



Figure 1. An 1870s composite view of the Tallassee Armory from Fuller & Steuart's *Firearms of the Confederacy*.

# The Tallassee Armory

William B. Floyd

In the early 1950s I made my first trip to Tallassee, Alabama, to visit the Tallassee Mills plant of the Mount Vernon Woodberry Mills of Baltimore, Maryland. This modern textile plant was located on the east side of the Tallapoosa River adjacent to a dam that extended across the river with a power plant on the western end and a group of buildings below the power plant along the western side of the river. In the reception area of the main office I noticed a carbine over the door leading to the offices. I was told that this was manufactured in a building across the river by the Confederate States government during the War Between the States.

I was later presented with a book published by the company titled *A History of Tallassee* that contained information that was so valuable to me: this was the beginning of my interest in the Tallassee Armory. A visit to the buildings, now owned by Alabama Power Company, was an experience I shall never forget. My research uncovered the fact that the original records of the Armory have never been found and, in order to get the real story, I would have to do a great deal of searching. I have found no record of the Federals ever reaching the area during the war, contradicting a story told by a former workman who came with the machinery from Richmond, and was published in the fine book *Firearms of the Confederacy* by Fuller and Stewart. Records presented here will help clear up the story of the Armory and its product. Accounts are taken from the letters sent to Tallassee by other persons in the Ordnance Department, copies of letters found in the Officer's files, the files of the firm of Barnett, Micou & Company, owners of the property, the Official Records, and work by Virginia Nobel Golden, author of *The History of Tallassee*.

By mid 1863, Col. Josiah Gorgas, Chief of Ordnance of the Confederate States, had reached the conclusion that standards for small arms manufactured by the Ordnance Department at its many armories had to be developed, and new factories had to be built deeper into the heartland of the Confederacy away from the constant threat of enemy action that disrupted production.

Col. Gorgas approved two new factories, one for the rifled musket and another for a new carbine. The former was to be built in Macon, Ga., with new machinery from England and the latter to be built at some other location to be determined later.<sup>1</sup> The new carbine was to be muzzle



loading, caliber 58, and similar to the Cook & Bros. carbine made in Athens, Ga.

When the pressures began to mount on Richmond in early 1864 and the safety of the Armory was in question, plans were rushed to pack up and move the machinery from the carbine factory. Macon was the first choice of a location, but James H. Burton, Supt. of Armories, advised Col. Gorgas that there was not room there for the workers and families nor buildings suitable for the factory. With Atlanta threatened, the suggestion was made to ship the machinery to Augusta, Ga., or Columbia, S.C., for safety.<sup>2</sup> A letter to Burton by Col. Gorgas on April 28th suggested Tallassee, Alabama, as the best choice for the new factory. The operation of a large textile plant on the Tallapoosa River, some six miles up river from the railroad of the Montgomery and West Point Railway Co. line at Cowles Station on the east side of the Tallapoosa River was offered. Burton was to visit the site and report back as quickly as possible.<sup>3</sup>

On June 1st, Burton sent a long letter to Gorgas describing the location and his visit with the Mill owners. A copy of this report was sent to Captain Charles P. Bolles, who was selected by Gorgas to accompany Burton to Tallassee and get the operation under way while waiting on the machinery to arrive.<sup>4</sup> Captain Bolles was a wise choice: as an Artillery Officer he was in charge of the early construction of the sand batteries at the entrance to the Cape Fear River at Wilmington, N.C., that latter became Fort Fisher. He was commissioned a Captain of Artillery, CSA, July 8, 1862, and assigned to the Fayetteville Arsenal & Armory. There he also com-

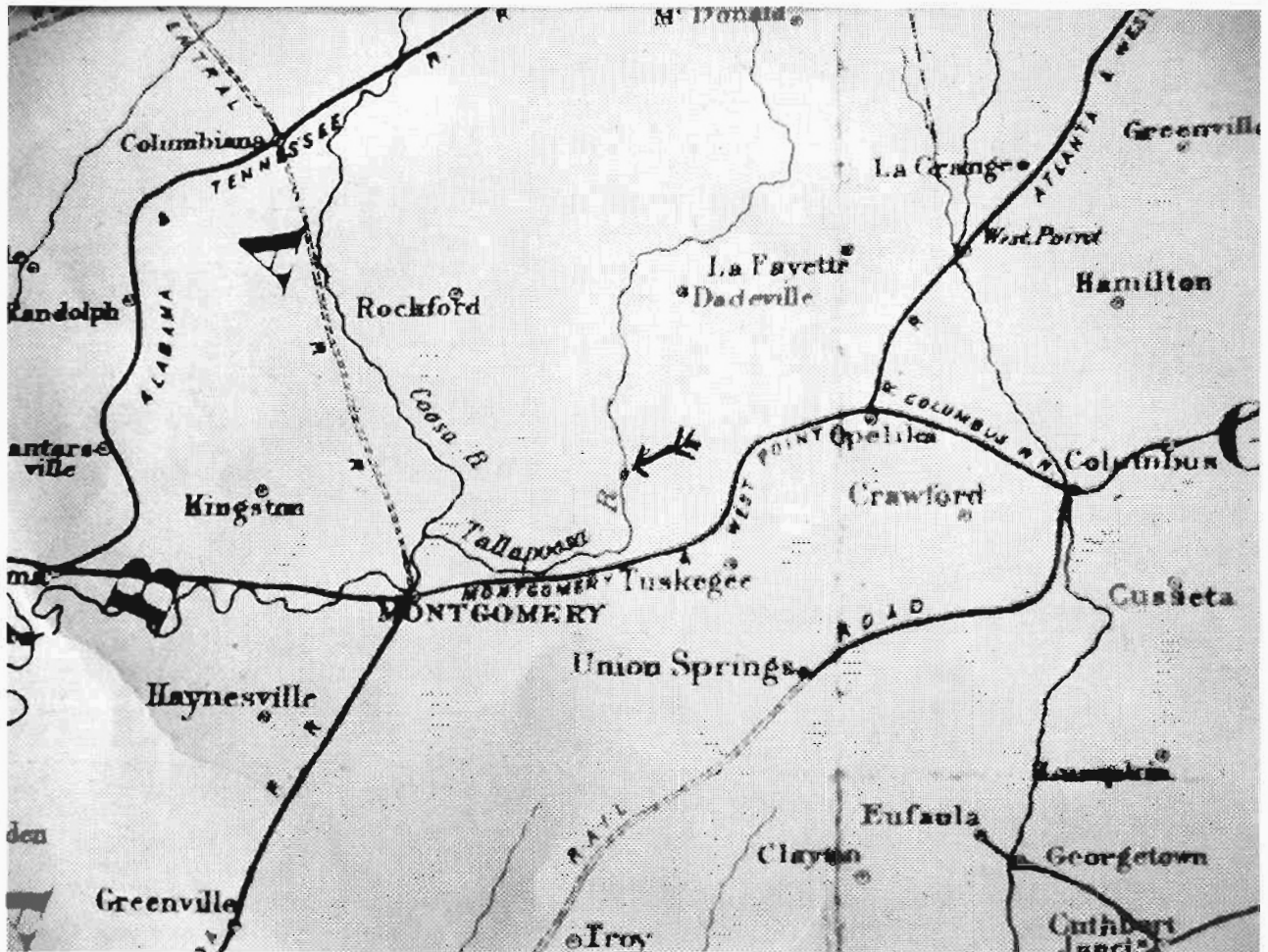


Figure 2. A pre-1860 map showing the Tallassee Armory location (arrow).

manded Company A, 2nd Battalion, N.C. Local Defence Troops, known as the Fayetteville Arsenal Battalion.

