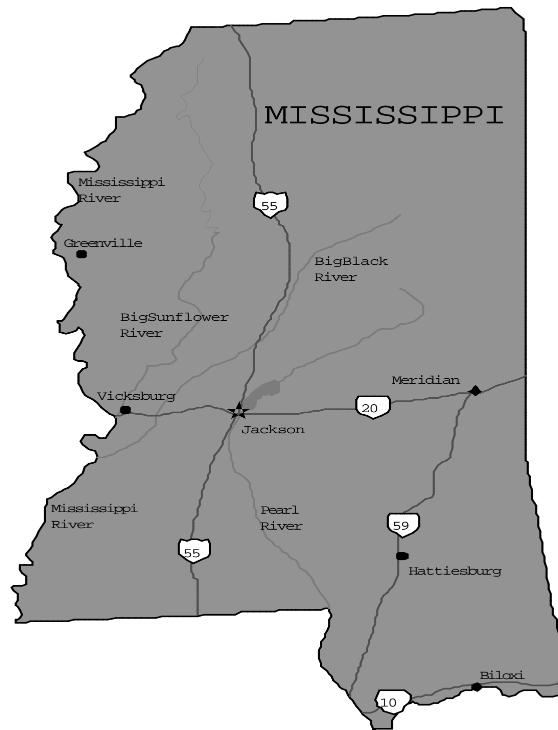
Lauderdale, Mississippi's Empire County: Volume 1: The Early Years, 1830-1865



By
Fred W. Edmiston

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Meridian, MS

Lauderdale, Mississippi's Empire county
Volume 1:
The Early Years,
1830-1865

By
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LAUDERDALE, MISSISSIPPI'S EMPIRE COUNTY:

Volume 1: The Early Years, 1830 to 1865

Fred W. Edmiston

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Preface

It was in 1945, at age fifteen, that I became interested in Lauderdale County's history. However, because of my imperfect understanding at that time of research standards and methods, in later years I had to re-work some of my early research. But even in those first years I realized that writing a *history* worthy of the term was going to be a very long-term project.

One of the most serious problems was the paucity of newspapers before 1900. Except for a few scattered issues of papers published in Meridian, Marion, and Marion Station, few of the many other papers published had survived. Newspapers from nearby towns and cities were of some help, but searching them was time-consuming and often only modestly rewarding. In 1952 and 1953, while in the Air Force, I wrote to a large number of public libraries, universities, and archival collections throughout the nation to seek newspapers and other historical records I could use. This effort did discover a number of papers. Most of these were scattered issues but in one case was almost two and a half years of the Marion *Lauderdale Republican* from the mid-1850s. All places holding such papers were happy to furnish me with microfilm or photostatic copies, all of which I eventually donated to the Meridian Public Library.

Official county and municipal records were rarely in a condition or environment that invited research. How daunting was my first visit to the old vault in the basement of the Lauderdale County Courthouse! That it was a real treasury of information was obvious, but at first I had little inclination to tackle it. Huge bound volumes, most of them clad in a deep patina of dust, looked almost like a scene from *Dracula*. For a while my use of these records was tentative and sporadic—and dusty! Meridian's records at the City Hall were a little easier to manage, for they were fewer and more accessible.

In July of 1982, at the same time that I suggested to the county supervisors that they plan a county sesquicentennial for 1983, I also recommended that they consider establishing a county archives. They liked the suggestion and soon turned the project over to James Dawson. His excellent organizational skills brought a great improvement in the storage and use of county records.

I was fortunate to spend most of the 1960s and 1970s in an area of the Northeast that put me near such important research centers as the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress, as well as such universities as Princeton, Rutgers, Duke, and North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The latter place, in particular, offered its justly-renowned Southern Historical Collection. In these places I often had the leisure simply to go on what lawyers call "fishing expeditions," sometimes with wonderful results. Occasionally I had to remind myself that, if not careful, I might become so enamored of research that I'd forget its purpose.

In the following narrative I have generally kept to the larger matters—political events and attitudes, social events, education, religion, industry, etc. Since there are already a considerable number of histories of Lauderdale families, churches, and similar subjects, I treat these matters only superficially.

The great event of this period is, of course, the Civil War—and I do use that term instead of several other somewhat cumbersome designations. Like the late novelist James Street, I think the shorter name is clear and that it saves time, breath and space.

This is the first volume of what I see as at least a two-volume set, perhaps even three. But I do not intend to go beyond 1900. From the start, research in the older periods has been more interesting; its very elusiveness is an engaging challenge. Writing about the county's history *after*1900 is relatively easy. The availability of newspapers alone makes the task much lighter.

I hope that I've done justice to an interesting story. Since there is probably no such thing as definitive history, this one might serve as a basis for future efforts. And thanks to the computer, historical records are much more accessible today than in earlier years, and will probably become yet more so as time passes. It is not too much to hope that even greater amounts of information will soon become available, and often without expensive visits to distant depositories.

Fred W. Edmiston
April, 2005

Chapter 1: The Beginnings.

Gloria Jahoda in her book *The Trail of Tears* has described how the Choctaw Nation were deprived of their land and homes in the early 1800s by immigrants avid for land and generally unconcerned about the morality of how they got it. In those days it was a rare Caucasian who thought that the Indians deserved consideration. It was probably also a brave one, for the majority of white settlers would tolerate no obstructions. They seem to have been, for the most part, unphilosophical, hard-nosed, and daring. Probably a considerable number were scoundrels. Even some of the Choctaw leaders themselves were apparently unfaithful to their own people.

The intention of those early settlers was, of course, to have all the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and other indigenous tribes moved to the west and to open the entire state of Mississippi to white settlement. After several conferences and treaties, hardly any of which bears critical scrutiny today, the Choctaws by 1830 were still dragging their feet, loath to cede their remaining land and be forced to leave their ancestral homes. White Mississippians became increasingly annoyed and enacted legislation to destroy tribal government and make it a crime to represent oneself as a chief or mingo.[1]

Chief Moshulatubbe, perhaps taking seriously his newly-conferred "citizenship" and hoping to better the lot of his people through the white man's methods, ran for Congress. He campaigned and addressed his audiences as "fellow citizens."

> I have fought for you, [he said] I have been by your own act made a citizen of your state; I am a freeholder, nature my parent…. While in a state of nature my ambition was alone in the shade—my hopes to be interred in the mounds of my ancestors. But you have awakened new hopes; your laws have for me brightened my prospects…. I have been told by my white brethren that the pen of history is impartial…. According to your laws I think that I am qualified to a seat in the councils of a mighty republic….[2]

White Mississippians did not know whether to laugh or to vent their sense of outrage at what they regarded as almost unparalleled effrontery, and the furor among the Choctaws was equally strong. In fact, the Choctaws became divided between Greenwood Leflore and his followers, who courted white ways, and the followers of Moshulatubbe and Pushmataha's nephew Nitakechi, who formed what they called the Republican Party that opposed removal and emphasized Native tradition. The result for the Choctaws was what Jahoda calls a civil war that was exacerbated by the state government's opening the Choctaw country to liquor traffic.[3]

Meanwhile, President Andrew Jackson became as disgusted with the Choctaws, for what he regarded as mulishness, as the Choctaws did with him, for what they saw as betrayal. As Moshulatubbe said, Jackson was the man who had vowed

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[1] Gloria Jahoda, *The Trail of Tears* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 78.

[2] From *Niles' Weekly Register*, quoted in *ibid*, 79.

[3] Ibid. On a visit to Mississippi in December 1845 to persuade the remaining Choctaws to join the larger group in Indian Territory, Nitakechi died in Lauderdale County quite near his birthplace—see the Jackson *Mississippian*, 17 December 1845.

that he would protectively "plant a stake and draw a line around us [the several tribes] that never should be passed" and yet now "was the first to say he could not guard the line, and he drew up the stake and wiped out all traces of the line."[4]

The reaction of the Federal government to all this ferment was to force about 5,000 Choctaws to a council at Dancing Rabbit Creek in September of 1830. The "treaty," signed on the 27th, was a defeat for Moshulatubbe and those who opposed removal. It was a defeat even for Greenwood Leflore who had envisioned himself leading his people to the new land to the west where he would be an exalted leader and live like a king. Now too unpopular, he thought it better to remain on his Mississippi plantation and be served by his slaves. He chose to follow his white ancestors rather than his mother's.

The infamous Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek theoretically opened for individual Choctaws, who wished it, the ownership of land in Mississippi. In fact, however, such ownership was practically impossible. Few Choctaws became landowners under the treaty, which was exactly as the white settlers had intended.

The story of the removal of the Choctaws is heartbreaking but hardly unique in the saga that Helen Hunt Jackson described in 1881 in her book *A Century of Dishonor*. There were the anguish of separation from ancestral homes and burial grounds, the sense of betrayal, the ordeal of hard travel and its concomitant sickness and death, and the trials of a new existence in unfamiliar surroundings near new, sometimes unfriendly, neighbors.[5] To Secretary of War Lewis Cass the Choctaw Peter Pitchlynn wrote a letter suffused with sarcasm: "I beg, sir, that for a whole nation to give up their whole country, and remove to a distant, wild and uncultivated land, more for the benefit of the Government than the Choctaws, is a consideration which I hope the Government will always cherish with the liveliest sensibility."[6]

If many in the white community had any sense of the injustice, pathos, and horror of the Choctaws' plight, there is little indication of it in the records. After all, there was still too much land elsewhere that the new immigrants might wish to appropriate. An analysis of the morality of it all could await some distant day when the native tribes no longer had anything that the white community coveted.

The exodus of the Choctaws was not simultaneous, though nearly four thousand left in the first wave in 1831. Later, other groups followed. A minority of the area's natives never did go, and their descendants still live in central Mississippi. As we shall see later, a few Choctaws even enlisted in the Confederate Army.[7]

Every so often in the succeeding years a voice was raised, not so much to the advantage of the Choctaws but for getting every one of them to the Indian Territory. An article in 1845 in the Paulding *Eastern Clarion* is a fair specimen of what passed for humanitarian concern for the friendless Choctaws:

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[4] Jahoda, *The Trail of Tears*, 84.

[5] *Ibid*., 82-88.

[6] *Ibid*., 84.

[7] The Choctaw Nation, according to the census taken shortly after the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, contained about 19,554 persons. Those who later moved west numbered about 15,000, which left a little over 4500 in Mississippi. *American State Papers, Documents of the Congress of the United States, in Relation to the Public Lands from the First Session of the Twenty-fourth Congress....* (8 vols.) (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-1861), 8:927. (Hereafter cited as *American State Papers*.)

> The small remnant of the Choctaw tribe of Indians still lingering among us, and their degraded condition in the land which was once the home of their fathers—in whose soil lie buried their kindred and friends for ages and ages past—should remind the philanthropist and moralist, that while his heart is constantly yearning with sympathy for the heathen of other lands, he should ask himself the question, "Can nothing be done to ameliorate the condition of the wretched outcasts of my own country?"

All of which sounds not bad. But then the writer got to his main point:

> We are, therefore, astonished to find any portion of our citizens opposed to the immediate removal of the Indians West. Humanity as well as sound policy demands their removal—they will not only become more and more degraded every year…but [will] retard in a great degree the settlement of this portion of Mississippi.

The government was obliged, said the writer, to see that white landowners were not troubled by "fraudulent [land] claims." It was a disgrace, said the paper: "12 years [have] elapsed since the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek was concluded and no settlement of the matter has yet taken place." More,

> Many good citizens who emigrated [*sic*] to this country some ten or eleven years since—who braved all the hardships and encountered all the dangers of pioneers of a new country—who entered their lands and paid the Government for them, and who have since that time been constantly engaged in improving their places—are now sued in the names of Indians who are called Mush-ha-tub-ba, Push-ma-tow-ha, Puck-shin-num-ba, &c. &c., or some other outlandish name, which they never heard or dreamed of before the suits were instituted.[8]

Sometime after the conclusion of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek and the filing by Choctaws of complaints about discrimination and failure to honor their claims, the United States government instituted investigations. It is difficult to know whether these inquiries were genuine and conscientiously prosecuted. In situations where white persons in large numbers wished to buy land and where the agents were either friendly to or under pressure from those prospective buyers, it requires little imagination to see the practical impossibility of getting justice for the Choctaws who were simply trying to exercise their technical rights under Article 14 of the treaty.

On 30 November 1835 Justice of the Peace William Cabaniss, of Oktibbeha County, questioned Gabriel Lincecum about his knowledge of the treaty and its ramifications. Said the witness:[9]

> I was there [at the treaty council] during the time, and was extremely anxious that the treaty should be made, and I know that many of the Choctaws were altogether opposed to making the treaty, and utterly opposed to removing west;

[8] Paulding (Miss.) *Eastern Clarion*, 7 June 1845.

[9] The following testimony by Gabriel and Grant Lincecum is in *American State Papers*, 8:690-691.

> from all I heard and witnessed, I am entirely confident that no treaty could have been made, but for the solemn assurances of the commissioners, made in public council, that all [Choctaws] might stay and keep their homes who did not wish to go; and the Indians distinctly understood that this was put down as a part of the treaty.

When asked which settlements were most opposed to removal, Lincecum replied that it was a fairly general reaction but was perhaps strongest among Choctaws "living on Bogue-chitto and the Mogalushas, and those living on Sook-e-natche, and on the head waters of Pearl, Leaf, and Chickasaw-hay." It was, he said very common to hear them say that they would die before they went west. Lincecum testified to seeing many Choctaws apply at the agency for land. They generally carried bundles of sticks, a stick for each family member, said Lincecum, "as is the Indian custom and offer[ed] to register the families thus represented." But the agent refused to register the families and, throwing the sticks away, said there were too many Indians, that they had sold their lands and must go west. Sometimes, said Lincecum, the agent did record quite a number of names, but these names could not later be found in the register. As to the agent's methods of work, Lincecum said:

> I lived near the agency, as before stated, and was very often at the agent's house, where he did all his business; and must say that his habits of business were very loose and careless. He kept his book lying on the table at all times, free to the inspection of all who wished to look inside it. I have often seen persons take the register out of the room…and out into the yard, and inspect it as much as they wished. I have seen it loaned out and taken off by persons.

When questioned about the agent's personal habits, and those of his deputy, Lincecum answered that their intemperance disqualified them for their work. He testified to having seen the deputy so intoxicated that he could not read or write, or even open the mail when it arrived. Both the agent and the deputy were opposed to allowing the Choctaws to become citizens and land holders, and were heard to advise white agents to whip Choctaws who objected to leaving and to force them off. Grant Lincecum, also, testified to a similar event at the council house near the Choctaw Agency in June of 1831. He stated

> that when the business of the day was opened, the agent directed the interpreter…to tell the Indians that all who did not wish to emigrate had a right, by the treaty, to stay and hold lands, and that he was then ready to receive their names, and register them in his book; all of which the interpreter did make known to the Indians. This deponent further states, that after the business of the day had considerably advanced, and while he was standing near the agent's table noticing what was going on, he saw a parcel of Indians come up, with an Indian they called the Red Post Oak, as their spokesman, and one or two others as sort of leaders. One of them had a bundle of sticks in his hand, which he gave in to the agent, and told the interpreter to inform the agent that these sticks represented a number of Indians who were unwilling to go away, and who wished to remain, become citizens, and hold their lands, and

> that they would give in the names of each head of a family, the number and sizes of their children.
>
> The interpreter explained all this to the agent, who took up the sticks and threw them away, and said there were too many of them, and told the interpreter to tell them that they must move west of the Mississippi.

The Committee on Private Land Claims reported to the U. S. Senate on 18 January 1837 that in their opinion Col. William Ward, the land agent

> in some instances neglected to register the names of Indians who had, within the prescribed period, signified to him their intention to remain and become citizens of the State; that in other instances he refused, in the face of the treaty, to notice the application at all; and, finally, that a part of the register which he made of applications was lost or destroyed through his negligence.

The Committee's findings and conclusions led the War Department to order that all Choctaws who considered themselves aggrieved be allowed to present their evidence and, if judged deserving, that they be awarded the land as entitled. This order resulted in satisfying the claims of 520 heads of families.[10]

On 23 December 1833 the State of Mississippi decreed the formation of sixteen counties within the recent Choctaw Cession. Townships 5, 6, 7, and 8, between Range 14 and the Alabama line, were to constitute Lauderdale County, named for the Tennessee soldier, Col. James Lauderdale.[11] Lauderdale served under Gen. Andrew Jackson and was wounded at the Battle of Talladega on 9 November 1813. He was with Jackson in the New Orleans campaign and was killed in the battle at Bayou Bienvenu on 23 December 1814, coincidentally the same date on which, nineteen years later, the Mississippi county bearing his name came into existence—Alabama and Tennessee also have counties named for him.[12]

Officially the new county began as a largely unpossessed piece of real estate. In fact, however, there were already residents within the recently defined boundaries. There were, of course, some Choctaws, a few of whom had received grants of acreage under the terms of the recent treaty, and probably others who would eventually leave. There were almost certainly some African-American slaves, perhaps even a few owned by Choctaws. But by the terms of the treaty no whites could move onto any of the recently-ceded land for three years after the treaty's ratification. This meant that all those such as Samuel Dale and Richard McLemore who had moved in earlier were probably trespassers. But such interlopers were in defiance of Federal, not state law; and Mississippi, like some other states, had already shown its contempt

[10] *American State Papers*, 7:927.

[11] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Embracing All Acts of a Public Nature from January Session, 1824, to January Session, 1838, Inclusive* (Jackson: [John D. Toy, printer, Baltimore], 1838), 511. Two days later, Samuel Grayson, Asa Hartsfield, Robert James, William Ellis, H. W. Ward, Henry Hale, George Evans, C. Dyer, N. Martin, and J. Bidwell were appointed commissioners to organize the counties of Jasper, Clarke, and Lauderdale—*ibid*., 578.

[12] "Biographical Sketch of the Late Lieutenant Colonel James Lauderdale, of Tennessee," *The Analetic Magazine* (May 1815), 5:378-384.

for anyone or any official, whether state or Federal, who interfered with the acquisition by whites of the newly acquired land.

Among those already in the new county were Charles Juzan's family who lived in what George S. Gaines described as a "neat cabin." Juzan, a Frenchman, married a niece of the Choctaw chieftain Pushmataha and established a family whose members' names appear frequently in the records of the area during the years prior to and just following the formation of Lauderdale County. Juzan's home was strategically situated on Gaines Trace where it crossed the old road that traversed the future county from southwest to northeast. Here Juzan entertained travelers and sold goods to persons in the area. Gaines, who visited the family in 1806, said the Juzan home was "near the Lauderdale Springs"; but contradicting himself somewhat, he said also that the home was on the site of the Choctaw town of Kunshak, or Coonsha, which was located on Lost Horse Creek, about four miles southeast of present-day Lizelia and some two miles northwest of where Lockhart would later be. Since this location was about six miles from the famous springs, Gaines must have named them as a neighbor from the lack of anything of note that was closer. Besides, perhaps Gaines didn't regard six miles as a great distance. Gaines described Kunshak as also the residence of Pushmataha, but so many places have been identified as that chief's home that one marvels.[13]

Others living in the area before 1833 included, of course, Samuel Dale, who had apparently already settled in the north-central part of the county and, indeed, was instrumental in its creation and development. Dale's home, the origin of today's Lizelia, was near the site of the old Choctaw town of Pante, from which our modern Ponta is apparently derived.[14] Very likely Richard McLemore had, by 1833, been in the area two or three years.[15]

The act that created the new counties put Lauderdale into the fifth judicial district with Jackson, Greene, Perry, Wayne, Jasper, and Clarke Counties. For the state militia, made up of four divisions (of eight brigades), the Second Division was formed of regiments from the counties of Claiborne, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Lawrence, Covington, Jones, Wayne, Clarke, Jasper, and Lauderdale. Regiments from Lauderdale, Lawrence, Covington, Jones, Clarke, and Jasper constituted the Second Division's Second Brigade.[16]

The governing of each of the new counties was the responsibility of a board of police constituted of one member from each of five beats, and was the counterpart of the modern board of supervisors. The Lauderdale group consisted of five members who received stated compensation for their services and were fined for

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[13] Notes made in the second of a series of conversations with George S. Gaines in the spring of 1848. Original in the Albert James Pickett Papers bound in notes upon the history of Alabama, section 14, number 2. Alabama Dept. of Archives and History, Maps and Manuscripts Division, Montgomery. (I am indebted to Thomas Goldman, Meridian attorney, who called my attention to this material.) See also John R. Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw* Indian (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931; Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin 103*), 61; see also *Township Plats of Lauderdale County*, U. S. Government Survey, in Chancery Clerk's office, Lauderdale County Courthouse, Meridian (hereinafter abbreviated LCCH).

[14] Swanton, *op. cit.*, 61.

[15] See, for example, W. B. Grauel, *History of Meridian and Lauderdale County* (Meridian: The Meridian Star, 1947), 5. This little pamphlet gives the year of McLemore's arrival as 1831.

[16] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at the Seventeenth Session of the General Assembly, Held in the Town of Jackson* (Jackson: George R. Fall, 1834), 22.

missing meetings. William Newton, for example, was fined five dollars on 17 May 1847 for having missed the previous meeting.[17]

The duties of the Lauderdale board were quite varied and extended even to lending money. With the rarity, and sometimes absence, of banks on the frontier, the county board of police granted loans from what was called the "three percent fund." On 2 April 1847, for example, Joseph Clinton was authorized to borrow fifty dollars from this fund, provided the money was "not otherwise appropriated." But such loans were probably what today are known as "call loans." That is to say, sometimes without prior notice the county had to call some or all of them in, as it did in March of 1848 when all persons indebted to the three percent fund were required "to come forward and pay twenty-five percent of the principal and the interest upon all notes by the first day of June next."[18]

Much of the Board's attention was given to improving transportation. The records of their proceedings are full of such matters, as well as appointments for opening or improving roads, of lists of persons assigned to work on roads, and of announcements of the opening or acceptance of bids for building bridges. Bridge contracts were fairly unimportant in the early years when there was comparatively little travel. At that time travelers usually had to ford streams; but after the citizens began to demand and to get stagecoach service, some amount of bridge construction was essential, especially at any crossing where a creek ran through deep cuts. In 1847, for instance, the county was busy repairing or procuring good bridges over Chunky River "at Daniel Stuckey's" near Chunkyville, across Sowashee Creek on the Enterprise Road, and over Okatibbee Creek near Davis' Mills.[19] Typical specifications for construction were those for the Stuckey Bridge which was "to be built of good sound hart [*sic*] timber [and was] to be Sixteen feet wide and from the center arch the Sleepers [*i.e.*, heavy supporting beams] are to be Sixty feet long, the flooring to be quartered plank two inches thick."[20]

Meetings of the Board of Police were very informal during the early years. Even the minutes of the group were apparently not carefully taken down and preserved. The members had no clearly-defined rules of procedure, and members and even visitors spoke quite freely at meetings. There was often much disorder, all of which completely robbed meetings of anything describable as dignity. It was difficult for board members to claim or get respect from the county's rustic citizens who subjected the unfortunate policemen to what a hurt and embarrassed board called "idle and jesting remarks." On 16 November 1847 an aroused board, consisting of President L. B. Bains, Isaac G. Suttles, L. B. Moore, Daniel Cameron, and A. Clay, formulated seven rules to help maintain decorum:

1. At the beginning of each meeting the president would call for the reading of the minutes of the last meeting, following which would come reports from members "who may have been commissioners on any public work &c."

[17] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-54*, 23; Lauderdale County Dept. of Archives and History, hereinafter abbreviated LCDAH.
[18] *Ibid.*, 19, 72.
[19] *Ibid.*, 33, 41, 46.
[20] *Ibid.*, 33.

2. All petitions, accounts, etc., would be submitted to the president who would have them disposed of before any other business could be considered.
3. Anyone desiring to make a motion was required to rise and address the chair, and no motion could be discussed until it had been seconded and presented by the chair.
4. Members had to stand and address the chair when speaking.
5. No citizens could address the board without first giving the president notification in writing and, if necessary, receiving permission to appear to explain his business.
6. No member was to engage in extraneous conversation "but shall give his time and attention to the business before the Board."
7. The clerk was required to keep a careful record of proceedings and post a copy on the Courthouse door.[21]

The act that created Lauderdale County allowed it one representative in Jackson and required it to share a senator with Kemper County.[22] Perhaps there were not many qualified men to fill such offices; but by this time Sam Dale, in semi-retirement, was renowned as a soldier, scout, and territorial legislator. As the few, scattered residents in the new county began to perform the duties necessary to become a political entity, they rather naturally thought of him as highly qualified to be the county's first delegate to the state's lower house. His colleague in the state Senate was Joseph A. Marshall.[23]

According to John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne, later Dale's biographer, the old veteran was chosen representative in an election in which but ten men voted.[24] If true, that small vote perhaps reflected the primitive conditions of living and communication as much as it did the number of eligible voters. It is possible that this sudden creation of sparsely-populated counties was one reason that the Whigs in the Mississippi legislature, especially those in the Senate, raised a great objection to the admission of representatives from the new counties. But on 19 January 1835, scarcely a year after Lauderdale's creation, Dale was sworn in as the county's first member of the lower house. Those from the other new counties accompanied him.[25]

In those years Mississippi's politics and social life were dominated by that element often called, at first, the National Republicans but about to become known as the Whig Party. They were to quite an extent direct descendants and heirs of the old Federalist Party, with all its emphasis on aristocracy. The fledgling party opposed the new spirit of democracy and equated it with mobocracy. This Federalist tradition was by no means all bad, but the striving for a social elite and for polished statesmanship perhaps tended to turn into a snobbish disdain for anything that seemed alien. It certainly ran counter to the new democratic spirit that was sweeping the West and much of the East.

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[21] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 52-53; LCDAH.
[22] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at an Adjourned Session of the Legislature, Held in the Town of Jackson, in January, 1837* (Jackson: G. R. & J. S. Fall, 1837), 203-204.
[23] Grauel, *op. cit*., 3.
[24] Letter from Claiborne, *Macon* (Miss.) *Herald*, 17 July 1841.
[25] Jackson *Mississippian*, 23 January 1835.

The wealthy gentry of the Natchez area were often appalled by the uncouth frontiersmen pouring into the state. And those newcomers regarded the Democratic-Republican Party, especially as restructured by Andrew Jackson and renamed simply Democratic, as far more congenial than the stuffy National Republicans in their new guise as Whigs. The Whigs, on the other hand, had little regard for the political descendants of Thomas Jefferson and none at all for that dangerous rustic from Tennessee, Andrew Jackson. It is interesting that after seeing Jefferson Davis for the first time, his future wife Varina Howell commented, "Would you believe it, he is refined and cultivated and yet he is a democrat!"[26] Mississippi's Whigs watched with growing concern as they saw, pouring into the lands recently vacated by the Choctaws and Chickasaws, a horde of what seemed to be very uncouth characters. And the Whigs were especially apprehensive that all those newly-created counties spelled trouble for their political dominance.

So it was that, instead of receiving a gracious welcome from the veteran members, Dale and the other freshmen were met by a bombshell: the Senate, dominated by the Whigs, refused to accept the new members. In the words of the Jackson *Mississippian*, the upper house's members "declared that the representatives from the new counties are not duly qualified and elected; announced them in fact as a set of lawless intruders or political bandits, and refused to meet them for any purpose whatever." It was, said the writer, an outrageous defiance of the United States and Mississippi Constitutions and of the will of the voters and an "unprecedented inquisition into the organization of the House of Representatives." The Whig majority had, declared the paper, "crossed the Rubicon."[27]

On 30 January 1835 the Senate adjourned *sine die* without consulting with its co-ordinate body. This, of course, was another breach of rules in that neither house was to adjourn for longer than three days without the concurrence of the other. After a few days there was nothing to do except for Governor Hiram G. Runnels to adjourn the House. Dale could make the trek back to Daleville, for the next legislative session was a year away.[28] According to the *Tennessee Truth Teller* the whole affair was "as great a *farce* as we recollect to have seen in the annals of legislation."[29]

A farce it was but one with somewhat more serious results, perhaps, than a disrupted session. Seldom, in the short history of the Whig Party, would the citizens of Lauderdale County give it much support. In later years some Whig candidates for local or state offices did carry the county, but such victories were fairly rare and were probably more personal than partisan. In the Presidential election of 1836 the county voted overwhelmingly—101 to 11—for the Democrat Martin Van Buren over the Whig's "favorite son" candidate, Hugh Lawson White. In that same election in the county, Congressional candidate S. J. Gholson trounced his Whig opponent, John A. Quitman, 100 to 12.[30] In 1837 Lauderdale gave gubernatorial candidate A. G. McNutt 174 votes and 102 to his Whig opponent, J. A. Grimball. In the governor's race two years later, McNutt beat the Whig candidate, E. Turner, 493 to 180 in the county; and in the same election the county's voters gave the Democratic

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[26] Burton J. Hendrick, *Statesmen of the Lost Cause: Jefferson Davis and His Cabinet* (New York: The Literary Guild of America, 1939), 39.
[27] Jackson *Mississippian*, 23 January 1835.
[28] *Ibid*., 31 January 1835.
[29] Quoted in *ibid*., 6 March 1835.
[30] *Ibid*., 9 December 1836.

candidate for secretary of state, T. B. Woodward, a victory of 459 votes over his opponent D. S. Jennings, who got but 168.[31]

In the presidential election of 1840 President Martin Van Buren was nominated by the Democrats to succeed himself. The Whigs, fielding their second candidate for the presidency, rather incongruously nominated the famous old soldier William Henry Harrison, the hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe. The Democrats ridiculed him as a doddering nincompoop fit only to rusticate in his log cabin and swig hard cider. Signing himself "Tecumseh" (after the Shawnee leader who had opposed Harrison at the Battle of the Thames), an anonymous citizen of Lauderdale County sent the *Mississippian* twelve quatrains of doggerel that ridiculed "Granny" Harrison. The poetic essay throws more light on Lauderdale's politics than on its *belles lettres*:

> Great Harrison was the one
> Who led the sons of freedom on;
> But when they went the foe to find
> It was his choice to stay behind.
>
> Poor Indians, too, without a hound
> Found Granny sleeping very sound;
> And when she woke, at break of day,
> As usual, she ran away.

And so on. It is interesting that the Lauderdale poet attempted to suggest that Harrison was just a warmed-over Federalist who "never can make the people chaw, Her Alien and Sedition Law," a reference to the hated group of laws, pushed through by the Federalists in John Adams' administration, and that bore heavily on personal liberties. And even more plainly:

> Her [Granny's] opinions she will not give them,
> Because they will her plans condemn;
> But brings them to a twist
> And proves herself a Federalist.

"Tecumseh" closed with

> Yet still the Whigs in triumph shout
> Hard cider, Tip will kick Van out.
> But Uncle Sam, a knowing one,
> Says, can't come that Miss Harrison.[32]

Well, "Tecumseh's" powers of prophecy were in a league with his versifying. Uncle Sam chose "Granny" Harrison; even Mississippi went for Old Tippecanoe. But not the Empire County. Lauderdale gave Van Buren 239 votes to Harrison's 44.[33]

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[31] Jackson *Mississippian*, 15 November 1839. The paper added the 1837 vote tally for comparison.
[32] *Ibid.* , 11 September 1840.
[33] Jackson *Mississippian*., 13 November 1840.

Even during the years following, memory remained strong. Though the county's Whig minority grew and included some influential men, in the other three presidential campaigns in which the Whigs offered candidates, Lauderdale continued to play coy with them. In 1844 the county gave 631 votes to victorious James K. Polk and only 256 to his Whig rival, Henry Clay. Zachary Taylor, the Whig candidate, won the 1848 election over Democrat Lewis Cass. It was a repeat of the 1840 election; for though like the nation Mississippi went Whig, Lauderdale doggedly voted Democratic 667 to 474. And when General Winfield Scott carried the last Whig banner in 1852, Lauderdale scorned him by preferring Democrat Franklin Pierce 688 to 310.[34]

Sam Dale had better luck next time around. Admitted to his seat in January of 1836, he voted with the others in the House and Senate to organize into counties the territory recently ceded by the Chickasaws in North Mississippi.[35] Dale must have remained fairly quiet, however, for there are few references to him in the press. One of these rare notices tells of his presenting several petitions for citizens of the county.[36] Advantageously for Lauderdale, Dale was appointed to the Committee on Internal Improvements, and at this period the county needed a great many of them.[37]

But in addition to internal improvements, the county needed also residents and seemed to be getting them rapidly, though to some extent getting new residents had earlier depended upon the completion of the Federal government's survey that was conducted mainly in the years 1832 to 1834. The U. S. Surveyor's Office in Jackson commissioned such men as John B. Peyton, William P. Stone, George Dougharty, William L. Dearing, Jacob B. Womack, William P. Bryan, Alexander Downing, Henry Hamblin, Frederick I. Bowie, and James Oswald to do the work in Lauderdale County.[38]

These men tramped all over the several townships, minutely describing in each section such details as the few existing homesteads, cultivated fields, types of soil and terrain, trees and other vegetation, and streams. A typical specimen of their notations is the description by William P. Bryan of Sections 19 and 20, Township 6, Range 16 East, around what is now the south side of Meridian. Sowashee Creek was apparently doing what it seems to do best: "Enter bottom. Cross creek 60 lks [links] wide, bear SW. Bottom inundated 18 to 24 in[che]s. Heavy cane. Residue poor broken pine land."[39] Moving on into Sections 4 and 9, Bryan found flood waters to a depth of two to three feet and in Sections 16 and 17 about four feet. And almost always the comment "poor land." If one took literally the opinions of these early surveyors, one might wonder that the new residents were able to grow much other than pine and cane.[40]

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[34] W. Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 560.
[35] Jackson *Mississippian*, 18 January 1836.
[36] *Ibid.*, 13 January 1837.
[37] *Ibid.*, 28 April 1837.
[38] *Field Notes 1889, passim*; Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH. These are manuscript notes made by the several original surveyors of the county in the early 1830's. (The apparent year "1889" has nothing to do with the time of the survey.)
[39] *Ibid.*, 207.
[40] *Field Notes, 1889*, 210.

