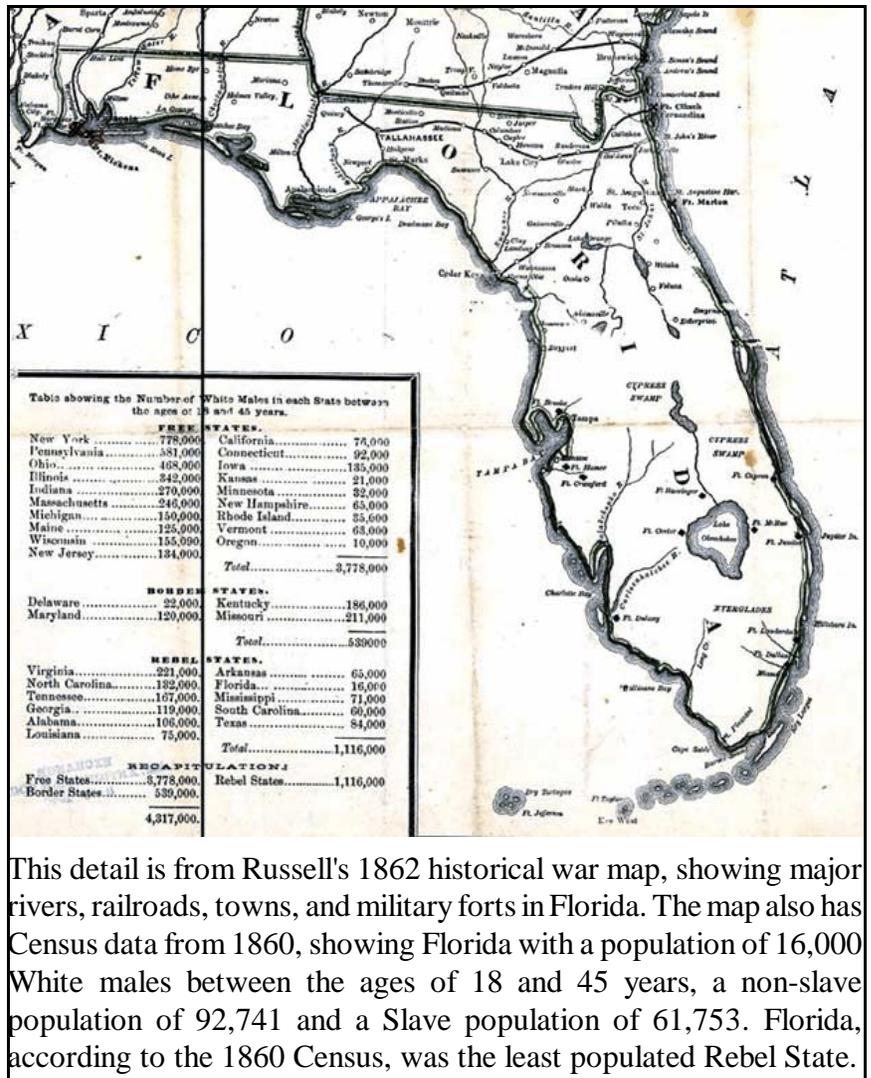
Assembly sounds at 7 PM on the second Wednesday of each month at the American Polish Club, 4725 Lake Worth Road, Greenacres, Florida (just west of Military Trail)



the Civil War – according to Shelby Foote, well-known historian, Florida was the most underappreciated theater and played a critical role.

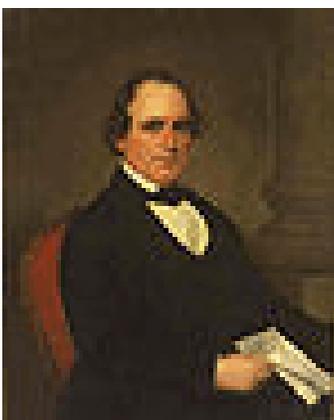
Participation by Florida’s adult white males in the Civil War was disproportionate compared to any other state, North or South. In the 1860 census, the state’s population was 154,494, all but 600 (excluding Key West’s 2,832) living north of Ocala. 61,753 were slaves. **The population of Palm Beach County was then 30!** Of the 92,741 whites, only 16,000 were between the age of 18 and 45, and nearly 100% fought in the war! [Editor’s note: While fragmentary, casualties of Confederate soldiers from Florida are estimated at about 3,200, of whom 1,047 were killed.]

