

A BIT OF HISTORY

By J. B. Leftwich

(This story was condensed from an article published in a family newsletter. It was written by the late Nora Jones Steele, granddaughter of Joshua and Annie.)

Joshua Bartlett of Buffalo Valley was quite outspoken in his opposition to secession. This got him into trouble with the Rebels. When it was known that Rebels were in the vicinity, he had to hide out, sometimes for a week or two.

In December, 1861, war fever was at a peak. Efforts were made by the Rebels to force Union supporters to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy.

One day, Joshua was grinding corn at his water mill on Indian Creek about two miles from his home, Annie learned Rebels were in Silver Point and headed toward Buffalo Valley. She sent her daughter, 15, to warn her father. Joshua left the mill, went down the creek about one mile, to the Caney Fork River to hide in a friend's home.

Joshua had a maple grove and tapped the trees to make maple syrup. He once hid in his grove for a week to avoid Rebel soldiers. Thinking the Rebels had departed, he went home. While he was eating breakfast, he heard horses running. The Rebels were approaching the house. Joshua tried to hide, but the Rebels captured him as he tried to crawl under a bed.

The Rebels took him up the Valley and held him captive throughout the day. He thought he would be killed, but he was released after the Rebels took his good hat and made him depart wearing a Rebel cap which he threw away as soon as he was safely out of sight of the Rebels.

While Joshua was held captive, a Rebel officer came by Joshua's house and found Annie sobbing. He asked why she was crying, and she told him the Rebels had captured her husband and probably would kill him. Asked where the Rebels were, she made a wild but accurate guess. They believed the Confederate officer prevented the Rebels from killing Joshua.

Joshua died in 1881 and was buried on Ned Anderson's farm. During the second half of the Twentieth Century, the farm was sold. The new owner destroyed the grave by plowing over it. His tombstone was recovered and taken across the Caney Fork River where it was placed in a little cemetery on the property of the I-40 Rest Stop next to the grave of Annie.

Annie was buried in this cemetery on a farm of a friend because she became sick and died while visiting there. Flood waters backed up to Buffalo Valley which prevented carrying her body to be buried beside Joshua on the Anderson farm.

The cemetery in which Annie is buried is on the campus of the I-40 rest center. A paved path runs near the her grave. Each year, hundreds -- perhaps thousands - - of tourists view her grave as they walk the path. Thus, in death she is exposed to the public whereas in life she was a very private person.

Note: *Joshua and Annie were my great-great grandparents.*

(J.B. Leftwich is a veteran journalist and a columnist for *The Lebanon Democrat*.

Email: leftwichjb@charter.net)

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