

Captain William McPherson – Commander of the Walton Guards

By: H. C. “Hank” Klein

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Prior to the formation of Okaloosa County out of what was Santa Rosa and Walton Counties on June 13, 1915, the area of Fort Walton Beach where the Indian Temple Mound is located was in Walton County. During the beginning of the Civil War the Walton Guards were formed to help with the war effort. In April 1861 the newly formed Walton Guards met at the Walton County seat of Euchee-Anna and selected their Commander – William McPherson, a 28-year-old local boy, to lead them in the Civil War against the Union Army of the United States. Just who was William McPherson and what qualified him to lead the men from his county; also what did the Walton Guards do to help the Confederate cause at the start of the War Between the States? We hope to answer those questions and more in this article about Walton County.

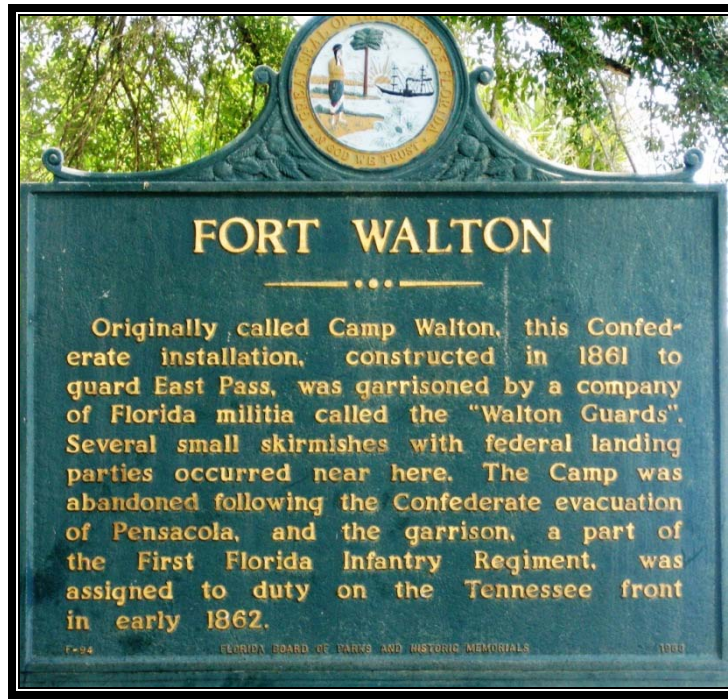
On March 1, 1861, just 50 days after the 62 to 7 vote in favor of the state of Florida seceding from the Union on January 10, 1861, the women of the county seat of Walton County, Florida, organized and marched around the small town of Euchee-Anna chanting, “Go boys, to your country’s call! I’d rather be a brave man’s widow than a coward’s wife.” That day, 60 brave men from Euchee-Anna and the surrounding area, at their womenfolk’s urging, joined what would be known as the Walton Guards.

In early April 1861, about a month later, these men met again, organized, and elected their company officers, who were:

- Billie McPherson, Captain
- Charles L. McKinnon, 1st Lieutenant
- Henry W. Reddick, 2nd Lieutenant
- A. B. McLeod, 3rd Lieutenant

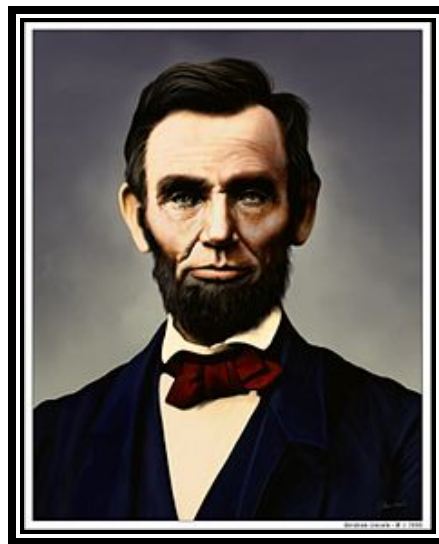
After electing their company officers, they agreed to meet at Alaqua Creek, just below Berry’s mill in two days. They then boarded the schooner *Lady of the Lake* for their voyage to Garnier’s Bayou (at present-day Fort Walton Beach), where they spent the night. The next day, they sailed to the “narrows” where they chose the site for their camp on and around a number of tall earthen mounds. From that point, they could observe any vessel that might attempt to travel from Choctawhatchee Bay up the “narrows.” The encampment was called “Camp Walton” – named for their county and located at the far southwest corner of what was then Walton County. ¹

The narrows (as it was called) was the narrow portion at the east end of the Santa Rosa Sound. Santa Rosa Sound is the waterway between the mainland and Santa Rosa Island that flows from what is today downtown Fort Walton Beach to Gulf Breeze, Florida. The tallest of the tall earthen mounds, the Walton Guards chose because of its good vantage of the Santa Rosa Sound, was what is known today as the Indian Temple Mound. Below is a picture of the historical marker at the foot of the Indian Temple Mound in downtown Fort Walton Beach, Florida, that describes the Walton Guard’s camp and their responsibilities while stationed here.



