

# APALACHICOLA HISTORY

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## SEAFOOD BY AIR, DIRECT FROM APALACHICOLA



Although this picture was taken in 1947, at Apalachicola, it shows seafood being loaded onto a Noorduyn Norseman, the same type of airplane used for the first air shipment of seafood from Apalachicola in 1945. Source: State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/63802>

A new era in Apalachicola's commercial history opened in 1945 when regular shipment of seafood by airplane was inaugurated. The following article appeared in the January 4, 1946, issue of *The Apalachicola Times*.

### **First Commercial Flight Of Seafood Left Here December 22**

Bill Felker, whose home is in New Orleans, and who was stationed at the local air base for about a year, took off with approximately 600 pounds of Apalachicola shrimp on Saturday, Dec. 22, in what was the first commercial airplane flight of seafood from Apalachicola, and possibly the first of

its kind in the nation.

Mr. Felker also left here yesterday, (Thursday at noon) with approximately 2,000 pounds of shrimp and 250 pounds of oysters on his second flight with the seafood to be delivered in Memphis, Tenn., and New Orleans in the afternoon.

Bill is flying a former Army cargo ship, the Noorduyn Norseman, single engine transport, capable of carrying 2,500 pounds, and is said to be one of the most outstanding cargo ships used by the Army.

Mr. Felker places his order for the amount of seafood wanted, and they are ready for him at about noon. The order is sent by truck to the local air base, loaded and

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the plane is off, and from the time of the take-off here, the seafood is delivered to Memphis, Tenn. two and one-half hours later and in New Orleans in five hours, with "Air Fresh Seafoods."

Both cargoes have been furnished by the Patton Seafood Company here.

Mr. Felker stated that if this venture proves profitable, that he would soon add another plane to deliver the seafood as far west as Oklahoma City, Okla. And would still add others to his group to fly Air Fresh Seafoods to all parts of the United States, as far north as Chicago.

The oysters taken out of Apalachicola yesterday at noon, were shucked out in the forenoon, and were probably on the table for residents in both Memphis and New Orleans to be enjoyed at dinner, and who could ask for a more delicious oyster than those taken from the Apalachicola Bay.

And the beautiful part of it is that no ice is needed, as the transport is so equipped that when flown at a few hundred feet height ice is not necessary.

This venture by Mr. Felker is bound to prove successful, provided sufficient seafoods can be furnished, and the deliciousness of airfresh seafoods becomes known in the cities of the country.

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By April 1946, Air Fresh Seafoods had four planes in operation, two Noorduyn Norseman and two C-47s. All of the airplanes were military surplus. The Noorduyn Norseman was a single-engine Canadian plane designed to operate in the far northern

back country. The C-47 was the military's version of the DC-3, a larger two-engine design

The Patton Seafood Company was Bryant G. Patton's Apalachicola Fish and Oyster Company.

Notice that although this 1946 article states no ice was necessary for the shipment of the seafood by air, in the 1947 photograph there is a tub of ice sitting in the foreground, which was used to ice down the containers once they were loaded in the plane, as shown below.



Source: State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/63804>

## The Silver Service for the U.S.S. Florida

In the early twentieth century battleships represented the ultimate naval weapon. As well as being a weapon of war they were also a visible symbol of a nation's power and prestige on the world stage.

