

APALACHICOLA HISTORY

APALACHICOLA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 75

Apalachicola, Florida 32329

www.apalachicolahistoricalsociety.org

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1890 WAR IN APALACHICOLA

In 1890 the future looked bright for Franklin County. The economic doldrums that had followed the decline in the cotton shipping trade and the end of the Civil War had dissipated as the lumber industry had begun to harvest the vast virgin stands of trees in the county. Sawmills, planing mills, and shingle mills were active from one end of the county to the other, but Carrabelle and, especially, Apalachicola were the center of the business.

There were three large mills along the waterfront in Apalachicola. The Kimball Lumber Mill was located near the mouth of the river, about where the Apalachicola Maritime Museum is now located. The Kennedy Lumber Mill stood about where the Up The Creek Raw Bar is now located, and the Cypress Lumber Company mill was located where Scipio Creek Marina is now. There were also several smaller establishments located around the city.

The last quarter of the 19th century was also a time of great labor unrest throughout the United States. Apalachicola did not escape the turmoil.

Tension was high in Apalachicola over the weekend of January 18-19, 1890. A confrontation was expected the following Monday between the owners of the various sawmills, planing mills, and millwork factories throughout the city and the black laborers, who outnumbered whites by three to one and made up much of the workforce.

The workers were dissatisfied with their pay and working conditions. On the previous Wednesday night a meeting of the black mill workers at the colored Odd Fellows Hall had resulted in the passing of a resolution to strike the following Monday unless the owners met their four demands. These demands included a ten-hour work day, raises from the current \$1.00-\$1.25 per day to \$1.50-\$2.50 per day depending on the job responsibility, payment of wages in U. S. currency instead of company scrip, and that no outsiders be brought in to work in the mills unless these demands were met.

If the demands were not met the workers

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would not report to work on Monday morning. As that date approached tension built. The owners refused to budge, and the workers threatened to kill anyone reporting to work. The local militia company, the Franklin Guards, had been in existence for several years, but were very loosely organized. The previous year they reported only 18 members. They were too small and unorganized to effectively keep order. A posse composed of white citizens, armed with the locally available guns and ammunition, was organized to protect the mills.

On Sunday Sheriff E. M. Montgomery telegraphed the governor asking for assistance.

"The negroes of this place have notified all millowners that they will not go to work on tomorrow unless their wages are raised, and they are arming and have given notice that the mills shall not start or other labor be employed under pain of death. Give me instructions as quickly as possible. We are needing guns and ammunition. Boat passes Chattahoochee this evening. Telegraph her to await your orders also."

As there was no railroad to Apalachicola at that time, Governor Francis Fleming ordered guns and ammunition shipped to Chattahoochee for dispatch down the river to Apalachicola. The boat passing Chattahoochee that Sunday evening, however, was carrying the U. S. mail and would not wait until the arrival of the train carrying the guns and ammunition the next morning.

Governor Fleming wired Sheriff Montgomery that the weapons were on their way, and told him to organize a posse to keep the peace. He also promised to order troops to Apalachicola to keep order if the strike got beyond the sheriff's control.

Monday arrived, tense but calm. Only a few blacks reported for work at the mills. At eleven o'clock that morning Sheriff Montgomery reported to the Governor that everything was quiet.

But when dark fell, things changed. Frank Horne, one of two blacks who had reported to work at the Kennedy Lumber Mill, was killed, presumably by the strikers. On Tuesday morning Sheriff Montgomery telegraphed the news of the murder to Governor Fleming and asked for the immediate dispatch of state troops. The Governor had to wire him back and explain his telegram was not sufficient to dispatch state troops. The state statutes required the existence of insurrection, riot, mob, unlawful assembly, breach of the peace or resistance to execution of the laws, or the

imminent danger thereof, and civil authorities are unable to suppress the same.

Sheriff Montgomery answered that there "is imminent danger of a bloody riot and in my opinion the civil authorities are unable for the want of ammunition and guns to suppress the same, and troops ought to be sent at once." The mayor of Apalachicola, Henry C. Hicks, endorsed the sheriff's telegram.

