

## A BICENTENNIAL HISTORY OF DEKALB COUNTY, TENNESSEE

By Thomas Gray Webb – 1995  
Published 1995 by Bradley Printing Company  
Smithville, Tennessee

### CHAPTER XI

#### CIVIL WAR GUERRILLAS IN DEKALB COUNTY

*(Story gives reference to Capt. Francis Marion Anderson “France Anderson”. He was the s/o Thomas Shirley Anderson & Judith Robinson - \* See Anderson family files and Chapter 3 of: [ajlambert.com](http://ajlambert.com))*

When General Morgan and his men left DeKalb County and the main Confederate army withdrew from Middle Tennessee to Chattanooga, most citizens of the county hoped that with the opposing armies gone, they could now live in relative peace. Both Confederate and Union sympathizers hoped for an improved situation during the last half of 1863; instead, it grew much worse, and the next two years proved to be the most bitter ones of the war for DeKalb County. They were years which left between the people of the county a legacy of hatred which would last for more than a century.

By the middle of 1863, there was little or no civil authority; the county government had practically ceased to function. For instance, the circuit court judge last appeared in October 1861; the clerk, J.T. Hollis, carried on business after that. The last court was held in September 1862, though an unsuccessful attempt was made to hold court in March 1863. After that, no court was held until October 1864.<sup>1</sup>

Schools had totally ceased to function, and churches were in almost the same condition. Salem Baptist Church at Liberty met only three times between July 1862 and June 1865; the Baptist Church at Old Bildad near Keltonburg held only one meeting between October 1862 and May 1865.

Prior to and during Morgan's occupation of DeKalb County, the Confederates and their sympathizers were in control most of the time. During this period, both Confederate and Union troops seized such things as horses, mules, corn and fodder, and meat from the smokehouse. Records still exist for some of the Union seizures, and among those who filed claims with the Federal government for property seized by Union troops in 1862 and 1863 were Giles Driver, Brackett Estes, S. H. Gray, R. C. Hays, James C. Baker, William H. Certain, L. G. Batton, and Wesley Johnson. General Elliott's command in December 1863 took from Jane C. Richardson, a widow of Smithville, two bushels of meal, two meal sacks, two mules, and seventeen loads of cut corn. William H. Magness had a ton of hay and a mule worth \$130 taken from him by Lieutenant Parker of the Second Michigan Cavalry.<sup>2</sup>

Confederate troops also seized such supplies, as they had no other source for such articles. Though there was this sort of activity in the first two years of the war, there is no evidence of such things as burning of homes and killing of civilians until after the Confederate army had left the county in the summer of 1863. When they were gone,

guerilla forces took over, with bands of both Union and Confederate sympathizers ranging through the county.

All areas of the county suffered from these guerillas, generally known as bushwhackers. The area around the Caney Fork, which was about evenly divided between Union and Confederate sympathizers, was particularly hard-hit. The most notorious of the bushwhackers who operated on Caney Fork were known as the Mine Lick Gang. Just how many members this group had is not known, probably around a dozen, and the number undoubtedly varied from time to time. They probably were most active in the last half of 1864, as one of the best known members, **France Anderson**, was captain of Company C of the First Mounted Infantry until June 10, 1864, when he resigned for what he called personal reasons. His company for the previous six months had been working out of Carthage, scouting and dispersing bands of guerilla.<sup>3</sup> He is said to have become so hardened to killing that he actually enjoyed lying behind a log and shooting people.<sup>4</sup>

The Mine Lick Gang ranged far and wide up and down the Caney Fork, attacking those of Confederate sympathies. No doubt they got credit for things that were done by others, but they nevertheless had a formidable reputation. They were said to have tried to kill John Staggs Allen, who lived near the Narrows, and to have whipped his bother-in-law Milton Tinsley so badly that the scars were still on his back when he died many years later.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Allen and his wife's family, the Martins, were so terrified that they left the Caney Fork and spent the remainder of the war years with relatives in Sumner County.<sup>6</sup>

The people on Falling Water were often victimized by the Mine Lick Gang. Billy Robinson's family hid their cured meat and their salt in gullies in the fields, but even then it was sometimes found by the bushwhackers. They went into the Robinson house and took the family's clothes, and Cal Dean shot and killed the geese and hogs while the family begged him not to. So trying were these experiences that Billy Robinson's daughter, Mrs. J.D. Bozarth, still wept when she described them to her children many years later.<sup>7</sup>