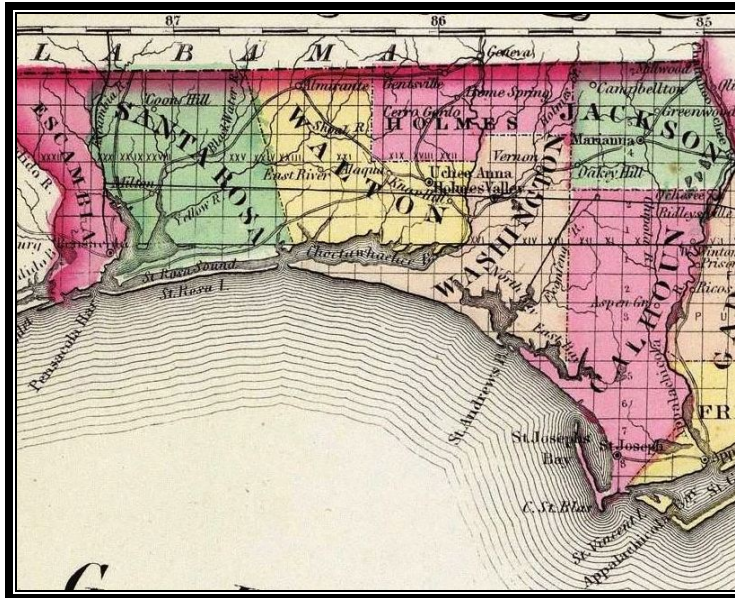
(Historic Marker - Foot of the Indian Temple Mount, Fort Walton Beach, Florida)

The Union controlled Fort Pickens at the mouth of the Pensacola Harbor, while the Confederates controlled Fort Barrancas in Pensacola, with General Braxton Bragg as the Confederate general in charge. One of President Lincoln's first actions, once the southern states seceded from the Union, was to blockade the southern ports to stop commerce at all southern ports – this included East Pass.



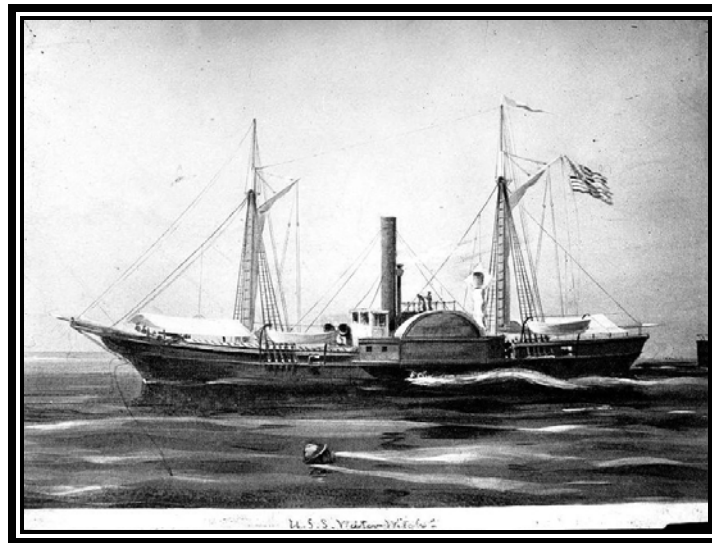
(President Abraham Lincoln 1809 – 1865)

The early map below shows why the area of the Walton Guards' assignment was so important to the Confederacy. At times, the Union blockading ships, USS *Water Witch* and USS *Wyandotte*, anchored at the mouth of the East Pass during the summer of 1861 and the Confederates worried that a Union ship might decide to sail into East Pass and up Santa Rosa Sound (the narrows) and attack Fort Barrancas from the rear. Guarding the narrows and watching any Union activity that might occur at East Pass was also an important assignment for the newly established Walton Guards.



A review of this map also shows that Okaloosa County had not been established yet – it was not formed until June 13, 1915. Fort Walton Beach did not exist at the time either, and East Pass was actually in Washington County, not Walton or Santa Rosa Counties.

There were no real battles at Camp Walton, just a few skirmishes with the Union steam gunboat the USS *Water Witch*, USS *Wyandotte*, and the USS *Maria A.* Wood firing on the Walton Guards and their camp from their ship while blockading the area. Camp Walton eventually received two cannons and fired on the Union blockaders as they sailed by in the Gulf of Mexico. Union blockaders also came ashore at East Pass from time to time and were driven back by the Walton Guards.



(USS *Water Witch* – Union Side-wheeler, 155' Gunboat)

The Walton Guards buried their two cannons when they abandoned Camp Walton on April 16, 1862 and joined the Confederate troop in Pensacola. Pensacola was soon abandoned by the Confederate troops also when they moved to Tennessee to fight battles on the front line of the war.

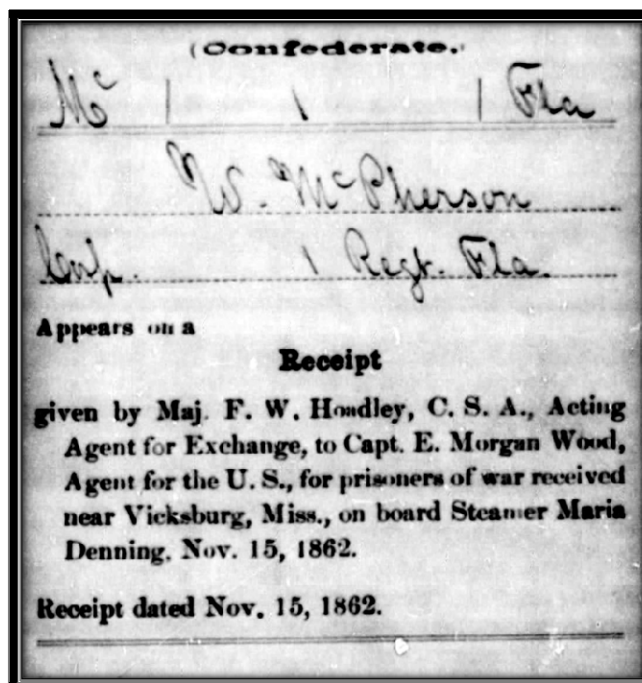
The cannon shown in the picture below is one of the cannons buried by the Walton Guard. It was found years later by citizens of Fort Walton Beach. It is on display in downtown Fort Walton Beach at the base of the Indian Temple Mound – where the Confederate Camp Walton was once located.



