

risoned by a negro guard. These negroes were zealous and pompous in challenging all comers that had to have passes; but their education was limited and an old Confederate pass or paper after "wise" scrutiny would usually be effective. There was a large garrison of white and colored troops in the southwestern edge of Brooklyn and companies of soldiers were also stationed in the city. Gradually company after company of the colored troops was withdrawn, until practically none but white troops remained to patrol the town.^c

The white soldiers not only were not disposed to annoy or irritate the ex-Confederates, but in time seem to have developed a dislike for the colored citizens hereabout. On the night of February 26, 1869,ⁱ United States white troops formed into squads under sergeants and corporals and marched into town of their own accord. Wherever negroes were seen on the streets the command, "Halt; Ready; Aim; Fire!" was given. Within a short time the volleys could be heard in many places in the then small city. The frightened and fleeing negroes sought refuge in the woods and under the wharves, and the streets during the remainder of the night and the next day were bare of colored citizens.^c The patrolling and shooting caused intense excitement. A negro was found dead on the sidewalk on West Bay Street near Hogan Street, but the soldiers said their cartridges were blanks and denied killing him. Sensational accounts were sent north about the affair^c and soon afterward the military occupation of Jacksonville ceased, the last of the United States troops being withdrawn April 6, 1869.ⁱ

Jacksonville in 1869

The estimated population of the town was about 6,000, not including the suburbs. Riverside had just been platted and that with Brooklyn were the suburbs southwest of the city. LaVilla was immediately west, situated on an island formed by the courses of two creeks. East Jacksonville was then called Scottsville, and beyond that Wyoming. The hotels were St. James; Taylor House, corner of Market and Bay Streets; Price House, close to the railroad depot; Cowart House; Union House; Florida House; Rochester House; St. Johns House, together with four or five large boarding houses. These were all filled to overflowing in the winter months.^d