Quoting from the Burton report is the best description of the Tallassee location:

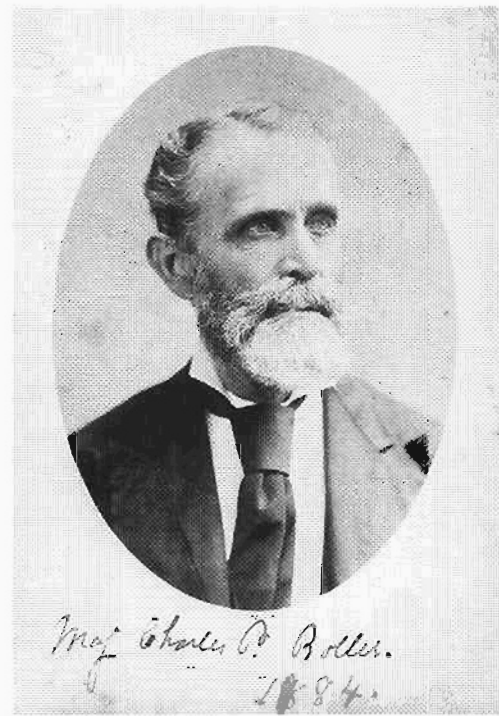
Colonel, In compliance with your instructions to Supt. J. H. Burton and Captain C. P. Bolles as contained in your letters of the 28th April and \_ May, constituting them a joint commission for the purpose of visiting Tallassee, Ala., and there making arrangements for the reception of the carbine machinery and operatives to be removed from Richmond, we have the honor to report that we have visited Tallassee and remained there from the 28th to the 31st inst. With reference to the accommodation of the machinery, we found the only buildings adapted to this purpose to consist of two cotton mills, an old one, and one of recent erection, the former full of machinery, in active operation, the latter about one-half filled with machinery also in active operation. The choice of selection lay between the possession of the whole of the old building, and the two upper floors of the four story new building. The latter would afford room sufficient for all the machinery to be removed, except the trip hammers, but the location so high we deemed too inconvenient, in addition to which objection there pertained the further objective of risk

from fire, and too close association with the operatives of the cotton mill. We therefore decided in favor of the old building, by which complete isolation from the large cotton mill is secured. We have arranged with Messrs. Barnett, Micou & Co. for the possession of the smaller factory building as soon as the machinery now in it can be removed to the large factory, which removal will be commenced immediately. As the building secured does not afford sufficient floor room for the accomodation of the carbine machinery, it will be necessary to erect a temporary addition to it, about 80 feet long, and 40 feet wide, two stories high, with plenty of windows to meet the requirements of filing operatives. There will have to be erected also a temporary building for trip hammer and other forging operations. The wall of the last named building Messrs B. M. & Co require to be of stone, as a measure of safety to their large factory in case of fire, the space between the buildings, as proposed, being not more than 100 feet. The expense of erection of these walls will not be great as stone abounds on the spot, of a nature easily quarried. We have arranged with Messrs. B. M. & Co. for the exclusive use of these premises or both for the war, with the privilege of extending the lease to five years should the war terminate earlier. Also privileges of grading the ground and erecting such



additional buildings thereon as may be necessary to the purpose in view, the use of the water wheel and gearing now in the mill, with water to propel it, with the right to increase the power and supply of water, to meet possible future contingencies. Also the unobstructed right of way to and from the premises. We have agreed to allow compensation to Messrs B. M. & Co. for loss of time in removing and reerecting their machinery, which will require from four to five weeks (estimated by the owners to accomplish). The above arrangements for the accommodation of the carbine machinery, which are not all that could be desired, in view of the delay incident to the vacation of the premises and the erection of the additional buildings, are the best that circumstances permitted us to make.

With reference to the accommodations of the workmen and their families, we found that there was none available for families and but little for unmarried men, the town of Tallassee consisting entirely of the cottages of the factory operatives, all of which were fully occupied. At the present time board & lodging for about thirty single men can be provided, and arrangements to this extent have been made. We have further arranged with Messrs B. M. & Co. for the lease on same terms and for the same time as stated for the factory premises of a sufficient number of town lots for the erection of twenty five double tenements for families, giving to each of the families a garden spot of a full quarter of an acre. These lots are located in the best part of the town and are convenient to the factory. We have agreed with Messrs. B. M. & Co. that they shall have the option of purchase at valuation, of all the buildings (factory & tenement) erected by the Govt. at the expiration of the lease, failing in which they are to be removed by the Govt. at the expiration of the lease, or within ninety days of expiration of lease. All C.S. Govt. taxes on the property leased to be paid by the Govt. It will thus be seen that no accommodations for families can be supplied until some of the Govt. tenements are erected. The facilities for getting lumber in adequate quantity are not such as will enable the erection of the buildings to progress rapidly. Messrs. B. M. & Co. have a sawmill on the spot, but its utmost capacity is but 2000 feet of lumber per day. There are two other small mills in the vicinity, but their united capacity is but 2000 feet per day. There is a large steam mill about eight miles distant, capable of producing say 6000 feet per day, but the readiest measure of transportation of lumber furnished will be first to ship it on the RR to a point within six miles of Tallassee and thence hauling by wagons & teams to the town. These are all the available sources of supply for lumber. Bricks can be made on the spot and operations to do this have been commenced. Lime can be obtained also from Youngsboro, about 60 miles distant, by RR to within six miles of Tallassee. All supplies from a distance



**Figure 3.** A photo of Major Charles H. Bolles, from the North Carolina Archives.

will be hauled these six miles, crossing the Tallapoosa river by means of a ferry flat. There is a grist mill on the spot, and Messrs B. M. & Co. have agreed to assist the Govt. in the necessary supply of provisions for the Armories.

The country about Tallassee is represented as not being very productive. Below the land is better and there are many fine plantations. Mr. Micou, in behalf of the Company he represents, expresses his earnest desire to assist the Govt. in every possible way in connection with the Armory at Tallassee, and his cooperation will be of the greatest importance as he controls nearly all the supplies for miles around by his facilities for barter and exchange for the factory products.

With reference to the location of an Armory permanent at Tallassee, we are of the opinion that the circumstances are not favorable to the erection of such works on that side of the river, for the reason that the best factory sites are now occupied and the water power would have to be derived from the canal of the factory Co. below their works, thus subjecting the Govt. to possible problems of operations incident to repairs & c. at the Govt. Works. We visited and examined the location on the side of the river opposite to the town of Tallassee and we are of the opinion that should the Govt. decide to establish a permanent armory at this point an adequate water power could be developed and a good site for a town on the high lands adjacent could be purchased. The question, however, of selecting a permanent location is one of much importance and we respectfully submit the propriety of making this the special duty of a commission to be appointed hereafter and who can give the subject the full consideration advisably.

Messrs. Barnett, Micou & Co. were unable to name the rent to be paid for the property proposed to be leased to the Govt but proposed to leave it to arbitration and to which we assented. This can best be effected by the officers in charge of the Armory who can then make the lease in proper form

All which is respectfully submitted.

We have the honor to be, Colonel.

Respectfully your obdt servts, James H. Burton, Supt. of Armories.<sup>5</sup>

Captain Bolles appears to have arrived with his baggage in hand, since a letter of June 2nd, 1864, from Burton was addressed to him in Tallassee as commander of C.S. Armory and, enclosed his report to Gorgas, advising him that he was shipping 10 boxes of 8 × 10 inch window glass for the new additions by the way of the Q.M. Dept.<sup>6</sup> Burton advises him that his order for glass had been turned over to Col. Cuyler at the Arsenal in Macon, Ga., and that he had better find housing in Montgomery, Alabama, for the families of the workers until such time as he could complete quarters in Tallassee.<sup>7</sup> On June 16 Bolles advised Burton that he was enclosing a draft of the agreement on the grounds and buildings to be erected with Messrs. B. M. & Co.<sup>8</sup>

A summary of work done at the C.S. Armory at Tallassee in the Month of June, 1864: articles fabricated: tools, 6 pick axes, 6 temporary dwellings houses, one office building 15 × 30, 2000 ft. clap boards, 4860 feet timber heaved for sills for buildings. Also were hired 5 foreman, 91 mechanics and 4 negro laborers. Two houses were repaired for temporary use by employees. The carbine machinery from Richmond had arrived at Cowles Station on Montgomery & West Pt. RR and was transferred by wagons the six miles to Tallassee. Bolles also excavated ground and blasted rock for the smiths, tilt hammer, grinding shop and extension of the cotton factory leased. Ground was cleared for employee's housing. Having received from Major Wagner of Montgomery on June 16th, 1864, hinges, screws, claw hammers, 10,405 feet lumber on 14th and 12,992 feet on the 27th.

The machinery was stored by B. M. & Co.

The list of the machinery arriving from Richmond is not dated but was found in the citizen's files on Barnett, Micou & Co.

By June 20th Bolles had purchased tools and supplies from Barnett & Micou for the buildings amounting to over \$7500.00.<sup>9</sup> Knowing the slow pace of military red tape in ordering supplies, Bolles chose instead to get what he needed locally and speed things up. He had been chosen by the Ordnance Department to get the Fayetteville Armory and Arsenal into operation in 1862 when the C.S. Govt. took over from the State of North Carolina.