(Confederate Cannon - On Display at Indian Temple Mound, Fort Walton Beach, Florida)

William McPherson and the Walton Guards became a part of the 1st Florida Infantry Regiment and participated in the Confederate invasion of Kentucky in August 1862. McPherson was captured by the Union Army at a battle in Bardstown, Kentucky on October 8, 1862.

McPherson was part of a prisoner exchange that took place on November 15, 1862. The Union Steamer Maria Denning took on Confederate Prisoners at Helena, Arkansas then transported them to the exchange, which took place at Vicksburg, Mississippi. ²



(Confederate Prisoner Exchange Receipt - William McPherson, November 15, 1862)

McPherson re-enlisted in the Confederate Army on May 15, 1863 at Marianna, Florida. He joined Company A, 5th Florida Battalion, Cavalry. William enlisted for the remainder of the war and received a \$50.00 enlistment bonus

(Confederate.)

16^c **5 Batt'n Cavalry.** **Fla.**

Wm P. McPherson.

*Plt. 2nd Lt., Co. A, 5 Batt'n Florida Cavalry.**

Appears on

Company Muster Roll

of the organization named above,

for *Nov. & Dec., 1863.*

Enlisted:

When *May 12, 1863.*

Where *Marianna.*

By whom *Capt. Wilson.*

Period *War.*

Last paid:

By whom *Wm J. Hanson.*

To what time *June 20, 1863.*

Bounty paid \$ *50* 100; due \$ 100

Present or absent *Absent.*

Remarks: *Selected from ranks*
Sept. 21st
On detached duty order of
Col. Montgomery.

*This company was organized Sept. 31, 1862, by the division of Co. G, 2d Regiment Florida Cavalry, by Special Order from Brig. Genl. Howell Cobb commanding District of Middle and West Florida, dated Aug. 13, 1862. It formed a part of the 5th Battalion Florida Cavalry when the latter was organized Oct. 9, 1862.

Book mark

[Signature]

(648) Copied.

(Confederate Muster Roll - Enlistment May 12, 1863 at Marianna, Florida)

McPherson became the Post Adjutant for Company A, 5th Florida Cavalry and was involved with the Battle of Marianna, Florida. He was severely wounded during the fighting around the Courthouse Square in Marianna, Florida on September 27, 1864, when he was shot through the side. While in Marianna he fought with Thomas Baltzell, who was also wounded, and would prove to be a brother of William McPherson's future wife.³

At the end of the Civil War William McPherson surrendered to the Union Army on May 10, 1865 at Tallahassee, Florida. The Civil War had actually ended on April 26, 1865 when General J. E. Johnson of the Confederate Armies and Major General W. T. Sherman, U.S.A. signed the treaty in Durham, North Carolina. Fifteen days later, on May 25, 1865 William McPherson was paroled by the Union Army at Quincy, Florida. ⁴

(Confederate.)

Mc | 5 Cav. Fla.
W. McPherson
Det. 5 Fla Cav

Appears in a
List
of Prisoners of War surrendered to Brig. Gen. E. M. McCook by Maj. Gen. Sam Jones, C. S. A., at Tallahassee, Fla., May 10, 1865.

Where paroled Quincy Fla.
When paroled May 25, 1865.

Remarks:

Reg. No. 63, P. M. O., 1st Div., Cav. Corps,
M. D. M., page 104

(652) *T. Johnson* Copyist

(Confederate List of Prisoner of War - Tallahassee, Florida on May 10, 1865)

William McPherson returned with his battalion to Marianna and decided to settle there. But, we are getting a little ahead of ourselves.

