

**The Alabama State Troops' Failed Encampment of 1891**

By

Lee McInnis

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Auburn University  
In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Auburn, Alabama  
December 14, 2024

Copyright 2024 by Lee McInnis

Approved by

Jennifer E. Brooks, Chair, Professor of History  
Adam H. Domby, Associate Professor of History  
Elijah Gaddis, Associate Professor of History

## Abstract

On June 10, 1891, the Alabama State Troops' (AST) three regiments assembled in Mobile for a two-week encampment. Under the personal command of Governor Thomas Goode Jones, a Civil War hero and former AST regimental commander, fifteen hundred troops from across the state would come together in the biggest gathering of Alabama troops since the end of the Civil War. Newspapers in big cities and small towns hyped the event for weeks before its commencement. Railroad companies arranged special trains to carry the troops to Mobile from across the state. The encampment was an unmitigated disaster. Sanitary arrangements failed. Soldiers from the different regiments fought each other, and there were even reports of militiamen firing live ammunition at each other. Mess halls could barely fit a third of the troops. After a near riot in front of one dining facility, officers from one regiment sent a petition to Governor Jones demanding the discharge of one of his aides, Lieutenant Colonel Randolph Peyton. Jones ultimately ordered the encampment to end two days early, but the disaster continued to the last as troops from Anniston, Alabama, burned Peyton in effigy. This paper will argue that the State of Alabama showed little interest in maintaining a competent state military force, did not institute a system to provide for competent leadership in the AST, and did not prepare its troops to conduct such an encampment. I will review the history of the militia in the late nineteenth century and the history of the militia in Alabama. I will also examine the histories of two of the key players in the events in Mobile, Thomas Jones and Randolph Peyton, to learn if the experiences of these two men show us where the state went wrong in preparing their troops for this event.

## **Acknowledgments**

I wish to thank the faculty of the History Department of Auburn University, especially Dr. Jennifer Brooks, who served as my advisor during this program, and as the Chair of my committee for this thesis. I would also like to thank, Dr. Adam Domby and Dr. Elijah Gaddis both served as members of my thesis committee. They were also instructors for classes that were key in the development and completion of this work.

I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students in the History Department for their advice and assistance in helping me return to graduate studies after a twenty-five-year break.

I thank my daughters, Bonnie and Colleen, who were the first to challenge me to pursue this degree. My biggest thanks go to my wife, Barbara. Simply stated, without her help, none of this would have been possible.

I was lucky my parents continued their families' storytelling traditions to my generation. Their families came from two very different strains of the Southern experience and the stories from their families were essential in my desire to continue this research. I dedicate this work to my parents, Rubie Mooneyham McInnis, and Chief Warrant Officer William McRae McInnis, Alabama Air National Guard.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments.....	3
Alabama Governors 1861 – 1891.....	5
Abbreviation and Unit Designations.....	6
The Effigy.....	7
The Militia.....	19
The Governor.....	28
The Aide-de-Camp.....	40
The Encampment.....	53
Conclusions.....	71

### Alabama Governors 1861 – 1890

Thomas Goode Jones	1890 - 1894	Democrat
Thomas Seay	1886 - 1890	Democrat
Edward A. O’Neal	1882 - 1886	Democrat
Rufus W. Cobb	1878 - 1882	Democrat
George S. Houston	1874 - 1878	Democrat
David P. Lewis	1872 - 1874	Republican
Robert Burns Lindsay	1870 - 1872	Democrat
William Hugh Smith	1868 - 1870	Republican
Wager Swayne	1867 - 1868	Appointed military governor
Robert M. Patton	1865 - 1867	Whig
Lewis Eliphalet Parsons	June 1865 – December 1865	Democrat – Appointed Provisional Governor
Thomas Hill Watts	1863 - 1865	Democrat
John Gill Shorter	1861 - 1863	Democrat

During this period, governors served two-year terms and were limited to two consecutive terms.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “Alabama Governors,” Alabama Department of History and Archive, accessed September 9, 2024, <https://archives.alabama.gov/research/guidance/fast-facts/officials/governor.aspx>.

## Abbreviation and Unit Designations

There was no standard writing style in the AST, and abbreviations varied during the period. I will use abbreviations for ranks and units that conform with official AST publications from the period.

### Abbreviations

AG.....	Adjutant General
AGO.....	Adjutant General's Office
AST.....	Alabama State Troops
Co.....	Company
Regt.....	Regiment

### Rank Abbreviations

2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut.....	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant
1 <sup>st</sup> Lieut.....	1 <sup>st</sup> Lieutenant
Capt.....	Captain
Maj.....	Major
Lt. Col.....	Lieutenant Colonel
Col.....	Colonel
Gen.....	General

### Use of Unit Designations and Abbreviations

During the 1890s, the Alabama State Troops transitioned from naming companies by location or in honor of an individual to the U.S. Army Regimental system standard. The new standard designated companies alphabetically "A" through "M." There was no "Co. J" in the system as handwritten J's could be easily confused with I's.

AST records during this period continued to refer to companies by both their old names and new alphabetic designators. For example, the Greenville Rifle Company was also identified as Co. "I," 1<sup>st</sup> Regt., AST. The Montgomery Greys were Co. "A", 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt, AST.

In most cases, I will use the letter designator and regimental affiliation for a company. The exception will be when quoting primary sources. Then, I will adhere to the source material. The company's letter designator was usually enclosed in quotation marks in AST formal records and correspondence. As it was not universal and to conform with more current standards, I have dropped the quotation marks.

## The Effigy

Military encampments do not usually conclude with the burning of an effigy of a senior officer, but that is how the 1891 brigade encampment of the Alabama State Troops (AST) ended. The encampment, scheduled for June 10<sup>th</sup> to June 20<sup>th</sup>, was the largest gathering of Alabama troops since the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> It should have been a grand affair celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of reforming the Alabama militia. The state's newspapers formed a cheering section for the encampment. Governor Thomas Goode Jones, a Confederate war hero and former commander of the AST's 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment (Regt.), attended as the State's Commander-in-Chief and assumed personal command of the event.

The encampment was a disaster. Rivalries between the regiments turned into violent confrontations, with some reports of soldiers firing live ammunition at each other. Soldiers shot out electric lights in the camp.<sup>3</sup> Troops would not lower themselves to collecting trash and garbage built up in the camp.<sup>4</sup> The worst ongoing crisis was the near riots at the overcrowded and undersupplied mess halls. The situation went so badly so quickly, on the third day of the encampment, that Lieutenant Colonel (Lt.Col.) Randolph Peyton, an Aide-de-Camp to Governor Jones, called out troops from the 1st Regt. to stop the Anniston Rifles, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. company, from storming one of the mess halls. Eventually, Governor Jones ordered the troops to break camp and go home two days early.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> "Burned in Effigy," *The Eufaula Daily Times* (Eufaula, AL), June 21, 1891, 3.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/308711534/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Mutinous Mob," *The Chattanooga Daily Times* (Chattanooga, TN), June 20, 1891, 1.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/604731858/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, to Thos. G. Jones, Governor and Commander-In-Chief. 1891.* Montgomery, AL, 1892, 70.

<sup>5</sup> "The Boys Back From Camp O'Neal, Thoroughly Tired," *The Daily News* ((Birmingham, AL), June 19, 1891, 3.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605514186/>.

But the disaster would have a final act. As the troops waited to board their trains home, members of the fractious Anniston Rifles showed their displeasure with Lt.Col. Peyton. They constructed a straw effigy, tied it to a tree, and symbolically executed it by firing live rounds into it and hanging it. They then took the effigy down, burned it, collected the ashes, and held a public funeral in front of Governor Jones' tent. It is unknown if the governor was still on the encampment grounds to witness the spectacle.<sup>6</sup> The burning of Lt. Col. Peyton in effigy was news across the state.

An explanation for the AST's disastrous encampment of 1891 cannot be found in existing literature. Existing scholarship on the AST tends to focus on events starting with the North Alabama Coal Strike of 1894. As an example, in a paper written for the U.S. War College at Carlisle Barracks in 1993, Edward J. Kelly wrote forty-three pages on the history of the Alabama Militia and National Guard and only spent two paragraphs on the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Spanish-American War.<sup>7</sup> Ward and Rogers, in *Labor Revolt in Alabama: The Great Strike of 1894*, speak only to the AST's role in the 1894 strike in the Warrior Coal Fields of north Alabama and says nothing about the militia leading up to that point.<sup>8</sup> Other works on labor unrest, such as Letwin's significant *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921*, do not mention the AST at all.<sup>9</sup>

A significant body of literature does exist concerning other state militias in the post-Civil War period, especially in the industrial northern states. In response to the 1877 Railroad Strikes, many states began to reform, reorganize, and resupply their militias to improve their capabilities

---

<sup>6</sup> "The Boys Back From Camp O'Neal, Thoroughly Tired," *The Daily News* ((Birmingham, AL), June 19, 1891, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Edward J. Kelley, "A History of the Alabama Militia and the Army National Guard – Alabama's Citizen Soldiers – Past and Present" (study project, U.S. Army War College 1993)

<sup>8</sup> Robert David Ward, and William Warren Rogers, *Labor Revolt in Alabama: The Great Strike of 1894* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1965.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).



to augment law enforcement agencies during labor unrest. This was especially true in the industrial states, where state governments made these reforms with significant commercial and industrial interest support. The 1877 Railroad Strikes started on July 16 in Martinsburg, West Virginia, when railroad workers, faced with another round of wage cuts, walked out on strike. The strike spread like a contagion, and while violent unrest was focused in Maryland, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, the unrest spread as far as California. As many as one hundred thousand workers walked out in the first instance of nationwide labor unrest.<sup>10</sup> Within days, national commerce slowed. Violence broke out in Baltimore, Chicago, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and San Francisco. Governors called out their state militias, but the state troops proved incapable of dealing with the strikers. President Rutherford B. Hayes sent federal troops to restore order. The strike was over by early August. In the aftermath, it was clear the state militias failed to keep order in their states.<sup>11</sup>

In his book *Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy*, William Riker writes the weakness of the militia system in the 1870s was rooted in the Militia Act of 1792. The 1792 act required all able-bodied white men to appear for drills and provide their arms and equipment, which gave the federal government little power to hold the states accountable for the manning and training of their militias. Riker documents several efforts to reform the militia system in the mid-nineteenth century, but these efforts failed in conflict with the dominant constitutional theory of the day, states' rights. In large part, state sovereignty was seen as a regional issue, with the South pushing back against federal intrusion. At different times, Federalists and Democrats favored reform and used state's rights to oppose those same reforms.

---

<sup>10</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Monad Press), 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Plitch, Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881): The Great Railroad Strike, Eno Center for Transportation, July 19, 2024, <https://enotrans.org/article/rutherford-b-hayes-1877-1881-the-great-railroad-strike/>

After the Civil War, the militia system collapsed across the country. In the South, the federal government barred states from rebuilding their militias; in the North, only a few states attempted to maintain anything other than a symbolic military force.<sup>12</sup>

The 1877 Railroad Strikes catalyzed reform of the militias in many states, rebuilding them to support law enforcement agencies during labor unrest. As the focus shifted to suppressing labor, the young men of the working class began to abandon the state troops. To woo them back, the states created annual encampments or "summer camps," where militia units would spend one to two weeks training together every summer. By 1889, thirty-two states were holding summer camps for their troops, and over time, the militia became more of a social and athletic club for young men.<sup>13</sup>

In *History of the Militia and National Guard*, John Mahon chronicles the slow rebirth of the militias in the 1870s and 1880s. Mahon writes that while many militias focused on improving their soldier skills, others focused on "reviews, parades, and sham battles." More than tactical training for the troops, a sham battle was for public consumption, and in some instances, the public pressed in so close the troops abandoned planned tactical movements. In other cases, civilian horses, startled by the blank ammunition fire, bolted through the "battlefield," opening gaps in the soldiers' lines. Beyond the social aspect of the new militia movement, Mahon argues that the anti-labor feeling of the later part of the nineteenth century and the state legislatures, "dominated by men of property, cherished the National Guard more than ever" and gave the militias leeway to take extreme action against labor unrest.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> William H. Riker, *Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy* (Public Affairs Press, Washington D.C., 1957), 19-28, 35-36.

<sup>13</sup> Riker, *Soldier of the States*, 44, 51-59.

<sup>14</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and National Guard* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1983), 108-116.

In his history of the Army National Guard, Michael Doubler confirms that the nature of the state militias began to change in the 1870s but puts the shift in the context of stressors placed on the Regular Army during the period. Pushed by concerns over how Presidents Grant and Hayes used the army during Reconstruction and the Railroad Strike, Congress passed The *Posse Comitatus* Act of 1878. The act changed the relationship between the Army and civil authorities by ending the practice of turning Regular Army troops over to US marshals, federal judges, and local officials during civil disturbances. The act required presidential orders to use federal troops to preserve civil order, and in those instances, federal military officers remained in command of these troops. In response to this shift in the role of the Regular Army, the National Guard Association (NGA) was formed in 1879 to provide advocacy and lobbying for improving professionalism in the state militias. Congress had maintained the federal allocation for the state militias at \$200,000 annually since 1808. The NGA's first order of business was to lobby for increased federal funding. The NGA's power as a lobbying organization grew in the 1880s, and the federal government doubled its appropriation to the militias by the end of the 1880s.<sup>15</sup>

In his books, *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia*, and *The Army and Civil Disorder: Federal Intervention in Labor Disputes, 1877-1900*, Jerry Cooper argues that the militias collapsed in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War for two reasons. In the North, states did not see a significant return on their investments, and many states did little to maintain an effective militia into the mid-1870s. In the South, exhaustion from the war, economic collapse, and resentment toward Reconstruction prevented the states from forming

---

<sup>15</sup> Michael D. Doubler, *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: The Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 112-114, 123. First published in 2001 by the United States Government as *I Am the Guard: A History of The Army National Guard, 1636-2000*.

coherent militias immediately after the war.<sup>16</sup> In the wake of the 1877 strikes, Regular Army officers found they served as a de facto army of occupation in industrial states. They were frustrated that existing laws left them subject to the orders of both federal and state officials during labor uprisings but did not give them protection from civil lawsuits in the aftermath. These officers expressed their frustrations publicly, contributing to Congress passing the *Posse Comitatus* Act. Cooper argues that as the role of federal forces changed, state militias began reexamining their militia capabilities to respond to civil and labor unrest. As a result, states began to improve their training and capabilities.<sup>17</sup>

Robert V. Bruce, in his work *1877: Year of Violence*, also argued the Regular Army was too small to manage labor unrest; in the 1870s, the Regular Army was a force of twenty-five thousand men that were exhausted from Reconstruction duties and at the same time assumed new roles in the West. After 1877, it was clear the federal troops would not be available for labor unrest, and military support to law enforcement agencies would have come from the state troops. Many states began to reform the militias by retiring older officers, doing away with fancy, impractical uniforms, and improving equipment, including purchasing Gatling guns and artillery for use in riots.<sup>18</sup>

Private citizens sometimes stepped in after the 1877 strikes to support the militia. Historian Sam Mitrani followed the actions of the Citizens' Association of Chicago in the 1870s and the 1880s. The Association was formed in 1874 and was composed of the city's elite. After the 1877 strikes, the Citizens' Association pledged their support to the police. Their support was

---

<sup>16</sup> Jerry Cooper, *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia, 1865-1920* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 23-34.

<sup>17</sup> Jerry M. Cooper, *The Army, and Civil Disorder: Federal Intervention in Labor Disputes, 1877-1900* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980) 79-91.