All cotton mill machinery had been removed by Septem-

ber 30th and Bolles approved invoices from B. M. & Co. amounting to a total of \$76,109.67.<sup>10</sup> The account at Barnett & Micou has by now grown to over \$100,000.00. Bolles complained bitterly to Burton that he needed money and material desperately. He was able to get most of his building supplies and other supplies from Barnett & Micou but at their charges, not at cash prices. It was not until late August that he was able to receive a shipment of stores of 10 lbs borax, 10 lbs copper (pig) and 20 lbs glue from Lt. Charles Selden, M.S. Keeper at Macon Armory.<sup>11</sup> This allowed a small number of workers to produce some components for the carbine.

Invoices from B. M. & Co. show a large number of slaves were hired by Bolles to build the houses and make the Armory additions.<sup>12</sup>

By the last of August, Bolles was ready to start up a small part of his machinery but was not able to secure oil needed to lubricate the bearings. Burton replied that he should use oil extracted from lard as B. M. & Co. does. He also inquires if he has yet erected his tilt hammer and smith shops and asks "You speak of the addition of the wing on the North side of the old factory as the only necessary addition to that building. Please explain."<sup>13</sup> Thus we see that Bolles is trying to build and operate a factory at the same time.<sup>13</sup> On the 29th Burton wrote, acknowledging Bolles letters of 22, 24th, & 25th on various requests for information. At the end of this letter he comments: "I am pleased to know that you are getting on so well with machinery, buildings & c in the face of difficulties."<sup>14</sup>

Of course no one wrote Bolles explaining the Union invasion of Northern Georgia.

From these letters and reports it is easy to see that no carbines have been produced.

On September the 8th Burton wrote to Major W. R. Hunt at the Niter & Mining Bureau in Selma the following:

The requisitions of Capt. C. P. Bolles, Comdg. C.S. Armory Tallassee, Ala., have been forwarded to me by Col. Gorgas, Chief of Ordnance, with instructions to give them proper direction. The following described rolled iron of best quality is required by Capt. Bolles for manufacture of arms, and I respectively request that you will supply the same as early day as possible, viz:

1000 lbs bar iron 1½ × ¾, 100 lbs bar iron 2 × ¾, 1000 lbs bar iron 2 × 3 in., 800 lbs bar iron 4½ square, 1000 lbs bar iron 1¼ round, 1000 lbs. bar iron ½ round and 2500 lbs bar iron in section as per drawing (see below). Should occasion require you will please correspond with Capt. Bolles in relation to the above.<sup>15</sup>

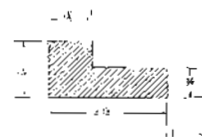




Figure 5. The Tallassee Armory buildings from the east, looking west, as they were in the 1870s. (Note: it was not possible to include Figure 4, a copy of Major Bolles' commission as a Captain, July 8, 1862.)

No sign of urgency, just passing the buck. This shipment would be the major metals needed to complete his carbines and get his production under way. No carbines have yet been manufactured. It is interesting at this point to see that Bolles has gone over the head of Burton directly to Gorgas. It is quite evident by the letter of Burton to Gorgas on the 15th of September that he was not pleased with Bolles and he recommended Mr. Walter C. Hodgkins, who was in his employment at the pistol factory and formerly of the firm of D. C. Hodgkins & Sons.<sup>16</sup> Since the date of this letter is of the same date as one where he requested to Maj. Hunt in Selma for the iron, it appears that Gorgas was fed up with Burton because he selected instead Maj. William V. Taylor of his own staff to take over the job in Tallassee.

On September 20th, five days after he had written Gorgas about Hodgkins, Burton wrote Bolles in Tallassee this letter:

Captain, Your two letters of the 17th received. The brick masons will be sent on to you tomorrow. I have no plasterers regularly employed as such but will endeavor to send you brickmasons who can do that class of work also. With reference to hand-stockers you require, I have none who can be transferred to you as I have never employed them at this Armory. I advise that you communicate with the Commanding Officers of the camp of instruction in Ala. and make known your wants and necessities. They may be able to detail as "light duty men" mechanics who can learn to stock arms. I think

Col. M. H. Wright Comdg. Columbus Ga. Arsenal may have some stockers. Write to him also and ascertain if he will transfer them to you. If he has such workman but declines to transfer them, write to Col. Gorgas. State the case fully and request him to decide to which work they are most essential, and to give orders accordingly. I believe them to be employed at Columbus on repairs of arms, but I think you may so state to Col. Gorgas.

In regard to the omission on the part of Col. Gorgas to furnish you with instructions with reference to the payment of detailed men, in accordance with the late act of Congress. I presume it has been inadvertently overlooked at the Bureau. I enclose herewith for your information a copy of the instructions rec'd at the Macon Ordnance Establishment from Col. Gorgas and also a copy of the schedule of rates of wages and classification of the workmen adapted by the officers in command of the several Ord. establishments here. I suggest that you at once make a similar classification of the workmen you employ and determine the rates of wages according to the cost of living in Tallassee as compared with that at Richmond and the rates of wages established at Richmond. Provisions are cheaper in Tallassee than in Macon. A reduction of 20 per cent on the Richmond schedule of wages has been made for this locality and I suggest that 25 per cent reduction would not be too great for Tallassee. The rates of wages as stated in the enclosed classification are in addition to the \$2.00 per day specified in the Act of Congress, thus a first class machinist

will receive the \$2.00 per day and \$5.00 in addition as extra compensation for skill etc., as specified in the General Order No. 66, a copy of which I enclose. I will endeavor to procure and enclose to you with this as it is specially referred to in the Bureau instructions as contained in Circular No. 61 and accompanied it from Richmond. Detailed men in the Macon Ord. Establishments were paid in accordance with the enclosed schedule for the month of August also.

Should you desire further instructions in this connection write me for them. Please also send me a copy of your classification and schedule of wages when you adapt it. I am Captain, Respectively your obt. svt., James H. Burton, Supt. of Armories.<sup>17</sup>

Burton seems to be still passing the buck to Bolles by asking him to again contact Gorgas, while he is in charge of the Armories and seems to be of little help with the problems at Tallassee. In the meantime Bolles wrote Burton on the subject of gunstocks, which Burton answered on the 20th of September:

Captain, Your letter of the 15th inst., on the subject of gunstocks is received. I am quite of the opinion that special efforts will have to be made to secure an adequate supply of gunstocks from the region of country above Columbia, S.C. and I am also of the opinion that the Govt. will have to take the matter in hand and establish mills for that purpose. You do not inform me whether or not Col. Gorgas has given you special instructions on this subject, but from the tenor of your letter I presume he has in as much as I addressed a letter to him on the 1st. August in relation the matter, copy of which letter I enclose herewith for your information. I have no doubt but a suitable portable steam engine & boiler could be purchased here for \$1500 each. Wagons are frequently advertised for sale. A special order from the Chief of Ordnance must be obtained before mules & horses can be purchased for Ordnance purposes. If you have received instructions from the Ordnance Bureau to establish mills etc. for getting out gunstocks it will be well for you to send a competent person.,  
Burton.<sup>18</sup>

Again on the 20th Burton wrote Bolles concerning his letter requesting his help in securing stockers, to which he replied that he has never employed stockers, as such at Macon. This is not true because in 1863 he had hired stockers when he set up the Armory in Macon. Richmond in the meantime had moved all the stock manufacturing from Richmond to Macon.

In the meantime Bolles wrote Burton that the operatives are dissatisfied at Tallassee and that he now has several important departments of the Armory in operation, to which Burton acknowledged on Sept. 23.<sup>19</sup> Here we see that only

parts of the Armory are now in operation and still no finished product:

During the months of October & December I found but little in communication between Burton and Bolles, but fortunately a complete record of purchases of supplies from Barnett, Micou & Co. have survived, so we can follow the progress by comparing items purchased by Bolles.<sup>20</sup> On Oct. 5th 10000 bricks; Oct. 17, 30000 bricks; 21st. 14000 bricks; 29th 10000 bricks, and such other items as lime, lumber and nails. One item, however, that stands out is 93 lbs. of bar iron on the 24th. This, of course, could have been used in the buildings. During November another 25000 bricks were purchased plus 55 gallons of lard oil, an item suggested by Burton earlier. Another 123½ lbs. of bar iron was purchased on Nov. 7th. One item of interest was 6000 well bricks: this probably was a type of curved brick. During the month of December large orders for files of various types amounting to \$2541.00 were purchased. This indicates to me that the manufacturing of carbines has at last begun. Another order for \$3048.00 for files was entered about the same time. Also during November and December, large numbers of slaves were hired from B. M. & Co. This seems for construction work, as their time varied from 3 to 24 days at from 4.50 to 8.00 dollars per day, more than Burton had recommended for operatives.

