

THE HISTORY OF THE TALLASSEE ARMORY 1864 TO 1865

By

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To God, Kathy, Megan, and Dane

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INTRODUCTION

The years from 1860 to 1865 were the most devastating in United States history. Eleven Southern states broke away from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America, launching the American people into a bloody, four-year civil war. Despite the problems the Confederacy encountered, its ordnance department, headed by Josiah Gorgas, was a success. The achievements of Gorgas and the Confederate Ordnance Department occurred in spite of the deficiency in the South's financial structure, which was based on capital invested in land and slaves. Despite the lack of hard money and falling cotton prices within the South, Gorgas implemented a system of overseas buying and established the Confederacy's ordnance manufacturing facilities. Gorgas's initial plan called for consolidation of production in locations such as Richmond, Macon, and Fayetteville, but as the war progressed and Union forces encroached on the Confederacy, Gorgas had to disperse his operations for protection. Alabama, as well as other Deep South states, became locations for Confederate ordnance sites producing infantry accouterments, gunpowder, and guns. Among these installations was the armory at Tallassee, which operated for eleven months. During Tallassee's short history as a Confederate armory, it struggled to supply the Confederate cavalry with guns even as the Confederacy collapsed.

The creation of the Tallassee Armory reflected the worsening situation around Richmond during the spring of 1864. The Federal Army's drive toward Richmond forced

Gorgas, upon the recommendation of his subordinates C. P. Bolles and James H. Burton, to transfer the Confederacy's carbine factory from Richmond to Tallassee. Bolles and Burton investigated the Tallassee site, and subsequently relocated Richmond's entire carbine shop with equipment, workmen, and families to Tallassee in June, 1864. The Tallassee Armory sprung to life in a leased 1844 cotton mill within a few short months.

This thesis will focus specifically on the operations of the Tallassee Armory from its birth in May, 1864, until its demise in April, 1865, outlining the day-to-day operations as well as the outside influences that affected the operation of the armory. The thesis will also examine the relationships between the different Confederate armories, including the men commanding those installations. It will rely on primary sources, such as the diary of Lt. Col. James H. Burton, which covers the years from 1861 to 1865, while he was commander of the Macon Armory as well as superintendent and inspector of armories in the South. This document contains descriptions of the Tallassee area during the mid-1860s, including the cotton mill and newly-established armory. Confederate records, correspondence written between the armories, recorded the day-to-day activities of the Tallassee operation and also outlined the working relationships between the armories. Citizen files, Confederate records related to private citizens and business firms that conducted business with the Confederate Government, help explain the connections between the Tallassee Armory and the owners of the cotton mill at Tallassee.

CHAPTER 1

TALLASSEE ARMORY: THE TENURE OF CAPTAIN C. P. BOLLES MAY 1864 TO DECEMBER 1864

During the early years of the Civil War, the Southern people were optimistic about gaining independence from the United States. The Confederacy enjoyed initial success against the Union forces, especially in the Eastern theater of operations, where General Robert E. Lee proved to be a nemesis to the United States Armies. But by the year 1863 the Confederacy's fortunes had changed. The capture of Vicksburg gave the Union control of the Mississippi River and divided the Confederacy, and the loss at Gettysburg forced Lee into a defensive posture. These defeats cost the South many valuable men, but the biggest loss was ordnance. The loss of irreplaceable supplies put even more pressure on the South's hard-pressed ordnance department, headed by Josiah Gorgas. Gorgas's initial plan had called for consolidating ordnance production in areas such as Richmond, Fayetteville, and Macon. But during the spring of 1864, the vulnerability of Richmond forced Gorgas to change strategy. The new plan involved dispersing industry throughout the South into locations inaccessible to enemy forces. The Richmond Carbine factory became the first facility moved to a safer location. On 8 May, Gorgas entered into his diary, "We are preparing to move our carbine factory with all the operatives and their families to Tallassee, Ala."¹

¹Frank E. Vandiver, ed., The Civil War Diary of General Gorgas (Tuscaloosa: University

Gorgas had concluded that Athens, Georgia, was unsuitable for the armory due to the disturbed military situation in Tennessee and Georgia. During the latter part of April and the first part of May, General Sherman initiated Grant's plan by invading north Georgia and eventually marching to the sea, cutting Georgia in half. Gorgas refused to locate more valuable machinery in a potential vulnerable area such as Athens. Upon learning from Colonel B. D. Fry that the mill buildings were still available at Tallassee, Gorgas requested in a letter dated 28 April 1864 that James H. Burton travel there and investigate the site. Earlier in the war, Colonel Fry had offered certain buildings to Gorgas for an armory. Upon receiving a favorable response from Fry, Burton traveled to Tallassee under orders from Gorgas to determine, "1st Is the property adapted to the purpose of an armory? 2nd Can the machinery be arranged there without much delay? 3d Can land and lumber be obtained for houses for operatives? 4th Is the country healthy and food abundant?"²

On 26 May, Burton and Bolles left Macon for Montgomery to confer with Major C. G. Wagner, Commander of the Montgomery Arsenal, about the two mill buildings at Tallassee. He possessed some information because he had recently toured the facilities at Tallassee. He gave Burton a letter of introduction to Mr. Micou, owner and president of the Tallassee Manufacturing Company. After departing Montgomery on 28 May, Burton and Bolles arrived late in the evening at the residence of Mr. Micou, where they

of Alabama Press, 1947), 99.

²Citizen Files, "Barnett, Micou & Co.," Roll 44, Record Group M346, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

stayed because Tallassee did not have a hotel.

The team of Burton and Bolles inspected the site from the evening of 28 May to 29 May and decided to lease the older 1844 cotton mill instead of the upper two floors of the newer mill. During the day of 30 May, Burton and Micou ironed out the details of the lease for the premises. The lease terms are quoted directly from Burton's diary, "The Govt to have the use of the entire old factory building & premises water wheel & water power the right to increase the power if desired and to drain additional water from the canal & to grade the ground and erect additional temporary buildings there on, and the right of way to and from the premises. The machinery in the factory to be removed as soon as possible by the owners. Messes. B. M. & Co. to be compensated for loss of time incident to removal. Also the use of a sufficient number of town lots on which to erect the necessary cottages for Armorers. The lease to be for the war with the privilege of extending it to 5 years. Messes. B. M. & Co. to have the option of purchasing all the buildings erected by Govt. at valuation at end of lease failing in which the Govt. to remove them within 90 days. The compensation to be determined by arbitrators to be appointed hereafter."³

On 31 May, James H. Burton returned to Macon to resume his duties as Superintendent of Armories. Captain C. P. Bolles traveled to Montgomery temporarily, but later returned to Tallassee to assume command of the Confederate Armory there. After a very brief stay in Montgomery, correspondence began on 1 June 1864, between

³ James H. Burton, "Personal Diary of James H. Burton, 1864." Special Collections, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin.

Burton and Bolles concerning Bolles's duties as commander over the Tallassee Armory.

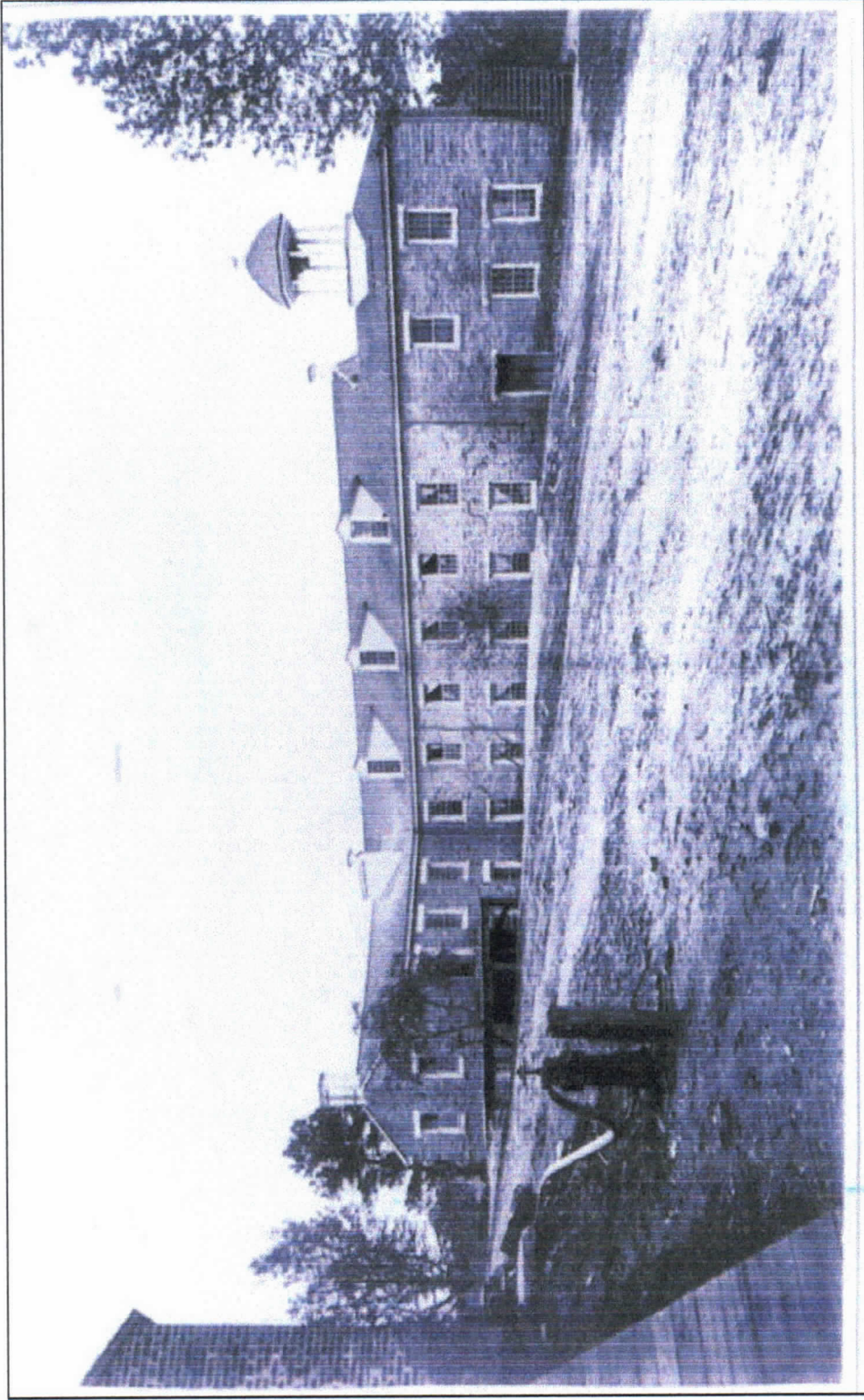
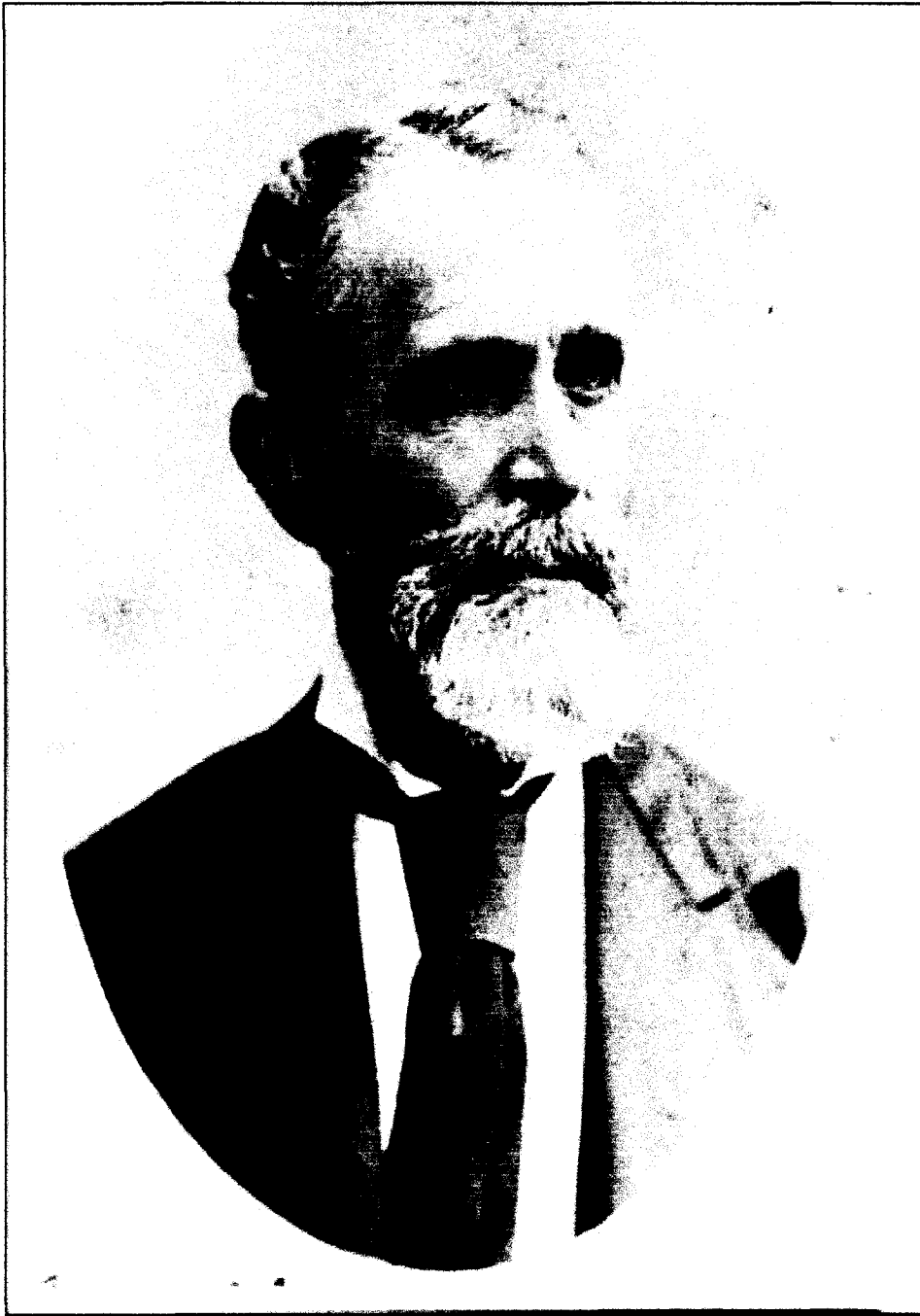


Fig. 1. Original 1844 Mill Building. The Alabama Historical Commission classifies the 1844 mill as a 2½-story building containing a ½-story loft and a full basement. Courtesy of the Alabama Historical Commission.

