Army Captain Accuses
Fort Lauderdale Doctor

Drink and 'Cheek-by-Jowl' Conduct Brings Charges

Dr. Ellis Hughes had every reason to expect a promising career as an assistant surgeon in the United States Army, but drink was to seal his demise in military service. In February of 1839, he arrived for duty at the newly-reactivated army post at Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

His aptitude for artistic and medical practice was already accepted as just short of brilliant, as the brief account of his life which follows confirms.

Dr. Hughes, however, found himself stuck in an out-of-the-way army outpost, virtually inaccessible except by water during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). So the Maryland doctor increasingly resorted to drink and bickering to relieve his boredom and deteriorating morale. (Broward Legacy, Vol. 2, March, 1978)

Captain William B. Davidson was commanding officer of the post, but was on extended leave to his Fairfax County, Virginia, slave plantation from May 1839 to January 1840. His long absence exacerbated matters as far as Dr. Hughes was concerned.

Tarpon Bend on New River where Assistant Surgeon Hughes helped to build the second Fort Lauderdale in 1839. (Fort Lauderdale Historical Society).
Davidson left Fort Lauderdale under the command of Christopher Q. Tompkins, an inexperienced and ambitious first lieutenant. Like Davidson, Tompkins was a member of the United States Third Artillery Regiment. As a medical officer, Hughes was not a member of the artillery regiment. He was, rather, under the command of Colonel Thomas Lawson, Chief Medical Officer of the United States Army. Hughes, therefore, certainly considered himself equal in rank to Lieutenant Tompkins, not much inferior to Captain Davidson and quite independent of them since he served in the medical corps. In this judgment Hughes was mistaken, for all military personnel of an army post were under the command of the post commander.

By June of 1839, the greatest concentration of Seminole and Mickasuki Indians in Florida had congregated along New River under the command of the remarkable Sam Jones (Arpeika). This threat to Fort Lauderdale contributed to the high tension among the post's personnel. (Vol. I, July, 1977) As a result of the constant threat to Fort Lauderdale by the Indians under Sam Jones, the army sent in reinforcements from time to time commanded by officers who outranked Tompkins, and who assumed command of the post as long as they were there. When they left after a short stay, the command of Fort Lauderdale reverted to Tompkins. Such a "musical chairs" approach to military command did little to solidify Tompkins' position.

The publication of Captain Davidson's charges and specifications against Dr. Hughes which follows is not intended to scorn or ridicule the doctor. Rather, they serve to illustrate several valuable points.

First, they make more intelligible vast portions of Dr. Hughes' remarkable journal covering matters at Fort Lauderdale. It is the only journal for Fort Lauderdale to survive the Second Seminole War and is chockful of the details of garrison life. This journal is now in the University of South Florida's library in Tampa, awaiting publication.

Second, Davidson's manuscript casts further light on Hughes' career after resigning his army commission. Apparently Davidson's charges regarding Hughes' conduct in Fort Lauderdale not only forced his resignation, but ruined the doctor's attempt to enter the United States Navy, as well, and eventually forced him out of medical practice and into the role of a newspaperman and finally a civilian employee of the United States government.

Finally, publication of these charges illustrate the trivia which officers used a century and a half ago to convict and drive from the military service their fellows, just as it shows the meanness and culpability of Dr. Hughes when he exposed his troops to danger through his slavery to alcohol.

As a direct result of these charges and specifications, Brigadier General Walker K. Armistead, commanding the army in Florida, ordered Dr. Hughes to Fort Heilemann, northwest of St. Augustine. Realizing the inevitable hopelessness of his case, Hughes submitted his resignation to Brigadier General Roger Jones, Adjutant General of the Army on July 17, 1840.

In forwarding Hughes' resignation, General Armistead recommended it be accepted in view of the severity of the charges and the fact that Tompkins and other witnesses had been transferred and it would be too great an expense to the government and take too long for a courtmartial.