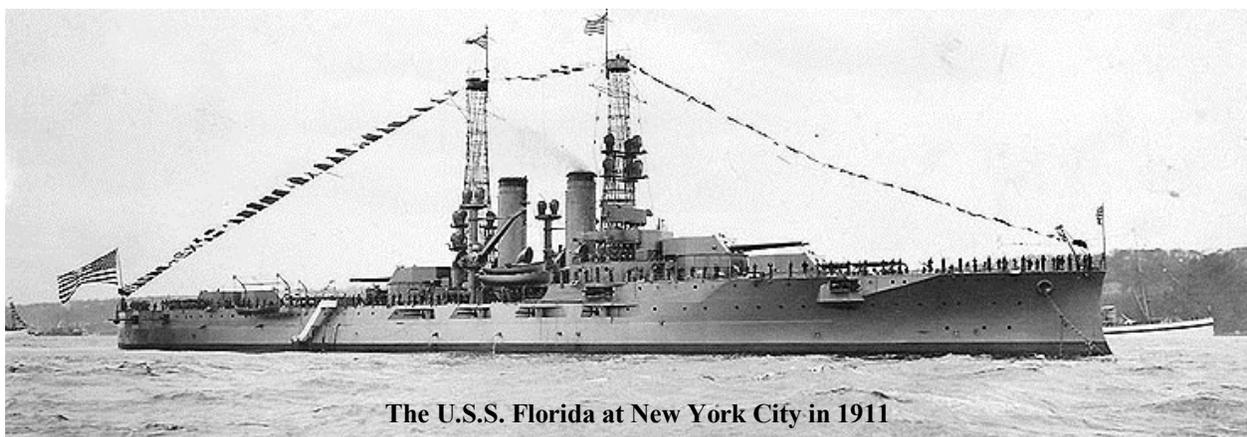
The United States Navy named its battleships after the states, and the citizens in each state took a great interest in "their" vessel. In 1911 the U.S.S. Florida, BB 30, was nearing completion, and the people of Florida donated funds to provide a suitable silver service for the battleship. On February 6 and 7, 1911, Mr. W. F. Penniman of Jacksonville was in Apalachicola on his tour of the panhandle soliciting subscriptions for the silver service. The following people and organizations from Apalachicola contributed to the fund: J. F. C. Griggs, W. D. Buzzett, R. M. Yent, John H. Hoffman, T. E. Mash, H. D. Marks, C. E. Harper, A. B. Gibson, G. W. Hinsey, R. H. Porter, J. H. Cook, C. C. Hose, A. A. Core, A. Flatauer, W. W. Pooser, J. W. Wilhelm, A. A. Meyer, J. Theobald, P. H. Johnson, Joe Ham, C. R. Harris, jr, J. M. McNeil, H. F. Gordon jr, Guy Messina, J. P. Echols, R. Pickett, L. C. Nedley, Jos. Bruni, Frank Martina, J. F. Warren, J. P. Hickey, Jos. Messina, H. L. Oliver, Joe Fun, A. J. Murat, B. D. Morris, C. H. Lind, G. J. Ram-

sey, S. E. Teague, J. P. Lovett, C. W. Vesels, R. Collins, H. A. Daniels, Chapman High School, Jas Montgomery & Son, and W. P. Dodd.

When the U.S.S. Florida was decommissioned in 1931 the silver service was returned to the State of Florida by the Navy. There was a minor controversy in the early 1980s when the nuclear submarine USS Florida was under construction. The Navy requested use of the silver service again, but the state refused to give it up. The service is currently in the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee.



A portion of the battleship silver service currently at the Governor's Mansion. The service is decorated with Florida motifs such as pelicans and alligators.



The U.S.S. Florida at New York City in 1911

# ***2013-2014 ILSE NEWELL CONCERT SERIES***

The schedule for the 2013-2014 Ilse Newell Concert Series has been set. All concerts will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church in Apalachicola except the Dec. 7 and April 12 concerts at the First United Methodist Church in Port St. Joe.

- December 7 Bay Area Choral Society -Holiday Favorites - First United Methodist Church, Port. St. Joe
- December 8 Bay Area Choral Society - Holiday Favorites - Trinity Episcopal Church, Apalachicola
- January 8 University of Notre Dame Folk Choir - Vespers Service
- January 19 FSU School of Music - Opera Scenes from Romeo and Juliet
- February 9 Trio Solis - Read Gainsford, piano, Corinne Stillwell, violin, and Gregory Sauer, cello
- February 23 Ivan Moshchuk, piano
- March 16 Joyce Guyer, soprano, Bianca Lupshaw, piano
- April 12 Bay Area Choral Society - Easter Portion of Handel's Messiah, First United Methodist Church, Port St. Joe
- April 13 Bay Area Choral Society - Easter Portion of Handel's Messiah, Trinity Episcopal Church
- May 18 Concert in Lafayette Park - Franklin School Band, Karl Lester Director

You are invited to join the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. Individual dues are \$10 per year, and the membership year runs from June through May. Please complete this application, make your check payable to "Apalachicola Area Historical Society" and mail to P.O. Box 75, Apalachicola, Florida 32329.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 150 YEARS AGO THE CIVIL WAR IN APALACHICOLA

When the Confederate Army evacuated Apalachicola in March 1862, it left the entrance to the river defenseless. There were no forts or gun batteries to prevent enemy ships from ascending the river. The Confederate Navy had a gunboat, the CSS Chattahoochee, under construction at Saffold, Georgia, but it would not be ready for service for nearly a year.