By this time every one was beginning to worry about the safety of the Tallassee operation. Messrs Barnett, Micou & Co. had written to Burton suggesting that employers form an organization, including their own men, to defend the properties against raids from the enemy. Burton, in a letter to Gorgas on Sept. 29th, recommended that such an organization be formed and to drill twice each week from 4 to 6 PM on Tuesdays and Fridays.<sup>21</sup>

In the rush to finish the buildings at Tallassee, Burton inserted an advertisement in the Macon newspaper on September 29th for negro carpenters to go to Tallassee to be employed on Government work and to whom liberal wages will be paid.

Bolles had written to Burton for a copy of the joint report to Gorgas on the location of the Armory at Tallassee to which Burton replied on Oct. 12th with the copy.<sup>22</sup> This indicates Bolles is reviewing his options to ask for a relief and reassignment of duties. He still does not know of the choice of a successor.

The great mystery connected with the production of much needed carbines is, why did the Confederate Ordnance Department, after closing the operation in Richmond prior to moving to Tallassee, allow the production of the same carbine to cease at Cook & Bros. in Athens, Ga.? This was a





Figure 6. Operative's quarters built by the Ordnance Department on King Street in 1865 as they look today. "Operatives" were supervisors and managers.

fine operation with a great record of producing a good product in quantity with adequate machinery, workmen and buildings. This foul-up is revealed in the following letter dated September 24th from Burton to Gorgas in Richmond and is quoted in full for your information:

Colonel, I have just received a letter from Mr. F. W. Cook, one of the proprietors of Cooks Armory at Athens, Ga., calling my attention to the condition of that establishment at the present time. He informs me that the works have been closed for the two months last passed, in consequence of the Government failing to pay anything for work done since the 1st. March last. In view of the exposed position of the Armory at the present time, he feels anxiety with reference to the safety of his machinery and proposes to remove it, if the Government does not assume responsibility for it at Athens. He requests my advice generally and especially in regard to a safe place to remove the machinery to. I have replied, declining to assume such responsibility without orders from you. He states the indebtedness of the concern to the Government to be about "\$250,000" but the machinery is worth much more than that, and "does not desire to run it again during the war if once taken down, that in that case the Government had better take as much as will pay our debt and pay us the balance if they want the whole." If the Messrs. Cook are so large in debt to the Government as stated above, would it not be polite for the Government to adopt some means by which to secure itself beyond the simple fact of holding a lien upon the machinery in the present location? Athens is, beyond

doubt, quite uncovered to the enemy at the present time and in view of this fact it would not seem to be advisable to resume the manufacture under existing circumstances. It seems to me that in view of the suspension of the work and the large interest the Government has in the machinery, it might be the best course for the Government to either take enough machinery to satisfy its claim, or take the whole machinery at a fair valuation, and remove it to a safer point. It would seem the only simple justice also to the proprietors for the Government to relieve them of at least so much of their responsibility as is represented by their machinery. It is a great pity that those works have not been able to go on steadily as I was very favorably impressed with all I saw on the occasion of my official visit to that Armory in April last. In my report at that time I recommend the purchase of the works by the Government.

I am not familiar with the entire history of the establishment of the works, and the precise character of the financial relations existing between the Govt. and the Messrs. Cook; but in light in which the subject is now presented to my mind it would seem polite for the Government to make some arrangements to close its connection with the Messrs. Cook and remove the machinery to a place of greater safety. It is at the same time possible that with your superior information on the subject you may think otherwise. My object in the present circumstance is simply to direct you attention to the interest of the Government in connection with the works in question, Jas. H. Burton Supt.<sup>23</sup>



The relationship with the above and Tallassee will become clear as we go along.

Burton wrote Bolles on November 5th that he was shipping a supply of scrap brass to him as he requested in his letter of the 3rd. This was a change: at last he was helping on supplies. On the 11th of November he wrote Bolles that he regrets he cannot supply him 300 to 400 lbs. of steel from 1 inch to 4 inch square and that it cannot be purchased in Macon. He states:

I have also to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 7th with accompanying Monthly Report, Form No. 30 for the month of October ulto and am pleased to note the fabrication of 105 carbines during that month at Tallassee Armory.<sup>24</sup>

This is the first mention of any carbines being fabricated at Tallassee and it is about the last record of letters to Bolles I found.

The last invoices by Barnett, Micou & Co. signed by Bolles were dated Jan. 3, 6, 7 and finally the 18th, 1865. These invoices were for rope, laths, old bagging, brick and finally 65 lb. iron. The first invoice for Major William V. Taylor to approve was dated Jan. 31, 1865, and this was for laborers hired from B. M. & Co.

January, 1865, must have been a busy month for Bolles, who was occupied with finishing building quarters for the operatives and finishing the Armory additions. No record has been found to show work done. Just how many carbines were produced during January is unknown. Stocks were a real problem; good iron for springs was holding up production. The military actions had begun, after the fall of Atlanta, and all of central Georgia was in danger from raids. On January 30th, Burton wrote Gorgas, in answer to his request for advice on the removal of the Pistol Factory at Columbus Ga. to Tallassee, to which he replied:

I beg to state that there is no spare room in the buildings at Tallassee controlled by the Government in which to erect the pistol machinery, and for this reason I cannot advise its removal to that place. There are other reasons which would in my opinion render such a step unadvisable, among which is the fact of there being no spare buildings for operatives. As soon as my duties will permit I will make a visit of inspection to the Columbus Armory, after which I will make such suggestions as may seem to me most expeditious in connection therewith.<sup>25</sup>

On Jan. 31st. Burton wrote C. H. Ford, Master Armorer at Cooks Armory in Athens:

By order of the Chief of Ordnance I propose leaving for Richmond tomorrow morning, which will cause my absence for at least three weeks.<sup>26</sup>

Gorgas must have changed his mind, for on the same day Burton wrote to Col. Gorgas acknowledging his telegram and describes his visit to Athens on the 12th January for the purpose of the purchase of the armory of Cook & Bros. by the Government from the owners and had returned on the 21st to Macon. Thus the Ordnance Department would take over Cooks Armory and this would be the main purpose of Burton's visit to Richmond.

By Feb. 5th Major Taylor had taken over as Superintendent of the Tallassee Armory, as Bolles wrote the following letter:

Col. J. H. Burton, Dr Colonel: As I am relieved and will leave here in a week or two, please send Certificate by return mail so that I can get paid off at Auburn before I return home. I wish you could make arrangements to come on here before I leave. C. P. Bolles.<sup>27</sup>

On Feb. 6th the following letter was sent to Taylor:

Sir; In the absence of Col. Burton, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 31st. ulto & 1st. respective. In reply to the first I have to state that the 3 inch steel can probably be furnished from this Armory, but it is packed away among other stores and we have not yet been able to get at it. The spring steel we can not find either at the Armory or Arsenal. We can also send you 2 brickmasons in a few days. The men have not been paid at the Armory for three months and it will not be convenient for them to leave here until they are able to pay board, etc. I think, however, that by the last of this week you may expect them. Col. Burton is absent at Richmond where he will be detained two or three weeks. Signed J. Fuss, Actg. M. O. In charge.<sup>28</sup>

At long last some promise of help!

On Feb. 6th Maj. Taylor wrote Gorgas the following:

Sir: I have the honor to request that this Armory be furnished with steel of the following sizes from some of the armories or arsenals of the country. Many efforts have been made lately to procure it in this locality and applications have been made on several arsenals for it without success: 100 pounds of sheer steel 1 × 2 in., 100 lb sheer steel 2 × 4 in., 250 lbs. sheer steel ½ × ¾ in. The largest sizes are needed for making tools. and the small are for main springs.