<sup>18</sup> Robert V. Bruce, *1877: Year of Violence* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1959) 88,136, 220-221, 311)

not just notional. In addition to buying the Chicago Police Department six cannons, a Gatling Gun, nearly three hundred breach-loading rifles, and sixty thousand rounds of ammunition, the Association paid to equip a militia cavalry battalion, paid the debts of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt's of the state militia, and donated three hundred rifles to the militia. Nine years later, when general strikes again threatened Chicago, another group of elite Chicago residents, the Commercial Club, decided having a Regular Army post near the city would be advantageous. The Club raised \$300,000 to purchase 600 acres along Lake Michigan, which they gave to the US Army. The following year, the Army opened Fort Sheridan.<sup>19</sup>

An additional body of work exists concerning the Black militia companies that formed in the post-war era. In the edited volume *Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers: Perspectives on the African American Militia and Volunteers, 1865-1917*, Eleanor L. Hannah writes about Black militia in Illinois growing alongside white militia companies in the 1870s and 1880s, but for different reasons. Black militia companies in the state struggled with the same issues as white companies, the most significant of which was lack of funding. Members of militia companies in Illinois received no pay and were required to pay for their uniforms. Units used public subscriptions and donations to pay for other equipment. Many of these Black and white companies failed within the first two years. Still, new companies would form within the African American community, allowing them to express their freedom and show that they could do everything white communities could. Being in a formally recognized militia company allowed Black men to parade with their arms publicly, a statement of their manhood and their equality with whites. After passing the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the definition of

---

<sup>19</sup> Sam Mitrani, "Reforming Repression: Labor, Anarchy, and Reform in the Shaping of the Chicago Police Department, 1879-188," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 76-78, 88-89, [https://read.dukeupress.edu/labor/article-pdf/6/2/73/304848/LABOR6.2n\\_Mitrani.2.pdf](https://read.dukeupress.edu/labor/article-pdf/6/2/73/304848/LABOR6.2n_Mitrani.2.pdf) ; "Fort Sheridan," Encyclopedia of Chicago, accessed August 18, 2024, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/478.html>.

citizenship was under review. Parades by Black militia companies publicly stated plainly the militiamen's intent to be part of that debate.<sup>20</sup>

In the same volume, Beth Taylor Muskat details the history of two Black militia companies in the AST, focusing on Montgomery's Capital City Guards. Black citizens of Montgomery had lobbied for a militia company for four years before Governor Edward A. O'Neal finally authorized the company's formation in 1885. The company was officially part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt. but always existed separately from the white troops. Black and white soldiers of the AST never participated in the same events and attended separate encampments. The Black community of the city respected the company, and the Black press praised them, even though they were limited to regular drills and ceremonial events within the Black community, such as graduation exercises at Tuskegee Institute.<sup>21</sup> (112-115, 120)

Gregory Mixon, in his book *Show Thyself a Man: Georgia State Troops, Colored, 1865-1905*, continues this theme while focusing specifically on the Georgia militia. Mixon argues that post-war emancipation of the Black population was a process, and Black militia companies "would serve as one of the institutions directly involved in the transition from slavery to freedom and the nation's creation after the Civil War." Service in these Black companies was in line with broader African American political and social objectives, allowing Black men to show character and confront white allegations of racial inferiority and unworthiness. With the end of Reconstruction, Georgia began a process to reorganize the state militia that lasted twenty

---

<sup>20</sup> Eleanor L. Hannah, "A Place in the Parade: Citizenship, Manhood, and African American Men in the Illinois National Guard, 1870-1917," in *Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers: Perspectives on the African American Militia and Volunteers, 1865-1917*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 86-88.

<sup>21</sup> Beth Taylor Muskat, "The Last March: The Demise of the Black Militia in Alabama," in *Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers: Perspectives on the African American Militia and Volunteers, 1865-1917*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2011) 112-115, 120. On August 20, 1905, while marching through Montgomery, the Capital City Guard's band played the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The white citizens of the city were outraged. Although the governor and the AG initially remained silent on the issue, on November 8, 1905, AGO cited the company as an "ineffective organization" and ordered them to disband.

years. Mixon says that the militia in this period allowed the Black communities to express their freedom by regulating their institutions and establishing their own traditions. The Georgia State Troops, Colored, was significantly larger than Alabama's Black militia. The AST consisted of two companies of Black troops during this period, while Georgia had forty-two in 1878.<sup>22</sup>

While the 1877 Railroad Strikes roiled the industrial states of the North, the strikes missed Alabama. Alabama's newspapers carried the details for the duration of the strike, but there is no indication the unrest migrated into Alabama. On July 25, the *Montgomery Advertiser* made a joke about the situation, reporting that the strikes "have even invaded these parts," as a Black man "struck in the stomach by a mule was a pitiful object at Irvine's drug store." On August 2, the *Advertiser* reported that newspapers from the North would arrive at 5:00 p.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. as trains rerouted around the cities where the strikers had blocked the railroads.<sup>23</sup> There was no other reporting on any strike actions in the state.

The labor unrest that pushed the industrialized states to reform their militias passed by Alabama. Unlike the Northern states, industry in Alabama was in its earliest stages. Langdon Wright, writing in *Economic Geography* in 1928, identified the first pig iron production in 1876 as the initial industrial event in the state. Wright identified the second significant event as the start of coal coking, which occurred in 1879. Also, Wright wrote that Birmingham, the center of industrial development in the state, had two advantages in its industrial development. First, it sat

---

<sup>22</sup> Gregory Mixon, *Show Thyself a Man: Georgia State Troops, Colored, 1865-1905* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2016) xi, 23, 93, 126-128, 155, 176-177.

<sup>23</sup> *The Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama), July 25, 1877, 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355687817/>; *The Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama), August 2, 1877, 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355687845/>; Other newspapers reviewed included Birmingham's *Iron Age*, the *Selma Times*, Talladega's *Our Mountain Home*, Huntsville's *Weekly Democrat* and *Independent*, and Opelika's *Observer*.

astride seams of coal, iron ore, dolomite, and limestone, the essential materials in iron and steel production, and Birmingham had “the cheapest labor supply in the United States.”<sup>24</sup>

The presence of cheap labor in Alabama was not an accident but the result of a concerted effort by state officials and industrialists. In *Agricultural History*, W. David Lewis wrote that industrial development in Alabama began with the antebellum planter class, who envisioned an enslaved labor force building Alabama's iron and coal industries. While the formal institution of slavery ended with the Civil War, the industrial center of the state, Birmingham, “was conceived as an urban plantation with a low-paid, servile black labor force.” Owners replaced enslaved labor with convicts leased from the state and local governments, and Lewis argues that access to cheap convict labor allowed the pre-war planter class in Alabama to transition to the industrial class in Birmingham relatively easily.<sup>25</sup>

Daniel Letwin documents the attempts to build collective action among the coal miners in the north Alabama coal fields. Between 1877 and 1890, the Greenback Labor Party (GLP), the Knights of Labor, and the United Mine Workers (UMW) attempted to organize the miners, but none succeeded. One of the most significant challenges was organizing a single labor organization to represent both Black and white workers in the Jim Crow South. The GLP was not strictly a labor organization but a political organization that attempted to represent the working class. In the Alabama elections of 1878, the GLP ran candidates for state legislative seats in North Alabama. While neither candidate won, they did make a sufficient showing to push the party to the 1880 elections, where they took on the conservative Bourbon Democrats. The

---

<sup>24</sup> Langdon Wright, “The Iron and Steel Industry of the Birmingham, Alabama District,” *Economic Agriculture* 4, no. 4 (October 1928): 349-350, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/140393>.

<sup>25</sup> W. David Lewis, The Emergence of Birmingham as a Case Study of Continuity between the Antebellum Planter Class and Industrialization in the “New South,” *Agricultural History* 2, vol. 68 (Spring 1994):62-79, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3744403>.



Bourbons withstood the challenge, and racial divides caused GLP to lose ground to traditional political parties. As the GLP died, the Knights of Labor grew as America's first working-class mass movement. Focusing on wages and working conditions, the Knights established a presence across the Birmingham mineral district and, by the mid-1880s, were ready to challenge the industrial regime. While the Knights were effective in bringing white and Black miners into the organization, miners began to see the Knights' reticence to call strikes as too conservative. Knights' membership dwindled. In 1890, labor organizations representing miners in north Alabama joined together to affiliate with the UMW as UMW District 20. In 1891, the UMW called a strike across the Birmingham district, and while most miners went out on strike, the company's willingness to exploit racial divides and bring in large numbers of Black strike breakers ended the strike with a defeat for the UMW.<sup>26</sup>

The literature indicates that many states reacted to widespread civil unrest in the late 1870s and early 1880s with programs to adapt their state military forces to the new dynamic. The states streamlined their militias, improved training, and modernized their arms and equipment. Alabama did none of that. State law continued to require officers at the company level to be elected by members of the companies and regimental colonels and lieutenant colonels to be elected by the company commanders. There were no training qualifications to assume command at any level, no testing to verify an officer's fitness for command, and no systematic plan for ongoing training of officers once they assumed command. Also, the authority to relieve an officer was limited. Not even the governor in his position as the Commander-in-Chief of the state troops, could relieve an officer without convening a court martial. Research for this paper found no evidence that any AST officers were relieved of their commands from 1877 to 1891.

---

<sup>26</sup> Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners*, 66-95.

In the fifteen years after Alabama reorganized its militia, the state was out of step with trends in other states upgrading the training and equipping of their state troops. The lack of an organized industrial labor force before 1890 meant Alabama only needed to cobble together a few hundred militiamen for short periods. Lack of training, failure to hold officers accountable, and lack of support from the state meant that in the early 1890s the AST was incapable of fielding a significant force of troops to meet state contingencies.

## The Militia

The Army National Guard cites December 13, 1636, as its birthday. That was the day the legislature of the Massachusetts Bay Colony organized its militia companies into three regiments.<sup>27</sup> On that date, the Massachusetts Bay Colony created a militia by adopting a system known today as "a nation in arms." The law required all adult males in the colony to participate in compulsory military service and be proficient in military skills aimed at self-defense. Eventually, all thirteen colonies adopted this model.<sup>28</sup>

The first militia units in Alabama formed before the state existed. In 1813, six years before Alabama became a state, political tension caused by continued white incursion on Creek lands turned into armed conflict. The Creeks split into two factions: the Creek National Council, which advocated cooperation with the U.S. government, and the Red Sticks, traditionalists who favored more aggressive, armed action against white settlers. Much of the fighting in what would be known as the Creek War took place along the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Alabama Rivers.<sup>29</sup> Militia units from what would become Alabama took part in two significant engagements; one did not go well, and the other was a massacre.

The first battle occurred when the Spanish in West Florida saw an opportunity to weaken expanding American influence in the Southeast by supplying the Red Sticks with weapons and ammunition. Colonel (Col.) David Callier from what is now Washington County, Alabama, raised a militia company of one hundred and eighty men. On July 27, 1813, they interdicted a group of

---

<sup>27</sup> "What is the birthday of the Army National Guard," Defense Media Activity – WEB.mil, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/about-the-guard/how-we-began/#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20birthday%20of,be%20organized%20into%20three%20regiments.>

<sup>28</sup> E. Wayne Carp., "Early American Military History: A Review of Recent Work." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 94, no. 3 (July 1986): 268-269. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4248891>

<sup>29</sup> "Creek War of 1813-14," Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated March 26, 2024, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/creek-war-of-1813-14/>.

Red Sticks returning from Spanish Florida with weapons. The battle on the banks of Burnt Corn Creek, in present-day Escambia County, Alabama, saw the militiamen driven from the field while the Red Sticks kept their supplies.<sup>30</sup>

Fearing attacks on civilians, Territorial Governor David Holmes asked settlers to move into stockades, one of which was Fort Mims, located in present-day Baldwin County, Alabama. One hundred and forty-five American and Creek militiamen defended as many as five hundred white, Creek, and enslaved persons who sought refuge in the one-acre stockade. Maj. Beasley and Capt. Bailey, the militia leaders at Fort Mims, were given ample warning large parties of Creeks were moving on the compound but they ignored them. Around noon on August 30, 1813, seven hundred Red Sticks attacked. Over one hundred militiamen died in the first few minutes, and it was all over in a few hours. Although accounts vary widely, between two hundred and four hundred people died in the massacre, and Red Sticks took one hundred enslaved persons captive. Approximately two hundred Red Sticks died in the attack.<sup>31</sup>

After those two defeats, the war was over for Alabama militia units. The federal government sent Andrew Jackson with a mixed force of Regular Army and Tennessee Militia into Alabama to end the Red Stick uprising, which he did at Horseshoe Bend.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "Prophet of War: Josiah Francis and the Creek War," *American Indian Quarterly* 9, No. 3 (Summer, 1985), 279.; "Battle of Burnt Corn Creek," Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated March 27, 2023, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/battle-of-burnt-corn-creek/>.

<sup>31</sup> Owsley, *American Indian Quarterly*, 280-281; "Fort Mims Battle and Massacre," Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated April 16, 2024, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/fort-mims-battle-and-massacre/>; "August 1813: The attack on Fort Mims prompts Choctaw involvement," National Park Service, updated: August 14, 2017, <https://home.nps.gov/articles/august-1813-fort-mims.htm>; "The Massacre," Fort Mims Restoration Association, accessed 1 July 2024, <https://www.fortmims.org/history/history02.html>.

<sup>32</sup> "The Battle of Horseshoe Bend: Collision of Cultures (Teaching with Historic Places)," National Park Service, updated: March 23, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-battle-of-horseshoe-bend-collision-of-cultures-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>; A.C. Quisenberry, "The Battle of New Orleans: Last Battle of the War of 1812-15," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 13, no. 37 (January 1915).

Alabama became a state in 1819, and the new state constitution established a militia and the position of Adjutant General (AG). The legislature passed legislation in 1821 requiring all white males between sixteen and fifty to serve in their local militia and muster for training, generally limited to parade practice and individual marksmanship.<sup>33</sup> The state did not need the service of the militia again until 1836 in the Seminole and Second Creek Wars. Activated to federal service, companies from Montgomery and Selma occupied Fort Foster near Tampa Bay.<sup>34</sup>

The continued influx of white settlers into Creek lands in violation of existing treaties again brought tensions to a boiling point. In the spring of 1836, Creek raiding parties killed white families and burned their farms and homes. Their campaign reached a peak on May 14, 1836, when Creeks raided the town of Roanoke, Georgia, killing fourteen and burning the town.<sup>35</sup> Three days earlier, Alabama Governor Clement Comer Clay ordered mobilized state militia units in Montgomery and sent them to east Alabama. As soon as the vanguard moved, Clay began activating other militia units. Clay called up twenty-seven hundred troops and authorized his militia leaders to recruit five hundred friendly Creeks to act as auxiliaries and scouts.<sup>36</sup>

While Governor Clay could get his troops activated quickly, things did not go well after that. Clay notified the federal Arsenal in Mount Vernon, Alabama, that he would need food for his men, forage for over a thousand horses, two thousand muskets, and at least four pieces of artillery. An officer at the armory informed Clay that the Seminole War had depleted almost all the arsenal's stocks, and as Congress had not passed an appropriations bill for the year, the Army had no money to purchase replacements. The arsenal commander dispatched an agent to Mobile

---

<sup>33</sup> Edward J. Kelly, *A History of the Alabama Militia and the Army National Guard – Alabama's Citizen Soldiers – Past and Present* (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, 1993), 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> Kelly, *A History of the Alabama Militia and the Army National Guard*, 8-10.

<sup>35</sup> "Second Creek War," The Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated May 7, 2024, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/second-creek-war/>.

<sup>36</sup> John T. Ellis, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2010) 207-208.

to negotiate a loan from the state bank there, but that would take time. The culture of the Southern militia also slowed progress. The white soldiers were fiercely independent and did not respond well to military discipline. They also believed that they had only been called up to fight Creeks and refused to do the menial tasks necessary to garrison the towns of Tuskegee and Irwinton, their bases of operations. With the deployment moving so slowly and four-week activations ending, troops began to leave. Others began to desert. The slow deployment of Alabama troops allowed the Upper Creek band leaders to organize and come out strongly in opposition to the uprising.<sup>37</sup> By March 1837, most of the fighting in the war ended, and Alabama militia units shifted from combat operations to removing all Creeks from the state.<sup>38</sup> The Alabama legislature, seeing no other apparent threats, disbanded the state militia. Alabama did not attempt to reform a militia until the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>39</sup>

Once the Civil War started, Governor John Gill Shorter planned for the militia to contribute to the defense of the state, and on March 1, 1862, Shorter called out the militia of eighteen counties for the defense of Mobile. To Shorter's surprise, no one answered his call. In December 1862, Shorter made a personal plea to the people to attend militia training, but by then, anyone interested in military service had already joined the Confederate Army. Making matters worse, the Confederate government asserted its supremacy, informing the governor that if he formed any militia units, they were subject to being immediately called up for Confederate service. The state legislature eventually authorized the appointment of a militia officer for each county responsible for organizing local forces, but Shorter felt he had no authority to move a

---

<sup>37</sup> Ellisor, *The Second Creek War*, 208-211.

<sup>38</sup> "Second Creek War," The Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated May 7, 2024, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/second-creek-war/>.

