

Bloody Lane



By
Miller Taylor

Introduction

It was about three years ago that I first learned that my great-grandfather's name was Robert Taylor and that he lived in Columbia County, Florida. My cousin and fellow researcher, Pat Blalock, pointed me to the right Robert Taylor in the censuses of Lake City, Florida. It took me a while to accept her conclusion, but now I know and have proof that she is absolutely right.

I had no idea that our Robert had any involvement in the Civil War. Recently, thanks to a newly found cousin, Mary Harrison, I became aware of Robert's service. She provided me with the pension applications of Robert and his widow and the history of his regiment. I then was able to obtain the surprisingly detailed, official information on his service that is held in the National Archives.

Utilizing the service information, the pension applications and the regimental history, I have added information from several Civil War history books to develop a history of Robert's involvement in the war. I am certain that future research will yield more details. I wanted, however, to let his descendants enjoy the information now. Since this is based on records and history, rather than family stories, it is a pretty accurate account of what happened.

Robert, born near Newberry, South Carolina about 1820, moved his family to Columbia County, Florida in 1858:

Robert had the following children:

- 1-William TAYLOR
- 2-Sarah TAYLOR
- 3-Jane TAYLOR
- 4-James Stanhope TAYLOR
- 5-Rufus TAYLOR
- 6-Noah TAYLOR
- 7-Nancy TAYLOR
- 8-Thomas Carter TAYLOR
- 9-Jackson H TAYLOR
- 11-Rufus TAYLOR
- 12-Joseph TAYLOR

His eighth child, Thomas Carter Taylor, later moved to Dyer County, Tennessee. He married, raised a family, and spent the rest of his life there. He was my grandfather.

I am not a historian. This paper would have certainly been more thorough if I were. I compiled it so the descendants of Robert, including my children, can understand and enjoy learning about the experiences of our ancestor.

Miller Taylor
August 14, 1997

Bloody Lane

Robert Taylor was born about 1820 near Newberry, South Carolina. He was one of eight children of William and Elizabeth Taylor. His father William was an Irish immigrant who married Elizabeth Dominick, the daughter of a German immigrant. Robert grew to adulthood and married a woman named Mary while still in South Carolina. Seven of his twelve children were born there.

1858: To Florida

In the 1850's, a large number of families from Newberry County, South Carolina, moved to Columbia County, Florida. The move was due to the availability of land and also to a split in some of the churches in Newberry. In 1858, Robert, along with his family, moved to Columbia County, south of Lake City, where he bought land and began farming. His sister Viney and his brother James brought their families to Lake City around the same time.

Early in Robert's Florida life, the states of the South began to secede from the Union and form the Confederate States of America, and in 1861, Florida followed the others. It has been said, however, that Florida would have probably sided with the North or would have been neutral if it had not been for the "hotheads" who had moved there from South Carolina. Our Taylors, if not hotheads, were certainly full supporters of the Confederate cause. Four brothers and three sisters of the original eight children were alive at the time of the Civil War. All four brothers fought for the Confederacy, two of the sisters' husbands fought, and the remaining sister had a son in the Confederate Army. Three of them died during their service.

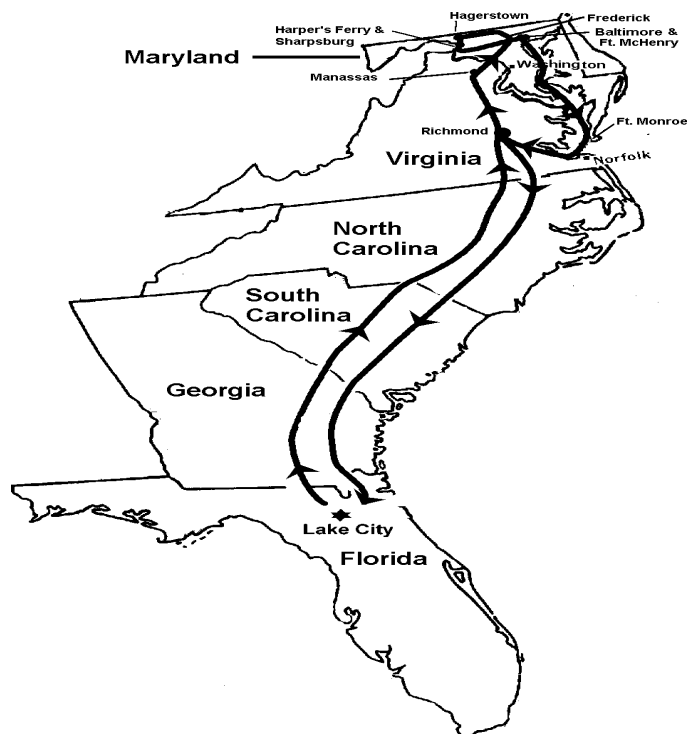
1861: War!!!