Captain Bolles's assignment in Tallassee promised to be very stressful. He possessed valuable experience as a maker of firearms as well as working in other Confederate armories throughout the South. It was his job to relocate a carbine factory into a remote location while making major additions to the old mill to begin operations. Workmen and their families were arriving, but he could not offer them adequate lodging or current pay. Compounding the situation, he received little support from Burton, his superior, in the form of money, supplies, or workers.

FIGURE 2

An 1884 photograph of Tallassee's first commander, Captain C. P. Bolles.



Courtesy of the N.C. Division of Archives and History

During June 1864, Gorgas received a joint report dated 1 June from James H. Burton and Captain C. P. Bolles outlining their trip to Tallassee. Burton went into great detail describing the situation at Tallassee. The report highlighted the many benefits, as well as the potential problems, that surrounded Tallassee. The most impressive benefit that Tallassee possessed was its supposedly inaccessible location from Union advances. Tallassee's location, as well as the Union armies' advance toward Richmond, compelled Gorgas to transfer the carbine factory from Richmond to Tallassee in the first place, but the problems associated with the location of Tallassee soon surfaced in Burton and Bolles's joint report to Gorgas. Burton and Bolles settled on the older, smaller cotton mill because of its isolation from the mill workers, but the smaller mill did not offer sufficient room for all of the carbine machinery. They deemed it "necessary to erect a temporary addition to it, about 80 feet long, and 40 feet wide, two stories high, with plenty of windows to meet the requirements of filing operatives. There will have to be erected also a temporary building for trip hammer and other forging operations."⁴

The second problem concerning the initial location was lodging the workers transferred from Richmond. Burton and Bolles said, "with reference to the accommodations of the workmen and their families, we found that there was none available for families and but little for unmarried men, the town of Tallassee consisting entirely of the cottages of the factory operatives, all of which were fully occupied. At the present time board & lodging for about thirty single men can be provided, and

⁴Citizen Files, "Barnett, Micou & Co.," Roll 44, Record Group M346, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

arrangements to this extent have been made.”⁵ But Tallassee’s rural location made it easy to buy large amounts of land cheaply. Burton and Bolles offset the lack of existing cottages by acquiring land from the mill owners, “We have further arranged with Messrs B. M. & Co. for the lease on same terms and for the same time as stated for the factory premises of a sufficient number of town lots for the erection of twenty five double tenements for families, giving to each of the families a garden spot of a full quarter of an acre. These lots are located in the best part of the town and are convenient to the factory.”⁶ But once again, these houses had to be built before or very shortly after the workers arrived from Richmond.

With all the construction required at Tallassee, the problem of acquiring all the needed materials posed another hurdle. The mill owners required that additions to the mill be made of stone for safety reasons, but this did not pose a problem as “the expense of erection of these walls will not be great as stone abounds on the spot, of a nature easily quarried.”⁷ The biggest hurdle involved getting enough lumber to build the cottages. The report outlined the obstacles involved in getting lumber, “The facilities for getting lumber in adequate quantity are not such as will enable the erection of the buildings to progress rapidly. Messrs. B. M. & Co. have a sawmill on the spot, but its utmost capacity is but 2000 feet per day. There are two other small sawmills in the vicinity, but their

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

united capacity is but 2000 feet per day. There is a large steam mill about eight miles distant, capable of producing say 6000 feet per day, but the readiest measure of transportation of lumber furnished will be first to ship it on the RR to a point within six miles of Tallassee and thence hauling by wagons & teams to the town.”⁸ Getting other needed supplies to Tallassee involved hardship as well. Burton stated, “All supplies from a distance will be hauled these six miles, crossing the Tallapoosa river by means of a ferry flat.”⁹ Tallassee’s isolated location provided protection but created supply headaches for the Confederacy.

Burton closed the report with some benefits of locating the armory at Tallassee. He emphasized the importance of the plantations scattered along the banks of the Tallapoosa River in supplying the armory with food. Mr. Micou operated a grist mill on the site of his textile mills and expressed his devotion to the Confederate cause without reservation. Burton wrote that “Mr. Micou, in behalf of the Company he represents, expresses his earnest desire to assist the Govt. in every possible way in connection with the Armory at Tallassee, and his cooperation will be of the greatest importance as he controls nearly all the supplies for miles around by his facilities for barter and exchange for the factory products.”¹⁰

Burton also gave his opinion that the present site on the west side of the river would

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

not be a good location for a permanent armory. The old mill building provided a temporary solution to Gorgas's relocation problem. As a permanent solution, the cotton mills were located on the best sites as far as right of ways and water power were concerned. He did give a glowing account for the unoccupied land on the east side of the river. The unoccupied land on the east side of the river was a mirror image to that of the west side. The area contained enough available land to erect a town and permanent armory while also having exclusive use of the water supply. He wrote :

With reference to the location of an Armory permanent at Tallassee, we are of the opinion that the circumstances are not favorable to the erection of such works on that side of the river, for the reason that the best factory sites are now occupied and the water power would have to be derived from the canal of the factory Co. below their works, thus subjecting the Govt. to possible problems of operations incident to repairs &c. at the Govt. Works. We visited and examined the location on the side of the river opposite to the town of Tallassee and we are of the opinion that should the Govt. decide to establish a permanent armory at this point an adequate water power could be developed and a good site for a town on the high lands adjacent could be purchased. The question, however, of selecting a permanent location is one of much importance and we respectively submit the propriety of making this the special duty of a commission to be appointed hereafter and who can give the subject the full consideration advisable. ¹¹

The official correspondence between Bolles and Burton began on 2 June 1864.

Burton wrote that he had instructed Colonel Cuyler to send Bolles ten boxes of window glass. He ended the letter with the statement, "You had better look after this glass as it might go astray in view of the out of the way location of Tallassee."¹² The construction

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Unless noted otherwise, all letters referred to come from Ordnance Department, "Letters sent from the Macon Armory, June 7, 1862-April 17, 1865" chap. IV, vol. 30, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C.

of worker housing became Bolles's most serious problem. With the transfer of 150 workmen and their families, accommodations became the pressing issue, as stated in the report of 1 June. Tallassee was woefully unprepared to receive the workmen. Bolles repeatedly requested that Burton help find shelter for the families in Macon until dwellings were constructed at Tallassee. But Burton could not help because of Sherman's military operations into Georgia. During the early part of June 1864, Sherman's Army had reached the area of Marietta, and all the fleeing refugees and wounded took up the extra housing in Macon. Burton telegraphed, "Your two letters received. No accommodation for the families can be provided here. You had better provide for them temporarily in Montgomery."¹³

On 11 June 1864, Burton sent Bolles a carpenter, a deserter from the Federal Army, who was in desperate need of work. Bolles needed skilled carpenters because of the massive amount of construction work at Tallassee. Later on 20 June, Captain Bolles sent Burton a rough draft of the agreement with B. H. Micou. Burton replied, "I have read the same and see no objections to its provisions. I think however, that it is desirable that the agreement should provide for the annexation of the decision of the arbitrators, on the question of annual rent,- to form part of the agreement. I also advise that action by the arbitrators be taken as soon as possible,-and before the leased premises undergo any alteration."¹⁴ Burton wanted the amount of rent paid to Micou included in

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

the agreement before any construction work began.

Construction proceeded at a fast pace, as Burton replied to a letter received from Bolles on 1 July 1864. The letter contained plans and drawings for houses that were erected for Burton's master machinist at Macon. Originally, there were three houses built in Tallassee for Confederate officers by the Confederate Government. Today only two of the dwellings survive. These three are widely regarded as the only houses built by the Confederate Government.

FIGURE 3

Officers' Quarters at Tallassee



Courtesy of Suzanne Solomon

In the next correspondence of 13 July 1864, Bolles requested a list of ordnance depots, arsenals, and armories and the names of officers in charge. The list was for the purpose of writing directly with any of the other establishments. Burton later replied to a letter of 15 July 1864 requesting brown drawing paper by stating he has "ordered a few

yards of brown drawing paper to be sent to you by Express. I would send more but cannot well spare it.”¹⁵ The drawing paper’s purpose was making patterns for the manufacture of the carbines. It seemed Bolles was making progress in the buildings as well as beginning the initial stages of production on the carbines. Not only did Captain Bolles have trouble arranging housing for his workmen, but later in the month of July Burton responded with more bad news concerning money. The shortage of money plagued the entire Confederacy at this stage of the war and was not a special problem of Tallassee. But currency demands added to Bolles’s and Tallassee’s problems. Bolles received the news in a reply from Burton on 29 July, which stated:

Captain, Your letter of the 15th inst. is only just now received. In reply I can only state that you have been misinformed with reference to funds having been supplied in large sums to the Ordnance Establishments in Macon. I have received no funds for several months, and am largely in debt. I regret therefore that I cannot let you have \$16,000 you require to pay your workmen to the 1st inst. I am greatly embarrassed by the want of funds and do not know when I shall receive any. This is the case at all the Ordnance Establishments. You are in a good position to supply food & clothing to your employees, and in view of this fact they cannot feel the want of money as much as those less favorably located. I am in hopes that, before long the Treasury will relieve our wants.¹⁶

The month of August began for Captain Bolles, much as previous months, filled with problems. In a letter dated 16 August, Burton stated that his Master Supply Keeper was sending Bolles thirteen kegs of nails of various sizes, but also wrote, “I regret that I cannot supply you with white-wash brushes. I have none on hand and there are none in

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

this market.”¹⁷

The cooperation that Bolles expected from his superior Burton did not materialize. Burton was Superintendent over the Armories, but he never seems to have been able to help Bolles solve his problems. The entire month of August witnessed a series of negative replies from Burton to various Bolles’ requests. Burton wrote on 22 August:

Captain, Your letter of 16th inst is only just now received. In all the finer purposes such as lubricating shaft machinery of all kinds, and for drilling, milling etc. parts of arms, lard oil is used at this Armory. The lard is purchased, and oil is pressed here by means of a lever press, I had made for that purpose, in all respects similar to that used by Barnett, Micou & Co. I think it would be well for you to purchase lard and make your own oil. I am pleased to hear of your good progress in erecting your machinery. I would run down to see you, but do not think it advisable to leave my Post whilst - the enemy occupies his present threatening position above us. Have you erected your till - hammer & smith’s shop as originally intended? You speak of the addition of the wing on north side of old factory as the only necessary addition to that building. Please explain.¹⁸

This request for oil makes it obvious that in approximately two months Bolles had gotten the operation at Tallassee ready to begin cutting metal carbine parts. It also seems obvious that Bolles had made do without some of the other additional buildings that he and Burton had discussed on their survey mission to Tallassee during May. The news remained negative as Burton replied to a letter of 18 August by stating, “I regret that I am unable to supply you with the leather belting you require, as there is none on hand at the Armory, and none in the market.”¹⁹ Burton paid Bolles a compliment as he closed his

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

letter of 29 August, writing, "I am pleased to know that you are getting on so well with machinery, buildings, &c in the face of difficulties."²⁰ Perhaps Burton's inability to help Bolles solve his problems reflected Burton's concern about Sherman. Sherman operated around Atlanta for about two months until the Confederates evacuated it on 26 August 1864. After capturing Atlanta, Sherman could have easily marched south and destroyed Macon and a vital link in the South's ordnance supply chain.