As a result the governor ordered the Escambia Rifles, a company of state troops from Pensacola, to Apalachicola. The telegram ordering the activation of the company reached Pensacola on Tuesday evening. Major W. F. Williams, commander of the troops, at once sent word around the city for the men to assemble to take the one o'clock train Wednesday morning for Chattahoochee, where they would catch a boat for Apalachicola. Thirty-seven men reported in time to catch the train. They arrived in Chattahoochee at nine o'clock Wednesday morning and embarked an hour later on a steamboat, the *W. D. Ellis*, bound for Apalachicola.

Meanwhile, at Apalachicola the situation remained tense, but uneventful. The town was being guarded by the Franklin Guards, the local militia company. All of the white citizens were armed. There were no demonstrations by the mill workers, but there were rumors that the mill workers planned to burn the town; rumors which the workers denied.

The uneasiness in the city was probably not helped by the fact that the sheriff provided liquor to the militia guarding the town. He probably did it to help them ward off the cold while standing guard during the long winter nights, but the alcohol did nothing to relieve the tense situation.

At nine o'clock Wednesday evening the boat carrying the Escambia Rifles arrived at Apalachicola. They were quartered in the Opera House on High Street (the current 4th Street) and fed at the Fuller Hotel. (The Opera House was located in what is now the yard of the Armory. The Fuller Hotel was on the corner where Cadence Bank now stands.) On Thursday morning they set about arresting the ringleaders of the strike. While the black men tried to avoid arrest, the black women poured out into the streets and loudly denounced the actions of the whites. In spite of the women's efforts thirty-five men were rounded up and their trials started the same day. One man, probably Charles Bryant, was shot while trying to escape from the arresting troops. One of the leaders of the strike, E. P. Sanchez, a black from St. Thomas in the West Indies, managed to elude arrest for a period, but was later apprehended.

Court records for this time period are incom-

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plete so it is impossible to know the full list of who was arrested or what they were charged with. When the circuit court met in Apalachicola in March, Aaron Pittman, Lewis Ming, Sanches [sic] and Silas Justice were still being held "in Jail as Rioters." The Grand Jury failed to indict them, and they were ordered to be released.

Aaron Pittman, however, was indicted for "secret arms". He plead guilty and was fined \$30.00.

Minnie Clark was indicted for "assault with intent to disfigure", but it is unclear if this charge resulted from the strike or from a separate incident. The prosecutor did not pursue the charge at the fall term of the circuit court and Mrs. Clark paid court costs of \$19.35.

The mills resumed operation and the timber boom continued unabated in Franklin County. In October 1890, however, the Kennedy Lumber mill and the Kimball sawmill were consumed by flames, along with most of the waterfront between the two mills. It was thought that the fire was accidental, having started in the scrap pile at the Kennedy mill, but it is possible that a disgruntled striker belatedly carried out his threat. The Kimball Lumber Company rebuilt their mill at the mouth of the river and resumed operations, but the Kennedy Lumber Company never rebuilt. In December the Kennedy Lumber Company sold their remaining property to the Cypress Lumber Company