The necessity of having the best quality of steel for main springs has been lately very apparent at this Armory, where eighty per cent of the springs finished and tempered have been broken in proving them. I should be glad to have the quantity of steel above mentioned sent to this establishment as soon as practical. Naylor's sheer steel if it can be procured signed W. V. Taylor Major Comdg.<sup>29</sup>

Action at last. On the 16th of Feb. Fuss wrote Taylor:

**The Confederate States of America,**  
*To Barnett Micou & Co*

1864		REMARKS, SHOWING THE OBJECT OF THE PURCHASE OR EXPENDITURE
<i>Sept 30<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>For Expenses incurred in removal of Cotton Factory machinery from "Old" Factory to "New" Factory (a detailed account of which is annexed hereto) viz:</i> <i>" Labor, in transferring machinery from one building to another, in repairing machinery injured by removal and stowaging the same</i> <i>" Material, acquired and expended in readjusting machinery removed to another building to make room for "Carbin Factory" in "Old" Factory</i>	<i>This acct is made out in accordance with agreement (Art. 5<sup>th</sup>), accompanying this voucher</i> <i>Approved</i> <i>Capt. A. C. [Signature]</i>
	<i>8495 19</i>	
	<i>30707 48</i>	
	<i>39252 67</i>	
<i>Approved, for Thirty Nine Thousand Two Hundred &amp; Fifty Two Dollars Sixty Seven Cents.</i> <i>Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1864</i> <i>Capt. A. C. [Signature] Commanding Officer.</i>		
<i>Received, from</i> _____ <i>Dollars</i> _____ <i>Cents, in full of the above account.</i>		
U. S. ARMORY, TALLASSEE, ALA. } 186 } (Signed Duplicate.)		

Figure 7. The invoice from Barnett, Micou & Co. for removal of mill machinery, 1864.

The 3 inch steel and scrap brass has been shipped as you have been advised by Lt. Seldon. An exchange for a small quantity of spring steel was effected with a view of procuring some for your use but as it is only  $\frac{3}{8} \times \frac{3}{8}$  it will be too small for making main springs. If you find that it could be made to answer your purpose, some of it will be sent you. We have at this Armory about 500 gunstocks sent here about a year ago from Richmond intended for Rifle Muskets, sufficiently seasoned, I think, for use. We have also a number of stocks that were condemned while we were machining stocks for the Richmond Armory, many of which would no doubt make good stocks for carbines. If you can send a pattern of the smallest dimensions that will answer, I will have them selected and sent you. Two brickmasons will leave here on tomorrow or next day morning., J. Fuss A. M. A. in Charge<sup>30</sup>

What a change! On the 18th Fuss advises Taylor he has sent him two of his best brickmasons who also can do plastering.<sup>31</sup> On the 28th Fuss wrote Taylor as follows:

Major Yours of 22nd inst. rec'd yesterday by the hands of Mr. Price. Mr. Price has selected 260 of the condemned stocks which he thinks will answer for the carbines. The stocks & steel will be shipped today. I will inform Col. Burton

of your need of stocks when he returns and it may be that he will order the 500 stocks remaining here to be turned over to your establishment. We have no nails of the sizes you need (4 & 6) that could be spared and I do not know where any could be procured. J. Fuss<sup>32</sup>

On the 22 March Taylor wrote Burton:

I fear that the production of arms at this Armory up to the present time will give but little satisfaction at any date. As to the number fabricated, in quantity they are very creditable. At present we have on hand 400 which we need subject to order from the Chief of Ordnance.<sup>33</sup>

Military actions were heating up everywhere. Selma had been captured, Montgomery is threatened and the threat to Tallassee is real, judging from the following telegram sent by Burton to Lieut. Gen. Richard (Dick) Taylor in Meridian Mississippi:

Lieut. Gen. Richard Taylor, Comdg. Division of the west, Meridian Mississippi. Do you advise the removal of the machinery of the Armory at Tallassee near Montgomery? Answer., James H. Burton, Supt. Armories.<sup>34</sup>

Then Telegram to Taylor:

Maj. W. V. Taylor, Commdg. C. S. Armory, Tallassee

Ala.: Proceed to make packing cases for your machinery at once but do not suspend operations on arms until further advised., Jas. H. Burton, Supt. & Inspt. of Armories.<sup>35</sup>

Excitement must have been high at Burton's office, for he sent a letter the same day to Gorgas advising him of his actions via telegrams and he states that if necessary he will order the removal to Athens, Ga., and also said:

Major Taylor complains of great difficulty in supplying the necessities of his workman. This is the reason why the removal of the Armory to some other more favorable point should be effected. I fear the removal, if necessary, will be slow, as everything must be hauled on wagons seven miles to the R. Road for shipment. If removed, I will send the machinery via Atlanta, as I learn the Ga. Railroad will be completed through it in two or three weeks. I will advise you further when I hear from Lt. Gen. Taylor, Burton<sup>36</sup>

Remember Richmond was under siege and would shortly evacuate and think how busy Gorgas was in removing his operations from Richmond. On the same day Burton got off the following letter to Taylor:

Major, Your letter of the 22nd inst. has been received. In reply I have to state that in the present disturbed situation of military affairs in your vicinity you had better suspend all work on permanent improvements such as houses for workmen, as you may have to leave them all at short notice. For the same reason I will not order any materials to you for the present. You had better endeavor to secure wagons & teams beforehand in case of necessity of the removal, and in that event special effort will have to be made to obtain the requisite R. R. Transp. in this direction. If the removal be effected it will be to Athens, Ga., where there is shop room & power ready for use. I regret that I have no funds to transfer to you. The removal of Tallassee Armory to Athens, if effected, will be the means of relieving it of many of the difficulties which now surround it, and which you refer to, I will urge on Gen. Gorgas the necessity of furnishing you with funds. Burton.<sup>37</sup>

This seems to be the end of production of Tallassee carbines. With the problems with the stocks and main springs, the total production could be only a few hundred. Much has been made of the telegram of Burton to Maj. Taylor on April 3rd., 1865, directing him to turn over at once to Coll. Cuyler at Macon Arsenal the five hundred carbines.<sup>38</sup> Nowhere have we found confirmation that Taylor advised him that he had that many. The monthly reports of Tallassee have never been located; therefore it is doubtful that the number is true.

In the meantime, the Ordnance Department had made arrangements to secure the Cooks Factory in Athens and

Burton writes C. H. Ford at Athens on the 30th March as follows:

C. H. Ford, M. Armorer, Athens, Ga.,

Sir: Your letter of the 23rd inst. and papers enclosed have been received. I am glad to know that you are at last in full possession of the Armory and that you have a force of men already employed finishing the arms on hand and repairing others. I approve generally all that you report in relation to the valuation of the property. The valuation of lands, buildings & permanent improvements, is much higher than I expected, but in as much as they are only leased for the war, it does not signify for much. The Grist mill must be kept fully employed so that it may yield as large a revenue as possible. Contracts for gun stocks should be entered into at the earliest moment possible, as it takes much time to get them in order for fabrication. As soon as R. R. communication can be had through from Macon to Athens, I will send you a barrel or two of rosin oil. Make contracts also for a supply of charcoal. Push on the fabrication and repair of arms all you possibility can, and if I can assist in the return of any of the workmen, absent in the army or elsewhere, give me particulars and I will attend to it. I enclose herewith a copy of a paper referred to me by Genl. Gorgas, and forwarded by me to Col. Rains with my endorsement. Let me know whether or not these men or any of them are with you, and if any are still absent, give me particulars so that I may be enabled to make proper efforts to secure their return. Adopt for the present, the regulations of Richmond Armory and the scale of wages I furnished you from this Armory. I have urged Genl. Gorgas in a recent letter to appoint a Commanding Officer and a M. S. Keeper to Athens Armory as soon as possible. I hope to make you a visit before long, or as soon as R. R. Communications is opened through via Atlanta, meantime keep me fully advised of your progress, wants, etc. Jas. H. Burton.<sup>39</sup>

On April 11th Burton again wrote Ford at Athens about his two letters and accompanying papers having reference to the purchase of Cook & Bro's Armory. Also concerning the establishment for manufacturing Malleable Cast Iron at this location.