William McPherson's Family Background

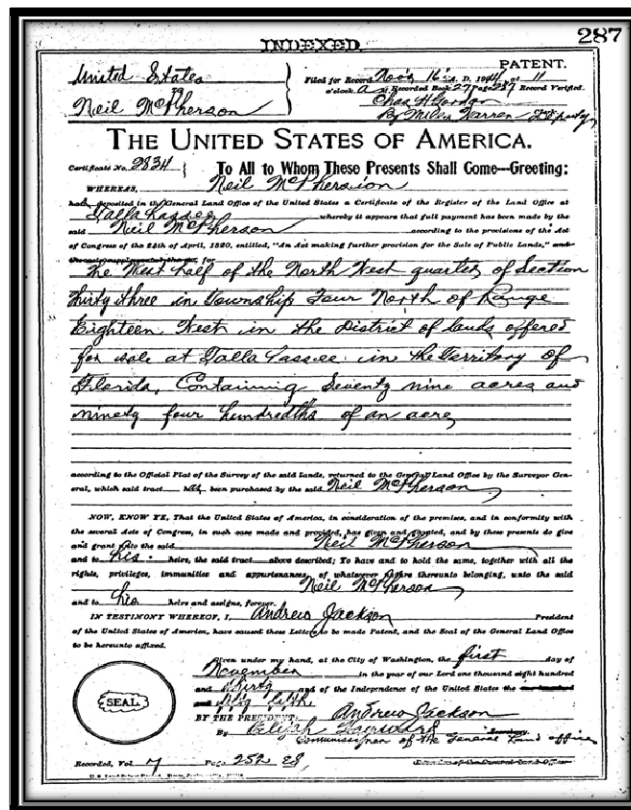
One might wonder who Captain William (Billie) McPherson was and what qualified him to lead his county's troops as commander of the Walton Guards. The 1860 Federal Census for Walton County shows that 27-year-old Billie McPherson was living with his parents.

His father Neil was a 51-year-old lawyer and his son Billie was also a lawyer. Others living in the family were his mother Eliza (age 49), his sisters Sarah (age 18) and Isabelle (age 16), and his brothers Malcolm (age 15) and John (age 13). Also living in their home was Eugenia Ward, who was the family's music teacher, and two servants: Mary Jane Drummond (age 15) and Thomas J. Laird (age 17). His parents were very well to do with servants and even a live-in music teacher for their children.

5

The McPherson family actually lived in Union. While Neil and his son William McPherson were both attorneys they did not live in the county seat of Euchee-Anna. They lived in the southeastern corner of Township 4, north, Range 18, west, in Section 33 – near the town of Union – which was 9 miles north of Euchee-Anna. Present day Kidd Road runs right through what was Neil McPherson's property, near County Road 183B, just south of Pleasant Grove.

Neil McPherson acquired his land in Union through The Cash Sales Act of 1820 for \$1.25 per acre. McPherson acquired 79 and 94/100 acres which was the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 33, Township 4, north, Range 18, west, in Walton County, on November 1, 1830 for \$99.92. ⁶



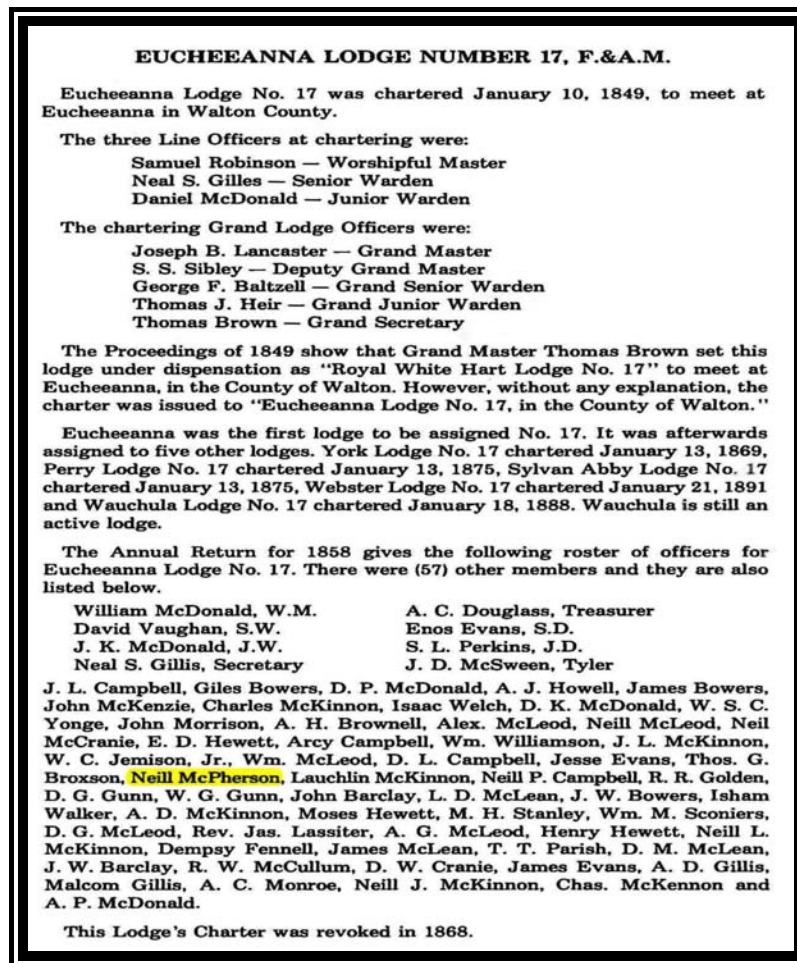
(Patent Deed - Section 33, Township 4, Range 18, Tallahassee Meridian - Neil McPherson)

Neil McPherson served Walton County in the Florida Indian Wars. Neil served in the Creek War (1813-1814), which was also known as the Red Stick War, and was considered a part of the War of 1812.

Neil also served in the Second Seminole War in Walton County:

- He served from March 12, 1837 to July 12, 1837 in Colonel Levin Brown's Militia as a Private.
- He served again from September 8, 1837 to January 8, 1838 in Levin Brown's Militia. He was an Adjutant with "two horses and one servant, in service."