In 1861, the war began, and the struggle was bloodier than anyone expected. All dreams of a quick, decisive end to the conflict rapidly faded. The South had surprised everyone with its military skill and the fighting spirit of its men, but it always lacked the resources to deal a decisive blow. The North had a large population and a strong industrial base; but the South, with its small, rural population and its agricultural economy, could never match the North in weapons or in personnel.

Due to this, the Confederate soldiers fought under conditions of deprivation. They often did not have shoes, some fought with ancient muskets, clothing was ragged, and food was meager and frequently unavailable. This was reflected in a statement by a Union Loyalist when Lee's Army invaded Maryland: "They were the dirtiest men I ever saw, a most ragged, lean, and hungry set of wolves. Yet there was a dash about them that the northern men lacked."

Early 1862: Building a Regiment

In order to supply badly-needed troops for the continuing struggle with the North, the Confederate Army was creating regiments in Florida. Regiments were formed from a specific area of a state; and as a result, the men fighting in a regiment were friends,



Robert's Travels During the War

neighbors, and family before the war. This dramatically affected the pride the soldiers took in their unit and the way they interacted with fellow soldiers. The 5th Florida Infantry, commanded by Colonel J. C. Hatley was being organized and recruiting was taking place around the Lake City, Florida area.

Robert Taylor was enlisted as a private on May 13, 1862, into Company B of the 5th Florida Regiment by Captain Garrant Vanzant. Captain Vanzant was commander of company B, which was also known as “The Baker Guards.” Robert was 41 years old and would not have been called up to serve, but he enlisted as a substitute for a man named Henry English.. Perhaps it was just for the money, since substitutes were frequently bought, but Robert was not a poor man. He had a good deal of land and personal property. Possibly there was some other factor involved.



General Pope

August 1862: Off to Virginia

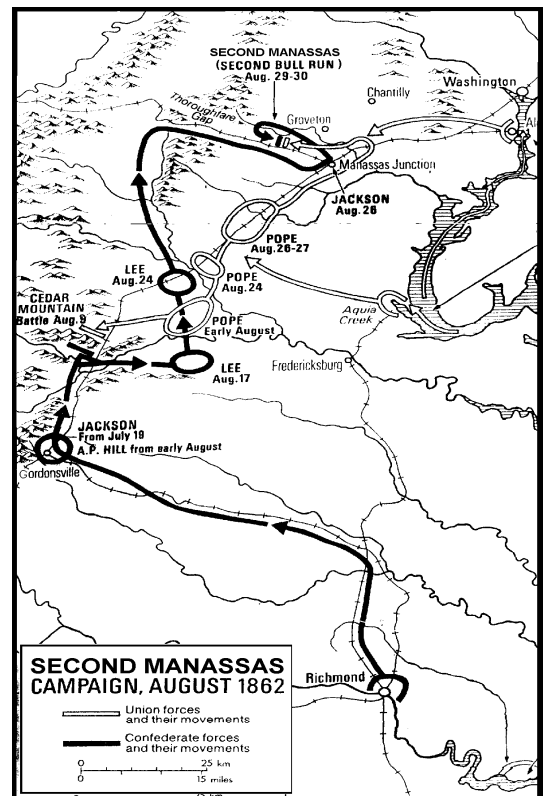
The 5th Regiment was mustered officially into the Confederate Army. After organizing and training, it was ordered to Virginia to join the 2nd Florida Regiment. The South was so short of equipment that the military commander of East Florida put out an appeal for people to donate private shotguns, muskets, and rifles to equip these troops.