In addition to a relatively few people such as Sam Dale and Richard McLemore, the earliest land owners included some Choctaws. For example, Jatchd-hopid [*sic*],[41] in a document dated 21 November 1831 and witnessed by John Everett, George Barnett, William Barnett, Nathaniel Norwood, and a member of the part-Choctaw Juzan family, sold nearly two sections of his land (1240 acres) to Samuel Dale who paid $700 for it. On 29 November 1833 Dale recorded his purchase of some 1280 more acres from a Choctaw whose name some scribe bravely rendered as Captain E Yav Char Par Ye.[42]

A somewhat more credibly-spelled Choctaw name was that of—to use the form in the deed record—Oaklarhomar. (This anticipated the name of the state formed out of the Indian Territory in 1907 and simplified to Oklahoma, from two Choctaw words meaning *red nation*.) By the terms of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, Oaklarhomar was one of a number of Choctaws, often either chiefs or sub-chiefs (*mingos*), each of whom sometimes received an entire section of land.[43] He and his wife, Anun Tooner, on 2 July 1838 sold to Phebe Juzan five acres about two and a half miles northwest of present-day Lockhart, near where Wild Horse Creek enters Lost Horse Creek. The price was eight dollars an acre.[44]

Other immigrants who purchased land in the very early years of the county's history included William Henderson, who on 10 December 1834 at the Land Office in Augusta, Miss., bought eighty-six acres at the site of Old Marion, which at that time must have been almost virgin land, certainly land devoid of what real estate agents call "improvements." About four years later he sold it to James Keeton,[45] who on the same day, 5 September 1838, bought a total of 418 acres from at least three other parties.[46] On 10 March 1837 William Stokes and his wife Martha sold land about two miles northwest of present-day Bailey to L. B. Bains.[47] On 13 December 1834 William Chandler bought forty acres at the Land Office in Augusta, Miss.[48]

Among the county's very oldest communities is Toomsuba, although that name did not appear until about the time of the Civil War. The first settlers moved into the area about 1832 and included Neill McLaurin, Jim Keeton, Duncan Kelly, Ephraim Odum, J. Clinton, Crosby Miller, John Calhoun, John Pierce, S. H. Shannon, Elizabeth Pigford and her children (Wright, William, Timothy, Alfred, and two daughters), and other families whose names were Griffith, McNeal, Durr, and Carr.[49]

In 1836 a number of other families moved into the community: There was, for instance, Bird Williams, whose children were John, Robert, Bony, Kitty, Nancy, Polly, and Elizabeth. The last-named was the mother of W. C. Rogers, born

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[41] Clerks at this time had enough trouble trying to spell European names of non-British origin; others, such as Choctaw names, were often the last straw.
[42] *Deed Record Book A*, 488-489. Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[43] Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Aamerican Indian and the United States* (New York: Random House, 1973), 4:2434.
[44] *Deed Record Book A*, 62-63, Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[45] *Ibid.*, 97.
[46] *Ibid.*, 90, 96-98. Others from whom Keeton purchased land included Duncan Calhoun and William G. Hall.
[47] *Ibid.*, 103.
[48] *Ibid.*, 57.
[49] A. Jarvis Welch, *A History of Toomsuba, Mississippi*, unpublished, unnumbered pages; a typed narrative dated 15 July 1941 and based upon information given by W. C. Rogers, a nonagenarian pioneer interviewed by Welch.

about 1847 and still living in 1941 to supply much information about those years. Another newcomer was Daniel Rogers, whose children were William (father of W. C. Rogers), James, Augusta, Martha, Ann, Sally, Jane, and Opehlia. Yet others were Capt. Peter Bozeman, Mrs. Penny Bradley, the Reverend George Bancroft, and Joseph Page.[50]

By the middle of 1836 the State Auditor's report showed that, based on various sources and investigations, Lauderdale County had a population of 1,830 free persons and 760 "colored."[51] One year later the official returns of a census taken of the entire state showed that Lauderdale County had a total of 1,883 whites and 544 slaves. The elements were as follows:

White males over 45………………………..	89
" females 21 – 45…………………….	345
" males 18 – 21……………………….	45
" " under 18……………………..	542
" females over 16…………………….	392
" " under 16…………………..	470
TOTAL WHITES	1,883
Male slaves………………………………..	249
Female " ……………………………….	295
TOTAL SLAVES	544[52]

The same census reported that Lauderdale County had 3,425 acres in cultivation on which was produced, in 1836, 128 bales of cotton.[53]

Data such as these, however meager, seem to show that the county in these early years was at a primitive economic level. For example, a list of economic indicators (including such factors as land value, value of town lots, sales of merchandise in 1835, amount of money lent at interest, value of "pleasure carriages," and—of all things—the number of billiard tables!) did not even include a return for Lauderdale; but neither did it give any information for twenty-five other counties in the state, including Hinds.[54] Obviously, much of the state was still frontier.

But if this kind of information indicates a primitive level of life for Lauderdale in the 1830s, it does not indicate that its inhabitants were not thriving. They were busy in the main clearing land for cultivation, raising houses (probably almost exclusively of logs or rough planking), and engaging in the simplest forms of manufacturing. Apparently commercial pursuits were rare, and the professions, except perhaps for a few clergymen, practically a luxury. We find, for example, few if any lawyers in the county at least as late as 1837 and probably not many from other counties intending to practice in Lauderdale. Of course, it is very difficult to be

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[50] Welch, *A History of Toomsuba, Mississippi.*
[51] Jackson *Mississippian*, 27 May 1836.
[52] *Ibid*., 12 May 1837.
[53] *Ibid*.
[54] Jackson *Mississippian*, 20 January 1837.

certain of such matters in the absence of good, hard evidence; but one sees few legal advertisements mentioning Lauderdale in the various newspapers in the area.[55]

And yet, despite the primitive conditions and even the wildness of the country, the citizens of Lauderdale were (to risk a pun) apparently able to "keep the wolf from the door," in fact from the entire county. Quite literally there were not enough wolves for Lauderdale to take the step that Newton, Neshoba, and several other nearby counties found necessary, that of offering a bounty of five dollars for each "wolf scalp," when persons produced it before authorities and swore that the wolf had been killed within that particular county.[56]

About three and a half years after Lauderdale was created, a reporter from the Paulding *Eastern Clarion* went over to the new county and poked around a bit. His observations were favorable and perhaps flattering, as befitted a representative of a paper that had good prospects of getting subscribers in a county apparently devoid of journalists. The *Clarion's* man described the county as "flourishing" and "rich in its resources, and scarcely surpassed, if at all, by our own [Jasper], in the wealth, intelligence, and number of its population." The country was still sparsely settled, though new residents were coming in rapidly and would, said the visitor, probably soon perform prodigies of agriculture and industry. Many citizens told him that the county contained "no absolutely poor land," a statement that would probably have amused the original surveying team. However, the reporter correctly predicted that Lauderdale would become one of the most prosperous counties in East Mississippi; though he thought the key to all this development would be navigation on the Chickasawhay. It would, of course, be the railroad, which he could not have foreseen.

> Could the river be navigated by steam boats, [said the journalist] as at present [is] contemplated and with proper improvements, it cannot admit of doubt, to the junction of its head branches in Clark[e] county, it would bring the most remote part of this county from that point, within about seven days of the New Orleans market, by a direct and easy channel of communication…. This will be a cotton growing country, the land is suitable for it, and it must be the staple production.[57]

That the Chickasawhay River might become an important artery of commercial transportation was not, in the 1830s and 1840s, regarded as a harebrained idea. Enterprise, where the confluence of Chunky River and Okatibbee Creek forms the Chickasawhay, was for some years the head of navigation on that river.[58] Even a number of smaller streams in east-central Mississippi saw some use as routes for moving goods. The Noxubee River at Macon, for instance, was used to move small barges down to the Tombigbee River where the cargoes were then loaded onto steamboats.[59] There were some who viewed even such streams as Chunky River and the lower part of Okatibbee Creek as possible waterways, at least in wet seasons. One

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[55] See, for example, the columns of the Jackson *Mississippian* for at least as late as into 1837.
[56] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…from…1824 to…1838, Inclusive*, 756.
[57] Quoted in the Jackson *Mississippian*, 2 June 1837.
[58] William Pitt Chambers, "My Journal," edited by Ruth Polk, in *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society,* Centenary Series (Jackson: the Society, 1925-), 5:237.
[59] *Macon Herald*, 28 August 1841.

such person was attorney John Steele, apparently the same as J. Steele, the partner of S. A. D. Steele in a law firm in Marion during the mid-1840s.

Steele was a strong advocate of internal improvements. In the spring of 1845 he announced his candidacy for district attorney; and though it seems strange, this candidate for an office involved primarily with criminal prosecutions gave much of his attention to the advocacy of new roads and waterways. Steele was aware of this seeming irrelevance and addressed it, admitting that, "At first view, you may not discover any analogy between the office to which I aspire and this subject, of general interest."[60] To understand Steele's interest in roads and waterways, one needs to examine the history of the Railroad and Turnpike Company in the counties of Newton and Lauderdale, more often called the Newton and Lauderdale Turnpike Company.

The 1830s and 1840s in the United States came toward the end of that period often referred to as the "Turnpike Era" and the "Canal Era." As new communities were established on the frontiers, they became keenly aware of their isolation, especially if they were not on navigable streams or on one of that period's few good roads. This was the situation in Lauderdale and several surrounding counties, most of which were landlocked. There the earliest efforts to improve communication with the rest of the region and the nation were almost all projects to improve land transportation. This meant new or improved roads and, perhaps someday, railroads.

On 16 February 1838 the legislature chartered the Newton and Lauderdale Turnpike Company for the purpose of building a toll road from Decatur in Newton County to the Alabama line in Lauderdale County "in the direction of Tuscahoma" in Alabama. The construction of a railroad along that route was an alternate or even an additional course. Decatur residents J. H. Leas, Robert Jones, Thomas Redwine, Benjamin Bright, and Lewis Nichols, along with Peter Doty, Joseph Clinton, and John Keeton, of Marion, were appointed to superintend the subscription of stock in the new company, stock which by law could not amount to more than $500,000, with certificates in hundred-dollar denominations. The money was to be paid in gold or silver "or the notes of any of the chartered banks of this state." The charter conferred on the company "all the additional powers, privileges, and rights conferred on the…Jackson and Brandon railroad and bridge company."[61] On 15 February 1839 the legislature amended the company's charter to allow it to change its route so "as to strike the Chickasawhay River at such point as the company may think proper, in Clarke county." More, the directors were empowered to

> acquire, by donation, or purchase, any quantity of land, not exceeding 160 acres, on the Chickasawhay river, where the said road or roads may strike said river, and to survey the land…into town lots, and to sell the same, and to apply the funds, arising from the sale…to the use of said company in the construction of such road or roads…the said company are authorized to make.[62]

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[60] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 May 1845.

[61] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Biennial Session of the Legislature, Held at Jackson, in January & February, A. D. 1838* (Jackson: B. D. Howard, 1838), 298-300. Such conferred rights were fairly standard.

[62] *Laws of the State of Mississippi: Passed at an Adjourned Session of the Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, from January 7, to February 16, A.D. 1839* (Jackson: B. D. Howard, 1839), 365.

In addition, the company was authorized to borrow from the state $30,000 with which to improve navigation on the Chickasawhay River within three years after the date of the issuance of the bonds.[63]

It would appear that the charter's amendment shifted attention from Lauderdale County, through which a road had been planned, to Clarke County where the Chickasawhay perhaps seemed to offer better prospects to people in Newton County for an outlet for goods and for general transportation. The best possibility by the Lauderdale route was a turnpike in the direction of the Tombigbee River in Alabama. Under the circumstances, it is difficult to see how the Chickasawhay project could have appealed to many in Lauderdale, except those who may have held stock in the company. This may help explain why the company never prospered, though there were other reasons why this transportation scheme foundered.

When the Newton and Lauderdale Turnpike Company came into existence, the nation was sliding into that period of recession and depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s. There just was no eagerness to invest in speculative ventures, and the exposure of a number of fraudulent enterprises at this time in Mississippi did not make it easier to persuade many citizens to risk what little capital they had. Finally, the worst suspicions of many seemed realized when reports began to circulate that the turnpike company's officials might be incompetent and even dishonest.

At first there was apparently only a hint of suspicion, but as early as 1843 the state, reacting to increasing demands for action, tried to correct abuses in the operation of the company. On July 26 of that year the legislature directed the governor to bring suit against the company and their security bonds which were on file in the state auditor's office. The legislators declared these sureties *conditionally* forfeit to the amount of $20,000 for each director as a result of what the investigators regarded as non-performance of the several men's duties. This punitive action was thus not a complete forfeiture of the directors' bonds; and apparently even that which did take place could, by future compliance, be nullified.[64] This mild punishment was perhaps ineffective, for three years later the Marion *East Mississippian* and the Paulding *True Democrat*, complained of the matter just as the governor approved another bill to discipline the company.[65] Said the *True Democrat*, in part commenting on several "queries" by the Marion paper:

> It is said that the bonds executed by the Newton and Lauderdale Turnpike Company, have been mislaid, or *hooked* from the archives of the State, and in the absence of the bonds, a suit might not be effectually sustained, as error in the proceedings might forever vitiate the now plain liability of the same company. With this view of the matter before us, the fact of the non-compliance with the law of 1843 is not altogether so "quere" as the *East Mississippian* would have us believe it was. If the company does not look sharp, [the courts] will be instrumental in compelling that company…to fork

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[63] *Ibid*., 366.

[64] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Called Session of the Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, in July, A.D. 1843* (Jackson: C. M. Price & G. R. Fall, 1843), 92.

[65] Paulding *True Democrat*, 25 February and 4 March 1846.

> over a part or all of the $30,000 that has been so wantonly squandered and misapplied.[66]

Suspicion of misconduct focused particularly on work on the Chickasawhay, an aspect of the company's enterprise sometimes referred to as the Chickasawhay Navigation Company. It was with this project that the punitive bill of 1843, referred to above, dealt primarily. In his first issue on 14 May 1845 the editor of the *True Democrat* stopped short of accusing the company of fraud but vowed to give it close scrutiny and to inform the public. After all, said the paper, "A large sum of money has been drawn from the State Treasury to improve the navigation of the Chickasawha[y] river, and that too at a time when the State was compelled to resort to increased taxation to defray the necessary expenses of the Government."[67]

Apparently not much was proved against the Chickasawhay project, and perhaps this, plus the desire of people in Paulding and Jasper County to improve a potential outlet to the Gulf, caused the *True Democrat* and other critics to settle down to a grumbling acquiescence to keeping the river free of debris and of generally improving navigation on that stream. Even in March of 1846 when the steamer *Piney Woods* hit a snag in the river and partially sank, the *True Democrat* was not discouraged. It praised Capt. Woolverton for his promptness in running his boat onto a shoal and thus saving the cargo. As for the river's navigational problems the paper commented merely, "The *Chickasawhay is a snaggy concern*."[68]

Thus it was that when John Steele campaigned in 1845 for district attorney, he was highly critical of what he regarded as incompetence by the directors of the Newton and Lauderdale Turnpike Company and their handling of that loan of $30,000 from the state. He attacked with vehemence:

> Have our reasonable hopes been realized? Have that Company expended $30,000 Or $20,000 Or even $10,000!!! On our great Eastern Channel? Let those who live on the [Chickasawhay] river answer—Let Col. Saffold, and Blalock, and McDonald, Capt. Williamson, and McCary, and many other farmers answer, who by their great exertions and hazard have forced a partial navigation of that river. Practical men say that for $10,000 every obstruction can be removed from Enterprise to Pascagoula and more money cleared than can be by the same means in planting Cotton, yet $30,000 is gone to parts to us unknown and the most valuable stream in the East…is left to be improved by the enterprise of private citizens…. [69]

Then Steele attempted to show how his interest in internal improvements was germane to a campaign for district attorney. He would, he said, prosecute all violators of contracts such as those pertaining to the turnpike and railroad

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[66] Paulding *True Democrat*, 25 February 1846.
[67] *Ibid*., 11 March 1846.
[68] *Ibid*., italics in original. For an example of the general support given by the paper, see its issue for 19 July 1845.
[69] *Ibid*., 21 May 1845.

companies. He had no illusions about the risk that such diligence on his part meant for his campaign for public office: "I have no doubt it is owning to the fact that I am known to be faithful in all trusts placed in my hands, and that I well understand this matter, that such efforts and intrigues are, and will be used to defeat my election."[70]

Steele was certain that such streams as the Noxubee, Pearl, Chunky, Okatibbee, Chickasawhay, Buckatunna, and Leaf, as well as "divers other smaller streams of ample width and depth," could be turned into a practical navigational system by removing obstructions from their beds. And obstructions could be easily removed, he said, if the boards of police in the several affected counties exempted all people living near these streams from road, jury, or militia duties and let them fulfill their public obligations instead by clearing stream beds. Steele vowed that, if elected, he would definitely punish anyone caught shirking his duty in such an effort. "For the adoption of such a system," he said, "the East is peculiarly favored." He explained the extent of such a network of streams:

> Starting at the Pascagoula, at the junction of Leaf and Chickasawhay rivers, thence up either stream, and you are not arrested for want of water or channel, until you have penetrated the very heart of the interior, and passed the finest cotton region of our State…. Going up Chickasawhay, passing Buckatunna and divers other smaller streams, and you find no lack of water, or channel, sufficient for Steam Boats, carrying 800 bales of cotton, until you reach the densely populated region of Clark[e], Jasper, Newton and Lauderdale, at the junction of Chunky and Octibbeha [*sic*], and up Octibbeha, to the Marion and Decatur Bridge or at least to Fountain's crossing; near the great Eastern and Southern Rail Road route.[71]

(This "Col. Saffold" that Steele spoke of was probably Bird Saffold, a native of South Carolina and a Newton County resident with extensive real estate holdings. Fountain's Crossing was probably named for Robert A. Fountain, who like his wife Emily was a native of South Carolina. They lived, as the quoted source says, near where today the railroad from Jackson crosses Okatibbee Creek.)[72]

Steele believed that these creeks and rivers could be cleared for navigation by having nearby residents work on them in the autumn after crops had been harvested and when water in the streams was usually low. Having the work done by interested neighbors, who could transfer their legal obligations for road work to the improvement of transportation on water, would, said Steele, solve the navigational problem without great expense and without new taxes. And those funds set aside for internal improvements could be spent on a system of new roads.[73]

Well! Navigation on such streams as Chunky and Okatibbee would require steamboats "of a smaller class," indeed! In fact, it is difficult to see how anyone could have taken such a proposition seriously. And yet it was taken seriously, and not only by Steele. Over a year before the lawyer began his campaign for district attorney, the legislature declared Chunky River a navigable stream "from its mouth up

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[70] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 May 1845.
[71] *Ibid*.
[72] See the personal enumeration of the U.S. 1850 census for Newton Co., Miss., family no. 230; and the personal enumeration of the U.S. census for 1850 in Lauderdale Co.., Miss., family no. 296.
[73] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 May 1845.

to Saffold's Mill." This legislation made it easier to get money to facilitate use of the stream, and it also provided penalties for anyone who caused obstructions in the river.[74]

Steele's advocacy of turnpikes makes more sense today than do his ideas on river traffic. There were some funds already available; and since a turnpike by definition is a toll road, such routes would have re-paid at least part of their construction costs. He believed one road was needed from Macon to Enterprise, routed to pass through Daleville and Marion, though there apparently was already a non-toll one that followed much of that route. Another would go from Louisville, through Philadelphia, Union, and Decatur, to Garlandville and Paulding.[75]

There has been much speculation about the locations of the first (before about 1840) courthouses in Lauderdale County. Unfortunately there is not much to consult but tradition and conjecture in trying to discover how many there were and where they stood. According to one unauthenticated source, the county's first "temple of justice" was a large oak tree under which the first session of court was held in 1841 with Judge Henry Mounger presiding.[76] One might otherwise be prepared to accept this as at least possible were it not that the date is unsatisfactory. W. B. Grauel, in his pamphlet history, was more circumspect. He mentioned the alleged event but offered no year for it; and while the rest of his story differed in some details, he did cite as his authority Mrs. Sallie Culpepper, an early county resident. According to Culpepper the site of the oak tree was the "old White place, near Marion." She also apparently recalled that after the seat of government was established at Marion, Wiley Bains (or Banes), justice of the peace, presided over court sessions.[77] There were judicial proceedings in the county before 1841. We find, for instance, that in 1837 Sheriff Isham Pace offered a reward of $500 for the apprehending of Robert B. Merrett (*sic*) who had escaped after being imprisoned for the murder of William D. Pellam, a resident of the county. The murder of a county resident and the jailing of his murderer in the county would certainly imply judicial processes in the county.[78]

Sallie Culpepper's contention that the county's first court sessions were held on the "old White place, near Marion" would accord somewhat with the testimony of another important source. Frank Durr, who was a young slave in the county in the 1830s, recalled that before the existence of Marion "there had been…a court held at [the place] which is known as old Magnolia." Magnolia, according to Durr, "took its name from a spring [from which] Toomsuba Creek flowed. A big magnolia stood directly over the spring; the old stump is there now [1909]. A man by the name of Cain had a store there which was also called Magnolia, [a] place better known as the White Place, owned by Messrs. Ben and Jim Bain."[79]

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[74] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Biennial Session of the Legislature Held in the City of Jackson in January and February, A. D. 1844* (Jackson: C. M. Price, 1844), 234-235.
[75] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 May 1845.
[76] *The Meridian Star*, Meridian Centennial edition, 8 May 1960, 1:3.
[77] Grauel, *op.cit*., 4.
[78] Jackson *Mississippian*, 24 November 1837.
[79] Frank Durr, "Chronicle of Old Marion from 1838 to 1865," Meridian *Sunday Morning Star*, 13 June 1909, 15. I am indebted to Mr. John Harvey for calling this article to my attention.

Thus, the possibility that the little village of Magnolia was an earlier site of the county's official functions—perhaps even the first—is considerably strengthened. On two counts Durr's testimony is even more valuable than that of Sallie Culpepper's: first, though a child, he was living in the county at the time, and second, when examined against other primary sources, many details in Durr's recollections agree very well. Durr apparently was an intelligent and keen observer, and in later life his memory did not fail him. One more point supports the case of Magnolia's prior claim to the county seat, and that is—as we shall soon see—that Magnolia was granted a post office a month before Marion got one. But since Marion's post office opened in May 1837, and the one at Magnolia closed permanently in May of 1838, it is possible that the county seat was changed from Magnolia to Marion sometime between those two dates.

It is perhaps impossible to know when the first settlement was made at Marion, but my guess is about 1835—we have already seen that William Henderson bought the entire site of Old Marion in late 1834. This choice for a county seat was influenced by its central location and by a pre-existing road that ran diagonally through the county from northeast to southwest. There were also two old trails, one that ran through the future site of Marion and another, Gaines Trace, which ran north and south two miles to the east.[80] It was a fairly uniform practice in those days, when establishing the seat of a county, to try to find one fairly near the county's center. In the case of Lauderdale County and the other new counties in the Choctaw Cession, the terms of the law *obliged* the boards of police in each county to fix the seats

> at the geographical centre of said counties, unless the centre should on some account be unsuitable, then, in that case said location shall be made at the most convenient point within five miles of said centre, and said Boards of Police may receive by donation, or purchase, any quantity of land for the use of said counties, not exceeding eighty acres.[81]

As in many other cases where counties were suddenly created out of wilderness, the original location was perhaps first called merely "Lauderdale Court House", as we see occasionally on old maps. I have thus far been unable to discover when the name *Marion* was first used; existing records showing the name seem to go back no earlier than about 1836.[82] Many suppose that the village was the namesake of Francis Marion of Revolutionary War fame, but I have never seen proof of it. Incidentally, on this matter of the town's name, there is in Marion's first (1838) charter a curious and suggestive statement, namely, "That the seat of justice for the county of Lauderdale, shall *hereafter* [my emphasis] be called and known by the name of Marion."[83] This seems to say that as late as 1838 the name of the little village was not completely a settled matter.

The rustic town grew up around the typical square. Probably all buildings, at least during the late 1830s, were plain, wooden structures. Records suggest that brick manufacturing was rare or non-existent, and even as late as 1854 the

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[80] *Township Plats of Lauderdale County*, Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[81] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…[1834]*, 42f.
[82] See, for instance, a deed of 8 October 1836 whereby John Collins sold land to Lindsey McCary—*Deed Record Book A*, 9; Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[83] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…in January & February, A.D. 1838*, 104.

Lauderdale *Republican* says that there was no commercial brick manufacturing in the county.[84] Nevertheless, when a reporter from the Paulding *Eastern Clarion* visited the town in 1837, he found Marion "a flourishing business place" situated on a plain that was healthy and fertile. He described the town as

> laid off in a manner similar to our own [Paulding], with a beautiful square in the middle, on which it is supposed will be erected during the ensuing summer a commodious and well-finished court house. It would add much to the appearance of the place to see a fine edifice of justice suitable to the character of the county, situated on the handsome plain appropriate for that purpose.[85]

This reporter found Marion booming to such an extent that town lots were selling for impressive prices. Often a lot passed through the hands of several owners within a relatively brief time, each one selling to the next at a considerable profit. The visitor from Paulding learned of one lot on the square that extended back a quarter of an acre and sold for twenty dollars per foot on the street, "which shows the estimate which the citizens themselves put on the value of property here and the prospects of the place." He saw adjacent to the town proper "handsome family residences" with a plentiful supply of good water.[86] Such favorable and often effusive compliments were so common in newspapers and promotional circulars during this period that I am suspicious of the phrase "handsome family residences" and suspect that, at the very least, it needs to be taken today as an opinion based upon the frontier standards of 1837. Everett Dick, in his excellent history of the Southern frontier, spoke about this matter:

> According to [Morris] Birkbeck, the term 'elegant' was much overused and misused to mean useful or eligible and had nothing to do with taste. A rude log cabin and a few acres with the trees cut down at a height of three feet and a rail fence surrounding the plot was called an elegant improvement. One heard of an elegant tanyard and an elegant mill. Even roads that were barely passable were called elegant.[87]

But that Marion was prospering seems certain, and in time Marion and the county would indeed have some *elegant* buildings. By 1838, one year after the reporter's visit, Marion's development justified incorporation and the state obliged with an act on February 8. The corporate limits created a rectangle of about eighty acres encompassed in the "north-west quarter of the north-east quarter, and the north-east quarter of the north-west quarter," as surveyors would put it, of Section 35, Township 7, Range 16. The town would be governed by five selectmen presided over by a president of their choosing. The selectmen would supervise the biennial election

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[84] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 21 February 1854. This, however, does not preclude the possibility that bricks might have been occasionally brought in from elsewhere, or that home-made bricks were not occasionally available. Frank Durr, in his recollection of Marion at the time of the Mexican War in 1846 mentioned that the volunteers assembled at a local brickyard. See Durr, *op. cit.*

[85] Quoted in the Jackson *Mississippian*, 2 June 1837.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] Everett Dick, *The Dixie Frontier: A Social History of the Southern Frontier from the First Transmontane Beginnings to the Civil War* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1964), 317-318.

of one justice of the peace and one constable who would "exercise all the powers which belong to their respective offices within the limits of said corporation." The selectmen were empowered to collect taxes equal to one-half the amount assessed and collected in the town by the county.[88]

The last part of this act of incorporation reserved the state's right to repeal the charter, and either this is what happened or perhaps somehow the charter simply lapsed. At any rate, on 24 February 1848, ten years later almost to the day, the legislature granted a new charter with no reference to the former one. The size of the town was increased from 80 to 360 acres, the limits extending a quarter mile east and south of the Courthouse and a half-mile west and north of it. The new charter changed a selectman's term from one to two years, but kept other provisions of the old charter mostly intact. One new provision mentioned citizens' obligation to do periodic street work, the then-common method of keeping streets in repair. All persons in Marion liable for street duty (which seems to have included everyone who had no valid excuse or who had not offered a payment in lieu of work) were exempt from road work outside the town limits. And if the Board of Selectmen let the streets fall into disrepair, they could be prosecuted.[89]

In 1839, the year after Marion's first incorporation, the County Board of Police ordered Jesse V. Killingsworth, County Surveyor, to correct the original survey of lots and streets in Marion which in the confused conditions of previous years had been badly done. Killingsworth complied and late that year submitted a plat of the town forming a rectangle of about 1,575 feet east to west and about 1,280 feet from north to south. The Courthouse Square was in the west-central part of town, and immediately surrounding the Square were eight lots, two on each side. There were on the map 84 lots ranging in size from the smallest around the Square, each of which was about 75 by 100 feet, to the largest ones, some 175 by 275 feet. Each of the six streets was 50 feet wide, but only three were named on Killingsworth's map. Main Street was on the north side of the Square, Murray was on the south side of it, and La Fayette Street was west of the Square.[90]

We find some evidence of the growth of Marion in the recollections of Frank Durr, who at the time was a young slave. The only version of his account that I have seen is a photocopy of a somewhat damaged newspaper reproduced imperfectly on microfilm. Nevertheless, much of what he recalled is legible and throws some light on life in Marion of the early 1840s. He names the leading merchants as E. A. Durr and Hiram and Joshua Smith. Somewhat later, Louis Smith also successfully entered the mercantile field, said Durr; and there was a retail family grocery run by James Ray and a man whose name was perhaps Oliver Bruton (Burton?), though the last name is unclear in the article. At about this time Charles Rushing arrived from North Carolina and worked a while in Marion as a clerk for E. A. Durr. James Dement, of a family later to be prominent in printing and journalism in and around Lauderdale County, had a printing establishment, one of whose employees was Buck Hancock, son of Jubal Hancock. Frank Durr recalled only two physicians, Doctors Wilson and Johnston. Robert Collins ran the only hotel.[91]

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[88] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…in January & February, A.D. 1838, 104-106.*

[89] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, January, February, and March, 1848* (Jackson: Price & Fall, 1848), 387-390.

[90] *Deed Record Book A*; Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.

[91] Frank Durr, *op. cit.*

About 1845, according to Durr, the leading merchants were Charles Rushing and David Smith. Their wares, like so many other commodities at that time, had to be brought in wagons over considerable distances, usually from Mobile or else from some river port on the Tombigbee in Alabama. Among the teamsters who drove those wagons were Henry Alexander, Willis Bishop, and Elias Jordan, all of whom were white. Durr named also two black drivers, one of whom was Dave Warbington; but he identified the other only as "Alvey." Smith and Rushing later went into the wholesale business but did not stay in it long. Subsequently, they moved their enterprise from Marion to Marion Station, at about which time Smith married into the Hancock family, which Durr described as the "largest family circle" in the county.[92]

Frank Durr moved to Marion in 1847, though he was apparently already thoroughly familiar with the town. He served a four-year apprenticeship in a blacksmith shop owned by L. B. Bains, who at the time was probate judge and in the mid-1850s would run one of Marion's hotels. Recalling the importance of the leather industry in the late 1840s, Durr said that all leather was tanned locally. The local bootmaker was James Taft, and the main cobbler was William Glasby—the printed record blurs his last name. A black man, Jeames (*sic*) Burrel, eventually became the leading cobbler, or shoemaker. (In 1909 when Durr was recalling all this, Burrel was still alive and a resident of Meridian.) Durr said that "Uncle Jube" Hancock owned a large vineyard and apparently used to make a considerable amount of wine from the grapes. To the delight of neighbors, especially the younger ones, Hancock allowed everyone to help himself free of charge.[93] That probably made Hancock a rather difficult candidate to beat in local politics.

In the same year in which Killingsworth resurveyed Marion, the county decided that it needed a proper courthouse, and James Keeton submitted the specifications for what must have been the county's first courthouse worthy of the name. The commissioners responsible for the undertaking contracted for its construction with William B. Smith and Peter Doty, both of Lauderdale County. They received $2,995 for the job.[94]

The new Courthouse was a two-story, forty-foot-square, frame structure with ample windows and "3 outside doors 4 feet wide, folding panel shutters 1 ½ inches thick with glass over them." The hipped roof was covered with heart pine shingles. Inside, the first floor accommodated the courtroom and had a "neat plain Judge seat" of paneling "with a suitable bar for the attorneys and jury seats." Two flights of stairs led to the offices on the second floor.[95]

Sometime before the end of 1840 the Courthouse, which had been put up "in a neat and workmanlike manner," was completed. We can be sure that it made the county's citizens very proud, and it was for many years the centerpiece of Marion. According to William C. Rogers, General Sherman's soldiers burned the Courthouse in 1864; but another version says that several citizens, including Constantine Rea's wife Margaret, doused the flames before much damage had been done.[96]

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[92] *Ibid.*
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Deed Record Book A*, 229f.
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] A. Jarvis Welch, *op. cit.*; also, Richard N. Rea, "A Southern Woman's Bravery," *Confederate Veteran* (January 1925), 32:22.

The Courthouse was the town's chief ornament and served not only for judicial matters but also for educational, religious, and social gatherings. Political meetings also were usually held there. Anyone who has studied frontier history knows that no community, especially a county seat, could claim serious consideration until it had a government building which could, according to the standards of the day, be regarded as substantial and (to use a favorite term) "commodious." The completion of Marion's Courthouse was a major achievement for a county which was still struggling to turn frontier into a respectable community, and this splendid building was a symbol of the county's progress as it moved into the the town's best period.

Chapter 2: Stagecoaches, Steamboats, and Iron Horses.

It is often assumed that those who lived on the frontier were generally satisfied with the inadequacy or even lack of the amenities for what was then regarded as a reasonable standard of living. That was probably often true. A housewife drawing water from a well or cistern, or carrying it from a spring, and the family huddled around an open fireplace trying, often in vain, to keep warm in winter, were perhaps content with the conditions that they and those around them endured. However, one finds evidence that our ancestors were sometimes far from satisfied with prevailing conditions. Cases in point are those of travel and communication. And to understand something of those problems in early Lauderdale County, one must know something of the development of roads in that area. This involves an examination of such few extant primary sources as old maps, Federal postal records, records of the County Board of Police, and occasional comments in old newspapers.