The citizens of towns upriver were especially concerned. There were tens of thousands of bales of cotton stored along the river, giving the Union blockaders a financial incentive to attempt a raid up the waterway. W. R. Boggs, a colonel in the Georgia militia and the chief engineer of the state, inspected the river for suitable sites for defense. He recommended placing obstructions at Fort Gadsden and arming the fort. The department commander, Major General John C. Pemberton, in Charleston, S. C., approved the plan but cautioned Boggs that he did not have any men or materials to aid in the endeavor. Col. Boggs proceeded to try to gather slaves to provide the labor from the plantation owners in Georgia and Alabama. Their owners balked, stating they could not spare the labor while crops were in the field. Eventually, in June 1862, Col. Boggs gave up in disgust.

The cannons that had been evacuated from Apalachicola had been emplaced at Ricco's Bluff, approximately 56 miles up the river. Brigadier General Joseph Fingan reported in early June that he had a battery of 7 guns under construction at Alum Bluff, 84 miles upstream from Apalachicola. Two of the guns were already emplaced and the rest would be mounted within a week to ten days. These guns probably came from the existing battery at Ricco's Bluff.

These fortifications did not impress

civil authorities upstream. The Columbus, Georgia City Council allocated \$3,000 on November 5, 1862, to obstruct the Apalachicola River. Plans moved rapidly after that. Brigadier General Howell Cobb was assigned to command the Department of Middle Florida, and a new engineer, Captain Theodore Moreno, took on the responsibility building the defenses of the river.

It was determined to build the obstructions at "The Narrows", a contorted series of bends in the river about 36 miles above Apalachicola. Col. Boggs had identified this location as a possible site for blocking the river. The major disadvantage was it was in the middle of a swamp with no adjacent high ground to mount guns on to guard the obstructions. The advantages outweighed the disadvantages, however, and construction proceeded. Rafts were sunk in the river channel with a chain strung across to collect debris coming down the river, adding to the effectiveness of the barrier.

Flooding during the winter hampered construction, but by March 1, 1863, Captain Moreno reported that the obstructions were complete. One hundred yards of "logs, trees, timber and trash" were already caught by the chain, enabling Captain Moreno to walk across the river without getting his feet wet.

Two mounds were constructed beside the obstructions and gun batteries were erected on top of them. Never tested by the Union Navy, the obstructions proved perfectly effective. By the end of the war it was reported that the jam backed up behind the obstructions extended for 2 ½ miles. The obstructions were never removed. A new channel had formed to the east of the obstructions by the end of the war and "The Narrows" is now a backwater slough, dry during droughts.

# THE GREAT HURRICANE OF 1873

The most destructive hurricane to strike the Apalachicola area between the end of the Civil War and 1900 struck the area on September 19, 1873. The storm formed in the Gulf of Mexico north of the Yucatan Peninsula before traveling north-northeast, heading toward Florida. At 7 a.m. on September 19, the center of the storm was about 40 miles southwest of Apalachicola. Heading east offshore the storm wrecked the Dog Island Lighthouse and destroyed St. Marks before going ashore near the mouth of the Aucilla River in Jefferson County.

The steamboat James M. Farley was caught in the Apalachicola River during the storm. According to the clerk on the boat, Henry Hoare, the cabin had to be tied to the lower deck to keep it from being blown off the vessel. When the high water flooded the town it brought with it many fish. As the water receded people gathered up the stranded fish. The winds stripped the fruit off the orange trees in town, leaving the streets full “full of oranges.”

The following is a description of the damage at Apalachicola from the September 27, 1873, *Daily Columbus Enquirer* from Columbus, Georgia. The Captain Whiteside mentioned is George Henry Whiteside.