On July 31, 1840, General Jones submitted Hughes' resignation, along with General Armistead's recommendation, to the Commanding General of the Army, Major General Alexander Macomb. Macomb recognized Hughes was "under charges of misconduct of a high military character and ought to be brought to a general courtmartial." But he accepted the recommendation of General Armistead based upon witness and time limitations. He approved Dr. Hughes' resignation the same day he received it.

**CHARGES AND SPECIFICATIONS**

**PREFERRED AGAINST ELLIS HUGHES**

**ASSISTANT SURGEON U.S. ARMY,**

**BY CAPTAIN WM. B. DAVIDSON, 3RD ARTILLERY**

**Charge 1st**

"Drunkenness on duty"

**Specification 1st:** In this — that Ellis Hughes Asst. U.S. Army, while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F., did on or about the 6th day of November 1839, go on board of the Steam Boat "Thomas Salmond," then lying a few hundred yards from the post, and become so drunk as to be unable on his return to the shore, about 3/4 of an hour after, to stand alone. — That on his attempting to rise from the supper table shortly after, he staggered and fell backwards, and was caught and held up by one of the mess servants before reaching the floor. He the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes was then assisted to his tent by Lieut. Tompkins 3rd Art. and private Wm. George of Company K 3rd. Art. and put to bed — being wholly incapacitated for duty, or to meet any emergency requiring the exercise of his professional knowledge.
Specification 2nd: In this — that Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S. Army while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F., was repeatedly drunk between the 6th and 30th of November — and in the month of December, 1839 — and incapable of attending to his duty in a proper manner.

Specification 3rd: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes, while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. was repeatedly drunk between the 1st and 31st January 1840, and incapable of attending to his duty in a proper manner.

Specification 4th: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. was repeatedly drunk between the 1st and 12th February 1840 — and incapable of attending to his duty in a proper manner.

Specification 5th: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes while on duty of Fort Lauderdale, E.F., was drunk on the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 20th, 21st and 22nd of February 1840, and incapable of attending to his duty in a proper manner.

Specification 6th: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes, while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. was repeatedly drunk between the 1st and 22nd of March 1840, and incapable of attending to his duties in a proper manner.

Specification 7th: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. was drunk on the 24th March 1840, and in that condition did go on board the Steam Boat "Wm. Gaston" then lying off the post, and expose himself to officers of the army — the non commissioned and privates of Company K 3rd Art. and to the Captain and crew of the Steamboat — and further he the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes had to be assisted into the barge that brought him on shore by Lieut. C. Tompkins 3rd Art. and artificer Jackson of Company K 3rd Art. — being himself incapable of getting into the barge, and was assisted to his tent after reaching the shore by the said Lieut. Tompkins, and put to bed. He the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes was so drunk as to be incapable of attending to his duties or to meet any emergency requiring the exercise of his professional knowledge.

Specification 8th: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. was drunk on the 25th March 1840, and incapable of attending to his duties in a proper manner.

Charge 2nd

"Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and Gentleman"

Specification 1st: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. did degrade himself by an habitual association, daily and nightly during the months of January, February and March 1840, with a boy called Andrew Storrs, clerk of the sutler of the post & who had been confined in the common guard house by the Comm’g. officer for misconduct — and did also carouse in his tent and converse familiarly, "cheek by jowl!" — indulging in low and obscene jests, with said Storrs frequently at the hours of 10, 11, 12, 1 & 2 o’clock at night.

Specification 2nd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art., was in the constant habit during the month of January, February and March 1840, of inviting some of the non commissioned officers and privates of said company to, or of allowing them to visit his tent, and did sit, and converse familiarly, "cheek by jowl", drink, carouse, and indulge in low and obscene conversation and jests with them.

Specification 3rd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. was in the constant habit during the months of January, February and March 1840 of accosting and stopping the non commissioned officers and privates of said company at his tent and other parts of the Garrison, and would hold them by the button — put his arm round them or through theirs, and converse with them in a familiar "cheek by jowl" manner, indulging in low and obscene language.

