



Colonel J. J. Dickison

In the War Between the States, Captain John Jackson Dickison proved that he was a skilled soldier who fought with courage against forces which almost always outnumbered his and usually possessed superior firepower. To the civilian residents of central Florida, Captain Dickison was a wartime savior, preventing much of the destruction residents of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia experienced.

Dickison's unit sometimes numbered around 300 men, but only when reinforced by local militia forces. Usually, he had less than 50. In the final 14 months of the war, Dickison's troops fought numerous skirmishes, losing less than 25 men while inflicting more than 1,000 casualties on Union troops and capturing the 132-ton armed steam tug *Columbine*. His soldiers almost always knew the lay of the land on which they fought and had the hearts and minds of the civilian populace on their side.

We are not
whipped, only
overpowered.
We stand firm,
unshaken, united."
J. J. Dickison 1865

Most Federal reports listed his forces at 400 -- over 1,000 in the Battle of Gainesville (a great Dickison Confederate Victory). Seldom did he have more than 200 men and two artillery pieces, those only in the final years of the war. From Cedar Key to Smyrna and Tampa to the Georgia line, Dickison's actions against numerically superior Federal forces, kept Florida as Confederate territory until the end of the war and made him a legend in his own time.

Dickison received word that he had been promoted to colonel in early April, after the surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, ending the war. Dickison, with the remainder of Company H, 2nd Florida Cavalry were paroled at Waldo on May 20, 1865. Dickison's final Civil War act was to aid members of the Confederate government in their escape through Florida and on to Cuba.

He was "a leader among leaders," said General E.M. Law in a Florida Times Union and Citizen item, shortly after Dickison's death. "He was the hope and defense of the state in the dark days of the Civil War, the only safeguard of the people against a foe that swarmed on every side. He swept from place to place with such rapidity and secrecy that his name struck terror to the hearts of the enemy and made them fearful of every rumor." Law, commander of the Florida Division, United Confederate Veterans for many years, said Dickison "was grand in war, grander in peace. In the darkest days of adversity and personal suffering, he was always the same gentle, loving man, fearless in his advocacy of right, and daring in his defense of his friends."

In 1877 Dickison was named Adjutant General of state troops by Gov. George Drew, the first post-Reconstruction government of Florida. In 1888 he was appointed Major General of Militia.

Dickison was active in veteran's affairs. He was elected commander of the Florida Division, United Confederate Veterans, in 1888 and served six consecutive terms. In 1899 he wrote the Florida portion of the Confederate Military History. He died in Ocala on Aug. 23, 1902. Dressed in his Confederate uniform, his body was sent to Jacksonville. Many stores closed on Aug. 26, and thousands watched the horse-drawn caisson move down Main Street to Evergreen Cemetery.