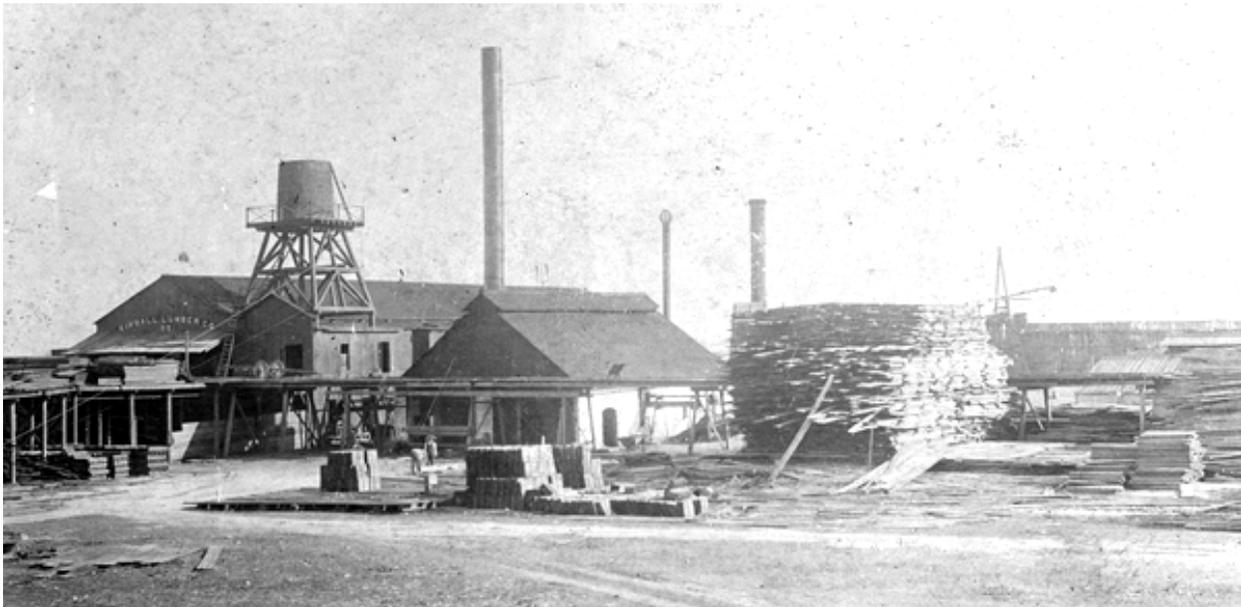
During the strike Sheriff Montgomery had distributed the guns and ammunition from the state to

various people guarding the town. Afterwards they were very slow in returning the weapons. In March the Board of County Commissioners threatened anyone who did not immediately return the state guns with legal action.

The bill to the County Commission for the trouble eventually came to more than \$250, half of it for feeding the Escambia Rifles and the Franklin Guards. The County Commission refused to pay the bill of Huber & Montgomery for the liquor they provided the guards during the strike. It was nearly a year before the county paid the final bill, of \$2.35, to Frank Messina for hiring a horse during the strike. The State of Florida expended \$990.56 in sending the Escambia Rifles to Apalachicola.

The most lasting result of the strike was the re-organization of the Franklin Guards. New members were recruited until the company reported a total of 58 members at the end of 1890. Robert Knickmeyer replaced J. H. Coombs as the Captain of the company. The company was incorporated into the State Troops as Co. C of the 3rd Battalion. The State Adjutant-General reported at the end of 1890 that the Franklin Guards are "now the largest and among the best equipped and most efficient companies of the militia."

Eighteen years later the Franklin Guards repaid the Escambia Guards when the Franklin County company was one of the units dispatched to Pensacola to keep order there during a strike by streetcar workers.



The Kimball Lumber Company about 1899. Photograph courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/259492>



This porcelain doll head and three doll legs were found when the Flatauer House was renovated into the Gulf State Bank in the 1980s. Other artifacts found at the same time include an electric coffee percolator, a bottle, a glass doorknob, an oblong dish, and various iron bolts.. These items were donated to the Apalachicola Area Historical Society recently by Anita Grove of the Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce.

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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NEW ADDITIONS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS

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Gainesville, Florida, June 14th. 1904-190

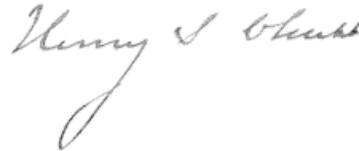
Hon. Shields Warren

Apalachicola, Fla.

Dear Sir:

With Capt. Coombs recommendation, I recommended Martha E. Lowry as postmistress at McIntyre, Franklin County. I herewith enclose a communication I have received from General Bristow-Please investigate very carefully, and if there is any reason to believe that the statements made to General Bristow are correct, please recommend some one else for postmaster there- Kindly let me hear from you as early as possible-