You know the McPherson's were very well off when they even took their servant to war with them. Additionally, Neil McPherson was a Mason. Euchee-Anna had Lodge #17 which operated from 1849 to 1868 and Neil McPherson was a member.⁷



(History of Eucheeanna Lodge #17 - 1849 to 1888)

Very clearly, the McPherson family were very involved with their community. They would have been considered pillars of the community of Walton County, in the early to mid 1800s. One of those community connections was with George F. Baltzell, who was the Grand Senior Warden when the Eucheeanna Lodge #17 was founded on January 10, 1849. In 1866 (after the Civil War ended) William McPherson married his daughter, Margaret, in Marianna, Florida

William McPherson's Followed in his Father's Footsteps

William McPherson followed in his father's footsteps. He was also a lawyer and would serve his county in time of war. Young McPherson was also very well educated for the times. He was in the first graduating class of Knox Hill Academy located in Walton County, Florida. William attended and graduated from Oglethorpe College in Georgia in 1856, and graduated in 1858 from Cumberland University Law School in Lebanon, Tennessee with a law degree.^{8,9}

In 1860, William McPherson was also the census taker for neighboring Washington County, Florida. His name is listed as the Assistant Marshall on many of the pages of the Washington County Federal Census.¹⁰

SCHEDULE 1—Free Inhabitants in _____ in the County of Washington _____ of Florida enumerated by me, on the 11th day of June 1860. William McPherson has received Post Office Vernon

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | 7 | 8 | | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---------------------|----|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----|----|
| | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | | 8 | 9 | | | | | |
| The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family. | | Sex and Age | | | Particulars, Occupations, or Professions of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age. | Value of Real Estate | | Place of Birth, Naming the State, Territory, or Country. | Color | Whether blind, deaf, dumb, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict. | Whether and how much land owned or leased. | | |
| | | M | F | Y | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Suzanne A. " | 17 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Joseph Bates | 13 | m | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Isaacson Davis | 7 | f | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Rebecca " | 3 | f | | | | | | | | | |
| 46 | 51 | Abraham Morris | 45 | m | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | George W. " | 32 | m | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Callie " | 20 | f | | | | | | | | | |
| 47 | 52 | Leander Bostick | 46 | m | | Farmer | 1000 | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Martha " | 27 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | George " | 7 | m | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Anna " | 5 | f | | | | | | | | | |
| | | William " | 3 | m | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Elizabeth " | 7 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| 48 | 53 | Louis Wise | 39 | m | | Farmer | 175 | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Elizabeth " | 11 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Ann " | 21 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Martha " | 17 | m | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Henry " | 15 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Leah " | 13 | m | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Louis " | 8 | m | | | | | | | | | |
| 49 | 54 | John Simmons | 55 | m | | | 60 | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Mary E. " | 22 | f | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Leptina " | 4 | f | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Henry S. " | 2 | f | | | | | Fla. | | | | |
| | | Benjamin " | 2 | m | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Elizabeth Stachow | 15 | f | | Domestic | | | Fla. | | | | |
| 49 | | Edward W. Stullough | 28 | m | 16 | Farmer | 200 | | Fla. | | | | |

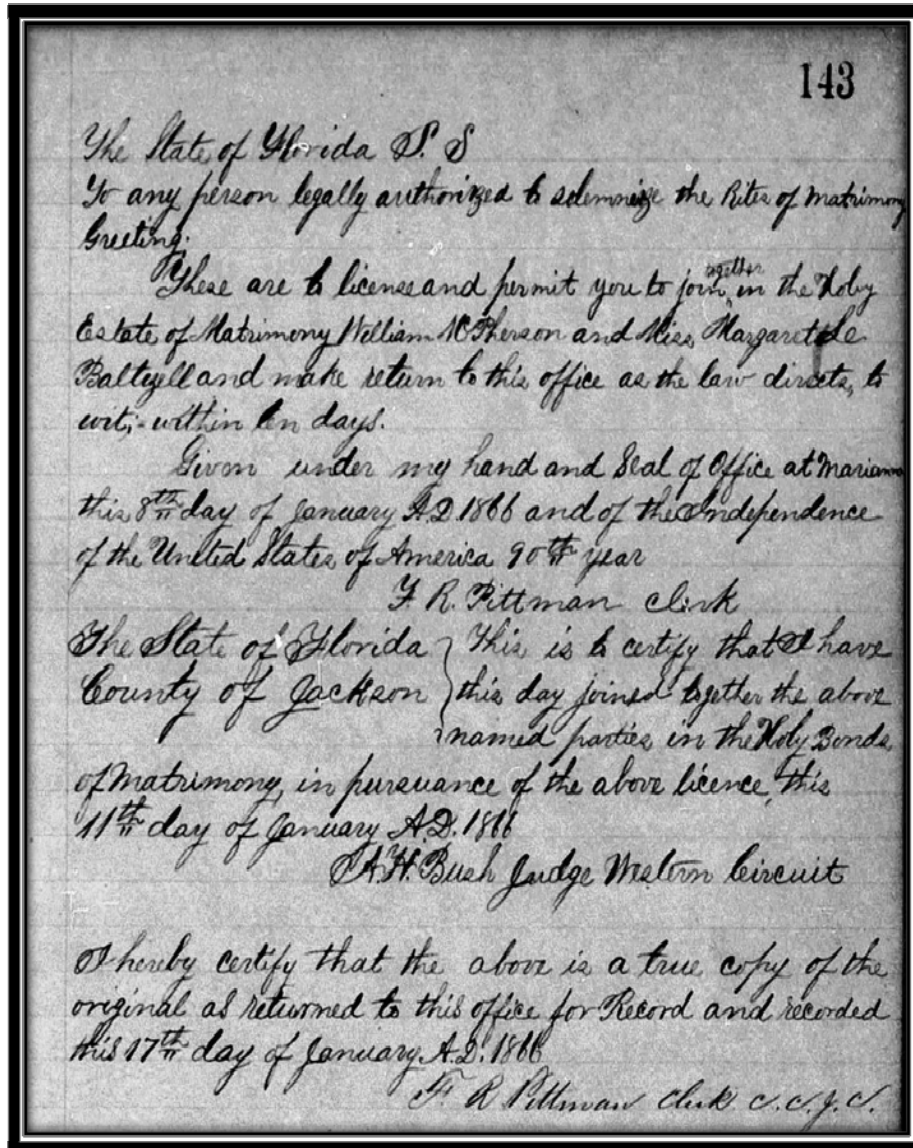
(1860 Federal Census, Vernon, Washington, Florida)