Examining and trying to interpret the maps made during the county's early days often reveals mapmakers' disagreement and misinformation. Cartographers of that day, lacking the reference sources and sophisticated equipment available to later ones, had to do the best they could with meager means. A critic today should not comment further than to say that trying to interpret maps of this period can be frustrating. Some early maps, so brightly colored and handsomely printed, are more valuable today for their beauty than for their accuracy. Framed, they make attractive wall decorations. Many cartographers probably could not visit every area they charted and so had to depend upon other maps often similarly made. Maps made by John La Tourrette of Mobile, Ala., illustrate this problem. I pick him not because his maps were very poor but because they were among the best. Several editions or versions of his map of the Central Gulf region are extant, and their quality indicates a better-than-average striving for accuracy and detail. Yet he *was* inaccurate in some instances and less than comprehensive in others. But though his maps were thus flawed, those of other cartographers were often more so. And all map makers occasionally came to grief over the correct spelling and location of towns. The old village of Sageville, for example, appears on one map as *Sagerville*, and on the map made by Sherman's engineers as *Staceyville*.

Any attempt to identify the trails that crossed what later became Lauderdale County encounters vagueness, contradiction, and considerable confusion among the various records. That several ran through the area appears certain, but sources cannot always agree on exact routes and names. The original Federal survey, for instance, shows at least eight or nine, though it names only one—Gaines Trace—which ran north and south about two miles east of Old Marion.[1] This was probably the same road that in the years before the Civil War was locally called the Tennessee Trace and that appears clearly on a map published in 1817, though without this name. That map shows it leading from Mobile to the Tennessee line about where Marshall County now is.[2] On the other hand, whether it was Gaines Trace is handled a little uncertainly in William E. Myer's book on trails in the Southeast.[3] That book's trail

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[1] *Township Plats of Lauderdale County, in Chancery Clerk's* office, LCCH.
[2] Reproduced in Edward N. Akin's *Mississippi: An Illustrated History* (Northridge, Cal.: Windsor Publications, 1987), 39.
[3] William E. Myer, *Indian Trails of the Southeast* (Nashville, Tenn.: Blue & Gray Press, 1971), 90-94 and attached map.

map shows Gaines Trace nowhere near Lauderdale County but rather well to the north of it. It does, however, show the east central area of Mississippi as considerably crisscrossed by trails. The Alabama, Choctaw, and Natchez Trail, for instance, cut across the northern part of the county and was probably the route later followed by the stage road through Daleville and Lauderdale Springs. And though Myer identifies a different route for the Cotton Gin Port, St. Stephens, and Mobile Bay Trail, his map shows it coming up from the direction of Mobile, suggesting that this could really have been Gaines Trace and that it ran from St. Stephens northward to Tennessee. Another trail, the Choctaw and Mobile Bay Middle Route, is shown running north and south roughly through the center of Lauderdale County. The Memphis, Pontotoc, and Mobile Bay Trail seems to have run along the border of the future Lauderdale and Newton Counties.

And yet, Myer's text, as opposed to its attached map, seems to support the possibility that the trail east of Marion was indeed part of the Gaines Trace. This trail was the creation not of the more famous General Edmund Pendleton Gaines but rather of George Strother Gaines, who became responsible about 1805 for getting supplies for the Federal government to St. Stephens, north of Mobile. Goods arriving at Mobile by sea ran into difficulties with the Spanish authorities who then controlled Mobile and that section of the Gulf area, so Gaines and his government had to devise a method to get supplies from Tennessee down to St. Stephens. Sometimes they used the Tombigbee River, but a land trail was also necessary.[4] (Before the use of steamboats, travelers upstream often found it better to go by land.)

As with trails, roads and their locations are elusive on early maps. The original surveys, made as the county came into existence, showed essentially one road. It crossed the county from southwest to northeast, following roughly the route of modern U. S. Highway 11 up to Meridian and U. S. Highway 45 north of Meridian.[5] This road was the one used by our pioneers between Lauderdale and Enterprise and was very likely the one that ran through the future site of Meridian, along what is now Sixth Street. A later road, but probably not much later, branched off this Lauderdale-Enterprise road somewhere near the center of the present site of Meridian, perhaps corresponding to Seventh Street, as we shall see later. This was often called the Decatur Road and led from Marion to that place. Another old road, an important mail route as early as 1836, entered the county east of Lauderdale Springs from Alabama and continued through Daleville westward to Brandon and Jackson. An important complex of roads, not just one route, cut through the center of the county from north to south, passed just east of Daleville, entered Marion, and went on south into Clarke County. These are rather well indicated on La Tourrette's map of 1845.[6]

The old road, used as the mail and stage route from Alabama to Brandon and Jackson, was perhaps the same as what is called the "Choctaw Trail" on the historical marker at "Brickalo," the old house near present-day Lauderdale. As we have already seen, that route was also called the Alabama, Choctaw, and Natchez Trail. (According to this marker, Brickalo was put up about 1800 by Vincent Delk and was at one time a stop for stagecoaches. Some of that is entirely possible, as far

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[4] Myer, *Indian Trails of the Southeast*, 90-93.
[5] See *Township Plats of Lauderdale County*, Chancery Clerk's office, LCCH.
[6] John La Tourrette, *An Accurate Map or Delineation of the State of Mississippi with a Large Portion of Louisiana & Alabama….* (Mobile, Ala.: John La Tourrette, 1845). Comparing old with modern maps will show that a number of our county's highways today tend to follow older routes.

as I am aware; though if it was built about 1800, it is hardly likely that Delk could have been the builder.)[7]

William C. Rogers recalled that the roads around Toomsuba, such as the Marion-Livingston Road that ran past his home about a mile north of Toomsuba, were always difficult to keep in repair. Muddy places and deep ruts were occasionally filled with topsoil or, if necessary, reinforced with board runways. The wheels of heavily-laden wagons cut especially deep ruts.[8]

Some road projects were large enough and of sufficiently general importance to require more than just private funding and effort. In 1855, for instance, the County Board of Police, through its member A. E. Gray, called for bids for the construction of the Stuckey Bridge across Chunky River near Chunkyville.[9]

Another important highway ran eastward from the Marion area, through Alamucha, and on into Alabama. It was called locally the Gaston Road and was an important route into central Alabama. It was on this road, about a mile and a half east of Alamucha, that William J. Hearn lived in the mid-1850s.

These were the main roads, but there were many others. For example, Elizabeth Culpepper advertised in 1854 that she had lost her purse "someplace on the road leading from Why-Not post office to the residence of Mr. J. R. Yarborough, and intersecting the Enterprise road six miles from Marion."[10] Since we know that the Yarborough home was eight miles south of Marion,[11] this would seem to indicate that a road ran from Whynot northwesterly to join the Enterprise-Lauderdale Road somewhere near the village of Meridian. That no map I have seen clearly shows such a road is no proof that it did not exist. There was probably also a road that entered the southeastern corner of the county from Alabama and led northwestward toward Meridian roughly along the route of the present state Highway 19, which very likely uses at least some of the old road's path. One must admire the extensive network of roads that existed by the end of the county's first two decades.

From the time of the county's founding until the advent of the railroads, the inhabitants in the area were vexed by poor mail service and inadequate means for travel and shipping. They resented it and said so, often and eloquently. For several years in the 1830s there was no post office in the county and probably no dependable stage service. In January 1836, Duncan Calhoun complained to Governor Charles Lynch that "there is no post office in Lauderdale County at this time."[12] And the following May when Sheriff Isham Pace, in a letter endorsed by Sam Dale, requested an appointment as census taker for Lauderdale County, the letter was postmarked in

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[7] Delk would have been rather young in 1800 to build a house, even if he had been living in the area, which he almost certainly was not. Though the census taker in 1850 seems to have garbled his last name, Delk was listed as 60 years old and with a son of 21, born in South Carolina, his parents' birthplace. Thus, it is unlikely that Delk came to Mississippi earlier than 1829. See the personal enumeration of the 1850 U. S. census for Lauderdale Co., family no. 666.

[8] Welch, *A History of Toomsuba, Mississippi.*

[9] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 9 October 1855.

[10] *Ibid.*, 12 September 1854.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Duncan Calhoun to Gov. Charles Lynch, 18 January 1836; Governor's Papers (hereinafter cited as GP), RG 27, vol. MF21, Miss. Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson, hereinafter cited as MDAH.

Winchester.[13] By late 1835 the citizens of Scott, Newton, and Lauderdale Counties were so exasperated by the lack of mail service that in the following February they persuaded the legislature to pressure the Federal government to establish a mail route from Jackson eastward through Brandon and the three subsequent county seats, and passing through Alamucha, to the county seat of Sumter County, Ala.[14]

But times were changing fast and just two months after Sheriff Pace complained to Governor Lynch, he was able to mail a letter in Daleville where on 21 July 1836 Postmaster John R. Leath opened the county's first post office. On April 13 of the following year, Thomas H. Davis became the first postmaster of the county's second post office, which opened in Mingo Houma, the early name for Lauderdale Springs.[15] Exactly one week later another post office was opened at the village of Magnolia under the postmastership of Isaac Barr—*Barr* is probably the correct name though it is not clearly written in the record. This post office was short-lived, for it ceased on 26 May 1838 and never re-opened. It is somewhat suggestive that Marion was only the fourth town in the county to get a post office, for it was on 27 May 1837 that James Murray opened the first one in what became the county seat.[16]

The following is a list,[17] in chronological order, of the establishment of post offices in Lauderdale County up to the beginning of the Civil War when, of course, postal service was assumed by Confederate authorities.

<u>Daleville</u>

John R. Leath, 21 July 1836; Ewin K. Adair, 6 July 1837; Benjamin F. Parke, 1 Feb 1838 "(Later Commissioned)"; Cleveland Robbs (writing unclear on last name), 14 Mar 1839; Logan D. Stevens, 30 Dec 1839; Lucian B. Hancock, 27 Jan 1841 (?); L. B. Moore, 30 May 1842 (in another place Moore's initials seem written as "S. B."); Willis J. Richards, 23 Oct 1845; William C. Dobbs, 27 May 1847; John L. Wilkerson, 28 June 1849; William H. Temple, 7 May 1851; John H. Hill, 8 Aug 1854; John S. (?) Wilkerson (perhaps the same as John L. above, for writer seems to confuse letters *S* and *L*), 29 Jan 1856; Elisha Mosley, 26 Mar 1858; Joel McWilliams, 7 Mar 1860.

<u>Mingo Houma/Lauderdale Springs</u>

Thomas H. Davis, 13 Apr 1837; Hugh G. Britton, 2 July 184- (last digit of year unclear but probably 1841); William W. Drunkwater (Drinkwater?) 28 Apr 1843; Henry Forbes, 25 Mar 1844; named changed to Lauderdale Springs when Hiram H. (?) Roberts assumed duties on 28 Jan 1846; William S. Patton, 2 Dec 1852; John M. Silliman, 11 Feb 1854; William P. Hobbs, 7 Mar 1855; James F. Patton, 22 Jan 1856; Thomas S. Roberts, 2 Feb 1857; James W. Maury, 12 June 1858; Benjamin B. Smith, 18 Jan 1859; discontinued on 29 June 1859 and all service in area assumed by "Springs Depot" post office that was later named Lauderdale Station.

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[13] Isham Pace to Gov. Charles Lynch, 26 May 1836; GP, vol. MF21, MDAH.

[14] *Laws of the State of Mississippi; Passed at a Regular Biennial Session of the Legislature, Held at Jackson, in January & February, A.D. 1836* (Jackson: G. R. & J. S. Fall, 1836), 54f.

[15] This name was changed officially to Lauderdale Springs on 28 January 1846. See: *Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-September 30, 1971,* Record Group 28, M841, Roll 68, Lauderdale Co., Miss., National Archives, Washington, D.C., (hereinafter cited as NA). Mingo Houma (or Hoomah) was a Choctaw leader, one of the 171 Choctaws who signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. His home had perhaps been on the site of Lauderdale Springs. See: Washburn, *op. cit.*, 4:2432.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] All data are from *ibid.*

Magnolia

Isaac Barr (?), 20 Apr 1837; discontinued 26 May 1838.

Marion

James Murray, 27 May 1837; Joseph P. Gray, 12 Jan 183- (?); Lewis Smith, 23 Jan 1839; James M. Piggott, 27 Sep 1844; Charles E. Rushing, 17 Sep 1849; Jubal B. Hancock, 31 Jan 1854; Lucien B. Hancock, 13 Dec 1860.

Alamucha (Old Town)

Daniel Cameron, 11 Nov 1840; Warren W. Johnson, 23 Mar 1846; Nelson Wood, 8 Mar 1847; Thomas B. Lucy, Sr., 19 May 1854; John J. McElroy, 5 Aug 1856; Jacob P. Welch, 6 Nov 1856; Nelson Wood, 14 Mar 1857; William C. Silliman, 27 May 1857; John J. McElroy, 17 Dec 1857; William C. Silliman, 12 Apr 1859; Peter H. Bozeman, 18 Nov 1859; John J. McElroy, 10 Apr 1860.

Chunkyville

John G. Gallaspy, 4 May 1848; Henry E. Barrett, 23 June 1852; Benjamin F. Gaddis, 3 Jan 1856; John I. Cook, 12 Mar 1858; John Warren, 13 Sep 1859.

Sageville/Okatibbee[18]

Martin C. Buston, 5 Jul 1848; Benjamin F. Gaddis, 24 Mar 1852; Thomas F. Gaddis, 29 Jul 1853; Edward J. Rew, 1 Mar 1854; transferred to Okatibbee on 13 Nov 1855 under Edward J. Rew; transferred back to Sageville on 7 Apr 1857 under Edward J. Rew; transferred back to Okatibbee on 12 Feb 1858 under I. J.(?) Brown; discontinued on 25 Oct 1859.

Battlefield[19]

James M. Trussell, 9 Oct 1849; F. H. Trussell, 9 Jan 1858; Jeremiah P. Davis, 20 Mar 1860; moved to Newton County.

Hurricane Creek[20]

Daniel C. Wallace, 22 May 1850; moved to Choctaw Co., Ala., 19 Dec 1853; then back to Hurricane Creek on 27 Nov 1857 under James L. Blanks; Perry X. Robinson, 10(?) Jan 1859; moved to Choctaw Co., Ala., 15 Feb 1859.

Ponta

William V. Raney, 19 July 1850; discontinued 29 Aug 1851.

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[18] These two settlements were near each other, Okatibbee on the railroad near present-day Arundel, and Sageville a short distance west from there.

[19] On the northwestern border near Newton County.

[20] The cited record says that Hurricane Creek was "late in Clarke Co.," meaning probably in Hurricane, just across The Clarke Co. line. According to Kate Reynolds, of Meridian, as well as Lamar Robinson, who was born and reared at Whynot, Hurricane Creek was originally called Blankstown, after James L. Blanks, storekeeper and postmaster. See WPA file, Lauderdale Co. Cities and Towns, Folder D-L, Meridian-Lauderdale County Public Library, hereafter cited as MLCPL.

Suqualena[21]

William G. Calhoun, 23 July 1851; Hiram D. Mahan, 4 Feb 1852; Coleman Jolley (*sic*), 15 July 1853; Charles P. Partin, 25 Oct 1853; Peter G. Hughes, 29 Jan 1856; Edward Osborn, 16 Jan 1858; discontinued 9 Oct 1860.

Whitesville/Whynot

As Whitesville: Isham K. Pringle, 23 June 1852; named changed to Why Not (the usual early spelling) on 30 Dec 1852, also under Isham K. Pringle; discontinued 27 Sep 1859.

Zero[22]

Recorded as having been "Late of Panola (Sumter Co. Ala)": Owen Pigford, 10 Feb 1853 and up to the Civil War.

Meridian/Baldwin[23]

Alfred Beck, 20 June 1854; William F. Brown, 2 May 1857; Alfred Beck, 13 Dec 1858; name apparently changed to Baldwin on 7 June 1859, under Alfred Beck, and then changed back to Meridian on 24 June 1859 under Alfred Beck; Richard L. Hill, 21 May 1860; Noah T. Beaman, 28 Nov 1860.

Markwell[24]

George W. Merrell, 29 July 1856; G. A. Sellers, 22 Mar 1859; George W. Merrell, 7 May 1859; Adolph Treukel, 29 Nov 1859; James W. Agnew, 12 July 1860; discontinued 18 Apr 1861.

Springs Depot/Lauderdale Station

Warner H. Lewis, 21 Oct 1859; John Greenlees, 1 May 1860; Frederick H. Adams, 11 Dec 1860; Lorenzo D. Belk, 15 Jan 1861.

Rawsonville[25]

Charles Rawson, 29 July 1854; apparently discontinued before the Civil War but no date given.

Rushing's Store

Harry (?) L. Williamson, 31 July 1860.

It has been a favorite pastime of Americans, perhaps since the creation of postal delivery, to damn mail service. Mississippi, along with most of its sister frontier states, seemed to be especially critical. We find, for example, the Jackson *Mississippian*, of 13 October 1837, complaining about how a shipment of mail, instead of being delivered as addressed, had been brought back by the "last northern

[21] In those days often spelled *Sookalena.*

[22] Though I'm not certain, this was possibly not the community of that name today south of Meridian but perhaps another located in the northeastern corner of the county.

[23] It is a mystery why Meridian's post office, for scarcrely two weeks, had a different name. Perhaps the apparent change was merely an error by some clerk of that day.

[24] This oddly-named village was four or five miles east of Lauderdale Springs. See *The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War* (New York: Arno Press, Crown Publishers, 1978), plate 148.

[25] About six miles east of Marion—see Marion *Laderdale Republican*, 10 Oct 1854.

mail." "We learn," said the paper, "that this is sometimes done twice or thrice in succession. We cannot be certain where this mistake or intentional misconduct occurs but think it must be either at Williamstown or Madisonville…." Said the newspaper, "[T]he whole business in Mississippi, is a disgrace to the department."[26]

As late as 1839 there seem to have been only two post roads in Lauderdale County serving the three post offices that existed at that time—Daleville, Mingo Houma (Lauderdale Springs), and Marion. One route came in from Kemper County to Daleville and went through Marion into Clarke County. The other route went westward from Daleville to Decatur, Brandon, and Jackson. Compared with some others in the state, both routes were minor ones. Take for example the one running between Jackson and Doak's Stand, described by one source as a "4-Horse Mail Post Coach" road. The two in Lauderdale were described by the same source as merely "1-Horse Mail or Sulkey [*sic*]" roads.[27] (A sulky was a light two-wheel, one-horse carriage built to carry one passenger.)

In 1837 the U. S. postal authorities advertised one of their periodic bids for carrying the mails in Mississippi, this one for the period 1 January 1838 to 30 June 1842. On those routes for which contracts were current, new contracts would date from 30 June 1838, unless the newer contract was for an improved service. Route 3804 was for service twice a week between Jackson and Daleville *via* Scott Courthouse and Union, a distance of 110 miles. Mail and passengers would leave Jackson every Sunday and Thursday at 5:00 A.M., arriving at Daleville on Tuesday and Saturday by 6:00 P.M. On the return, the coach left Daleville every Sunday and Thursday at 5:00 A.M. and arrived in Jackson on Tuesday and Saturday by 6:00 P.M.[28]

Route 3836 ran from Columbus to Daleville, *via* Cedar Creek, Macon, and De Kalb, the sixty-mile trip being made twice weekly. The coach left Columbus at 6:00 A.M. on Tuesday and Friday and arrived in Daleville the following day by 6:00 P.M. The return trip left Daleville on Sunday and Wednesday at 6:00 A.M., arriving in Columbus the next day by 6:00 P.M. Persons and mail going beyond Daleville to the south could transfer to route 3852 which went through Magnolia, Quitman, and Chickasawhay to Winchester, a distance of seventy miles, twice a week. (A failure to list Marion perhaps means that the future county seat was only a fledgling community.) Mail and passengers left Daleville at 5:00 A.M. on Sunday and Thursday and arrived at Winchester the next day by 6:00 P.M. Returning, one left either on Monday or Friday and arrived at Daleville by 6:00 P.M. the following day.[29]

These schedules were really not bad for that time, that is, when everything went well; though the fare charged—about ten cents a mile—may seem a bit high. But the announcements rarely alluded to the many problems that could plague such travel: wash-outs, highwaymen, broken wheels or axles, injured animals, bad weather, and so on. The postal authorities made honest efforts to secure the best equipment and the most trustworthy contractors. Those applying had to show testimonials from one or more "responsible persons" in their communities and to

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[26] Jackson *Mississippian*, 13 October 1837.

[27] David H. Burr, *Map of Mississippi, Louisiana, & Arkansas, Exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, RailRroads, ec.* ([Washington]: n. p., 1839); RG 28, Burr Atlas, Map 9, NA. Probably by the time this map was published, the mail routes had been upgraded in the Lauderdale area so that vehicles were post coaches pulled by four horses.

[28] Jackson *Mississippian*, 29 September 1837.

[29] *Ibid*.

present "good and sufficient securities." And to make sure that those testimonials from "responsible persons" were worth anything, the bidder was required to produce the certificates of a postmaster "or other equivalent testimony that the guarantors are men of property, and are able to make good their guaranty." And, added the announcement, there could be "no exceptions…in favor of old contractors, railroad companies, or any other companies, or persons whatsoever."[30]

The postal authorities also wished to upgrade the three routes in Lauderdale County so that the coaches would be drawn by four horses and at greater speeds than formerly. Schedules were arranged so as to allow for the opening and closing of the mails plus an additional hour at the distributing post offices. The Federal postal authorities reserved the right to impose fines for failure to take or deliver the mail, or for the damage or loss of mail; and they threatened forfeiture of the pay for a cancelled trip or one on which the coach arrived so late at its destination as to miss a connection with another stage. An additional stipulation was that if a contractor showed that he could or had run a stage more rapidly than the contract called for, then he was required to "give the same increased celerity and frequency to the mail, and without increase of compensation." Passengers arriving at a point, and continuing by transfer to another stage, had preference for seating over those passengers just getting on.[31]

In the spring of 1838 a proposal was made in the U. S. Senate to establish a new postal route that would run from Mobile to Winchester, Miss., there to connect with the stage that ran on to Daleville, with connections to Columbus and Jackson. Another proposal was for a new *daily* route from Montgomery, Ala., to Jackson, Miss., *via* Selma and Livingston, in Alabama, and Marion, Decatur, Hillsboro, and Brandon, in Mississippi.[32] Whether these two routes were actually established at this time on a daily basis is not clear, but later in the summer of that year, 1839, an act of Congress *did* put that route on the mail schedules.[33] Bids for one leg of the route were invited in the spring of 1839, the distance to be covered being the ninety miles between Livingston, Ala., and Brandon, once a week. The route crossed Lauderdale County through Marion and perhaps used the so-called Decatur Road out of Marion through the future site of Meridian.[34]

In the mid-1840s there was a tri-weekly coach from Tuscaloosa, Ala., through Lauderdale Springs (or White Sulphur Springs, as it was sometimes called at this period) to Jackson.[35] But not all the patrons along this route were happy with its service or with that of the other routes. The firm of Roberts & Bilbo, which ran the new resort at Lauderdale Springs, complained that the Paulding *True Democrat* was not reaching them regularly and that their customers, who liked the paper, were often disappointed. The proprietors, perhaps trying to play on the rivalry between the two Democratic papers in Paulding, noted that the town's *Eastern Clarion* arrived regularly. (The *True Democrat* was perhaps a trifle more dogmatically Democratic than was the *Eastern Clarion*.) Roberts & Bilbo suggested that the missing issues might be sent by "private conveyance, if they cannot reach us through the Post

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[30] Jackson *Mississippian*, 29 September 1837.
[31] *Ibid*.
[32] *Ibid*., 8 June 1838.
[33] *Ibid*., 7 September 1838.
[34] *Ibid*., 19 April 1839.
[35] Paulding *True Democrat*, 10 September 1845.

Office," possibly an insinuation that those pesky Whigs were at the root of the problem, even though that somewhat inept party no longer controlled the executive branch in Washington.[36]

In July 1846 three new stage routes were established into or through the county. Route 5763 ran from Daleville south to Winchester, *via* Marion, Quitman, and Chickasawhay. Stages on the first route made the seventy-five miles twice a week. They left Daleville every Sunday and Thursday at 5:00 A.M. and arrived in Winchester the next day by 6:00 P.M. The northbound stage left Winchester every Monday and Friday at 5:00 A.M. and arrived in Daleville the following day by 6:00 P.M. Another route, number 5753, connected Columbus and Daleville, a distance of seventy-six miles. It made two trips each week, leaving Columbus at 5:00 A.M. on Tuesdays and Fridays, reaching Daleville the following day by 6:00 P.M. The return to Columbus left Daleville at 5:00 A.M. on Sundays and Wednesdays and arrived in Columbus the next day by 6:00 P.M.[37]

The third and much more ambitious route, no. 5702, ran from Jackson to Livingston, Ala., *via* Brandon, Sandy Hill, Hillsboro, County Line, Union, Herbert, Octibbehah (*sic*), Daleville, and Mingo Houma (Lauderdale Springs). This 150-mile trip was made thrice weekly, possibly even daily at a slightly later period. The stage left Jackson every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday at 11:00 A.M. and arrived at Livingston about forty-five hours later. A return trip left Livingston every Monday, Thursday, and Saturday at 11:00 A.M., completing the trip in about forty-three hours. It is difficult to say with certainty, but the service may have employed both two-horse and four-horse coaches, as well as variations in the route so as to take it at times either through De Kalb to Gainesville, Ala., or through Decatur and Marion instead of Union, Herbert, and Daleville, but still terminating at Livingston.[38]

In 1851 there was probably put into operation another mail line, route 5820, between Daleville and Gainesville, Ala., a distance of forty-five miles. With only one trip a week, it left Daleville at 7:00 A.M. on Thursday, went through Kemper Springs, and arrived at Gainesville by 11:00 A.M. next day. Its return trip began at one P.M. Friday and arrived in Daleville about twenty-four hours later.[39]

By early 1855 a mail route was proposed between Columbus and the Mobile and Ohio Railroad which was working its way northward in southeastern Mississippi. It was the idea of Congressman William Barksdale; and that the line would pass through Marion was gratifying to Constantine Rea, editor of that town's *Lauderdale Republican*. Said Rea, "When it goes into operation we will be able to furnish our readers promptly with the earliest news." The route was to be served by coaches pulled by four horses, and the run would be made six times a week.[40]

Though not to the extent that many had hoped, the extension of the Mobile and Ohio through the county improved the delivery of mail. Also, it spawned some short, auxiliary stage routes. One line, for instance, connected with the trains at Lauderdale Station and ran to De Kalb *via* Kemper Springs, Cullum's Mills, and Pleasant Ridge.[41]

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[36] Paulding *True Democrat*, 3 September 1845.
[37] Jackson *Mississippian*, 18 February 1846.
[38] *Ibid*.
[39] *Ibid*., 7 February 1851.
[40] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 12 February 1855.
[41] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 August 1858.

Even after the Mobile and Ohio Railroad had begun to push inland toward Lauderdale County, the problems of poor mail delivery and inconvenient travel persisted. By April of 1855 the M & O had reached Quitman, but mail delivery remained irregular and slow. Instead of two or three days, which ought to have been sufficient to get a letter from Mobile to Marion, it generally took at least eight. Early in 1855 there was talk, as described above, of establishing a stage line from the gradually advancing terminuses of the railroad to Columbus, but apparently nothing came of it at the time. As one disgusted patron put it, the national authorities regarded the idea as "too vast, too pregnant with advantages to the people of this neglected section."[42]

The idea did not die, however. The Jemison and Ficklin Stage Line, which was already conveying passengers to and from the railroad, was quite willing to carry mail, too. Another suggestion was a mail route to connect the railroad with Gainesville, Ala., on the Tombigbee River; and again Jemison and Ficklin made what many regarded as a very attractive bid. But the postal authorities were not interested. Rea, Marion's salty editor, said that if the Democrats really did abandon all mail service, as the Whigs pretended to fear, Lauderdale County could find some consolation in the fact that they had been pretty well prepared for it.[43]

Even mail within the county sometimes fared no better. John H. Hill, postmaster at Daleville in the mid-1850s, complained that mail directed to Lauderdale Springs was often returned from that place to Daleville, and that in other cases the mail had passed back and forth several times before anyone noticed.[44] Hill said that mail from Marion to Daleville more often than not strangely arrived from Brandon *via* Lauderdale Springs, and he considered himself fortunate if it went only to De Kalb before reaching Daleville. Editor Rea in Marion knew that such wretched service delayed delivery of his paper, and he was not inclined to take it quietly. He wrote:

> There is a mail rout[e] direct from Lauderdale Springs, yet the De Kalb and Brandon rout seems to be preferable, and the mail matter by some mysterious hocus pocus starts Eastward from Marion, and after boxing the compass, arrives from the Westward at Daleville, and the delighted citizens are regaled with the pleasure of reading a paper some two or three weeks old. This is progress with a vengeance, and though it is only ten miles to Daleville, and we have a tri-weekly mail, yet the citizens of that place are debarred from all the priviledges [*sic*] accruing hereby, simply because the *stage driver* disdains to favor them with his patronage, by refusing to stop and deliver the mails.[45]

Chunkyville, in the more remote southwestern part of the county, was especially neglected. There had earlier been in operation through the town an old tri-weekly coach route between Daleville and Quitman, but it was later abandoned. It was re-established, probably in early 1855, and the situation for Chunkyville improved.[46]

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[42] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 9 April 1855.
[43] *Ibid*., 23 April 1855.
[44] *Ibid*., 7 August 1855.
[45] *Ibid*.
[46] *Ibid*.

Editor Rea employed some of his choicest sarcasm on U. S. Postmaster General James Campbell:

> The citizens of this place [Marion] are about to purchase a venerable mule, and dilapidated railroad cart, with a view of presenting them to Judge Campbell, our efficient post master general, as a testimonial of their gratitude for the *able* and *efficient* manner in which he has discharged the functions of his high and responsible office.
>
> The mule is lame in all his legs, and blind in both eyes, while the vehicle is minus certain spokes and felloes, and other requisites, indispensable to strength and durability. The various qualifications of this symbolical present represent the *exalted* order of talent which has heretofore *eminently* distinguished Mr. Campbell from all his predecessors. The lame and blind mule is typical of his stubbornness, indifference, and blindness to our interest, while the crazy cart is only a correct copy of some of the vehicles now in actual use, by which he manages to deliver the mails *regularly* to the American people.[47]

By the fall of 1855, after the M and O had entered the county, mail from Mobile to Marion still generally took ten to fourteen days. A tri-weekly rail service ought to have done it in two or three days. But delivery to the county was sluggish; and mail to Marion often arrived there after it had been erroneously sent to Marion, Ala., simply because the postal personnel in Mobile would not distinguish carefully between the two towns.[48] Even after the railroad reached Marion, mail delivery was scarcely better, all of which further convinced many residents of the county that the Post Office Department was staffed by incompetents.[49]

Overland travel also was frustrating. In the early days of the county the area's residents probably thought little about it; but when, by the 1850s, Marion and its vicinity had begun to take on the aspects of a thriving community and living became more complex and more dependent upon other communities and regions, the hazards and deficiencies of travel and shipping facilities was increasingly irritating. For example, in those days numerous bands of outlaws plagued the primitive roads, and there was often little the few law enforcement officials could do about them. These brigands made travel, especially that of lone individuals on horseback, extremely risky. Ever since the breakup of John Murrell's ambitious outlaw empire in 1835, splinter groups from it, as well as new, independent groups, preyed on the unwary and defenseless. Lauderdale County was part of the domain of the notorious gang led by James Copeland and Gale Wages, whose crimes caused reverberations long after James Copeland's execution in 1857 in Augusta, Miss. (See Appendix A.) The swampy sections of Lauderdale County were an invitation to covert activities of all sorts. For example, when in the fall of 1854 a Dr. Williams was traveling on horseback from Daleville to Jackson, he was attacked by robbers where the road cut through the Okatibbee swamp.[50]

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[47] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 7 May 1855.
[48] *Ibid.*, 18 September 1855.
[49] *Ibid.*, 25 December 1855.
[50] *Ibid.*, 28 December 1855.

Despite such happenings, lone riders continued to take the risk. In the early part of 1856, for example, Constantine Rea, the Marion editor, traveled to Jackson to claim his seat in the legislature. The trip from Marion required three days, which for that time was not especially remarkable. The road was in poor condition, for recent heavy rains had carried away most of the primitive bridges, and Rea very nearly lost his horse as he crossed Okatibbee Creek. He was thrown into the water which, as he said, "will cause me to entertain no very pleasing recollections of that dark and turbid stream."[51]

Another typical travel experience was recorded in 1852 by William Proctor Gould, of Boligee, Ala. He and a companion set out in a carriage to make the considerable trip, *via* Marion, to Winchester, Miss. They left Livingston, Ala., after breakfast on 18 September and, after eating a cold lunch on the road, mistakenly took the road toward Daleville instead of the one to Marion. This lost so much driving time that they did not get into Marion until eight P. M., long after dark and after enduring what Gould called "the worst piece of road I ever traveled over." In Marion they put up at the tavern run by Brice M. Mayfield, whom Gould described as "a queer old joker," and adding "his wife ditto." The next morning, Sunday, they had an early breakfast and drove all that day to cover the twenty-eight miles to Quitman. The trip was without mishap except for a rain shower that caught them at sunset. The road between Marion and Quitman was a rough one and Gould thought the country along the way very poor. About twenty-four hours later, on Monday, they reached Winchester fully determined to take an alternate route on the return trip.[52]

In those days, and with such conditions prevailing, the traveler usually preferred to travel by stage. But while a coach might give more protection from thieves and might make one less likely to be dumped into a creek, it did not always assure a more comfortable trip. (It would perhaps not be too wide of the mark to suppose that a large number of legislators in those days, as they made their difficult ways to the seats of honor, occasionally cursed the day they decided to take their places at the public trough.) Two years before Rea had his encounter with the Okatibbee, Greene C. Chandler took the stage to Jackson to fill *his* seat in the legislature. His later account was about as graphic and jaundiced as was Rea's:

> I reached Jackson on the morning of the 1st instant [January, 1854] most decidedly "a used up man." The recollection of my stage ride from Daleville to Brandon is almost enough to give one the "horrors." The cold, blighting winds, and the chilling and nipping frost, together with the banging against the sides of the open box which I received without mercy, made me heartily curse the heartless contractors of this line, and determine to warn "all the world and the rest of mankind" never to pay ten cents a mile to be frozen, or to have their brains beat out, as long as they have horses, buggies, or feet to walk.[53]

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[51] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 18 March 1856.