<sup>39</sup> Kelly, *A History of the Alabama Militia and the Army National Guard*, 8-10.

company outside their home county. Effectively, Alabama did not have a militia through the war's end.<sup>40</sup>

Alabama needed a militia as political chaos descended on Alabama. After the fall of Atlanta and the outcome of the war became more apparent, a faction emerged in Alabama politics that supporting a negotiated settlement with the Northern government. Union raids destroyed property and civilian morale, and internecine violence broke out across the state. In Coffee County, men fled the Confederate Army into Union lines in Florida, then returned and raided their neighbors for supplies. In Shelby and Autauga Counties, men evading the Confederate draft raided the homes and stores of Confederate sympathizers. The state considered at least six northern counties militarily lost to the state due to the strong opposition of Union supporters. With no militia forces to deploy and no assistance coming from the Confederate government, Governor Thomas Hill Watts was powerless.<sup>41</sup>

With the war's end, the state's political turmoil worsened. Eight men from three political parties and one federal military officer served as the state's Chief Executive over the next ten years.<sup>42</sup> The state's militia was also in chaos after the end of the war. In December 1865, Governor Robert M. Patton claimed over one hundred organized militia companies in Alabama, but his control over these units was questionable. Elected in 1868, President Grant refused calls to remove federal troops from the state and did not support the former Confederate states re-establishing their militias. The Alabama Constitution of 1868 gave the governor the authority to create a new militia, but Governor William Hugh Smith, a Republican, followed Grant's lead and

---

<sup>40</sup> Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1949) 89-91.

<sup>41</sup> Micheal W. Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama: From Civil War to Redemption in the Cotton South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 29-30.

<sup>42</sup> "Alabama Governors," Alabama Department of Archives and History, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://archives.alabama.gov/research/guidance/fast-facts/officials/governor.aspx>. Until 1901, Alabama governors served two-year terms and were limited to two terms in office. The 1901 Constitution changed the governor's term to four years but prohibited two consecutive terms. That would remain in place until 1968.

refused to take action. The result was that in 1869, Alabama had no functioning, state-controlled armed force to maintain order, and with federal troops becoming less active, racial and political violence grew unchecked across the state. Eventually, Smith was forced to act.<sup>43</sup> In July 1870, Smith called for Alabama's first recognized militia companies to be formed in Greene, Morgan, and Tuscaloosa counties to curb criminal activity, believing that the laws there "cannot be executed by mild measures."<sup>44</sup>

In the following years, local men formed militia companies across the state. Three companies, the Montgomery Greys, and the Metropolitan Blues in the state capital, and the Selma Rifles, were formed by 1872.<sup>45</sup> The Birmingham Rifles formed two years later, and the Mobile Rifles organized the following year.<sup>46</sup> Under the new Militia Act of 1876, Governor George S. Houston organized all militia companies in the state into a single division with James T. Holtzclaw as the division commander. Holtzclaw was a well-known lawyer in Montgomery and commanded a Confederate brigade at Spanish Fort during the Battle of Mobile in 1864-1865.<sup>47</sup> Houston also appointed eight brigade commanders with ill-defined geographic commands, and as with Holtzclaw, each was a former Confederate officer.<sup>48</sup> Under Holtzclaw, the militia grew, expanding to at least ten companies in the next two years.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama*, 117, 172, 211.

<sup>44</sup> "A Proclamation by the Governor," *Tuscaloosa Observer* (Tuscaloosa, AL), July 30, 1870, 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355664279/>.

<sup>45</sup> "The Grand Military Pic-nic," *The Montgomery Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), May 29, 1872, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355639637/>;

<sup>46</sup> "Birmingham Rifles," *The Iron Age* (Birmingham, AL), August 27, 1874, 3.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/356195604/>; "Local News," *The Daily Tribune* (Mobile, AL), December 28, 1875, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/356162196/>.

<sup>47</sup> "Battle of Spanish Fort," Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated July 17, 2023, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/battle-of-spanish-fort/>.

<sup>48</sup> *The Troy Messenger* (Troy, AL), March 16, 1876, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355863617/>; Confirmation of Confederate service came through the ADAH, "Civil War Service Database," <https://archives.alabama.gov/research/CivilWarService.aspx>.

<sup>49</sup> "The Rifles Ball," *The Iron Age* (Birmingham, AL), January 1, 1879, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/356204917/>.



The state legislature passed a new militia law in 1877, renaming the militia the "Alabama State Troops," and reorganized it into three regiments, each commanded by a colonel and consisting of twelve infantry companies, a cavalry troop, and an artillery battery. The new law also allowed the appointment of a state AG for an unpaid administrative position. Command authority for the three regiments was vested solely in the Alabama Governor as Commander-in-chief of state forces.<sup>50</sup> The state would make no significant changes to the AST for twenty-one years.

In October 1890, AG Col. Charles P. Jones submitted his formal report on the state of the AST to Governor Thomas Seay. The report stated the AST consisted of 2,776 officers and men, an increase of twenty percent from the previous year. The AST was organized into three regiments: the 1<sup>st</sup> Regt, headquartered in Mobile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt. headquartered in Birmingham, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. headquartered in Selma. Each regiment was authorized twelve infantry companies, one cavalry squadron, and one artillery battery. Each regiment was at full strength except the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., which had eleven infantry companies. While companies in the 1<sup>st</sup> Regt. were generally based in south Alabama, there was very little geographic integrity in the organization of the other two regiments, with each having companies scattered across north Alabama.<sup>51</sup>

While AG Jones generally speaks glowingly about the men in the AST, he expresses several concerns. The annual budget for the AST was only \$11,250.00, allowing the state to provide the companies with weapons and a limited supply of ammunition. The men or the

---

<sup>50</sup> "General Laws of Alabama," *Montgomery Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), February 14, 1877, 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, to Thos. G. Jones, Governor and Commander-In-Chief. 1890.* Montgomery, AL, 1891, 4, 21-28. The AST had no armories so individual company commanders were responsible for storing weapons in their local area. To ensure the weapons would be replaced if lost or stolen, each company commander was required to post a one-thousand-dollar surety bond.

individual companies purchased all other equipment, from uniforms to tents. Each regiment ran a budget deficit during the previous year, with the men of the companies making up the difference. AG Jones also complained that officers showed a lack of diligence in maintaining the weapons assigned to them, and company commanders were not providing required documents when they assumed command, which prevented the state from issuing them weapons and equipment for training.<sup>52</sup>

Regular Army officers inspected the AST during the regimental encampments in the summer of 1890. While the officers' comments were generally positive the found deficiencies. The three encampments occurred near or in built-up areas, which limited tactical training due to space. In one case, safety issues made marksmanship training impossible due to the proximity to inhabited spaces. The troops also tended to roam away from the encampment sites into nearby towns. The inspectors felt that time used to host guests and perform parades could have been spent on tactical training, uniforms were generally gaudy and unsuited for field service, and prize contests did not foster regimental esprit but created animosity between the companies. The report from each regimental encampment was critical of the men failing to maintain their weapons properly. The officers' harshest criticism was for the discipline displayed in the camps. Soldiers would not stand when addressing officers, they did not stand at attention when in formation, and officers were not saluted. The Regular Army officer saw soldiers not being trained on the basics of military discipline was seen as the root cause of many of these issues.<sup>53</sup>

In 1890, the AST included "two companies of colored men," the Gilmer Rifles in Mobile and the Capital City Guards in Montgomery. These companies included 156 officers and enlisted

---

<sup>52</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, to Thos. G. Jones, Governor and Commander-In-Chief. 1890.* Montgomery, AL, 1891, 5-12.

<sup>53</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, to Thos. G. Jones, Governor and Commander-In-Chief. 1891.* Montgomery, AL, 1892, 59-65.

men. While the Gilmer Rifles were notionally assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment and the Capital City Guards to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., these companies did not train with the white units and held separate encampments. In the 1890 Adjutant General's Office (AGO) report, the two companies were mentioned twice, once to report their personnel strength and once in the list of company officers. The two companies are not mentioned in any surviving documents from 1890 or 1891.<sup>54</sup> There is no indication that the AST ever expected to use either the Gilmer Rifles or the Capital City Guards in any capacity beyond ceremonial events within the Black community. It is unknown if Regular Army officers inspected the two Black companies as they did the white regiments.

There are similarities between the AST of 1890 and the militias in the industrial states in the late 1870s and 1880s, including encampments for training were poorly planned, tactical training was sacrificed for parades and ceremonial events, discipline among the troops was lax, and AST soldiers failed in basic soldier tasks such as maintaining their weapons and uniforms. Inspectors saw the same deficiencies across all three AST regiments. At this point, AST troops were ill-equipped, ill-disciplined, and ill-trained. No one should have assumed an encampment with all three regiments could be successful.

---

<sup>54</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama 1891.* 4-5, 28.

## The Governor

The South lost the Civil War, but Major (Maj.) Thomas Goode Jones returned to Montgomery a hero at just twenty years old. Jones was born November 26, 1844, in Macon, Georgia, but his parents were from an old Virginia family. Jones's mother, Martha Ward Goode, was a descendant of John Goode, one of the leaders of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676. Thomas's father, Samuel Goode Jones, traced his history in the state back to 1607.<sup>55</sup> Samuel was a well-known civil engineer who built many of the railroads across the South, including the Macon and Western Railroad, which would be vital in turning a small hamlet into the city of Atlanta. Samuel took an interest in Leakesville, Georgia a little town along the Macon and Western line. Seeing the growth potential, Samuel drew up a town plan, which the town immediately adopted. To show their appreciation, the residents of Leakesville changed the town's name to Jonesboro. The city is now a suburb of Atlanta and still carries the name.<sup>56</sup> In 1849, Samuel accepted a position as an engineer with the Montgomery and West Point Railroad, and the family settled in Montgomery.<sup>57</sup>

In 1860, at the age of fifteen, Thomas enrolled at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), but before he completed his first year, Virginia seceded from the Union, and the state called the VMI cadets into Confederate service. Jones went to Richmond to serve as a Drill Master for newly enlisted Virginia volunteers.<sup>58</sup> In May 1862, VMI sent the cadets to the Shenandoah Valley to serve under former professor Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. The former VMI students

---

<sup>55</sup> Malcolm Cook McMillan, "Thomas Goode Jones, 1844-1914, Warrior Statesman and Jurist," *The Alabama Lawyer* 17, no. 4 (October 1956), 376.

<sup>56</sup> "City History," City of Jonesboro, accessed Jun 23, 2024, <https://www.jonesboroga.com/CityHistory.aspx>.

<sup>57</sup> Brent J. Aucoin, *Thomas Goode Jones: Race, Politics, and Justice in the New South* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>58</sup> "Historical Rosters, Thomas Goode Jones," Virginia Military Institute Digital Collections, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://archivesweb.vmi.edu/rosters/record.php?ID=1677>.

did not engage in active combat but formed burial details.<sup>59</sup> The experience made a lasting impression on Jones, and in May 1902, while delivering the Memorial Day address at Grant's Tomb, Jones recounted his experience:

We had not yet become accustomed to the horrors and sights of war, and the memory of that day will be with me always. Among the dead was an Ohio boy, hardly old enough to carry a musket. He had died peacefully and not in pain; for his blood had slowly trickled away from a wound that could not be staunched. Death had fixed in the lineaments of his sweet young face a solemnity and dignity all its own. Near him was a Bible and a letter. These had been the last things on which his eyes had rested in life.<sup>60</sup>

In 1862, the VMI Board of Visitors awarded the members of Jones's class "War Graduate" degrees, and with that degree in hand, Jones left Virginia and returned to Alabama. He enlisted in Co. K, 53<sup>rd</sup> Regt., Alabama Partisan Rangers.<sup>61</sup> Jones, known as "Little Tommie," quickly rose to Orderly Sergeant, then Company First Sergeant.

Jones first saw combat at Thompson's Station, Tennessee, on March 5, 1863.<sup>62</sup> Company (Co.) K mustered twenty-four men that day. Lieut. Brown was in command as the company took positions behind a stone wall. Union troops pushed Co. K back from the wall and up a hill behind their initial positions. At some point, Lieut. Brown was forced to withdraw due to exhaustion, leaving the company under the command of their eighteen-year-old First Sergeant, "Little Tommie" Jones. A captain in the regiment, Adam Whetstone, praised Jones, saying, "Our

---

<sup>59</sup> Aucoin, *Thomas Goode Jones*, 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas G. Jones, *Grandeur of General Grant's Character* (Speech delivered at Grant's Tomb, New York City, May 30, 1902), held in the Auburn Special Collection, Auburn University Library.

<sup>61</sup> McMillan, "Thomas Goode Jones," 377.

<sup>62</sup> Confederate Troops of Alabama, 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Alabama Partisan Rangers, National Park Service, accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battle-units-detail.htm?battleUnitCode=CAL0053R>; Aucoin, *Thomas Goode Jones*, 8-9.

youthful leader proved a fit successor to Lieut. Brown and, though wounded, refused to leave the field."<sup>63</sup>

While Jones recovered from the wound, his first of six during the war, he received word that Confederate Attorney General Thomas Hill Watts of Montgomery wrote a letter of recommendation to Gen. John B. Gordon on his behalf, and, as a result, Gordon gave Jones a first lieutenant commission and an appointment on his staff.<sup>64</sup> Gordon described his new aide as "a very young soldier, a mere stripling (that) was at that awkward, gawky age through which all boys seem to pass," but continued, "It was not long before I found that Mr. Watts had not mistaken the mettle of his young friend, Thomas G. Jones."<sup>65</sup>

In his memoirs, Gordon recalled that one of the first tasks he gave Jones was to carry a message to a higher headquarters, but he cautioned Jones before he left that he would be riding through an area covered by Union pickets. Jones felt sure he could make it, and off he went. Jones did not deliver the message, but he returned to Gordon's headquarters with six captured Union soldiers.<sup>66</sup> After the war, Gordon was fond of repeating the tale of how his "boy aide-de-camp" took the Union soldiers, sometimes significantly expanding the number of prisoners Jones captured.<sup>67</sup>

Jones would serve on Gordon's staff for the remainder of the war, receiving steady promotions to captain and then major. Jones claimed Gordon's recommendation for his

---

<sup>63</sup> Captain Adam Henry Whetstone, *History of the Fifty-Third Alabama Volunteer Infantry (Mounted)* (Montgomery, Alabama: Confederate Publishing Company, 1985), 26.

<sup>64</sup> McMillan, "Thomas Goode Jones," 377.

<sup>65</sup> General John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* 1903 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 112.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon, *Reminiscences*, 113.

<sup>67</sup> "Reunion of Gordon's Brigade," *The Weekly Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama), November 4, 1874, p 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355762359>.

promotion to lieutenant colonel, endorsed by Gen. Lee, was sitting on Jefferson Davis's desk when the Confederate government left Richmond.<sup>68</sup>

Jones was possibly best known for two actions that took place in the closing days of the war. At Petersburg, Gordon approached Gen. Lee with a plan to attack Fort Stedman on the Union's left wing, hoping that would throw the Union left into disarray and give Lee a chance to disengage and break from the siege. Gen. Lee approved the plan, and Gordon picked three hundred men, including Jones, for the assault.<sup>69</sup> At 5:00 a.m. on March 25, 1865, the troops attacked Fort Stedman. The attack went well initially, but Union forces regrouped and counterattacked, and Gordon ordered his men to fall back. During the retreat, Jones exposed himself to Union fire on multiple occasions, including dragging a wounded New Yorker to the safety of the Confederate trenches. Gordon's orders to withdraw had not reached all the Confederate units in the fort. He asked his staff for volunteers to take the order to the remaining units, which would involve significant danger. Gordon wrote in his memoirs that every officer on his staff volunteered, but "Thomas G. Jones of Alabama insisted that as he was the youngest and had no special responsibilities, it should fall to his lot to incur that danger." Gordon saw Jones riding forward "through a literal furnace of fire" to deliver the orders.<sup>70</sup>

Two weeks later, Jones played a part in the final act of the Army of Northern Virginia. Surrounded at Appomattox, Lee ordered Gordon's 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps to break out to escape to the Virginia and Tennessee mountains. Gordon's attack initially showed good progress, but Union forces quickly responded. Gen. Lee sent a staff officer to check on Gordon's progress. Gordon replied, "I have fought my corps to a frazzle, and I fear I can do nothing unless I am supported

---

<sup>68</sup> Eidsmoe, *Jones Law Review*, 86.