On Friday, August 1, the 5th Infantry left Lake City heading north, and Robert, with his regiment, arrived in Richmond on Monday, August 11. He was assigned to Pryor’s Brigade in Wilcox’s Division of General Longstreet’s Corps. The 5th was now part of Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and would remain so throughout the war.

George McClellan headed the Union’s Army of the Potomac, and was Lincoln’s highest general. Lincoln, angered with General McClellan’s unwillingness to fight, created a new army in Virginia headed by General Pope. This new army stripped many of the units from McClellan’s Army of the Potomac. Lee’s Army was in Richmond to prepare for a possible attack by McClellan’s Army, and when McClellan began withdrawing, Lee decided to move north and deal with Pope before he could be reinforced with parts from McClellan’s Army.

13 August 1862: First Campaign

Things were starting to happen fast for Robert. He had only been in Richmond two days when his unit was ordered north to attack Pope. Lee’s Army left Richmond on August 13 and began a month-long campaign. They went to Hanover Junction and Gordonsville and on August 24 were across the Rappahannock from Pope’s Army. Against all the rules, Lee split his army in the face of superior forces. He sent Stonewall Jackson’s Corps ahead to go west of the Bull Run Mountains, cross over the mountains at Thoroughfare Gap, and cut Pope’s railroad link to Washington at Manassas. Lee, with Longstreet’s Corps (Robert’s unit), continued on about a day behind. Jackson completed his mission and then waited, knowing Pope’s Army would be coming soon to attack.



Richmond to Manassas

29-30 Aug 1862: Manassas

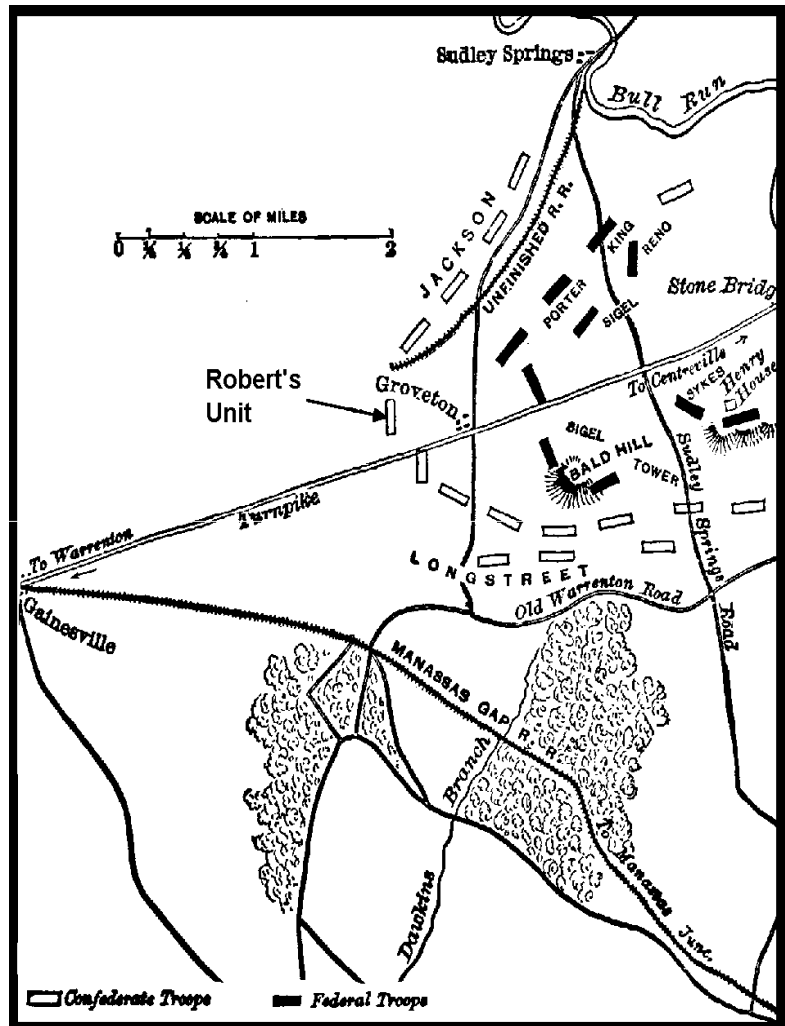
Robert camped the night of the 28th in the Bull Run Mountains just east of Thoroughfare Gap. Unlike most of the Army, his unit had come through a different gap, Hopewell Gap, and rejoined the main army where the two roads over the mountains intersect. In the morning, they began to march toward Manassas. He could hear the cannon firing in the distance as Jackson's men fought with Pope's Army, and as they came closer, the pace quickened and the excitement rose. Never having experienced battle, the excitement for him must have grown into terror. He was about to participate in the Second Battle of Manassas (Second Battle of Bull Run).