Even worse than the Robinsons' experiences were those of Ellie Bozarth's family. Mrs. Bozarth, a widow, lived on Falling Water with her young children, her widowed daughter, Polly Pistole, and a granddaughter. They were first raided by Bill Colwell and a group who were not with the Mine Lick Gang, but who took all their horses and hogs. Then bushwhackers came to the home of Mrs. Bozarth's daughter Helen, who had married Dick Smith. They took Dick Smith from plowing and asked him to set them across the river in his canoe. His wife suspected that they had more in mind than that and had him kiss his babies, Ellen and Alex, before he went. And sure enough, when they had got across the river, they killed him, leaving his wife to cross the river with a wagon and oxen to get the body. Even then they were not through, for after Smith was buried, the family was met in the road from the cemetery by the bushwhackers, who laughed at the family and said, "Looks like you all have been somewhere." After the death of her husband, Helen Smith moved back to her mother's already-crowded house, but still there was to be no rest for them; for the Mine Lick Gang came and burned the house to the

ground one night. They even returned the next morning and tried to make the women cook breakfast for them on the coals.<sup>8</sup>

The Mine Lick Gang was active on Mine Lick Creek itself, where they raided the Henry Burton home one day. All the horse stock had already been taken, however, except one mare which one of the boys had ridden to the mill at Second Creek. It was hoped he would not get back while the bushwhackers were still there, but unfortunately he did; they took the mare, and the family was left with only oxen.<sup>9</sup>

The one occasion remembered when the Mine Lick Gang was defeated was when they raided the home of J.M. Lee near Holme's Creek. After taking silver spoons and other things, they left the house, but were surprised by a group of Confederates, who shot and killed Harrison Green and two or three others.<sup>10</sup>

The area around Holmes' Creek and Indian Creek was not bothered greatly by the Mine Lick Gang, as it had its own band of bushwhackers in the last year of the war. Some of them, including Tom Self and Hens Hills (both of whom were in Stokes' Cavalry), went to the home of Ezekiel W. Taylor on Indian Creek. Mr. Taylor, a former sheriff, was then over sixty years old. They called for him to bring them a bucket of water; when he did, they shot and killed him. Riding on up Mill Branch, they killed Henry L. Turner there at the mill. They were not through; they took Henry Hendrixson to a house in Cove Hollow and kept him there one night, then killed him the next morning. Henry's brothers Jerry and Wilse Hendrixson, along with Wilse Taylor, were known as guerillas in the latter part of the war; perhaps they were seeking revenge for the death of their brother.<sup>11</sup>

Dred Fish was another of the bushwhackers of the Indian Creek area. At the home of Hill Hayes on Holmes' Creek, he went in one day while Mrs. Hayes was weaving cloth for a shirt for her young son Walk. Dred Fish cut the cloth out of the loom, saying that he would take it to his own son. As he left, Walk Hayes told him that when he grew up, he would kill him for that. And he did just that a few years after the war, on the steps of the courthouse in Smithville.<sup>12</sup>

Not many of the bushwhackers met such violent ends, and most of them during the war continued their raids. No section of the county was safe; Bill Billings and probably his father were killed by bushwhackers near Peeled Chestnut.<sup>13</sup> At Belk, bushwhackers from White County came to the home of Christopher Wright and threatened to shoot him and his wife. She gave them the money-box, which they broke open and threw away after removing the money. They rode away, back across the river, killing the dog as they left. Mr. Wright was able to save his houses by hiding them in a cave for most of the war.<sup>14</sup>

Such activities as these were commonplace during the last two years of the war in DeKalb County; Confederate sympathizers and their families were at the mercy of these roving guerilla bands. And they could not expect the Union Army to restore order, for not only were the guerilla bands killing Confederate sympathizers and destroying their property, the Union army itself was doing the same thing. When Captain E.W. Bass's company of Union Cavalry left their command at Tullahoma and went home to DeKalb

County in June 1864, he reported that he went with them in order to prevent them from “committing outrages.”<sup>15</sup>

In neighboring White County the next month, a force of a hundred Union soldiers was sent to recover 500 horses that had been stolen from them by Champ Ferguson’s guerilla band. The official army report stated that they found very few of the horses, but that “the major commanding found that the citizens were all aiders and abettors to the thieving band. So he commenced to show them the rewards given to such people, and had their stock (private) and everything that his command could consume seized, and plundered every house from there to Sparta...and destroyed all that could not be brought away. For a distance of fifteen miles...the most unparalleled plunder was committed.<sup>16</sup> The same report mentioned that there were still Confederate guerilla bands at Sparta, Spencer, and in Overton County, and that “Kearsy has about thirty men and ranges near Smithville...they are all regular desperadoes, taking no prisoners at all”.<sup>17</sup>