<sup>69</sup> Gordon, *Reminiscences*, 403.

<sup>70</sup> Gordon, *Reminiscences*, 412-413; Aucoin, *Thomas Goode Jones*, 10-11.

by Longstreet's corps." Lee had no support to give, and he informed Gordon that he was sending a flag of truce to Gen. Grant, asking to stop hostilities. Gordon was free to pass that message on to the Union commanders on his front. Gordon sent multiple officers forward under white flags, one of whom was Maj. Jones.<sup>71</sup>

Jones was twenty years old when he was paroled and returned to Montgomery. In April of 1865, Wilson Raiders occupied the city for two days, destroyed the city's industrial base, and left the city battered.<sup>72</sup> Jones tried running a farm and started a newspaper, *The Daily Picayune*, but both failed. While in the army, Jones read law books in his spare time, and after returning to Montgomery, he continued his studies under Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice A.J. Walker. In January 1868, Jones was admitted to the Alabama Bar and became a notable figure in the legal and political life of Montgomery. In 1870, he was elected to the Montgomery City Council and became the Reporter for the Alabama Supreme Court.<sup>73</sup>

Jones became nationally recognized as an advocate for sectional reconciliation. In April 1874, he gave the keynote address at the Memorial Day ceremonies at Oakwood Cemetery in Montgomery. Jones recounted his time in the burial detail after Sharpsburg and the burial of the young Ohio soldier, and he spoke of the graves of Union dead, "In them lie men of the same race as ourselves, who spoke the same language, and worshipped the same God. Fond mothers sent them to battle, and tender tears and agonizing prayers watched them on their pathway... And while honoring ourselves and our dead, let us do all that men may do to hasten the coming of that great day when peace and goodwill shall once more prevail over all the land."<sup>74</sup> The speech

---

<sup>71</sup> Gordon, *Reminiscences*, 436-438.

<sup>72</sup> Wilson's Raid, Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated February 26, 2024, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/wilsons-raid/>.

<sup>73</sup> McMillan, "Thomas Goode Jones," 377-379.

<sup>74</sup> Aucoin, *Thomas Goode Jones*, 15; "Decoration Day!" *The Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama), April 29, 1874, p 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355762257/?terms=thomas%20g.%20jones>.



spread across the nation, and in 1877, Union veterans from Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania presented Jones with a medal to honor his commitment to reconciliation.<sup>75</sup>

Jones's political ascension in Alabama continued. In 1884, he was elected to the Alabama House of Representatives and became Speaker of the House two years later. His reputation as a lawyer grew as well. In 1877, the state bar association asked him to write a code of legal ethics for the state, the first of its kind in the nation, which the American Bar Association later used as the basis for its code of conduct.<sup>76</sup>

Jones political rise was accompanied by his rise in the Alabama militia. Soon after returning to Montgomery, Jones recognized the need for an armed militia. He began organizing a militia company in Montgomery known as the Governor's Guard. In 1866, the state legislature recognized the Governor's Guard and granted Jones a state charter for the company. It is unclear when, but the Guards disbanded at some point.<sup>77</sup> When the state began to reform the militia in 1874, Jones led the effort to form a company in Montgomery. That same year, Governor George S. Houston commissioned Jones a lieutenant colonel in the state militia and appointed him Military Aide-de-Camp to the Governor. In 1880, the officers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt. elected him regimental commander, a position he would hold until he was elected Governor ten years later.<sup>78</sup>

As the Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Col. Jones would lead state troops in suppressing multiple civil disturbances; the biggest were the Posey Riot of 1883 and the Hawes Riot of 1888, both in Birmingham.

---

<sup>75</sup> "Medal Presentation by Union Soldiers to a Confederate Soldier; Address of Gen. W.P. Richardson, On Behalf of the Donors, And Response of Maj. Thomas G. Jones. At the Soldiers' Re-union, Marietta, Ohio, September 17, 1877." held in the collection of ADAH, Thomas Goode Jones (1844-1914), Papers, 1861-1914, Box 7.

<sup>76</sup> MacMillan, "Thomas Goode Jones," 377-379.

<sup>77</sup> Eidsmoe, *Jones Law Review*, 142; "Alabama Legislature," *The Selma Times* (Selma, Alabama), February 2, 1866, p 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/571075899/>.

<sup>78</sup> Aucoin, *Thomas Goode Jones*, 17; Eidsmoe, *Jones Law Review*, 142.

On December 3, 1883, the Sheriff of Jefferson County arrested Wesley Posey, a Black man, for the alleged attempted rape of a four-year-old white girl in Grace's Gap, a community outside of Birmingham. Tension in the city escalated as word of Posey's alleged crime spread, but rumors spread that a mob lynched Posey, and tension eased over December 4. The rumors of the lynching proved untrue, and when Posey appeared for his arraignment on December 5, a lynch mob formed near the jail.<sup>79</sup>

Governor Edward O'Neal expected trouble and, on December 4, ordered Col. Jones to move troops to Birmingham. Jones departed Montgomery with two companies of AST troops, arriving in Birmingham at 7:00 p.m. on December 5. He took command of two Birmingham companies already on duty when he arrived. Jones learned that the mob controlled at least part of the county jail, but the sheriff had moved Posey from the jail. Jones took all four companies to the Court House next to the jail. He asked the crowd to disperse, and when they failed to do so, he ordered Capt. Gresham and the Montgomery True Blues "to disperse the crowd at the point of the bayonet, which he did promptly and thoroughly." The mob regrouped in front of the jail, and Jones ordered a company to confront the crowd but to fire only if necessary. The crowd dispersed when the officer ordered their men to prepare to fire.<sup>80</sup>

Jones assessed the situation and realized with just eighty-five men and two pieces of artillery, he could hold the jail "but not without a deplorable loss of life." He immediately called for more troops, who began to arrive the next morning. By 3:00 p.m. on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Jones had over two hundred soldiers at his command. He sent scouts throughout the city and sent troops to any

---

<sup>79</sup> 1883 Wesley Posey Riot, BhamWiki, updated February 10, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/306211215/>.

<sup>80</sup> Report from Col. Thos. G. Jones to Col. James G. Gilmer, Adjutant General, December 11, 1883, held by the ADAH, Alabama Adjutant General, Administrative Files SG017681, Folder "1883-Birmingham Riot."

gatherings that appeared hostile. Jones formed a perimeter around the courthouse and refused entry to anyone not on official business. During the night, he extended the perimeter to avoid "collisions" around the courthouse that could result in gunfire. Jones maintained those measures through Posey's trial on Friday, December 7. Feeling the tension had passed, Jones began releasing companies on the night of December 7. AST troops escorted Posey to Montgomery on December 8, and the remaining companies were released to return home.<sup>81</sup>

Five years later, in 1888, Jones returned to Birmingham to put down another, much more violent, riot. On the morning of December 5, 1888, the body of a young white girl was found floating in East Lake in a city suburb of the same name. The girl was one of three children of Richard Hawes and his wife Emma. None of the other family members could be located, but that evening, the *Birmingham Age-Herald* received a telegram announcing Richard Hawes had been married in Columbus, Mississippi, and that he would be traveling by train to Augusta, Georgia. When the train stopped in Birmingham on Friday, December 7, the Jefferson County sheriff arrested Hawes. On Saturday, the Birmingham newspapers were already full of stories of the heartless killer Hawes when his wife's badly beaten body was found. Although Sheriff Joseph Smith had only been in his job for four months, he realized the volatile situation and telegraphed Governor Thomas Seay and Col. Jones, asking for state troops. Smith was correct, and a lynch mob formed. Smith issued weapons to his deputies, and when the mob advanced on the jail, Smith ordered his deputies to open fire. Eleven men were dead or mortally wounded. Smith immediately called for the three AST companies in Birmingham to send troops. They arrived and dispersed the crowd, but tensions remained high.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Report from Col. Thos. G. Jones to Col. James G. Gilmer, Adjutant General, December 11, 1883.

<sup>82</sup> The body of Hawes's second daughter was found a week later. His son was found alive, staying with relatives in Georgia. Jeff Northrup, "The Hawes Riot: All the News Unfit to Print," *The Journal of the Birmingham Historical Society* 5, No. 4 (July 1978): 16-25, <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/hgpub/id/33831/>.

On Thursday, December 6, the day before the violence, Col. Jones was traveling through Birmingham on the way to Atlanta for business. At Governor Seay's request, Jones stopped in Birmingham and met with the mayor and police chief. Jones spent Thursday night walking through the streets of Birmingham in civilian clothes, speaking to the people he met there to gauge the possibility of violence. He remained in the city until Friday morning when he telegraphed Seay, saying he could see no immediate need for troops, and he then continued to Atlanta.<sup>83</sup>

On Saturday, December 8, Governor Seay ordered Jones back to Birmingham. Jones arrived in Birmingham the next morning, and only then did he learn of Saturday's riot and the eleven deaths. Again, in civilian clothes, Jones went into the crowds where he found, "excitement was intense and pervaded all classes in the city. The resentment and anger manifested by the groups on the streets against the Sheriff and his posse was appalling. Most of those whom I then met on the street were thirsting for vengeance on the officers, indulging in threats, and denouncing the defense of the jail as a savage butchery."<sup>84</sup>

As with the Posey Riot, Jones believed the best way to avoid additional violence was to move a large body of troops into the city as quickly as possible to "restore confidence, convince the most desperate of the folly of further violence, and meet any other contingencies which might likely arise." By Monday afternoon, Jones had twelve infantry companies, two Gatling Guns, and a 3-inch howitzer at his command. He deployed men to secure the city's gas, water, and electric works, the county jail, and gun stores. The show of force worked, and the city remained quiet. Governor Seay arrived Monday evening and stayed through Tuesday morning. Tuesday passed

---

<sup>83</sup> Report from Col. Thos. G. Jones to Col. James G. Gilmer, Adjutant General, December 24, 1888.

<sup>84</sup> Report from Col. Thos. G. Jones to Col. James G. Gilmer, Adjutant General, December 24, 1888.

without incident, and on Wednesday, December 12, Jones released the companies from Anniston, Tuscaloosa, and Opelika. The other troops return home over the next several days.<sup>85</sup>

At the end of Jones's report on the events, he spent two and a half pages identifying individual officers and men who deserved praise. He did not have such praise for the state government. Most of the time troops were in Birmingham, it was raining and cold, and they were not issued overcoats or blankets. More than thirty men, nearly ten percent of his force, became ill and had to be sent home. This was not the first time this happened, and Jones did not reserve his criticism:

"On the occasions in the past five years, the people of Alabama have seen her citizen soldiers, while engaged in the enforcement of her laws, exposed for days to rain and cold of winter, without overcoats, blankets, and proper equipment of any kind. Men who are willing to stake their all in the defense of the State, should not be required to risk loss of life and health from exposure which can be obviated by moderate expenditure on the part of the State."<sup>86</sup>

Jones displayed physical courage as he walked through the crowds to gather information during the Posey and Hawes Riot. During the later event, he was not just the commander of the military force sent to put down the riots, but he was also the Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives. There was every probability some of the rioters would recognize him and understand exactly why he was there, and yet, he went anyway.

The people praised Col. Jones for his actions in Birmingham. *The Evening News* of Birmingham said, "Col. Jones will go down in history as one of Alabama's most gallant and bravest heroes."<sup>87</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* of Montgomery reported that the soldiers from

---

<sup>85</sup> Report from Col. Thos. G. Jones to Col. James G. Gilmer, Adjutant General, December 24, 1888.

<sup>86</sup> Report from Col. Thos. G. Jones to Col. James G. Gilmer, Adjutant General, December 24, 1888.

<sup>87</sup> "The Military's Departures," *The Evening News* (Birmingham, AL), December 13, 1888, p 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605501315/>.

Greenville who were in Birmingham "were loud in their praises of Colonel Thomas G. Jones."<sup>88</sup> Birmingham's *Daily Herald* wrote, "The people of Birmingham learned something of (Jones) at the time of the Wesley Posey riot, and they have confidence in him."<sup>89</sup>

By the end of the month, Jones had declared his candidacy for governor.<sup>90</sup> The *Daily Picayune* of New Orleans said, "Alabama is in the midst of the bitterest political campaign since 1874 when the reconstruction era closed, and the Democratic Party obtained control of affairs in the state."<sup>91</sup> The bitterness carried to the state convention, where five candidates were still in the race. After thirty-four ballots, the Democratic Party's nominee for governor was Thomas Goode Jones.<sup>92</sup> In the 1890 elections, Jones easily defeated the Republican candidate to become the twenty-eighth governor of Alabama.<sup>93</sup>

Thomas Goode Jones proved himself to be a capable officer at several levels. His assumption of command at Thompson's Station while still a teenager showed his ability to command under extreme conditions. His service as an Aide-de-Camp to General Gordon and his rapid promotion in that position showed he was a capable aide. The number of wounds he received and his routine demonstration of physical courage made him a hero to the people of Alabama. His service in the state militia should have made him very familiar with the workings and capabilities of the AST.

---

<sup>88</sup> "Glimpses of Greenville," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), December 14, 1888, p 4. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262126607/>.

<sup>89</sup> "The Military," *The Daily Herald* (Birmingham, AL), December 10, 1888, p 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1002056614/>.

<sup>90</sup> "A Dream: Col. Nunnelee's Great Political Swimming Match," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), December 29, 1888, p 4. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262127457/>.

<sup>91</sup> "Alabama," *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), May 28, 1890, p2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/28285221>.

<sup>92</sup> "The Nominee!" *The Eufaula Daily Times* (Eufaula, AL), Jun 1, 1890, p 4. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/308702489/>.

<sup>93</sup> Eidsmoe, *Jones Law Review*, 149.

A more critical examination of that record reveals a lack of depth in his military expertise and knowledge. There is no indication that Jones received any formal education or training in the military arts after his cohort was withdrawn from VMI in 1861 when he was seventeen years old. While his service as Gordon's aide may have been heroic, Jones never commanded troops and there is no indication that he was involved in day-to-day operational or logistical planning on Gordon's staff. Gordon's memoirs focus on Jones's service as a messenger and an additional officer on the front lines during when additional officers were needed for command and control of troops engaged in battle.

In two instances in Birmingham, Jones demonstrated an intuitive knowledge of civil disturbance operations and effectively controlled and defused violent mobs. A more objective examination shows that Jones led small commands from a mishmash of AST companies thrown together for very short periods. In his after-action reports, Jones pointed out the flaws in the AST's ability to mobilize and supply its troops. His statement after the 1888 Birmingham riots was especially damning, but there is no record that once he became governor, he made any attempt to resolve those issues.

While Jones proved to be a competent staff officer during the Civil War, for the twenty-five years leading up to the 1891 encampment, his focus was on his legal and political career. His military experience after the war was as an unpaid, part-time officer in an organization that by many accounts, did not take its military obligations seriously. His command experience was limited to a few days leading thrown together forces in city center. There is no reason to believe he had the training or the experience to lead a two-week encampment involving the care and feeding of over fifteen hundred troops.

## The Aide-de-Camp

By any reasonable definition of the term, in the growing, industrial city of Birmingham, Alabama, Randolph G. Peyton was a "star." The product of Virginia aristocracy, a successful businessman, and married into a prominent family, Randolph Peyton moved within the highest social circles and seemed precisely what the city wanted in an officer of the Alabama State Troops.

Peyton was born in 1863 into a family that arrived in the Virginia Colony in the seventeenth century. Randolph's grandfather, Bernard Peyton, had been the Adjutant General of the State of Virginia, Postmaster of Richmond, and at the time of his death, owned a large plantation in Albemarle County, Virginia.<sup>94</sup> Bernard served on the first Board of Visitors of the Virginia Military Institute, and his portrait still hangs in the institute's museum.<sup>95</sup> Randolph's father, Thomas G. Peyton, served as a lieutenant colonel in the 15<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment during the Peninsula Campaign, served on the Confederate Army's Inspector General's staff, and became a prominent insurance broker in Richmond after the war.<sup>96</sup>

Peyton seemed to fill the role of the scion of such a well-respected family. His name appeared in the Richmond newspapers associated with events of "social importance." He rowed crew and was the secretary of the Virginia Boat Club and an officer in the Virginia militia. In

---

<sup>94</sup> Family Search, Peyton Family Tree, accessed July 9, 2024. <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/LZWF-7C7>; "By Yesterday's Southern Mail," *The Alexandria Gazette* Alexandria, Virginia, June 24, 1854, p 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/816472541/>; *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), Oct 11, 1854, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/884231697/>.