The month of August witnessed little cooperation between Bolles and Burton. By September, Bolles was completely dissatisfied with Burton. Bolles tried to offset his dependency on Burton by purchasing supplies directly from Micou. Bolles bought construction materials such as lumber, nails, and shingles as well as office supplies such as envelopes, letter paper, and a broom. He also rented slaves for construction work and wagons and teams for hauling supplies and equipment. Bolles even went as far as to purchase machine oil, files, brass, and iron for making carbines from Micou. From 7 June 1864 to 18 January 1865, Bolles amassed a debt of \$142,272.93 for supplies, labor, and the costs incurred by the mill owners of removing their machinery from the building leased by the Confederate Government.²¹ During August, Bolles also corresponded directly with Colonel Gorgas, Burton's superior, and requested help in getting his supplies. Gorgas forwarded Bolles's request to Burton, who replied to Gorgas on 5 September:

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Disbursing Officer of the War Department, "Barnett, Micou & Co.," Entry 24, Record Group 365, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Colonel, I respectfully request to be furnished with copies of the Quarterly Returns of property on hand at the several depots of supplies. This information is necessary to my arranging for the distribution of supplies to the Several Armories on requisitions. So far as I have been furnished with copies of the Quarterly Returns of the Several Armories, there does not appear to be any surplus materials on hand at any of them. I cannot therefor order a transfer of materials from either to supply the wants of either, without producing embassanment [sic]. I will revise the requisitions of Capt Bolles Comdg. Tallassee Armory by greatly reducing the quantities asked for, which appear to be generally in excess of our ability to Supply at once.²²

Three days later, Gorgas forwarded another request from Bolles to Burton concerning iron. Burton promptly forwarded a reply dated 8 September to Major W. R. Hunt, Superintendent of the Niter & Mining Bureau located at Selma, Alabama:

Major, The requisitions of Capt. C. P. Bolles Comdg. C. S. Armory Tallassee Ala. have been forwarded to me by Col. Gorgas Chief of Ordinance, with instructions to give them proper directions. The following described rolled iron of best quality is required by Capt. Bolles for manufacture of arms, and I respectfully request that you will supply the same at as early a day as possible. ²³

Bolles's disregard for the chain of command must have alienated Burton, but it also made Gorgas aware of the tensions that existed between Bolles and Burton. By the middle of September, it had become painfully obvious to Gorgas that the working relationship between Burton and Bolles had significantly deteriorated. Although it is not clear whether Bolles requested transfer or Gorgas decided to make a change, Gorgas wrote to Burton on 8 September seeking his assistance in finding a replacement. Burton

²²Ordnance Department, "Letters sent from the Macon Armory, June 7, 1862-April 17, 1865" chap. IV, vol. 30, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C.

²³Ibid.

responded on 15 September in the following letter nominating Walter C. Hodgkins:

Colonel, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th inst; requesting my assistance in the selection of a proper person to fill the position of Superintendent of the Armory at Tallassee Ala. In reply I beg respectfully to nominate Mr Walter C. Hodgkins of Macon, as being qualified to fill the position. He is a practical gun-maker by trade, has carried on a private shop in Macon for many years; occupies a very respectable position in society, popesses [sic] executive ability, energy, and is a good manager of men. He has been and still is, in the employ of Lt. Col Cuyler, Comdg Macon Arsenal, in the capacity of Superintendent of his arms repair shop, and bullet moulding department in which position I have had opportunity, during the past two years of observing his efficient management of the business under his control. Should you deem it necessary, you can refer - to Lt. Col. Cuyler for confirmation of my good opinion of Mr. Hodgkins. I have mentioned the subject to Col Cuyler, and he is willing to release Mr Hodgkins, and he has expressed his willingness to accept the position provided it be made a full appointment by the President as provided for by law at the present Time I know of no person who is available and more competent in my opinion, to fill such a position than Mr Hodgkins, and hence my recommendation of him as above which I trust will meet your approval.²⁴

Despite this glowing recommendation, Captain Bolles remained in command at Tallassee. On 20 September 1864, Bolles received two letters from Burton that would cause him concern. The first dealt with Bolles most sought-after ingredient for the production of carbines, which was gunstocks. Burton as usual referred Bolles to Gorgas and only offered him suggestions about gunstocks. Burton suggested that Bolles should set up for the manufacture of gunstocks, even though he had some gunstocks at the Macon Arsenal. Also on 20 September, Burton requested that Bolles reduce the wage scale for his employees. The request must have added to Bolles's and his employees' dissatisfaction at Tallassee:

²⁴Ibid.

I enclose herewith for your information a copy of the instructions rec'd at the Macon Ordinance. Establishments from Col. Gorgas. and also a copy of the Schedule of rates of wages and classification of the workmen adopted by the officers in command of the Several Ord. Establishments here. I suggest that you at once make a similar classification of the workmen you employ and determine the rates of wages according to the cost of living in Tallassee as compared with that at Richmond and the rates of wages established at Richmond. Provisions &c are cheaper in Tallassee than in Macon. A reduction of 20 percent on the Richmond Schedule of wages has been made for this locality, and I suggest that 25 percent reduction would not be too great for Tallassee. The rates of wages as stated in the enclosed classification are in addition to the \$2.00 per day specified in the Act of Congress thus a first class machinist will receive the \$2.00 per day and \$5.00 in addition as "extra compensation" for skill &c &c - as specified in the general order No 66-A. & I. G. office, a copy of which I will endeavour [sic] to procure and enclose to you with this, as it is specially referred to in the Bureau instructions as contained in Circular No 61. and accompanied it from Richmond. Detailed men in the Macon Ord. Establishments were paid in accordance with the enclosed schedule &c for the month of August also. Should you desire further instructions in this connection, write to me for them - Please also send me a copy of your classification and schedule of wages when you adopt it.²⁵

Burton answered Bolles's pleas for workers, to an extent, better than those for supplies. The workers that Burton sent to Bolles were detailed men, which became a problem because they were some of the highest paid on the Confederate wage scale. A detailed man was an enlisted man who was wounded or otherwise unfit for duty in the front lines and so was detailed away to work in the various ordnance facilities. Detailed men could hold any job title in the Confederate classification of jobs, but he was distinguished from exempt men by wages. Burton wrote:

I. All detailed men receive their regular army pay, clothing, & rations, on commutation therefor, and also commutation for quarters when not supplied. as part of their wages, and without deduction for loss of time in consequence of sickness, or any other cause. The balance of their wages is made up by the

²⁵Ibid.

\$2.00 per day, and the “extra compensation” provided for in the Act. according to skill, industry &c &c, in each case.

II. & III. In the absence of instructions from the Ord. Bureau concerning the pay of exempt men it was decided by the Ord. Officers in Macon to discriminate between them and detailed men, and in favor of the latter, to the extent of \$1.00 per day in the case of 1st class mechanics and other classes in proportion. In view of the immunities enjoyed by the exempt man it was deemed but just that his wages should be somewhat less than that of detailed men. Army pay and all commutations we estimate in Macon at \$3.50 per day. Exempt men receive nothing but their wages. There is no provision in the act, or in the instructions giving it force, to sell rations to exempt men at govt or any other prices. It is not done here. The high rates of wages paid to them is to enable them to purchase in the market.²⁶

Bolles could not pay his own workers, and Burton sent Bolles a detailed man in charge of three slaves. Burton continued to send Bolles high-priced workers which constantly drained his meager means of payment to his workers. Bolles’s workers were beginning to become dissatisfied with their assignment in Tallassee due to the wages, living conditions, and rural location.

Apparently the workers at Tallassee were unhappy about the hasty transfer from Richmond, because some of them deserted. Burton acknowledged Bolles’s letter of 19 September by replying, “Your letter of the 19th in regard to the four men who have deserted you has been received and referred to the commdt of Post.”²⁷ The letter of the 21 September was followed up by a letter of the 23 September reiterating Bolles’s employee problems. Burton replies, “I regret to hear that the operatives are dissatisfied at Tallassee, but I anticipated that such would be the case. Workmen accustomed to

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

employment in cities or large towns will not be satisfied in the country. This has even been my experience.”²⁸ Even with all of the problems facing Bolles, he seemed to be doing an outstanding job, as highlighted by Burton’s closing statement of the letter of 23 September. He stated, “I note with satisfaction that you have several important departments of the Armory in operation.”²⁹ In his letter, Burton asked, “How was the barrel bedding machine dispensed with at Richmond?”³⁰ The barrel bedding machine seated the finished barrel and lock to the stock for final assembly. This communication leaves no doubt that the production of the carbines was proceeding at a very fast pace despite all the problems.

On 28 September, Burton turned down a request for cement. Burton also foreshadowed the fate of Bolles, as well as the Tallassee operation:

Captain, Your letter of the 22d inst. is received. I regret that I have no cement on hand from which to supply your wants. There is none to be had in all this region of country, and I have been compelled to dispense with its use entirely at this establishment. I have not used an ounce of it in all the work I have had done. Could you not arrest the flow of the surface water on the side of the Hill by means of a ditch? If this can be done a simple ditch at the foot of the Hill might suffice to keep your food rations dry enough for all practical purposes. Do not lose sight of the fact that all these arrangements are but temporary. I will endeavor to visit Tallassee when you are relieved.³¹

It seemed that Burton had already given up on Tallassee even though production

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

continued on the guns, and he gave the first indication of Bolles's being officially relieved. September concluded with Burton denying a request from Bolles for carpenters. He suggested trying the conscript camps of Alabama, and on the same day Burton authorized an advertisement in the *Macon Telegraph*. It stated "Negro Carpenters Wanted. to go to Tallassee, Tallapoosa Co. Ala. to be employed on Govt work, and for whom liberal wages will be paid. Apply to the undersigned Jas. H. Burton Superintendent of Armories. Daily 1 Week."³² Also on 29 September Burton addressed a request from Barnett, Micou & Co. for the formation of the armory and mill workers into a military company to protect the place. Burton endorsed the idea to Gorgas and, partially quoting from the letter, he wrote:

... Since Tallassee has assumed a national importance by the location of an Armory there, I think some steps should be taken to render the employees efficient as troops. I therefore respectfully recommend that the officer in command of that Armory be instructed to organize a military company to be composed of the Armory employees and to drill them twice each week on Tuesdays & Fridays from 4 p m until 6 p m. and that they be properly armed and equipped as infantry as the first step to be taken towards the accomplishment of the end in view. At the same time I respectfully recommend to your favorable consideration and action if practicable of the general scheme of organization be as proposed by Messrs Barnett Micou & Co.³³

This letter is the only reference to the formation of the company. It is unclear whether the company was formed or not.

The month of October began with Burton replying to Bolles's document detailing the classification of his workmen and with the wage scale reduced by 10% for workers

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

employed at the Tallassee Armory. Burton replied to Bolles's last proposition to wages by stating, "With reference to establishing your schedule of wages on the basis of 10% reduction on Richmond prices you are the best judge of this question. What I have written and now write to you on this subject is only advisory. If you are ready to pay, I suggest that you do so on the above basis and lay the whole subject before Col. Gorgas for his approval."³⁴ It is noteworthy that Bolles suggested only a 10% reduction in wages instead of the 25% reduction suggested earlier by Burton. Since Macon operated under a 20% wage cut, the Tallassee employees made more than those employed by Burton in Macon. Later on 17 October, Bolles sought information concerning the problem of feeding the Negroes in his charge. Once again Burton forced Bolles back on his own resources. He replied:

Captain, In reply to your letter of the 11th inst. I have to state that the Commissary Dept. does not furnish rations to the negroes employed at this Armory. I have made several efforts to this end but without success. I suggest that you see the Officer controlling the "tax in kind" nearest to you, and request him to turn over to you for this purpose corn, peas &c. &c. I think "tax in kind" officers have been instructed to do this. It is the case here. If this can be done, it will be much cheaper for you than to purchase. Bacon or beef you will doubtless have to purchase but you ought not pay more than the Govt price.³⁵

November started off surprisingly well as Bolles requested some brass and Burton finally answered favorably. In a reply of 5 November Burton stated, "Captain, Your letter of the 3d inst. is received. In reply I have to state that a supply of scrap brass will

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

be turned over to you by invoice at once, and forwarded without delay to Tallassee.”³⁶

The manufacture of butt plates and bands on the carbines awaited the brass. But on 11 November, Burton denied a request for 300 to 400 pounds of cast steel. Burton ended his letter, “ I have also to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 7th inst accompanying Monthly Report Form No 30 for Month of October ulto. and am pleased to note the fabrication of 105 carbines during that month at Tallassee Armory.”³⁷ There was not very much correspondence during October and November. Burton’s last response to a Bolles letter was 11 November.