This referred, of course, to Pomp Kersey, the best-known of the Confederate guerillas in DeKalb County. He actually lived just across the line in Cannon County near Short Mountain but most of his guerilla operations were directed against Union sympathizers around Liberty and Smithville in DeKalb County. Pomp Kersey’s real name was Hiram Taylor Kersey, but apparently he was always called by the nickname Pomp. He was the youngest son of Margaret “Peggy” Kersey enlisted in Company A. of Colonel Savage’s 16<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Infantry Regiment in May 1861, when he was only thirteen years old. His older brother and two cousins were in the same company, and they all served honorably there through the terrible battles of Perryville and of Murfreesboro, where one of his cousins was killed. The other died at Franklin in November 1864.

Pomp Kersey was not with the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment at Franklin; he had left the army more than a year earlier. On May 24, 1863, he wrote to his mother from Shelbyville. He was fifteen years old at the time, but his letter did not sound like one written by a fifteen-year-old-boy, nor did it sound like one written by a desperado. He wrote, “Dear mother, when I know that you are well and doing well I am satisfied for I care for nobody else but you, all my labor and privations and hardships are to make you comfortable in your old age. I am looking forward to the time when I shall see you enjoy all the necessary comforts and pleasures of this earth and I am in hopes I will in a coming day be with you and be able to still assist and aid you in your troubles and cheer you in your old age...I understand that you have bought you a farm, and I am glad you have done so for I had no other use for my money and should it so happen that I never get to come home you will have a home where you can live unmolested. Mother I want you to write to me as soon as you receive this letter, and let me know how every thing is going on. I have no news to write to you, we have bad news from Mississippi. I will send you \$15 in this letter and if you need any more just let me know it and I will send you more, be sure and write me some more I remain your Son for ever H T Kersy

To his mother Margrett Kersy”,<sup>18</sup>

Writing to his friend M.B. Martin, also on May 24, 1863, Pomp Kersey sounded more like a typical fifteen-year-old, but still nothing like a man bent on spreading death and

destruction. Addressing him as “Dear old Friend, Rich,” he wrote: “I am well and enjoying all the pleasures of this life. I have plenty of money to spend for anything I want. I have for the last month had the finest time with the young ladies you ever saw. I visit a place where they had the finest kind of instrumental music preformed by a natural actress She acted well on the piano and I think she will act well almost any other way. Rich I have a great many good things to tell you but I have not got time to tell them all now but I want you to save a 2 gallon jug full of good whiskey and rob the bees for I intend to come home in a few days. I will be home by the time these letters gets home and I want you to attend and have all things so we can take a big spree out in the flat woods. Rich I am in the notion to take a big bust before long I will be sure to be at home so I will come to a close.

I remain yours most truly for ever H T Kersy”<sup>19</sup>

Pomp Kersey gives no indication in these letters that he was planning to leave the army. However, when he did come home, he found that the Short Mountain section was being subjected to repeated raids by a band of Union guerillas. They had plundered the home of his mother and had killed Bob Jones, on of her neighbors.<sup>20</sup> When the Confederate army withdrew from Middle Tennessee to Chattanooga, Pomp felt that his home would be unprotected against these Union men. Vicksburg had fallen, Lee had retreated from Gettysburg, and the future looked dark for the Confederacy. Therefore, on August 4, 1863, he left the army and returned home,<sup>21</sup> as did quite a few other Middles Tennesseans at this same period of time. He gathered about him a dozen or so others who felt as he did, and they set about protecting their area from the outrageous actions of the Union guerillas.

Unfortunately however, some of the actions of Pomp Kersey’s guerillas became as outrageous as those of the Union guerillas. Pomp Kersey and his band appear to have operated mainly in DeKalb County, with Liberty and Smithville receiving most of their attention. They were particularly disliked at Liberty, where they robbed several of the Union sympathizers, among them William Vick and James Fuston. Their raids into Liberty culminated on the night of January 25, 1864, when they surrounded the home of Ben Blades, who was 66 years old and a Union man, but was well thought of by the entire community. When he tried to escape out a back door, he was killed almost instantly by a shot through the door.<sup>22</sup> Mr. Blades’ death succeeded in arousing most of the people of the Liberty area against Kersey’s band.