Jackson had at first gained time by pulling back into the woods and deceiving Pope into thinking he had retreated. He then set up a strong defensive position behind the embankment of an unfinished railroad. There had already been considerable fighting by the time Robert arrived at about 11 o'clock in the morning. Robert had his first taste of battle in Friday's fighting, but Saturday would bring greater conflict than he could have imagined.

On Friday night, Lee had released some prisoners and performed other acts to make Pope believe that Lee's Army was retreating. Using the cover of woods, he also had been able to keep Pope thinking that the unit on his left was a small group, rather than Longstreet's entire corps. Pope was fully deceived and confident he would take the day.

Saturday started with repeated attempts by Pope's Army to break through Jackson's defensive position. The position behind the embankment was an excellent one to defend, and many Federals were killed trying to approach it. Robert, part of Longstreet's men on Pope's left, had done some fighting, but the size of the unit was still hidden. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Pope sent waves of troops to do frontal assaults on Jackson's positions behind the railroad embankment. So many Federals came and were killed that Jackson's troops were running out of ammunition to the degree that some had to throw rocks at the Federals to try to stop them. It appeared that the position might be overrun, but they were reinforced just in time to prevent disaster.

This was when Lee and Longstreet decided to make their move. The left flank of the Union was weak and within the range of Longstreet's artillery. Longstreet first hit them with cannon to disrupt the assault; and then as Jackson's troops leaped out of their defensive position to pursue the federals, Longstreet ordered a charge from his position.



**Second Battle of Manassas (Bull Run)
At 3:00 on August 30, 1862
(Note Robert's Unit)**

This charge placed Robert in the center of the action. He was in the middle of the charge with Jackson's men on his left and most of Longstreet's on his right. They moved forward yard by yard, sometimes running, with many engagements, until 10 o'clock that night, when victory was complete. The exhausted Confederates lay down in the field among the dead of both armies for a badly needed rest and a long night's sleep.