In the meantime on April 5th Burton sent a telegram to Maj. Taylor at Tallassee as follows:

Commence the removal of your machinery, tools and materials at once, the most valuable first. Consign to yourself at Athens Ga. and send by way of Atlanta. Keep me advised of progress by telegraph.<sup>40</sup>

On April 6th, Burton sent a telegram to Gen. Gorgas, now at Danville, Va., as follows:

Telegram received, I advise that all machinery saved be sent here. Also Major Jones and Mr. Adams and all the

Armorer. Telegraphed yesterday to Maj Taylor to move his machinery at once. Fear he will not succeed for want of transportation.<sup>41</sup>

This is the first notice that Richmond had been abandoned. The iron and steel center of Selma, Ala. had been taken, Montgomery was threatened, and Sherman had captured Columbia, S C. Even so, there was hope, since Macon and Athens had been bypassed and the railroads were being repaired through Atlanta.

On April 7th Burton wrote Taylor at Tallassee:

Your Letter of the third just now received. My experiences have taught me that reliance on the Q. M. for transportation of machinery in an emergency, upon a simple requisition in writing, results, in most cases, in disappointment. You will have to look after its particulars yourself, or assign some energetic subordinate to that duty. The only hope is in hunting it up for yourself. I telegraphed you on the 5th inst. as follows viz. "Commence the removal of your machinery, tools and material at once, the most valuable first. Consign to yourself at Athens, Ga., and send by way of Atlanta. Keep me advised of progress by telegraph. "You had better send one or more of your employees with each train of cars containing your property, to see that no abuse occurs in handling, shipping, housing, etc. I will write to Q. M. at Atlanta and request him to arrange for sheltering the property, if possible, as it arrives.

I have telegraphed Gen. Gorgas this morning urging him to order funds to you at once. I trust you will receive assistance from the planters in the vicinity in the hauling of your property to the R. Road. Keep me fully advised of your movements by telegraph and by letter also. Burton<sup>42</sup>

Taylor wrote Burton on April 7th that:

I have your telegram of the 5th and now have all our machinery down, in boxes and ready for a move as soon as I can secure transportation for it. I appealed to the farmers in this vicinity as soon as I got your letter of 28 March, but I find much unwillingness on their part to render any assistance in supplying us with wagons and teams as they seem to be busy in running off their own property to some place of security, but having received authority from Gen. D. W. Adams Comdg. this district to impress them for this purpose. I have sent out today a detail of our men for this purpose, but as yet have learned nothing of their success. With ten good wagons I think we can get everything to the depot in ten or twelve days, if the weather favors it. But at present the prospect is unpromising as we have a very heavy rain, which will render the road almost impassable and I fear raise the river so high as to prevent crossing for several days.<sup>43</sup>

On the 7th Burton wrote Col. L. W. Glenn, Commander of Post in Atlanta advising him that the Chief of Ordnance had

ordered the removal of the machinery & stores of the C. S. Armory at Tallassee, Ala., to Athens, Ga., via Atlanta, and to ask the Post Q. M. at Atlanta to secure shelter, etc. when it arrives.<sup>44</sup>

On April 10th Burton telegraphed Col. M. H. Wright in Columbus, Ga.:

Major Taylor greatly needs \$10,000.00 dollars to assist him to move his machinery from Tallassee Armory. can you spare it from Armory funds?

Then on the same day he wrote General Gorgas at Richmond (in excitement or habit, he meant Danville) the following letter:

I have received (this A.M.) a letter from Major Taylor dated the 7th and a telegram dated the 9th, viz. "I have commenced to move. Shall need funds before I leave. Please send some." I trust that you have ordered same to Maj. Taylor as this reaches you. Major Taylor informs me in his letter of the 7th that "I have now all of our machinery down, in boxes, and ready for a move as soon as I can procure transportation for it. Also, that with ten good wagons I think we can get everything to the depot in ten or twelve days if the weather favors it." The Q. M. at Montgomery has informed him that "the transportation will be furnished as soon as the valuable stores from here are shipped." Major Taylor complains that he cannot even pay the expenses of a messenger to and from Montgomery daily. His workmen have not been paid for two months and are suffering the consequence. I have no information of movement of the enemy from the direction of Selma.<sup>45</sup>

On the same day, April 10th, Burton wrote Mr. C. H. Ford, M. A. at Athens, that the removal of the Armory at Tallassee to Athens is being effected and for him to make arrangements for the shelter of the 108 white employees and that he had requested to Major Taylor to keep the families at Tallassee as long as he can with safety.<sup>46</sup>

On the 10th of April he telegraphed Taylor that he is sending him the ten thousand dollars by express and he wrote the same day confirming his letter of the 7th and telegram of the 9th and that he hopes that he was able to get the transportation to the R.R. and the cars requisitioned. And that; "I shall rely upon your best efforts to get everything away from Tallassee, in time, to cheat the enemy should he visit your locality."<sup>47</sup>

Then on the 11th Burton telegraphed Capt. F. M. Johnson, A. Q. M. in Atlanta that:

Machinery commenced leaving Tallassee 9th. If you cannot secure shelter, keep machinery and stores in cars until Georgia road is completed.<sup>48</sup>

Burton was too optimistic, for he sent a telegram to Col. F. M. Johnson on the 17th asking if he had any information on



the shipment from Tallassee Armory or whereabouts of Major Taylor. This was the last entry in the letter book and West Point had been captured on the 16th, Macon on the 20th.

What happened then to the machinery and carbines? My best guess is that they never left Tallassee. Nowhere in the Official Records can we find any reference to the machinery being captured. The best clue I have uncovered is in the Official Records dated April 13, 1865, near Montgomery, Ala. as follows:

Headquarters, 4th Division Cavalry Corps., Military Division of the Mississippi: Special Order No. 49; The First and Fourth Divisions of the Cavalry Corps will move this morning as follows: The First Division at 4.30, toward West Point, taking the most direct route and reaching there at the end of the third day's march or morning of the fourth, securing the railroad bridge at that point and at once communicating with the balance of the Command by the most direct route at Columbus. The object of the expedition is to secure the railroad bridge at West Point over the Chattahoochee River so as to insure the crossing of the entire Cavalry Corps over that stream if it be found that the bridge at Columbus be destroyed. Further instructions will be sent the First Division at West Point. If the bridge is not destroyed, it will be immediately made passable and the troops crossed over. The Commanding Officer of the First Division will send detachment to burn the bridge over the Tallapoosa at Tallahassee and the factory at that place. All important bridges that may be found along the line of the Montgomery and West Point Railroad will be destroyed. By order of Brevet Major General Upton; James W. Latta, Asst. Adjutant General.<sup>49</sup>

I think that he meant Tallassee rather than Tallahassee. This also lends some credence to the story in the History of Tallassee about "A detachment of Union General J. H. Wilson's Cavalry, on reaching Cowles Station, the officer in command ordered a negro to guide them to Tallassee. This guide insisted on leading them across the river at Cowles Ferry, a mile above the station. The officer, however, whose map showed the town to be on the east bank of the river, suspected treachery and had the negro shot."<sup>50</sup>

This stands to reason and, if true, fits the puzzle.

And what about the Armory families at Tallassee? Well, in the invoice list of Barnett, Micou & Co. are the following items:

<i>Distributed to Armory hands in April &amp; May—</i>	
April 935½ lbs. Bacon	\$2806.50
86 bushels Meal	\$688.00
May 286½ lbs. Bacon	\$42.97
26¼ bushels Meal	\$26.25

This shows that the firm of Barnett, Micou supplied food to the hands even though the war was over for practical purposes. Many of these families stayed on in Tallassee according to Virginia Noble Golden, in the book *A History of Tallassee*: She lists the houses, still there, as Numbers 1, 3, and 5 of King Street.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### NOTES