They were better liked around Smithville, where the majority were of Confederate leanings. One day “there gathered in the northern part of the town a squad of men belonging to Company F, Blackburn’s Regiment, to secure Federal recruits-Ras Foster, ‘Black Bill’ Foster, Jim Eastham, Pal Rigsby, John Colwell, and others. Suddenly Kersey’s men dashed into town, stampeding the recruiters. Eastham killed a horse trying to get away, while eight of the Federals were killed, among them Rigsby and Colwell.... The Rebel citizens of Smithville were pleased over this raid, for they had much to bear.”<sup>23</sup>

Some of Smithville's citizens were not so pleased with Kersey's raids. William G. Foster lived on the square where the jail now stands, in a log house with a room on either side and an open hall in the middle. One night Kersey and fifteen or twenty men came shooting into town and rode their horses right into the open hall, woke the family, and choked Mr. Foster and his wife until they gave him what money they had. They then rode away, but were not yet through with Mr. Foster. They returned another night when Mr. Nathan Newby was visiting the Fosters, shot and killed Mr. Newby's horse, and shot the Fosters' cow, through it lived. Again they choked William Foster until he gave them money, and Nathan Newby barely escaped with his life when he had no money. Such events as these were described as a "regular occurrence" in Smithville in 1863 and 1864.<sup>24</sup> William Foster seemed to get the worst end of the war from both sides; he had voted to remain in the Union and was considered Union by Kersey's men. However, he had two sons in the Confederate army in the early part of the war, so the Union soldiers did not hesitate to take his supplies. One fall when his corn crop had been brought into town and piled in his yard before storing, Bill Hathaway and about a hundred Federal soldiers rode up and turned their horses into it, consuming nearly all of it.<sup>25</sup> The Fosters finally moved to Watertown during the last year of the war to escape the guerillas.

Kersey's men when they needed money did not seem to be too particular about whether their victims were of Union or Confederate sympathies. Hearing that John M. Love on the Caney Fork at Young Bend had some money, they rode to his house and demanded it, even though he was of Confederate sympathy and had two sons in the Confederate army. When he refused to hand over the money, they took his wife, Nancy, to the back of the house, put a rope around her neck and threw it over a tree limb, and threatened to hang her until she finally told where the money was hidden.<sup>26</sup>

For better or worse, the raids of Pomp Kersey and his men were to come to an end less than a year after they had begun. In many ways the members of the band could hardly be called men; Ike Gleason of White County was only fifteen years old, Pomp Kersey himself was only sixteen, and several of the others were said to be about the same ages.<sup>27</sup> However, the war had demanded men's work of them, and most of them would attain no greater age, for they were soon to die.

On the night of July 23, 1864, there was a party near Gassaway at the home of a Mr. Dennis on Canal Creek. Several Union men were there; among them were Dr. Shields of Smithville, Henry Blackburn, Bill Hathaway, a Mr. Parrish, Thomas G. Bratten, Louis Lyles, Daniel Gan, and Jim Clarke. Some of these were soldiers; some were not. Jim Clarke, a young boy, had on a Federal uniform, but was not a soldier. Daniel Gan had deserted Stokes' Cavalry the previous year, but had returned to duty and was now listed as "Absent sick" at Liberty, Tennessee. Henry Blackburn and Louis Lyles were absent without leave from Stokes's Cavalry; Bill Hathaway had already resigned from that unit and had not yet joined the Fourth Mounted Infantry. Thomas G. Bratten, however, was on active duty with Stokes' Cavalry. He was sixteen years old at the time, a month older than Pomp Kersey; it was Bratten and Hathaway who fired the fatal shots that ended Kersey's life the next day. Bratten gave this description of the party: "We had several interesting rustic beauties there, all were having a fine time. Not many of us got sleepy,

but three went to the barn and in the loft and were soon dreaming; and Hathaway went to the side room and went to sleep. We did not have much fear of an attack, as we never dreamed that an enemy was near. John Overall was fiddling for us. About 10 o'clock (we afterwards learned), Pomp Kersey, the captain of the Short Mountain bushwhackers, came into the yard to see how strong we were; but Louis Lyles and Jim Clarke coming up the creek just then, shouting and shooting, as wild boys will do, doubtless scared him away for the time.