Why did Florida secede? The state was then run by “big business” -- there were huge plantations along the Northern tier, some the size of counties! If the Florida planters had to pay comparable wages, the cost of growing produce was higher than it was in the Caribbean islands. The planters could not afford to lose their slave labor, so pushed the government to secede.



This detail is from Russell's 1862 historical war map, showing major rivers, railroads, towns, and military forts in Florida. The map also has Census data from 1860, showing Florida with a population of 16,000 White males between the ages of 18 and 45 years, a non-slave population of 92,741 and a Slave population of 61,753. Florida, according to the 1860 Census, was the least populated Rebel State.

There were a substantial number of



Union sympathizers living in Northern Florida. One was the territorial governor, 1836-39 and 1841-1844, Richard Keith Call (pictured at left), believed that secession was both treason and suicide, saying, “You have opened the gates of hell and the curses of the damned will haunt you!”

Eliot then teased us: why was Vicksburg the cause for our present population of 18 millions? The remainder of his presentation was addressed to this question.

President Lincoln’s first military action even before the firing on Fort Sumter was to call for a blockade of the entire shoreline of the Confederacy from Virginia to Texas, the “Anaconda” plan. He felt that this strategy was both cheaper in blood and money and more efficient than land battles, and he was right. Almost one-fourth of this coastline belonged to Florida, which was closer to Cuba, the

Bahamas and Bermuda than any other state. Florida, among other things, had one very important product: salt, needed to cure beef so it could be shipped to the Confederate armies. That is why the Union attacked Cedar Key and broke up the salt works there!

Even before Lincoln took office, Fort Pickens, in Pensacola Harbor, almost became the first shot fired. The Confederates sent the man who had built Fort Pickens to demand its surrender. The opposing forces reached a “truce”: Fort Pickens would not be attacked unless it was resupplied. As a result, a fleet of Union ships anchored offshore for months. However, once the war began, the Confederates under Braxton Bragg attempted to take Fort Pickens. This became the Battle of Santa Rosa Island.

[The following is taken from the National Park Service interactive “readings” about Fort Pickens: Before dawn, on October 9, 1861, more than 1,000 Confederates landed four miles east of Fort Pickens and

advanced against the Union lines. Darkness provided surprise but some soldiers lost their way among the sand dunes and scrub vegetation. One Union camp (see picture to the right) was taken and burned, but the approaching dawn and fear of Union gunboat attacks on their transport boats led the

*Harper's Weekly*, November 9, 1861: Attack upon the camp of the Sixth Regiment, New York Volunteers (Wilson's Zouaves) on Santa Rosa Island, October 9, 1861.

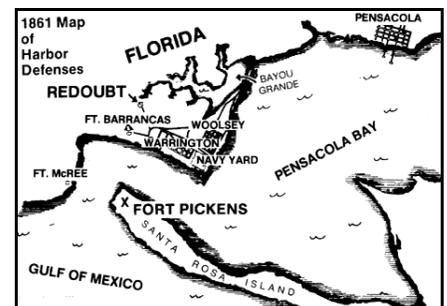
Confederates to withdraw eastward toward their landing place. In the meantime, Union troops from Fort Pickens counterattacked and the battle became a running skirmish down the island. Finally, the Confederates reached their boats and rapidly crossed the bay to safety. Known as the Battle of Santa Rosa Island, this confrontation was one of the first significant land battles of the Civil War fought in Florida.]

[Fort Myers was occupied by Union soldiers in December 1863. It was the only federally occupied fort in South Florida. Union commanders planned to send horse soldiers into the area north of the Caloosahatchee River to confiscate livestock from area cattle ranches, thereby preventing shipment of beef to the Confederate Army of the Tennessee in Georgia. By 1865, it was estimated that more than 4,000 head of cattle had been taken from cattle farms by the Union cavalry units from similar raids. The Confederates organized a special battalion of the state militia with the sole purpose of stopping the Union raids. The battalion, commanded by Col. Charles Munnerlyn, was made up of cattle drovers who were exempt from the Confederate Army, became known as the Cattle Guard Battalion or "Cow Cavalry." In early February 1865, the Cattle Guard Battalion was ordered to attack Fort Myers. Three companies and one artillery piece set out, along the way shooting some Black Union soldiers and alerting the fort. Asked to surrender, Capt. James Doyle, refused, saying, "I have force enough to maintain my position and will fight you to the last." Both sides engaged in sporadic firing until dark. One black Federal soldier was killed in the skirmishing. By morning, the Cattle Guard Battalion returned to Fort Meade. Fort Myers was abandoned in early March, 1865.