<sup>95</sup> "Gen. Bernard Peyton, Portrait, 1852," Virginia Military Institute, VMI Archives Digital Collections, accessed July 2, 2024, <https://vmi.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15821coll7/id/1462/>.

<sup>96</sup> 1900 US Census, Henrico County, Virginia, Schule 1 – Population, Richmond, Monroe Ward, Sheet 12, Line 88.; "Col. Peyton Dies Suddenly," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), September 18, 1900, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/77839095/>.



September 1885, the men Co. F in Richmond elected him 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut.<sup>97</sup> In December 1886, he was elected captain of Co. D, The Old Dominion Guards. In December 1887, the members of the Military Club of Virginia, a social club of militia officers, elected Peyton Secretary.<sup>98</sup>

In 1888, twenty-six-year-old Randolph Peyton moved to Birmingham, where he was the North Birmingham Railroad General Manager.<sup>99</sup> On October 29, 1889, Peyton married Nelia Fitts. Nelia's father, William Aylet Fitts, known as "Captain Fitts" around the city, was a real estate broker. Captain Fitts joined the Jefferson Davis Artillery in Selma at the Civil War's onset and became lieutenant while serving in Virginia. He returned to Alabama and raised an infantry company in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Alabama Infantry Regiment, where he served for the remainder of the war.<sup>100</sup> Nelia and Randolph's wedding was a significant social event. *The Daily News* reported, "This couple is one of the most popular ever married in Birmingham, and hundreds of friends will extend heartiest congratulations and rich presents." The paper also pointed out that Peyton was a lieutenant in the Birmingham Rifles, and the company was expected to attend the nuptials.

101

Randolph Peyton was perhaps best known in Birmingham society for his readings of the works of Thomas Nelson Page. Page's writings provided a romanticized version of the antebellum South that relied heavily on dialects that "projected black subjectivity and collective

---

<sup>97</sup> "Brilliant Wedding," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), Dec 2, 1887, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/71010399/>; "Our Crew," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), Jun 27, 1886, 5. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/83328322/>; "Annual Meeting of the Virginia Boat Club," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), March 15, 1888, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/71219441/>; *The Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, VA), September 24, 1885, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/347360645/>.

<sup>98</sup> "Col. Randolph Peyton," *The Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), May 19, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1000540688/>; "Election of Officers – Purposes of the organization," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), December 11, 1887, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/71011336/>.

<sup>99</sup> "Those Improvements," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), March 24, 1891, 5. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605516419/>.

<sup>100</sup> "Untiring Service Was Keynote of Capt. Fitts' Life," *The Morning Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), November 30, 1925, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/221775406/>.

<sup>101</sup> "Orange Blossoms," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), October 29, 1889, 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605578643/>.

experience into the realm of the reassuring ‘darky’ stereotype.”<sup>102</sup> On March 31, 1891, Peyton gave a reading of Page's *Mars Chan* for the benefit of a local hospital. The *Birmingham Post-Herald* ran the following promotion for the event:

"Everyone is familiar with the delightful stories of Thomas Nelson Page, but only a few Birmingham people have had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Randolph Peyton read those tales of old Virginia home life, with his perfect imitation of the negro dialect of thirty years ago."<sup>103</sup>

An indication of Peyton's popularity in the city was his success in the "Most Popular Birmingham Man" competition. *The Daily News* of Birmingham ran the contest from May through July 1890, with the prize being a "\$100 Gold Watch." Peyton did exceptionally well in the competition; on July 1, he ranked third out of the original eighty contestants. However, he suddenly withdrew the next day due to what he considered to be irregularities in the voting process.<sup>104</sup>

Peyton's fortunes in the AST rose hand-in-hand with his social status. With no discernable qualifications other than being the son and son-in-law of former Confederate officers, a short stint as an officer in the Virginia Volunteers, and being very well-liked in Birmingham's elite white social circles, the State of Alabama commissioned Peyton as a second lieutenant in the Birmingham Rifles, Co. K, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., in 1888.<sup>105</sup> Two years later, in January 1890, the company's men elected him as their Captain.<sup>106</sup> Peyton seemed precisely what the public wanted

---

<sup>102</sup> James Christmann, "Dialect's Double-Murder: Thomas Nelson Page's 'In Ole Virginia,'" *American Literary Realism* 3, no. 3 (Spring, 2000), pp. 234- 243. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27746988>.

<sup>103</sup> *The Birmingham Post-Herald* ((Birmingham, AL), March 28, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1002072727/>.

<sup>104</sup> "Vote Your Choice," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), May 10, 1890, 1.; Many Friends [psued.], "Captain Peyton Withdraws," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), July 2, 1890, 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605497940/>.

<sup>105</sup> "Military Matters," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL) March 24, 1888, 8. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262611073/>.

<sup>106</sup> "All Over the State," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), January 18, 1890, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262022619/>.

in a militia officer, and local newspapers regularly reported on him. In 1890, he won the company medal for the best shot in the company, leading *The Daily News* to describe him as "an excellent commanding officer" who can "handle a musket as well as any of the boys."<sup>107</sup> Daisy W. Rowley, a resident of Birmingham, wrote a patriotic march that she dedicated to Capt. Peyton.<sup>108</sup> The famous Broadway actress Patti Rosa, an honorary member of the Birmingham Rifles since visiting the city, sent the captain a "large and elegant" American flag to display at the company armory.<sup>109</sup> In June 1890, Birmingham's *Daily News* called Peyton "one of Alabama's best soldiers," but outside the newspapers, there were indications that Peyton was not the excellent officer the public perceived.<sup>110</sup>

As the state had no armories to store weapons and equipment and the responsibility for securing these high-value items fell to the local officers, every AST company commander was required to post a one-thousand-dollar surety bond when they assumed command. Sending the bond to the AGO was a priority for every newly elected company commander. For Capt. Peyton, it was not. On June 20, 1890, six months after Peyton took command of Co. K, AG Col. Charles P. Jones wrote to Peyton about his surety bond. The letter clearly indicates this was not the first correspondence between to the two men on the issue:

Dear Sir:

Your attention has heretofore been called to the fact that you have failed to send to the office the bond for your arms. This bond must be sent without delay. I can not allow your company to have arms, unless this bond is given.

You stated to me that you would send me this bond at once and you have failed to do-

---

<sup>107</sup> "Won the Company Medal," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), September 4, 1890, 7. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605502489/>.

<sup>108</sup> "A Meritorious Composition," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), August 2, 1890, 7. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605500465/>.

<sup>109</sup> "The Gift of Patti Rosa," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), Dec 31, 1890, 2. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262585600/>.

<sup>110</sup> "Tented Field," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), June 24, 1890, 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605584294/>.

Give this matter your early attention.  
Very Respectfully  
Your Obedient Servant  
Chas. P. Jones  
Adjutant General<sup>111</sup>

That was not Peyton's only issue with the A.G. On Thursday, June 12, 1890, *The Daily News* of Birmingham announced Co. K accepted the invitation of the Queen & Crescent Railroad and, in two days, would travel to Chattanooga.<sup>112</sup> At 10 o'clock on the 14<sup>th</sup>, a special train set off from Birmingham's Union Station for Chattanooga carrying as many ninety-eight AST soldiers. That included fifty-eight men from Co. K, twenty-five from a Bessemer company, and a fifteen-person band.<sup>113</sup> At that time, Alabama Law prohibited troops from leaving the state without prior permission from the AGs of all states involved. The publicity associated with the excursion made it inevitable that it would come to the attention of Col. Jones, the Alabama AG.<sup>114</sup>

On June 18, AG Jones, along with the AST Judge Advocate General and the AST Ordinance Officer, met with Peyton and his regimental commander, Col. T.G. Jones, concerning the Chattanooga trip. Birmingham's *Daily News* came down squarely on the side of Peyton, describing the entire episode as a "Tempest in a Teapot." Peyton assured the *News*, "(A)ll proper steps were taken by me as Captain of the Rifles before the company went to Chattanooga. I telegraphed for permission to the appropriate state authorities in Montgomery. I also received a

---

<sup>111</sup> Charles P. Jones to Randolph Peyton, June 20, 1890, ADAH, Adjutant General's Office Letters Sent, SG006231.

<sup>112</sup> "Will Go To Chattanooga," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), June 12, 1890, 1.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605583968/?terms=%22randolph%20peyton%22&match=1>.

<sup>113</sup> "Now They Are Off," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), Jun 14, 1890, 6.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605584091/>.

<sup>114</sup> Col. C.P. Jones was the brother of 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt. Commander and future governor Thomas G. Jones. For clarity, Charles P. Jones will be referred to as "AG Jones" and Thomas G. Jones will be referred to as "Col. T.G. Jones" or "Governor Jones." "Jones's Remains Reach Montgomery," *The Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), November 9, 1907, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/873225201/>.

telegram from Governor Taylor of Tennessee granting the Rifles permission to enter Tennessee with arms, and Peyton offered to produce the telegram from Governor Seay.<sup>115</sup>

AG Jones was not convinced. Three days after the meeting with Peyton, he wrote to Governor Seay about the situation. In the meeting, Peyton claimed he had telegraphed Col. T.G. Jones his intention to take his company to Tennessee, but he said the telegram was never delivered. In any event, Col. T.G. Jones never responded to the telegram approving the trip. AG Jones points out that he learned of Peyton receiving a telegram from the Governor of Tennessee only by reading the *Birmingham Evening News*. This implies that Peyton failed to mention receiving approval from the Tennessee governor during the formal meeting. AG Jones said that even if the telegram existed, the request should have come from his office and Peyton had violated Section 198 of the State Militia law for leaving the state without permission. AG Jones closed his letter to the governor, "I think for the good of the State Troops that this should not go unnoticed and that a reprimand at least should be given."<sup>116</sup> There is no record that Governor Seay took any action on the recommendation.

However, these mistakes had little effect on Peyton's military career, which reached its high point in February 1891, when he led fifty militiamen to Carbon Hill in Walker County, Alabama, at the request of the local sheriff. On November 29, 1890, 3,500 members of UMW District 20 in Walker County walked off the job. Within a week, 6,000 to 8,000 miners were striking, and by the end of December, the number grew to 15,000 to 20,000 across Jefferson, Walker, and Winston Counties. The coal companies reacted quickly using their regular tactics of evicting striking miners from their company housing and suppressing protests with armed

---

<sup>115</sup> "Tempest In A Teapot," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), June 19, 1890, 5.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605584179/>.

<sup>116</sup> Charles P. Jones to Thomas Seay, June 21, 1890, ADAH, Adjutant General's Office Letters Sent, SG006231.

guards. Faced with miners forced out of their homes in the middle of winter, armed opposition, and a hostile press in mid-January, District 20 accepted that the strike failed and sent the miners back to work.<sup>117</sup> By January 23, the mines were back in production.<sup>118</sup>

That should have been the end of it, but the Debardeleben Company introduced a new tactic into labor disputes in North Alabama, the large-scale importation of Black laborers to act as strikebreakers.<sup>119</sup> The white miners' anger toward the Black strikebreakers lingered, and during the early morning of January 31, a group of armed white miners entered a cabin occupied by nine Black miners, killing two and wounding the other seven.<sup>120</sup> That afternoon, civil authorities in Carbon Hill asked Governor Jones to send troops to maintain order.

On February 1, 1891, Thomas G. Jones, the former commander of the AST's 2d Regiment and recently inaugurated governor, sent orders to "Col. L.V. Clark, or in his absence, Senior Officer 2d Ala. State Troops," to assemble fifty men in Birmingham and move to Carbon Hill. As Col. Clark was out of town, Capt. Peyton assumed command and assembled the troops from his own Co. K and from Bessemer's Co. G. The troops left Birmingham at 6:30 p.m., five hours after Peyton received the orders. Peyton and his men arrived in Carbon Hill at approximately 10:30 p.m. Peyton immediately spoke to the mayor and then informed the governor that the mayor was unaware of any civil disturbances except for the initial killings. Governor Jones directed Peyton to make his troops comfortable and await orders, but there was no food or housing. As with the Tennessee trip, Peyton would claim that he had telegraphed the Carbon Hill mayor, informing him that he was responsible for feeding and housing his men, but the mayor stated he had never

---

<sup>117</sup> Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism*, 91.

<sup>118</sup> "The Railroads," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), January 23, 1891, 1.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605512506/>.

<sup>119</sup> Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism*, 91.

<sup>120</sup> "Nine Men Shot at Carbon Hill," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), February 1, 1891, 7.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/262137371/>.

received Payton's telegram and he had no means to feed or house them. Ultimately, the troops would not get fed until they returned to Birmingham late the following evening.<sup>121</sup>

Col. Clark arrived in Carbon Hill at 10:00 a.m. on February 2 and later reported, "Upon my arrival Capt. Peyton turned the command over to me, with the orders of the governor." The local sheriff asked Clark for assistance in arresting two of the suspects in the murder of the Black miners. Clark and two AST sergeants accompanied the sheriff, but the suspects had left the county. The sheriff did arrest another miner with an unrelated warrant. No other action was required from the troops, and at 3:00 p.m. on February 2, the Governor ordered Col. Clark to return to Birmingham. Col. Clark arranged for a hot meal at Birmingham's Union Station, and he gave Peyton explicit orders not to release the troops until they were fed.<sup>122</sup>

In most instances when the governor sent the AST to keep the peace, few people, even in Alabama, showed any concern, but Debardeleben Coal's decision to bring in Black strikebreakers added racial tension to worker unrest, and the murders at Carbon Hill and Randolph Peyton became national news. The front pages of at least fifteen newspapers across the country carried stories of the AST of Carbon Hill. Newspapers as far away as San Francisco, Sacramento, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Baltimore carried stories about the murders of the Black miners, and all of them mentioned Capt. Randolph Peyton.<sup>123</sup> Even Chicago's Polish language

---

<sup>121</sup> "Report of Randolph Peyton, Captain, Second Regiment A.S.T., Commanding Co. K," *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, to Thos. G. Jones, Governor and Commander-In-Chief. 1891.* Montgomery, AL, 1892, 49-50.

<sup>122</sup> Report by Col. Louis V. Clark to Col. Chas. P. Jones, *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, to Thos. G. Jones, Governor and Commander-In-Chief. 1891.* Montgomery, AL, 1892, 41-47.

<sup>123</sup> "Trouble In Alabama," *The Macon Telegraph* (Macon, GA), February 2, 1891, 1.; "Rumors of a Massacre," *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago, IL), February 2, 1891, 1.; "Shot by Miners," *The Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, MI), February 2, 1891, 1.; "Negros Shot Down," *The Pittsburgh Post* (Pittsburgh, PA), February 2, 1891, 1.; "Rioting in Alabama," *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, MD), February 2, 1891, 1.; "To Quell a Race Riot," *The San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, CA), February 2, 1891, 1.; "A Race War," *The Minneapolis Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), February 2, 1891, 1.

newspaper, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, reported carried a story on Peyton at Carbon Hill.<sup>124</sup> For a moment, Randolph Peyton was a national figure.

What was not widely known was that Governor Jones asked the Solicitor for the Jefferson County Circuit Court, Charles W. Ferguson, to accompany Peyton to Carbon Hill. It is unclear if Ferguson was formally acting as an advisor to the AST troops, as the governor's formal representative, or if he had a more informal role as a personal observer for the governor. Peyton and Clark mentioned Ferguson in their reports but did not mention any specific actions he may have taken, and Ferguson sent his report on the events directly to Governor Jones. When Ferguson arrived with the troops in Carbon Hill, the train was met by Mayor Anderson and Mr. Wingfield, the Superintendent of the Galloway Mines. Ferguson's initial reaction was that "Everything was perfectly quiet at Carbon Hill, and so far as indications on the surface were concerned, there had been no trouble whatsoever." After Col. Clark arrived, Ferguson reported the sheriff asked for assistance in arresting the alleged killers of the Black miners who were hiding near the Galloway mines. Ferguson suggested that the troops hold back from the arrest. Col. Clark agreed with Ferguson and order the main body of Peyton's men to hold back. Clark went forward with two unarmed soldiers who were to act as messengers if troops were needed at the mines. Ferguson noted the sheriff did arrest one miner on an unrelated warrant without the assistance of any troops. Ferguson stated that Capt. Peyton's telegram to the governor telling him the arrest was made "with the assistance of the troops" did a disservice to the sheriff as the troops were a half-mile away at the time of the arrest.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Niepokoje Robotnicze," *Dziennik Chicagoski* (Chicago, IL), February 2, 1891, 4.