The end of 1864 closed out the tenure of Captain C. P. Bolles. Bolles did a commendable job at Tallassee. He faced a host of problems, including little or no housing, inadequate room for the armory machinery, disgruntled employees, supply shortages, and a lack of support from his superior, James H. Burton. Through the letters it is obvious Bolles made major progress in employee housing and armory additions while also getting the production of the carbine underway, although the only known output under Bolles’s command seems to have been 105 carbines mentioned in Burton’s letter. Considering the bad conditions, Bolles made a great effort.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

TALLASSEE ARMORY: THE TENURE OF MAJOR W. V. TAYLOR JANUARY 1865 TO APRIL 1865

The year 1864 ended with major construction in Tallassee as well as the completion of the first run of carbines. Bolles and the Confederacy had spent a considerable amount of money to improve the facilities at Tallassee, and it seemed that Tallassee was beginning to become a more vital component in the Confederacy's ordnance program. Even though Burton's letters lead one to believe that Tallassee was temporary, Gorgas wrote him suggesting the relocation of the pistol factory at Columbus to Tallassee.

Burton responded on 30 January 1865:

General, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th inst. requesting my advice with reference to the removal of the Pistol Factory at Columbus Ga. to Tallassee Ala. In reply thereto, I beg to state that there is no spare room in the buildings at Tallassee controlled by the Govt. in which to erect the pistol machinery, and for this reason I cannot advise its removal to that place. There are other reasons which would in my opinion, render such a step unadvisable[sic], among which is the fact of there being no spare buildings for operatives. As soon as my duties will permit I will make a visit of inspection to the Columbus Armory after which I will make such suggestions as may seem to me most expedient in connection therewith.¹

Gorgas obviously viewed Tallassee as a location for further expansion, but Burton's assessment of the situation at Tallassee hits home. The shortage of worker housing had

¹Ordnance Department, "Letters sent from the Macon Armory, June 7, 1862-April 17, 1865" chap. IV, vol. 30, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C.

become a major disadvantage to Tallassee. Tallassee required a massive amount of construction throughout its short existence. In time, Tallassee could have been a great location for a major Confederate munitions factory, but Burton could not in good conscience advocate the move of another facility to Tallassee until the carbine factory was completed.

Captain C. P. Bolles took his leave from Tallassee around the first of the year 1865. The last voucher signed by Bolles was dated 31 January 1865, approving supplies purchased during the middle of the month. Colonel Gorgas did not follow the recommendation of superintendent Burton to replace Bolles with Walter Hodgkins but appointed Major W. V. Taylor to command the Tallassee Armory. Major Taylor arrived at Tallassee during the early part of 1865 and encountered the same supply problems that had plagued Captain Bolles. After Bolles conferred with Taylor upon his arrival, Taylor must have viewed his problems at Tallassee as insurmountable. Bolles briefed Taylor on the problems concerning the employees' housing, supplies, and especially the lack of support from Burton. Taylor's tenure at Tallassee is best divided into two distinct periods, first as manager and second as evacuator of the Tallassee Armory. The management part of Taylor's command started upon his arrival and lasted until the end of March, while the evacuation lasted from March until the last days of the Confederacy.

Because Burton usually denied Bolles's repeated requests for material, Taylor must have been pleased by the reply he received to his letters of the 31st and 1st to Macon:

Sir, In the absence of Col Burton, I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 31st ulto & 1st inst respectively. In reply to the first I have to state that the 3 in [sic] steel can probably be furnished from this Armory, but it is

packed away among other stores and we have not yet been able to get at it. The spring steel we cannot find either at the Armory or Arsenal. We can also send you the scrap brass which will be shipped to you with the 3 in steel as soon as they can be got ready. We will be able to send you 2 Brickmasons in a few days. The men have not been paid at the Armory for three months, and it will not be convenient for them to leave here until they are able to pay board, &c. I think however that by the last of this week you may expect them. Col Burton is absent at Richmond where he will be detained two or three weeks. Very Respectfully Your Obdt. Servt J. Fuss, Actg. M. O In charge²

Burton's departure to Richmond for two to three weeks seemed to be a great benefit for Major Taylor. Mr. Fuss, the acting commander at Macon, denied Taylor only spring steel because there was none at either the arsenal or the armory. He immediately sent Taylor steel, brass, and needed workers. Fuss replied to Taylor's letters of 13 February and 16 February and stated that he had shipped the 3-inch steel and brass. The working relationship between Tallassee's new commander and Fuss began on a high note.

Finally, Fuss added some welcome news concerning gunstocks, which were desperately needed at Tallassee. Bolles had never received any favorable responses from Burton on the subject of stocks. Fuss, however, immediately furnished a timely solution to the gunstock problem. He stated:

We have at this Armory about 500 Gunstocks, sent here about a year ago from Richmond, intended for Rifle Muskets, sufficiently seasoned I think for use, we have also a number of stocks that were condemned while we were machining stocks for the Richmond Armory, many of which would no doubt make good stocks for Carbines. If you can send a pattern of the smallest dimensions, that will answer. I will have them selected and sent you.³

After months during which Burton had denied Bolles any help in acquiring gunstocks,

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Fuss revealed that Burton was sitting on 500 condemned stocks! It is perfectly possible that after the manufacture of the first 105 carbines the lack of stocks had halted the production of completed guns. The workers probably finished the carbines up to the point of assembling gun to stock. Ending the month of February on a positive note, Fuss replied to Taylor's letter of 22 February:

Major, Yours of 22d inst was rec'd yesterday by the hands of Mr Price. Mr Price has selected 260 of the condemned stocks, which he thinks will answer for the carbines. The stocks & steel will be shipped today.

I will inform Col. Burton of your need of stocks when he returns, and it may be that he will order the 500 R. M. Stocks remaining here to be turned over to your establishment. We have no nails of the sizes you need (4 & 6) that could be spared, and I do not know where any could be procured.⁴

With the assistance of Fuss, Taylor received sufficient supplies and gunstocks to complete the much-needed carbines. Fuss also ended February by saying he was sending Taylor some workers as well. The fact that Fuss sent workers illustrates the situation in which Major Taylor found himself at Tallassee. The construction on the armory and worker lodgings appeared to have been an ongoing function paralleling the operation of the armory. There was no doubt that Fuss and Taylor were working together much better than had Bolles and Burton. Even so, Taylor supplemented his supplies by purchasing directly from Barnett, Micou & Co. just as Captain Bolles had. Taylor purchased an additional \$14,643.71 of supplies from Barnett, Micou & Co. during his tenure in addition to the \$142,272.93 spent by Bolles.⁵

⁴Ibid.

⁵Disbursing Officer of the War Department, "Barnett, Micou & Co.," Entry 24, Record Group 365, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

March began with Fuss denying Taylor machine oil. He told Taylor if he could purchase the lard he would press it and return the oil it produced. By this time Burton had returned from Richmond, and on 28 March 1865, Taylor received an urgent telegram from Burton stating, "Proceed to make packing cases for your machinery at once do not suspend operations on arms until further advised."⁶ The 22 March invasion of Alabama by Union cavalry under the command of James Harrison Wilson prompted the telegram. Wilson's raid began from the northwest corner of Alabama, but neither Burton nor any other Confederate authorities knew the destination of his raid. Burton wanted to be sure that Tallassee could be evacuated at a moment's notice. The same day Burton sent a telegram to Lieutenant General Richard Taylor, commander Military Division of the West, at Meridian, Mississippi, asking, "Do you advise the removal of the machinery of the Armory at Tallassee near Montgomery? Answer."⁷ Burton wrote to Major Taylor at Tallassee on 28 March as well, stating the situation as well as Burton understood it at the time:

Major, Your letter of the 22d inst. has been received. In reply I have to state that in the present disturbed situation of military affairs in your vicinity you had better suspend all work on permanent improvements such as houses for workmen &c &c, as you may have to leave them at short notice. For the same reason I will not order any materials to you for the present.

I telegraphed you this morning instructing you to at once make packing cases for your machinery but to continue work on arms until further advised. I have also telegraphed Genl. Rich Taylor this morning for advice as to removal from Tallassee. You had better endeavor to secure wagons & teams beforehand in

⁶Ordnance Department, "Letters sent from the Macon Armory, June 7, 1862-April 17, 1865" chap. IV, vol. 30, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C.

⁷Ibid.

case of necessity of the removal, and in that event special effort will have to be made to obtain the requisite R. R. transp. in this direction. If the removal be effected it will be to Athens Ga. where there is shop room & power ready for use. I would advise you to apprise the proper officer of the R. R. that you may probably require transp. for your machinery &c and request him to hold himself in readiness to furnish. I regret that I have no funds to transfer to you. There has been a great want of funds at all the Ordnance Establishments for several months and I know of none at which a surplus is on hand.

The removal of Tallassee Armory to Athens if effected, will be the means of relieving it of many of the difficulties which now surround it, and which you refer to. I think the public service would be promoted by its removal if for no other reason than that.⁸

Burton concluded the day of the 28th with a letter to Gorgas explaining the situation in Alabama. Burton highlighted Tallassee's main problems, stating, "Maj. Taylor complains of great difficulty in supplying the necessities of his workmen in consequence of the isolation of the place. This is an additional reason why the removal of the Armory to some more favorable point should be effected. I fear the removal if necessary will be slow as everything must be hauled on wagons seven miles to the R. Road for shipment."⁹ The situation presented to Gorgas was bleak. Burton relayed Major Taylor's two complaints and informed Gorgas of his complete lack of news concerning the movements of the enemy.

The second phase of Taylor's command started with Wilson's invasion of Alabama. Taylor's task shifted from building an armory to dismantling the effort Bolles had begun nine months earlier. Major Taylor inherited Bolles's management problems at the outset,

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

but also had to confront the added burden of removing the carbine machinery in the face of the enemy. From April until the Confederacy fell, Taylor's goal was to relocate the Tallassee Armory to a place of safety.

April 1865 started out with Burton writing to Mr. C. H. Ford, Master Armorer, at Athens, Georgia. He advised Ford that "It is possible that the whole of the machinery &c. of Tallassee Armory may be removed to Athens very soon. You will therefore be prepared to receive it, and shelter it should it be necessary."¹⁰ Taylor received a telegram from Burton dated 3 April 1865 stating, "Turn over and forward at once to Col. Cuyler Macon Arsenal the five hundred carbines."¹¹ The 3 April telegram represented the last official recorded output of the Tallassee Armory. Two days later, Burton sent another telegram stating, "Commence the removal of your machinery, tools and materials at once. The most valuable first. Consign to yourself at Athens Ga. and send by way of Atlanta. Keep me advised of progress by telegraph."¹² The evidence suggests that the production of carbines ceased on 5 April 1865 or shortly thereafter, allowing for the delay in telegram delivery. The same day Burton wrote to Brigadier General W. W. Mackall, Commander Post and Defenses of Macon, Georgia, soliciting advice concerning the removal of Tallassee. Burton had not heard anything from General Richard Taylor,

¹⁰Ordnance Department, "Letters sent from the Macon Armory, June 7, 1862-April 17, 1865" chap. IV, vol. 30, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

Commander Military Division of the West, and was extremely anxious to discover the correct information. He stated to Mackall:

General, I have telegraphed to Lieut. Genl. Richd. Taylor for information in relation to the military situation in Ala. but have received no reply.

I am anxious about the the Armory at Tallassee near Montgomery which I regard as quite unsafe , if it be true that Selma is in the hands of the enemy, as reported this morning.

My judgement [sic] suggests the propriety of removing the machinery from Tallassee as soon as possible. In the absence of information from Genl Taylor, I beg to request that you will assist me by giving me the benefit of your own opinion with reference to the Tallassee Armory and its removal.¹³

Burton followed upon the previous day by sending a telegram to Gorgas stating:

“Telegraphed yesterday to Major Taylor to move his machinery at once. Fear he will not succeed for want of transportation.”¹⁴ Burton followed the telegram up with a letter on 6 April 1865, briefing Gorgas on the situation at Tallassee as far he knew it. Burton had finally received the news that Selma had fallen, which he relayed to Gorgas as well. He ended the letter asking for funds to be sent to Major Taylor.

On 7 April 1865 Burton replied to a letter of the 3rd from Taylor and stated:

Major, Your letter of the 3d inst. is just now received. My experience has taught me that reliance upon Q. M.'s for transportation of machinery &c in an emergency, upon a simple requisition in writing results, in much cases, in disappointment. You will have to look after it pertinaciously [sic] yourself, or assign some energetic subordinate to that duty. As transportation is the great difficulty these times, the only hope of success in obtaining it lies in hunting it up for oneself. I trust, therefore, that you will act on this suggestion at once, as you may fail in the removal of your armory if you do not. I telegraphed you 5th inst. as follows viz:- “Commence the removal of your machinery, tools and

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

materials at once: the most valuable first. Consign to yourself at Athens Ga., and send by way of Atlanta. Keep me advised of progress by telegraph.”

You had better send one or more of your employees with each train of cars containing your property, to see that no abuse occurs in handling, reshipping, housing &c &c. I will write to the Q. M. at Atlanta and request him to arrange for sheltering the property, if possible, as it arrives.

I have telegraphed Genl. Gorgas this morning urging him to order funds to you at once, if possible, as your necessities are peculiar and pressing. I trust you will receive assistance from the planters in the vicinity in the hauling of your property to the R. Road.