Specification 4th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did walk in the Garrison "arm and arm" with private Rodebuck of said company on or about the 17 March 1840, and, converse in a familiar "cheek by jowl" manner with said Rodebuck.

Specification 5th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did on or about the 18th February 1840 did carouse in his tent with artificer Jackson of said company after tattoo, during which carousal, in a discussion between them on the subject of farriery, the said Asst. Surgeon Hughes suffered himself to be called — a "damned liar" by said artificer Jackson.
Specification 6th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did on or about the 25th March 1840, invite the Drummer (John Laird) of said company to his tent and did take the said Laird on his lap, put his arms round him, and utter low and obscene conversation and at the same time did call into his tent private Wm. George of said company invite him to drink, and make use of indecent language.

Specification 7th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. on or about the February 1840, when the Commanding officer had given permission to the Mess Cook private Bennett of said company to show his associates in the company some tricks of legerdemain at his cook tent — did visit said Bennett’s tent and party, seat himself familiarly with the party send for spirituous liquors, wines and segars, and did drink, smoke, laugh and converse "cheek by jowl" with them, until he was discovered and carried to his tent by the officer of the day Lieut. C. Tompkins 3rd Art. about 10 p.m.

Specification 8th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. While on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did on or about the 24th March 1840 in a state of intoxication go on board the steam boat "Wm. Gaston" then lying off the post, and abuse in a violent and most indecent manner without provocation, the Capt. of said Boat (Capt. Poinsett) telling the said Capt. he was no Gentleman, and did continue to abuse him in the most gross and indelicate manner until he the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes was urged, and finally ordered & assisted from the steam boat into the post barge by Lieut. C. Tompkins 3rd Art. & artificer Jackson & others —

"Disobedience of Orders"

Specification: In this, that the said Ellis Hughes, Ass’t. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. was in the constant habit during the months of January, February, and March 1840 of inviting some of the non commissioned officers and privates of said Company to his tent and giving them spirituous liquor without the knowledge of the Commanding Officer and when the said Ass’t. Surgeon Hughes well knew that such conduct was in disobedience of the standing orders of the post.

"Conduct prejudicial to Good Order and Military Discipline"

Specification 1st: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. was in the constant habit of during the months of January, February and March 1840 of inviting some of the non commissioned officers and privates of said Company to his tent, especially after retreat, and did give them spirituous or fermented liquors to drink, without the authority or knowledge of the Commanding officer — at the same time conversing in a familiar "cheek by jowl" manner with them, indulging in low and obscene conversation, neither party appearing to be impressed with any distinction of rank.

Specification 2nd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. was in the constant habit almost nightly of calling up the officers Mess Cook private Bennett of said Company at the hours of 10, 11, 12, 1 & 2 o’clock at night to make "Egg nogg" for him; and would then carouse with the sutler’s clerk, a boy called Andrew Storrs, indulging in low jests and loud laughter, to the disturbance of the Garrison — depriving the men of their proper rest, and corrupting their morals.

Specification 3rd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did on or about the 15th October 1839, during the temporary absence of Lieut. C. Tompkins 3rd Art. (the then Comm’g. officer of said post) for a few hours — give permission without authority to some of the men of said company to purchase from the sutler post, wine & cider whereby they became drunk, and in consequence the whole Garrison was in a state of confusion and turbulence on the return of Lieut. Tompkins.