Key West was held by the Union throughout the war. In the absence of a bridge, it might as well have been on Mars.

In early 1864, Union forces mounted their largest military operation in Florida, an expedition that culminated in the Battle of Olustee. Both political and military considerations played a role in the campaign. 1864 was a presidential year, and various factions within the Republican Party hoped to organize a loyal Florida government in time to send delegates to the Republican nominating convention. Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase was particularly intrigued with this possibility. Chase's protege Lyman D. Stickney, the Union Tax Commissioner for Florida, lobbied hard for an increased Federal military presence in the state. President Lincoln became aware of Chase and Stickney's machinations, and Lincoln himself hoped to see a loyal Florida government returned to the Union under the terms of his December, 1863 Reconstruction Proclamation.

In addition to the political objectives, legitimate military concerns also played a role in the decision to occupy East Florida. Major General Quincy Gillmore, commander of the Union Army's Department of the South,



Fort Pickens was sited both to protect Santa Rosa Island and to prevent enemy ships from entering the bay and anchoring within range of the navy yard. (National Park Service)

wrote in a January 31, 1864 letter that the expedition was designed, in addition to the political objectives: "First: To procure an outlet for cotton, lumber, timber, turpentine, and the other products of the State; Second: To cut off one of the enemy's sources of commissary supplies. He now draws largely upon the herds of Florida for his beef...; Third: To obtain recruits for my colored regiments...."

In early February, 1864, 6,000 Union troops, largely Black, from South Carolina, occupied Jacksonville (one of the three times the Union captured Jacksonville!) and moved about 50 miles toward Tallahassee. John Hay, President Lincoln's private secretary, arrived in Florida to begin taking oaths of allegiance from Florida unionists as a preliminary step in organizing a loyal state government. To this point, the Union occupation of East Florida seemed to be progressing according to plan. The Confederate troops in Florida had few resources with which to stop the Union invasion. Following Union successes in Tennessee in early 1862, the majority of the southern forces in Florida had been withdrawn from the state and sent to more vital theaters of the war. Only a few units, mostly poorly equipped and with little combat experience, remained in Florida by early 1864.

The Confederate commander of the District of East Florida, Brigadier General Joseph Finegan, a native of Ireland, had served in the pre-war U.S. Army as an enlisted man, and had been prominent in Florida politics and the railroad industry before secession. At the time of the Federal landings, Finegan only had about 1,500 troops to defend his District, but reinforcements from Georgia brought his troop strength to 5,000 by mid-February. Meanwhile, the Union generals, Truman Seymour and Quincy Gilmore squabbled over strategy.

Following the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Railroad, Seymour led his 5,500 men in the direction of Lake City. At approximately 2:30 in the afternoon of February 20, 1864, the Union force approached General Finegan's 5,000 Confederates entrenched near Olustee Station. Finegan sent out an infantry brigade to meet Seymour's advance units and lure them into the Confederate entrenchments, but this plan went awry. The opposing forces met at Ocean Pond ... Seymour made the mistake of assuming that he was once again facing Florida militia units that he had previously easily routed and committed his troops piecemeal into the battle. Finegan and Seymour both reinforced their engaged units during the afternoon and the battle took place in open pine woods. The Union forces attacked but were savagely repulsed by withering barrages of rifle and cannon fire.



Battle of Olustee – Finegan (CSA), Seymour (USA)

The battle raged throughout the afternoon until, as Finegan committed the last of his reserves, the Union line broke and began to retreat. Finegan did not exploit the retreat, allowing most of the fleeing Union forces to reach Jacksonville. However, the Confederates did make a final attempt to engage the rear element of Seymour's forces just before nightfall, but they were repulsed by elements of the famous 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and the 35th United States Colored Troops, both composed of African-American soldiers. The Confederate cavalry commander received criticism for failing to pursue the retreating Union forces.