<sup>125</sup> Charles W. Ferguson to Thomas G. Jones, February 3, 1891, ADAH, Thomas Goode Jones Papers 1861-1914, Box 1.



In a bizarre footnote, Governor Jones and Peyton exchanged a number of letters concerning the events at Carbon Hill. The Alabama Department of Archives and History holds one letter from the exchange. It was written on February 10 by Peyton. The brief letter underscores how little Peyton understood military organizations and his place in the AST. In the letter, Peyton admits he commanded men from his own Co. K and men from Co. G, and "there were some hard feelings among the men of Co. G." For that reason, when Col. Clark arrived in Carbon Hill, "I considered wisest to allow Col. Clark to assume command without a special order." Still, Peyton insists, "I could have retained command until relieved by your orders, but, in my opinion, it was an inopportune time to arouse any petty jealousies."<sup>126</sup> Col. L.V. Clark was Peyton's regimental commander and the senior officer on the scene. Governor Jones's initial order had not been addressed to Peyton but rather to "Col. L.V. Clark, or in his absence, Senior Officer 2d Ala. State Troops." No reasonable interpretation of that order would allow Peyton to remain in command after Clark arrived. Still, Peyton insisted in a letter to the AST Commander-in-Chief that he had every right to maintain command if he wanted, and he only transferred command to Clark to assuage the petty feelings of others.

Montgomery's *Daily Advertiser* printed Solicitor Ferguson's report to Governor Jones in its entirety on its front page on February 18, 1891.<sup>127</sup> While it is impossible to determine how the publishing of Ferguson's report may have affected Peyton, eight days later he resigned his commission as the company commander of Co. K, citing "the great pressures of his private

---

<sup>126</sup> Randolph Peyton to Thomas G. Jones, February 10, 1891, ADAH, Governor Thomas G. Jones, Administrative Files, Microfilm Series SG008415.

<sup>127</sup> "The Teapot Tempest at Carbon Hill," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), February 18, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262138616/>.

business." *The Daily News* reported that Peyton's decision left his men "filled with much regret."<sup>128</sup>

On March 2, 1891, First Lieutenant (1<sup>st</sup> Lieut.) B.H. Wilkins was elected Captain of the Birmingham Rifles.<sup>129</sup> The next day, Wilkins wrote Governor Jones "in an unofficial capacity yet on behalf of the Bham Rifles," asking the governor to appoint Peyton to the governor's staff. "I consider him one of the best posted soldiers in the State Troops, and his selection would please the people of the city."<sup>130</sup>

On May 13, 1891, Governor Jones announced he had appointed Randolph Peyton as an Aide-de-Camp on his military staff and commissioned him a Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry.<sup>131</sup>

Objectively, Randolph Peyton was not a good officer. His election to the Birmingham Rifles' Commander indicated he was well-liked by his men, and reports suggest he was an excellent marksman. No records show Peyton was given any formal training as an officer in the AST, and it is possible to mark up some of his mistakes due to that lack of training. His failure to immediately provide a surety bond for his company's arms and equipment and his crossing state lines with armed troops without permission could be due to his lack of training. Still, his reactions to both situations demonstrate issues with his conduct as an officer. The AG asked Peyton to provide the bond multiple times, but he did not.

His actions during the investigation of his trip to Tennessee showed even more severe lapses in judgment. First, Peyton seemed to understand he needed permission from at least his regimental commander to travel out of state, as he claimed to have sent a telegram to Col. T.G.

---

<sup>128</sup> "Military Matters," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), February 27, 1891, 5.

<sup>129</sup> "Capt. B.H. Wilkins," *The Birmingham Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL) March 3, 1891, 4.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/1002071490/>.

<sup>130</sup> B.H. Wilkins to Thomas G. Jones, March 3, 1891, ADAH, Governor Thomas G. Jones, Administrative Files, Microfilm Series SG008415.

<sup>131</sup> "Governor's Staff," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), May 13, 1891, 3.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605511189/>.

Jones informing him of the trip. Oddly, he did not see the need to receive a response to the telegram before departing. More concerning is Peyton's integrity, which is called into question. During the formal interview, Peyton never mentioned the telegram he had received from the Governor of Tennessee, but when talking to reporters, he seemed to have remembered he had the telegram and could produce it whenever it was needed. If his story about telegrams from Tennessee was true, why did he not bring it up during the formal interview? At this point, Peyton's integrity must come into question. This also shows significant disrespect for his chain of command by taking his issues directly to the press. For his actions, the AG recommended Peyton be sanctioned, but no action was taken.

After Carbon Hill, Randolph Peyton was arguably the most famous officer in the AST, but his performance again raises questions concerning his competence. He left Birmingham with a command made up of troops from two companies, many of which he admitted resented his assuming command. He made no arrangements before moving to Carbon Hill for the billeting or feeding of his command again, blaming it on a lost telegram, one that the Carbon Hill mayor never received. Peyton did turn over command to Col. Clark upon his arrival. Still, after the arrest of the miner, Peyton took it upon himself to telegram Governor Jones information that he knew was false. In a final footnote, he seems to have challenged Governor Jones's interpretation of orders Governor Jones issued.

That Peyton resigned relatively soon after the events of Carbon Hill seems reasonable. It is difficult to understand why, two months later, Governor Jones would appoint Peyton to his military staff and give him the second highest rank in the AST except for the closing sentence in Capt. Wilkins's note asking the governor to give Peyton the appointment. Wilkins closes his letter by saying that Peyton's selection would please the people of Birmingham. Lack of

competency aside, Peyton apparently received his appointment for political reasons. While it is possible to argue that Peyton was one company commander among the AST's forty-two company, squadron, and battery commanders, he seems unsuitable to serve as a military officer. As a newly commissioned lieutenant colonel, Randolph Peyton would become the face of the failures in the AST.

## The Encampment

Governor Thomas Seay wanted to bring together all three regiments of Alabama troops in one place for a brigade encampment during the summer of 1890, his last year in office. It would be the largest gathering of Alabama troops since the end of the Civil War. Seay was so adamant that AG Charles P. Jones referred to Seay's efforts as "agitating the question."<sup>132</sup>

AG Jones admitted that a brigade encampment would benefit the militia and the state's people, but he was worried about the cost. In March 1890, he wrote to two railroad companies asking for a reduced rate to move approximately nine hundred men from around the state to Mobile. He was frank in stating that if the railroads could not help with discounted rates, the encampment would not happen.<sup>133</sup> By April 5, AG Jones realized that the state appropriation would not cover expenses, and he openly said that a city would have a good chance of hosting the encampment if private donors could cover the state's deficit.

On April 26, AG Jones sent a six-page, handwritten letter to Governor Seay giving the estimated cost of a brigade encampment. Again, Jones stated he supported the idea of a brigade encampment, but having the encampment in the upcoming summer would cause significant personal costs to the officers and men of the AST. Jones gave a detailed breakdown of the cost of an encampment, everything from \$6,500 for transportation to \$300 for feed for horses at three cents a day for two hundred horses. The total cost of the encampment in Mobile was \$15,370.00, over \$4,000.00 more than the state had budgeted. Holding the encampment in Montgomery

---

<sup>132</sup> C.P. Jones to J.S. McEachin, March 8, 1890, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG006231.

<sup>133</sup> C.P. Jones to M.H. Smith, March 28, 1890, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG006231; C.P. Jones to W.F. Allday, March 28, 1890, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG006231.

would cost about \$1200.00 less but still leave a significant deficit. This estimate was for one thousand four hundred troops. If more soldiers attended, the cost would go up.<sup>134</sup>

On May 15, AG Jones notified the regimental commanders three weeks later that Governor Seay decided not to hold a brigade encampment.<sup>135</sup>

On December 1, 1890, Thomas G. Jones, former commander of AST's 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., became Governor of Alabama. On March 25, 1891, while on a trip to Mobile to inspect the 1<sup>st</sup> Regt., Governor Jones made three announcements concerning the 1891 encampment. First, the encampment would be in Mobile. Second, it would be the first brigade encampment. Third, as the Commander-in-Chief, he would personally serve as the brigade commander.<sup>136</sup> Governor Jones gave the AST less than three months to plan for the housing and feeding of three regiments of soldiers, something the AST had never done. The unpaid, part-time volunteer staff of the AGO would be responsible for all planning. There was one paid staff member, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. James B. Erwin was a Regular Army officer from the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. The Army Chief of Staff assigned Erwin to the AGO, but he had only arrived in Montgomery three weeks before Governor Jones made his announcement.<sup>137</sup>

Surprisingly, one problem the AGO did not have was funding. The state's budget for the encampment had not changed, nor had the anticipated cost, but less than two weeks after the announcement, Col. Price, Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regt headquartered in Mobile, notified the AG Jones that Mobile citizens raised the funds needed to hold the encampment in Mobile.<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> C.P. Jones to Thomas Seay, April 26, 1890, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG006231.

<sup>135</sup> C.P. Jones to W.W. Quarles, May 15, 189, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG006231.

<sup>136</sup> "Mobile the Place," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), March 25, 1891, 6.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/262141967/>.

<sup>137</sup> "Lieut. Jas. B. Erwin," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), March 3, 1891, 4.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/262139677/?match=1>.

<sup>138</sup> Adjutant General's Officer Received Correspondence Logs 1891, ADAH, SG006220.

On April 14, fifty-seven days before the start of the encampment, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Erwin sent a survey to all forty-two company commanders and three regimental commanders, asking them how many officers, NCOs, and privates they would bring to Mobile and, "What will be, in your opinion, the best date to hold Brigade Encampment?" He received thirty-six responses. Answers for the best dates to hold the encampment ranged from mid-May to mid-September. Only one company commander responded, "Don't know" to the number of men attending the camp. The remaining thirty-five provided estimates that totaled one thousand four hundred and sixty-three troops.<sup>139</sup> While it is concerning that the start date of the encampment was not set, the survey provided a very accurate number of men who would attend the encampment and should have been the baseline for the planning of the encampment. It was not.

On April 23, AG Jones formally announced the encampment in Mobile from June 8 to June 18, 1891. Later, the dates would slide two days, and the encampment started on June 10.<sup>140</sup> The AST staff had forty-eight days.

Pushback from the companies began almost immediately. On April 29, Lieut. E.V. Thompson asked Col. L.V. Clark, his regimental commander if his company could be excused from the encampment. His men were all farmers or worked in businesses associated with farming. It would not have been possible for them to be away for ten days in June, suggesting that there was a disconnect between the leadership of the AST, based in Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, and Selma, and the rank and file of some companies still closely tied to the agricultural economy.<sup>141</sup> On May 9, a company commander in Wilcox County wrote his regimental commander complaining it would take his men two days to travel to the encampment

---

<sup>139</sup> The returned surveys are kept at the ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Administrative Files, SG15224.

<sup>140</sup> "The Brigade Encampment," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), April 24, 1891, 7. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262544636/?match=1&terms=%22encampment%22>.

<sup>141</sup> E.W. Thompson to L.V. Clark, April 29, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG15224.

and two days to return home, and it was not reasonable to make his men miss two weeks of work.<sup>142</sup> On May 17, J.B. Kendrick of Co. G, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt. asked 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Erwin if some of the days in the encampment would be more important than others since many of his men could not get off work for the entire ten days.<sup>143</sup> There are no records of any replies to those requests.

In early May, the AGO contracted with the Electric Lighting Company of Mobile to provide fourteen electric lights with 1200 candle power each to light the camp for \$410. The contract included a map of where the company would locate the lights, which is the only known surviving map of the encampment. The map showed most of the tents would be along the outside of a rectangle 1350 feet long and 165 wide. A 400-foot-wide drill field would be east of the main encampment. The Governor's and his staff's tents would be on the other side of the drill field, away from the main encampment.<sup>144</sup>

As June came, Alabama's newspapers focused on the coming encampment. Montgomery's *Daily Advertiser* proclaimed, "Military matters are now uppermost in the minds of the people." Bessemer's *Daily Pig* demanded that members of the Birmingham Rifles be given time off work to attend. Birmingham's *Daily News* felt the city's people should go to the train station for "the departure of the military boys." The *Weekly Times* of Tuscaloosa reported their correspondent, Mr. J.L. Wallace, "will shoulder the knapsack and march to the front with the boys tonight," so the people of Tuscaloosa should "look forward with pleasurable anticipation to a perusal of the history of the camp life of our boys." On June 11, Brewton's *Standard Gauge* reported, "Mobile is gay with bunting and soldier boys. The encampment opened yesterday."<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> J.T. Bell to Price Williams, May 9, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG15224.

<sup>143</sup> J.B. Kendrick to J.B. Erwin, May 17, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG15224.

<sup>144</sup> Contract Proposal from The Electric Lighting Company of Mobile, May 9, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Office Correspondence SG15224.

<sup>145</sup> "The Soldiers Boys Camp," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), June 5, 1891, 7.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/262562127/>; "Let the Boys Off," *The Daily Pig* (Bessemer, AL) June 5, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/322943555/>; "On to Mobile," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), June 8,



The encampment started on June 10, and things immediately started going wrong. When the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt's arrived, they had issues with their tents. The individual regiments purchased their tents, many of which were of poor quality, while some were completely unusable. There was no uniformity with the tents of the other regiments.<sup>146</sup> On the second morning, a massive rainstorm swept through the encampment, flooding the encampment and destroying ten of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt's tents.<sup>147</sup>

A second, more significant problem became apparent that first day. Even though 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Erwin's survey gave an accurate number of soldiers to expect at the encampment, but the Commissary Department had woefully underestimated the space in the mess halls needed to feed the men. Col. Williams, 1<sup>st</sup> Regt. Commander said there were 1,500 troops in camp, but there was space in the camp's three mess halls for fewer than half. Other estimates said the buildings could accommodate less than one-third of the total number of men. The brigade staff attempted to adjust and quickly issued orders, breaking units into mess squads and giving specific schedules for those squads to report for meals, but those orders were either not communicated or ignored, and "chaos" at the mess halls ensued.<sup>148</sup>

By June 13, the third day of the encampment, there was no denying things were going very badly. At 8:00 a.m., Capt. B.H. Wilkins, the recently elected captain of the Birmingham Rifles, Co. K, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., filed his Officer of the Day report. The report ran three short paragraphs but painted a woeful picture. First, Wilkins happily reported that only three men had been arrested in the camp and only for minor offenses. They were detained for a few hours and then

---

1891, 6. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605513368/>; "Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier," *The Weekly Times* (Tuscaloosa, AL), June 10, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/322825663/>; "Hone News," *The Standard Gauge* (Brewton, AL), June 11, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/237583822/>.

<sup>146</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891*, 8-9.

<sup>147</sup> "Brigade Encampment," *The Birmingham Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), June 12, 1891, 1.

<sup>148</sup> "Col. Price Williams Makes a Statement," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), Jun 28, 1891, 3.

discharged from the guardhouse. Second, "I find the ditch running through camp damp and offensive to the companies camped on its side and recommended liberal use of strong disinfectant." Third, "The requirements sink (the camp latrine) is entirely unfit for use, and should be filled up and abolished at once... would recommend that a new sink be made and dry earth filled in daily to prevent the smell which is now so offensive to the camp."<sup>149</sup>

That same day, Capt. I.J. Cornwall, Commander Co. G, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt., wrote to the AG, stating, "Several of our men desire to return home before encampment is over." Cornwall wanted to know if AG Jones could arrange tickets at the reduced rate offered by the company for the men who stayed to the end of camp. Cornwall did not state what specifically led to the request, but it had to be troubling that troops were already asking to leave.<sup>150</sup>

Also, on June 13, issues with the food quality and overcrowding in the mess halls began to make their way into the newspapers. Governor Jones, who was serving as the brigade commander, was asked about the food situation by a correspondent from Birmingham's *Age-Herald*. Governor Jones acknowledged the complaint but said he "paid it no attention as it was not a general complaint and only indulged by a few. The boys are fed well and really have no occasion to grumble."<sup>151</sup> If the Governor really thought the grumbling was limited to a few troops and the situation was under control, that would be over by the end of the day.