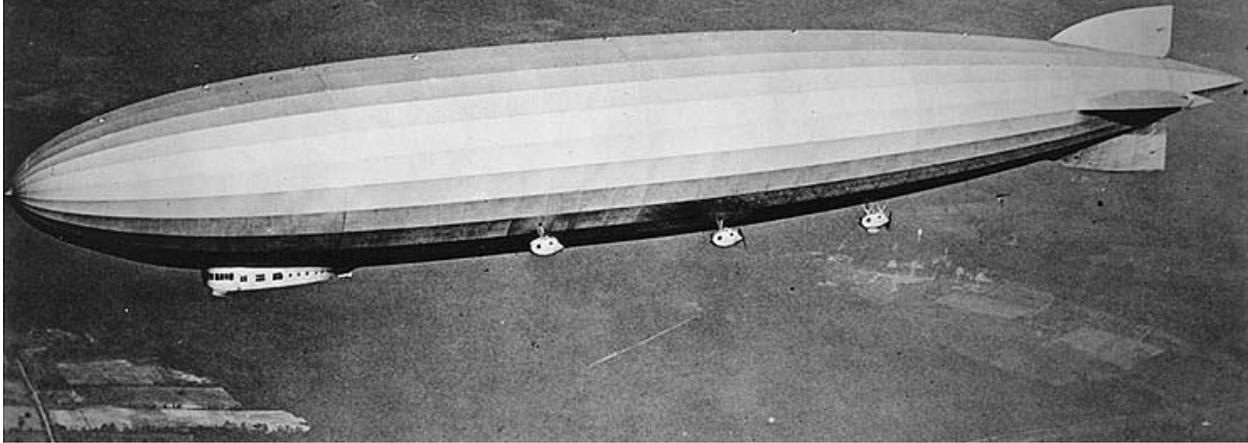
Sincerely yours,



Gail Warren of St. Marks recently donated various papers from the Floyd and Warren families to the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. Shields Warren was active in Republican politics in Franklin County in the early 1900s, and many of the papers, such as the one above, deal with the appointment of people to fill various government positions.

Mr. Gail Warren was also kind enough to loan the historical society Samuel A. Floyd's original 1872 journal that he kept as he was working at a local sawmill in Apalachicola. It vividly records everyday life in Apalachicola during the year, including card games, croquet matches, dances, Sunday school classes, and picnics. The journal has been transcribed and is available on the historical society's website.

ZEPPELIN OVER APALACHICOLA



The USS *Los Angeles* in 1924. Photograph courtesy of the Navy History and Heritage Command.

In the 1920s and 30s the U. S. Navy experimented with lighter-than-air ships. The USS *Los Angeles* was a 656 feet long rigid airship built by the Zeppelin Company in Germany. After being flown across the Atlantic Ocean it was turned over to the Navy, which used it for experimental work and public relations. The sight of a giant airship floating in the sky above a city brought the reality of the Navy to the people.

In May 1929 the *Los Angeles* made an aerial tour of Florida as part of the dedication of Miami's new airport. Leaving Lakehurst, New Jersey on Tuesday, May 8, the zeppelin was scheduled to arrive in Miami the next day, but contrary winds and poor weather conditions caused a change of course. The airship turned west at about the Florida-Georgia line and headed toward St. Joseph's Bay, where its tender, the USS *Patoka* was moored. About 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 10, the *Los Angeles* passed over downtown Apalachicola on its way to St. Joe. It moored at the *Patoka* about 1 p.m., and, after taking on supplies, it left for Miami, passing along the coast of Franklin County about sundown. Foul weather forced the *Los Angeles* to return to St. Joseph Bay during the night.

The bad weather continued the next day. At time the weight of the rain on the covering of the airship forced its tail to dip into the water of St. Joseph Bay. To compensate for the increased weight the crew had to dump ballast from the airship.

People from throughout West Florida flocked to Port St. Joe to see the unusual sight of a dirigible. Visitors were allowed on the *Patoka* but not on the *Los Angeles*. Newspaper reports from the period say it was one of the largest crowds of people ever to assemble in Port St. Joe up to that time.

Finally on Sunday, May 12, the weather calmed enough that the *Los Angeles* could make its tour of the peninsular. In a 39-hour flight the airship visited St. Petersburg, Tampa and Fort Myers before passing over to Miami on the east coast. From there it flew northward along the coast, over Fort Lauderdale, Pompano Beach, Boca Raton, West Palm Beach, Orlando and Jacksonville, after which it returned to Port St. Joe.

On Monday, May 14, the *Los Angeles* left St. Joseph's Bay for its home station of Lakehurst, New Jersey, where arrived safely the next morning after a flight of only fourteen hours.