## *River News – Further from the Storm*

The steamer Jackson arrived yesterday with 292 bales cotton, mostly from the lower river. Capt. Whiteside has kindly placed within our hands a copy of the Apalachicola Times, dated Friday, 19<sup>th</sup>, which fully confirms the first reports of the storm. If anything, the reality was worse than the first reports. The following summary, taken from the paper before us, it will be seen, reports no loss of life, but the Mayor’s appeal, published

at a later date, says four lives were lost:

The loss may be summed up, as far as we have been able to learn, as follows: Fifteen three-story brick buildings entirely demolished, or so badly injured as not to be worth repairing; thirteen of the same class of buildings seriously injured by the loss of the whole or portions of the roofs, windows and shutters, besides the damage done by the water; one of the Curtis saw mills entirely destroyed; three brick and two wooden warehouses entirely destroyed, and several others injured; one blacksmith shop and one carpenter shop – the private losses as stated above – and the following vessels: Schooner Mary Ann, with \$200 of supplies, sunk; schr. Glide, total loss; sloop Bonita, sunk; sloop Fawn, dismantled and sunk; schr. Merlinda and cargo, sunk; schr. Victory, total loss, sloop Red Not, dismantled and sunk, sloop Clara Reese, total loss, sloop Storm King, total loss; sloop Red Jacket, mast sprung, bulwarks carried away, and driven in upon the logs and lumber about the Curtis mills (got off without much difficulty); tug Hudson Pet, with the hull of the tug Ella (undergoing repairs) and a barge in tow, driven into the marsh – will be saved.

Apalachicola Mills lost smoke stack, about six hundred logs, and sustained some other slight damages. The Tie Mill lost smoke stack, a large number of logs, and lost the roof of the drying house. The other Curtis mill sustained little or no damage, but lost fifteen hundred logs and a quantity of lumber.

No one killed but several reported as badly injured by falling buildings and flying bricks and timbers. As far as learned, we could get but two names – Minigo Singaree, arm sprained seriously, and Geo. Miller, colored, knocked down by flying lumber.

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Capt. W. thinks that a half million dollars would not replace the buildings and shipping damaged and destroyed.

Although the article states that the Mayor's appeal would be published at a later date it appeared in the same issue.

*Aid for Apalachicola.*

Capt. Whiteside, of the steamer Jackson, has handed us the following appeal from the Mayor of Apalachicola for help. It tells a sad tale, which should touch a tender cord in every heart, and draw a liberal response from all who are in a condition to help our unfortunate neighboring city:

DESTRUCTIVE TORNADO – APPEAL  
FOR AID.

Our city was visited on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> instant by one of the most terrific tornadoes that has ever occurred upon this coast. The damage to the city is perfectly appalling. Over *twenty* private residences were entirely destroyed, and a great number unroofed and otherwise materially damaged; in fact, scarcely a house but shows the devastating effects of the storm. The business portion of the town presents, possibly, the worst feature. Whole blocks of brick buildings blown down; all of the large warehouses, both wood and brick, destroyed.

We have reason to be thankful that so few lives have been lost – only four persons thus far are known to have been killed or drowned, though several more are more or less injured.

This disaster falls particularly heavy upon our citizens at present. We have but little wealth amongst us, and there are many now houseless, and without money or supplies. Most of our fishermen and oystermen

have lost or had their boats wrecked. The saw mills, which gave employment to the largest class of our population, are more or less wrecked; the logs have been swept from their booms, and they will not be in a condition to give employment or material aid soon.

I write this with a view that it may meet the eyes of our more wealthy sister cities, who have been fortunate enough to have escaped this dreadful calamity, with the hope that they may render us at this juncture whatever material aid or supplies that may be in their power. If this appeal should meet the eyes of any one in a condition to render any aid, it can be forwarded to F. B. Wakefield, Mayor, by Capt. Whitesides of the Central Line of boats for distribution to the needy.

F. B. WAKEFIELD, Mayor  
Apalachicola,

Sept. 20, 1873



The Dog Island Lighthouse destroyed by the 1873 storm.



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