

CIVIL WAR IN THE UPPER CUMBERLAND OF TENNESSEE

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"Aristocrats had led the South out of the Union in 1861, confident that subsistence farmers and impoverished laborers would follow them in their bloody campaign. Initially they were correct, but in time the realities of deaths, wounds, and suffering families prompted the white under-class to re-examine its role in a war fought so that aristocrats might own slaves and exploit those who did not, thousands among the lesser whites then abandoned the Confederate cause."

When South Carolina seceded from the Union in 1861 Tennessee did not immediately join the secessionists. Governor Isham G. Harris was the leader of the pro-secessionist forces, and called for state wide vote on secession on February 9, 1861. In this vote the State rejected secession, and the Upper Cumberland area was a leader in rejecting secession. DeKalb, Jackson, Overton, Putnam, Smith, and White Counties voted strongly against secession, and only Fentress by narrow margin voted for secession. After Fort Sumner was fired upon Governor Harris summoned a special session of the legislature, and the legislature declared itself independent of the Union. Even though the voters ratified the legislative act there was still sizable support for the Union in the Upper Cumberland.

The people that were loyal to the Union were forced to keep their sentiments to themselves in most cases. Amanda McDowell expressed their feelings when she wrote "I guess it is voted 'out of the Union' by this time", "But it would not have been had the people been allowed to vote their true sentiments." "At least I do not believe it would." "Nearly all the Union men in this neighborhood stayed at home, not wishing to get into a brawl and deeming it a hopeless cause." "Jack said that there were—I thought he said about twenty—Union men standing there, but none of them ventured near to vote for fear of their lives."

Supporters of the Union had to be silent about their sentiments, but some individuals such as Joshua Bartlett did not remain silent about their views. Joshua was the grandfather of Nora Jones Steele, also her grandfather was Byrd Smith Jones, and both were Unionists opposed to the war. Nora wrote that "Although Byrd was opposed to the war he had little to say about it. On the other hand, Joshua Bartlett, my mother's father was very outspoken. I don't know what Grandpa Bartlett did on the day of the vote for secession but it was later said of him in comparing him to Byrd Jones, that he said enough for both of them.. Of course this got him in trouble with the Rebels on several occasions. One day Grandma Bartlett heard there were Rebels in area now Silver Point, and that they were coming down the Valley. Grandpa was grinding corn at his water mill on Indian Creek about two miles from his home. Grandma sent my mother, then about fifteen years old [1861], to tell him.the Rebels are coming! Grandpa quickly

left the mill and went down to the Caney Fork River, a mile away, and on up the river and up the first hollow [Happy Hollow]. Grandpa Bartlett had a maple grove near the house. These were the trees they tapped to make maple syrup and candy. One time Grandpa had been hiding in the maple grove for a week. The family took him food when they were sure it was safe. No Rebels had been in the Valley for several days so Grandpa decided to come home one morning. Grandma had fixed his breakfast and while he was eating they heard horses running up the lane toward the house but they thought it was their own horses coming up to the spring for water and paid no attention until it was too late. Someone in the family just happened to look out and saw the Rebels...just about to enter the door. Grandpa started to crawl under the bed which was in front of the fireplace so he could climb up the chimney..but he was too late. Just as he was half way under the bed the Rebels entered the room and with an oath said 'We've got you now!' They took him up the Valley to where my grandfather Byrd Jones lived. Grandpa was gone all day. Just before sundown they saw Grandpa coming down the road-bareheaded. He said he thought sure they were going to kill him, so he had given his pocketbook to Byrd Jones to take to his family. Grandpa didn't know why they didn't kill him. They took his good hat and gave him an old one of theirs, but when he started home and was he was sure he was out of their sight he threw the Rebel hat away."

Supporters of the Union felt that their life would be safer when the Union Army took control of Tennessee in 1862 and the state officials fled to Mississippi. The "rose-water" policy pursued by Major General Don Carlos Buell the commander of the Union occupation army urged a lenient course of action towards the secessionists. The Union policy however did not bring relief to the Unionists. The loss of their power caused the secessionists to resort to atrocities against Union supporters. Guerrilla bands and outright bandit gangs plundered and stole from Unionists. Ash clearly points this out when he said; "Whether degenerate guerrillas or merely opportunistic desperadoes, the bandits routinely terrorized the people.

Conditions were no different in Buffalo Valley and the surrounding areas. William Henry Harrison Mitchell joined the First Tennessee Mounted Infantry. Before he was mustered a group of 12 men headed by David Crowell and Jeff Benson took him and killed him in September 1863 per affidavits in his widow's pension file. There is also an affidavit that the group consisted of 12 men that stayed around Indian Creek and belonged to neither Army. The Malone gang was headed by a slave owner that raided citizens homes and stole their property. Kiddy Smith Carr told her descendants of one raid by the Malone gang. She, her sister, Hellen Smith Merritt, and mother were alone at home when the gang arrived. Kiddy had hid her horse in a cane thicket, but her sister had her horse in the barn. The gang took Hellen's horse and vandalized the house by pouring flour and molasses on the floor. Malone was killed in 1863 by a man whose brother had been killed by Malone. Some individuals such as George S. Jones, his brother, Prettyman, and brother-in-law, Perry Stocton, moved their families to Kentucky to escape the

atrocities. Others in attempting to move away such as Mansfield Smith, Alexander Barclay and James Dildine were not as luckily in avoiding problems. Barclay and Dildine paid dearly for their loyal Union support as they were killed. We will discuss them further in this article. Mansfield Smith was a zealous Union man as reflected by his widow's pension application. "When the Confederates began conscription [volunteering for confederate service at gunpoint] for their army Mansfield moved to the City of Nashville, Tennessee in 1862 with his first wife and children, and two of his brothers went into the Federal service uniting with a Kentucky Regiment. Mansfield while sojourning at Nashville his wife and children took measles and his wife and two or three of his children died of measles.. As a result of the atrocities being committed against civilians the First Tennessee Mounted Infantry was organized to bring law and order back to the Upper Cumberland.

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