At another time, when one of the soldiers stepped out and fired his pistol, he thought he saw a man out in the corn, but paid no particular attention to him. Just before day I sat down on the stair steps with my Spencer rifle leaning against the wall. The fiddler was playing 'Eighth of January' and the strains rang musically through the room. I had not been there long before I heard several rifle shots. Every man in the house looked up suddenly, turning white with fear. For a moment all was still. The clock ticked loudly. The snoring of a sleeping man in an adjoining room could be plainly distinguished. One of the soldiers' horses, tied out in the yard, nickered lonesomely. Then all of a sudden, the three persons who had been in the barn came bursting through the house as if Satan was after them!

Some of the girls hurried and tried to wake Hathaway, but he was hard to arouse. After giving him a shake, I rushed to my horse, put spurs to him and started towards Liberty. Some other soldiers were out in the road and got their horses as I got mine. As we turned into the branch that led to the road, behold! Pomp Kersey's gang, or a part of it, was standing right between us and town. But spurring our steeds, we pressed through them, and here we went, helter-skelter. We checked at the forks of the creek, about where the mill is at Gassaway. We noticed that all of our men were there but Hathaway and Clarke. I noticed also that my coat, which was a blouse, had seven holes in the tail. Presently we heard horse hoofs beating over stones and Hathaway soon hove in sight. His hat was lost, and his hair was flying in the wind as he said, 'Boys, I feel like I was just out of the mouth of hell!' he said that Clarke was behind a tree keeping the gang of 12 at bay. We thought of going to his relief, but knew it meant destruction. Clarke was killed fighting to the last. John Overall, the fiddler, who was very young, had his fiddle broken over the rail fence and told to keep out of such bad company."<sup>28</sup>

The Federals went on to Liberty and got reinforcements, among them E.D. (Ras) Foster, who had earlier been run out of Smithville by Kersey, and whose father had been raided by Kersey's men several times. The Federals then headed toward Short Mountain, where Pomp and his band had gone. Pomp's band had stopped at Bob Jones' oat field and taken up oats in loose bundles for their horses; the Federals tracked them from there by the scattered oats dropped on the way. They found them asleep in a thicket; one man, Seals, had heard them coming and, after trying unsuccessfully to waken the others, he made his escape. Ike Gleason and E.J. Hawkins, who were sleeping some distance away, also made their escape when the shooting began. Of the remaining seven, five were killed by Hathaway and Dan Gan, leaving only Pomp Kersey. He tried to get on his horse, but failed to get the halter untied. Thomas Bratten put his rifle against Kersey's back and pulled the trigger, but it failed to fire. Kersey jumped into the bushes, turned back toward

Bratten and got his pistol half-way out, but was shot simultaneously by Bratten and Hattaway. Jack Neeley, two men named Benton and Kelly, and two Arnold brothers from Murfreesboro were among those killed.<sup>29</sup> The Federals did not escape completely unscathed; when Dan Gan was discharged a year later “on account of wounds received in action,” he still had in his thigh a rifle ball received “in action on Short Mountain Tennessee with the notorious Pomp Kersey and his guerilla band.”<sup>30</sup>

After shooting, the Federals went to the Bob Jones place (Jones had earlier been killed by Union bushwhackers) and commandeered his wife’s oxen and cart. Stripping all clothing from the seven bodies, they piled them into the ox card and started through Mechanicsville. Miss Mary Reams wrote from there many years later, “I have heard those that saw it say it was a gruesome sight, the hot July morning sun on those dead bodies, their legs and arms hanging nearly to the ground. Saddest of all, the mothers and sisters of the boys following the cart, begging the bodies of their loved ones. Heedless, the cart went on.”<sup>31</sup> It reached Liberty about sunset; the bodies were thrown into a vacant storeroom and buried the next day on the Daniel Smith farm north of the bridge.<sup>32</sup>

There were many who were pleased that Pomp Kersey and his band would raid no more, and there was even a son which became quite popular in parts of DeKalb County, It went:

We had a little party on the banks of Canal,  
Along came Pomp Kersey and whipped us like hell!  
We routed, we scouted All half the next day  
And found the bushwhackers by scatters of hay!  
Huzza! Huzza! We’re a nation so true,  
Three cheers for Abe Lincoln, the red, white, and blue!<sup>33</sup>

The bodies of Kersey and his men were removed from their first burial place by relatives, and Pomp’s body was buried in the Melton Cemetery near Short Mountain. The inscription on his tombstone expressess his family’s viewpoint quite well:

He Died for his County H.T. KEIRSEY  
Born Nov. 13, 1847, Joined the Confederate army May 1861  
Associated himself with a Tenn. Guerilla band Aug. 1863  
and was murdered near Short Mountain July 24, 1864

During the year that Pomp Kersey’s guerilla band was active in DeKalb, the county was not completely neglected by the regular armies. General Elliott’s Federal troops evidently passed through in late November and early December, as they took corn, mules, and bacon from Jane Richardson, Brackett Estes, and other citizens of the Smithville area at the time.<sup>34</sup>

Earlier in the year Colonel Stokes’ men had been on Smith Fork at Hannah’s Branch, where they had driven James Tubb from his home on July 24, 1863.<sup>35</sup> In February 1864 Colonel Stokes took up headquarters at Alexandria, where his men occupied the fairgrounds, and then moved on to Sparta. Though the disastrous encounter with Champ Ferguson’s guerillas took place near there, eventually most of the guerillas were subdued and Stokes himself returned to Carthage in April. Some of his troops apparently



remained in DeKalb County, however, and the following incident probably took place during that time. George Turner, a private in G. Company of Stokes' regiment, tells of being "sent at one time to try to capture one Mr. Yance Malone, who it was reported was a bushwhacker. We reached his home and found that they had been making molasses, using large kettles, and as we found a pen full of fattening hogs and not being too well fed, we proceeded to prepare for a feast. Some were put to killing hogs, some to killing chickens which we found to be plentiful, and others to attending to the fires. We strung the joints of pork on sticks and placed them in the kettles and hung chickens in between. While waiting for the meat to cook, we saw an opening in the ceiling to the attic, and I remember seeing an officer as he got up in the middle of that white bed with his muddy boots on and looked to see what was up in the attic, where he discovered a pile of mellow apples. I was ordered up in the attic and to push the apples to where they would roll out the door and down on the bed, rotten apples and all. You can imagine what the bed looked like, and the women folks could do nothing but stand and look on. Some of the men out in the yard noticed an old man standing off up on the hillside at the edge of the woods watching what was going on. He was in his shirtsleeves, bare-headed and leaning against a tree. He was too far off to be shot at, and two men were sent under cover of fences and bushes to get behind him and capture him and bring him to camp. Instead they killed him when close enough, shooting him in the back, and he fell on his face. They turned him over and left him, and I remember going up to see him the next morning as he lay there with the frost on his face. We eat up about all that we could find at Mr. Malone's, and when we were breaking camp, some of the men shot the last rooster on the place because he crowed."<sup>36</sup>

This incident probably took place in the Temperance Hall neighborhood, but as when Morgan's troops were in the county, much of the action again centered around Liberty. Stokes', Blackburn's, and Garrison's men all camped at Liberty at various times. At one time one or more Federal companies of Negroes camped at Liberty with headquarters at the Methodist Church.<sup>37</sup>

Captain Jack Garrison's Company G of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee Mounted Infantry located at Liberty in the late summer of 1864 and began construction of a stockade or fort, aided by part of Colonel Stokes' command. The building of the stockade, however, was interrupted in late August when General Joe Wheeler's Confederate cavalry passed through DeKalb County. He had started from Georgia and raided East Tennessee, then went on through DeKalb County and Middle Tennessee almost to Nashville before returning to Georgia. Some DeKalb County men were in Company D of Wheeler's command and were able to make brief visits home as the 2000 men of the regiment went through Liberty and Alexandria. There were also DeKalb Countians in Allison's Cavalry Squadron, which was under command of General "Cerro Gordo" Williams. The 2000 men of this command had been separated in East Tennessee from General Wheeler and were attempting to catch up with him. They passed through Liberty two or three days after Wheeler's regiment did, followed by Dibrell's cavalry, and with Champ Ferguson's guerillas bringing up the rear. The people of Liberty especially dreaded to see Ferguson, as Liberty was considered the home town of Stokes, Blackburn, Hathaway, and Garrison. This dread was justified to some degree, as Ferguson, burned James Lamberson's barn

and thresher.<sup>38</sup> General Williams; command went on to Aleandria, where they camped at the fairgrounds; the troops of Allison's squadron met there with families and friends.