[52] William Proctor Gould, *Diary of William Proctor Gould of Boligee, Greene County, Alabama* (6 parts) (Montgomery, Ala.: Ala. State Dept. of Archives and History, 1938-1939), 2:48.

[53] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 17 January 1854. Since he put it in quotes, Chandler's phrase "a used up man" perhaps was borrowed from the Whig campaign song of 1840, "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too," in which "Tippecanoe" (Harrison) would surely beat the Democrats' "Little Van" (Van Buren)—"And with him we'll beat Little Van, Van, Van, Van, Oh he's a used-up man…."

If Lauderdale residents refused to travel or to transport goods by stagecoach and dreaded going on horseback, what alternative did one have? Until the advent of the railroad, not much, unless one could make some use of Tombigbee steamboats. Well, why not by steamboat? For at least two good reasons: first, the Tombigbee was an inconvenient distance from the Lauderdale area and, second, the river was not exactly an ideal stream for steamboats. A larger river such as the Mississippi or Tennessee, or even the Tombigbee itself nearer Mobile, could have had an adequate depth all or most of the time. But the Tombigbee as far upstream as a hundred miles or more was undependable. When the river had plenty of water in it, everything went well, and some of the steamboats were quite attractive. By early 1854, for example, a beautiful new steamer named the *Eliza Battle* was carrying passengers. She departed Mobile every Tuesday afternoon at five, reached Demopolis about twenty-four hours later, and arrived at Jones Bluff, opposite Lauderdale County, late Wednesday evening. By Saturday night the boat was back in Mobile.[54]

Looking through records of early steamboat travel in Alabama, one gets the impression that transportation on the Upper Tombigbee was of minor significance compared with that on other streams such as the Alabama and the Coosa. Part of the reason was probably that the latter streams were more central to Alabama and, thus, more vital; but another reason may be that the Tombigbee's water level was often inadequate. This, if true, was certainly unfortunate for those living in Lauderdale County and surrounding areas before the arrival of railroads.[55]

Incidentally, in May 1856 Lauderdale County Surveyor Jesse V. Killingsworth proposed a new principle of design for stern-wheel boats. It was described as follows:

> To this proposed boat there are, in fact, two wheels, obliquing on each side of the run, from the center, yet so formed that the buckets act in parallel lines with the stern as usual, but possessing the power of separate action when machinery is attached, like the side wheels of high pressure engines, and thus obviating the present difficulty in turning boats of this description.[56]

Killingsworth demonstrated his design by operating a working model of his invention in the Mobile River at the foot of Conti Street in Mobile. I leave to those competent in physics and mechanics to say whether the idea was sound or whether it had any influence upon the subsequent design of steamboats.

During the spring of 1855 a drought caused the water in the Tombigbee to drop to such a level that only smaller boats could navigate. Thousands of bales of cotton piled up in the area along the river and its tributaries, and business suffered

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[54] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 17 January 1854. Hardly had the *Eliza Battle* been put into service, when on 27 March 1854 she hit a snag and sank, though there was no loss of life. She was subsequently raised, refitted, and put back into service. But March must have been her unlucky month, for on 1 March 1858, while in the vicinity of Kemp's Landing, she caught fire. High water prevented the pilot's getting safely to the bank, and many were burned to death or drowned. See: James F. Doster and David C. Weaver, *Historic Settlement in the Upper Tombigbee Valley* (University, Ala.: University of Ala., Center for the Study of Southern History and Culture, 1981), 70-71.

[55] See, for example, Mell A. Frazer, *Early History of Steamboats in Alabama*; reprinted from *Alabama Polytechnic Institute Historical Studies*, 3rd series (Auburn, Ala.: Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1907), *passim*.

[56] Mobile *Daily Register*, 25 May 1856.

when money almost disappeared from circulation. In Lauderdale County and surrounding areas such staples as sugar, coffee, salt, and flour were almost unobtainable. By late March the rivers had risen a little, but much cotton remained stranded along smaller streams. On the Tombigbee above Columbus there still lay about 20,000 bales from the crop of 1853. Two bad seasons in succession severely depressed the economy in that section. Day after day residents of Lauderdale County watched wagons loaded with supplies pass through going to the more heavily-blighted region to the north. One resident from the northeastern counties said that some items such as coffee were impossible to find.[57] But better times were coming and the *Lauderdale Republican* spoke of them and of the travelers who were going south to the northernmost terminus of the Mobile and Ohio:

> Our town is still flooded by the influx of passengers, journeying backwards and forwards, to and from Mobile. All the world seems to have disregarded the Bigby [Tombigbee River], and forsaken the *luxuries* of the one horse, stern wheel steam boats, which now flourish upon that fallen stream, with all the pomp and glory, which five dollars a bale can impart to their graceful movements. The Mobile and Ohio Rail Road is monopolizing the trade….[58]

All of this dramatized the necessity to push work on the railroad to completion, and every delay increased the impatience and frustration of residents along the intended route. One exasperated observer said that he looked forward to the day "when we can reach the city of Mobile by railroad, and be no longer skinned by swindling steamboats."[59]

As one today reads those contemporary accounts of the progress of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad northward from Mobile, one finds the excitement among the residents along its path quite palpable. The railroad, as a practical means of transportation, was scarcely a decade old, and it requires no special imagination to see that it was the great marvel of the age. A new and almost incredible mobility was nearly within reach. Residents of Lauderdale County, many of whom only recently had spent weeks laboriously making their trek westward in wagons or on horseback, could now contemplate a trip of the same distance taking only a day or two. It is thus understandable that the newspapers regularly noted every detail of the road's progress, deprecated the delays, urged greater exertion to hasten the completion of the work, and, to vary the chorus, fantasized and quipped about the coming revolution. In May of 1854, for example, when the work crews had almost reached the state's boundary, editor Rea was elated that soon "the Iron Horse will appear among us to the great astonishment of Old Fogies—making a new era in the history of East Mississippi."[60] Even out at Mormon Island in California, Alfred Spinks, apparently a former resident of Lauderdale County, followed with interest the railroad's progress.[61]

By June of 1854 the M and O was into Mississippi, some sixty miles from Marion. "Look out for the Iron Horse!" warned the *Lauderdale Republican* with

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[57] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 26 March 1855.
[58] *Ibid*., 17 May 1855.
[59] *Ibid*., 23 February 1854.
[60] *Ibid*., 2 May 1854.
[61] *Ibid*., 20 June 1854.

relish. The trains would, it predicted, carry off the county's harvest for that year. The prophecy was a little premature, though a few shipments of cotton were indeed carried down in wagons to the northern end of the line. In fact, according to Marion's newspaper, a load of cotton early in 1854 was the first shipment of that commodity by rail from Mississippi to the Gulf Coast.[62] About the middle of that September a number of wagons passed through Marion on the way to the road's terminus at Winchester. Several merchants in Marion had already received invoices for goods that would be shipped by rail.[63]

But the pace of construction often seemed agonizingly slow. How many times predictions were made as to when the citizens of the county would hear the clanging of the locomotive, only to have the date arrive with the road still miles away! Meanwhile, the residents could only watch, and hope, and sometimes ponder in alarm rumors that the route was, for some reason or other, going to be changed.

Land along the right-of-way was, of course, selling at a premium. When in January of 1854, for example, Ramsom McElroy advertised 800 acres for sale one and a half miles north of Marion, he noted (in addition to a cotton gin, slave quarters, 300 cultivated acres of creek-bottom land, and a comfortable dwelling) that the property was on the future route of the M and O.[64]

By 1855 it was fairly obvious that, barring unexpected or protracted delays, the railroad would enter the county sometime that year. In mid-summer the railroad reached to within about fifteen miles of Marion, and then stopped—again. For a while laborers were almost impossible to procure. In June there was an outbreak of cholera among the workers on the roadbed near Sageville, with seven or eight deaths out of thirty or forty cases. That most of the workers were slaves moved the *Lauderdale Republican* to fear that "the owners will withdraw them if the violence of the disease does not moderate." The paper observed further, "Hands are very scarce, and cannot be hired without considerable difficulty, and if this disease continues, they cannot be hired at all." Subsequently, twenty-five of the slaves ran away. By the end of August, however, a little more track had been laid, and the road was into the county to a point about ten miles south of Marion, near Sageville. The new terminus was called Okatibbee, after the creek nearby. Sometimes it was called Grimes Depot.[65]

If a washout had not occurred on the railroad to the south, the cars would have reached Okatibbee on Monday, 7 September. The station house was ready, and, as had so often happened along the road at other points, a little village was developing around it. Three stores were under construction, and two men named Jackson and Williamson had put up a large stable and something that passed for an inn, which they advertised as having a "good table." The depot itself was considered quite spacious and attractive, though built on somewhat swampy ground.[66]

During the droughts in 1853 and 1854 the resulting disruption of Tombigbee transportation was a temporary bonanza for the stage line of Jemison and Ficklin. They established a line between Columbus and the northernmost depots on the M and O, and for several months their stages were heavily patronized by passengers who poured through Marion on their way north and south. Coaches

[62] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 20 June 1854.
[63] *Ibid*., 19 September 1854.
[64] *Ibid*., 6 January 1855.
[65] *Ibid*., 25 June, 24 July, 28 August, 4 September1855.
[66] *Ibid*., 25 September 1855.

arrived in Marion on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings, stopping at the Bains Hotel, on the southwest corner of the public square, where the proprietor, L. B. Bains, served the passengers supper.[67]

The innkeepers in Marion experienced a great increase in patronage. The preceding October Bains had bought the establishment formerly owned by Walter W. Welch, who had operated it as the Planter's and Railroad Hotel. The new owner was not without competition, however; for the Mansion House, owned by H. H. Raney—whose name is occasionally seen as *Rainey*—was already a popular place for tired and hungry guests and known for its well-equipped stable run by John Turner, who offered horses and buggies for hire. But Bains was popular, too, and was famous for his hospitality, his somewhat portly physique, and his rosy, smiling face.[68] The tired traveler just entering Marion saw the large sign swinging some forty feet above the ground. It proclaimed in fancy, bold letters "BAINS' HOTEL" and was the promise of rest and good food from the engaging "Barry," whose heavily-laden table was famous.[69] Between 20 April and 25 May 1855, 517 travelers patronized that agreeable gentleman's hotel, a number in addition to those staying elsewhere in Marion. This was indeed a boom, for before the railroad reached as far north as Quitman, four or five guests a week in Marion had been about average.[70]

Thanks to the Jemison and Ficklin Stage Line, it was possible by the spring of 1855 to leave Mobile by train on, say, Monday at ten A.M. and arrive in Marion by stage the following morning at four o'clock.[71] Perhaps that sounds grim today, but it represented a great improvement over the time, less than a decade before, when a trip to Mobile generally meant many days or even several weeks of travel in ox-drawn wagons. In a few months, of course, the further extension of the railroad into the county would lighten the journey yet more, but for several months Jemison and Ficklin prospered at an average of two to three hundred dollars on each trip. The accommodations, especially for residents boarding in Lauderdale County, were not the best. Regulations prescribed that those traveling farthest were entitled to the best seats inside the coaches. Others had to sit on top. Those who did not wish to be shaken to distraction inside the coaches, or frozen in winter and roasted in summer on top, sometimes rode their horses to the nearest rail depot. But some found that irksome, too.[72]

During this same period when the stage line was taking passengers to and from trains, farmers in the Lauderdale area were pragmatic in solving their shipping problems. The sluggish economy goaded them into vigorous measures, and many farmers loaded their wagons with produce and went south to the nearest station. This was an especially popular solution after the M and O reached Clarke County. The streets of Marion were increasingly filled with the wagons of the county's farmers, as well as with great numbers of wagons coming down from the counties of Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, and Kemper.[73] Most of these transients probably had scant means to make purchases, but they probably brought a little extra exchange of some kind to the county's merchants. After the railroad reached the little depot at

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[67] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 16 April 1855.
[68] *Ibid*., 28 October and 11 November 1854, and 16 April 1855.
[69] *Ibid*., 9 December 1854.
[70] *Ibid*., 28 May 1855.
[71] *Ibid*., 23 April 1855.
[72] *Ibid*., 7 May 1855.
[73] *Ibid*., 12 March 1855.

Okatibbee, there must have been an even greater improvement in the county's economy.

By the late summer and early fall of 1855 the story of the building of the railroad takes on a special interest. Although no trains were yet running that far, the track was laid nearly to Sowashee Creek. And while the story of Meridian belongs elsewhere in this book, it is perhaps appropriate at this point to note several things that have a bearing on that story. For one, since creeks and rivers often caused some delays in construction, or at least served to gauge its progress, they tended to become temporary terminuses where depots were sometimes erected. Thus it was that construction on the road apparently hesitated briefly after it reached Sowashee, and not because the spot was regarded as a settlement, or even as the site of a future settlement. Obviously, wherever the Southern Railroad from Jackson crossed the Mobile and Ohio would, without doubt, spawn a considerable town. But in 1855 no one could say precisely where that crossing would be, although somewhere in the general vicinity of Marion seemed probable.

On Wednesday, 26 September, when the first train reached Okatibbee Station and track had been laid to Sowashee, workmen began erecting a depot on the M and O right-of-way just opposite Marion.[74] Probably no one suspected it at the time, but the hammers that drove the nails into the little station house were also driving them metaphorically into Old Marion's coffin. In time what was first called merely "The Station," became Marion Station, then New Marion. Today it is simply Marion; there is nothing left of the original town except a cemetery.

It would probably be difficult to exaggerate the excitement which greeted the arrival of the first locomotive in Marion Station, and, for that matter, all the other places along the route. A curious fact, however, is that the *Lauderdale Republican*, which had often and with great interest and in great detail reported the road's progress, apparently did not record the event in Marion. It almost reminds one of the host who planned a party, repeatedly reminded the guests over a period of time, and then failed to be at home when they arrived. One wonders whether editor Rea was out of town at the time and those left in charge had committed some almost incredible oversight, or whether the event was thought to justify a special issue that failed to be included in the bound volume that I used for this narrative. All that can be said is that the newspaper *apparently did not chronicle the event*.

On past Marion the road made its way. By the first of December track had reached Lockhart, and the first train arrived there probably on Monday, 3 December, at the newly-built station house.[75] The first train rolled into Lauderdale Springs on 18 December, and by Christmas the M and O had pushed entirely through the county.[76] When the *Lauderdale Republican* praised the M and O for the speed with which the work had been carried forward, it was probably meant as much as anything else as a slap at the Southern Railroad whose progress eastward from Jackson had almost taken on the character of a fiasco.

Now that trains were running on a schedule of three a week, business quickly responded. There was a great quantity of cotton to ship south, and between one and three hundred passengers rode each train. These were apparently trains made up not of regular passenger coaches but perhaps of modified freight cars. At any rate, such

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[74] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 25 September, 2 October 1855.
[75] *Ibid*., 4 December 1855.
[76] *Ibid*., 25 December 1855.

travel must have felt like the ultimate in luxury to those first passengers. Think of it! Moving over hills, through valleys, and across raging streams, without fear of tiring the locomotive, and at a breathtaking ten or fifteen miles an hour! Well, it perhaps seemed to many the climax of civilization. Passengers probably were even tolerant of the rustic cars, the washouts, and the delays. When in late December of 1855 the track south of Citronelle, Ala., wore out and caused delays, the *Lauderdale Republican* admitted that even with such trouble as that the railroad was far better than "low rivers, ox carts, [or] one-horse steamboats with forty miles of mud."[77] The paper also made light of a little crisis just north of Lockhart in December 1855, when a field of lignite through which the road ran caught fire and destroyed the track. The fire burned for about four weeks and, as the paper put it, made Lockhart temporarily "the terminus, and consequently a city of note and importance." It added, "Success to Lockhart and its growing trade."[78] The new road's earnings after reaching Lauderdale County are demonstrated dramatically by the following figures: Up to 1 February 1853 the M & O had earned $22,454.43. That was exceeded between 1 February 1853 and 1 February 1854 by earnings of $30,165.81. The remainder of 1854 saw earnings of $59,367.45. But in 1855, the year the road pushed completely through Lauderdale County, earnings jumped to $200,032.96.[79]

The new railroad was becoming a real money-maker for the company. In 1856 the number of passengers was 51,025, a fifty-seven-percent increase over 1855. The income from these passengers totaled $93,225.95. But freight brought in far more profit. That same year the road realized $314,725.36 from freight carried, and by far the most valuable freight was cotton.[80] According to that era's *American Railroad Journal*, "Cotton is the leading and most profitable article of freight on all Southern roads. It is easily handled, and its high value allows a very remunerative charge for its carriage…." "Southern roads," it added, "are upon their cost the most profitable in the country."[81]

After the railroad ceased to be a novelty, however, the citizens of the county looked at its operation with more critical eyes. For the first few months the road was plagued by problems; accidents and delays became commonplace. One suspects that part of the trouble was slipshod construction caused by undue haste to silence the mounting criticism of an impatient public. Yet, despite these and other vexations, the dominance of the stagecoach and the steamboat was coming to an end. The railroad was about to transform the region and the nation.

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[77] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 25 December 1855.
[78] *Ibid.*, 4 December 1855.
[79] *American Railroad Journal*, vol. XXX, no. 1,088 (21 February 1857), 116.
[80] *Ibid.*, vol. XXX, no. 1,096 (18 April 1857), 241-242.
[81] *Ibid.*, vol. XXVIII, no. 1,009 (18 August 1855), 521.

Chapter 3: "This part of the state was then almost a wilderness."

Greene Callier Chandler, only six in 1835 when his parents moved to just west of Marion in Lauderdale County, was a witness to these early years of rapid change. Twenty years later he described the area as follows:

> This part of the state was then almost a wilderness. Very few white people were to be found within a radius of fifty miles, the county being inhabited mainly by Choctaw Indians, and my earliest impressions in life were about this simple people.... I became friendly with many of the Choctaws, living near one of their villages and always regarded them as the best of all the Indians.[1]

As has already been suggested, most of the 1830s were a time for Marion and the county to establish just the rudiments of an economy and society. There probably was for several years little in the way of business or industry, at least as we would understand such things today. To the extent that there was anything like an *economy*, it must have illustrated almost literally the meaning of the two Greek elements in that word, *i.e.*, managing the home. Researching the newspapers published in the middle 1830s in the state, even those in a place as close to Lauderdale as Paulding, one rarely finds even a mention of Lauderdale County except in lists of statistics that included all counties. And even in those sources it is not unusual to find few or no returns for Lauderdale. Even the advertisements of lawyers in the earlier years rarely mentioned Lauderdale County, though they generally listed counties in which they were prepared to practice. That would seem to say either that there weren't many residents in Lauderdale who required legal services or else that the lives of its residents were not yet sufficiently complex to invite the luxury of litigation. It was a situation that must have prevailed, more or less, in almost all of the counties created from the Choctaw Cession of 1830.

Another indicator of industrial vitality and progress was missing from the picture—banks. As late as 1838 a list of banks in the state, of which one newspaper, the *Spirit of Kosciusko*, had any knowledge, did not include any in Lauderdale County, even though the list contained both incorporated and unincorporated ones. This does not preclude the possibility that there were in Lauderdale County some small "wildcat" banks which, as the Kosciusko paper said, were "now in great numbers in almost every town in the State." Of the banks listed by the newspaper, those nearest the Lauderdale area were a branch at Paulding of the Mississippi and Alabama Railroad and Banking company, Kemper County's Wahalak Real Estate Company, and a branch in Paulding of the Mississippi Shipping Company of Natchez.[2]

As every high school senior theoretically knows, the great increase in the number of banks in the mid- and late-1830s, many of them unsound, was directly

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[1] Greene Callier Chandler, *Journal and Speeches* (Privately printed, 1953), 44-46. The basic manuscript was written in Marion in 1855 and was described as "A Journal of Fugitive Thoughts; Containing Autobiographical Incidents, Sketches of Men and things, Scraps of Family History, Miscellaneous Articles on Various Subjects, and Unpublished essays and Speeches," all of which must surely have covered the subject!

[2] The article from the *Spirit of Kosciusko* is quoted in the Jackson *Mississippian*, 10 August 1838.

related to the financial policies and attitudes of President Andrew Jackson; and these new banks and their often reckless methods of operation played a considerable role in the nationwide depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s.

One of the chief offenders among banks in Mississippi in the 1830s was the Mississippi and Alabama Rail Road Company, also known as the Brandon Bank. Like several other companies in the region that were functioning as banks, this one had been incorporated to build a railroad, in this case from Jackson to Mobile. The company said they could do it if given enough money and if allowed banking privileges. Critics later charged them with tricking the public into buying shares in the company and, when the money began rolling in, of abandoning railroad construction in favor of underhanded banking that enriched the company's officers to the amount of from two to three million dollars. And the only track laid extended about twelve miles. Said the *Mississippian*, "If it costs the people three millions of dollars to build *twelve* miles of railroad, how much will it cost to build the distance which rail road banks have proposed to build?" The answer, said the paper, was quite simply "enough to ruin every man in the State, who does not engage in the transaction."[3] (That twelve-mile stretch of railroad would eventually be incorporated into the Southern Railroad of Mississippi that reached Meridian in 1861.)

Such articles as those in the *Mississippian* hastened the loss of confidence by the public in such institutions as the Brandon Bank, although for several years that company's scrip circulated as very acceptable currency. For a while, in fact, the bank's notes were more readily traded than were those of many competitors, especially banks that already were clearly shaky operations. At first, shares in the Brandon Bank seemed sound investments, and a good many Mississippians bought them. How many in Lauderdale County were beguiled by the charade is perhaps impossible to know. Norman and Ann Martin in 1838 bought twenty shares and paid $1400 for them, mortgaging some of their land to get the money.[4] Neill McLaurin and his wife Jane bought thirty-one shares in another company, the Mississippi Union Bank, at $100 a share. Like the Martins, they covered the price by mortgaging some of their land.[5] And on 28 August 1838 at Marion, James Keeton bought 96.23 shares in the Mississippi Union Bank and paid a whopping $9,600 for them. He mortgaged at least 674 acres of his land and even included a 30-year-old slave named Willis.[6] The records do not tell us what became of these investments, but at that date they were questionable at best. Incidentally, the real estate assets of the Mississippi Union Bank were sold in 1847. Those in Lauderdale County were auctioned at the Courthouse in Marion on September 6.[7]

The hard times that hit the nation and the state by the early 1840s are evident today in old newspaper notices of property sales, announcements of insolvency, and sales of land for non-payment of taxes.[8] But perhaps most of the residents of Lauderdale County were only slightly affected by the depression. The vast majority of the citizens were small farmers and, hence, probably fairly self-sufficient and not inclined to speculate. Only a slight retrenchment would have been

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[3] Jackson *Mississippian*, 31 May 1839. Curiously, the paper blamed the Whigs for the multitude of "rotten corporations which now curse the land with a worthless currency"—*ibid*., 19 July 1839.
[4] *Deed Record Book A*, LCCH, 306-308.
[5] *Ibid*., 404-406.
[6] *Ibid*., 357-362.
[7] Jackson *Mississippian*, 28 May 1847.
[8] See, for example, the *Macon Herald* throughout 1842.

necessary in so uncomplicated a lifestyle. But by the start of Lauderdale's second decade, the county was on the verge of great changes.

The census of 1840, though perhaps a somewhat flawed operation, gives some evidence of a continuing simple economy in the county. There are no returns for livestock or cereal grains, for example, although there must have been many a family that had at least a cow or two and certainly some who raised corn—Washington County was the only other county having no returns in these categories. The record shows only 20,000 pounds of cotton gathered in Lauderdale compared with 193,401,577 pounds for the state. The value of dairy products is given as $336, and "home made, or family goods" were valued at only $3,622. There were two businesses under the heading of "Retail dry goods, grocery, and other stores." The county had one tannery with an investment of $350, compared with 128 in the state and an investment of $70,870. There were no returns for printing shops or for the manufacture of pottery or gunpowder. (But there soon would be printing, because at least as early as 1849 James P. Dement was a printer in the county, probably in Marion, and doing such work as serving as the official county printer.) There was also no return for liquor manufacturing, though it is almost impossible for me to accept *that* statistic! In some categories the county data were more positive. There were ten gristmills (806 in the state) and twelve sawmills (309 in the state). Thirty-seven men were employed in oil mills (cotton, presumably) with $81,000 invested in the industry (compared with 923 men and an investment of $1,219,845 in the state). For the preceding year the record shows the construction of only four "brick and stone" houses, but 256 wooden houses. There were 527 men employed in house-building.[9]

As this and other sources show, gristmills were common implements in an area where corn was probably the most important food crop. (Though it was used in the whole grain, it was usually ground into meal for the corn bread that was much more common than wheat bread and probably more relished, at least as daily fare.) Owen Lee had what was perhaps the best-known, and possibly the longest-lasting, gristmill. Owen and Cynthia Lee were living in the county at least as early as 1837 when in May they sold a lot on which there were a store and small cabin on the public square in Marion.[10] In August of 1838 they sold to William B. Worbington a half-acre of land in the town.[11] Owen Lee established his mill about a mile due south of Marion, apparently on Nanabe Creek. The earliest record of it that I have seen is on John La Tourrette's map of 1844. The map-maker regarded the mill as important enough to indicate it along with another, owned by a man named Davis, in the area of Lauderdale Springs.[12] It is no absolute proof that Lee's mill lasted that long, but

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[9] *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, as Obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census, by Counties and Principal Towns, Exhibiting the Population, Wealth, and Resources of the County….* Prepared by the Dept. of State (Washington: Printed by Thomas Allen, 1841), 226-237. For information on James P. Dement's printing, see *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 17 August 1849, LCDAH, 142, and 28 August 1849, 157.
[10] *Deed Record Book A*, 25-26.
[11] *Ibid*., 28.
[12] La Tourrette, *op. cit*.

another map produced in 1864 still shows the Lee's mill in the same location.[13] As we shall see later, one of U. S. General William T. Sherman's chief concerns upon reaching Meridian during his expedition in 1864 was that of securing enough ground corn for his stay in Meridian and for his return march to Vicksburg. The Union soldiers found a number of such mills in the county, including some that the Confederates had left operable.

Thus were gristmills and sawmills extremely important in Lauderdale's early years. Though the county lacked large rivers or swift-running creeks, there were enough creeks of adequate size and current which, if dammed, could provide the waterpower to turn the necessary water wheels. Mills were really regarded as something akin to present-day utilities. That is to say, their construction and operation were strictly licensed and controlled. For example, in the spring of 1848 Abraham L. Burwell applied for permission to establish a mill on the site of an earlier mill run by Morris Lindsey; and a jury of ten men concluded that his proposal was sound, that it would be a "public utility," and that it would not "injure the health of the neighborhood or real estate in the vicinity."[14] Such solicitude for the environment was sensible, for the building of a mill could greatly alter the stream and surrounding land. In cases where the prospective miller owned both sides of a stream, however, there was much less difficulty in getting a license. Thus, when Joel Bullard applied for permission in 1855 to build a mill near Sageville—apparently on Hognose Creek—there were no objections, for he owned both banks.[15]

It was quite another matter, however, when in early 1855 J. W. Parks and T. B. Ross proposed to build a mill in the southwestern corner of the county at what is now Wanita Lake. They and their attorney presented their case in open court before the Board of Police, who also heard objections from a contesting party led by Thomas Sullivan. The Board decided in favor of Parks and Ross, who were nevertheless "limited to raise a dam of nine feet [of] water, after first cutting down the timber and removing the same or burning the timber before the erection of said dam from all parts of the pond that will be covered by water."[16]

Other early mills included Beason's mill in the late 1840s on Nanabe Creek, and one run by a man named Spinks in 1850, near Sageville. In 1851 Pendleton McDonald and some others proposed to open a "Gin & Mill seat & Saw Mill seat," which had once been known as Rigsby Mills. The Police Board approved, and Cornelius M. Gaddis set about reconstructing it.[17] Davis Mill on the site of Lauderdale Springs has already been mentioned, but there was another of the same name in the 1850s in the western part of the county. It was on the Decatur Road (probably the *Upper* Decatur Road) and in the general vicinity of the M. D. House residence.[18]

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[13] *Department of the Gulf Map, No. 44, Southern Mississippi*; prepared under direction of Maj. D. C. Houston, Chief Engineer, July 1864. (Based on la Tourrette's Map, with updating by Lt. E. C. Miles, Topographical Engineers), RG 77, roll S 21, NA.
[14] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, LCDAH, 81. The jury consisted of C. D. McCall, William T. Mason, William Purvis, Adam Eubanks, William L. Wolf, J. W. Daniel, J. H. Gentry, Robert and L. B. Fairchild, and Willis Owens.
[15] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 80.
[16] *Ibid*. 57f.
[17] *Ibid., 1847-1854*, 163, 225, 267.
[18] *Ibid., 1854-1860*, 71.

Trying to get a comprehensive picture of everyday life in Lauderdale County of the 1840s reveals a paucity of data. Few newspapers were published in the area in those days and even fewer have survived. Those that have survived contain only occasional references to Lauderdale County. Of the two or three published in the county during the 1840's, apparently not an issue has survived. Courthouse records, until recent years, have been generally inaccessible and, thus, often of only marginal help. The establishment in the mid-1980s of the county archives, however, has mitigated this deficiency very much. There are still deficiencies. Letters and diaries, for instance, are a valuable source of local history; but not very many of them dealing with the county in these early years seem to exist.

Nevertheless, from the meager extant sources that do exist we get the impression that in its second decade Lauderdale County was experiencing an adequate development—economically, politically, and socially. The population for 1840 was 4,029 whites, 1,353 slaves, and fourteen free blacks, for a total of 5,396.[19] Thus it can be seen that the county's population more than doubled in less than three years.

During the first two decades of the county's history efforts to establish schools made very heavy weather of it. Not until the 1850s did public interest in education produce substantial results. Earlier, even into the 1840s, there seem to have been few schools and little effective effort to improve the situation. This is surprising in that a large portion of the residents were adolescents. In 1840, for example, fifty-two percent of the county's white population were under fifteen years of age.[20] (The slave population, of course, received no formal education.) By 1850, however, there were twenty-two schools in the county, and as many teachers, with 521 pupils, some of whom may have been boarders from outside the county. (In those days it was not unusual to send children to other towns where, living with relatives or friends, they could attend a local school.) Nvertheless, in 1850, a time when literacy was not taken for granted in the nation and certainly not on the frontier, there were only 494 illiterates among the white population in Lauderdale County.[21]

According to Sallie Culpepper, who arrived in the county in 1874 from Choctaw County, Ala., and resided first at Russell, the first school in Lauderdale County was that at Union Grove Church run by a man named Burkhalter.[22] (Though Culpepper apparently did not recall his first name, the schoolmaster is perhaps the same as Elias Buckhalter who appears in the 1840 census for the county.)[23] According to this source, Burkhalter (or Buckhalter) was succeeded by one Garrett who, after the school was moved two miles east to Jeff Knox's cotton mill, was followed by Misses Hestell and Hemphill of Toomsuba. Still later, Mary Brandon, of Russell, operated the school.

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[19] Fred W. Edmiston (comp.), *A Transcription and Index of the 1840 Census for Lauderdale County, Mississippi* (Meridian, Miss.: Lauderdale County Dept. of Archives and History, 1988).

[20] *Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, as Corrected at the Department of State in 1840* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1841), 252.

[21] *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850; Embracing a Statistical View of Each of the States and Territories…and an Appendix Embracing Notes upon the Tables of Each of the States, Etc.* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1853), xcviii, 447, 451-454.

[22] "Has Tuition School," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 Novbember 1946, unnumbered sections and pages.

[23] Edmiston, *op. cit*.