Keep me fully advised of your movements. So do by telegraphs and by letter also.¹⁵

The very same day Burton wrote to Colonel L. W. Glenn, Commandant of Post

Atlanta, Georgia, and solicited his help. Burton wrote:

Colonel, The Chief of Ordnance has ordered the removal of the machinery & stores of the C. S. Armory at Tallassee Ala. to Athens Ga. via Atlanta. I respectfully request that you will order the post Q. M. at Atlanta to secure suitable shelter for the property as it arrives, as it is of a perishable character and should not be exposed to the rain or to deprivations [sic] by unprincipled persons.¹⁶

Burton also telegraphed Gorgas requesting funds for Taylor. The telegram stated, “Major

Taylor is much embarrassed for want of funds. His men are suffering. I cannot assist

him. Order funds to him at once if possible.”¹⁷

Three days later on 10 April Burton wrote Gorgas with the latest information concerning Major Taylor at Tallassee:

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

Since writing you my letter of the 6th inst. reporting progress with reference to the removal of the Tallassee Armory. I have received (this A. M.) a letter from Maj. Taylor dated 7th inst. and a telegram dated 9th inst. the latter as follows:- viz : - "I have commenced to move. Shall need funds before I leave. Please send some."

I regret that I am so behind hand that I cannot well spare funds to supply this demand and I trust that you will have ordered some to Maj. Taylor ere this reaches you. I am not aware that there are surplus funds at any Armory under my control, but I will telegraph Col. Wright at once ascertain if any funds can be spared from the Columbus Armory.

Maj Taylor informs me in his letter of the 7th inst. as follows: "I have your telegram of the 5th inst. and have now all of our machinery down in boxes and ready for a move as soon as I can procure transportation for it." Also, that "with ten (10) good wagons I think we can get everything to the depot in ten or twelve days if the weather favors it." The Q. M. at Montgomery has informed him that "the transportation will be furnished as soon as the valuable stores from here are shipped."

I have instructed Major Taylor not to trust to the promises of Q. M.'s but to make special personal efforts to get the necessary cars in time. Major Taylor again complains of want of funds. He cannot even pay the expenses of a messenger to and from Montgomery daily there being no mail communication now. His workmen have not been paid for two months and are suffering in consequence. I beg to again urge upon you the necessity of ordering funds to Maj. Taylor. I have strong hopes now that all will be gotten away from Tallassee as I have no information of a movement of the enemy yet in that direction from Selma. ¹⁸

The very same day that Burton penciled the above letter, Wilson began his march to Montgomery. The city of Montgomery capitulated to General Wilson early on the morning of 12 April. On the day Montgomery surrendered Burton penned a letter to Taylor acknowledging his letters of the 7th and telegram of the 9th:

I am pleased to know by the latter that you have commenced to move, and trust that you have succeeded in obtaining the requisite transportation to the R. Road, and also the cars you made requisition for.

¹⁸Ibid.

With reference to the removal of your employees and their families and effects you are authorized to furnish transportation for all in same manner as when they removed from Richmond. Private effects however must not be moved until all the Govt. property has been transported. I think the employees and their families had better remain at Tallassee as long as they can with safety of which you must be the judge in order to give all the time possible for the necessary arrangements to be made for their transp from Atlanta to Athens, and for their shelter &c at the latter place. I will instruct Mr. C. H. Ford Master Armorer now in charge of Athens Armory, to make the best and most ample arrangements in his power for the shelter of your employees & families, and also for your machinery stores &c.

I have already requested the Q. M. at Atlanta to provide proper shelter for the latter as it arrives.

With reference to funds for you I have written again to the Chief of Ordnance to' day urging him to supply your wants. In the mean time I will spare you ten thousand dollars which will be forwarded to you at once by Express. I notify you to' day by telegraph of the remittance of the above.

I shall rely upon your best efforts to get everything away from Tallassee, in time to cheat the enemy should he visit your locality.¹⁹

Burton continued to search for funds to send to Taylor. Burton telegraphed Colonel M. H. Wright, commander of the Arsenal and Armory at Columbus, Georgia, and asked, "Major Taylor greatly needs ten thousand (\$10000) dollars to assist him to move his machinery from Tallassee Armory. Can you spare it from Armory funds?"²⁰ Burton also wrote to Mr. C. H. Ford, Master Armorer at Athens, Georgia, on 10 April :

Sir: The removal of the Armory at Tallassee Ala. to Athens is being effected. You will please make the best arrangements you can for the shelter and accomodation [sic] of the employees and their families as they arrive, in the dwellings under your charge. See also if you cannot rent additional quarters outside of the Armory. I do not know how many families there are probably some 20 to 25 however. Maj Taylor reports 108 white employees in March ulto. I have requested Maj Taylor to keep employees and their families at Tallassee as

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

long as he can with safety, in order to give you time to make the necessary arrangements for them in Athens.²¹

Evidently Burton's persistence paid off, since he telegraphed Taylor on 11 April, "I send you ten thousand (10,000) dollars today by express."²² It is not known from where Burton received the funds, but they surely helped Taylor greatly. The same day he telegraphed Captain F. M. Johnson, A. Q. M. of Atlanta, Georgia, advising him "machinery commenced leaving Tallassee 9th. If you cannot secure shelter otherwise, keep machinery and stores in cars until Georgia road is completed."²³ He solicited help on 13 April in a telegram to Major General Howell Cobb at Columbus, Georgia. "Maj W. V. Taylor commanding Tallassee Armory requires two trains of cars at Cowles Station, for removal of machinery and stores. Please have them sent at once if possible."²⁴ The same day Burton telegraphed Taylor at Cowles Station on the Montgomery and West Point Railroad and stated, "I have telegraphed Genl. Cobb, to send you two trains if possible. Omit no efforts to obtain cars, and do the best you can under the circumstances."²⁵ In the meantime, General Wilson prepared to leave Montgomery. The Federal Army began marching toward Columbus, Georgia, but after

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

traveling due east twenty miles they stopped to camp within a day's march of Tuskegee.²⁶ On 15 April, Wilson arrived at Tuskegee, a very short distance from Cowles Station and Tallassee. The same day Burton telegraphed Major James Harding, C. S. Armory at Columbus, stating, "Please ascertain and inform me if machinery of Tallassee Armory has been brought away. Also the whereabouts of Maj Taylor."²⁷ The last telegram or letter related to Tallassee from Burton is dated 17 April 1865 and was addressed to Captain F. M. Johnson, Atlanta Quarter Master. Burton wrote: "How many if any car loads machinery and stores from Tallassee Armory have arrived Atlanta or are yet to arrive."²⁸

The final location of the machinery and stores from Tallassee are unknown, but the evacuation from Tallassee orchestrated by Major Taylor proved to be a success. In hindsight, however, the evacuation proved costly, as Tallassee was never fired upon by Union forces during the war. The Tallassee Armory was the only Confederate armory to survive the Civil War.

Wilson's raid precipitated the removal of the armory. Yet in the letter of 28 March, Tallassee's future as a Confederate armory seemed uncertain from the sentiment shared by Burton and Taylor. The letter stated that removal of the armory would relieve it of

²⁶Malcolm C. McMillan, ed., The Alabama Confederate Reader (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 411.

²⁷Ordnance Department, "Letters sent from the Macon Armory, June 7, 1862-April 17, 1865" chap. IV, vol. 30, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington D.C.

²⁸Ibid.

many difficulties and also promote the public service.²⁹

The Tallassee Mills, on the other hand, continued to grow and prosper despite being affiliated with the Confederate Government. The loyalty and concern for the armory workers demonstrated by Micou cannot be denied. The last invoices attributed to Major Taylor stated that Barnett, Micou & Co. distributed food to armory hands in April and May 1865, totaling \$3,563.72.³⁰ Barnett, Micou & Co., furnished supplies to the families that were left behind in the removal of the armory from Tallassee even though they probably never recovered the money owed them by the Confederate Government. The mill's growth carried over to the site on the east side of the Tallapoosa River, which was a location suggested by Burton for further expansion of the armory. This expansion of the mills lend credence to Burton's recommendation in the letter of 1 June that Tallassee could become a major site for a Confederate armory.

The last days of the Tallassee Armory proved as hectic as the evacuation from Tallassee was successful. The destinations of the machinery and guns are known, but the ultimate fate of most of them are not. There are only a few surviving Tallassee carbines and no surviving machinery, nor is there definitive evidence of what happened to them. Chapter 4 will speculate on the fate of the armory's machinery and output.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Disbursing Officer of the War Department, "Barnett, Micou & Co.," Entry 24, Record Group 365, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

FIGURE 4

Invoice from Barnett, Micou & Co. to Captain

C. P. Bolles

Confederate States of America,
 To Barnett, Micou & Co.

| 1864 | Month | For. Kind of Goods | Quantity | Price | Total | REMARKS |
|------|----------|--------------------|----------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| | December | For. Kind of Goods | 24 | | | Articles furnished by |
| | " | " | 24 | | | " |
| | " | " | 6 | | | " |
| | " | " | 24 | | | " |
| | | | | | 12.00 | |

Approved for Six hundred and Twelve Dollars
 J. M. Taylor

Received from
 C. P. Bolles

U. S. ARMY, TALLASSEE, ALA. (Signal Department)

Note: The invoice was used to keep a record of the transactions from Captain Bolles and Major Taylor to Micou of the Tallassee Mills. Bolles spent \$142,272.93 while Taylor added an additional \$14,643.71 of vouchers for lumber, food, slaves, as well as a variety of other things. It is very doubtful that Micou recouped the majority of the money owed him by the Confederate Government.

CHAPTER 3

THE TALLASSEE CARBINE

When the Civil War started the South's cavalry was better than that of the North, but as the war progressed, the Northern cavalry cut into this advantage by adopting better arms. The Confederate cavalry was armed with sabers, revolvers, smoothbore muskets, and double-barreled shotguns. These weapons, especially the shotgun and revolver, were deadly in short range combat. The Confederates' Union counterparts, however, were beginning to be equipped with breech-loading carbines as early as 1862. The breech-loading carbines were easier and faster to load on horseback and had an effective range of 500 yards. The South could not compete with troops carrying carbines. The Union cavalry's Sharps carbine, and also the 1863 seven shot repeating Spencer carbine, prompted the Confederacy to develop a breech-loading carbine for its cavalry.

The idea and design for the Tallassee carbine evolved from necessity. The South had been trying to develop a reliable breech-loading carbine to compete with the Union cavalry's Sharps carbine. Various privately-owned gunmakers, as well as the Confederate Ordnance Department, produced several different types of breech-loading carbines. The Confederate Ordnance Bureau settled on the Richmond Sharps as the answer to the Union cavalry's outstanding Sharps carbine. But the Richmond Sharps, as well as other small production carbines such as the Tarpley, Alexander carbine, and the Confederate Maynard or Confederate Perry, proved unreliable. The inadequacies in the

manufacture of the Confederacy's main breech-loader, the Richmond Sharps, caused the South to develop a new muzzle-loader instead. Gorgas had a revealing statement about its production. He stated, "the arms [Richmond Sharps] were never perfect, chiefly for want of nice workmanship about the 'cut-off.' It was not gastight. We soon bought out the establishment, and converted it into a manufactory of rifle carbines, caliber .58 as the best arm our skill would enable us to supply the cavalry."¹ In July 1863, General Robert E. Lee ordered a new muzzle-loading carbine to be made for cavalry use.

By August the new carbine was ready in Richmond. General Jeb Stuart received it for his examination, evaluation, and approval. Along with his other duties, General Jeb Stuart tested and evaluated new weapons for the Confederate weapon designers. It seemed a natural fit as Stuart was the South's top cavalry commander and the weapon was destined for service in the Confederate cavalry. General Stuart had some suggestions for modification. In a 14 August memo, Major Downer, commander of the Richmond Armory, relayed Stuart's suggestions to his Master Armorer. Stuart recommended that the stock on the breech end should be more curved like the Smith carbine. He wanted the barrel to be 1.5 inches longer, brass bands, and an Enfield pattern lock. The sights were inadequate and he suggested that the ones on the Smith carbine could be used graded (adjusted to the proper range for the Tallasse carbine). Stuart wanted the weapon to be fairly accurate up to 800 yards to compete with the Union

¹William A. Albaugh III and Edward N. Simmons, Confederate Arms (New York: Bonanza Books, 1957), 91.

cavalry's Sharps carbine.² During October 1863, the Richmond Armory received an order approving production of the new carbine incorporating the modifications suggested by Stuart:

The sliding ring and bar on the side of the stock will be omitted; being a muzzle loading weapon it will not do to carry it by a hook with the muzzle downward. Swivels for a sling will be attached; the upper one to the band, the lower one by a plate in the stock. The front sight will be brazed on. The rod swivel will require to be made loose in every joint so that it may drop to its place on withdrawing the rod from the barrel.³

The new model carbine was in fact the Tallassee carbine. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the muzzle-loader carbines were made at Richmond. During April and May, 1864, Gorgas transferred the entire operation to Tallassee.