Some of those Confederate cavalymen who passed through the county took advantage of the opportunity they had to get fresh horses. Some of the few horses left in the county were taken; Thomas Givan on Clear Fork lost five fine mares, and all the horses on Eli Vicks's farm were carried off. Others suffered similar losses.<sup>39</sup>

The passage of General Wheeler's men through Liberty was described rather vividly by James h. Fite, who was a 16-year-old private in Captain Jack Garrison's company of Federal troops. His home was on the pike a mile and a half west of Liberty. He wrote: "Our regiment, the First Tennessee Mounted infantry, was mustered in at Carthage early in 1864. About May the different companies were sent to various portions of the State for garrison duty and scouting after Champe Ferguson and other guerillas. A good part of my company (G) was from Liberty and vicinity, the officers having been a part of Stokes's regiment. We were first sent to Granville, above Carthage, on the river, to build a stockade, and then to Liberty to build another, our force numbering seventy-five or one hundred men. The latter was well started, when about the first of September, late in the afternoon, Wheeler's cavalry took us by surprise, and like a covey of birds we were scattered.

A week or so prior to this, Gen. H.P. Van Cleve, at Murfreesboro, sent word to our officers that Wheeler was reported coming through Sequatchie Valley and suggested to them to scout in that direction and see if the news was correct. Instead of doing that, they selected about twenty of us and went thorough Lebanon and by Cedar Glade and Cainsville. We returned to Liberty about two hours before Wheeler came upon us from the direction of Smithville. It was a complete surprise, and the result was a rout. There was considerable firing; and while nobody was killed, they captured something like a dozen of our boys.

My horse had given out on the expedition into Wilson County, and I was riding one belonging to a member of Stokes's regiment. In returning to Liberty I stopped at my mother's just west of that village, to get supper. She prepared a sort of feast, setting the table on the front porch. I recall the big peach cobbler. I had finished supper when T/G. Bratten stopped at the gate and told me that they were fighting in town and suggested that we ride down and take part. As I had no horse, he went on alone. He returned in a gallop shortly, calling to me that the Confederates were coming. I watched for the advance guard, soon seeing four about three hundred yards away, and retreated in fairly good order to a plum thicket back of the house. The Johnnies rode into the yard. Having brother to hold their horses, they ate supper. Mother said one of them, finishing first, walked to the back door, and she expected every moment that I would shoot him, though I would never have killed one from the bushes. I am glad to this day I did not, for that Confederate too had a mother somewhere waiting for his return.

About sunset quite a bunch came by and stopped. Their officer proved to be a relative of ours. He asked for a pillow for a wounded man, mother taking it to the gate. They had

already taken a buggy from a neighbor. When asked who was in command, the officer said, "Wheeler," adding that the force was ten thousand strong and would be a week in passing. In the night I went to the house; and learning that the Confederates were under Wheeler, I was relieved. The impression was that they were Ferguson's guerillas, and I knew I would be murdered if caught by them.

The next day I found a hiding place, a thicket back of the field, and had a narrow escape. Some Confederates came down to the creek very close to me, and a number went swimming. Others were as thick as blackbirds in Eli Vick's cornfield, just across the creek. While some were at the house eating, a soldier went up and said that they had killed a Yankee back of the field. It was supposed that some one in the neighborhood told him to say that before mother, believing that she in her emotion would give me away. My little brother, Robert, whispered to her to be quiet, and he would go and see if anybody was killed. When within thirty yards of me a Confederate asked where he was going. His reply was that he was hunting where the hogs had been getting into the field. My brother soon found me and reassured mother. Truly the mothers, daughters, sisters, and sweethearts deserve as much honor as any of the soldiers.

After Wheeler passed through our men got together again and finished the stockade. I think we could have kept off quite a force now, unless the attacking party had had cannon. We were at the stockade when the battle of Nashville took place between Hood and Thomas. We expected an attack from Forrest, but I'm thankful he never came. Only sixteen, I did not have sense enough at that age to be scared. I have seen older men have ague when they expected an attack."<sup>40</sup>

During the construction of the Federal stockade at Liberty, the frame schoolhouse was torn down and the lumber used for making cabins for the Federal officers stationed at the stockade.<sup>41</sup> This stockade, or fort, was located northwest of the Methodist Church and north of the school.

Jack Garrison's company, and possibly some of Colonel Stokes' troops, remained at the stockade through the winter and evidently into the spring until they were mustered out of service on April 21, 1865, two weeks after Lee's surrender in Virginia.

During the last months of the war there were occasionally Federal troops at Smithville, but they only remained there for short times. However, at Alexandria they remained for longer periods. Colonel Blackburn's troops took post at Alexandria on March 11, 1865, and were still there on May 26 when they captured Champ Ferguson. They apparently remained there until mustered out of service on August 14. The men on both sides were now out of service, the last battles had been fought, the last guerilla had surrounded, and the Civil War in DeKalb County had ended.