Specification 4th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A., while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did on or about the 25th March 1840 call private Wm. George of said company to his tent, and said — "George I have been looking for you, here is Laird" (the drummer of said company & then sitting on the lap of said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes) "and me." — you are an Englishman, Laird is an Irishman, and I am the friend of both" or words to that effect. The said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes then desired the said private George to drink with him, pouring out whiskey at the same time, and uttering many indecent and obscene remarks — Private George then told him he must go, saying "it would look bad" — upon which the said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes took hold of private George and detained him, saying at the same time — "I don't care for the Captain (meaning his Commanding Officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art.) "nor any of them" or words to that effect — the said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes was at that time very drunk.
Charge 5th
"Mutinous, Insubordinate and Disrespectful Conduct Towards his Commanding Officer"

Specification 1st: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did say on or about the 16th October 1839 to private Wm. George of said company, as follows "I will let Lieut. Thompkins" (3rd Art. the then Commg. officer of said post) "know that my orders are as good as his" (Lieut. Tompkins') "own or words to that effect. Meaning thereby that the permission given by him the day before to the soldiers of the Garrison to purchase liquor from the sutler in the absence of Lieut. Tompkins were of equal authority.

Specification 2nd: In this — that the said Asst. Surgeon Ellis Hughes U.S.A. while on duty with Company K 3rd Art. at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. did say on or about the 15th day of February 1840, to private Wm. George of said company — "I know it, but neither the Captain nor Lieut" (meaning his commg. officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art. and Lieut. C. Tompkins 3rd Art) "are deep enough to catch me. You know, George, they want to catch me slipping, but they must have better eyes than me before they do; I tell you they never can or shall fling me, if powder and ball can prevent it" or words to that effect — The said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes had a pistol in his hand at the same time, and was loading it — had spirituous liquor on his table — was much intoxicated, and spoke in a threatening manner, using the epithets of mean paltry fellows etc.

Specification 3rd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A., having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. on the evening of the 25th March 1840, by his Commg. Officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art. did make use of the following language to Private Bennett of Company K 3rd Art. to pull or cut down the fly of said tent — and further did then and there cut and pull down his tent with his hands and go to the back of it on the outside and lay himself down.

Specification 4th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art., just after retreat on 25th March 1840, did a short time after about 8 p.m. on the same evening cut with a knife or other instrument his tent and the cords of it, and did direct the Hospital Cook, private Gascoigne of Company K 3rd Art. to pull or cut down the fly of said tent — and further did then and there cut and pull down his tent with his hands and go to the back of it on the outside and lay himself down.

Specification 5th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art. on the evening of the 25th March 1840, did on the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th, and 31st March following persist in going from his tent to the Hospital — give orders and send in morning Hospital reports to the Commanding Officer.

Specification 6th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A., after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art. on the evening of the 25th March 1840, did repeatedly leave his tent and walk about the grounds of the Garrison on the 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th, and 31st March following, and also on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th April following.

Specification 7th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson on the evening of the 25th March 1840 did on the morning of the 29th March following, deliberately leave his tent and walk to the corner of the Commanding Officers qtrs., a distance of about one hundred yards with a lighted segar in his mouth, and then back to his tent.

Charge 6th
"Breach of Arrest"

Specification 1st: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art., just after retreat on 25th March 1840, did a short time after about 8 p.m. on the same evening cut with a knife or other instrument his tent and the cords of it, and did direct the Hospital Cook, private Gascoigne of Company K 3rd Art. to pull or cut down the fly of said tent — and further did then and there cut and pull down his tent with his hands and go to the back of it on the outside and lay himself down.

Specification 2nd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art. on the evening of the 25th March 1840, did on the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th, and 31st March following persist in going from his tent to the Hospital — give orders and send in morning Hospital reports to the Commanding Officer.

Specification 3rd: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A., after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson 3rd Art. on the evening of the 25th March 1840, did repeatedly leave his tent and walk about the grounds of the Garrison on the 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th and 31st March following, and also on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th April following.

Specification 4th: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. after having been duly arrested and confined to his tent at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. by order of the Commanding officer Capt. Wm. B. Davidson on the evening of the 25th March 1840 did on the morning of the 29th March following, deliberately leave his tent and walk to the corner of the Commanding Officers qtrs., a distance of about one hundred yards with a lighted segar in his mouth, and then back to his tent.