The defining moment of the encampment took place on June 13. Lt.Col. Randolph Peyton was the brigade's Field Officer of the Day. He was aware of the issues with overcrowding at the mess halls, and he intended to resolve the situation and return discipline to the dining facilities. A crowd of troops from Anniston gathered at a mess hall and became unruly, and

---

<sup>149</sup> B.H. Wilkins, Officer of the Day Report, June 13, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Administrative Files, SG15215.

<sup>150</sup> I.J. Cornwall to C.P. Jones, June 13, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant Generals Administrative Files, SG15215.

<sup>151</sup> "Down at Camp O'Neal," *The Birmingham Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), June 13, 1891, 1.

Peyton attempted to get control of the problem with little effect. As the situation deteriorated, Peyton called in the Mobile's Co. A, 1<sup>st</sup> Regt. to restore order.<sup>152</sup> The presence of the Mobile troops did not have the desired effect, and the men of Co. D, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt., the Anniston Rifles, attempted to storm a mess hall. Peyton ordered the men back, and when they did not comply, he arrested the company's First Sergeant and threw him in the stockade.<sup>153</sup>

The officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. had enough. Their anger may have resulted from the accumulated frustration with the issues at the encampment, but their focus was Lt.Col. Peyton. Before June 13 was over, the officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. sent a petition to Governor Jones that stated: "We, the undersigned officers of the Ala State Troops, respectfully petition your excellency that you ask in our names and behalf for the resignation of Col. Randolph Peyton as an officer in the service of the State of Alabama."<sup>154</sup> Thirty officers, the majority of officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt., signed the letter, including one major, seven captains, the regimental surgeon, the assistant surgeon, the quartermaster, and several lieutenants.<sup>155</sup>

In the coming days, things worsened as the troops' discipline broke down. Newspapers reported that members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment were shooting the electric lights in the encampment.<sup>156</sup> Fights broke out between men in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt's, and there were reports of troops using live ammunition in exchanges between the units.<sup>157</sup> On June 15, the fifth day of the encampment, companies from Monroe and Wilcox counties left the encampment, and it is unclear if they had permission to go or if they left of their own volition. Three more companies

---

<sup>152</sup> "Col. Price Williams Makes a Statement."

<sup>153</sup> Randolph Peyton, "Col. Peyton's Own Statement," *Birmingham Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), June 20, 1891, 4.

<sup>154</sup> Received Correspondence Log, June 13, 1891, Alabama. Adjutant General's Office. Administrative Correspondence 1881 – 1905 (SG006207), Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

<sup>155</sup> Alabama. Adjutant General's Office. Administrative Correspondence 1881 – 1905 (SG006207).

<sup>156</sup> "Mutinous Mob," *The Chattanooga Daily Times* (Chattanooga, TN), June 20, 1891, 1.

<sup>157</sup> "Encampment Matters," *The Columbus Enquirer* (Columbus, GA), June 23, 1891, 1.

departed on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Again, it is unclear if they were authorized to do so. Governor Jones had enough, and he ordered the remaining companies to break camp on June 18, two days ahead of schedule. The breakdown in discipline continued to the end. As they waited for their trains, the men of the Anniston Rifles and other unidentified companies burned Lt.Col. Peyton in effigy.<sup>158</sup>

The effigy burning was the biggest news in Alabama for days after the encampment ended, and anyone with any involvement with the events could find themselves on the front pages of the state's newspapers.

Governor Jones and the senior officers of the AST gave Peyton a public if not enthusiastic, defense. The governor said the burning of Lt.Col. Peyton in effigy was "very sincerely regretted," he felt too much focus was on the noise made by a few when, in truth, ninety-five percent of the troops at the encampment were satisfied with the event. Reporters asked if the governor had indeed assumed overall command of the encampment and if that had caused discontent among his officers. Governor Jones replied that the senior colonels had asked him to come to the encampment and serve as the overall commander in his role as Commander-in-Chief. When he was a regimental commander, everyone assumed that the governor would attend and be in overall command. The governor assured the people that the reports of senior officers of the AST being dissatisfied with his actions were unfounded.<sup>159</sup>

Col. Henry E. Jones, Assistant Adjutant General of Alabama, blamed the problems with the mess halls on miscommunication during the first few days of the encampment. Regiments and battalions did not receive notice when they should send men to eat, which led to crowding and harassment of the attendants. As the Officer of the Guard, Lt. Col. Peyton took steps to bring

---

<sup>158</sup> The Boys Back From Camp O'Neal, Thoroughly Tired," *The Daily News* ((Birmingham, AL), June 19, 1891, 3

<sup>159</sup> "Governor Jones Talks Plainly," *The Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), June 23, 1891, 1.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/262570645/>. It is not known if Henry E. Jones was related to the Governor and the AG.

order to the situation at the mess halls. AG Jones would say nothing more critical of Peyton than he took "some energetic steps to preserve order at the mess hall, and there were some complaints about how he did it."<sup>160</sup>

Less senior AST officers also came forward to publicly voice their opinions about the situation and Peyton's culpability. Capt. B.H. Wilkins stated that Lt.Col. Peyton "only did his duty in camp. And did it well, receiving the commendation of the governor and all the army officers detailed at the camp." Wilkins blamed the lack of discipline solely on the officers and men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment.<sup>161</sup> Wilkins's loyalty to Peyton is unsurprising as he took command of Co. K when Peyton resigned, he also recommended Peyton to the governor for the appointment with his staff.

J.H. Clisby, an artillery captain, downplayed the issues at the encampment. "I ate at the mess hall and found the fare very good. The only other incident which occasioned an unfavorable comment was the action of some of the men on the last day after the guards had been relieved in burning in effigy Lt.Col. Randolph Peyton," Clisby stated. "The thing has been greatly exaggerated. I saw the mattress when it was raised in the air by three or four men and set fire to it, but I did not then know what was meant by it. This was the only breach of discipline which was very considerable."<sup>162</sup>

The *Montgomery Advertiser* reported members of Opelika's Co. H, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., "did not participate in the burning of Randolph Peyton in effigy although doing so meets their heartiest

---

<sup>160</sup> "An Officer Talks of the Encampment," *The Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), June 21, 1891, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262570188/>.

<sup>161</sup> "Col. Peyton at Mobile," *Birmingham Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), June 20, 1891, 4. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1000541453>.

<sup>162</sup> "Capt. Clisby Talks," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), June 23, 1891, 7. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262570808/>.

and most enthusiastic approbation and endorsement not so much on account of the rations furnished as on account of his general deportment in the camp they say."<sup>163</sup>

On June 21, Birmingham's *Age-Herald* published a letter from Lt.Col. Edward G. Caldwell of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. on the front page of that day's edition. In the letter, Caldwell questioned why Peyton had made several procedural errors in arresting the Anniston Rifles' First Sergeant. Caldwell cited three specific issues. First, Peyton did not send the Commander of the Guard a written statement on the arrest. Second, as the First Sergeant's company commander, Peyton should have informed him of the arrest. He did not. Third, Peyton confined the First Sergeant in the guardhouse with junior enlisted soldiers and not in his quarters under guard. Caldwell also noted that Capt. J.J. Hunter of the Noble Guards, Co. K, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. and Lieut. Harrison of the Huntsville Rifles, Co. M, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. would testify that Peyton was not justified in his actions. Caldwell speculated that "either ignorance of duty or a desire to be arbitrary" caused Peyton's mistakes. Caldwell admitted signing the petition sent to Governor Jones but said he did so only out of duty to do what was best for the AST. Finally, he denied any involvement with the burning of the effigy "except to refuse to let members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. have my company band to play a funeral dirge."<sup>164</sup>

Peyton released a public statement through Birmingham's *Daily News*. He first wished to refute reports that he was the commissary officer and that the food quality at the encampment was his responsibility. Peyton stressed that his job had been to carry out the orders of the governor, and if any of the men had complaints about him or how he executed the governor's

---

<sup>163</sup> "Opelika," *The Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), June 21, 1891, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262570188/>.

<sup>164</sup> "Lt-Col. Caldwell," *The Birmingham Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), June 21, 1891, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1000541468/>.

orders, he asked that the complaints be put through proper channels. He stood by his actions and offered to appear before a court of inquiry.<sup>165</sup>

Possibly the only objective observers in the encampment were two Regular Army officers detailed to the encampment as inspectors.

1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. James B. Erwin had been serving with the AST since March 1891. He received his commission as a cavalry officer after graduating from West Point in 1880. Erwin served in the West in multiple assignments, operating in the field against bands of the Ute and Apache nations, including Geronimo's band. He was the commander of the School of Instruction at Monterey, California, and commanded a cavalry troop at the Presidio of San Francisco.<sup>166</sup> In Erwin's analysis, the issues with the mess halls fell on the regimental commanders and officers. He acknowledged that the mess halls could seat barely a third of the men in the camp, but "Had Regimental Commanders exercised sufficient control over their men and regulated by order the number of men to be fed at one time, there is no doubt this arrangement would have been perfectly satisfactory." Erwin acknowledged that "friction arose when it became necessary for the Field Officer of the Day, who was at the mess hall, to designate the companies which were allowed to enter, while others awaited their turn." This was the only mention of the situation with Lt.Col. Peyton.<sup>167</sup>

Erwin reported that AST could not conduct tactical operations above the regimental and, in some cases, company level. He faulted the location of units across the state that prevented more than one or two companies from drilling together. He cited significant issues, including

---

<sup>165</sup> "The Boys Back From Camp O'Neal Thoroughly Tired." *The Daily News* ((Birmingham, AL), June 19, 1891, 3. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/605514186/>.

<sup>166</sup> "Lieut. Jas. B. Erwin," *The Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), March 3, 1891, 4. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/262139677/>.

<sup>167</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891*, 67,

arms and equipment needing better maintenance and failure to perform guard duty properly, especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment. Erwin mentioned this, along with a refusal by many of the troops to perform menial tasks such as picking up trash, cleaning weapons, or maintaining equipment, as a significant problem. In Erwin's mind, these tasks were a core part of being a soldier. "If a man regards himself too much of a gentleman to learn the duties of a soldier, he is too much of a gentleman to make a good soldier."<sup>168</sup>

To Erwin, the cause of many of these problems was the level of familiarity and the casual relationships between the officers and enlisted men. He held that the election of officers by the enlisted men, which at that time was the only method for selecting officers allowed by Alabama law, was a weak system that inherently led to discipline problems. AG Jones agreed with Erwin on this issue. In his annual report to the Governor, which included Erwin's report on the encampment, AG Jones stated the elective system had disadvantages, but state law permitted no other system. AG Jones acknowledged that the men of the AST companies elected their officers based on popularity and not qualifications. The AGO had issued a general order to begin examinations of all elected officers before granting them a commission, but that system had not started.<sup>169</sup>

The other Regular Army observer was 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Charles L. Phillips was from the U.S. Artillery at Fort Barrancas, Florida.<sup>170</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Phillips was an 1881 United States Military Academy graduate who served principally in Coastal Artillery assignments after graduation. His

---

<sup>168</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891*, 64-71.

<sup>169</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891*, 12, 71.

<sup>170</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891*, 58.



only break from artillery units was the three years he was the Professor of Military Science and Tactics at the Maine State College in Orono, Maine.<sup>171</sup>

Phillips started his report by saying, albeit very politely, that the AST and its officer were not up to the challenge of running an encampment for more than 1,500 troops, and the encampment was doomed from the start:

There is, however, no regular brigade organization, and hitherto all encampments have been entirely regimental. The present encampment was, there, of the nature of an experiment, and both officers and men were serving under, to most of them, a new order of things. These circumstances, together with the fact that the experiment was ordered by the Governor contrary to the desire of many of his immediate subordinates, would doubtless explain the partial lack of success attending the experiment and perhaps extenuate the many infractions of camp orders that occurred. It is not expected that civilians meeting but once a year in military capacities, and especially as was the case here under changed circumstances and in new capacities, could submit at once to the requirements of strict military service.<sup>172</sup>

Like Erwin, Phillips identifies some infractions that some might consider minor, such as soldiers leaving the encampment, refusing to collect trash, and cleaning their weapons and equipment by company servants. Phillips was most concerned about discipline among the troops. Soldiers and sergeants did not salute officers. In conversation with officers and men, he realized they did not understand the fundamental difference between a well-drilled company and a disciplined one. Phillips found the lack of discipline in guard duty to be the most disturbing. Guard mount is the ceremony in the U.S. Army where soldiers are assigned to their posts and given their orders. No one in the AST knew how to conduct guard mount. Soldiers would regularly abandon their posts, leaving their weapons and equipment behind. Phillips believed that

---

<sup>171</sup> Mary Phillips Brewster, "Obituary, Charles Leonard Phillips". *Seventieth Annual Report of the Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy*. Newburgh, NY: Moore Printing Company. p. 139 – via West Point Digital Library: <https://digital-library.usma.edu/digital/collection/aogreunion/id/21817/rec/2>.

<sup>172</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891.* Montgomery, AL, 1892, 58.

the companies of the AST were proficient in drill and wore their uniforms well, but they needed to improve their basic soldier skills, and they needed to be more capable of conducting tactical operations at anything above the company level.<sup>173</sup>

As polite as Phillips's report sounds now, he was very concerned about how Governor Jones would receive it. On October 4, 1891, Phillips wrote a personal letter to Governor Jones. He included a copy of his formal report and apologized for how long it took to complete. Phillips worried that his report did not agree with the Governor's views of the encampment, "but I have tried to present the state of affairs as they appeared to yourself and me and as we talked (about) them during the encampment." Phillips tried "to state things fairly and squarely. I didn't wish to seem to dodge any issues and may, on this account have handled some of them rather roughly." Phillips closes, "Of course, you need not hesitate to refute them. It will not in the least interfere with our friendship nor detract from the high esteem in which I hold that friendship."

After the sensation of the burning effigy faded from the press, no one took any action to resolve the issues identified by the encampment of 1891. While Governor Jones and senior AST officers promised inquiries and officers like Caldwell and Peyton volunteered to testify, there is no evidence that anyone conducted a formal investigation or that anyone was punished.

In August 1891, AG Jones sent a letter to the Commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt in the only formal action taken after the encampment. with orders to provide a copy to each officer who had signed the petition demanding Peyton's expulsion from the AST. The letter, which was an attempt to close the book on the issue, was not a serious attempt to hold anyone accountable for their actions. The letter opens with AG Jones absolving all the officers involved of any culpability, stating the governor believed most of the officers who signed it "joined in this petition

---

<sup>173</sup> *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of Alabama, 1891*, 58-63.

inadvertently, and in ignorance of their rights and duties as officers of the Alabama State Troops." After relieving them of all blame, AG Jones points out that the officers who signed the petition violated Section 179 of the Alabama Militia Act and the 62<sup>nd</sup> Article of War. He then details the specifications of the crimes committed and the potential punishments associated with those violations. According to AG Jones, the governor was aware of the situation at the mess hall on June 13, and even though the governor ordered the release of the Anniston Rifles' First Sergeant, the governor still supports Lt.Col. Peyton, whom the AG mentions by name, and agreed with the actions Peyton took. The governor released the First Sergeant to close the matter for the good of the AST and to allow everyone to move on. AG Jones sums up the governor's position in one of the closing paragraphs:

In view of the fact that the Governor believes that most of the signers of this petition were not aware of the evils to which such petition leads, that it was in plain violation of the laws of the State, good order and military discipline, he will take no further action on this petition, except in cases of such signer, as after having been notified of the contents of this letter, again forward the petition.<sup>174</sup>

The governor had closed the book on this issue, and it was in the best interest of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt officers to do the same. AG Jones's letter states that no officer above the rank of captain signed the petition, which was technically correct, but there was an asterisk. Capt. Ed. G. Caldwell was the commander of the Anniston Rifles, Co. D, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt. on June 13, 1891, and signed the petition. Two days later, he was elected by the regiment's officers to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regt.'s lieutenant colonel. There was no attempt by Governor Jones or AG Jones to relieve him of his new position.<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> Circular Letter from Charles P. Jones to Commanding Officers. 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment AST, June 22, 1891, held by the ADAH, Alabama Adjutant General, Administrative Correspondence SG006228.

<sup>175</sup> "From Brigade Encampment," *The Age-Herald* (Birmingham, AL), June 17, 1891, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1000541390/>.