Young William McPherson was probably one of the best educated and traveled young men in Walton County. Additionally, as the local lawyer his family was well regarded and financially they must have been very well off to have 3 servants living in their household. So it becomes clear why the other men of the newly formed Walton Guards chose William McPherson as their leader in April of 1861.

After the Civil War William McPherson Continued to be Successful

So now you may be asking yourself how did William McPherson who had been a lawyer, a Federal census taker, commander of the Walton Guards, a prisoner of war, and wounded in the Battle of Marianna, do after the Civil War ended.

After the war, William McPherson set up a law practice in Marianna, Jackson County, Florida in late 1865, where he had fought in 1864 - 1865 during the Civil War. On January 11, 1866 William McPherson married Margaret S. Baltzell of Jackson County, Florida. Below is a copy of their Marriage Certificate. They were married by A. H. Bush, the Judge of the Western District. ¹¹



(Marriage Certificate between William McPherson and Margaret Baltzell - January 11, 1866)

Within a couple of years Margaret (Baltzell) McPherson died in childbirth and William McPherson moved on with his life. California had won its independence from Mexico and was a new state of the Union and many men of that time were moving to California to begin a new life after the Civil War.

William settled in Los Angeles and ran for and was elected the Los Angeles city attorney on December 9, 1868. He served for two terms through December 9, 1870. While serving as the Los Angeles city attorney he also served on the following committees:¹²

- Fire Limits Committee - Member, February 8, 1868 – December 9, 1869
- Public Pound Committee - Member, January 4, 1869 – December 9, 1869
- Special Election Committee – Member, July 21, 1869 – December 9, 1870