Charge 7th
"Gross and Wilful falsehood, etc. and slander"

Specification 1st: In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. While on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did say on or about the 11th Dec. 1839 to private George of said company, that he had brought his friend Asst. Surgeon Baldwin U.S.A. from Key Biscayne to act as his friend between himself and Lieut. Tompkins (his commg. officer), whom he said he had challenged — as he was determined no longer to submit to the interference and paltry conduct of Lieut. Tompkins, or words to that effect—he the said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes well knowing that he had never challenged Lieut. Tompkins, and that Asst. Surgeon Baldwin was on a visit to Fort Lauderdale by invitation of Lieut. Tompkins.
In this that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. with Company K 3rd Art. did report to the men of the said company that on or about the 4th September 1839 at night that Lieut. Tompkins 3rd Art. the commanding officer of Fort Lauderdale did not act promptly in coming out to take command of his company and give the necessary orders, but let himself down through the trap door of the 2nd story of the blockhouse (of the officers quarters) to the first story where he remained until the said Asst. Surgeon E. Hughes went there and informed the said Lt. C. Tompkins that the company was formed and waiting for Indians.

*Deletion by Capt. Davidson

Charge 8th

"Habitual Intoxication"

In this — that the said Ellis Hughes Asst. Surgeon U.S.A. while on duty at Fort Lauderdale, E.F. was repeatedly, and almost daily and nightly drunk, during the months of January, February & March 1840, and in this condition, did expose himself to the officers at the mess table, and to the non comm. officers & privates of the Garrison.

Witnesses to the foregoing charges & specifications — viz.,
Lieut. C. Tompkins 3rd Art. Rect. Service
Lieut. J.B. Boyd 3rd Art. Ft. Lauderdale
Capt. A. B. Myers Asst. Qtr. M. St. Augustine
Capt. Poinsett Steamer Gaston
Private Quan Compy. K 3rd Art.
Asst. Surgeon Baldwin, U.S.A. Ft. Dallas
Sutler Scobie Ft. Lauderdale

Wm. B. Davidson
Capt. 3rd Art.
Comm'g. Ft. Lauderdale
April 10, 1840

The following biography of Ellis Hughes is reprinted from THE NEW ORLEANS MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL 19:714-718, 1866-67.

The late Ellis Hughes, M.D.

The subject of this sketch was born in Baltimore, Maryland, 9th of August, 1813, being descended from an old and respectable family which emigrated to the colony some time in the reign of George II. From an early age he exhibited a most enquiring mind. As indicative of early tastes and predilections, it is related that he would sit for hours examining maps and drawings, with an uncommon interest for one of his years. In early youth when able to grasp a pencil, he manifested a precocious taste in the fine arts, and, in the subsequent course on his diverse studies and investigations, could handle the pencil with remarkable facility, in illustrating his views. Sketches which he would occasionally execute for pastime, indicated what success he might have attained in a serious devotion to Art as a profession.

At an early age, Dr. Hughes matriculated in St. John’s College, at Annapolis (Md.), at a period when that venerable institution was in a comparatively flourishing condition, with an able and cultivated Faculty, presided over by the Rev. Dr. Rafferty. Here young Hughes soon became one of the first students in his class, most of whom have since attained eminence as useful and distinguished men. In 1829 Dr. H. received the degree of B.A. with much credit, his graduation speech as the commencement being generally considered as one of the most finished productions of the occasion, and receiving high commendation from the classical critics of the day.