Another very early school, about which there seems to be little more than tradition, was one run by a Professor Rivers. No account that I have seen of this school gives Rivers' first name, but in the 1850 census and in other records for the county there is a John Rivers who was a school teacher. And assuming that the two are identical, we can say at least that Rivers was born in Georgia about 1806.[24] Apparently, little else is known about him personally, including where he received his own education. According to tradition, Rivers' school was located about a mile and a half west of present-day Bailey, though records of the Board of Police place Rivers in Township 7, Range 16 East, quite to the *east* of Bailey.[25] Perhaps his school at some point changed location. At any rate, he appears first in the county's school records on 13 January 1851, though it is possible that he was teaching school here earlier than that. The same records' final entry for Rivers was on 2 January 1859, perhaps about the time he died.[26]

The Rivers School is said to have consisted of a large, one-room log building with a grand chimney and fireplace at one end. "As far back as the early 'forties,' at least," says this same source, "the fame of this noted 'professor' and the superiority of his school" attracted considerable numbers of aspiring scholars. Though some students boarded in the neighborhood, sometimes young men and women walked great distances to attend this institution that apparently included a high school. A session at the Rivers School lasted three or four months in the winter with a two-month session in the summer, and at times there were as many as forty or fifty pupils. After Rivers' death, the school was run by others; but it closed when the Civil War began.[27]

Tradition speaks also of another school which was begun sometime in the 1840s by Pinckney Vaughn, who lived in the area of Suqualena. Vaughn is said to have chosen a teacher for his own children and then to have invited other families in the area to help expand the undertaking. The Vaughn School was housed in a very large frame structure that also served as a church which both whites and slaves attended. There were two doors in front and one in the rear, and the windows had genuine glass panes, which according to the traditional reports was, at that time, an unusual feature for the area. The pulpit was near the center of the room and was enclosed by a railing. Instead of a fireplace, two "box stoves" gave far more effective heat. The school continued during the Civil War, when the faculty included Mary Daniels; and it survived into the early 1870s.[28]

Even in the 1830s, the larger communities of Marion and Alamucha made somewhat more ambitious, but perhaps no more successful, efforts to establish schools. On 9 May 1837, for example, the legislature approved a charter for the Marion Academy. The first trustees were James Ruton, James Murray, Benjamin T. Larke, John R. Leath, Isaac Barr, John F. Chester, Horatio B. Warlington [*sic*—Warbington?], and Theodore S. Swift. They were authorized to receive by donation, purchase, or other method, real estate worth up to $5,000 and personal estate not exceeding $10,000. The first meeting of the trustees was held in the Courthouse in Marion on the first Monday in April 1838. One gets the impression not only that the

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[24] Personal enumeration of the 1850 census for Lauderdale County, Miss., family number 278.
[25] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, LCDAH, 237; also *ibid., 1854-1860*, 47.
[26] *Ibid., 1847-1854*, 237; *ibid., 1854-1860*, 335f.
[27] "Open Rivers School," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition.
[28] "Gets Own School," *ibid*.

academy did not already exist (since they had to meet in the Courthouse and since the charter provided for securing a building) but also that all this activity was to little avail. At any rate, there was another effort to start a school five years later.[29]

On 23 February 1842 the legislature granted another charter to incorporate the Marion Male and Female Academy. Provisions of the act were similar to those in the act of 1837; and one of the trustees for this new venture, John F. Chester, had been among those in the 1837 effort. The other trustees named in the 1842 charter were Ransom McElroy (the charter misspelled his name *M'Leroy*), Abram Carr, William Carter, Edward G. Hussey, Richard McLemore, William C. Foster, Neal (or Neill) McLaurin, and Berry Brown.[30]

An early effort to support formal education in Alamucha was the incorporation on 27 January 1840 of what was called the Alamucha Academy and Free Church. How successful the venture was is difficult to say from the few records that exist, but the effort began with some fanfare. Ralley Spinks, Daniel Cameron, Dennis Marsh, John A. Reed, and Simon Tool, trustees, offered to the public, in five-dollar denominations, shares to the amount of $5,000. The corporation was accorded all the usual rights to organize and run a school "for the promotion of learning and good morals among the students." Stockholders were to meet on the first Monday in each May to elect new trustees. They were empowered to procure an appropriate building which could serve also as "a place of religious worship for all christian [*sic*] denominations, at such time and under such regulations as may be prescribed by the trustees." One wonders what became of this rather ambitious plan not only for a school but also for a church that would welcome all denominations but be obligated to none.[31]

In the late 1840s there was near Alamucha a school on the land belonging to D. Newton Commack. What its name was does not appear in the records I have seen, but in the late 1840s there was a proposal to enhance its status and change its name to the Alamucha Academy. (Perhaps it was somehow connected with the Alamucha Academy and Free Church, just mentioned; but I have seen nothing to suggest any connection except the similarity of names.) On 6 March 1850 the legislature approved a charter to make this new school a legal entity. The trustees were William Wiggins, Daniel Cameron, William O'Neal, Branch R. Bragg, and Abraham Brower. The academy was enjoined to see that "students of all denominations may and shall be admitted to equal advantages, and that they receive alike fair and generous treatment." And since alcohol is not the best lubricant for the working brain, the charter provided

> that…it shall be unlawful for any person or persons to retail or sell any distilled or spirituous liquors within a half mile of said academy; and any person or persons contravening the provisions of this act, in any respect, shall for such and every offence be fined in the sum of fifty dollars, one-half to the

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[29] *Laws of the State of Mississippi; Passed at an Adjourned Session…January, 1837*, 118f.

[30] *Laws of the State of Mississippi; Passed at a Regular Biennial Session of the Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson in January and February, A.D. 1842* (Jackson: C. M. Price & G. R. Fall, 1842), 166-168.

[31] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson in the Months of January and February, A.D. 1840* (Jackson: C. M. Price, 1840), 134-138.

> use of the informer, and the other half for the benefit of the school fund of the State.[32]

The trustees were empowered, if they thought it desirable, to move the academy to adjoining lands "provided said removal be not within the distance of one-half mile of any grocery [i.e., saloon] or drinking shop already established." (It is difficult to believe that any of the village swains would have hesitated to walk four times that distance for a gourdful of top-notch liquor.)

Four years later, on 28 January 1854, a building committee consisting of D. Cameron, F. P. Brower, J. P. Welch, E. Sage, and E. E. Pack took bids for work on the Alamucha Academy. One cannot be sure from the few extant records whether the academy was now four years old and still thriving or whether the trustees were only then carrying out the terms of a four-year-old charter. Speaking of the academy's prospects, the Marion *Lauderdale Republican* predicted "that the institution, when established, will be inferior to none in this section of country."[33] The phrase "when established" rather clearly indicates that the academy was still only in the planning stage. One often encounters this sort of thing in studying the history of education in this period of the county's history—few schools and those few often uncertainly begun and precariously operated. And merely finding among the state's laws a charter for Such-and-Such School or Academy is no proof that the institution ever was realized. Were there a good run of newspapers from this period, one would be able to speak with much more certainty.

By the 1850s Marion's citizens began serious efforts to support education. At about the same time (1854) that the *Lauderdale Republican* was wondering whether someone would undertake to start a library in Marion,[34] J. M. Richardson, a young Marion clergyman, assisted by Mary E. Woods, started the Marion Female Academy. Previous efforts to give the town a good school had been hampered by disagreement over details. Richardson's school offered two five-month sessions and, in addition to the usual subjects, taught rhetoric, philosophy, higher mathematics, Latin, Greek, and vocal and instrumental music. Richardson was a Presbyterian, but he ran a non-sectarian institution.[35] The academy was so successful that by April Richardson's scholars numbered between sixty and seventy girls.[36]

Also in 1854 a group of trustees, of whom L. B. Bains was president, advertised for a teacher to begin what they called the Marion Male Academy. Since there were no responses, the Rev. Mr. Richardson, already busy with his duties at his Female Academy and with pastoral concerns, decided to take on this additional venture. Acquiring the services of a young clergyman named A. B. Newton, who was proficient in Latin and Greek, he began the school on the first of May 1854, fixing board at five dollars a month. The fall session began on 7 August, with both the Male Academy and the Female Academy as parts of the same institution. Thus, for teachers Richardson had Mary E. Woods, Pauline Hughes, and Newton.[37]

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[32] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, January, February and March 1850* (Jackson: Fall & Marshall, 1850), 403f.
[33] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 24 January 1854.
[34] *Ibid.*, 31 January 1854.
[35] *Ibid.*, 3 January 1854.
[36] *Ibid.*, 4 April 1854.
[37] *Ibid.*, 3 January, 21 February, 9 May, and 8 August 1854.

All that Marion needed now was a good building for Richardson's school. The necessary funds to build one had been available for some time, but previous efforts had always run aground on disagreement over such matters as location.[38] With Richardson's leadership the effort was resumed with new vigor and ultimate success. Now, perhaps there would be an abatement of the problem, so much complained of in Marion, of the droves of boys who congregated, skylarked, and created noise and mischief.[39]

M. H. Whitaker, whom the *Lauderdale Republican* described as "an exemplary young gentleman" and who later was a successful attorney in Meridian, began a school in Marion on 7 January 1856.[40] And by the fall of 1857 Mrs. Robert Leachman and several assistants trained "in all branches of modern female education," had opened the Marion Female Seminary.[41]

Though it eventually was moved to Lauderdale Springs, there was one school in Marion that was, thanks to its founder, a bit out of the ordinary. L. J. McCormick, from whom we shall hear more during the early days of the Civil War, in 1859 was operating at Marion what he was pleased to call McCormick College. Styling himself "president," he taught the "McCormick System of Education," which seems to have been expounded in textbooks written by McCormick himself and particularly emphasizing mathematics and the author's conception of Southern ideals. The Paulding *Eastern Clarion* quoted an estimation of McCormick by a publication called the *Southern Statesman*:

> We know Prof. McCormick and hazard nothing in saying that he, although a *Southerner*, stands at the head of his profession in the United States. He is also the author of an arithmetical work, which is pronounced by scientific men to be the best ever published. We bespeak for him the patronage of the South, as he is Southern born, Southern raised, Southern trained, and Southern educated, and therefore more capable of instilling good Southern principles into the minds of our youth than Northern teachers.[42]

There is little question that McCormick was an unusual man, and he used every opportunity to sound the bugle during the exciting days following Lincoln's election. He was a thoroughgoing, dogmatic Southerner and secessionist of the classic type and put all his energies into his teaching and his beliefs. The Presbyterian clergyman in Meridian, William C. Emerson, found McCormick a congenial spirit and had high praise for the pedagogue.[43]

In 1846 the state legislature took one of the earliest steps toward the development of a public school system. The act created what were called "common schools." Under the terms of this act the Lauderdale Board of Police appointed five members, one from each police district or beat, who constituted a board of school commissioners. On 1 June 1846 the first board met at the Courthouse in Marion, and at that meeting and subsequent quarterly sessions they designated certain schools in

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[38] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 25 June 1855.
[39] *Ibid.*, 21 February 1854.
[40] *Ibid.*, 8 January 1856.
[41] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 8 January 1856.
[42] *Ibid.*, 4 May 1859.
[43] *Ibid.*

the county as common schools. These schools would then be under the board's scrutiny and those teachers considered "qualified to teach the various branches of an English education" would be duly licensed and "entitled to receive from the school fund…such sum of money as shall have been agreed on between himself and the said board." Money to finance this considerable scheme would come from "all escheats and all fines, forfeitures and amercements hereafter decreed, ordered or adjudged" by the state's judicial proceedings within the county, as well as monies from the "licenses granted to hawkers and pedlars, keepers of billiard tables, retailers of vinous and spirituous liquors, and brokers." In addition, money received from the sales of lands in each sixteenth section (long before determined by the national government as set aside for educational purposes) would go into the school fund. The county treasurer was responsible for administering the fund.[44]

In 1848 the legislature amended the common school law in relation to the counties of Clarke, Jasper, Lauderdale, Harrison, Hancock, and Copiah so as to give the school commissioners more flexibility in getting and using school funds. The amendment recognized the differing needs that might arise between one part of a county and the rest. Then, for some reason, on 5 February 1852 Lauderdale was removed from the list of exceptions and placed back under the terms of the original law.[45]

Something of the application of this system of common schools can be seen in the routine way in which the Board of Police paid the county's teachers and anyone else who had provided any sort of service to the common schools. A teacher might receive pay from two or even three different sources. For example, J. G. Knox in February 1855 received $36.69 from the general fund, $3.50 from the fund for Township 8, Range 18, and $4.24 from the fund for Township 7, Range 17.[46]

After about 1855 the central part of the county, as well as even some more remote areas, could be reasonably certain that their children had, or soon would have, access to a school. This advantage was considerably enhanced when in 1854 the legislature authorized the Board of School Commissioners in the county to sell the sixteenth sections of townships, or parts of them, if those lands had not already been disposed of.[47] However, a majority of citizens in a township could, if they wished, block the sale of land in their own sixteenth section. J. Lowry, President of the Lauderdale Board, announced that the sale authorized by the new act would take place on June 12; and on that day at a public auction in front of the Courthouse in Marion, the lands were sold to the highest bidders. All monies received from the sale went to the common school fund.[48]

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[44] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Biennial Session of the Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson in January, February and March, A.D. 1846* (Jackson: C. M. Price & G. R. Fall, 1846), 98-104. How well this scheme of common schools served the county is difficult to assess, though it was at least an early effort to improve education.

[45] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…1848*, 143f; also, *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, January, February, and March, 1852* (Jackson: Palmer and Pickett, 1852), 402.

[46] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, LCDAH, 48.

[47] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, from 2nd of January to 2nd of March, 1854* (Jackson: Barksdale and Jones, 1854), 456.

[48] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 2 May 1854; also, *Laws of the State of Mississippi…1854*, 456f.

By the late 1850s newly established schools included the Alamucha Academy where James T. Crawford was principal.[49] Elsewhere—I have not been able to determine precisely where—C. T. Ford, a teacher since about 1840, was running the Walnut Springs Academy.[50] Mr. and Mrs. S. Batchelder opened two schools, probably in the fall of 1855, one for boys and another for girls. Operating on an eight-month session, each school began on the first Monday in October and allowed a week's vacation for Christmas. Tuition was two to four dollars a month, board seven dollars a month. Both schools offered English, Latin, Greek, and French, and for an extra charge, piano, painting, and drawing. The girls' school was at the residence of Nelson Moore, that for the boys a mile and a half south of Moore's home.[51] Up in Lauderdale Springs, in late 1858 or early 1859, the Reverend Nehemiah (?) Brown opened a boarding school.[52]

If these schools did not suit the county's more affluent parents, they could send their children to such schools outside the county—but widely advertised in it—as the Gaston Institute, just over in Alabama to the east of Alamucha. Here the principal was L. Gould, who in the mid-1860s would establish a respected school in Meridian.[53]

Thus, Lauderdale County was at last making tangible progress in education. In the middle and late 1830s, when it took all one's energies and resources to wrest a bare existence from a raw frontier, a primitive little school was probably the best that could be expected. It was a great advance from those first humble efforts to the later academies, institutes, and "colleges" in such places as Marion, Alamucha, and Lauderdale Springs.

Information about the earliest churches in the county is meager and often vague. One frequently finds tantalizing brief references that give only a name of a church, or perhaps one sees a citation of an unnamed church with a few details and with or without an address. But in the 1830s there simply were not many churches of any denomination. Frank Durr, who as a young slave remembered conditions in the county as far back as the late 1830s, stated flatly that in those days "Churches were very scarce."[54] Even in Meridian as late as 1863, Major W. H. Dameron, Confederate commissary officer, could write his wife that there were but two churches in Meridian, one a Methodist and the other Baptist. And neither had a minister.[55]

Durr could recall but two Baptist churches at the end of the county's first decade, a Primitive Baptist church near Lauderdale Springs which he referred to as "Bill Allen's Church" and the Salem Church in Alamucha where in 1844 Durr attended his first "association."[56] There was, as we shall see later, at least one other

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[49] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 12 September 1857.
[50] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 22 January 1855.
[51] *Ibid.*, 18 September 1855.
[52] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 30 March 1859.
[53] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 17 January 1854. Four years later Gould was owner of the West Enterprise (Miss.) Female Institute—see Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 August 1858.
[54] Durr, *op. cit*.
[55] Dameron to his wife,15 November 1863; in Norton, Chilton, and Dameron Papers, series 1, folder 8, 1862-65; in Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, N. C.
[56] *Ibid*.

Baptist church in the county, as far back as the late 1830s—the Oaky Valley Church which was an ancestor of Meridian's First Baptist Church. It was established in 1839 and will be discussed in the chapter on the founding of Meridian. By 1850 there were sixteen Baptist churches in the county, seventeen by 1860.[57]

The Methodists were very early arrivals in the county; and the church in Marion, discussed more fully in a later chapter, may have been the first of that denomination in the county. Records indicate that the Sageville Methodist church was organized about 1838 and that it stood near the Sageville stage line on the Paulding Road. Sherman's soldiers are said to have burned it in February, 1864.[58] But from the 1830s on into the 1860s the eastern Mississippi frontier was so undeveloped that the Methodist churches in Lauderdale County (as well as those in other east Mississippi counties) were charges not of the Mississippi but rather of the Alabama Conference.[59] And yet churches were established so that by 1850 there were ten in the county, twelve by 1860.[60] By 1855 the Methodists even had a campground on the Upper Decatur Road in the northwestern part of the county.[61] Here they could hold their very popular "protracted meetings," similar to modern revivals.

The only other denomination with churches in the county up to 1860 were two Presbyterian houses of worship. The earliest Presbyterian church in the county apparently was the one established about 1836 at Toomsuba, referred to in earlier years as the McLaurin Church—Toomsuba, as we have seen, was first called McLaurin, or McLaurin Station after the railroad arrived. The church stood on what is now the front lawn of the residence of the late A. Jarvis Welch, just north of town.[62] The other Presbyterian church was in Marion and will be discussed later.

The following data show something of the status of organized religion in Lauderdale County prior to the Civil War:[63]

	Baptist	Methodist	Presbyterian
1850			
Number of churches:	16	10	2
Seating capacity:	2,665	2,000	500
Value of church property:	$3,885	$5,000	$600
1860			
Number of churches:	17	12	2
Seating capacity:	5,800	3,900	1,200
Value of church property:	$5,700	$5,000	$2,000

A search through the files of the Marion *Lauderdale Republican* from January 1854 to April 1856 reveals a number of churches in the county, in addition to

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57 J. D. B. DeBow, *The Seventh Census of the United States, (Including Mortality, Property, &c.) in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns and Being the Final Exhibit of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), 418f.
58 "Early Churches and Schools."
59 Anson West, *A History of Methodism in Alabama* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1893), 446.
60 DeBow, *op. cit.*, 418f, 451.
61 *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 88.
62 From a conversation with Welch in the summer of 1986.
63 DeBow, *op. cit.*, 418f, 451.

the ones already discussed. It should be kept in mind, however, that some of these references are so vague that they may be identical with some mentioned elsewhere in this book:

Methodist Churches

Pleasant Grove: No location given but in March 1855 it was the site of a quarterly meeting of the county's circuit.

Higgins: No location, and possibly a residence rather than an actual church building.

Oxford: No location.

Lauderdale Springs.

Marion Station: The Rev. Mr. D. M. Hudson had been the regular pastor for the year preceding January 1856.

Crossroads: No location.

Brewster's: Located "at Brewster's," possibly a residence.

Bethel: No location.

Union: No location.

New: Located "near Durr's."

Baptist Churches

New Prospect: Described as "near John Tinnen's former residence."

Ebenezer: No location.

Zion Hill: Probably in Suqualena since H. M. Wilinson (Wilkerson?) of Suqualena was moderator; R. P. Dollar was clerk.

An unnamed church located near John Harvey's home on the Marion-Daleville Road.

An unnamed church, in 1855, was being built near Pinckney Vaughn's home about eleven miles west of Marion on the Decatur Road; to be a frame structure 30 x 55 feet; contractors were H. D. Mahan, C. P. Partin, and James Moore. Perhaps this was the Vaughn School that served also as a church.

It is interesting that apparently the first advertisements from Lauderdale County in newspapers outside the county are those of lawyers, though physicians' ads appeared at about the same time. (This perhaps gives further evidence, if anyone needs it, that humans thrive on dispute and are indefatigable at getting themselves into trouble.) One early legal firm was that of J. Steele and S. A. D. Steele, who as early as 1844 were practicing in Marion. At about the same time, and also in Marion, R. McElroy and William J. Daniel had a law partnership. Shields L. Hussey, of Marion, and John H. Blanks, of Quitman, had a law firm in the latter part of 1845. Dr. James R. Battle advertised in October 1845 that he would continue to practice medicine—an indication that he was already a veteran in the field and the area—at his home "about ten miles south-west of Marion," except when he was away on professional business.[64] Ads in 1846 include those by Dr. F. A. Salmon, physician and surgeon in Marion who had "permanently located himself at Ransom McElroy's…where he will attend to all professional calls on terms to suit the times"; and George Wood, who was practicing

[64] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 May, 8 October, and 29 October 1845.

law in Marion. Dr. Salmon specialized in treating females and included among his professional credits a period of study in a "celebrated Hospital" in France whose name was somewhat dubiously rendered in the ad as "Saintmavtre." Salmon was willing to travel to patients within a 100-mile radius of Marion, but "When by letter, the symptoms must be fully and accurately stated, and medicine or prescription will be sent as required."[65]

No one can study Southern history without realizing that most Southerners, male and female, held the soldier in high regard. An aspirant for public office, with a period of military service in his background, possessed at once a considerable advantage over an opponent who had stayed secure in mufti. And if a Southern man had ever been an officer, especially one above the rank of lieutenant, he generally continued to be called by that title long after he had answered his last muster. "Captain," "Major," and "Colonel," appear in the records with monotonous frequency, and one finds even a fair sprinkling of "Generals." A suspicion often creeps into a researcher's mind that the origin of a considerable portion of such titles might not bear close examination.

There is evidence that at least as far back as 1842 some sort of county militia existed. Although it was intended also as a defense against real or potential danger to the community, it was probably more important as a social organization. This is not to suggest that the men in the county did not take their membership in the militia seriously; they obviously did. In the spring of 1842, for example, we find Joseph P. Gray of Marion asking Governor Tilghman M. Tucker about commissions for members of his staff.[66] There certainly must have been a fairly well-organized group before the Mexican War; and when that conflict began in 1846, the county's militiamen were eager to join the march to Mexico City. Apparently there was a re-organization that year on Saturday, 23 May, when the group offered its services to Governor Albert B. Brown. The officers were Capt. William J. Daniel, 1st Lt. William M. Hancock, 2nd Lt. Jesse G. Steele, and Ensign (i.e., flag bearer) Andrew J. Trussell.[67]

Capt. William J. Daniel, a veteran of the Texas War for Independence, was about twenty-seven years old when the Mexican War began. Daniel, a native of Maury County, Tenn., on his military records gave his occupation as "sawyer," though he also practiced law. He was five feet eight inches tall, dark complexioned with black hair, and a man of considerable energy as he led the "fighting county of the chivalrous state of Mississippi"—his own phrase—to be mustered into service at Vicksburg as Company F, Second Mississippi Regiment of volunteers. Col. Reuben Davis and, later, Col. Charles Clark commanded the regiment. The Lauderdale volunteers served from 5 January 1847 until 11 July 1848.[68]

But the Lauderdale militia, so eager for the fight, did not get to Mexico on the first attempt.

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[65] Paulding *True Democrat*, 22 April, 6 May, and 3 June 1846.

[66] Joseph P. Gray to Gov. Tilghman M. Tucker, 22 March 1842; GP, RG 27, vol. MV23, MDAH.

[67] William M. Hancock to Gov. A. G. Brown, Marion, 24 May 1846; J. B. Hancock to Gov. A. G. Brown, 25 May 1846; GP, RG 27, vol. 35, MDAH.

[68] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 18 March 1856; J. B. Hancock to Gov. John J. Pettus, 14 November 1860, GP, RG 27, vol. MF32, MDAH; photographic copy in author's possession of W. J. Daniel's discharge and application for pension, original in military pension records, NA.

All during the summer of 1845 in and around Lauderdale, the possibility of war with Mexico was a lively topic. Earlier that year the Republic of Texas had become the State of Texas when it was annexed by the United States, and this despite Mexico's refusal to recognize either the independence of Texas or all of Texas' territorial claims. The preceding year James K. Polk had campaigned for the presidency, and won, on a belligerently expansionist platform.

The Lauderdale militiamen now seemed to have something more than just socializing as a reason to polish their swords and clean their muskets. Brigadier Gen. Joseph P. Gray, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, Mississippi Militia, made visitations to the several units in his command; and on 23 August 1845 he appeared in Marion to watch the militia of the Empire County parade its might for his review. A week later Gen. John A. Quitman reviewed them when, as an observer reported, "there was a general turnout of the military of Lauderdale, horse, foot, and dragoon," that made a "creditable" exhibition. The most splendid show, said the observer, was "Capt. White's Horse Company of the chosen valor of Lauderdale." Moreover:

> The Captain is full of military enthusiasm and tactics and the young men under his command have caught the fire of that noble commander. Volunteer companies, with appropriate uniforms, add greatly to their martial appearance, and we take this occasion to recommend Capt. White and his horse company, as a worthy example for imitation to our young company in Clark[e County], gotten up in haste, but in such enthusiasm as assures us they will contend with Captain White's company for the palm.[69]

During the volunteering fever, according to Frank Durr, there occurred another event that raised even higher the excitement already caused by the war fever. The volunteers had been using a brickyard in town owned by a man identified by Durr as "Shoemek"—perhaps J. G. Shumate. Shoemek (or Shumate) and his wife somehow became involved in a dispute, apparently involving the brickyard, with a married couple named Warbington. Said Durr:

> His wife was widely known as Aunt Muggie Warbington, but old Uncle Jube [Hancock], being the mayor, he took his little [walking] stick and arrested them all, and charged them a dollar apiece, which he took for his fee; but the quarrel was renewed later. A duel was fought over the brick yard, three men of the Fisher family on one side, against Aunt Muggie and her husband. At that time there were no guns like they use now [1909], but the old flintlock shotguns. One had to break off the end of the flint with his knife in order to fire. Old Aunt Muggie had two guns and her husband had one. They all walked out, picked the flints and fired when the word was given. Aunt Muggie cut down old man Fisher at the first fire, and the other two shot and missed her. She dropped her empty gun, picked up the other and cut down William Fisher. Shoemek himself ran, and his wife shot him with his own gun, which he abandoned in his flight. The third Fisher shot and killed Aunt Muggie while she was disarmed.[70]

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[69] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 19 July 1845; Paulding *True Democrat*, 3 September 1845.
[70] Durr, *op. cit.*

Well! Talk about hardy pioneers! The shaky syntax makes it at times impossible to be sure who's doing what; but syntax aside, it was obviously a memorable event. Durr does not say whether that little practical demonstration in the martial arts increased or dampened the ardor of the volunteers.

By late spring of 1846 East Mississippi was lustily remembering the Alamo, as the area's newspapers eagerly reported each new detail of the war that trickled into that part of the state. On Sunday night, 17 May, a meeting, described by one source as "large and respectable," brought a crowd of citizens to the Courthouse. Upon motion by William J. Daniel, John F. Chester presided, with Benjamin F. Parke as secretary. In addition to Daniel, there were Sylvanus Evans, Thomas J. Johnston, Campbell McLane (*sic*), and George B. Petty on a committee to work out a suitable resolution to express the county's attitude toward the war. While the committee worked, Dr. F. A. Salmon addressed the group. The committee then returned and recommended that everyone support the formation of a Lauderdale company who would "report themselves as ordered by the Governor and hold themselves in readiness." Other parts of the county were urged to participate in a similar manner. Johnston, Parke, and Evans would enroll volunteers in the Marion area. To put an appropriate ending on these proceedings, William J. Daniel, described as "a Texas volunteer in 1842," was called upon for a speech.[71]

Even old Jubal B. Hancock caught the war fever and wrote to Governor Albert Brown to tell him that a company had been formed. Hancock added a touching personal note: "The old Man, your humble servant, has seen some service in 1812, and would like to accompany his two sons and teach them how to fight while in the service, but is unable, from lameness, to walk. Is there no chance for a place in the staff so as to get on horseback & go?… Please let me hear from you."[72]

In June the Lauderdale company, not yet officially summoned but eager to get south of the Rio Grande, left the county on its own accord. When they reached Decatur, they were received with exuberance and treated to a barbecue. The people of Newton County then cheered them on their way, said a reporter, and the fair maids "smiled adieux to the gallant hearts of the empire county."[73] It was all just as in the storybooks.

And then—disappointment, disgust, and disgrace all wrapped up in a blighting message from Governor Brown saying that he did not need the valiant sons of Lauderdale. Paulding's *True Democrat*, sympathizing with the Lauderdale men, but also aware of the humorous and even ridiculous aspects of the matter, said consolingly: "Well, none the less are their honors. Though they have not returned, scarred and mutilated, from the fight, their prompt response to the cannon of the invader has placed laurels upon their brows."[74]

The governor's name was Brown, but in Lauderdale he was probably called several other names as well, and the volunteers held a meeting to vent their fury. Said the *True Democrat*, "His Excellency is getting knocks all round—some of them we must acknowledge, undeserved."[80] It really wasn't Brown's fault. The *East Mississippian* explained that though the first call for men had been for only one

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[71] The Marion *East Mississippian*, quoted in the Jackson *Mississippian*, 3 June 1846.
[72] J. B. Hancock to Gov. A. G. Brown, 25 May 1846, GP, RG 27, vol. 35, MDAH.
[73] Paulding *True Democrat*, 17 June 1846.
[74] *Ibid*.
[80] *Ibid*.

regiment from Mississippi, ten had responded. Furthermore, Governor Brown had protested against Mississippi's being allowed only one regiment.[75]

On 1 November 1846 Brig. Gen. Alexander Trotter reviewed his entire 30th Regiment at Marion. Officers and men had drilled for two days preceding the review, and today the colonels made sure that their units were mustered, armed, and equipped according to regulations. But by now the Lauderdale volunteers must have been experiencing a slight cooling of their ardor, for there were vacancies in their ranks. The officers were even obliged to seek recruits in neighboring counties. The Paulding *True Democrat*, always friendly toward its neighbors in Lauderdale, tried to help: "Lieutenant Lard [i.e., William D. Laird] of the Lauderdale Volunteers—a gallant looking fellow, by the way, who will do honor to his county on the battlefield, is now in Paulding, and wants ten men to complete…his company. Surely Jasper will send *this* small number to represent her where her sister counties have acquired such imperishable laurels?"[76]

That paper's somewhat wry comments probably indicated that its support for the Lauderdale company did not extend to the war itself. The movement of the American army reminded the *True Democrat* of "the grand march of an army of snails." "We hear of marching and countermarching," complained the paper, "an army sent hither and an army sent thither; of towns taken without a blow, and all are, of course, great victories, and shed unfading lustre upon American arms…. It has assumed all the unmistakable characteristics of a war of conquest."[77] Well, that's what it *was*. President Polk would probably have been very angry if anyone had suggested to him that the purpose was anything *other* than conquest.

Under Polk's second requisition, Governor Brown was able to do better by his state's volunteers, and on 27 November 1846 he called for a new levy of men to serve for the duration of the war. On December 18 Brown announced that he had accepted seven companies: Lowndes Guards, Marshall Relief Guards, Choctaw Volunteers, Monroe Volunteers, Tippah Guards, Lauderdale Volunteers, and Thomas Hinds Guards (of Jefferson county). Shortly afterward he accepted also the Panola Boys, Union Grays (Attala County), and the Union Company (Lawrence and Covington Counties). All of these made up the Second Mississippi Regiment which rendezvoused at Vicksburg during the first five days of January 1847 and went into training at Camp McClung, three miles north of Vicksburg. The Lauderdale Volunteers constituted Company F in the regiment.[78] On 12 January Reuben Davis was chosen colonel. Despite the intention of the War Department, the editor of the Jackson *Mississippian* managed to have the men equipped with rifles instead of muskets. Bowie knives and side arms were optional.[79]

It seems that only two of the companies, A and B, left narratives of these early events; though what happened to them must have been approximately what

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[75] Quoted in Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 October 1846.
[76] *Ibid.*, 21 October, 30 December 1846.
[77] *Ibid.*, 30 December 1846.
[78] *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served during the Mexican War in Organizations from the State of Mississippi*, hereafter cited as *Mexican War Service Records*), Microfilm Publication M863, roll. 4 (Washington: National Archives, National Archives and Records Servcice, General Services Administration).
[79] Dunbar Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898* (Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1978), 29.

the others, including the Lauderdale boys, experienced. Company A left Vicksburg on the evening of 12 January 1847 by steamboat, and Company B left the following day. Their chroniclers don't say how many boats it took to get the entire Second Regiment to New Orleans; but one hopes that the Lauderdale men went on the same boat with Company A. It was the *Sam Dale* and it arrived at New Orleans on the fourteenth.[80]

The sojourn at Camp McClung had been made onerous by much sickness, but the move to New Orleans put the soldiers into a situation far worse. The men of the Second were quartered outside the city in tents on the field at Chalmette where the Americans had defeated the British almost exactly thirty-two years before. Heavy rains soon turned the camp into a nightmare in which the drenched, muddy troops suffered sicknesses which, according to Charles Clark, took more lives in the Second than the First Mississippi had lost at the Battle of Monterey. There were barracks at New Orleans, but the officials directing housing refused to open them either to the Mississippians or to a regiment from Pennsylvania. The *Vicksburg Sentinel* was furious:

> Men thrust out like beasts, without clothing, and denied the shelter they saw others enjoying, put to wallow in the mire and exposed to the bitter elements which they felt every moment destroying their lives, were little disposed to obey the restraints of discipline, and the real wonder is not that a few outbreaks were committed by such as flew to the wine cup to forget their sufferings, but rather that the whole regiment, with arms in their hands, did not march and take the buildings they knew belonged to their government, but from which a tyrannical partiality was excluding them.[81]

When the Lauderdale Volunteers and their regiment set out on 30 January 1847 down the Mississippi River for their trip across the Gulf of Mexico, they probably had few regrets. Their recent accommodations in New Orleans had been a torment; but since ocean travel was doubtless a new experience for almost all of them, they probably looked forward to this voyage with both relief and curiosity. At least they could anticipate warmer weather. How many ships transported the regiment's men is unclear, but the one on which the Lauderdale men traveled was named the *Prentiss* (or perhaps *Prentice*). It anchored off the island of Lobos, south of Tampico, on February 18. The men went ashore next day and camped for three days. Ordered back on board, they moved northward and anchored off Brazos de Santiago on the twenty-eighth, though some of the group must not have reached that place until 3 March. They entered the mouth of the Rio Grande and, quickly moving inland, reached Matamoras on 4-5 March and Camargo on the seventeenth. On 6 April they arrived at Monterey and pitched their tents at what they called Camp Walnut Springs. Sunday, 30 May, found them at Camp Taylor, near Buena Vista, on the day of the battle there, though they did not fight in it. They moved on to Matamoras, where Col. Reuben Davis was in command of the city, and on 14 March left for Monterey. Living conditions were so bad that the Second Mississippi, which originally had contained 850 men, by this time had but 650, many of whom were sick. By 10 May Captain Daniel's Lauderdale company had suffered eighteen deaths, and other companies had comparable casualties. The following is a list of the company's dead:

[80] *Mexican War Service Records*, roll 4.
[81] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 30.