Josiah Gorgas's plans called on Tallassee to be an integral part of the Ordnance Bureau. The importance placed on Tallassee by Gorgas revealed itself in Special Report No. 2, December 31, 1864, from Gorgas to the Secretary of War, James A. Seddon. The report detailed supplying munitions to the Confederate troops east of the Mississippi River. Gorgas figured that the Armory at Tallassee would employ 150 workers with an annual output of 6000 carbines.⁴ The Tallassee Armory was one of five establishments under Confederate control producing rifles or carbines. The production at Tallassee consisted only of carbines, whereas the rest produced rifles. The South's only other

²Ibid., 89-90.

³Ibid., 90-91.

⁴Malcolm C. McMillan, ed., The Alabama Confederate Reader (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 283.

sources of carbines were private manufactures, foreign importation, and battlefield capture. However, these alternative sources were being closed because of the tightening blockade, inadequate private manufactory, and lost battles. The reason the Tallassee Armory never gained in stature was its short period of existence. The armory only existed from 2 June 1864 to 13 April 1865. The operatives had to deal with transfer from Richmond to Tallassee and undertake major construction upon arriving at Tallassee. The armory also had to deal with all the other problems confronting the Confederacy, such as supply shortages, transportation disruptions, and government bankruptcy in 1864 and 1865. It never reached maximum production before the end of the Confederacy itself in April 1865.

The Tallassee carbine remains one of the rarest Confederate firearms made and just a handful are known to exist. The Tallassee carbine is widely considered to be the only firearm officially designed and adopted by the Confederate Government. The surviving specimens are scattered throughout the United States. These weapons are located at the Virginia Historical Society, Smithsonian, Columbus Museum, Greensboro Historical Museum, Confederate Memorial Park, Illinois State Military Museum, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and Springfield Armory Museum, and at least one specimen is in the hands of a private collector. The provenance data for the majority of these pieces goes back only as far as the individuals who donated the weapons to these various historical organizations. FIGURE 5 on the following page profiles these surviving Tallassee carbines.

There were 500 of the Tallassee carbines produced at Tallassee. It stands to reason

that the guns were denoted by a serial number from 1 to 500. The Virginia Historical Society has a Tallassee carbine in the Maryland-Stuart Collection stamped with the serial number 92 on the rear of the barrel breech and etched into the wood stock. The Greensboro Historical Museum's carbine contains the serial number 277; the Illinois State Military Museum's carbine is stamped 289; and the carbine at the Springfield Armory Museum is stamped 32. The serial numbers represent a broad view of the production runs at Tallassee.

FIGURE 5

Location of Tallassee Carbines

| LOCATION | ADDRESS | CONDITION | PROVENANCE |
|--|--|-----------|---|
| Virginia Historical Society | Virginia Historical Society 428 N. Boulevard P. O. Box 7311 Richmond, Virginia 23221 | Mint | Donated by Richard Stuart |
| Smithsonian | National Museum of American History 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW Washington DC 20560 | Mint | Acquired from the Military Service museum in 1922 |
| Columbus Museum | Columbus Museum 1251 Wynnton Road Columbus, Georgia 31906 | Mint | Donated by a private collector |
| Greensboro Historical Museum | Greensboro Historical Museum 130 Summit Avenue Greensboro, NC 27401-3016 | Very Good | Donated by Dr. John Murphy |
| Confederate Memorial Park | Confederate Memorial Park 437 County Road 63 Marbury, Alabama 36051 | Fair | On loan from an anonymous donor |
| Illinois State Military Museum | Illinois State Military Museum 1301 North Macarthur Boulevard Springfield, Illinois 62702-2399 | Mint | Donated by Ed Kitchell in 1865 |
| Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park | National Park Service Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park P. O. Box 2128 Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia 30742 | Mint | Part of the Claude Fuller Collection of Firearms |
| Springfield Armory Museum | Springfield Armory Museum 1 Armory Square Springfield, MA. 01105-1299 | Mint | N/A |

The complete history of the majority of the Tallassee carbines is unknown. Most of the specimens were donated by gun collectors. In a telephone interview, Dr. Murphy, who donated a carbine to the Greensboro Historical Museum, stated that a good friend found and acquired the carbine for him in Atlanta, Georgia. The friend discovered the

gun disassembled in a garage. As far as knowing how the carbine happened to be in Atlanta, Dr. Murphy could not solve that mystery.

The guns at the Smithsonian and the Springfield Armory Museum were absorbed from earlier museums that went out of business. The Illinois State Military Museum and Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park provided the most interesting information concerning the Tallassee carbine.

The museum at the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, located in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, has three carbines on display identified as made in Tallassee. These carbines are a part of the Claude Fuller Collection of American Military Longarms. Only one of the arms is, in fact, a Tallassee carbine. The identification of the other two is erroneous. In Fuller's book, Firearms of the Confederacy, he cites two Civil War era newspaper articles as evidence that the Confederate Maynard carbine originated from Tallassee. Fuller referred readers to the Daily Clarion and Daily Richmond Examiner, which stated, "the factory at Tallassee makes carbines for the cavalry chiefly of the Maynard patent."⁵ Fuller presents additional evidence of a letter from John Purifoy to E. Berkley dated 4 March 1924. The letter concerned Mr. William New, a worker that transferred from Richmond to Tallassee. He stated the machinery "was set up in a building at Tallassee where breech-loading carbines were manufactured."⁶ The correspondence related to Tallassee reveals that the only weapon

⁵Claud E. Fuller and Richard D. Steuart, Firearms Of The Confederacy (Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1944.), 197.

⁶Ibid., 198.

manufactured at Tallassee was a muzzle-loading carbine and not the breech-loading Confederate Perry or Maynard, despite all the evidence presented by Mr. Fuller. The physical characteristics of the correctly identified Tallassee carbine are the same as the others, except Fuller's carbine measures 40 3/4 instead of 40 1/2 inches. The extra 1/4 inch seems odd because all the other Tallassee carbines measure 40 1/2 inches in length. All of the weapons displayed in the museums are in mint condition and do not show any signs of obvious wear or excessive firing.

Perhaps the most interesting information received comes from the Illinois State Military Museum. Its collection contains a Tallassee carbine donated by Lieutenant Colonel Ed. Kitchell in 1865. Mark K. Whitlock, Museum Curator, wrote, "A Confederate carbine, made at Tallassee, Alabama, and captured at Macon, Georgia, April 27, 1865, from the office of Col. J. W. Mallett, Superintendent of the Confederate States Laboratory, at that place, by the 98th Illinois Mounted Infantry. Donated by Lt. Col. Ed. Kitchell, 98th Illinois Infantry, July 1, 1865."⁷ The carbine is marked with the serial number 289 on the trigger guard and on the left side of the barrel channel. Out of all the surviving carbines, only this one has any clear provenance. This data, as well as other sources, will help explain the fate of the Tallassee carbines and machinery in Chapter 4 .

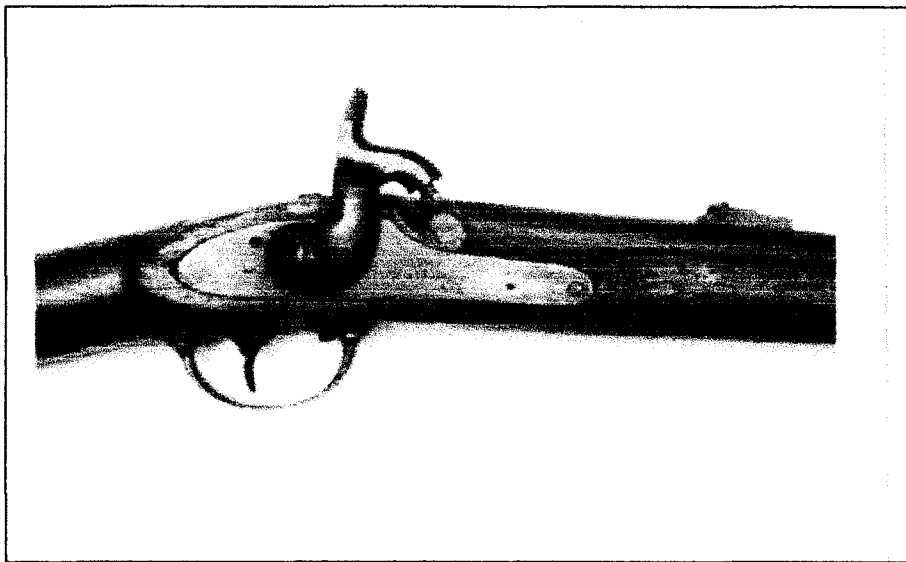
The Tallassee carbine was the best the Confederacy could produce during the latter stages of the war. Today, there are fewer than ten surviving guns out of an output of five

⁷Letter from Mark K. Whitlock to Author, 7 September 1999.

hundred produced. The guns are scattered throughout the United States and are among the rarer specimens of Confederate firearms history. Realistically, Tallassee played a small role in the war, and the carbines most likely were never placed into active service. But the Tallassee carbine reflects the desperation and ingenuity of a defeated Confederacy trying to overcome superior odds and industrial might.

FIGURE 6

Lockplate of Tallassee Carbine



Courtesy of Suzanne Solomon

Note: The physical description of the Tallassee carbine comes from information received from the various surviving specimens scattered throughout the country. The Tallassee carbine had an overall length of 40.5 inches with a 25-inch barrel. It was .58 caliber with an Enfield type lockplate measuring 5 1/4 inches long. In three lines on the lockplate, C. S. Tallassee Ala. was stamped as well as 1864 stamped to the rear of the hammer. The carbine contained a brass buttplate, triggerguard, and two brass barrel bands of the clamping type. The gun possessed a swivel ramrod, fore end tip, and two iron sling swivels fastened at the top band and the butt of the stock. The front sight was a small iron block

blade and the rear sight was a two leaf folding variety. The stock was made out of a dark colored walnut wood.

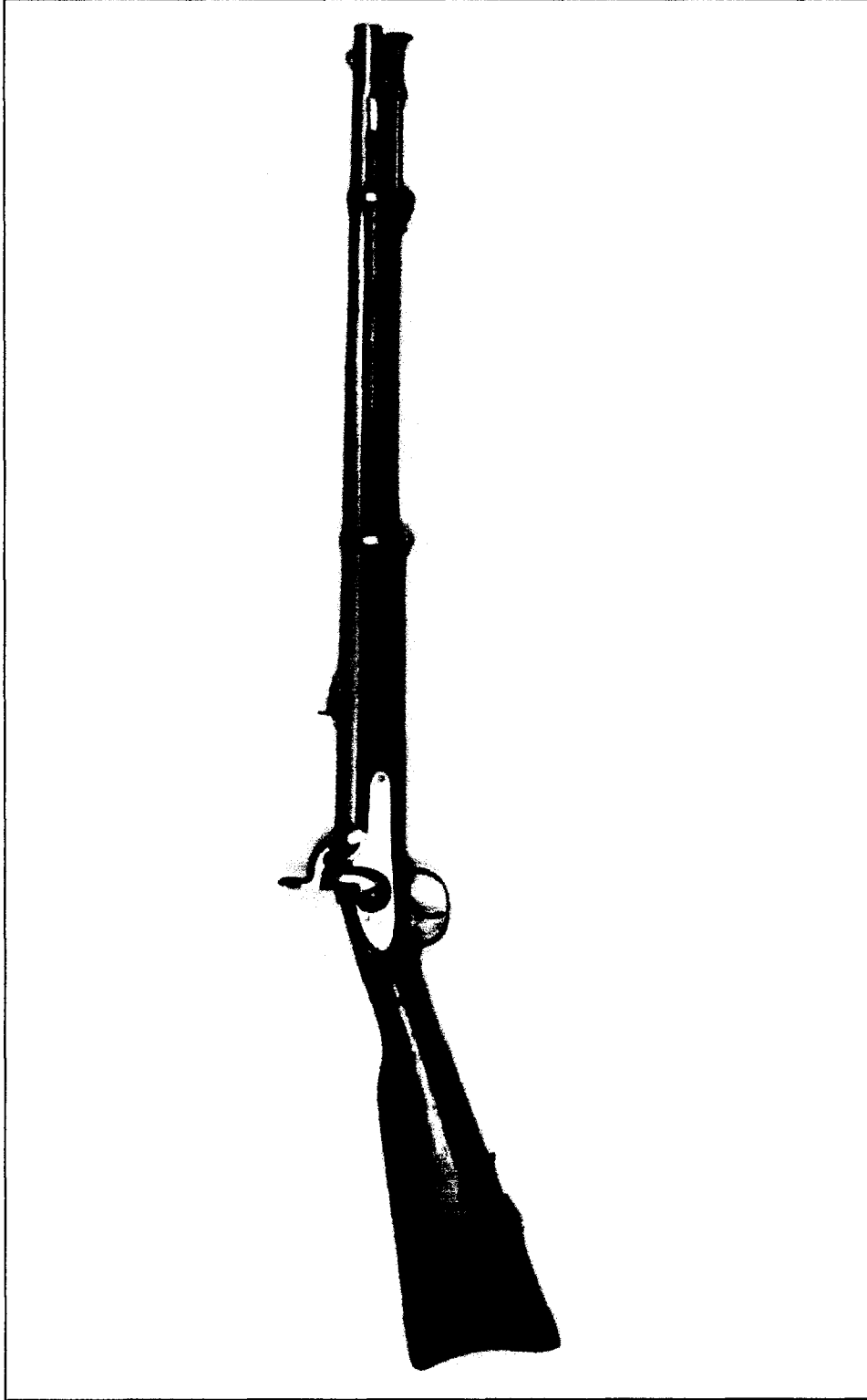


Fig. 7. Tallasse Carbine. Courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society.

