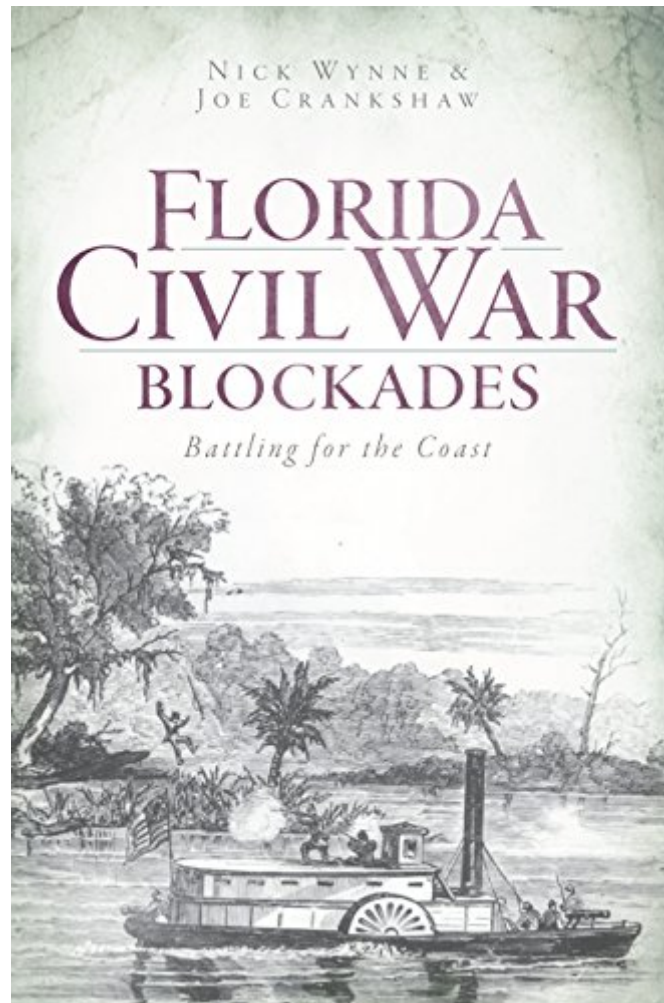




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Florida Civil War Blockades: Battling For The Coast (Civil War Series)



Synopsis

Florida was the third Southern state to secede from the United States in 1860-61. With its small population of 140,000 and no manufacturing, few Confederate resources were allocated to protect the state. Some 15,000 Floridians served in the Union and Confederate armies (the highest population percentage of any southern state), but perhaps Florida's greatest contributions came from its production of salt (an essential need for preserving meat and manufacturing gunpowder), its large herds of cattle (which fed two southern armies), and its 1500 mile shoreline (which allowed smugglers to bring critical supplies from Europe and the Caribbean). Florida in the Civil War: Blockaders will focus on the men and ships that fought this prolonged battle at sea, along the long and largely vacant coasts of the Sunshine State and on Florida soil. The information will be drawn from official sources, newspaper articles and private accounts. Approximately fifty (50) period photographs and drawings will be incorporated into the text.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The book's theme is sort of a niche interest, but I'm a volunteer at an historical Calusa Indian site in

Charlotte Harbor on Florida's Gulf Coast, and I wanted to expand my informational palette regarding those waters our visitors look out upon. I enjoyed this book immensely. I actually had not, until reading it, appreciated how important to both sides the naval blockade strategy was even from the very beginning of the war. We well recognized the names of famous land battles, but water was critical to moving supplies to sustain the troops. It's an easy read too.

While being the third state to secede from the Union, Florida played a fairly small and limited role in the Confederacy in terms of men. With a population of less than 75,000 free citizens the state contributed only around 15,000 soldiers. In addition, being removed from the major theatres of battle little fighting took place in the state. While this makes it appear that the state was an unimportant one that is hardly the case as authors Nick Wynn and Joe Crankshaw attempt to show in their new work discussing the Union blockade of Florida's coastline. When the Union blockade of the Confederate coast was instituted in early 1861 it seems that little thought was given to how this was going to be carried out. The Union navy at the time consisted of less than 100 ships with only a dozen or so being ready and available to cover more than 3,000 miles of coast with half belonging to Florida. In addition to a lack of ships there was also the issue of supplying the blockaders with training, food and water, and medical supplies. In addition the 1856 Treaty of Paris, which stated that for a blockade to be legal it must be effective, was a concern. With the effectiveness of the blockade in question the Union had to be concerned about the Confederacy being granted European recognition. Wynn and Crankshaw discuss the state by geographic region. On the east coast the Union established control at Jacksonville, Fernandina, and St. Augustine forcing blockade runners to use smaller ports such as New Smyrna. The problem with such small ports was theft. This was the case with a shipment of shoes and guns that arrived via the Kate in 1862. While some of the guns were recovered the majority of supplies vanished into the hands of locals or into the interior wilderness of the state. The west coast of the state was led by the port at Tampa. Tampa Bay proved difficult to patrol due to the large entry way. This along with the Hillsboro River that emptied into the Bay made this an attractive target for blockade runners. Charlotte Harbor and Punta Gorda also became important for Confederates. The final area of the state was the area between Cedar Key and Pensacola, probably the most heavily populated area of the state at the time. While both areas were controlled by Union forces small ports at places such as St. Andrews Bay and Apalachee Bay allowed a continued flow of supplies in and out of the state. The Union blockade could point to other areas of success in addition to preventing transport of goods and supplies. Salt was a valuable commodity whose price rose considerably during the war. Saltworks

were vulnerable to Union blockaders on several fronts. Many saltworks, which were located near the coast, were manned by slaves. Being close to the Atlantic or Gulf made saltworks prime targets of destruction for Union troops. Former slaves or "contraband" as they were known were dealt with in a couple of different ways. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles had authorized using the contrabands as sailors if they could be useful. Most however were taken to collection points that would serve as prime recruiting grounds later in the war. By destroying two economic drivers at once the blockade helped further pinch and already cramped state. So do Wynne and Crankshaw think the Union blockade was effective? In their own words "Yes and no." The blockade was leaky at best. Small ports allowed quick moving runners entry into the vast array of waterways leading to the interior of the state. Despite this however around 1,500 blockade runners were stopped. These shipments prevented much needed supplies from entering the state and being shipped over land northward. It also prevented outgoing freight that was bound for ports further north to supply troops or from going to overseas ports that could have provided much needed capital. The success in lowering the production of salt and stopping of fishing vessels put a crimp in the daily lives of many Floridians. Floridians also had to be concerned about the possibility of invading troops coming from blockaders. These factors help push the scales toward a Union success. This is a quick reading book that provides a good introduction to the topic. It is however far from definitive. Due to space constraints the book does not contain an index, proper bibliography, or notes making it difficult for future researchers to use the book. There is a small essay of suggested reading but this is really of limited value. A few minor typos, including a wrong date of secession for South Carolina, would show a need for a further proof-reading. These issues aside if you are looking for an introduction to the subject this is a book that will fit your needs until a more complete coverage is released.

Really easy reading and informative.

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