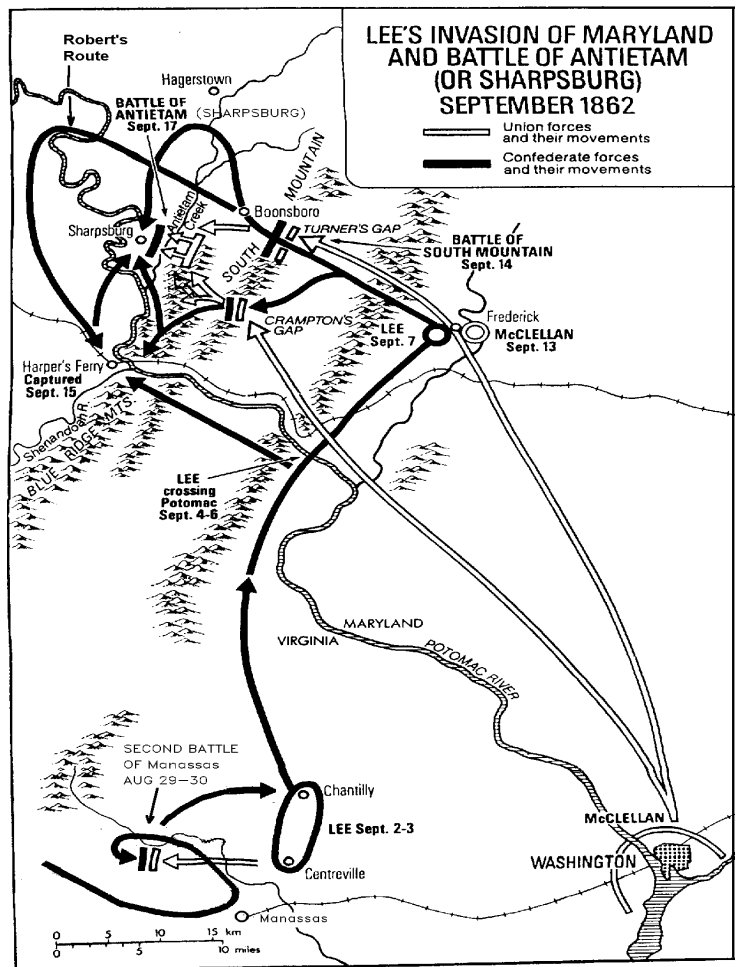
Even though they were green troops, the Florida boys displayed themselves well. After the battle, General Pryor reported "The 5th & 8th Florida Regiments, though never under fire before, exhibited the cool and collected courage of veterans." Robert had now seen war, but it was not the last or the worst time.

The loss to the Union was great, they had 15,000 casualties in the two days of fighting, and they were demoralized from their hurried retreat. Pope decided it was safer in Washington, DC, and moved his troops back there; and not surprising to anyone, McClellan did likewise. Pope was relieved of command and sent to the West to fight Indians. Lee was encouraged enough by the outcome of the battle that he felt strong enough to take a bold move, north into Maryland.

Early Sep 1862: Maryland Campaign

In early September, Lee decided to move his army into Maryland and begin a campaign. It would have several political, and military benefits and would allow his army to forage in new territory. Also, it had been assumed by the Confederacy that Maryland was full of Southern sympathizers and given the opportunity, would take up the Confederate cause.

On September 3, the Army headed north toward Leesburg. The men were poorly equipped after all the fighting, and one fourth of the men did not have shoes. On September 4, at White's Ford, they began crossing the Potomac by wading for a half mile in waist deep water. On



Manassas to Sharpsburg



Harper's Ferry

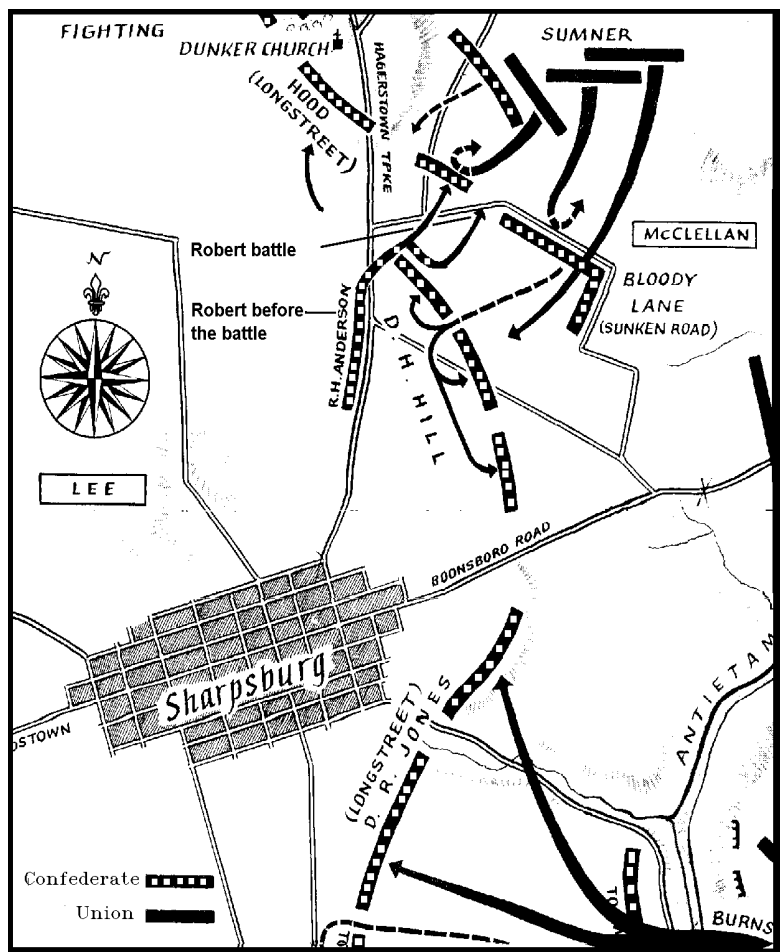
September 7, the crossing was complete, and they marched through Maryland to Frederick. Lee gave a speech to win the people over, and Jeb Stuart even held a fancy dress ball for the townspeople. Even though several rebel sympathizers came forward, most people were indifferent. Lee, therefore, decided it was time to move on.

