Florida's Civil War soldiers

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Abstract
The purpose of this thesis is to chronicle the actions of the soldiers of Florida during the Civil War, both within and without Florida. As there has not been a great deal written on this topic, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the discussion and perhaps lead others to study this field. The soldiers of Florida during the Civil War deserve the same attention given to the soldiers from more prominent states. Those who fought for the Confederacy and stayed to defend their state often had to fight against overwhelming odds. Abandoned for a time by the Confederacy, those left behind had to do their best with what they had. Those who fought for the Union and returned to liberate their state often had to contend with the hatred of their fellow Floridians. They had better support and arms than their Confederate brethren, but fought for a state that branded them "traitors" and "deserters." The fight within Florida was not the whole story.

Most of the soldiers from Florida who fought in the Civil War did so in other states. Often unhappy about being taken from the state they volunteered to fight for, most of them still proudly represented their state. This is not to say there were no problems. On the contrary, desertion and acts of cowardice were issues that needed to be addressed. This should not; however, take away from the contributions of the brave individuals and the groups they represented. Chapter 1 gives a brief overview of the state of affairs in Florida at the time of the Civil War. Chapters 2 through 6 detail events in Florida for each year of the war. The actions of both Union and Confederate sympathizers are described in as much detail as possible. From Fort Pickens to Cedar Key to Tampa to Jacksonville, and back again, the soldiers of Florida fought many battles throughout the state of Florida. Several times—at Tampa and Natural Bridge most notably—it came down to Floridians in the Confederacy vs. Floridians in the Union.

Chapters 7 through 11 describe the actions of the Florida troops who fought in the larger war at places such as Chancellorsville and Antietam. These chapters are also divided by year. The majority of the soldiers of Florida were called upon to leave their state and go to other states to fight on behalf of the Confederacy. They did so, in many cases, very reluctantly. However, they distinguished themselves at places such as Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Cold Harbor, the Wilderness, and Gettysburg. When the Confederacy gave its last gasp at Petersburg and Appomattox Courthouse, soldiers of Florida were there. Chapter 12 speaks of individuals and smaller groups and the contributions—both large and small—they made. Chapter 13 sums up the information presented in the previous chapters, attempts to answer all of the questions raised within the text, and provides a conclusion to the work.

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St. John’s Bluff. Civil War Battles in Florida. Other Names: None. Location: Duval County. Campaign: Expedition to St. John’s Bluff (1862). Date(s): October 1-3, 1862. Principal Commanders: Brig. Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore, launched an expedition into Florida to secure Union enclaves, sever Rebel supply routes, and recruit black soldiers. Brig. Gen. Truman Seymour moved deep into the state, occupying, destroying, and liberating, meeting little resistance on February 20, he approached Brig. Gen. Joseph Finegan’s 5,000 Confederates entrenched near Olustee. One infantry brigade pushed out to meet Seymour’s advance units. Civil War pension records offer a rich source of details for anyone researching U.S. Civil War soldiers and their wives. Unlike Union pensions which were issued by the federal government and are held by the National Archives, Confederate pension records were issued by the states in which the veteran lived at the time of his application. Many southern states have indexes to the Confederate pensions available online, and some (including North Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Virginia) even have digitized copies of the full pension applications or other pension records. In most cases these records are nowhere near as in-depth or rich as federal Union pension records, but they still offer the opportunity for genealogical discoveries.