Union casualties were 203 killed, 1,152 wounded, and 506 missing, a total of 1,861 men—almost 40%. Confederate losses were lower: 93 killed, 847 wounded, and 6 missing, a total of 946 casualties in all—but still about 20%. Additionally, Union forces allowed six artillery pieces and 39 horses to be captured. The ratio of Union casualties to the number of troops involved made this the third bloodiest battle of the War for the Union. Many of the soldiers on both sides were veterans of the great battles in the eastern and western theaters of war, but many of

them remarked in letters and diaries that they had never experienced such terrible fighting. Following the battle, men of the 54th Massachusetts manually pulled a train of wounded Union soldiers for five miles, until horses could be secured to transport them further. This story of bravery and sheer strength became widely known over the whole United States.

The Union losses caused Northern authorities to question the necessity of further Union involvement in the militarily insignificant state of Florida. There is also considerable evidence from Confederate memoirs and letters that the high Union casualties were partially the result of Confederate troops murdering wounded and captured African-American Union soldiers. In the South, the battle was seen as a spirit-raising rout. One Georgia newspaper referred to Union forces as walking "forty miles over the most barren land of the South, frightening the salamanders and the gophers, and getting a terrible thrashing..." Today, the battlefield is

contained within the Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park, a part of the Florida State Park system. This park is located within the Osceola National Forest, on U.S. 90.]

Eliot attended a reenactment of the Battle of Olustee, commenting that watching it, he discovered 12 things in his book that were wrong!

In March 1865, Maj. Gen. John Newton (USA) had undertaken a joint force expedition to engage and destroy Confederate troops that had attacked Union outposts at Cedar Key and Fort Myers and were allegedly encamped somewhere around St. Marks. The Navy had trouble getting its ships up the St. Marks River. The Army force, however, had advanced and, after finding one bridge destroyed, started before dawn on March 6 to attempt to cross the river at Natural Bridge. The troops initially pushed Rebel forces back but not away from the bridge. Confederate forces, protected by breastworks, guarded all of the approaches and the bridge itself. The action at Natural Bridge lasted most of the day, but, unable to take the bridge, the Union troops retreated to the protection of the fleet. Once again, casualties for an attacking force were disproportionate (148 vs 28). The Confederate force consisted of grizzled veterans of the Seminole Wars and students from the West Florida Seminar (now Florida State University). Their banner hangs to this day in an FSU hall. Tallahassee is the only Confederate capital East of the Mississippi River never to fall into the hands of the North.

During the war, Governor John Milton (1807-1865) stressed the importance of Florida as a supplier of goods, rather than men, with Florida being a large provider of food and salt for the Confederate Army. With the Confederacy close to defeat, he left Tallahassee for his home, "Sylvania," in Marianna, Florida. In his final message to the state legislature, he said, "Death would be preferable to reunion." On April 1, 1865, he committed suicide, in his home, by a gunshot to the head.



There are traces of the Civil War all over Florida. St. Cloud was founded by veterans.

The only monument in the South honoring Union soldiers is in Linnhaven, Florida.



He is a fully uniformed Union Soldier facing North.

The fall of Vicksburg was very bad for the Confederacy but a boon to Florida! Texas was the only Confederate state that had a land border with a foreign country, thus permitting easy blockade evasion. The fall of Vicksburg cut the Confederacy in two, but also cut off the flow of beef, leather, pork, cotton, turpentine, etc. As a result, the Confederacy looked to Florida to replace Texas. The nickname for Gainesville, for example, was "Hog Town."

At the end of the war, Florida was "broke, broke, broke." But as Union soldiers compared the snows of Vermont and Wisconsin with the sun and sand of Florida, many planned to visit Florida on vacation, if not necessarily to live. Floridians, broke but resourceful, found they could plat homesteads and sell them to Northerners. Promoters would set up a "town" and offer free land "downtown" to businessmen. Henry Flagler's plan to link Jacksonville to Miami by rail netted him 2,000 free acres from the state for every mile of track! Henry Plant scored equally well on the West coast. His Tampa Hotel is now the campus of the University of South Florida. By the late 1890's, Florida was the "American Riviera." Booms led to busts, but World War II put Florida on firmer footing: from 17 bases in 1941, the military presence grew to 144 bases by 1945, with commensurate Federal dollar inflows. Population also soared: from 2 million in 1941 to 3 million in 1950 to 7 million by 1970 to 18 million in 2010. Where do we go from here? It depends upon us – can we pick our leaders intelligently? The jury is out on that issue.