Robert's unit, under the command of General Stonewall Jackson, left Frederick and took a route that led them over South Mountain, into Pleasant Valley, and into West Virginia. The remainder of Lee's Army went different routes as Lee again divided his army. Three of the groups, including Robert's, converged on the Federal Supply Depot at Harper's Ferry. Greatly outnumbered, the commander of the post, Colonel Miles, surrendered without a fight on Monday, September 15. This gave the Confederates a large supply of captured federal weapons and provisions. The 5th was then placed in General R. H. Anderson's Division of General Longstreet's Corps.

17 Sept 1862: Sharpsburg (Antietam)

Having been in Harper's Ferry for only a day, Robert's regiment now had to rush from Harper's Ferry to Sharpsburg. General Lee was being hard pressed by Union forces converging on the town, and he was depending on Longstreet to come to his aid. The Confederate troops, enjoying the good food and supplies, were not happy to leave. They marched all night and arrived at Sharpsburg on Wednesday morning just after dawn. They were placed in reserve at Lee's Headquarters to be used where most needed. Wednesday, September 17, 1862, promised to be a fateful day for Robert.

The battle had begun at dawn, just before Robert arrived, and fighting was going on in several places north and south of town. At about 9 o'clock in the morning, Robert's unit was sent up to support the central part of the fighting. The Florida troops took up position north of town along the Hagerstown Turnpike near a Sunken Road. The Confederates were using the Sunken Road, later called Bloody Lane, as a firing position against the Federals. The road had been worn down by wagon traffic until it was several feet below the level of the surrounding fields. It was a very effective firing position, almost annihilating regiment after regiment of Union troops.



**Battle of Sharpsburg (Antietam)
Robert's Area**

Robert's unit advanced across the turnpike and through a field and orchard and joined the forces in the Sunken Road. Colonel Barlow's New York regiments then found a position on a knoll that would allow them to fire down on and along the line of the Rebels. The Confederates could be killed at will, and the

bodies began to pile up. One of Barlow's men later said, "It was like shooting sheep in a pen."

After a period of almost unbelievable bloodshed, Robert's unit had to retreat. Bodies were piled everywhere! One soldier said that it was almost impossible to get himself untangled from all the dead bodies to be able to retreat. The advancing Union soldiers reported kneeling to fire on a "floor" composed of three layers of dead bodies. When the unit regrouped it was discovered that Robert did not return; he had been killed on Bloody Lane! He was not alone; this battle had the greatest losses of any single day in the Civil War.

Autumn 1862: Grief

Within the next few weeks, his wife Mary would have received the news that her husband was dead. Sometimes a commanding officer would write, and newspapers regularly carried casualty lists. Also, since his regiment was full of hometown boys, they would write to her or to their wives with the information. Mary would go into mourning and wear black for a year. It must have been devastating for her because, not only had she lost her husband and partner, she had lost her security. Along with loneliness, she faced hardship for the rest of her life. The Autumn was a sad one for her, and the war continued with neighbors losing their family members in battle. Christmas that year would be grim.