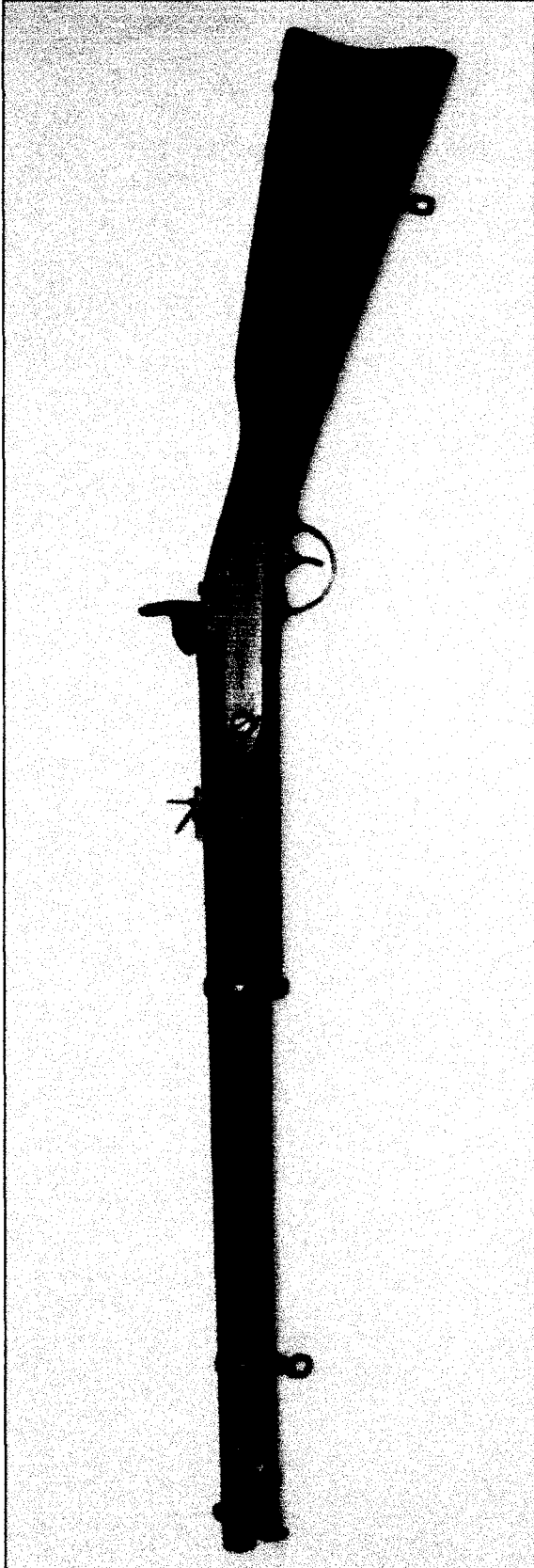


Fig. 8. Back view of Tallassee Carbine. Courtesy of Illinois National Guard & Militia Historical Society, Inc.

CHAPTER 4

RAIDS AND LEGENDS

The final chapter of the Tallassee Armory remains unwritten. The status of the carbines and equipment remain a mystery because only a few carbines have survived, and none of the gun-making equipment survived the war. This chapter deals with the legends and raids directed at the Tallassee Armory while also presenting evidence and theories of the fate of the Tallassee carbines as well as of the gun-making equipment. According to Guide To The Archives Of The Confederate States Of America, the official records of several Confederate ordnance facilities during the last days of the war have never been discovered, including those of the Tallassee Armory. These official records were destroyed either by the retreating Confederates or the advancing Union forces. The historian only has what has been written before and after the fact with which to piece together the last, hectic days of the Tallassee Armory.

Local legend has it that Federal troops conducted two raids on Tallassee to destroy its war materials producing industry. These were the raids of 10 July 1864 by Rousseau and 22 March 1865 by Wilson. It is hard to believe that Rousseau's raid worried Colonel Bolles at Tallassee because there is no mention of the raid in the correspondence between himself and Burton. The orders from General Sherman to Rousseau make it obvious that his sole mission was to destroy the Montgomery and West Point Railroad that ferried supplies to the city of Atlanta. Sherman was beginning his campaign against Atlanta and

needed to weaken the defenders of the city as much as possible. Sherman specifically stated to Rousseau the objectives that he wanted achieved:

“The expedition should start from Decatur, move slowly to Blountsville and Ashville, and, if the way is clear, to cross the Coosa at the Ten Islands or the railroad bridge, destroying it after their passage, then move rapidly for Talladega or Oxford, and then for the nearest ford or bridge over the Tallapoosa. That passed, the expedition should move with rapidity to the railroad between Tuskegee and Opelika, breaking up the road and twisting, the bars of iron. They should work on that road night and day, doing all the damage toward and including Opelika. If no serious opposition offers, they should threaten Columbus, Ga., and then turn up the Chattahoochee to join me between Marietta and Atlanta, doing all the mischief possible. No infantry or position should be attacked, and the party should avoid all fighting possible, bearing in mind, for their own safety, that Pensacola, Rome, the Etowah, and my army, are all in our hands.”¹

Sherman made it clear that the main objective was the railroad and did not mention Tallassee. He confirmed his orders on 7 July 1864 and, again, there is no reference to the armory at Tallassee. Rousseau came very close to Tallassee on two occasions. The first occurred when he entered Dadeville, about 15 miles north of Tallassee, in his advance toward the Montgomery and West Point Railroad. Rousseau burned several miles of track near Dadeville, destroyed the depot and burned a locomotive and several carloads of supplies that could have been destined for Tallassee.² The raid continued and on 17 July 1864 Rousseau arrived in Loachapoka, about 12 miles south of Opelika. Rousseau

¹Malcolm C. McMillan, ed., The Alabama Confederate Reader (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 260.

² Stanley W. Hoole, "The Confederate Armory at Tallassee, Alabama, 1864-1865," The Alabama Review 25 (January 1972): 10.

sent detachments to Notasulga, 6 miles south, and Chehaw Station, 12 miles south of Loachapoka, to begin destroying track back toward Opelika. A force of 500 University of Alabama cadets, local militia and conscripts from nearby Camp Watts met the Union forces in battle at Chehaw. The Confederates were armed with muskets whereas the Union forces carried Spencer repeating carbines. After a short battle, the Confederates were defeated and the Federals resumed their destruction. After wreaking havoc on the railroad, Rousseau started on his line of retreat on 19 July 1864. The Federals' penetration to Chehaw had put Rousseau within 15 miles of the Tallassee Armory once again. If Rousseau's mission had been to destroy Tallassee, he could have easily done so at this time. Only young cadets and old or wounded men were available to the Confederates for Alabama's defense. Alabama's first line of defense, General Forrest, was in Mississippi and posed no threat to Rousseau's Raiders. Contrary to popular local legend, the Rousseau raid was not directed at the carbine factory at Tallassee, but it did possibly hurt its operations by burning supplies at Dadeville.

The second raid that threatened Tallassee was the raid of General James Harrison Wilson. Wilson began his campaign from North Alabama and captured Tuscaloosa, Selma, and Montgomery. After capturing Montgomery, Wilson issued special orders to his command and then left Montgomery on 13 April. Special order number 49 outlined Wilson's line of march and his objectives in the coming days:

IV. The First and Fourth Divisions of the Cavalry Corps will move this morning as follows: The First Division at 4:30, toward West Point, taking the most direct route and reaching there at the end of the third day's march or morning of the fourth, securing the railroad bridge at that point and at once communicating with the balance of the command by the most direct route at

Columbus. The object of the expedition is to secure the railroad bridge at West Point over the Chattahoochee River so as to insure the crossing of the entire Cavalry Corps over that stream if it be found that the bridge at Columbus is destroyed. Further instructions will be sent the First Division at West Point. If the bridge is not, it will be immediately made passable and the troops crossed over. The commanding officer of the First Division will send detachment to burn the bridge over the Tallapoosa at Tallahassee and the factory at that place. All important bridges that may be found along the line of the Montgomery and West Point Railroad will be destroyed.³

The order directed a detachment to Tallahassee to destroy a factory. Since Tallahassee, Florida, was several hundred miles south of Wilson's command, the order obviously referred to Tallasse. On 14 April, Wilson received word from his advance regiments under Emory Upton, who stated:

General: I have ordered the First Division direct to West Point with orders to destroy the bridge over Tallapoosa at Tallasse and all railroad bridges along its march, and to cross the Chattahoochee at West Point and then await further orders. My train has not reported, and, as we are to move rapidly, I ordered them to remain with general train. Nearly 800 men of my division were detailed away last night. Regiment on picket is ordered to move at daylight to join division.⁴

This order clearly dispatches a detachment of Wilson's raiders to destroy the factory at Tallasse. What happened? Local legend from Virginia Nobel Golden's A History of Tallasse states:

A detachment from this command (Wilson's Raiders) set out to destroy the Tallasse armory. On reaching Cowles Station the officer in command ordered a Negro to guide them to Tallasse. This guide insisted on leading them across

³The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1, vol. 49, Part II-Correspondence, Etc. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), 345.

⁴Ibid., 354-355.

the river at Cowles ferry, a mile above the station. The officer, however, whose map showed the town to be on the east bank of the river, suspected treachery and had the Negro shot. He then continued to march his mistaken way until he reached Franklin, ten miles from Tallassee. Although he discovered his error at Franklin, he chose not to retrace his march for fear of encountering General Forrest's men who had been sent out from Montgomery against him. Thus Tallassee was never fired upon by Union forces during the war.⁵

This tale seems improbable. The detachment from Wilson's command was the best armed cavalry during the war at this time and had defeated Forrest soundly at Selma, driving him back toward Mississippi. It seems reasonable to assume that Forrest posed little cause for concern. Moreover, Forrest would not have set out from Montgomery because Wilson had captured the city a few days previously. While the tale of the Negro guide adds a dramatic flair, all factories and mills were located next to their vital water power resources. It would have been a minor task to follow the river until the Federal forces encountered their target at Tallassee. It is possible the Federal forces learned the armory had been moved from Tallassee. In any case, the mill and factory could have been easily destroyed at this time.

In their book, Firearms of the Confederacy, Claude E. Fuller and Richard Stuart state:

Mr. William New was also one of the workmen transferred from Richmond to Tallassee and in 1924 he related how upon the approach of the Federal troops the armory employees destroyed all the guns and parts that were in process of manufacture, much of the machinery, and about 600 completed arms. They then made a quick departure to avoid capture, to find upon their return that the

⁵Virginia Noble Golden, A History of Tallassee for Tallasseeans (North Carolina: Tallassee Mills of Mount Vernon-Woodberry Mills, 1949), 29.

Yankees had completely demolished and thrown into the river, all of the machinery but that the sturdy construction of the buildings had defied them as they were practically intact, and, lo and behold!--the old clock had been overlooked and was still in place.⁶

The evidence presented by Fuller seems questionable. The Federal troops did not destroy the cotton mill machinery that supplied cotton cloth to the Confederate armories. No history of the cotton mills mentions a shutdown or visit by Union raiders. The carbines and equipment definitely left Tallassee because Major Taylor wrote to Burton stating that the armory had commenced to move. Some, if not all, of the carbines arrived in Macon, where at least one was captured on 27 April 1865 by the 98th Illinois Mounted Infantry. By the time Mr. New relayed his story in 1924, he would have been a very old man and the details of his stay in Tallassee could have been clouded. The weight of evidence refutes the claims made by Mr. Fuller that the Union troops destroyed the equipment and guns in Tallassee.

The Confederate government files representing the mill interests included an inventory of machinery and supplies left behind in the rapid removal of the armory. The inventory list offers the only proof of property from Tallassee most likely not destroyed by Union forces during the war. The inventory list also lends some credence to a story told to Stanley Hoole by Douglas E. Jones, former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Alabama, and an authority on Confederate firearms. Hoole recounted a legend that "when the old building was being repaired after the war, all

⁶Claude E. Fuller and Richard D. Steuart, Firearms Of The Confederacy (Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1944), 153.

remaining Tallassee carbines and their unused metal parts were gathered up and buried in the stone and concrete walls as reinforcements.”⁷ The list shows 3 boxes of rejected musket barrels as well as other metal parts that could now be within the foundations of the newer mill buildings. What is virtually indisputable is that Tallassee was never fired upon during the war.