Eliot's closing comments: the Civil War was a great failure because people on both sides could not solve their problems short of violence. Romanticizing the Civil War is like romanticizing 9/11. The obvious technological and medical benefits accruing from war, while significant, do not justify the cost in blood.

A vigorous Q and A session followed. Our old friend, David Levy Yulee, was discussed. Why was the Battle of Jupiter Lighthouse fought? The Confederates wanted the light extinguished since the blockade runners did not need it, but the Union ships chasing them did. The Assistant Lighthouse Keeper, a Confederate sympathizer, told his boss, "Turn out that light or die." The Keeper did as he was told, but

instead of destroying a very expensive piece of equipment, buried it in the sand for 4 years. After the War, he reinstalled it in the lighthouse!

Who were Boynton and Linton? In 1894, William Seelye "Steel Cut" Linton, postmaster of Saginaw, Michigan, bought a tract of land just west of the Orange Grove House of Refuge, and began selling plots in what he hoped would become a farming community. The Linton settlers began to achieve success with truck farming of winter vegetables for the northern market. A hard freeze in 1898 was a setback, and many of the settlers left, *including William Linton*. Partly in an attempt to change the community's luck, or to leave behind a bad reputation, the settlement's name was changed in 1901 to Delray, after the Detroit neighborhood of Delray.

Nathan S. Boynton was a major and a good deal other things besides the man who gave Boynton Beach his name. He was born June 23, 1837 in Port Huron, Michigan. After graduating high-school, Nathan S. Boynton worked as grocery-store clerk and a buggy-whip manufacturer before making a tidy sum of money with his own grocery business. He invested his savings in Michigan pine lands and was promptly wiped out by the Panic of 1857. He enlisted as a private in the Eighth Michigan Cavalry, was promoted to First Lieutenant and captured the Confederate raider John Morgan. After the war he served three terms as Mayor of Port Huron, Michigan and was the publisher of the local newspaper. In 1894, his health failing, he and his friend, Congressman William S. Linton, traveled to Florida in search of a winter retreat from the harsh Michigan winters. They sailed down the newly dredged Florida East Coast Canal (the Intracoastal) in Fred C. Voss's launch "Victor." Pausing at an area close to the present-day Ocean Avenue, Boynton pointed around him and said, "I'll take this." It was as simple as that. He built the legendary Boynton Beach Hotel that cemented his name to the area. He died in 1911.

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A portion of an article by Tony Horwitz (the author of "*Confederates in the Attic*"), in The New York Times, October 31, 2010, entitled, "*The 150-Year War*" follows (the whole article is worth reading):

“. . . as we approach the 150th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's election, on Nov. 6, and the long conflict that followed, it's worth recalling . . . reasons [why] that era endures. The Civil War [is] a national reservoir of words, images and landscapes, a storehouse we can tap in lean times like these, when many Americans feel diminished, divided and starved for discourse more nourishing than cable rants and Twitter feeds. 'The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.' These famous lines . . . [were] delivered not in the Gettysburg Address, but on a routine occasion: [Lincoln's] second annual message to Congress. Can you recall a single line from any of the telepromptered State of the Union messages in your own lifetime?

. . . much of the Civil War's landscape has been interred beneath big box malls and subdivisions named for the history they've obliterated. But at national parks like Shiloh and Antietam you can still catch a whisper of a human-scaled America, where soldiers took cover in high corn and sunken roads, and Lincoln's earthy imagery spoke to the lives of his countrymen. In an electronics-saturated age, battlefield parks also force us to exercise our atrophied imaginations. You have to read, listen, let your mind go. If you do, you may experience what Civil War re-enactors call a 'period rush' -- the momentary high of leaving your own time zone for the 1860s. You wouldn't want to stay there: at least I wouldn't. Nor is battle the only way into the Civil War. There are countless other portals, and scholars are opening them to reveal lesser-known aspects of Civil War society and memory. Know about the 11-year old girl who convinced Lincoln to grow a beard? The Richmond women who armed themselves and looted stores, crying 'Bread or blood'? The 'Mammy Monument' that almost went up in Washington a year after the Lincoln Memorial?

It's a bottomless treasure, this Civil War, much of it encrusted in myth or still unexplored. Which is why, a century and a half later, it still claims our attention and remembrance.”

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