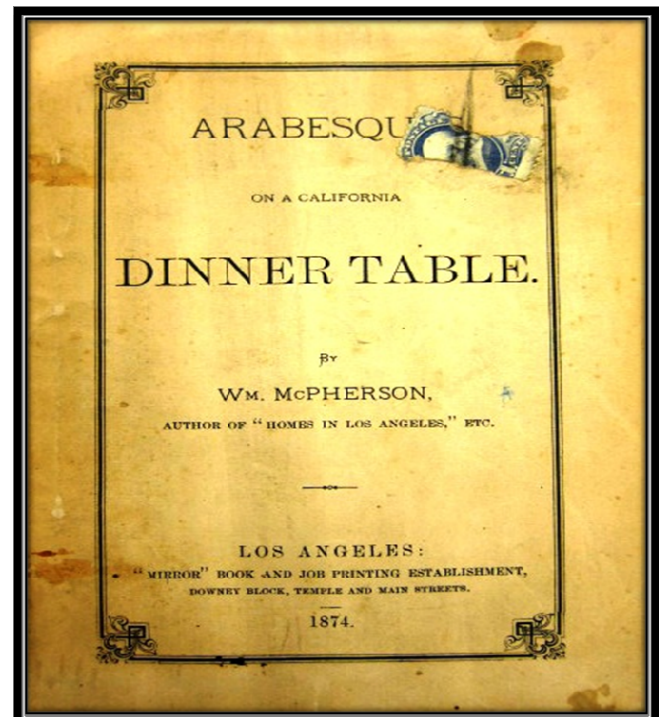
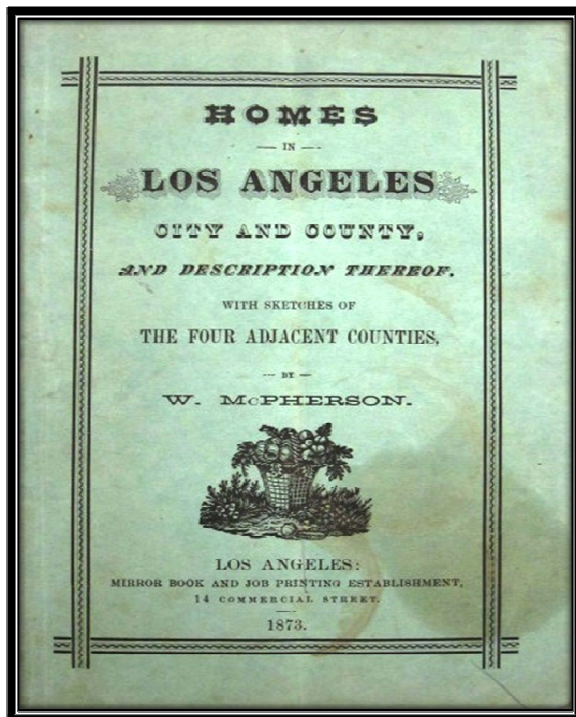
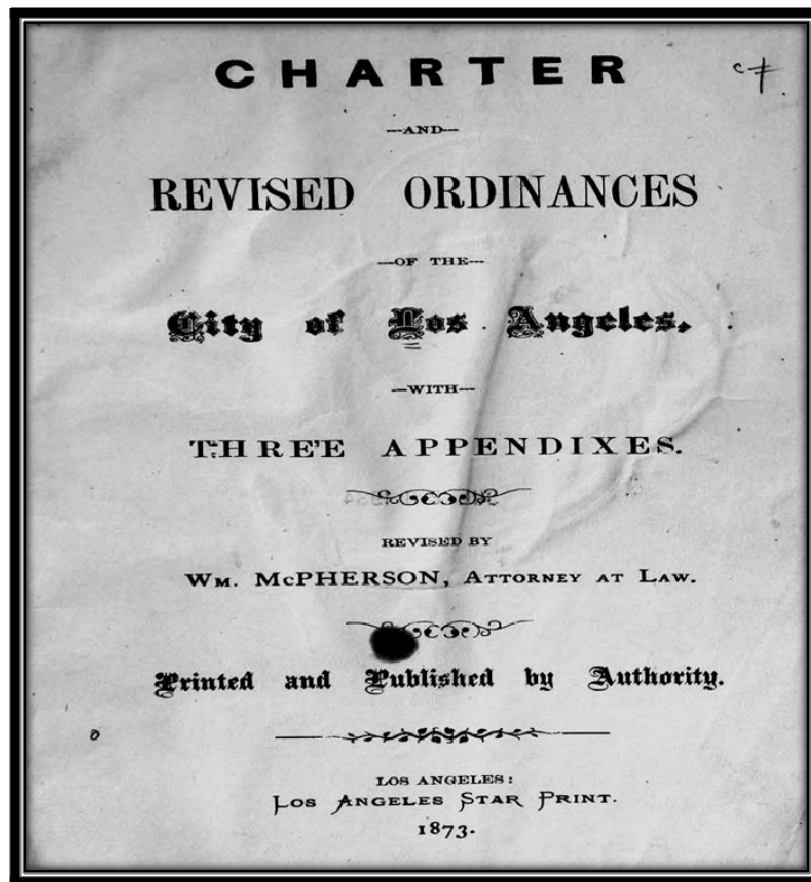
William McPherson was listed in the 1870 Federal Census taken on August 19, 1870 in Los Angeles City, California living with 3 other young lawyers. Thomas Shipley was a 32-year-old and had been born in Virginia. Elwood McDaniel was a 27-year-old and had been born in Mississippi. Frank Ganahl was a 31-year-old and had been born in Georgia. They were living in an all white neighborhood with other lawyers, druggists, a hatter, saloonkeepers, and a brick mason.¹³

After William McPherson left his political career he returned to practicing law. His law office was at #55 Temple Block which was in the large building pictured below at what would become Temple Street in Los Angeles, California. This was the same building housed many types of businesses, including the Los Angeles Court House.



(Temple Block Building, Los Angeles, California - 1873 - Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library)

William McPherson also became an author. His first book (he used the word Complied) was 215 pages in length and was titled – “*Charter, Revised Ordinances of the City of Los Angeles, with Three Appendixes.*” Today, this book is in many law libraries across the country. The author located a copy at the Arkansas Supreme Court Library, in Little Rock, Arkansas, just 5 miles from his house.

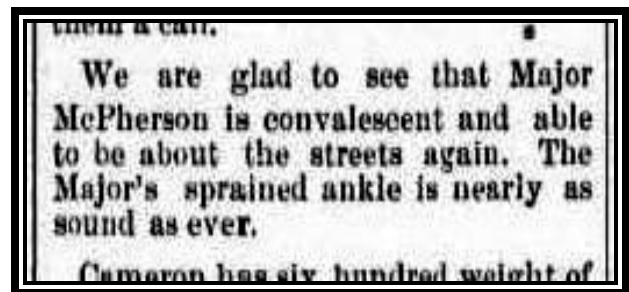
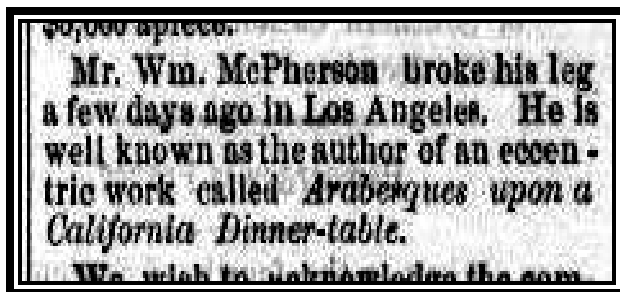


After William McPherson completed his first book he continued to author books. In 1873 he wrote and published a book titled "Homes in Los Angeles City and County and Description Thereof, with Sketches of The Four Adjacent Counties." The book basically told the story of how nice it was to live in Los Angeles and compared it to other areas of the country.