1st Lt. William D. Laird, 2nd Sgt. William D. Joiner, Corp. William T. Ford, and the following privates: Jackson Adams, Paul C. Banks, George W. Busby, Lochlin Calhoun, Asa Folly (Foley?), James A. Francis, John Gardner, Hiram Laird, Samuel Lamb, William R. Lucky (Luckie?), Ludy (or Lewdy) B. Osborn, L. D. Phillips, W. Pritchett, William Scott, and Henry J. Wigginton.[82]

Thus did the men of the Second Mississippi spend their time in the Mexican War. Unlike the First Regiment, the Second saw no actual combat. As Rowland records: "In a skirmish with Indians near Agua Nueva…part of the Second was called out, but the enemy had disappeared. Save an occasional alarm, there was no experience of war. The men suffered from smallpox and Mexican diarrhoea."[83]

For a while the survivors of the Second Regiment, after their bouts with disease and other non-combat hardships, camped near the Mexican city of Calderito, near Monterey. By April of 1848 the regiment's headquarters were at Cedras, 120 miles south of Saltillo. In the summer of 1848 the Lauderdale Volunteers and their comrades returned to a welcoming barbecue at Fort Adams where on 3 August the citizens of Wilkinson County made them feel that they were heroes, even though all their battles had been with Nature and bureaucratic clumsiness.[84]

Whether Company F had difficulty explaining to their families and friends in Lauderdale County their lack of a real war record is apparently not chronicled. It wasn't their fault, and under different circumstances they would certainly have given as good an accounting as did the First Regiment. Mexican bullets could scarcely have been more lethal than the enemies they had encountered. The Lauderdale men had marched away with enthusiasm; and when Gen. Reuben Davis wrote his recollections years later, he particularly praised Captain Daniel. Davis recalled with amusement that Daniel had habitually worn his sword behind him rather than to the side, as did others. Daniel's comrades kidded him about it, but Davis added that no one had doubted that had it come time to fight, Captain Daniel's sword would have been prominently in front.[85]

For perhaps most of the county's veterans of the Mexican War, their experiences constituted the great episode of their lives. They had traveled farther, seen more excitement, and dealt with more exotic people than all of them had ever expected to. Even their hardships became, in their memories, sanitized and softened by the filtering of time. That they had done all that and survived probably gave them an aura of *gravitas* in their relations with the county's citizens. They had interesting things to tell; their opinions were sought and taken seriously.

It was in the 1840s that the public began to seek the supposed curative effects of the springs that were later called Lauderdale Springs. At first the spot was usually referred to as White Sulphur Springs, a name occasionally used as late as the latter1850s and sometimes expanded to White Sulphur and Chalybeate Springs.[86] The

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[82] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898,* 30; for a list of deceased see the Natchez *Weekly Courier and Journal*, 9 June 1847.
[83] *Ibid.*, 31.
[84] *Ibid*.
[85] Reuben Davis, *Recollections of Mississippi and Mississippians* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1889), 228.
[86] See, for example, the Mobile *Daily Register* for 20 June 1857.

Paulding *True Democrat* said that the public had begun going to the springs in 1843; and Frank Durr, who was a slave at the time and sixty-five years later recalled the event, said the springs opened in 1844, and that William S. Patton was the first operator.[87] Thus were the springs at an early date often called Patton Springs, as one sees on a map published in 1845 by John La Tourrette. Later editions called the resort Grigsby's Springs. None of these maps calls the nearby village Lauderdale Springs, or, the older name, Mingo Houma, but rather shows it as "Davis' Mill."[88] The name Grigsby probably came from the Lauderdale Springs family that included Rhydon, Luke W., and William F. Grigsby.[89]

By the summer of 1845 the springs were operated by the partnership of Roberts and Bilbo, and the business was already attracting a number of "customers, who resort to our house," as the proprietors' ads put it. At that time they advertised themselves as the White Sulphur Springs and got their mail at Mingo Houma. The owners sang their own praises, boldly announcing that there was "no place in East, perhaps in all Mississippi, destined to be of equal value to the proprietors, and importance, both political and physical, to the people." The U. S. Mail stagecoach passed through the resort three times a week on its run between Tuscaloosa and Jackson. And since the proprietors could not know that Tuscaloosa would soon cease to be the capital of Alabama, they predicted that the resort, situated approximately equi-distant from both state capitals, would be a popular place for conferences of delegates from the two states. Soon, predicted the proprietors, the "great Southern and Eastern Rail Road" would run "almost in sight of these springs." And with unconscious irony, they offered a bit of military logistics: "That this road must and will be constructed in a few years, none can doubt, who will take an enlarged view of a wise policy, and its convenience in facilitating our transmission of the munitions of war. Men and arms may be seen flying by these Springs to fight the battles of our country."[90] As for the quality of the water, they boasted, "That this water is a specific, sovereign cure, for any species of scrofulous affection, we consider as certain as an axiom of Euclid. Not only for such disease as makes eruptions on the surface generally, but for many, if not all, chronic ulcers, and many of the urinery [*sic*] affections."[91]

Well! The Federal Trade Commission would make mincemeat of them today, but perhaps not for the following sort of effusion that was then very common in other, similar advertisements:

> [There is] in the wilderness, around them [*i.e.*, the springs] a most flourishing town, the germ of a great city, in a few years. Large and spacious public Inns, filled with guests from the four winds. All sorts of fashion, and intelligence, from the brights of moral worth, all provided for by the worthy host, S. G. Field, tenant of those romantic scenes. Then you have the very embodiment of good society, of all sorts, parties, and of the *fair* not a few….

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[87] Paulding *True Democrat*, 10 September 1845; Durr, *op. cit.*
[88] La Tourrette, *op. cit.*; see also *Department of the Gulf Map No. 44, Southern Mississippi*.
[89] See *Deed Record Book I*, 43-45; Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[90] Paulding *True Democrat*, 3 September 1845.
[91] *Ibid*.

Such rival resorts as Mississippi Springs, Brandon Springs, Blue Lick Springs, Saratoga, or Virginia's White Sulphur Springs, said the ads, "all come short of the White Sulphur [Springs] of Lauderdale, the Empire County of Mississippi."[92]

There is certainly some exaggeration here, but no more than one saw in similar ads everywhere else in those days. Besides, the resort did develop considerable popularity for about a dozen years, and one wonders what it might have become had the Civil War not blighted all the splendid plans of several owners and operators. J. W. O'Neal and A. Y. Smith, for example, who were running the resort by the spring of 1846, certainly must have known what they were doing. O'Neal was the proprietor and Smith the superintendent. Smith, until recently, had been employed at the Waverly House in Mobile. The two men advertised that their *table d'hôte* would have "every delicacy" and their bar "the best Wines and Liquors which can be procured in the city of Mobile."[93]

Despite what a later time would call ballyhoo, one wonders at this bold enterprise. It had its exaggerations and pretensions, but one cannot deny that the resort had also its actual advantages and accomplishments. Here was a charming bit of society plopped down in the hills and the pines of an area that in 1846 was in every respect frontier. Even today, over a century and a half later, there is still a pleasant atmosphere of calm and isolation about the site where often the only sounds are those of songbirds and the sough of wind in the tall pines.

At the opening of the 1849 season William Patton announced that the resort had been "thoroughly repaired." The Jackson *Mississippian* assured its readers that the Lauderdale resort offered "charming scenery" and "most delightful recreation." A visitor could spend a month at The Springs for twenty dollars, only six dollars for a week. A room overnight cost a dollar and single meals fifty cents. Children and servants were accommodated at half price. One's horse was housed for ten dollars a month or seventy-five cents a day. And in a time when lamps or candles were necessary and people's lives were more governed by the sun, Patton reminded his guests that lights required "an extra charge." The 1849 season opened formally with a big party on 30 May with Patton and his wife greeting the visitors; and when the resort closed around the end of September, Patton could congratulate himself on a successful season. The editor of the *Mississippian* regretted that the statewide political campaign had kept him from attending.[94]

The business generated was doubtless as gratifying to the community as was the exciting report that summer about what some called a "rich bed of lead ore" that had been found in the area, an ore that some declared would yield seventy-five percent of the metal.[102] It was only one of the earliest of such reports that would be sent out from time to time in the coming years.

In the mid-1850s the Springs entered a prosperous, if brief, period with the advent of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. By the winter of 1854 William S. Patton, a former owner, was back at the resort working with a man named McGrew. They both had perhaps been operating it as a partnership for some time before that date, since their ads spoke of "their old friends, customers, and the public generally." They offered, in addition to the resort itself, a livery stable that had hacks, buggies, and

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[92] Paulding *True Democrat*, 10 September 1845.
[93] *Ibid.*, 3 June 1846.
[94] Jackson *Mississippian*, 20 April, 8 June, and 12 October 1849.
[102] *Ibid.*, 15 June 1849.

horses for hire. Three months later B. B. Smith, described as "an old caterer," was in charge, though this does not necessarily mean that he was taking the place of either or both of the other two men. Some two months later, however, Capt. Thomas Adams and a Mr. Ulrick, both of Mobile, apparently *had* taken over from Patton and McGrew.[95]

By late 1854 and early 1855, there seems to have been a great deal of building and re-furbishing at the resort, perhaps in anticipation of the greater patronage that the railroad was expected to bring. In the summer of 1855 Smith, apparently in his second season at the Springs, announced that the resort had been "thoroughly refitted" with "new and substantial buildings." And more: "As a resort for invalids, the medical properties of the water render this resort so celebrated, that commendation is unnecessary. They cure a variety of diseases, and no patient suffering from chronic disease, can fail to visit them without deriving advantage from the use of the variety of waters, which there abound and which have given the place the celebrity it now enjoys."[96]

In the years just before the arrival of the railroad, hacks and stagecoaches of the Jemison and Ficklin Company shuttled passengers between the resort and the terminus of the M & O. By the summer of 1855 this involved hauling guests some twenty-five or thirty miles from Enterprise and Okatibbee Station. Those guests arriving by Tombigbee steamboats in 1854 and early 1855 could get off at Moscow Landing and take one of Robert Johnson's stagecoaches to the Springs.[97]

The railroad reached Lauderdale Station just before Christmas of 1855 while Smith and the proprietor, Thomas Adams, were making extensive improvements and, at the same time, trying to assure potential customers that what the operators described as "a few fights and rows" in the neighborhood were not a threat. They had occurred outside the resort's "square" and "the visitors within…knew nothing of it until they heard it from a witness or from common rumor."[98]

The 1856 season found the resort announcing even more improved facilities as well as proximity to the railroad. The arriving guests admired the new, larger, more-attractive cottages and rooms. Even the furniture was new. The new railroad station was only a mile away, and carriages from the resort met every train. Guests coming from either east or west of the Springs could arrive in splendid four-horse mail coaches. The price of accommodations at the Springs had doubled since 1849 to ten dollars a week or two dollars a day, though children and servants were still accepted at half price.[99] With increasing acrimony between North and South during the 1850s, Southerners were increasingly urged, and were usually inclined, to take their vacations in Southern places such as Cullum Springs, Ala., and the White Sulphur Springs, in Lauderdale.[100]

Not even the theft at the Springs, in 1856, of several guests' valuables could spoil a special Independence Day celebration three weeks later. The thief had forced a safe, but the stolen items were later recovered in a remarkable manner which the Mobile press subsequently described:

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[95] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 3 January, 11 April, 27 June 1854.
[96] *Ibid.*, 7 May 1855.
[97] *Ibid.*, 11 April 1854, 7 May 1855.
[98] *Ibid.*, 4 December 1855.
[99] Mobile *Daily Register*, 25 May 1856.
[100] See, for instance, *ibid*, summer of 1856, *passim.*

> A young man named Johnson had been engaged in New Orleans as Clerk of the establishment and suspicions rested on him to a certain extent. But wanting any direct evidence, another gentleman connected with the Springs closeted Johnson in company with himself and a brace of pistols, observing that one of them *must* have the missing plunder, and that both could not quit the room alive without producing it. On this the culprit confessed freely and produced the entire property, which had been buried hard-bye [*sic*] in bottles and other vessels, and the whole of it was exhumed in perfectly good order.[101]

In 1857 the Springs opened on the first of June with old hand William S. Patton apparently back yet again. The *Daily Register* wrote glowingly about the resort's prospects:

> Of the charming society frequenting these Springs from the surrounding country, every visitor is eloquent in praise. The polished families of the wealthy planters around make them [the Springs] their favorite resort. The scenery, too, is charming; and of the efficacy of the waters, many of our distinguished physicians…speak in the highest terms. They are particularly good in cases of affection of the liver, stomach, kidneys, nervous system, and cutaneous diseases.[102]

Guests from as far away as New Orleans found this isolated spot among the pines an attractive retreat. They could board one of the Mail Line boats that arrived in Mobile in time to catch the morning train on the M & O and arrive in Lauderdale Springs at six P. M. the same day. And by 1857 there was a special surprise for guests arriving from east and west of the Springs: The four-horse stages had been replaced by coaches drawn by *six* horses.[103]

In August of 1857 the Mobile and Ohio offered the public a special "pleasure trip." The train was pulled by a splendid new locomotive named the *William Jones, Jr.,* and even the engineer was lionized as a hero as he made his way along the route in his awesome engine with its four special cars. The happy party left Mobile at 9:30 A. M., a later departure than the regular schedule allowed and one that permitted the passengers to have a more elegant and unhurried breakfast in Mobile. They stopped in Citronelle for a "profuse and elegant dinner: at Childress's Hotel, and arrived in Lauderdale Springs early enough to enjoy the evening and a good night's rest in the famous resort. Next morning they went back to the train which set out again on its leisurely way north, occasionally stopping to allow the passengers to get out to examine the cotton growing along the way. The train passed through Macon and stopped at Brooksville, ten miles beyond which was the track's temporary terminus.[104]

The railroad was certainly a benefit to Lauderdale Springs, but it is also true that the resort was a boon to the railroad as the latter continued to advance northward. By 1857 the road was running trains daily except Sundays. During the

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[101] Mobile *Daily Register*, 18 June 1856.
[102] *Ibid*., 17 June 1857.
[103] *Ibid*., 20 June 1857.
[104] *Ibid*., 28 August 1857.

summer, when Macon or Brooksville was the northernmost point, a train left Mobile at seven A. M. and arrived at Macon at 8:15 P. M., leaving there next morning at 4:55 on its return to Mobile where it arrived at six P. M. It was a good schedule and one which must have been a dizzying novelty to the people in the region. By January 1858 the railroad's extension to Artesia required another alteration of the schedule. Trains left Mobile at eight A. M. and reached Artesia about twenty-four hours later. On this schedule northbound trains arrived in Marion at 4:20 P. M. and at Lauderdale Station forty-five minutes later. Thus, both north- and southbound trains went through Lauderdale County at very convenient times of the day. Stages connected at Lauderdale Springs and Scooba for Livingston, Gainesville, and Tuscaloosa, Ala. First-class fare was four cents a mile, and second-class tickets for slaves cost two and a half cents a mile.[105]

Perhaps only a few in the county could afford the luxury of visits to the resort at Lauderdale Springs or of rail excursions. Most county citizens probably regarded such recreations as too expensive, and there were others for whom life on the Lauderdale frontier was a struggle against poverty. There were those who struggled in vain.

Every beat in the county had to deal with paupers and had an official responsible for them. Looking through the records of the Board of Police, one sees notations about the pauper funds, about individuals on charity, and disturbing notations of obscure, pitiable individuals who were cared for at public expense or buried with little ceremony in paupers' graves. In August of 1852, for instance, Joseph Bird received five dollars for making a coffin for someone identified only as Mrs. Ikard. The money came out of the "poor tax." In February 1860 a man named Samuel Wood, otherwise apparently an unknown, was killed on the railroad a short distance north of Lauderdale Springs. The ending of his life, perhaps from being struck by a passing train, gave him a sort of immortality in the county's records which went to some trouble to record how his body was cared for. The $20.10 it cost to bury him was spent as follows:

$1.00 to W. A. Kennedy for hauling body from railroad to Lauderdale Springs.
$10.00 to R. McKinley for holding an inquest.
$3.00 to constable for housing body a day and a night.
$ .60 to H. E. Barrett for pair of gloves (!) and pair of socks.
$8.00 to G. R. Tucker and F. M. Smotherman for coffin and pair of pants and one gravedigger.
$1.00 to B. B. Smith for one gravedigger and horse to haul body to grave.
$4.50 to J. W. (?) Maury (?) for furnishing winding sheet and lining for coffin.[106]

By the late 1850s it was clear that the county needed a home for paupers. Commissioners were chosen to select a site for such an institution and on 11

[105] Mobile *Daily Register*, 24 June 1857, 5 January 1858.
[106] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 357, 452.

January 1858 reported that they had decided upon the former residence of W. P. Carter about three miles south of Marion on the Quitman Road. They described the existing buildings as "very well adapted" for the intended use and as requiring few repairs or modification. This would involve mainly the chimneys, windows, and a fence around the yard. The property was still owned by the M & O Railroad, but the commissioners believed it could be bought for five dollars an acre. They requested $375 to initiate action, $250 to purchase the current owner's claim, $100 for one payment to the railroad, and twenty-five dollars "to put the place in order." By November 1859, after the Board of Police had accepted the commissioners' plan, construction and repairs began.[107]

Lauderdale's days as a raw frontier county were fast drawing to a close, and improved transportation and communication were among the chief reasons. In addition to the railroad, another marvel of the age was the telegraph, which if not quite new to the nation was nevertheless new to such parts of it as Lauderdale County. In the summer of 1857 Moses Gibson endeavored to establish a line between Mobile and Macon, Miss. He visited the various communities along the proposed route and was encouraged by the response of the public, especially the people in Scooba and Enterprise. In 1858, while the Magnetic Telegraph Company planned a line from Mobile to Cairo, Ill., a rival company wanted to put up a line from Mobile to Columbus, Miss. The Mobile *Daily Register* urged its readers to support the former.[108] There was a third contender for this honor, the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. This road reported that it owned the telegraph rights from Jackson to "Ragsdale City" and that it had already (summer of 1958) put up the wires between Jackson and Brandon, "thus putting our fellow citizens of Brandon in full telegraphic communication with all sections of the country."[109] Lauderdale's time for the telegraph, however, was not yet. As we shall see in the chapters on the Civil War, it was not until the early 1860s that telegraphic service was established with lines between Mobile and the country to the north. At that time, the South-Western Telegraph Company helped create even stronger ties between Lauderdale County and the Gulf city.

[107] *Minutes, Board of Police*, *1854-1860,* 250-252, 419.
[108] Mobile *Daily Register*, 11 and 17 July 1857, 2 February 1858.
[109] *American Railroad Journal* XXXI (2 July 1858), 473. This item quotes from the *Vicksburg Whig* of 3 July 1858.

Chapter 4: "Our little town feels the impetus."

By the mid-1850s Marion seemed to be on the verge of becoming a real city. For a while no one was concerned that the railroad by-passed the village. So what? Let "The Station" enjoy its novelty. Marion would profit from it, too, and without being right in the middle of the hubbub of the trains and the diseases and shady characters they imported. Besides, Marion still had the Courthouse, and that ought to guarantee continued precedence. Early in 1854 Marion's *Lauderdale Republican* trumpeted praise of its hometown and county: there were the "pristine loveliness and healthfulness," the "fertile soil," the "merry sound" of the slave, and the "sound of the sickle." The paper was optimistic about the changes the railroads would bring. Land which three years before could not have been sold at any price was now bringing ten dollars an acre, and good land near the routes of the railroads was getting twenty dollars an acre. The town of Marion was attracting new residents almost in droves; in one week alone in January 1854 there were fifteen new arrivals. At that same time J. M. Richardson, the Presbyterian minister, had just opened his Female Seminary and was going to use the profits from it to erect a church and a school. (Such philanthropists, said the *Republican*, were rare in that "degenerate age.") Also under construction were two large saddle factories, a new family grocery, a carriage factory, a silversmith, a watchmaking concern, and several smaller businesses. "Our little town," said the paper, "feels the impetus. Marion is becoming a city! Will you believe it? Or will you remain obstinately blind to the conviction until the truth bursts upon your benighted vision with all its glorious churches, splendid architecture, crowded streets, and other appendages of a great city!"[1] In May of 1854 the *Republican*, while commenting on Marion's progress, noted the following businesses: six dealers in dry goods, one drugstore, a "provision" store, two tanyards, two saddle and harness shops, three taverns, two blacksmith shops, one carriage and wagon shop, a male academy and a female academy, three law offices, and two physicians. It added: "We see no reason why it [Marion] will not, in a short time, become the most important town in East Mississippi."[2] The *Republican* could not have known that while it was correct in assessing the result of the county's increasing vitality, it would not be Marion's lot to serve as the hub of it.

Marion's citizens and visitors had ample reason to suppose the town destined for greatness in East Mississippi. Even a staff member of Paulding's *Eastern Clarion*, when he attended "court day" in 1854, was impressed by the town's improvements and, as had other visitors, particularly commented on the great increase in the value of real estate. A short time later another observer marveled that "a small dilapidated log house" on a small lot had sold at auction for $400.[3]

As Marion and the county increased in population, the collection of taxes and revenues became more important, and Marionites and county residents paid them about as willingly as have other citizens in other times and places. A considerable revenue, for example, flowed in from the annual licensing of saloons, taverns, and inns.

In the mid-1850s Marion's merchants demanded a crackdown on peddlers and other transient entrepreneurs who, they alleged, profited from the local

[1] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 24 January 1854.
[2] *Ibid*., 16 May 1854.
[3] *Ibid*., 26 September 1854 and 19 February 1855.

market without sharing equally its burdens. They sold a variety of merchandise, even horses, mules, and slaves. It seems that many of these mobile merchants came in on the railroad and some apparently even hawked their merchandise from the trains. During the first few days of January 1856, for example, an itinerant trader auctioned twenty-six slaves.[4]

Lauderdale County must quickly have become accustomed to the resident peddlers, as contrasted with the transient ones, who were much a part of the frontier scene as were the rustic towns and loblolly pines. Most peddlers performed a useful service and probably paid their fair share of the county's financial obligations. As early as 1848 a peddler paid an annual fee of sixty-five dollars to the county's treasury, an amount that would increase measurably during the next decade or so. In August, 1850, peddlers' fees were set at $100 to hawk on foot, $150 to sell from "a horse or other beast of burthen," and $200 to sell from a vehicle. A month later these rates, regarded as too steep, were greatly reduced to twenty, forty, and sixty dollars respectively; and these levels held at least until as late as 1855, though a change was made so that anyone selling from a two-horse, four-wheel wagon had to fork over $100.[5]

Most of the peddlers seem to have been Jewish, and we find among them the ancestors of some of the county's most illustrious families. In April 1857 for example, licenses were issued to the following men: Moses Rosenbaum—the county record spelled his name "Rawsonbum"!—Aaron, Leopold, and Moses Lowenstein; Samuel Loeb; and Lipman (*sic*) Levy. All were licensed to peddle from horseback except Levy, who used a two-horse carriage. In May of the next year Levy and Loeb, who now added "Co." to their partnership, were allowed to add "one pack horse." Not to be outdone, Aaron and Moses Lowenstein added "& Co." to their names, though they were licensed for only a pack horse without the wagon. Leopold Lowenstein renewed his license but apparently preferred to work alone on horseback. In February 1858 Isaac Mayer entered the picture with his "two-horse, four-wheel wagon."[6]

The Presbyterians and Methodists dominated Marion's religious life. Records are few, but my research suggests that the Methodist Church at Marion was the first of that denomination in the county. Certainly the Methodists were active at an early date. (There is, for instance, nestled oddly among the county deed records an entry, stating that on 13 November 1831 Bishop Robert R. Roberts ordained Thomas I. Elliot an elder in the Methodist Church. Roberts was presumably from the Paris, Tenn., Conference.)[7] Apparently, no one knows when the church in Marion was organized, but it seems to have been in existence at least as early as 1847 and by 1850 was one of ten Methodist churches in the county.[8] In the late 1840s the pastor was J. C. Newman

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[4] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 15 January 1856.
[5] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 782; *ibid., 1854-1860*, 70.
[6] *Ibid., 1854-1860*, 189, 283, 285, 318, 364.
[7] *Deed Record Book A*, 186; Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[8] Bill Dennis, "First Methodist Church in Lauderdale County," *Meridian Star's* Lauderdale County Centennial ed., 40. Dennis reported having access to one of the few prime sources on early Lauderdale Methodism, "An ancient, time-worn register" that went back at least to 1847.

with T. Y. Ramsay as the presiding "elder' of the district. An old register shows that Granville Henderson became a member in 1847 and William P. Anderson in 1852.[9]

Checking through records of Lauderdale Methodism of the middle 1850s, I found random references which are difficult to work into a narrative. One sees here a wedding, there a visiting preacher, and somewhere else the title of a sermon. Another problem encountered when trying to establish an historical record is the famed brevity of Methodist pastorates. And the congregation in Marion, as so often happens to small churches, seems to have been occasionally without a clergyman.

In January of 1855 S. M. Hudson, who had just been appointed to the Alabama Conference (under which Lauderdale and several other Mississippi counties were placed at that time), was the minister at the Marion Methodist Episcopal Church, South. On 9 September he and Margaret Boutwell were married at the church in Marion by E. McMeans. The regular pastor for 1856 was R. W. Spence, who preached his first sermon on 6 January, Hudson having moved on to Sumter County, Ala. Once, in August of 1856, the Rev. John H. Gibbs visited and preached. At that time Gibbs was living in Enterprise, though he was almost certainly the same person who a few years later moved to Meridian and became its first mayor.[10]

The Rev. Mr. J. M. Richardson was important to Presbyterianism in the county during his two-year pastorate, and we have already seen something of his importance to education, a role, by the way, that Presbyterians have often played throughout their history. Richardson announced candidly that he intended some of the profits from his academy to be used for the construction of a Presbyterian church building in Marion. To these funds he and his members added the proceeds from such social affairs as the "ladies' fair" which was held on 22 September 1854 in the Courthouse. By early 1855 the church had been completed, and the first service held in it was probably the one in early February. J. M. Henderson spoke at the service, perhaps in the role of visiting clergyman. Richardson, who had served the Marion Presbyterians since about the early part of 1854, moved in early 1856 to Franconia, Pickens County, Ala. Robert McLain, who came up from Enterprise, succeeded him.[11]

Politics in Marion and the county was an important business and diversion—one is almost tempted to say *obsession*. We look in vain for a modern parallel, the nearest perhaps being the interest in collegiate and professional athletics. (Americans in that day had perhaps a stronger—and from our viewpoint more naïve—notion that those jostling for public office were neatly divided between good ones and shifty ones.) The time that used to be consumed by political rallies, conventions, speakings, court days, caucuses, and the like is now occupied by all the other demands that a more complicated, but perhaps more prosaic, society creates. Politics, then a very serious matter, certainly spawned a remarkable array of homicides, duels, vigilante activities, and general mauling of the law. Need one point out that the Civil War and

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[9] "Church at Marion," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary issue, 12 November 1946, unpaged.
[10] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 6 January, 7 August, 11 September 1855; 8 and 15 January 1856.
[11] *Ibid.*, 29 August 1854, and 15 January and 5 February 1856.

Reconstruction were nothing other than a natural and familiar expression (albeit at a greater amperage and on a larger scale) of our ancestors' political enthusiasm?

The columns of the newspapers during the years before the Civil War contain much interesting and sometimes amusing material which supports the assertion that politics really was the great American concern. Especially just before elections there were the usual items in newspapers written by "A Subscriber," or "Publicus," or signed with any other of many then-popular pseudonyms (but also frequently signed with the writer's real name). Some of the articles urged this or that person to run for office (or perhaps threatened him if he did), while others perhaps showed that some candidate was misrepresenting himself, and so on. For example, several voters sent a letter to the *Lauderdale Republican* in 1855 to urge W. V. Raney, of Ponta, to run for sheriff. In an answering letter Raney thanked them but said that he would run instead for probate clerk, because, he explained, "the Clerk's office is the most profitable of the two." He signed himself "Respectfully." We overlook the grammatical solecism in deference to his candor, a rare quality in a public figure and worth more than all the grammar books ever written. Also, Raney had already been sheriff, so he knew what he was talking about.[12]

The presidential campaign of 1844 in Lauderdale County may be examined as probably a typical example of the quadrennial mania that hit the area in those days. The Democrats in the county outnumbered the Whigs who had difficulty getting a fair hearing and usually ended up in the area's press looking foolish.

In 1844 James K. Polk, with running mate George M. Dallas, was the Democratic nominee for the presidency; while the Whigs nominated the much more famous Henry Clay, a Kentuckian, who had been a national figure since the War of 1812. Polk, speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, had probably not been the first choice of the county's Democrats; but when by a fluke he was nominated, they whooped as lustily for him as they had for ex-President Van Buren and others. *Anyone but a Whig!* might very well have been one of the county's Democratic slogans in that sloganizing time.

Democratic organization in the state, patently superior to that of their opposition, sent the six candidates for electors (including H. S. Foote and Jefferson Davis) about the state as speakers. Foote spoke in Marion on Thursday, 22 August. At that same time Democratic leaders met at the Courthouse in Marion to plan what was termed a "Democratic Mass Meeting" that was intended to attract people from surrounding counties. James Trussell presided and Benjamin F. Parke was secretary for the group which worked out the details of the gala that would be on a scale impossible for the Whigs to emulate—there was not even a "Clay Club" in the county.[13]

The much-ballyhooed meeting took place on Thursday, 19 September, not in Marion but at what was called "the Campground," perhaps the one that was situated about five miles northwest of Marion. S. L. Hussey, who later reported the affair, estimated the crowd at about 1200. Had it not been for a similar meeting the following day in Alamucha, he believed, there would have been an even larger turnout. Nevertheless, the Campground was a lively place and made even more charming by a large number of voteless females, they, said Hussey, "adding (or rather

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[12] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 6 January 1855; see also letter from Rainey to Gov. J. W. Matthews, 13 April 1848, GP, RG 27, vol. 37, MDAH.
[13] Jackson *Mississippian*, 16 August, 20 September 1844.

giving) life, beauty and refinement to the exhilarating scene." Many women flaunted badges proclaiming "Polk and Dallas." There was attached to Mrs. William S. Patton's carriage a "beautiful little flag" with the same slogan and (in honor of George Dallas's home state) with a lone star on it.[14] (How she squared that with her husband, who is generally recognized as one of the leading Whigs of that day, the record does not say, but perhaps he had not yet been converted from Democracy.)

One of the orators, Jacob Thompson, was a popular member of Congress. Another speaker was John E. Jones, a state senator from Sumter, the neighboring county in Alabama. John D. Freeman, the first orator, talked for at least three hours, a length of time which surely allowed him to, in Hussey's words, touch on "nearly all of the points at issue between the parties of the present day." People in those days were accustomed to such feats of oratorical endurance, and this audience seemed to enjoy the performance which they occasionally applauded and to which generally they paid close attention. At one o'clock an announcement that dinner was ready brought Freeman's exposition to a close, and everyone made for the arbor that shielded the tempting dishes from the hot sun. After this fine repast, the crowd went back to the speaker's stand and listened to Thompson, who spoke (said Hussey) in "that felicitous style, and with that winning manner, for which he is celebrated; and which has earned for him an enviable reputation, not only in his own State, but in the halls of Congress, amidst a host of competitors."[15]

Perhaps the listeners were a little torpid from the huge dinner, or oppressed by the hot afternoon, or simply reluctant to get too late a start toward home. Whatever the reason, many in the crowd began to leave. Thompson did his best, but the early departures and perhaps the disadvantage of having to entertain a jaded audience detracted from what was probably a good speech. Thompson had been on the stump scarcely an hour, in those days not regarded as enough time to do more than pay the usual compliments to the audience as the most intelligent gathering of citizens on the face of the globe, barring none. Said Hussey: "The democrats departed…highly satisfied, and in high hopes of a victory in November; while the whigs all wore long faces; and some [Whigs] went home under deep convictions, others very sore indeed with the coon-skinning they had got, and still others I rejoice to say, thoroughly converted to the democratic faith."[16]

The following Saturday, 21 September, Alamucha played host to a similar meeting whose 2500 guests, including four or five hundred women, helped make it even larger and more splendid than the Thursday affair had been. There were even about a hundred Whigs present, though they were a little hard to find amid the bustling Democrats. The site of the meeting was apparently quite close to Salem Baptist Church, whose pews, placed under a large arbor, furnished seats for some of the women. The speaker's stand was constructed of hickory poles—Hussey said "young hickory" poles, a nostalgic suggestion that Polk was a chip off *Old* Hickory, their sainted and still-living hero, Andrew Jackson. Another hickory pole served as a staff for Old Glory, and other flags flapped here and there proclaiming such mottoes as "Polk and Dallas" and got gratifying results. Then there were three cheers for the sons of Sumter, from over in Alabama. That went well, too, and Senator Jones of that

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[14] Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 October 1844.
[15] *Ibid*.
[16] *Ibid*.

county responded in a "short but soul stir[r]ing address." Hussey described that scene for posterity:

> Mr. Williams took the stand, which he occupied till dinner, which was sumptuous and elegant, far beyond what barbecue dinners usually are; indeed, as many observed, the table and viands prepared for [by?] the ladies was more after the manner of a wedding dinner, than a barbecue. After dinner, Mr. Freeman took the stand and entertained the attentive audience for an hour or more, when he gave way to Mr. Jones, who, though the people were breaking off in crowds for their homes, made a most excellent speech in which he told the people some plain truths on the subject of the tariff…. The whole affair at Almuchey [*sic*] went off… [well and] the democrats were in high spirits, nay, enthusiastic; presenting quite a different front to that of 1840.[17]

The county's Whigs had attended an earlier, somewhat dispirited meeting on 16 September at Lauderdale Springs, then a new resort just in its second season and still referred to as the White Sulphur Springs. The Democrats ridiculed the affair and laughingly broadcast such mishaps as an apparent mix-up of the food supply. The managers had contracted with a man—he was later described by Hussey as a "staunch democrat by the by"—who drove twenty-five sheep to the Springs, only to discover that the Whig managers were unable to pay for them. In disgust, the owner of the sheep left them at the Springs for a while, but Hussey supposed he'd eventually have to take them back. Such food as the meeting had was damaged by an untimely rain. Democratic rumor also had it that the food was "without proper seasoning, and badly cooked."[18] The wretched Whigs, so it seemed to the Democrats, couldn't even cook.