December 8, 1862: A Christmas Present

On Monday, December 8, a seeming miracle occurred. Word reached the 5th Regiment that Robert was alive and in a hospital in Richmond! He had been captured, not killed. By Christmas, Mary would know that her husband would return to her. This must have had an emotional impact on her as strong as when she heard he was dead.

In Bloody Lane, Robert had been wounded with a bullet that shattered his right ankle, a wound that would leave him partially crippled the rest of his life. When Barlow's men successfully stormed the road, Robert lay helpless among the bodies. He and 300 others were captured and moved to a rear area. Due to his injuries, the Federals sent him to the USA General Hospital on Camden Street in Baltimore, Maryland.

On November 1, the Headquarters of the 8th Army ordered the Marshall of Police to take a group of prisoners to Ft. McHenry on the Baltimore Harbor. The prisoners were then to be sent to Ft. Monroe in Virginia to be exchanged for prisoners held by the Confederates. Seventy four prisoners, including Robert, left the hospital on November 3 and went to Ft. McHenry. Later they boarded a large boat that took them down Chesapeake Bay to Ft. Monroe on the James River near Newport News, Virginia, where they arrived on the 5th of November. Captain John Mulford of the 3rd New York Infantry, who was assistant commissioner of exchanges, escorted the group.

Later in the day, Robert proceeded by boat across and up the James River to Aiken's landing, the official exchange point for prisoners in the East. As the boat, with its white truce flag displayed, approached the landing, there was always a cheer, because the Confederate soldiers were approaching Southern soil and freedom. On Wednesday, November 5, 1862, Robert was back in the South.

After disembarking, Captain Mulford met with Captain G. A. Wallace of the Confederate Army to work out the details of the exchange. By previous agreement, two privates were exchanged for a non-commissioned officer, four for a lieutenant, 6 for a captain, etc., up to 60 for a commanding general. This group had, in addition to the 74 regular soldiers, three surgeons and one servant. The surgeons were, by previous agreement, considered exempt and were handed over without exchange.

On Monday, Robert, still suffering from his wounds, was taken to Richmond and placed in General Hospital Number 7.

February 1863: Back to Florida

On February 21, 1863, he was transferred to Chimbarazo Hospital Number 4. On February 28, Chimbarazo

gave him a 40 day sick furlough, and he apparently took the train south. Robert was now back home in Florida. He was having problems from his wounds and entered the military hospital there at Lake City. He was later able to arrange a transfer to that hospital, allowing him to stay in his home town.

Robert remained in the Army until Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, when his unit was dissolved. He, however, was able to remain in Lake City near his family. He continued to receive his military pay and other payments (See below.). It is unsure if he continued to perform some services for the Confederacy, possibly working at the hospital. He was lucky to be alive! Life, however, would never have the joy it had before. He had lost his country, many of his friends, and many of his relatives. He would suffer the hardships of reconstruction, and he would be crippled for the rest of his life. But he had survived!!!

The Confederate States,

No. 10 of the Fla. Regt. G. S. A. 33

To Private Robert Taylor

FOR MONTHLY PAY, FROM <u>January 1st</u> 186 <u>4</u> TO <u>April 30</u> 186 <u>4</u> BEING	
<u>four</u> MONTHS <u>—</u> DAYS AT <u>91.00</u> PER MONTH	214 00
FOR BOUNTY	" "
FOR COMMUTATION CLOTHING	" "
FOR USE AND RISK OF HORSE	" "
AMOUNT	44 00
DEDUCT. DUE	" "
AMOUNT PAID	44 00

I certify that I have endorsed this payment on Descriptive Roll in possession of soldier, and that the account is correct as appears from said Roll.

Heister L. Route
Major Q. M.

RECEIVED at Lake City, Fla., the 24th day of August 1864, of
Major H. S. ROUTE, Quartermaster Confederate States Army, the sum of Forty four
Dollars and _____ Cents, being the amount,
and in full of the above account.

Robert Taylor

[SIGNED IN DUPLICATE.]

WITNESS: S. A. Bryant

**Pay Slip for Robert for 1864
(Pay is for 4 months)**