The next year, 1874, McPherson wrote and published his third, and as far as we can tell his final, book titled, "*Arabesques on a California Dinner Table.*" McPherson third book was reviewed in the LOS ANGELES DAILY HERALD. In the Wednesday Morning, July 8, 1874 issue we found the following article.

"We have before us a little book, entitled, "Arabesques on a California Dinner Table," by Wm. McPherson, recently issued from the Mirror office in this city. The work is printed in pamphlet form, contains eighty pages and has a very creditable typographical appearance. The subject matter comprises three idealistic essays, entitled, "Whom Shall We Choose," "Hilaria," and "Publicity." The writing is profusely illustrated with choice quotations and historical references and is apparently designed to while away a leisure hour without affecting anything profound or startling. Just what the book has to do with California or dinner tables we cannot see, but suppose that the rose will smell as sweet by this as by any other name."

It really does not sound like this was a very good book review, but more like William McPherson was someone to write about. Then two years later, in the spring of 1876, there was news again about William McPherson in the local newspaper.



The first news article that appeared on Thursday morning, March 2, 1876 mentions that he broke his leg. Then again on Wednesday morning, March 29, 1876, another news article states that McPherson is, "able to be about the streets again." and "the sprained ankle is nearly as sound as ever." They must have been VERY hard up for news or William McPherson must have been a very important person in the Los Angeles community.¹⁴

The last two articles that appeared in the Los Angeles Daily Herald that mentions William McPherson, or Major William McPherson as he was sometimes called, were in April and May of 1876. On April 28, 1876 in the City Council news there was mention of William McPherson being one of four individuals who had applied for the position of Police Judge. Again, just seven days later, on May 5, 1876 another article appeared in the City Council news which mentioned that William McPherson was one of seven candidates for City Judge. He was appointed to neither position.

After that there was no further mention of William McPherson in the newspapers in Los Angeles. He was not listed in the next City Directory for Los Angeles which came out in 1878. Additionally, he could not be located in the 1880 Federal Census. Possibly he died in mid-1876 or he may have been disappointed in not being named a judge and simply moved on to greener pastures.

In 1911, in his book titled, *The History of Walton County*, John L. McKinnon writes about William McPherson and states that "after the death of his young wife he cast his lot in the far West and sleeps today solitary and alone on the Pacific slopes beneath the golden sands of California."

Summary - So, William McPherson did pretty well for himself in civilian life after the Civil War too. When we think of early Florida and Walton County we often believe everyone was a farmer and lived off the land. While that was often true, it was certainly not the case with William McPherson, the Commander of the Walton Guards during the Civil War. Nor was it true of his parents and their family. They were very well to do and educated their children very well for that day and age. No wonder his peers chose him as their leader of the Walton Guards.

Endnotes:

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- ¹ *Seventy-Seven Years in DIXIE*, by H. W. Reddick, published in 1910
 - ² Civil War Documents, Fold3 - 1st Florida Regiment, William McPherson
 - ³ Battle of Marianna, Florida Casualty List- <http://www.battleofmarianna.com/casualties.html>
 - ⁴ Civil War Documents, Fold2 - 5th Florida Battalion Calvary - William McPherson
 - ⁵ 1860 United States Federal Census for Walton County, Florida
 - ⁶ Patent Deed Certificate Number 2834 - Walton County, Book 27, Page 287 - November 1, 1830
 - ⁷ Euclidean Lodge Number 17, F. & A. M. History - Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Florida, Jacksonville
 - ⁸ Southern Reporter, Milledgeville, Georgia Page 2, July 29, 1856 – Oglethorpe College Graduation
 - ⁹ Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee – Academic Year 1857-58
 - ¹⁰ 1860 United States Federal Census for Washington County, Florida - Dated June 11, 1860
 - ¹¹ Marriage Certificate - Jackson County, Florida dated January 11, 1866
 - ¹² City of Los Angeles Officials/Office Holders - <http://cityclerk.lacity.org/chronola/index.cfm?fuseaction=app.FacultySearchGeneral>
 - ¹³ 1870 United States Federal Census for Los Angeles City, California
 - ¹⁴ Chronicling America, Library of Congress - www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

The author of this article, H. C. "Hank" Klein, has long been interested in the history of Northwest Florida, and the genealogy of his father-in-law's and mother-in-law's families (Marler and Shirah). Both came from pioneer Destin families and both were related to Leonard Destin, the founder of Destin, Florida.

Hank's father-in-law's aunt, Emma Marler, married George Destin the first born son of Leonard and Martha Destin. While Hank's mother-in-law's sister, Alice Shirah, married George D. Destin the son of George Destin and grandson of Leonard and Martha Destin.

Klein has written books documenting he and his wife's family genealogy. Hank has also contributed historical research for Tony Mennillo's recently published book *Salty Memories along the Coastal Highway – Historic Stories of Destin and the Emerald Coast*. Copies of this book containing 492 vintage photographs of Destin and the Emerald Coast can be obtained by contacting Arturo's Studio at <http://www.arturosstudio.com> or 850/585-2909 or from Amazon.com.

Klein lived for many years in both Okaloosa and Bay Counties. He is now retired from his credit union management career, and he and his wife (the former Muriel Marler of Destin, Florida) live in North Little Rock, Arkansas. He can be contacted at klein@aristotle.net or at 501-256-7474.