The convention attracted between two and three thousand persons, half of whom (averred Hussey) were Democrats. And if the Democratic version can be believed, almost everything about the meeting was an "abortion." A procession to raise partisan ardor contained only about 480 marchers. The raccoon, a Whig symbol, was represented by two of the small, chastened beasts "be-whigged out in ribbons," and led along in the parade. That spectacle allegedly caused some local disgusted Whigs to swear off Whiggery forever. Then, at some point in the procession two Democratic women, guests at the resort, rather unsettled the grand marshal's equipoise by thrusting a "Polk stalk" at him. Of course, reported Hussey, the marshal "was so ungallant as to refuse the proffered gift." The Democrats present were delighted and invited the two women to the Democratic counter-meeting near Marion three days later.[19]

While sunshine would be a problem at the Democratic meetings, the Whigs had to contend with rain. Hardly had Judge Mayes begun what Hussey called "one of his interminable tariff speeches" than a sudden shower drove everyone for the nearest shelter. As soon as the ladies had reached safety, however, the rain ceased. A second time Judge Mayes began his address; a second time the rain came and chased the audience indoors. The rain stopped again and Mayes somewhat warily resumed his speech near the shelter. This time he finished it. According to Hussey, a number

[17] Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 October 1844.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*

of Whigs in the audience, alarmed at the speaker's doctrines on the tariff, began to have grave doubts about Henry Clay's fitness to be the equal of Caesar, Charlemagne, and Washington.[20]

As we have already seen, Polk and Dallas in November handily carried the county, the state, and the nation.

On occasion Lauderdale Democrats could take issue with their own kind almost as sharply as they usually did with the Whigs. A real or fancied personal slight, an undue claim to credit, or perhaps political treachery, or any number of other grievances could throw the county's Democracy into disorder. In the exciting year of 1845, with the "Oregon Question," the annexation of Texas, and brewing trouble with Mexico agitating the nation, Lauderdale's Democrats were preparing for a state convention. On 22 March they met in Marion to elect six delegates and to draft their instructions, but the manner in which the leaders handled the affair brought grumblings from about 125 county residents that it had not been a free convention but one characterized by "dictation."[21] The ruckus was thus described by the Marion *Banner* and passed on to other papers in the area and the state. By June, however, many of those who had signed the original protest published statements expressing their change of heart and saying that their protest had been the result of misrepresentation.[22]

During the 1850s national politics became a matter fraught with passion and a sense of imminent crisis. The Compromise of 1850 had given only a brief respite from the slavery controversy, which had been quickened by the argument over how to manage the territory acquired in the Mexican War. President Franklin Pierce, elected in 1852, tended to be much influenced by his Southern advisers and was therefore popular in the South. But as the campaign of 1856 neared, it became clear that Pierce would not be the nominee. For Southerners, however, there was an even greater concern: The new and bustling Republican Party angered and frightened many in the South because of its advocacy of the containment of slavery. Contrary to what many in Dixie thought, however, it did *not* advocate abolition.

The National Democratic Convention of 1856 met in Cincinnati. To it the county's Democrats sent Dr. J. P. Welch, J. R. McLaurin, William M. Hancock,

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[20] Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 October 1844.

[21] Among the leaders were William V. White, Joseph Martin, Jesse Killingsworth, James Agnew, Sr., Simeon Culpepper, George and Austin Keeton, C. G. and William A. Clayton, A. J. Trussell, John C.Yoes, E. A. Durr, William W. Dupree, L. B. Bains, E. G. Hussey, James A. and Isaac H. Rawlings, J. R. McLaulin (McLaurin? McLaughlin?), Arthur Tucker, William Rhodes, and Joseph Clinton. Among the protesters: A. T. Rogers, A. T. Phillips, G. W. Ross, Sherwood Wilson, Andrew O'Fallon, Charles E. Hughes, John Baliff, J. Zachary, Walter Welch, Robert Langston, Charles L.Bruner, Wesley Alexander, Thomas Sullivan, John W. Little, Benjamin Taylor, Joel Alexander, William Watts, B. F. Ray, John James, C. C. Traywick (?), John H. Coleman, M. H. and J. M. Furlon, A. L. Scarborough, J. M. Pierce, John Hammond, Cornelius Sullivan, Lewis Moore, William Humphrey, Harwell Denton, John Gilcrease, J. G. Alford, J. Agnew, Jr., W. B. Wilkerson, R. A. Phillips, John Crane, Jeremiah Howell, William Newson, William McMullin, Willis Hanrick, C. Pickard, Charles Smith, B. G. Waits, N. P. Dean, W. Davis, J. Jarvis, J. W. Bailey, William Browning, William Bilbo, J. L. Alexander, Lovelace H. Mott, James Wilson, J. Williamson, James Thomas, W. E.Trussell, H. J. Dean, D. J. Stuckney (Stuckey?), J. Morron (Morrow?), P. Vaughn, and W. Alexander.

[22] Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 June 1845.

Charles E. Rushing, Constantine Rea, J. M. Trussell, H. D. Mahan, James D. Tolson, Dr. J. M. Gaddis, E. A. Durr, and C. W. Henderson.[23] They returned home reasonably assured that James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, was a nominee who was sympathetic to the South's interests. It would be many years before Southern Democrats would again exercise much influence at a national convention.

Buchanan, who won in November, proved sympathetic and even pliant to his Southern brethren and their concerns. But to dilute this rather temporary Southern victory was the astounding showing by the new Republican Party—the Black Republicans, as Southerners often called them. With John C. Frémont as their first presidential candidate, they seized second place. The Whig Party had taken a humiliating third place and would, in fact, not survive for another campaign. It was one of the early victims of the controversy over slavery.

Slavery may have been the great national political issue during the middle 1850s in the nation, but in Lauderdale County during that brief time the fascinating question was who was or was not a member of the semi-secret movement known as the American Party, or, more commonly, the Know-Nothing Party. It was a curious phenomenon almost exclusively of that decade and ceased to exist as suddenly as it had appeared. The movement's chief issue was its opposition to Roman Catholics and aliens and its wish to keep the control of affairs out of their hands. The formation of the party came in the wake of the large immigrations in the 1840s and 1850s—there were about 500,000 arrivals in 1855 alone—of which the Irish and Germans were a large percentage. The name "Know-Nothing" was given by its enemies in derision of the group's members who, when questioned, usually denied any knowledge of it. Like the Whig Party, the Know-Nothings were destroyed by the dispute over slavery. Its Southern members, only momentarily wobbled by their fear of foreigners, were far more disturbed by abolitionists and the argument over slavery and state rights. Besides, Lauderdale County was scarcely fertile soil for Know-Nothingism. Roman Catholics were a tiny minority, and the number of foreign-born persons was insignificant—only thirty-four in 1850.[24]

The existing records seem to indicate that Southern Whigs were more attracted to Know-Nothingism than the Democrats were. In Lauderdale County few of the Democratic leaders had anything to do with the movement, and some of them accused the Southern Whigs of having deliberately introduced it into the area to divide the Democrats. Constantine Rea, editor of the *Lauderdale Republican*, was vigorously hostile to the paranoid Know-Nothings but denied that they had ever been very successful in the county. Dr. C. G. Miller, who had been a county resident since about 1835, said in his campaign for the state legislature that though he believed native-born Americans ought to rule America, he would "never consent to abuse that maxim by persecuting or proscribing foreigners." Miller's fellow delegates at the State Democratic Convention in 1855 generally agreed with him. Such men as Dr. J. E. Knott, James M. Trussell, Daniel Cameron, James Tolson, Joel Walker, and Constantine Rea never subscribed to the American Party's creed.[25]

Rea, who was the other candidate for the legislature, attacked the Know-Nothings in almost every issue of his paper, often with derisive humor. Once,

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[23] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 5 February 1856.
[24] J. D. B. De Bow, *Statistical View of the United States...Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census....* (Washington: Beverley Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854).
[25] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 22 January, 14 and 21 May 1855.

when burning lignite had halted traffic on the M & O Railroad near Lockhart, he facetiously suggested that the village was now the road's terminus and thus might become a "city of note and importance…which nothing can extinguish, save a fire anihilator [*sic*], a Know-Nothing press or a Catholic priest with a jug of holy water." J. A. Trott, editor of the Sumter Co. (Ala.) *Whig*, and a man known to meddle in the politics of neighboring Lauderdale, was, because of his interest in Know-Nothingism and his initials J. A., often referred to by his Democratic enemies as "Jack-ass" Trott. When "Sam," as the Democrats called the Know-Nothings, had done badly at the polls in Virginia (where they had apparently bragged of making giant strides), Rea's paper carried a woodcut of a man on a donkey with the comment: "Sam having lost his seven leagued boots in Virginia, purchases a dilapidated quadruped [i.e. Trott] and opens the canvass [in] Mississippi."[26]

In October of 1855 the Know-Nothings held a "Barbecue and exhibition" in Marion. Rea did not attend but reported that Amos R. Johnson, a Whig, "pitched into the Catholics and foreigners" and "made the six resident Dutchmen [i.e., Germans] of our county quake with fright and dismay." Johnson's speech, said Rea, was "very pretty," but the "grand lion of the day" was the Rev. J. K. Clinton. Clinton had for some time been traveling about the state preaching the gospel of Native Americanism. He was an animated speaker, and the highlight of his harangue was invariably his demonstrating how vigorously he had left the Democratic Party. This he accomplished by a spirited jump in front of his audience. Rea, in his next issue, printed a woodcut of the Rev. Mr. Clinton doing his acrobatics. Said Rea: "The leap is the principal figure of this art…. It is said that Mr. Clinton did not leap as high here as he did at Decatur, but in other respects he excelled himself, and gave complete satisfaction to the numerous audience…."[27]

A number of Democrats did actually join the Know-Nothings, believing that the association would not interfere with their regular party affiliation. After attending several secret meetings, however, they sensed a decidedly anti-Democratic spirit whose climax for many of them occurred at a secret meeting one night in the swamp near Chunkyville, in the southwestern part of the county. The uproar that followed news about the clandestine meeting seems to have been a catalyst not only for a mass exodus from the party but also of a protest from citizens of Chunkyville at what they regarded as a story that made the town seem undesirable and sinister. Residents of Chunkyville pressured several disgruntled Know-Nothings to say that not only had the meeting actually been held at a mill in Chunky Swamp in Newton County but also that it had been called "by an old Whig living near Daleville" who wanted to gratify his own spite and disorganize the Democrats.[28] The "old Whig" was not identified, but the accusers probably referred to William S. Patton, Sr.

In the spring of 1855 Charles Wesley Henderson, who had been active in the Know-Nothing movement in the county, decided to quit it. He explained publicly how he had become involved with the group and his reasons for leaving it. Since this came on the heels of Henderson's announcement of his candidacy for circuit clerk, the annoyed Know-Nothings in the county circulated a broadside which

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[26] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 2 July and 4 December 1855. Rea's statement about the priest and holy water was not anti-Catholic but rather an expression of his attitude toward Know-Nothing bigotry. Rea was actually quite friendly toward Catholicism.
[27] *Ibid*., 16 October 1855.
[28] *Ibid*., 7 May and 11 June 1855.

ridiculed “Wolf” Henderson and suggested that he had lost his talent for public office. In his own announcement Henderson said that the movement had been introduced into the county in the fall of 1854 by William S. Patton, one of the county’s leading Whigs, and that subsequently William S. Ragland had become grand president of East Mississippi, with Henderson as president of the Marion Council. Henderson charged that all the leaders were really Whigs who hoped to wreck the Democratic Party in the area, and he divulged what he declared were many secret rituals and methods used by members to recognize one another in public. (Shades of the late outlaw John Murrell and his gang!) Henderson said that he intended to stay in the race for circuit clerk but that he was sure the rest of the Know-Nothings would throw their support to Benjamin F. Parke, who was still in the xenophobic organization. Henderson’s charges brought an immediate denial from Patton to which Henderson replied, “The General’s memory is treacherous.”[29]

Henderson’s defection, along with the flap over the Chunkyville affair, served as an incentive to at least sixty others in the county to quit the Know-Nothings. During the next several weeks the *Lauderdale Republican* published impressive lists of withdrawals. In Suqualena H. D. Mahan, H. M. Wilkerson, and three members of the Keith family—W. B., A. J., and Henry—got out. Other defectors included Ben Carpenter, William Stephens, John R. Giles, P. G. Hughes, Matthew Lee, Asa Lee, Joel Hammond, A. Cochran, and Joseph and E. E. Jolly. Dr. James B. Ramsay and J. H. Winningham of Daleville withdrew. R. W. Robinson, of Whynot, announced his withdrawal; and Robert Maxey, candidate for tax assessor, denounced all reports that he had ever been a member.[30]

Rea had a glorious time exulting in the columns of his paper. He enjoyed an argument, particularly one in which he could defend the Democratic Party while holding plenty of ammunition. He printed a woodcut that showed a wolf (Henderson) running off with a diminutive human figure that represented “Sam,” as Rea jeeringly called the Know-Nothings. “Who,” asked Rea, “shall deliver Sam from the mouth of his adversary?” Continuing, he became lyrical and even scriptural:

> These facts we have gathered from Mr. H. and others who *know something* of the tricks of Know-Nothings, and under the circumstances we have no hesitation in acquitting Mr. H. of all blame whatever…. He has dealt “Sam” a death blow. Yea, dragged him out from his concealment in the corners and by-places. Wolf Henderson knows how to howl, and the Know-Nothings have now other sources of sorrow besides the awful defection of the 60 seceders…. His demise is very near, for he hateth the light and delights to dwell in dark places. Wolf Henderson drags him into the light and lo! The giant is a pigmy, and the movement a humbug.[31]

All efforts by the remnant of the Know-Nothings to ruin Henderson came to nothing. He was too well known and respected, and he was a popular justice of the peace, a loyal member of the Methodist Church, a leading merchant, and a Royal Arch Mason.[32]

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[29] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 11 and 25 June 1855.
[30] *Ibid.*, 21, 28 August, and 11 September 1855.
[31] *Ibid.*, 11 June 1855.
[32] *Ibid.*, 16 June 1855.

But some of the credit for Henderson's rehabilitation in the Democratic Party would have to go to Constantine Rea, who had no patience with Know-Nothing principles in general and especially not with the bigoted, scurrilous writings which were going around during this period, many of which the bilious Know-Nothings had encouraged. A book by Isaac Kelso, *Danger in the Dark*, appeared in the county in 1855 and elicited this blast from the *Republican's* editor: "It is a conglomeration of nonsense, interspersed with gross misrepresentation and traduction of Convents, Catholic Bishops, Priests, the Pope, and the members of that branch of the church generally. It is full of the most glaring falsehoods, and wilful perversions of historical facts. Indeed, the Arabian Nights are thrown into the shade by it, in point of fiction and lies."[33]

There was still some life left in the secretive group. In August of 1855 they met in Marion and named Elisha Mosley and C. G. Clayton to run for the county's two seats in the state's lower house. Shortly thereafter F. L. Swann and A. G. Horn spoke in Marion in support of the party's program and candidates.[34] But like the Whig Party, its time was fast running out. The great issue of slavery was growing with cancerous swiftness and eclipsing all other concerns as though they had never mattered.

But the old times, and concerns with local affairs, would last a little longer. The citizens could, for example, find some interest in the prediction by some that Lauderdale County might become an important producer of minerals. Various individuals continued to swear that the county had galena, the ore that produces lead. Dr. Thomas H. Moody, of Alamucha, was one of these. He reported a great quantity of lead-rich galena on his farm. There were also those in the area around Lauderdale Springs who insisted that there was much of the ore there. Moreover, a Mr. J. Yarrell exhibited what he thought was "a small piece of virgin silver" that he said he had found in a well at "Mr. Huggins' Church." To support his claim, the *Lauderdale Republican* reported that several old settlers insisted that the Choctaws had often declared silver to be present in large quantities in the area and that they had made their jewelry from it. The Choctaws, according to the story, would never tell outsiders where the metal was, but simply had passed the information from generation to generation. The growing speculation brought State Geologist L. Harper to the county. He arrived in Marion on 7 November 1854 and put up at the Mansion House. After a fairly careful survey of the area, Harper reported that the only geological realities were some fossils and outcroppings of buhrstone, a mineral which looks like silicon and is hard like granite; considerable quantities of lignite; and some good soil—nothing more.[35]

And there were the usual everyday happenings, and others not so usual, that could furnish topics of conversation. A tornado hit the area on 16 May 1854 doing much damage and destroying Dr. D. U. Ford's home. The winter of 1854 to 1855 was stranger than any of the older residents could remember—extreme cold, much wind, little precipitation, and very late frosts which killed all fruits and nearly

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[33] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 15 January 1856.
[34] *Ibid*., 21 August, 4 September 1855.
[35] *Ibid*., 23 May, 11 November 1854.

ruined the gardens. In March of 1855 Marion was shocked by the suicide by hanging of a Mr. Morgan who was a tanner by trade and a stranger in Marion, insofar as his origins and family were concerned. A letter in the paper signed "Poor Robert" complained about the young men who made pests of themselves by firing guns and pistols in the street, even on Sunday, which annoyed especially the young ladies at school.[36]

During the mid-1850s the citizens of Marion marveled at the throngs of immigrants passing through on their way to Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. As one observer said: "One to look at them would think that the whole region east of us was being depopulated, in order to settle the wide and uncultivated wilds of the west." And on 20 April 1854 people in Marion watched as a large group of Choctaws passed through town on their way to the future state of Oklahoma. A Federal agent named Bridges led them. The observer thought the Indians showed no regret at leaving.[37]

During its early years Lauderdale County seems to have had a fairly law-abiding population, which if true may explain why Marion's jail for many years was inadequate. In April 1848 for instance, Daniel Stuckey, accused of murdering Jared Way—both were county citizens—broke out of jail. The Board of Police immediately ordered "two stock locks to be placed on the inside & outside doors of the jail [and] also a large screw lock for the iron door." The Stuckey case had been a protracted one. Stuckey was accused of having assaulted and killed Way on 24 August 1845. By the following February the case was still unresolved and Stuckey was released on $5,000 bail. He eventually went back to jail, and then on 12 April 1848 he escaped. Sheriff W. V. Raney requested that Governor J. W. Matthews offer a reward for Stuckey's capture "as it is important that such men should be punished," though there is nothing in Raney's letter to explain why the county had let the case drag on for three years.[38]

As far back as 1837 Sheriff Isham Pace had been obliged to advertise the escape from Marion's jail of Robert B. Merrett (*sic*). The culprit was about thirty years old, an impressive-looking man at least six feet tall, with dark hair and features and a heavy beard. He was of stout build and he moved quickly but with deliberation. He apparently was a smooth talker but, when angry, very profane. His murder of William D. Pellam (*sic*) and his subsequent escape were perhaps in character.[39]

Meanwhile, Lauderdale's jail continued to be run in what today seems a very casual and quaint manner. Repairs and supplies were furnished in an unsystematic, offhand way. Various citizens helped as they could, as did a Mrs. Lindley in August 1849 when she received six dollars for making a mattress for the jail. Thomas D. Spain, five years after performing the service, received a dollar for having guarded Daniel Stuckey in 1845. In 1854 Amos McLemore and James D. Strickland served several times as guards for the "gaol."[40]

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[36] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 23, 30 May 1854; 26 March, 2 April 1855.
[37] *Ibid.*, 25 April, 16 December 1854.
[38] Paulding *True Democrat*, 3 September 1845, 25 February 1846; W. V. Raney to Gov. J. W. Matthews, 13 April 1848, GP, RG 27, vol. 37, MDAH; *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 83.
[39] Jackson *Daily Mississippian*, 24 November 1837.
[40] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 157, 204, 459.

By the middle 1850s the condition of the county jail was so poor that prisoners were usually held in Newton County's jail in Decatur. The *Lauderdale Republican* considered the jail in Marion—that "miserable shanty now known by that name"—a disgrace, and added, "We know that such a thing [as a jail] is scarcely ever needed in a county like this, where crime is almost unknown, yet we should have a good jail merely for the looks of the thing, if nothing else."[41]

Three years later the *Lauderdale Republican*, by then published in Marion Station, commented teasingly about some recently-escaped prisoners: "We learn that the prisoners confined in the old jail at Marion, Miss., four white men and one negro, escaped from durance vile, on Wednesday last and are, at this time, 'up stumpum, over railum, in swampum, non est come-atum.' They escaped by cutting through the floor of one of the rooms and making their way out under the bottom of the house."[42] The escaped prisoners were from Clarke County and had been sent to Marion for better security, which tells us something about Clarke's facilities! Perhaps this episode helped bring about some repairs, for in the following August the county successfully held William Turner and a slave named James Ellison, both of whom were convicted murderers who had escaped from the state penitentiary. Benjamin F. Parke had captured the pair as they were heading, as the *Republican* put it, for "parts unknown."[43]

It seems to have been as easy to break *into* the county's premises as it was to break out. On 20 June 1855 someone forced his way into the office of the circuit clerk and made off with fifty-nine indictments. There were no broken locks or other signs of forced entry, which suggests either an inside job or a lock of easy virtue. The incident sparked a demand for the purchase of an iron safe in which to keep the county's more critical records.[44]

In October of 1858 the Police Board condemned the county's jail as unsafe and insufficient. Ordering that a new one be built, they appointed a committee and told it to visit facilities in nearby counties and to report a plan by the first of November if possible. The committee members were favorably impressed by the jail in Livingston, Ala., and recommended it as a good model. The Board, satisfied, ordered the committee to draw up plans, choose a site, and make a list of the needed materials and their cost. All of this was to be completed by 3 January 1859; but when the new year arrived, the citizens of the county had apparently become convinced that the expense of a new jail was an unaffordable luxury and that some extensive repairs would have to suffice, at least for the foreseeable future. The Board rescinded the previous order for a new jail, at the same time ordering improvements of the existing one by making general repairs and by securing the cells with emplacements of what were termed "iron cages." Any money left over would be spent on other projects approved by the Board of Police. And there the matter ended, though as late as June of 1860 the Board were still grumbling about the jail.[45]

A jail was definitely a major consideration; for there were several times when, despite the *Republican's* statements about its law-abiding county, some rather

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[41] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 6 January 1854. I assume that Rea was not being ironic.

[42] Quoted in the Mobile *Daily Register*, 17 June 1857.

[43] Quoted in *ibid*., 8 August 1857.

[44] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 25 June 1855.

[45] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, November, 1859* (Jackson: E. Barksdale, 1860), 130f; *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 324, 327, 332, 475.

rough characters enlivened the little town of Marion. One such was Edmondah Worbington, who had an impressive record of criminal and anti-social behavior. Sometime about 1851, while attending a wedding, he deliberately, without provocation, fired a pistol in the face of his cousin who, turning aside, received only a powder burn. To escape prosecution for attempted murder Worbington fled to Texas where he subsequently killed a man. Apparently fleeing from there to escape justice, he eventually returned to Marion where with remarkable bravado he went on a drunken rampage and rode his mule throughout the town and through places of business, all the while "swearing he would ride over the damned place" and giving other verbal evidence of his contempt. It took heroic efforts to subdue him, and Sheriff Benjamin Meador was almost killed when Worbington pulled a large knife. Finally, however, the culprit was captured, confined in the town's jail, and charged with the wedding incident. Somehow, in the night Worbington managed to file off his irons and, on the morning of 3 October 1857, he feigned sickness. When the jailor entered the cell, Worbington jumped up and rushed out past the sheriff, the deputy, and several others, all of whom were unable to stop him. Sheriff Meador fired his Navy repeater three times; and though at the third shot Worbington fell, there was no blood to indicate he had been hit. He made good his escape.[46]

Marion was the scene of a near-lynching in April of 1860. Green B. Bishop, overseer for a Mr. Cole in the county, discovered a slave named Felix who had escaped from the estate of a Dr. Ramsay and had taken refuge on the Cole plantation. When Bishop tried to take Felix, the slave beat him to death with a pine knot. A pursuit party with dogs tracked the fugitive, captured him, and lodged him in the jail in Marion. The inevitable crowd gathered around the jail to demand summary punishment and probably would have exacted it had not several of Marion's influential citizens intervened. They hurriedly called a meeting over which Col. E. A. Durr presided. Several men made impassioned protests against lynch law, and others spoke with equal fervor for it. A vote produced thirty-six in favor of lynching and forty-nine against, with a large number abstaining. The Paulding *Eastern Clarion* was gratified that the citizens of Lauderdale had come "to this sensible and reasonable conclusion."[47]

In the existing court records one finds few major crimes and only an occasional reference to such relatively minor incidents, so common in most frontier areas, as that in August of 1854 between Joseph Eakens (Eakin?) and James Miller. Both had been at odds for some time when they met accidentally on a summer day in 1854. Miller, riding a spirited horse, apparently began the affair by spurring his horse against Eakens' horse and striking its rider with a stick. Eakens pulled a repeater and fired, hitting Miller in the thigh. "Both parties," said the *Republican*, "are promising young men, and we deplore the unfortunate circumstances which may have brought about this sad affair." A physician who tended Miller's wound did not think it mortal. And at about the same time a man named William Owens was stabbed in the cheek "near Meridian, in this county."[48]

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[46] Mobile *Daily Register*, 18 October 1857.
[47] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 25 April 1860.
[48] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 22 August 1854. This was perhaps the first time that this paper mentioned Meridian.

Thus one could say that citizens of Lauderdale County in the years before the Civil War probably exhibited no more antisocial behavior than did those elsewhere in the state, and perhaps less than many.

Lauderdale citizens, like others on the frontier in those days, had to rely for diversion mostly upon their own resources and inventiveness. Churches, for example, quite aside from their religious functions, served other important social needs as well. The building of a new church might suggest that a well-attended supper of ice cream and cake could both raise funds and entertain; and weddings, baptisms, singings, and even funerals could provide that social contact that was avidly sought.

Other than W. C. Calhoun's tenpin alley and several saloons, or "groceries," there seem to have been few entertainment facilities as we would conceive them today. One of these few was a campground five miles northwest of Marion. It had a good spring, a pleasant site, several commodious cabins, and good provisions generally for any kind of social gathering. Those who operated it—the "tenters" as they were called—were known for hospitality; and the park was a popular retreat for those fleeing the frenzied urban life of Marion.[49]

Yet, even in those idyllic, pastoral surroundings of a by-gone day there were flaws. How outrageous conduct could have crept into such an Eden is a matter for speculation. But a "Spectator" complained bitterly and grandly to the *Lauderdale Republican* of the "indecency" and "illegality" which he said he had witnessed in the latter part of October of 1854 at the Campground on the occasion of a festive celebration of a good harvest and an absence of dreaded epidemics. The aggrieved party did not specify what he had seen, an omission that puts a tremendous strain upon one's imagination.[50]

There was an amusing incident that grew out of a "cotillion" party given at the Mansion House on 1 April 1854. Editor Rea had previously noted the event in his paper and had listed the managers as Col. E. Holden, W. M. Hancock, Capt. W. J. Daniel, Dr. J. M. White, Dr. D. U. Ford, Hon. G. C. Chandler, Hon S. Evans, Con. Rea, and Col. W. P. Lasley, thus giving titles to everyone except himself and Hancock. Hancock didn't like it: "Being a *private citizen* [he wrote peevishly to the paper] *my name looks unique and obtrusive* [his emphasis], appearing among the names of such honorary titles, civil and military, (although the tenure thereto, by some of them, is questionable,) therefore I decline serving as a manager."[51]

Perhaps William Hancock was being overly sensitive, but he did not consider himself second to anybody else in the county. His was a prominent family in Marion. His father Jubal B. Hancock, apparently born in Virginia about 1791, at an early age moved to Tennessee. According to his own testimony, Jubal married a Choctaw woman "long before the treaty of 1830" and later "removed to and became a member of the Choctaw nation, and at the date of the treaty was the head of a Choctaw family." In accordance with the treaty's provisions Hancock claimed the appropriate amount of land for a head of family, namely, 640 acres for himself and his wife and half that amount for each unmarried child who lived with him and was over ten years

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[49] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 26 September, 28 October 1854.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid*., 11 April 1854.

of age, plus a quarter section (adjoining the parents' land) for each child under ten years. This seemed clear enough, but at this point a legal issue arose. Could a non-Choctaw, under the treaty's provisions, be considered a Choctaw? If not, the wife, who *was* Choctaw but not "head" of the family, could not claim land rights and would presumably have to move west. It was knotty matter that even some of the government officials admitted was an "absurdity of distinction." Though Hancock's claim ran into difficulties with Col. William Ward, the Indian agent, a congressional committee agreed that Hancock's claim was legitimate, and it was apparently honored.[52] His wife seems to have died sometime before 1850, perhaps even before the Hancocks, probably shortly after 1840, moved into Lauderdale County.[53]

Jubal Hancock was active in local and state Democratic circles, serving variously as probate judge, postmaster in Marion, and on numerous civic committees. During some of the 1850s he managed the Marion Drug Store.[54]

William M. Hancock, one of Jubal's sons, became a resident of the county about 1840 when not quite twenty. He played an important role in state Democratic politics and was a delegate to the National Convention in 1856. He apparently received with eagerness the news of war with Mexico; but if he served in that conflict, it was not with the Lauderdale Volunteers in the Second Regiment.[55]

It would be difficult to exaggerate the fondness which early Americans had for circuses, especially in a day before railroads made transportating them easier. Getting a circus through the country in earlier times must have been picturesque and very difficult. The idea today conjures up a strangely appealing scene of ponderous wagons dragging their squalling, roaring burdens over the primitive roads of that day. Doubtless as the caravans threaded their way through the woods and past the occasional cabins, many a youngster's blood pressure rose to a level sufficient to match his hopes of eventually running away to work in those romantic circumstances. It could scarcely have been an easy life, but there was probably a considerable income available to anyone able to procure at least a few scrawny animals and "monsters" and advertise in the journals of the frontier's scattered settlements that a "Great Circus and Menagerie" was on the way.

In early May of 1854 Robinson and Eldred's Circus and Menagerie visited Marion. (It probably was not the first one to visit the area, or the local paper would have said so.) The usual excited anticipation was perhaps somewhat alloyed by unfavorable reports of the show's recent visits in Georgia and Alabama. But the circus personnel, with their elephant, camel, and "rare living monsters," behaved themselves fairly well in Marion and apparently gave reasonable satisfaction to what

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[52] *American State Papers*, 8:557-560. See also, personal enumeration of the 1850 census for Lauderdale County, Miss., family no. 9. One can see what a windfall this interpretation was for those white men who happened to have married Choctaw women. Better equipped to handle the conniving that went on among the agents and their subordinates, they could make the treaty's provisions more than empty phrases. One can see also how much land Choctaws might have acquired had a majority of them been able to press their claims successfully.

[53] Edmiston, *op. cit.*

[54] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 17 January, 6 June, 25 November 1854; 24 July, 18 September 1855.

[55] *Ibid.*, 5 February, 18 March 1856. No Hancock's name appears on the roll of the Lauderdale Volunteers.

one observer thought was the largest crowd ever seen in Marion. Admission was fifty cents for adults, a quarter for servants and children. The *Lauderdale Republican*, however, did not think the show lived up to its claims: "Their collection of animals was very inferior…the clown was a dry old chap without originality, repeating old worn out sentences away in the rear of the times…. They are very successful in *pickin' up the dimes*, for their collateral penny catch-mongers are as numerous as they are ridiculous and contemptible." It is a fair assumption, however, that the village's youngsters, and not a few of the older ones, were somewhat less critical. Rea, though, having traveled a bit, was not impressed; and he even suggested that the good behavior of the circus's personnel was more a matter of "circumstance than innate virtue." As to their failure to fulfill his expectations, Rea added: "As it is so seldom circus companies traverse the country there are few persons who would not feel recompensed by the novelty of the most inferior exhibitions, and no doubt this circumstance is calculated, whereby they can fall short of their advertisements with impunity." After the circus left Marion and had traveled about a mile south on the Enterprise Road, one of the wagons, while descending a hill, hit a stump and threw the driver off. He was run over by a wheel and died the next day in Sageville.[56]

The Great Alabama Circus visited Marion the following February and gave a good performance. Two circuses within eleven months was not bad for such an isolated, sparsely-populated area as Lauderdale and would seem to contradict the contention of the critic previously quoted that circuses did not visit Marion often. The answer probably is that times were changing, and the railroad was very likely the main element of that change.[57]

By the 1850s the minstrel show was becoming a universal favorite in the nation's repertory of stage entertainment. The performers garbed themselves in bizarre costumes and make-up to give white imitations of slave customs and humor. Just before Christmas of 1854 a "Professor" Pike appeared to crowded houses in Marion as a magician and "delineator of the negro character."[58]

Within the space of three months in the early part of 1855 there were three musical concerts in Marion. On 16 February Madame Siminsky, a flutist, was well received by a large audience. Three days later a Miss Reynolds gave a concert at which she sang and played the violin, guitar, flute, and piano. The large audience were pleased and probably agreed with editor Rea's observations: "Miss Reynolds seems to be the genius of music and poesy personified, and if it was not that we are old and ugly, and married besides, we would endeavor to monopolize this rich musical treasure, and make her princess of our sanctum."[59]

On the 23 and 24 April—two days!—the visiting Riley family gave successful concerts. Fanny Riley played the violin, Amanda the 'cello, and Mattie the guitar. Unfortunately, a few members of the audience created a disturbance during the second evening's concert. The local paper, after praising the performers, commented with disgust on the ugly demonstration:

> I cannot speak as approvingly of some of the audience on Tuesday night, for when the company were performing one of their choicest gems of music…a

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[56] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 11 April, 9 May 1854; 19 February 1855.
[57] *Ibid.*, 19 February 1855.
[58] *Ibid.*, 23 December 1854.
[59] *Ibid.*, 19, 26 February 1855.

> few, who seemed to be gentlemen, disturbed the audience by commencing a heavy dance in one end of the room, which they continued some length of time to the great annoyance of all persons present, except themselves and two or three little boys.

The boorish minority were strangers, said the reporter, who observed with satisfaction that "the citizens here may congratulate themselves on knowing the fact that no one of our citizens was capable of indulging in such coarse amusement."[60]

Despite the so-called temperance movements and the strong opposition to alcoholic beverages by various groups, America has always been a nation of heavy drinkers. It has often been suggested that rum could well be regarded as the real Spirit of '76, and perhaps hard liquor was one of the essential tools in the taming of the wilderness. One certainly can much better understand the Boston Tea Party by remembering that, after all, the Patriots destroyed nothing stronger than *tea*.