At college one of the daily exercises enjoined on the lower classes by Dr. Sparks, the professor of ancient languages, was one which may be worthy of mention in these days of degeneracy in classical literature. The foot stu-
dents had the privilege of asking of the head of the class any question pertinent to the lesson, and successively each one above the foot; so that frequently the last would become first, and the first at the foot, when his turn for the question might again place him in the van. Rivalry for the place was thus created, until every member became thoroughly grounded in the contents of Lempprie's Classical Dictionary. At these exercises Dr. Hughes, with the aid of his prodigious memory, became so expert that, should he lose his vantage ground temporarily, he seldom failed to recover it. The practice of research into ancient history and into old and curious facts, thus early imbibed, continued during life, and was the origin of that thirst for investigation which was so distinguished a trait in his character, and which led to the acquisition of such a vast fund of general information.

About the year 1832, he received the degree of M.A., but always appeared to estimate these literary tributes at much less value than most people attach to them; and never resorted to these, or any other means, to obtain credit by a mere display of knowledge, for which his thirst was so insatiable that he did not seem disposed to sacrifice his time to any other purpose; always apparently considering this as the main business of life.

After graduation, Dr. H. entered upon a course of medical study with that much esteemed and distinguished physician, Dr. Dennis Claude, of Annapolis, than whom few men have possessed during their lives more completely the love and admiration of the society in which they moved, or were more honored by their fellow-citizens with proofs of consideration and distinction. Here Dr. Hughes was noted among his fellow-students for thoroughness in his attainments, and for the spirit of enquiry which was continually stimulated and extended among them, by his questions, examinations and suggestive remarks. "In fact," remarked a distinguished physician, then an ornament to the faculty of physic, as he is now to that of Divinity, "in fact, he qualified some of his fellow-students for examination," which in those days, "they might have found it difficult to have passed, has it not been for his constant aid."

After three years of office study, Dr. H. Attended the course of medical lectures at the University of Maryland, receiving much aid from that eminent Baltimore Surgeon, Dr. W. W. Baxley, who by his researches and contributions has acquired literary as also professional distinction.

In regular course, Dr. Hughes received the degree of M.D. — in those days not an empty title — graduating with distinguished honor, and was awarded the University Prize of a gold medal, as the author of the best original Thesis in the Latin language. Returning to Annapolis, Md., he commenced the practice of medicine, and seemed to have a prospect of soon securing an extensive business, which his attainments so well qualified him for; but having received the appointment of Demonstrator of Anatomy in the University of Maryland, he removed to Baltimore, where other engagements and views prevented him from seeking an extension of practice. About this time he contributed occasionally to the medical and literary periodicals of the day. Some of his articles attracted much attention, not unfrequently producing telling effect, by settling some dubious question in history, chronology or geography; and he seldom made an attack with his trenchant pen, either in regard to principles or persons, when it might not be said of his aim: "Hoerct lateri lethalis arundo."

Dr. H. had now directed his attention to a more active life, and applying to Mr. Poinsett, then Secretary of War, for permission to appear before the Army Medical Board for examination for the position of a medical officer in the U.S. Army, did not find it difficult, from his superior scholastic and professional attainments, to attain the grade of number one in the list of successful candidates.

In April, 1839, he received from the President his commission as a surgeon in the army, and served successively on the eastern frontier of the United States, and in Florida during the Seminole war. Stationed in the vicinity of the Everglades, and suffering the vicissitudes incident to a campaign in an insalubrious country, his health was seriously impaired. From the effects of disease and climate he long suffered, and perhaps it may be said never fully recovered. Yielding to the solicitations of friends, he resigned his commission in the army and returned to the walks of civil life; not, however, until he had had opportunities of medical practice, and of ministering to the comfort of many who have expressed the warmest gratitude and appreciation of his professional services.