1. B D, May 26, 27, 28, 29, 1864
2. RCOB Letters sent, Macon Armory.
3. RCOB, Burton to Gorgas, April 19, 1864. Page 355
4. RCOB, Page 422, 423, 424, June 1, 1864
5. RCOB, June 7, 1862-Apr. 17, 1865. Pages 422-424.
6. RCOB, page 420, June 2, 1864
7. RCOB, Page 434
8. AGPF
9. CF, M346
10. CF, M346
11. RCOB, Burton to Selden, Aug. 17, page 534.
12. CF, M-346
13. RCOB, Burton to Bolles, Aug. 22, 1864
14. RCOB, pages 547-548
15. RCOB, Burton to W. R. Hunt, Sept 8th, 1864
16. RCOB, Burton to Gorgas, Sept. 15th, 1864
17. RCOB, pages 57-58, Burton to Bolles, Sept 20, 1864
18. RCOB, Burton to Bolles, page 58, Sept. 20, 1864
19. RCOB, page 65, Burton to Bolles, Sept. 23, 1864
20. CF
21. RCOB, Burton to Gorgas, page 74, Sept. 29th, 1864
22. RCOB, Burton to Bolles, pages 82, 99, Oct. 3, & 12th, 1864
23. RCOB, Burton to Gorgas, page 69, Sept. 24th, 1864
24. RCOB, Burton to Bolles, Nov. 11th, 1864
25. RCOB, Burton to Gorgas, Jan. 30th, 1865, page 204
26. RCOB, Burton to Ford, Jan. 31, 1865, page 206
27. AGPF
28. RCOB, Fuss to Taylor, Feb. 6, 1865, page 210
29. AGPF
30. RCOB, Fuss to Taylor, Feb. 16, 1865, page 214
31. RCOB, Fuss to Taylor, Feb. 18th, 1865, page 216
32. RCOB, Fuss to Taylor, Feb. 28th, 1865, page 219
33. AGPF
34. RCOB, Burton to Gen. Taylor, March 28th, 1865
35. RCOB, Page 231, Mar. 28, 1865
36. RCOB, Burton to Gorgas, page 234, Mar. 28th, 1865
37. RCOB, Page 234-235, Burton to Taylor Mar. 28, 1865
38. RCOB, Page 245, Burton to Taylor, Apr. 3rd, 1865
39. RCOB, Burton to Ford, page 268, Apr. 10, 1865
40. RCOB, Apr. 5th, 1865 Telegram Burton to Taylor, page 255
41. RCOB, page 258, Burton to Gorgas, Apr. 6, 1865
42. RCOB, page 263, Burton to Taylor, April 7th, 1865
43. AGPF
44. RCOB, Burton to Glenn, page 264, Apr. 7, 1865
45. RCOB, page 267, Burton to Gorgas, Apr. 10, 1865
46. RCOB, page 268, Burton to Ford, Apr. 10, 1865
47. RCOB, page 269, Burton to Taylor, Apr. 10, 1865
48. RCOB, page 271, Burton to Johnson, Apr. 11, 1865
49. OR, Series L, Vol. XLIX, page 345
50. HT, Page 29

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OTHER SOURCES

(BD) Burton Diary, Microfilm, University of Texas Archives, Edwin Pugsley Collection

(RCOB) Records Confederate Ordnance Bureau, Old Records Section, National Archives, Chapter IV, 154 Volumes 20, 29, 30, 31

(AGPF) Adjutant Generals Office, War Department, National Archives, personal files. These individual files pertain to each member of the Union and Confederate armies.

(CF) Citizens Files, War Department Collection of Confederate Records. M 346, Records related to citizens or business firms

(OR) Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies

(HT) *A History of Tallassee*, Virginia Noble Golden, published by Tallassee Mills of Mount Vernon Woodberry Mills, Inc. Baltimore, Maryland. 1949.

(NCAH) North Carolina Division of Archives and History

(VHS) Virginia Historical Society

*Firearms of the Confederacy*, Fuller & Stewart, Standard Publications, Huntington, W.V. 1944.

*Confederate Carbines & Musketoons*, John M. Murphy, M.D., Taylor Printing Co., Dallas, Texas, 1986

Note: Due to Mr. Floyd's sore throat, his talk was read for him by H. Michael Madaus. We thank him for his very helpful assistance.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE TALLASSEE CARBINE:

So far, less than a dozen of these carbines have survived. All are in museums, except one in the collection of Dr. John Murphy. Those in the museum collections all appear to never

have been used. John Murphy's shows some use and could have been used as a hunting gun.

Description of the carbine is as follows:

Lock plate is of the Enfield type, 5¼ inches long, marked C.S. Tallassee, Ala. in three lines and 1864 at the rear of the hammer. Calibre .58 with 25 inch barrel. Total length of the arm is 40¾ inches. Two brass bands of the clamping type and a swivel ramrod similar to the 1842 musketoon. Trigger guard of brass and also similar to the 1841 guards. Brass curved butt plate and sling swivels are carried on the top band and at rear at the butt. Rear sight similar to the 1861 model.

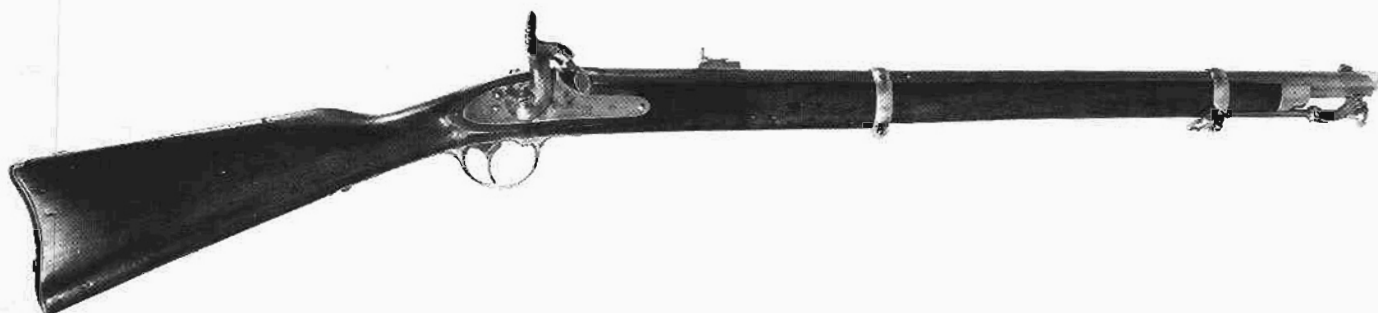


Figure 8. The Tallassee carbine in the Smithsonian Collection.

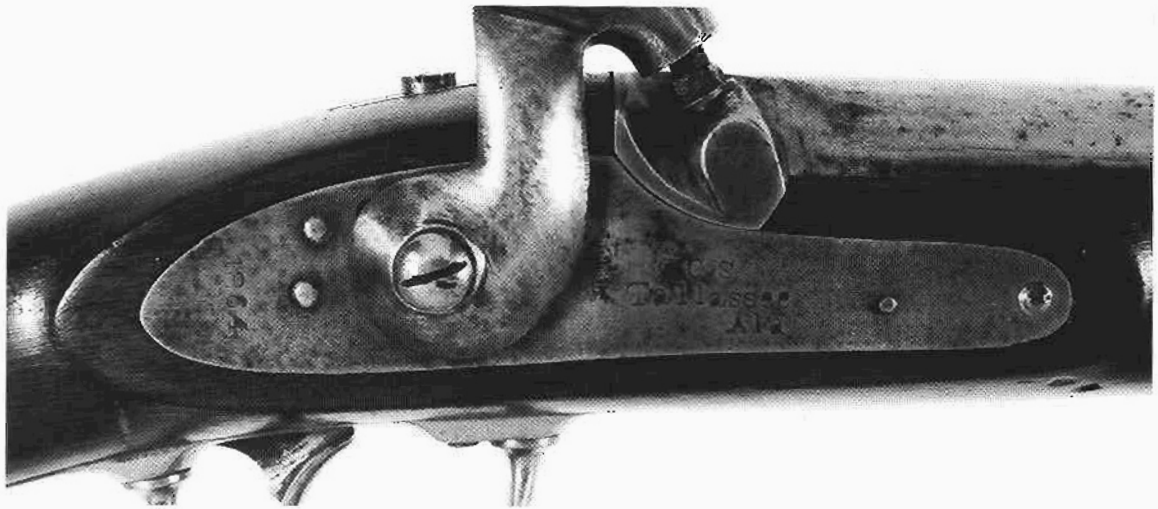


Figure 9. Lockplate of the Smithsonian carbine.