In anticipation of Wilson’s capture of Montgomery, Charles Pollard, manager of the Montgomery and West Point Railroad, decided to send rolling stock of the Montgomery and West Point and the Alabama and Florida railroads east into Georgia. His plan called for a division of locomotives and cars between West Point and Columbus with the hope of saving at least half of the railroad stock. The following map shows the route of the Montgomery and West Point track from its beginning at Montgomery to its end at West Point and Columbus. After capturing Montgomery and the headquarters of the Montgomery and West Point Railroad, Wilson marched from Montgomery eastward toward Tuskegee. Wilson’s raiders arrived in Tuskegee on 15 April and then continued their line of march parallel to the Montgomery and West Point Railroad into Georgia. Figure 9 shows the route of the Montgomery and West Point Railroad.

⁷Stanley W. Hoole, "The Confederate Armory at Tallassee, Alabama, 1864-1865," The Alabama Review 25 (January 1972): 29.

FIGURE 9

Montgomery and West Point Railroad

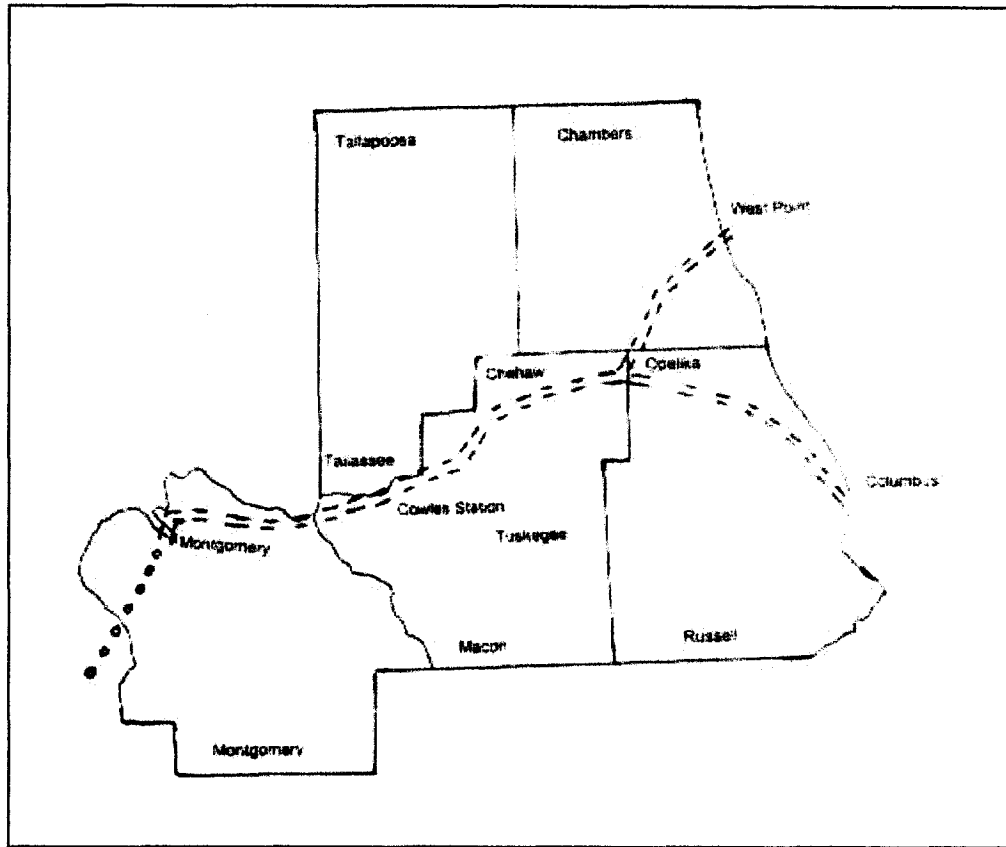


Figure 10 shows the only two routes the carbines and equipment from Tallassee could have taken on the railroads. The first is to Athens, Georgia, via Atlanta, but the trains had to avoid the detachment of Wilson's cavalry that was proceeding to West Point parallel to the Montgomery and West Point Railroad. If the train made it past the cavalry to West Point, it had to leave before the Battle of West Point on 16 April. The next obstacle was getting through Newnan before Croxton's cavalry crossed the railroad at this point. Croxton led part of Wilson's command that had gotten separated in northern Alabama. Croxton continued on a route different from Wilson and in essence became an

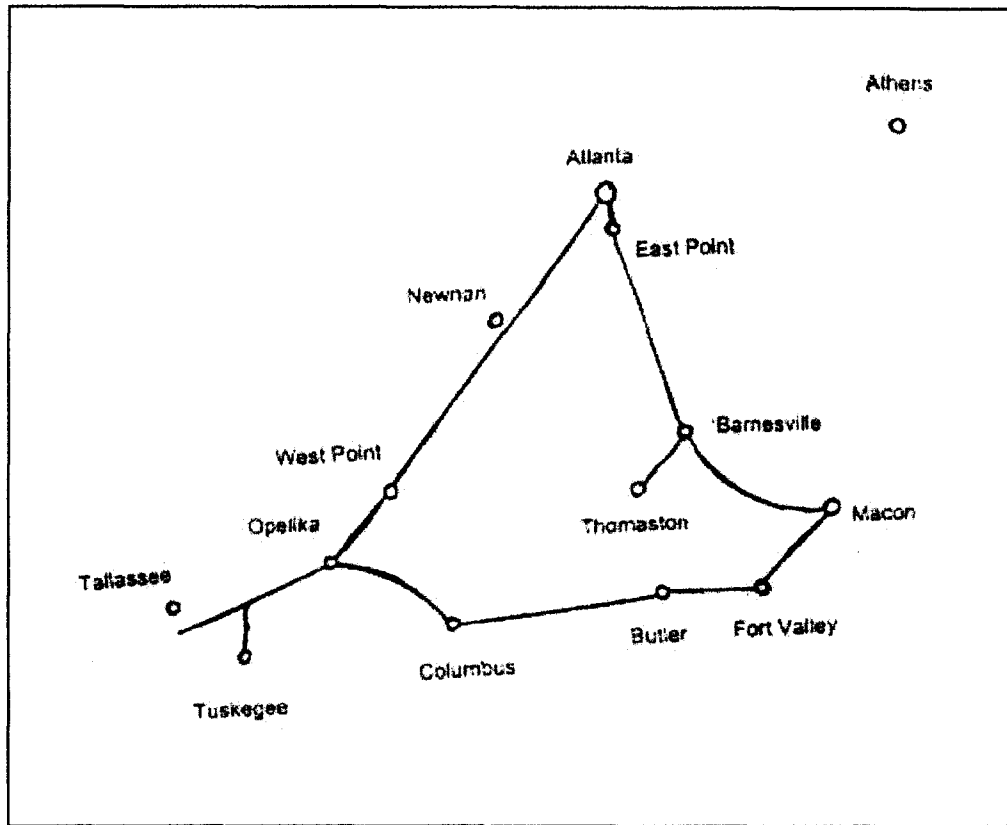
entirely separate raiding party. He planned to reunite with Wilson in Georgia.

The second route the carbines possibly took was from Columbus to Macon and then north to Atlanta or Athens. Railroad cars at West Point or Columbus could have contained the Confederate supplies, equipment, and records from Selma, Montgomery, and Tallassee that were being sent to the east to avoid capture by Wilson. There is a high probability that the Tallassee stores were stuck in Columbus or West Point because the Montgomery and West Point Railroad was narrow gauge track and the cars could proceed no further than these two cities, where the gauge became wider.⁸ A Federal soldier captured a Tallassee carbine in Macon, and the following sketch shows the most plausible routes of how it happened to be there.

⁸Wayne Cline, Alabama Railroads (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 63.

FIGURE 10

Sketch of Georgia Railroads



After leaving Tuskegee and upon entering the vicinity of Opelika, Wilson split his forces, sending detachments toward both Columbus and West Point. By dividing his forces, Wilson foiled Pollard's plan for saving at least half of his locomotives and cars. Wilson's forces captured both West Point and Columbus, Georgia, after short battles on 16 April and 17 April, respectively. In Columbus, Georgia, Wilson's men possibly caught up to the machinery that had been located in Tallassee. Wilson sent a dispatch dated 17 April from Columbus to Major General E. R. S. Canby at Mobile describing successful attacks by his troops on Columbus and West Point. Wilson stated: "General

Winslow is burning navy-yard, foundries, arsenals, factories, armory, railroad stock, depots, and cotton warehouses to-day. The value in Confederate currency of property destroyed cannot be estimated." ⁹ Wilson added "I have just received dispatch from La Grange, commanding Second Brigade, McCook's division. He captured West Point, and fortifications defending it, by assault at 2 p.m. yesterday; killed rebel General Tyler, took 200 prisoners, all the guns, 15 engines, 200 cars, and large quantities supplies."¹⁰

In hindsight, the removal of the machinery and equipment from Tallassee proved to be a mistake. They were moved right into the path of destruction and were in all probability destroyed either in Columbus or West Point, Georgia. As Superintendent Daniel H. Cram of the Montgomery and West Point Railroad stated, "All the effective locomotives, 19 in number, owned by the company at the beginning of the year, were as nearly destroyed as fire and a liberal use of the sledge hammer could accomplish it."¹¹ The results for the Alabama and Florida were not much better, as Samuel G. Jones, manager of the Alabama and Florida Railroad, stated: "The forces under Colonel LaGrange very soon attacked the town, and capturing Fort Tyler, the sole dependence for successful resistance, immediately crossed the river, captured and destroyed three engines and seven cars, with their contents, among them our entire stock of patterns.

⁹The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1, vol. 49, Part II-Correspondence, Etc. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), 383.

¹⁰Ibid., 383.

¹¹Wayne Cline, Alabama Railroads (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 65.

This loss left us with only four effective engines and about forty cars of every description, all more than one hundred miles from home, and all communication with Montgomery completely destroyed. The armistice between Generals Johnston and Sherman alone prevented the total destruction of all the property we took to Georgia.”¹²

The machinery and records of the Tallassee Armory were in all probability destroyed along with this railroad equipment. It seems highly unlikely that much, if any, of the Tallassee stores were off loaded onto railroad cars of the proper gauge to proceed beyond the cities of West Point or Columbus. The Confederates may well have transferred the carbines, however, because a Union soldier took a Tallassee carbine as a souvenir in Macon, Georgia. The few existing specimens of Tallassee carbines were probably taken as trophies of war in Macon and the rest were destroyed.

¹²Ibid., 65.

CONCLUSION

The Tallassee Armory's plight mirrored the fate of the dying Confederacy. Originally, Gorgas consolidated all of the South's scant resources into major industrial cities such as Richmond, Macon, Fayetteville, and Selma. But Grant's advances on Petersburg and Richmond forced Gorgas to change his plans. Despite some disadvantages to Tallassee's location, its isolation well away from any major fighting provided a major benefit.

Rousseau's raid to cut the Montgomery and West Point Railroad revealed the limits of Tallassee's isolation. Rousseau was supporting General Sherman's advance on the city of Atlanta. His forces approached within 15 miles of Tallassee and could have easily destroyed the armory. Rousseau's raid exposed the weakened condition in which the Confederacy found itself in 1864.

The final blow for the Tallassee Armory occurred when General James H. Wilson began his raid from North Alabama. The Confederate forces located in Alabama were few and were soundly defeated all along Wilson's march. Ever since Major Taylor arrived at Tallassee, he and Colonel Burton had been contemplating the removal of the Tallassee Armory just to relieve it of the many problems stemming from its isolation. Wilson's raid sped up the process of evacuating the premises and relocating to a safer portion of Georgia. Major Taylor's job changed from one of building and operating an

armory to one of dismantling and removing it. The last days at Tallassee must have been hectic as the armory had to be dismantled, packaged, and driven seven miles to the railroad. Despite the hardships, the armory was successfully removed from Tallassee.

During the final days of the war, as the remnants of Lee's army were in a desperate flight to save themselves and the last hopes of the Confederacy, the Tallassee Armory conducted a desperate removal. Instead of fleeing into a safe zone in Georgia, the surviving stores from Selma, Montgomery, and Tallassee were rushed along the paths of the advancing Union cavalry at Columbus and West Point. The majority of the stores that arrived in these cities were subsequently destroyed by Wilson when he captured them on 16 April and 17 April. At least one Tallassee carbine arrived in Macon, Georgia, where it was captured in the office of Colonel J. W. Mallet, Superintendent of the Confederate States Laboratory, by Lieutenant Colonel Ed Kitchell of the 98th Illinois Mounted Infantry.

Tallassee illustrated the struggles of the Confederacy by showing the manner in which it used its scant resources and ingenuity to help offset its lack of industrial power. The survival of the Confederacy rested on General Lee's army, and his success rested on Gorgas's ability to supply him with weapons, swords, and ordnance. Even though all hope seemed lost, Major Taylor and Colonel Burton never surrendered or gave up until the very end their effort to supply Lee's army with the guns and equipment it needed to keep fighting.

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