## NOTES

1. DeKalb Co., TN, Circuit Court Minutes, 1860-66, pp.321-324.
2. Stokes-Tubb Papers, MS Section, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, TN.

3. Civil War Service Record of **Francis M. Anderson**, microfilm, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, TN.
4. Bill Dyer, interviews February 1960 and January 1976.
5. Toy and Laura Hayes, interview September 17, 1951.
6. Valerie Burton Lounsbury, letter to Thomas G. Webb, September 23, 1963.
7. Dee Bozarth, interview August 4, 1960.
8. Mollie Mangum Turner, interviews August 7, 1956 and November 29, 1959.
9. Valerie Burton Laounsbury, letter to Thomas G. Webb, September 2, 1963.
10. Toy and Laura Hayes, interview September 17, 1951; and Alice Dildine interview, October 3, 1970.
11. Jack Fuson, interview August 17, 1957; Ina Greer, interview January 16, 1960; and Charlie Taylor, interview April 2, 1966.
12. Frank Cheatham, interview February 9, 1952.
13. Amanda and Nancy Billings, interview September 18, 1966.
14. John H. Wright, interview October 5, 1966.
15. E.W. Bass service record, Civil War, Microfilm, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, TN.
16. Report of Major Thomas H. Reeves from Kingston, Tennessee, July 20, 1964. Quoted in Sensing, Champ Ferguson, p. 175.
17. Ibid.
18. H.T. Kersey letter to Margaret Kersey, May 24, 1863. Photocopy in possession of Thomas G. Webb.
19. H. T. Kersey letter to M.B. Martin, May 24, 1863. Photocopy in possession of Thomas G. Webb.
20. Mary Reams, "Pomp Kersey's Death Shows Bad Part of Civil War," Smithville Review, August 3, 1950.
21. H. T. Kersey Civil War service record, Microfilm, Tennessee state Library, Nashville, TN.
22. Hale, DeKalb, pp. 239-240.
23. Ibid
24. W. T. Foster Reminiscence No. 4, Smithville Review, March 31, 1927.
25. Ibid., March 3, 1927.
26. Riley Turner, interview by Thomas G. Webb, August 6, 1956.
27. Hale, DeKalb, p. 242; Smithville Review, August 3, 1950 and August 26, 1948; W.T. Foster letter to Ernest Foster, April 25, 1937, copy in possession of Thomas G. Webb.
28. "Twice-Told Civil War Tale Retold from Liberty Herald," Smithville Review, August 26, 1948.
29. Hale, DeKalb, p. 242; Smithville Review, August 3, 1950 and August 26, 1948; W.T. Foster letter to Ernest Foster, April 25, 1937, copy in possession of Thomas G. Webb.
30. Daniel Gan Civil War service record. Microfilm, Tennessee State Library, Nashville, TN.
31. Reams, Review, August 3, 1950.
32. Hale, DeKalb, p. 243.
33. W.T. Foster, Smithville Review, April 7, 1927.

34. Stokes-Tubbs Papers. Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, TN.
35. William B. Stokes, letter of Colonel James Tubb, July 24, 1863. Stokes-Tubb Papers, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, TN.
36. Organ, W.M., Jr., typescript "Tales as Told by One of the Few Remaining Ex Slaves in the South." Liberty, TN, about 1925, p. 6. Copy in possession of Thomas G. Webb.
37. Hale, DeKalb, p. 208.
38. Ibid., p. 235
39. Ibid, p. 238.
40. Ibid, p. 236-238.
41. Ibid, p. 60.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Gray Webb was born in Smithville, Tennessee, on July 30, 1931, and has spent most of his life in DeKalb County. He began collecting historical material on DeKalb County while in high school and has maintained a lifelong interest in DeKalb County history. He has interviewed and corresponded with several hundred people during the past fifty years, and has studied all available printed material and county records. He has been DeKalb County's historian since 1964.

He graduated from DeKalb County High School in 1949 and from George Peabody College in 1952, when he began teaching in the Dekalb County school system. He had taught in one and two-teacher schools, at Smithville Elementary School, at Liberty High School, and at DeKalb County High School, where he is presently employed. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Peabody College and has attended the University, and the University of Tennessee. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean conflict. He and his wife, Audrey Turner Webb, live on a farm in DeKalb County.

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