150 YEARS AGO THE CIVIL WAR IN APALACHICOLA

SINKING OF THE *AMANDA*

From the time the USS *Montgomery* arrived off Apalachicola in June 1861 to commence the blockade of the port, there were Union warships stationed here until the end of the war. As the war progressed and the Union Navy grew in size more ships were assigned to the Apalachicola station to effectively cover all the entrances to the bay.

In May 1863 there were five warships blockading the bay. The USS *Port Royal*, *Somerset* and *G. L. Brockenborough* were stationed at West Pass. The USS *Hendrick Hudson* and *Amanda* were watching East Pass. The *Port Royal*, *Somerset*, and *Hendrick Hudson* were all steam powered while the *Amanda* and *G. L. Brockenborough* relied exclusively on sails. The *Amanda* was a 117' long bark armed with 8 cannons.

On Tuesday, May 26, the weather began to deteriorate, and by that afternoon a strong gale was blowing from the northeast. The storm continued throughout the night and the next day, increasing in intensity. The *G. L. Brockenborough* dragged her anchor, as did the *Port Royal*. George H. Cooke reported in his journal that all hands on the *Somerset* were soaked, with water on the forecastle a foot deep.

At daylight on Thursday, May 28, the weather moderated, revealing the fate of the Union vessels. The *Brockenborough* was wrecked on St. Vincent Island. A bark delivering coal to the squadron, the *Andrew Manderson*, was dismasted and wrecked on Sand Island (the disconnected eastern tip of St. George Island). The pile of coal the Union Navy had stockpiled on Sand Island, containing over 200 tons, was washed away. All of the small boats of the squadron were sunk

or wrecked. The *Amanda* was aground on Dog Island.

After a short respite the storm resumed with the wind blowing from the southwest. The *Amanda* was blown off Dog Island and driven toward the mainland. That afternoon the storm blew itself out, and by midnight the moon was shining brightly.

The next day found the *Amanda* fast aground, upright and approximately 150 yards from the mainland. Her bow was facing east and she was parallel to shore. Lt. George E. Welch, her commander, thought he saw soldiers moving around on the bluff off his port quarter. Fearing they were erecting a battery he ordered the cannons aboard to be spiked, their cascabels broken off, and the *Amanda* abandoned. As the crew left the vessel they set her on fire to prevent the Southerners from salvaging anything useful.

A court of enquiry was convened to investigate the loss of the *Amanda*. The officers composing the court thought Lt. Welch could have taken more precautions during the storm, but they were not certain even those actions would have prevented the *Amanda* from being wrecked due to the severity of the storm. They were strong in their denunciation of him, on the other hand, for ordering the abandonment and destruction of the vessel. No one but Lt. Welch saw the "soldiers" on the mainland. It was noted that the closest known Confederate military force was 40 miles away at Shell Point in Wakulla County, and they were armed with nothing larger than a 6-lb. gun.

Lt. Welch was sent north in disgrace. The sailors from the *Somerset* salvaged the cannons and everything of value from the wreck of the *Amanda*, and then returned to the monotony of blockading Apalachicola.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE

From *The Apalachicola Times*,
Friday, February 2, 1901

Appropriate services in memory of the deceased Queen of England, were held in Trinity church last Sunday by the Rector, Rev. J. P. Lytton. The Daughters of the King, on request of the Rector, and under the supervision of their President, had draped the altar and chancel in funeral black, relieved only by white flowers on the altar. Outside the church, the large pillars in front, and the entrance doors, were heavily draped in black. A solemn funeral march as processional, the chanting by the choir of the anthem from the burial service, the "Dominus Regit Me," and "Nunc Dimitis," formed a part of the impressive and appropriate music rendered. Rev.

Mr. Lytton prefaced his sermon by explaining that the church here mourned the death of Queen Victoria, not as Sovereign of England, but as the temporal[sic] head of the English church, from which the church in America is descended and to which it is closely allied by ties of faith, affection, and interest. He then took as text for the day Mat VIII-8, and at the close of his sermon, paid an eloquent tribute to the virtue, nobility and womanliness of Queen Victoria. The record of her life, he said, was like a beautiful poem which everyone has read and loves, and not only as a wise and beneficent[sic] Queen, but as woman, wife and mother, she will go down to history and live forever in the hearts of her people. A large congregation listened reverently and with much interest to the services and sermon.

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