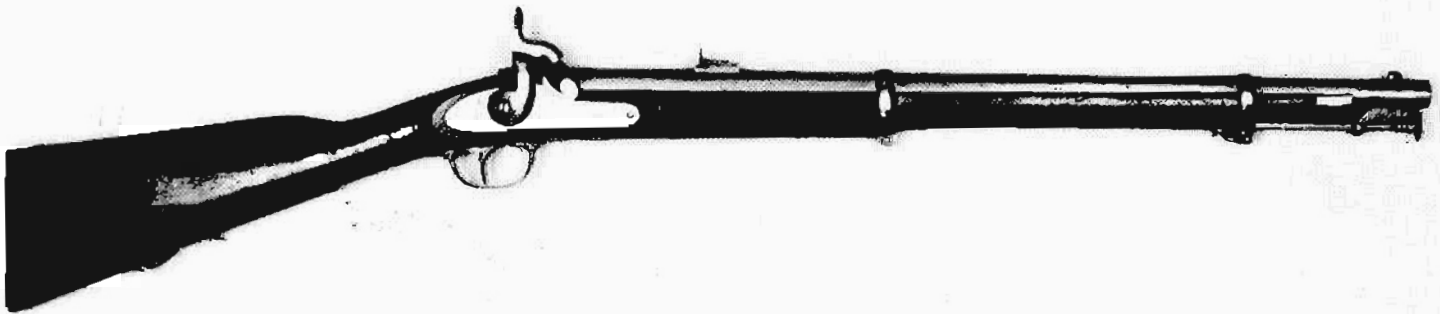


Figure 10. The Tallassee carbine in the Virginia Historical Society Collection.

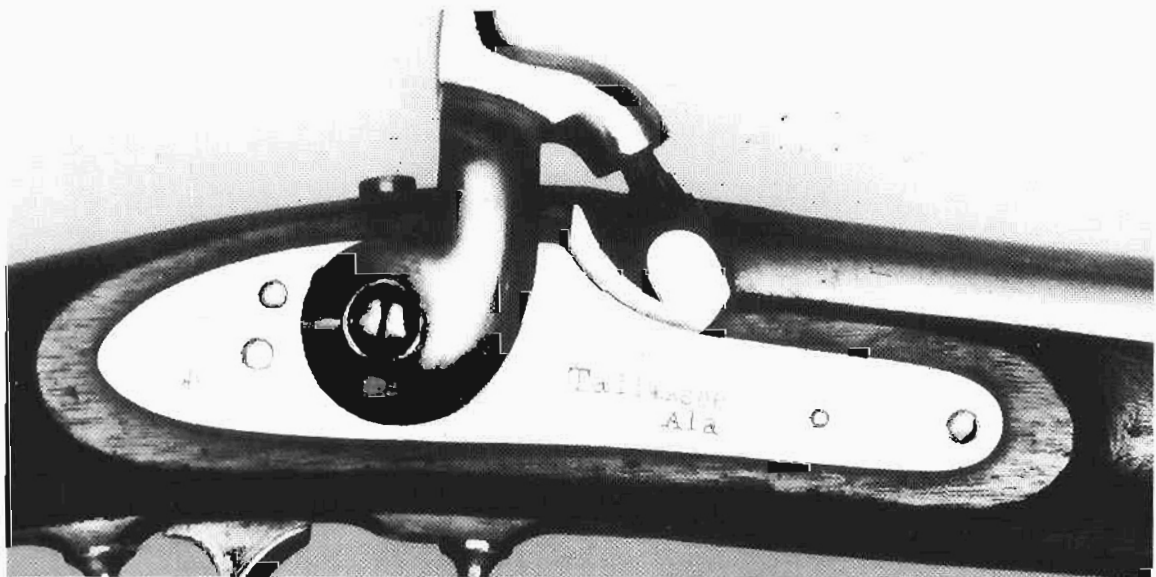


Figure 11. Lockplate of the Virginia Historical Society carbine.

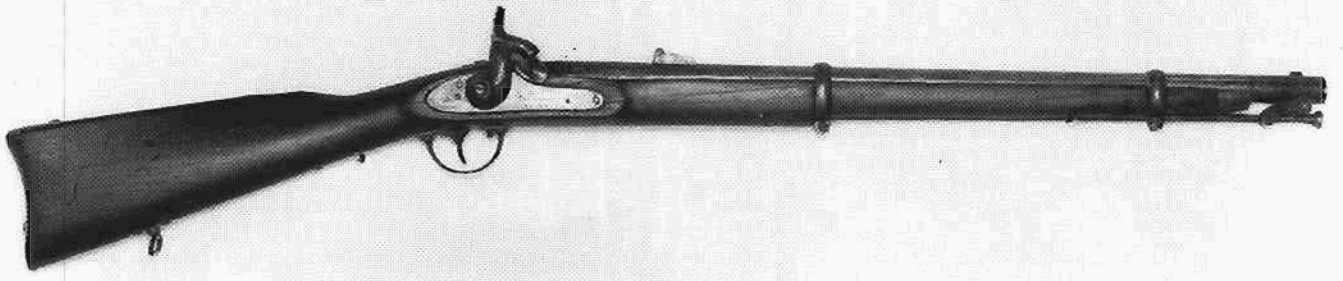


Figure 12. The Tallassee carbine in the John Murphy collection. . .

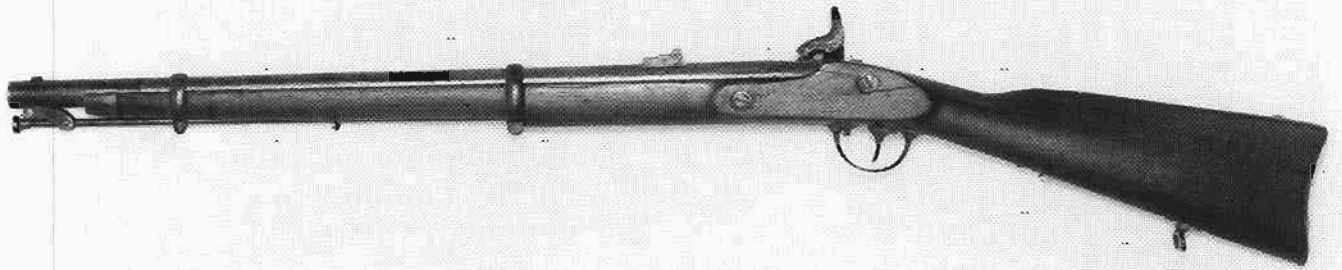


Figure 13. . . and the left side of that carbine.

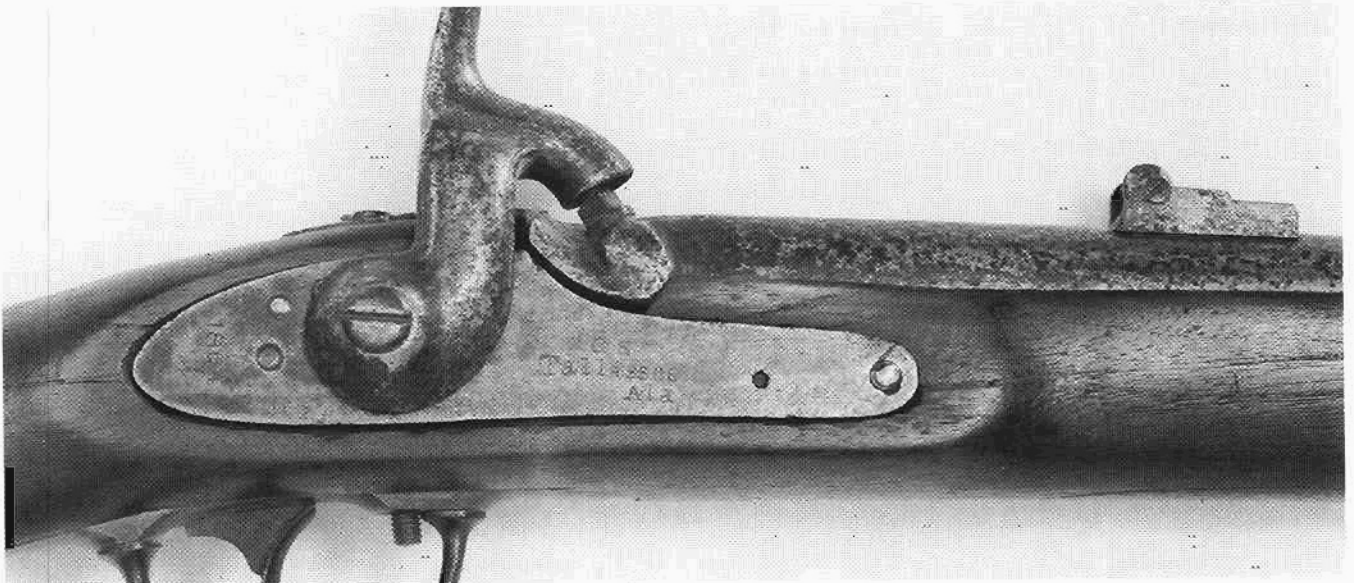


Figure 14. The lockplate of the Murphy carbine.