The Alabama State Troops would not hold another brigade encampment for four years. For the summer of 1892, the AST returned to regimental encampments. Just before those encampments took place, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Erwin published a special order on behalf of the governor. The order had five paragraphs. First, when two companies were traveling on one train, the senior officer would take command and be accountable for the behavior of the troops onboard. Second, all officers and NCOs were ordered to stop "rough and boisterous behavior" by the soldiers while traveling and to keep them out of bar rooms. Third, only enlisted personnel and two servants from each company would be allowed in camp, and any violation would result in a court martial. Fourth, no ammunition of any sort will be carried to the camps, and officers will inspect the men to ensure compliance. Fifth, "Regimental commanders shall prevent the sale or giving away of spiritous, vinous, or malt liquor with the camps or one-eighth mile there-of."<sup>176</sup>

Lt.Col. Randolph Peyton's place in the Birmingham social scene would never recover from the events of June 1891. His name would appear in an Alabama newspaper one last time. On June 26, 1892, one year and seven days after the Anniston Rifles burned him in effigy, a small item appeared on page six of Birmingham's *Sunday News*. It read, "Captain P.G. Bibb has been appointed on the Governor's Staff to succeed Col. Randolph Peyton, resigned."<sup>177</sup> Peyton's career in the Alabama State Troops lasted four years and two months.

By 1900, Peyton returned to Richmond and joined his brother, working as a clerk in his father's fire insurance firm.<sup>178</sup> Randolph's father died suddenly in September 1900; fifteen

---

<sup>176</sup> "Military Matters," *The Daily News* (Birmingham, AL), June 29, 1892, 5.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/605513959/>.

<sup>177</sup> "Military Matters," *The Sunday News* ((Birmingham, AL), Jun 26, 1892, 6.

<sup>178</sup> 1900 US Census, Henrico County, Virginia, Schule 1 – Population, Richmond, Monroe Ward, Sheet 12, Line 88.  
<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/72797971:7602?tid=193325849&pid=232521958722&hid=1053035654134>.

months later, in January 1902, Randolph's brother and business partner died after a short illness.<sup>179</sup> The business seemed to fail soon afterward. At some point, Randolph left Richmond and drifted through multiple jobs in Norfolk and Newport News. He left Virginia, eventually landing in New York using the name "R. Preston." On October 8, 1904, *The Times-Dispatch* of Richmond reported the body of a man who drowned at Saint Joseph's, Michigan, and who used the name "John Randolph," was identified by an investigating detective as Randolph Peyton. A "friend of Peyton" told the *Times-Dispatch* that Peyton was an excellent swimmer but "under great mental strain."<sup>180</sup>

Governor Jones's legacy would not come from his military service. He was reelected in 1892, and while he was a white supremacist who benefitted from racial politics, as the chief executive of the state, he would be remembered as an advocate for more liberal causes. He fought with the state legislature for equal funding for Black schools, for reforms in the state's convict-leased labor system, and to hold local sheriffs more accountable for lynchings, and in 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him a Federal District Court Judge.<sup>181</sup> He is most remembered for the Alabama Lawyers Code of Ethics, that he wrote in 1887. Carol Rice Andrews' a professor at the University of Alabama School of Law, wrote, "Alabama's 1887 Code of Legal Ethics was the primary model for the other codes of ethics in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The most important of these was the American Bar Association's 1908 Canons of Legal Ethics, which was a close replica of the 1887 Alabama Code." As multiple other bodies

---

<sup>179</sup> "Col. Peyton Dies Suddenly," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), September 18, 1900, 1.; "Partnership Notices," *The Times* (Richmond, VA), October 7, 1900, 15.; "Mr. Peyton Is No More," *The Richmond Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), January 12, 1902, 18.

<sup>180</sup> "Richmond Drowned," *The Times-Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), October 9, 1904, 19.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas Goode Jones (1890-94), Encyclopedia of Alabama, updated April 29, 2024, <https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/thomas-goode-jones-1890-94/>; Thomas Goode Jones, Alabama Men's Hall of Fame, accessed July 15, 2024, <https://www.samford.edu/alabama-mens-hall-of-fame/inductees/Jones.html>.

have used the ABA model, "it is difficult to find any modern discussion of legal ethics that does not credit the contribution of Alabama's 1887 Code of Legal Ethics."<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> Carol Rice Andrews, "The Lasting Legacy of the 1887 Code of Ethics of the Alabama State Bar Association," in *Gilded Age of Legal Ethics: Essays on Thomas Goode Jones' 1887 Code*, Carole Rice Andrews, Paul M. Pruitt, and David I. Durham, Tuscaloosa, AL: Bond Law Library, 2003), 7.

## Conclusions

In examining the 1891 AST encampment, it would be helpful to look at the status of other state militias at the time. If comparing the Alabama militia to the industrialized north is not entirely valid, as has been discussed, then the Southern states that border Alabama might provide a better comparison, but in 1891, there was no unifying federal legislation concerning the state militias. There was very little funding from the federal government, and state funding for the militias varied greatly. As a result, the organization, manning, and missions of the state militias in Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, and Georgia also varied widely.<sup>183</sup>

For instance, in November 1891, W.A. Love, a Mississippi National Guard major and a state legislature member, wrote to the Alabama AG saying that the new Mississippi constitution required funding for the National Guard. Love wrote asking how much Alabama allocated for its militia.<sup>184</sup> In 1891, the Mississippi National Guard comprised three infantry regiments, a battalion of artillery, and a battalion of cavalry. In the Mississippi AG's Annual Report for the year, there is no information on the strength of any of the organizations, no comment on their abilities to complete any assigned missions, and no reporting on any activities that took place during the year. The Mississippi AG stated, "Mississippi can never have a thoroughly efficient and reliable military force until the State makes a regular annual appropriation to defray the necessary expense of keeping up the organization."<sup>185</sup> There is no indication Mississippi held encampments before 1891.

---

<sup>183</sup> Martha Derthick, *The National Guard in Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 15.

<sup>184</sup> W.A. Love to the Alabama Adjutant General, November 19, 1891, ADAH, Adjutant General Administrative Files SG15215.

<sup>185</sup> *Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of Mississippi, for the Term Ending January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1892* (Jackson, MS: Power & McNeily State Printers, 1892), 5, 22-30.

In 1891, the Florida Militia held its first encampment in three years. The 1888 Florida encampment ended abruptly when the troops redeployed to Jacksonville to assist with a yellow fever outbreak. For the next three years, yellow fever in the state prevented large gatherings of troops. During the summer of 1891, the Florida Militia held an encampment in St. Augustine. Nineteen companies from five battalions were present. Capt. Thomas M. Woodruff of the U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regt. served as an inspector for the camp, and he submitted a detailed fourteen-page report. Woodruff found some of the same issues from the Alabama encampment, such as soldiers leaving menial tasks to hired servants. Still, he complimented the militia officers and their training, stating, "Taking the early hours and the heat into account, the amount of work that accomplished was astonishing."<sup>186</sup>

The Tennessee National Guard was composed of three regiments totaling twenty-four infantry companies. Tennessee held its biennial encampments for 1892 in Memphis for ten days. The Regular Army Inspector was Capt. Henry C. Ward, 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regt. While Capt. Ward found the Tennessee troops lacking in maintaining sanitary conditions in some areas of the camp, his overall impression of the encampment was positive. He praised the quartermaster department for providing quality food in sufficient quantities and the staff for conducting an instructive tactical exercise on the last day of the encampment.<sup>187</sup>

The Georgia Volunteers, the largest state force in the region, was composed of four regiments of infantry totaling thirty-six companies, three independent infantry battalions totaling eight companies, five independent infantry companies, and a regiment of cavalry with ten squadrons. The 1891 encampment was held in Savannah in June over four weeks, with the

---

<sup>186</sup> *Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of Florida for the Biennial Period Ending, December 31, 1890*, (Tallahassee, FL: The Floridian Printing Company, 1891), 11, 26-40.

<sup>187</sup> *Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of Tennessee for the Years 1891-1892* (Nashville, TN: Marshall & Bruce Printers to the State, 1893), 5-6, 35-37.



regiments attending sequentially.<sup>188</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Erwin served as an inspector for the encampment along with Lieut. C.P. Terrett of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regt. While Erwin's and Terrett's reports were unavailable, the Georgia AG and the regimental commanders indicated that although there were some issues with sanitation and equipment, the colonels were all happy with the performance of their men.<sup>189</sup>

Georgia also had the largest contingent of African American units. The Georgia Volunteers – Colored consisted of three battalions and four independent companies of infantry companies, totaling nineteen companies, one artillery battery, and one cavalry squadron.<sup>190</sup> There is no indication Georgia's Colored Volunteers held an encampment in 1891.

Except Mississippi, the states bordering Alabama conducted successful encampments in 1891 or 1892. The obvious inference is that the problems with the Alabama encampment were unique to the state. There are two reasonable answers.

First, throughout this narrative, there have been instances where the principal players have identified deficiencies within the AST and pushed those issues to the officials who should have been able to address the problems. Col. Thomas G. Jones, as the Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regt., reported that in Birmingham in 1888, his men were not issued overcoats or blankets, and as a result, he lost nearly ten percent of his force to illness. AG Charles P. Jones, in his annual reports, pointed out the need for a state armory and the deficiencies in the process for the selection of officers. The state government failed to act even after Thomas G. Jones became governor. It is a reasonable conclusion that part of the blame for the failure of the 1891 encampment can be placed on the Alabama state government. Neither Governor Seay nor Governor

---

<sup>188</sup> “Military Boys,” *The Atlanta Journal*, April 24, 1891, 7. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/968866041/>.

<sup>189</sup> *Report of the Adjutant and Inspector-General of the State of Georgia for the Year 1891* (Atlanta: Franklin Printing House, 1892), 10-24, 39-47.

<sup>190</sup> *Report of the Adjutant and Inspector-General of the State of Georgia for the Year 1891*, 3.

Jones seriously attempted to address any of the issues brought to them by the AST leadership. The AG's Annual Reports and his correspondence with the governors outline the impact of the lack of resources. Still, there are very few indications they responded to his correspondence, much less attempted to solve the problem.

A critical examination of the two men we have followed, Governor Thomas Jones and Lt. Col. Randolph Peyton, gives us our second issue. Thomas G. Jones's record during the Civil War and his handling of the Posey and Hawes Riots in Birmingham demonstrate that he was a brave and capable tactical officer, but his decision-making process leading up to the brigade encampment was flawed. As reported by 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Erwin, Jones's staff had advised him not to hold the brigade encampment in the summer of 1891, but he ignored them and gave them barely two months to prepare for the event, a serious miscalculation. We have little insight into the AST decision-making process. We have some data points. There seems to have been an effort to determine the number of troops attending the encampment, but no one used the data. All other details of the planning process within the AGO are lost.

Randolph Peyton gives us another facet of this issue. When Peyton assumed command of Co. K, he had two years of experience in the AST and at least three years in the Virginia Militia. Still, there is significant evidence that Peyton had not learned the fundamental lessons of being an effective officer. He failed to submit his surety bond for over six months, which negatively affected his ability to train his troops. He took troops out of the state without permission to do so. He possibly fabricated sending a telegram to his regimental commander that was never delivered, and he probably fabricated getting permission via telegram from the Governor of Tennessee. At Carbon Hill, he took fifty men to the field with no plans to feed or quarter them, again blaming an undelivered telegram for all his problems. He sent a telegram to the governor that overstated

the AST's role in an arrest. Then he quibbled with the governor over whether his regimental commander should have taken command on the scene and only surrendered his command because of the petty jealousies of the people around him. Finally, he arrested a senior non-commission officer and violated existing legal procedures for such an action.

This leads us to the worst aspect of the brigade encampment: the breakdown of discipline among the troops. Both 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut Erwin and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Phillips cited the lack of discipline as one of the most significant concerns in their reports. Erwin specifically singled out the AST's electoral system as a core issue. The state put these officers in a compromised position by allowing the election officers to command positions with no consideration of any other qualification beyond popularity. These officers had to discipline the troops needed to maintain their positions during the next election. As there were no qualification examinations, it would be possible, if not probably, for a popular candidate to get elected to command with limited abilities to lead and train his troops.

Again, Randolph Peyton provides an example. We know that for at least the first six months of his tenure at Co. K, the company conducted no meaningful training in military skills. The AST could not issue any weapons or equipment to his company for training because he did not provide his surety bond. The AG and his regimental commander had ample reason to relieve him of command, but short of charging him with a criminal offense, that would have been nearly impossible. His command authority came not from his superior officers but from state law and the men he commanded.

The failure was not limited to the company officers. After the AGO received the results of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut, Erwin's mid-April survey to determine how many soldiers would be in the encampment, the senior leaders of the AST had six weeks to plan for feeding the troops. Simple

math would tell them they had a certain number of seats in the mess halls, and they would have three times that number of soldiers. It should have been evident that a dining schedule would need to be communicated to the regiments and companies before they arrived in Mobile, but there is no indication any action was taken before the beginning of the encampment. Once the encampment began, it should have been relatively easy to communicate a dining schedule from the AGO to the regiments and the companies, but by the third day of the encampment, the command staff had either not communicated a schedule or their commands had been ignored by the companies. In either event, it was clear the senior staff could not lead a brigade-sized operation.

The counterargument is that the AST effectively dealt with civil unrest in Birmingham in 1883 and 1888, and the 1891 encampment did not accurately reflect AST's capabilities. The success of the AST in the Posey and Hawes Riots can be attributed chiefly to Thomas Jones's individual efforts. His personal courage and ability to read the environment allowed him to combine and use units effectively. Essential to his success in both instances was his ability to determine his need for additional troops and to quickly and effectively communicate that requirement to the governor. Also, neither of the riots required troops on the ground for more than a week or involved fewer than five hundred soldiers. Also, in 1888, Jones lost ten percent of his command to illness in just a few days. In any sustained operation, that attrition rate due to illness would be unsustainable.

Political factors also appear to have permeated the AST decision-making process. Randolph Peyton was a problematic company commander. His resignation was probably a relief to both the governor and the AG. We must ask why they appointed him an Aide-de-Camp to the governor and promoted him to lieutenant colonel. The reason is probably in the last line of Capt.

Wilkins's letter recommending Peyton for the position. His appointment to the position "would please the people of the city." Peyton was well-liked in Birmingham, and appointing to the second highest rank in the AST would be a popular move in the growing city.

It is hard to argue that with no plan for effective training programs at any of the AST encampments, the most likely goals for the events were social and political, neither of which lends itself to military discipline.

Should the state of Alabama been aware of the requirements to build an effective state military organization? The answer is yes. As the literature indicates, after the Railroad Strikes of 1877, the capacity of the state militias to cope with civil unrest and the ability and desire of the government to commit Regular Army troops to deal with civil unrest was a topic of national public debate. The passing of the *Posse Commutates* Act should have been a clear indicator that Alabama could only rely on the AST in the event of widespread unrest. Alabama began the reactivation of its militia during the midst of this transformation in the militias and Regular Army, and the leaders in Alabama could have learned from the experiences of the other states. They did not.

By 1891, the problems with the AST were obvious. While other states had spent a decade reforming, rearming, and equipping the state militias, Alabama had done nothing to reform the militia since its reactivation in 1877. AST leaders such as Col. Thomas G. Jones clearly reported the state was providing insufficient resources to the AST. Still, the political leaders in the state, including Thomas G. Jones after he became governor, took no action to fix the problems. Regular Army officers who inspected the AST repeatedly identified deficiencies with the militia, highlighting the lack of discipline among the troops, and the system of electing officers with no examinations of their qualifications did not identify effective leaders, but the state took no action.

If we accept that politics is dividing finite resources to answer multiple needs, the most likely explanation is that the Alabama government did not apply more resources to the state militia if politicians did not see the need. While labor unrest ripped through the industrialized states in 1877, Alabama, which had just begun industrialization, avoided the unrest. At that time, labor unions were just starting to find a foothold in Alabama, and the first widespread labor unrest in Alabama took place in 1890. The only involvement of state troops in that strike was in Carbon Hill after the strike had ended. The state would not call the AST for a large-scale strike in the Alabama coal fields until 1894.

The State of Alabama failed to provide financial support to update its arms, equipment, and facilities, ensure the AST had competent trained leaders, and hold its officers to an acceptable standard of conduct. The most likely reason was that the politicians did not think it was necessary. The encampment of 1891 should have been a wake-up call for the state that the AST was not capable of deploying troops of significant size for even the shortest periods. The actions of Governor Jones, the AG, and other AST leaders in the immediate aftermath of the disastrous encampment indicate it did not.