

CONCLUSION

Between 1861 and 1877, Pensacola went from Florida's most populous city to almost becoming a part of Alabama. From the moment that First Lieutenant Adam Slemmer withdrew his soldiers from Fort Barrancas, the city started on a course of events that nearly led to its ruin. By the end of the Civil War, Pensacola had turned into an abandoned, dilapidated town with almost no residents. The city's port and sawmills fell into a state of neglect, and the Alabama-Florida Railroad was in ruins. However, one of Pensacola's constants remained, the military. The continuous Army and Navy presence ensured peace and brought employment to a destitute economy. The city received further aid from the Freedmen's Bureau which gave free blacks aid and education and enforced the law. While the military and the bureau prevented uncontrolled violence against former slaves and Republicans, they did not restore Pensacola to its pre-war prosperity. The city's economy only recovered with the growth of the timber industry and the rebuilding of the Alabama-Florida Railroad. These two elements kept people employed and maintained a steady stream of commerce.

During the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, Pensacola became a forsaken town that regained its commercial importance. In 1862 the Confederates abandoned it in favor of strengthening their armies in Tennessee, and in 1863 the Union withdrew from the city because it offered little strategic value. Even as Pensacola regained its importance after the war, it was disconnected from the rest of Florida. Only the building of the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad in 1883 made the city an integral part of the state.

While Pensacola faced an easier transition to the post-war South when compared with much of the state, it endured hardships. The worst of these was yellow fever. Recurring

epidemics caused hundreds of deaths and frequently forced the population to abandon the city. Racial and political tension also proved troublesome as Democrats learned to accept former slaves as citizens and living under Republican rule. Unlike other Southern regions, these problems did not become rampant because of the military and growing economy.

The crucial elements in Pensacola's Reconstruction were the military and the timber industry. The bay's coastal fortifications and the Navy Yard required continuous garrisons and personnel that could be used to put down uprisings and to suppress lawlessness. During the war, the Army had the opportunity to make Pensacola one of the first Confederate cities that embraced emancipation, but strategy intervened causing the Union to fall back to its installations. Until 1866, the timber industry was just a pre-war memory, but the need for lumber and a seemingly infinite source of trees revitalized it. With companies paying wages instead of using the sharecropping system, local residents earned real money keeping the area's economy healthy. Between these two elements, Pensacola avoided the lawlessness and depression endured by so many other Southern cities.