He visited our city, where he remained for a time, pursuing a quiet and unobtrusive life, being debarred by continued ill health and other considerations from the practice of his profession. He soon after removed to Maryland where, at no time during his relaxation from professional labors, did he cease from his efforts to store his mind with that extensive general knowledge for which he literally thirsted, watching every movement on the chess-board of nations with the most vigilant eye, especially the vicissitudes of the seizing the key positions of the world, with the same interest as if he had been a diplomatist or minister of state; noting daily the progress of nations, whether of Europe, Asia or America, and the discoveries in the interior of Africa, as if the accuracy of his map depended upon the notation of each individual event. For in fact he remarked and corrected his maps and wrote up journals, as if personal interest existed in every movement. If the siege of Sebastopol was ended, or if Louis Napoleon cast his eye upon Piedmont or the banks of the Rhine, or if the ambitious and tyrannical despot of Prussia longed for the dismemberment of Denmark, he did not fail to mark the fact and note its bearing upon the institutions of our own country. Or did the French Emperor essay to give his views of Julius Caesar, he failed not to criticize them, regarding the accuracy of his facts and the deductions that might be made from them, as to the motives of his own action and the principles of his own conduct.

Desiring to visit the shores of the Mediterranean, and to renew the classical associations connected with the seats of ancient power and arts in the Grecian archipelago, and for the purpose of reestablishing his impaired health, in the summer of 1841 he submitted to an examination before the Naval Medical Board. Some cause, however, prevented him subsequently from entering the navy.
Primeval New River which the soldiers of Fort Lauderdale patrolled in the 1830’s and 1840’ (Fort Lauderdale Historical Society).

for which he had passed so satisfactory an examination; and had been reported by the Board as No. 1, for grade of a medical officer. He again devoted himself to civil pursuits, being associated with his father, the late Jeremiah Hughes, in the publication of that well-known standard periodical, “Niles’s Register,” so useful for reference, to the statesman and historian.

In 1849, he removed to the District of Columbia, and still continued his researches into the realms of general knowledge; became connected with the press; mastered most of the modern languages, as readily as he had the Greek, Latin and the Hebrew; acquired a reputation in the private literary circles of the metropolis, as an accomplished philologist; was versed in the principles of aesthetics, numismatics and the plastic arts; investigated the geography, flora and geology of almost every region on the globe, and becoming well acquainted with its latitude, longitude and topographical features searched out almost every remarkable place, locating it definitely; examined the ancient and modern history of battles and sieges, at the same time extending his studies in physiology and the natural and physical sciences.

One of the favorite maxims of the lamented subject of this notice, seemed to be, that it is not well to appear to know too much — that such is the weakness of human nature, men do not like to see others possess more knowledge than themselves; he was, therefore, generally careful to know more than he gave expression to, especially in society; and not infrequently persons, in conversation with him, would discover that his knowledge was profounder and more exhaustive on the subject under discussion, than they had anticipated.

His health not permitting him to engage in the practice of his profession, Dr. Hughes was engaged, prior to the late civil war, successively in some of the various bureaus of the War and Interior Departments at Washington, especially those of the census, statistics and the topographical engineers. To aid him in his system of journalizing and annotations of maps, charts and other literary and scientific works, he mastered the arts of Phonography and Stenography, and claimed to have improved and simplified the system. His memory was singularly retentive — in fact he was remarkable in this respect. In the private relations of life he was, indeed, the type of a good man — not a successful one in the commercial and pecuniary sense of the word, since he was unselfish, generous, charitable, and liberal to an imprudent degree — for he had no guile, or suspicion of any one. In his habits he was moderate and temperate, and in social intercourse was more conspicuous as a listener than an active participator. In manner and character he was urbane, sensitive, retiring; quick to resentment, but ready to forgive; high toned and punctilious.

In the midst of life, and especially in late years, he has reflected on the certainty of death, and a few weeks before the close of his probation, gave such directions and made such remarks as induced the belief that he was anticipating the awful change as eminently probable in a very short time. In the hour of death he was as he lived, for

“—verae voces tun demum pectore ab imo
Ejiciuntur, et cripitur persona, manet res.”

The summons of the dread event came to him October 5th, 1866 at Georgetown, D.C. His last intelligent words were, “This is Life indeed!!”

Requiscat in Pace.

A.JK. Semmes, M.D.

New Orleans, Jan., 1867.

—15—