Most early Lauderdale citizens seem to have taken alcoholic beverages for granted and probably sneered at the pretensions of any settlement that did not have at least one church and one "grocery," preferably several of the latter. In fact, between 1847, when record-keeping on them began, and the end of the Civil War, saloons were far more numerous in the county than churches and probably more generally esteemed. There were, indeed, at least eighty-eight saloons of one kind or another between 1847 and 1865, some of them of great popularity and endurance. One can identify during that period, for example, at least twenty-two in each of Marion and Lauderdale Springs. Even in the much shorter period of Marion Station's existence before 1865 there were not fewer than eight. Daleville and Meridian had at least seven each, a remarkable fact since Daleville was declining as a community and Meridian was a young upstart.[61]

It was the duty of the Board of Police to license all taverns, saloons, groceries, or whatever one might call them. More often than not the license was a permit only "to retail vinous and spirituous liquors," or to operate "an inn & tavern"; and fairly often one sees the tantalizing, but probably hyperbolic, phrase "to operate a house of private entertainment." But however a proprietor might describe his establishment, he paid the same fee as all the other owners of "tippling" houses, or at least those in his area. As a matter of fact, the price of the license did vary somewhat with the location. For example, in the late 1840s and on into the next decade, a liquor license cost $100 a year in Marion and Lauderdale Springs and $75 in Daleville. Everywhere else retailers paid only $50.[62]

In Marion a saloon keeper could buy liquor for thirty cents to a dollar a gallon (depending on quality and market conditions) and sell individual drinks at five or ten cents a shot. Visiting these dram shops was a popular pastime for many of the town's more convivial residents. Hardly a day went by that one did not see at least one person staggering around town or lying in the street. Saturday, especially, was a day for drinking and carousing. Later, by the mid-1850s, Marion adopted the so-called "gallon law" which forbade serving individual drinks. This meant the end of saloons in Marion, and the town defeated three or four subsequent efforts to re-open them. For some years afterward anyone desiring liquor was obliged to buy it in bulk

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[60] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 30 April 1855.
[61] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1860*, *passim.*
[62] *Ibid.*

quantities, a practice that had the effect of lessening the number of anesthetized citizens in public. Constantine Rea liked the new arrangement; and though he hoped for eventual prohibition, he doubted that Marion was ready for it. However, in categorical and biting articles he blasted the consumption of spirits. In one such attack he wrote:

> If you wish to entice men to drink and become intemperate, build a neat house, arrange everything in comfortable style, display your liquors, glasses, decanters, have all the machinery for making drunkards in full parade, and some jolly fellow behind the counter to talk to them; customers are much more easily caught with such a trap than with a black bottle or jug in some corner or out-house. A decent grocer! The more decent the worse they are….

The editor was pleased when the last saloon closed its doors in Marion on 6 February 1855.[63]

Rea was not alone in advocating what was called "temperance" (but is probably more aptly termed *abstinence*). In those days all over the nation the so-called temperance movement was one of an increasing number of crusading efforts—utopian, if you will—that included those for women's rights, prison reform, improved treatment for the insane, and the abolition of slavery. By the late 1850s there was in Marion an active "temperance" group which called itself the Social Circle of Marion. Among the members were C. W. Henderson, W. P. Andrews, W. A. Smith, W. H. Curtis, W. H. Dubose, R. K. Curtis, Walter Welch, W. S. Patton, Jr., S. H. Ford, and W. S. Boswell.[64] (*See* Appendix B for a list of the county's saloons.)

The Masons were active quite early in the history of the county. When Sam Dale died in 1841, his funeral was conducted by that organization, though there apparently was no lodge in the county before 1846 when the legislature issued a charter for Marion Lodge 62.[65] According to one source the Marion Lodge was chartered in 1844. This same source gives the dates of the chartering of the other county groups as follows: Patton Lodge 129, Lauderdale Springs, 1851; Alamucha Lodge 130, 1851; Mellen Lodge 138, Chunkyville, 1851; and Daleville Lodge 151, 1852.[66] These were the earliest. These and later lodges became an important element in the county's social life, and one finds frequent references to them. In 1855, for example, the Marion Royal Arch in October honored Canada McLain, a deceased member; Patton Lodge of Lauderdale Springs announced similar honors to a deceased member, John M. Silliman; and in Alamucha, in December, Secretary Thomas B. Lucy, Jr., noted the death of Elijah Hearn, a member of that town's lodge.[67]

Recreation and entertainment must be seen to include the local militia, which continued in the 1850's to attract an eager membership, just as it had in the 1840's. On the eve of the Civil War, for instance, the Lauderdale Rifles, drawing members especially from Marion and Marion Station, were very active. There are extant references from 1859 which describe them as holding regular meetings, voting

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[63] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 12 February 1855.
[64] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 13 November 1858.
[65] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 18 July 1854; *Laws of the State…1846*, 396.
[66] Jeanne Hand Henry, *Abstradex of Annual Returns, Mississippi Free and Accepted Masons, 1819-1849 (with 1801, 1816, and 1817 Petitioners & First Returns through 1851)*, 225-227, 307f, 311, 315f.
[67] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 26 February, 16 October, and 4 December 1855.

on a constitution and by-laws, or just deciding upon new uniforms. In the summer of that year they reported the following officers: Capt. W. P. Evans, 1/Lt. M. H. Whitaker, 2/Lt. W. H. Shields, 3/Lt. W. L. Mayfield, 1/Sgt. H. D. Boutwell, and W. H. Curtis, Secretary.[68]

Until the very end of the nineteenth century Lauderdale County was not fertile soil for journalism, though many newspapers were published at one time or another, some of them very good ones. But hardly any enjoyed a long life until 1898 when the Dement family began *The Meridian Star*, a paper that gradually monopolized the market and still exists. Records are few and vague, but there probably was no newspaper in the county in the 1830's. Robert Collins edited a paper named the *Banner* that began publication in Marion, probably in April of 1845.[69] The *Banner* survived until about July of 1851 when it was bought by William Penn Andrews, a native of Ohio. He brought out an entirely new publication called the *Lauderdale Republican*.[70] And in 1849 the Lauderdale Board of Police were publishing county notices in an organ named the *Southern Eagle*, a paper presumably published in the county.[71]

References in the Paulding *True Democrat* in the mid-1840s indicate that another paper, the *East Mississippian*, was published in Marion as early as February of 1846 and that it perhaps ceased publication in August or early September of that year. According to somewhat vague references, the publisher was probably Thomas J. Johnston (or possibly Johnson). One gets the impression that Johnston was a gregarious, hearty man with a considerable sense of humor; and his announcement was probably in character in March of 1846 when he declared his willingness to take in payment from subscribers "corn, pork, beans, beef, potatoes, chickens, or anything else printers can eat, and they [i.e. subscribers] are not slow on any of the above articles."[72]

Johnston's paper usually carried a column that purported to be written to his "Arm-Chair" and was humorous and tongue-in-cheek. One column, signed as though written *by* his armchair, and printed in the Paulding *True Democrat*, in early September of 1846, is tantalizingly vague and apparently full of "in" jokes and allusions. But it seems to suggest that the editor of the *East Mississippian*, Johnston, had left the county. Since Johnston perhaps wrote it himself (and even if someone else did, it was probably meant in good-natured ribbing), we almost certainly must not take literally statements such as the following:[73]

> Thomas H. Johnston, Esq., has affected a great deal in this community [i.e., Marion], and finally, after cheating and swindling to a very considerable extent, has run away from the country, leaving every one who has had dealings with him to suffer from his baseness and want of honor.

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[68] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859, quoting the *Lauderdale Republican*.
[69] Jackson *Mississippian*, 16 April 1845.
[70] *Ibid.*, 11 July 1851.
[71] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 131.
[72] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 25 February, 2 September 1846; Jackson *Mississippian*, 25 March 1846.
[73] All quotations from Paulding *True Democrat*, 2 September 1846.

> The public should be guarded against the swindling propensities of that artful, well-dressed vagabond.
>
> When absent, heretofore, upon excursions of pleasure of business, he has amused himself by inditing letters to his "arm chair." In consideration of such favors, his deserted arm-chair avails itself of the only medium of communication to return his compliment.

The "arm-chair" then went on to complain that the "East Mississippian, once so terrible to [Governor] McNutt, British Whigs, and abolitionists, has poured out the last sands of its hour glass" and that "you, its beautiful and talented editor [have gone] on your 'winding way' to 'parts unknown.'" More,

> I grieve to think that your gold specks, sword cane, and diamond pin will glitter in other saloons; whilst, I who have been with you and them, through nights of revelry and evil days, must languish alone, and perhaps forgotten. Those graceless scamps, your creditors, have divided your humble patrimony; and here am I the worn and only relict of your former self, seized for your grocery [liquor] bill, without a friend to console me.

Although Alexander G. Horn's best-known association with Lauderdale County would not come until after the Civil War, he was a frequent visitor during these ante-bellum days. Thus it is perhaps useful at this point to state that he published the Quitman *Intelligencer* in the early 1850s and by the spring of 1854 was offering it for sale. About a year later he sold it to two men, Mortimer and Beard. The sale must not have been completed, however, for he is recorded as selling it in the spring of 1856 to a man named Murphy, formerly of the Paulding *Eastern Clarion*. It seems that Horn then must have operated a paper called the *Chickasawhay Advertiser* until the fall of 1857 when he sold out to two men, Smith and Lee, and moved to Mobile. There he helped establish the Mobile *Daily Mercury*.[74] Perhaps his association with this latter journal suggested the same name that he used for one he established in Meridian shortly after the Civil War.

A paper called the *Observer*, owned and published by W. G. Grace and a man named Smith, began publication in Marion toward the end of 1858. Its advent was heralded by the Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, which described it as "of good size, very handsomely printed" and with "an attractive appearance."[75]

Another paper, the *Eastern Sentinel*, was published in Marion just before the Civil War and was apparently short-lived. W. J. Duckworth was publisher and J. J. Glenn, editor. In July of 1860 the *Macon Beacon* described it as a "new paper."[76]

The Meridian, published by William Spinks, was begun in 1859; and a discussion of it belongs in a later chapter on its hometown.

The most influential pre-Civil War paper, and the one that apparently survived longest, was the *Lauderdale Republican*, first published, as we have seen, at Marion in 1851. (Later it was published in Marion Station, and at least as early as the

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[74] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 16 May 1854, 14 May 1855, 1 April 1856; Mobile *Daily Register*, 21 October 1857.

[75] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 11 December 1858.

[76] *Macon Beacon*, 18 July 1860.

summer of 1859 its editor was Col. William A. Shields) The *Republican* seems not to have been a great success financially, at least in its first five years or so. At first it had little competition and was, in fact, the county's only paper by the summer of 1854.[77] This failure to prosper puzzled the Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, which, noting in 1857 that the *Republican* was for sale, observed that Lauderdale County had one of the largest groups of voters in East Mississippi and that the Democrats, the paper's party, had a clear majority of about 500 voters. Democrats held all offices, which almost guaranteed it the county's printing. The *Eastern Clarion* could "see no reason why a Democratic paper published in such a county should not be a paying concern.[78] Nevertheless, it almost certainly was not.

The *Lauderdale Republican* began publication in the summer of 1851, very likely around the end of July.[79] As we saw above, it was founded by William Penn Andrews, whose brief career as a Free-Soil editor will be discussed in another chapter. After a few months Adams sold out to Greene C. Chandler and R. B. G. Harper.[80] At the beginning of 1854 it was owned by L. B. Bains and Harper, who at about that time sold out to Constantine Rea and C. W. Henderson.[81] The sale spawned one of several disputes in which Rea was occasionally involved. This one concerned the methods used by the former owners to handle lapsed subscriptions. Harper and Bains attacked Rea and Henderson through articles in the Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, and Rea countered in the *Republican* by calling them such names as "base, wretched calumniators" and by deploring their "malicious aspersions."[82]

Greene C. Chandler, the county's representative in the state legislature, edited the *Republican* for a few weeks in late 1853 and early 1854 but ended his association on 7 February. Chandler was a lawyer, had never had any intention to enter journalism, and agreed to serve as editor only as a favor to Bains and Harper. Rea then took over and continued to operate the paper for several years. His partnership with C. W. Henderson ended the following October, and from then until he sold it, Rea was editor and sole proprietor.[83]

About two years after he assumed ownership, Rea printed an editorial that reflected his concern over the paper's financial problems. He complained of a lack of patronage by some county officials who were ordering their blank forms from other printers. The question, Rea suggested, was simply whether the Democrats were willing to support a Democratic press in the county. If not, he said, "they have only to let us know and we will discontinue at once…." He vowed never to beg patronage of the public, and certainly not of the party; but he reminded all concerned that no paper so situated could maintain itself without the county's printing. He had, he said, led a precarious existence for the past two years, making nothing and scattering "over every part of East Mississippi" the little he had once possessed.[84]

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[77] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 22 August 1854.
[78] Quoted in the Mobile *Daily Register*, 22 July 1857.
[79] The issue for 3 January 1854 was the weekly's number 1, volume III, and (somehow) whole number 126, suggesting that it was occasionally published more often than weekly; see also Evans and Daniel's advertisement, dated 29 July 1851, in the *Lauderdale Republican*, 3 January 1854; see also Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 July 1851.
[80] Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 July 1851, 2 January 1852.
[81] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 28 March 1854.
[82] *Ibid.*, 25 April 1854.
[83] *Ibid.*, 7, 21 February, 10 October 1854.
[84] *Ibid.*, 8 April 1856.

This strange failure by the *Republican* to be financially successful is perhaps partly traceable to the various owners themselves. Andrews, the paper's founder, must have been half-insane to think he could run a successful antislavery newspaper in a Mississippi county. And it may be that this prior association with Free Soilism plagued later owners. If, as appears to be true, some subsequent owners lacked editorial experience and the journalistic instinct, that could certainly have held the paper back. Also, other owners apparently tried to carry on additional full-time occupations while running the paper. Rea, for instance, became increasingly involved in politics, often tinged with controversy. He frequently was out of town, perhaps attending a state convention, or serving in the legislature, or sometimes going on considerable trips such as that to Cincinnati for the National Democratic convention in 1856. During these frequent and often protracted absences he was obliged to leave the paper in the hands of others, some of whom were perhaps unequal to the task.

As though Rea did not have problems enough, a scarcity of paper complicated his operation several times. A drought hit much of the eastern United States in 1854; and Northeastern mills, which used waterpower, were unable to meet the demands for newsprint. There was widespread retrenchment, and even suspension, of many newspapers throughout the stricken region. The *Lauderdale Republican* was obliged on several occasions to give its customers abbreviated editions called "half-sheets." Sometimes paper became scarce when navigation on the Tombigbee River was hindered by low water during local droughts. And after the Mobile and Ohio Railroad arrived, even too much water could be a problem, as happened in the spring of 1856 when very heavy rains disrupted rail service between Marion and Mobile. This delayed both the news and the arrival of printing materials. On one such occasion the *Republican* ruefully promised that "when things get 'to rights' again, and the editor returns to his post…we shall endeavor to make amends by furnishing a larger quantity as well as more entertaining matter than is found in our columns this week."[85]

At the time that Rea assumed sole ownership of the *Republican*, its subscription list contained scarcely a thousand names. Furthermore, even by that day's standards, the paper's ageing press and equipment detracted from its appearance. Rea's hope, when he took over, was to increase the number of subscribers to at least 1500 and then to purchase new equipment. He was apparently at least partly successful, for he bought a new press and a large quantity of printing materials in April of 1855. On 30 April the first issue printed with the new press appeared—and with a new motto. It is obvious that the paper's name, thanks to the new Republican Party and its attitude toward slavery, was becoming an embarrassment. The paper had always used "republican" in the Jeffersonian sense, and a change of name would have been problematic. But recent political developments were probably responsible for Rea's changing the paper's motto from "The South and the Friends of the South" to a slightly more pointed "Union, Democracy, and State Sovereignty."[86]

Rea sold the *Republican* probably in the latter part of 1856, but possibly in early 1857. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1857 Col. William A. Shields, who was by then publishing at Marion Station, offered the paper for sale. But even as

[85] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 8 April 1856.
[86] *Ibid*., 19 February 1854; 23, 30 April 1855.

late as the summer of 1859 the paper was still being published in Marion Station, and apparently still by Shields.[87]

Constantine Rea, who almost invariably abbreviated his name as "Con.," was a feisty, plainspoken man who seemed to court controversy. He had already had some military experience in the service of what at the time was the Republic of Texas. One gets the impression, indeed, that he was something of a "professional male," or as we might say today, a "macho man." It is difficult to understand how Rea escaped being murdered by one of the many persons with whom he traded insults over the years, but he survived them all and died a soldier's death in the Confederate Army.[88] He would have wished no other.

Editors in those days often engaged in disputes of one kind or another—perhaps they hoped it would increase their paper's circulation—but it would seem that Rea almost abused the privilege and that he cared little whether he was arguing with Alex. Horn, editor of the Quitman *Intelligencer*—and no shy fellow himself—or calling state Representative Wesley W. Hall of the county a "liar, scoundrel, and slanderer," (see below) or leading a military force against Ft. Pickens, Fla., several weeks *before* the Civil War began. It was all the same to him and no doubt was his conception of *really living*.

Despite a recent state act forbidding dueling, and increasing opposition to the practice from reformers, in the 1850s it was still regarded by probably a majority of males in Lauderdale and nearby counties as an entirely honorable, manly, and sufficient method of settling an argument. In most cases duelists were probably not trying to kill each other but simply trying to put each other in enough danger, and perhaps cause a minor injury and resulting scar, to enable both parties afterward to have their masculine *bona fides* acknowledged by an admiring audience. Even if it was silly and childish, it certainly enlivens the reading of history. The dueling spirit persists today, usually in symbolic and less-hazardous forms.

Frank Durr recalled a duel about 1857 between Constantine Rea and a man Durr identified as "Bill" Evans. A considerable number of people witnessed the event which apparently had to be held just over the state line in Alabama. Among the spectators were a number of slaves including Durr himself. Rea's second was his cousin Bill Moody, while "Buck" Hancock assisted Evans. In case medical attention was necessary, Rea brought Dr. James E. Knott; and Evans had equally eminent medical assistance in Dr. D. U. Ford. The spectators were orderly, realizing probably that any undue commotion would give the authorities an excuse to descend upon them all and put an end to what promised to be good theater. After the audience had sat down on the ground, the principals stepped off sixty yards along the road and marked the distance with boards. The duelists took their stands facing away from each other. The count was given—one, two, three! On "three" both men wheeled about and fired three times at each other. Rea hit Evans all three times but without serious effect. Evans hit Rea in the knee with his third shot but also without inflicting a serious wound. What they regarded as "honor" had been served; and in the best dueling tradition both men advanced with outstretched hands to be reconciled. Evans forgave Rea's offending editorial.[89]

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[87] Mobile *Register*, 22 July 1857; *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.

[88] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 338. Major Rea was wounded in the fighting around Atlanta, Ga., on 9 July 1864 and died on September 14.

[89] Durr, *op. cit.*

Rea was not always the irascible dynamo. He had a good sense of humor which often came through even in his disputes, at least it did as long as he could control his temper. And Rea could write clever little articles such as the one in which he commented on the irony that W. P. Lasley, the young probate clerk, had issued, between 10 November 1853 and the end of the following January, thirty marriage licenses—a "'sad inroad' upon bachelorhood." But Lasley was himself a bachelor! Rea asked: "Will no charitable young lady take this ally of Cupid…to herself and put a period at once to his joyless and miserable Bachelorship? For his lot is surely like Tantalus [in Greek mythology]; the cup of joy is before him, yet he partakes not."[90] (How many editors today would know the myth of Tantalus? For that matter, how many in any other professional group would know it? More important yet, how many would care?) On another occasion, as an election neared, Rea exhorted his readers: "Candidates are becoming plenty [*sic*] so come on…give us authority to announce you, and we'll vote for you provided we don't vote for somebody else. So come along, there are plenty of fat offices….[91]

The *Republican* often carried an advertisement for nostrums called "Ayer's Cherry Pectoral" and "Ayer's Cathartic Pills," which were sold in Daleville by Mosely and Geiss and in Marion by Rushing and Smith. The pills were advertised as good for at least fifteen different ailments and, as Rea added, were "pills that are pills [for] men that are men." In a further mood of whimsy he added some other "remedies":

> For seasickness—stay at home.
> For drunkenness—drink cold water.
> For health—take "Ayer's Pills."
> For accidents—keep out of danger.
> To make money—advertise in the Republican.
> For coughs and colds—take [Ayer's] Cherry Pectoral.
> To keep out of jail—pay your debts.
> To be happy—subscribe for a newspaper.
> To please all—mind your own business.
> To have a good conscience—"pay the printer."[92]

One of Rea's celebrated disputes grew out of a short visit he made to Quitman in April 1855. His reference to the "empire of Clarke" was probably elicited by an apparently previous sneering jab by Alexander Horn at Lauderdale's nickname of "Empire County." Rea told about his visit to Quitman as follows:

> We met with several old friends and some new ones, and a mighty crowd of strangers at Quitman, and enjoyed ourself considerably at that celebrated metropolis of the empire of Clarke; everybody at that place appeared to be on a "bust," that is except a few, but for the life of us (that is, ourself and friends) could not discover a single grocery [saloon] in the city, consequently we imagined that the excitement was owning to the peculiar nature of the water, lately discovered in that neighborhood.

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[90] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 31 January 1854.
[91] *Ibid*., 6 January 1855.
[92] *Ibid*., 5 February 1856.

Keeping his tongue squarely and good-naturedly in his cheek, Rea went on to describe his difficulty with his hotel accommodations. He and his companions had received several invitations to lodge but, wishing to avoid showing partiality, they decided to put up at whatever hotel still had space after "court day" visitors had been housed. What they found was described by Rea as "a shuck bed in a garret" that required twenty-five cents in advance.[93]

Rea's description was intended only as humor and droll exaggeration, and probably almost everyone except the editor of the Quitman *Intelligencer* took it that way. Alexander G. Horn, however, was a hot-tempered man who, though perhaps as irascible as Rea was, seems to have lacked Rea's sense of humor and basic good nature. Horn, as he would often do in later years in Meridian where his fractious personality found new avenues of expression during the troubled days of Reconstruction, reacted with characteristic petulance:

> The editor of the Lauderdale Republican [wrote Horn] is down upon Quitman, in an article that shows not only a want of policy but decency—we are sorry that he has thus in an attempt at wit so far forgotten common courtesy, as to forfeit the good opinion which many hereabouts formerly entertained of him. Look out for a diminution in your circulation. If you do tell the truth (doubtful), always use a *round about way*.

Rea replied:

> Thus writer *Horn* of the *Intelligencer*, the man who prated about the *Empire* of Lauderdale, and the great question concerning the sun and moon which *he said* was agitating the minds of our citizens…. Why the man is crazy, perfectly crazy; for we have profited by the good advice…and we "now use a *round about way*: to tell the truth, for we are too charitable to say that he was *slightly* inebriated when he wrote the said article.
>
> We down upon Quitman?… There is not a prettier village than it is in the broad Union, and we intended nothing disreputable to it, or its citizens; they are too chivalric and noble to elicit any remark from us save a kind and complimentary one…. We simply meant in a pleasant way, to give a humorous account of our visit, and to convey the idea of the great crowd attending Court on that occasion, which was a reasonable interpretation, and no man but one capable of *seeing double* could give it any other.

And with a sneer at Horn's politics, Rea added: "Mr. Horn is of course perfectly conversant with the rules of landlords in relation to persons traveling 'without baggage,' and has no doubt obtained his knowledge by actual experience, for Whig editors, we are informed, generally travel through Mississippi in that manner…."

During the late summer and early fall of 1858, a dispute developed between Rea and Wesley W. Hall, a Lauderdale member of the legislature.[94] Hall's

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[93] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 7 May 1855. All of the ensuing material came from this source.

[94] All of the following information of Rea's dispute with Hall comes from newspaper clippings at the end of the volume of the Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, for 1854 into 1856, at the Miss. Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson.

wife had received a package of anonymous, vulgar letters which Hall reportedly accused Rea of writing, since one letter allegedly made reference to something that Rea had related to Hall in confidence. After Hall's accusation, Rea tried to draw him out into a fight. Rea denounced Hall publicly and on 25 September, when in the presence of B. K. Bragg, S. B. Morgan, W. S. Henson, T. J. Phillips, S. F. Lacy, and A. J. Odum, as well as Hall's brother David and nephew Berryman Hall, Rea labeled the legislator a liar, scoundrel, and slanderer. Later Hall told these men that he had never accused Rea of having written the letters and that he had merely remarked on the coincidence that one letter contained a confidential communication that only he and Rea were supposed to know. Hall then read the letters aloud but the several men could see no connection and thus added amperage to Rea's anger and his charge that Hall was trying to damage his (Rea's) candidacy for public office.

Rea's animated efforts to elicit a public response from Hall were unsuccessful and prompted Rea to write Hall off, so to speak, as "too contemptible to waste a thought upon." Fumed Rea: "Though a slanderer, he has not sense enough to tell a plausible story. He lacks every other qualification of an accomplished villain, except the inclination; that he has to a greater extent than John A. Murrell [the infamous outlaw of the 1830's] ever had."

Rea went on to recall an earlier case in which Hall's nephew, Berryman Hall, had been indicted for assault with intent to kill J. P. Welch. L. Commack had been a strong witness for Hall, but the elder Hall sided against his own nephew and, alleged Rea, "did his best to frighten Commack out of the country by telling his mother, a poor widow, that there was a writ against her son." This, charged Rea, was untrue and was merely the elder Hall's way of trying to help Welch get Berryman Hall into the penitentiary. (Rea was also at odds with Welch.)

Such a man and editor was Constantine Rea. His antics, which seem not to have been unusual in those days, make amusing reading today and show us how different journalism today is from what it was in those rollicking times. Perhaps it is just as well. With the dissemination of news today dependent upon mammoth journalistic empires, it would probably not do to risk organizational chaos by having editors constantly offering themselves for target practice. At any rate, Rea seems to have been what the times and the trade expected, demanded, and esteemed, and he prevailed against all his foes except one in a blue uniform on a Georgia battlefield.

Chapter 5: Of Towns and People.

By the mid-1850s the county had at least nine distinct towns and villages. Using as a basis for comparison the returns of an election in December 1854, we can find the following population centers and their number of voters—adult males, of course:

Marion	246
Daleville	155
Lauderdale Springs	136
Alamucha	88
Chunkyville	59
Whynot	52
Sageville	38
Suqualena	26
Tuckers	16

There were, of course, other tiny communities such as that at Charles Rawson's store located six miles east of Marion and sometimes called Rawsonville. Rawson was postmaster for the office that opened there in 1854 and was, according to the *Lauderdale Republican*, "a good fellow in every sense of the word." In 1855 Sheriff Benjamin Meador included on his schedule for tax collection the communities of Martin (or Martin's Box), a reference to that voting precinct in the northwestern part of the county, and Meehan. Martin, which became a voting precinct on 7 August 1855, had its polling place in the home of W. Martin.[1] Ponta was in existence at least as early as 1850 when, as we have seen, it acquired a post office. And near Marion was the community of White's Store. Antioch Church, in the southeast corner of Beat 5 became a voting precinct on 2 August 1858.[2] Franklin P. Brower, about 1848 and 1849, seems occasionally to have used the name "Franklinville" to refer to the area where, with Abraham Brower, he had a mill and liquor store on Toomsuba Creek. Rushing's Store acquired a voting precinct on 5 August 1858, a location described by the Board of Police as "near Lutts old field." By the summer of 1858 there were the following voting centers in the county: Alamucha, Chunkyville, Daleville, Lauderdale Springs, Lockhart, Marion, Marion Station, Martin, Meridian, Suqualena, Sageville, and Whynot (or Why Not).[3]

Whynot, usually written in those days as two words and known first as Whitesville, must have been first settled during the 1840s. By 1852 it rated a post office and by the mid-1850s was the location of S. H. Cochrane's blacksmith shop and S. H. Wilkin's store that sold drugs, musical goods, cutlery, tobacco, etc.[4]

On 27 May 1850 the voting precinct at Suqualena was abolished and moved to the store owned by Hiram D. Mahan.[5] That arrangement must have been a brief one, however; for as we have just seen, Suqualena was again a voting precinct in

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[1] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 29 August, 9 and 25 December 1854; *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 80.
[2] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 299.
[3] *Ibid., 1847-1854*, 92, 135; *ibid., 1854-1860*, 306-308, 314.
[4] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 17 January 1854, 26 February 1855.
[5] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 108.

1854. That town, whose name in those days was usually spelled *Sookalena*, was the village nearest to Pinckney Vaughn's considerable estate. Vaughn's plantation consisted of at least 675 acres with a good residence, out-buildings, slave quarters, and cotton gin.[6]

Daleville, present-day Lizelia, was a relatively important community that had developed around the residence of Samuel Dale. It was one of the very earliest settlements by whites in the county, perhaps the first, and received the county's first post office in July of 1836. It was also among the first of the county's communities to have stagecoach service. By the middle or late 1850s it was the home of such prominent persons as retired physician James B. Ramsay, J. H. Winningham, and Peter Ulrick, the latter a veteran of the War of 1812. There were also such retail establishments as Mosely and Geiss's Drugstore.[7] By the late 1850s, however, Daleville was in decline; and on 18 June 1859 the community's voting precinct was moved to Elisha Mosely's store in Beat 3.[8] After the Civil War the community of Daleville gravitated northward some three miles to re-form around the Spring Hill Institute, later called the Cooper Institute.

When the M & O Railroad reached Okatibbee Creek in the late summer of 1855, there was already a community nearby to the west, Sageville, hardly any of which now exists. It was a thriving village before the Civil War, and among its residents were Abraham Burwell, J. E. Rew, and Joseph Bullard.

Bullard, elected a justice of the peace in 1855, must have been a fellow of unusual moods and methods. At the time that he was elected, he reached a decision to marry, a course not in itself unusual, though his method of finding a wife raised some eyebrows. He placed an ad in Rea's *Lauderdale Republican* and announced to the world, or to that part of it that read the *Republican*, that he was "in want of a wife" and was "prepared to receive communications upon that tender subject from girls or Widows and entreats them to address him by mail or otherwise…. No particular qualifications or accomplishment is required except that of baking good hoecakes and of being able and willing to spin without a spinning stick." While Bullard's requirements were modest, his tactics were not above question, as a subsequent letter, signed "Eugenia" made plain. (The letter writer's name in Greek means "well bred" and was perhaps the writer's way of saying that Bullard was not.) Said Eugenia:

> It really seems to me that in a country like ours, where so many widows and girls are to be found, any brave and courteous man could get a wife of some kind, without waking up the attention of the public generally, by advertising in a newspaper…. Women, generally, are rather timid, and seldom propose marriage; and the custom of the day is decidedly against the like audacity in a woman….[9]

A week later two persons came to Bullard's defense: someone named "Martha," who accepted his public proposal, and Editor Rea, who in a friendly, bantering manner,

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[6] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 7 May 1855.

[7] *Ibid*., 4 July 1854, 23 October 1855, 5 February 1856. Peter Ulrick is discussed in the chapter on the beginning of the Civil War.

[8] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 378.

[9] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 26 February, 19 March 1855.

assured the captious "Miss Eugenia" that Bullard was all right and would make a good husband.[10]

When Dunbar Rowland published his multi-volume history of Mississippi in 1907, he described Alamucha as extinct for over half a century, only "a dim memory."[11] The town, situated some four or five miles south-southeast of present-day Toomsuba, was one of the first settlements in the county and occupied the site of a former Choctaw town, thus its common *alias* of "Old Town." Perhaps the white newcomers chose the site because it was already cleared and had crops growing nearby. At any rate, as a white settlement Alamucha was nearly, if not quite, as old as Magnolia and Daleville.

The editor of the *Lauderdale Republican* kept a close contact with Alamucha. In the spring of 1855, for instance, Con. Rea attended a debate there and even participated in it, though it was mainly an exercise of virtuosity by the youngsters. As Rea later put it: "Some old men participated, but they were *fanned out* without ceremony by impetuous Young America, who as usual, came off victorious in this conflict of old fogeyism. We ourself attempted to participate, but we were *no where* in this hand [*sic*] conflict, of arguments and witticisms."[12]

Rea noised it about that Charles Hitt, who lived near Alamucha, had a very old red oak on his place that was thirty-seven feet in circumference.[13] Thus we can see that the editor never hesitated to take an interest in neighboring and even competing communities, especially if they had readers who might subscribe to his paper. To do Rea justice, one must remember also that he regarded his paper as the Democratic organ not only for the county but also for that part of the state.

Among the prominent citizens in Alamucha in these years were the physicians James E. Knott and J. P. Welch, as well as Thomas B. Lucy and Thomas H. Moody. Knott, who was active in the state's Democratic organization, also operated a store that sold hats, shoes, silks, alpaca cloth, and household goods. Lucy was probably half of the partnership of Lucy and Eaves, a dry goods establishment. Lucy was also secretary of Alamucha Masonic Lodge No. 130. Lucy and Eaves had purchased the stock of Wood and Sage and were running the business on the old premises.[14] As far back as January of 1845, S. Newberger, M. Blumenbach, and A. Goldsticker operated a general mercantile business "at the old stand" where Newberger alone had earlier been in business.[15]

Dr. Jacob Perry Welch, of Alamucha, was one of the county's most interesting residents. He was born in 1807 in Burke County, Ga., and received a good education which enhanced a considerable musical ability, especially on the violin. In 1836 he entered medical school at the University of Pennsylvania and subsequently practiced in Jefferson County, Ga. For a year and a half he took his practice briefly elsewhere in the state to Cool Springs and then to Sandersville and Washington

[10] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 26 March 1855.
[11] Dunbar Rowland (ed.), *Mississippi: Comprising Sketches of Counties, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons, Arranged in Cyclopedic Form*, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907), I:58.
[12] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 7 May 1855.
[13] *Ibid*., 30 May 1854.
[14] *Ibid*., 6 June 1854; 6 January, 4 December 1855.
[15] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 May 1845.

County, after which he moved in 1851 to Lauderdale County, Miss. There he remained the rest of his life, practicing medicine, running his considerable plantation, and spreading his own brand of saltiness about the area.[16]

The Welch estate consisted of over 4,000 acres and was one of the county's ornaments. Welch married Martha S. Whitaker, of Georgia, on 14 July 1840; and the twelve children they had were well occupied in helping run the family plantation. The main house was a two-story, colonial-style building whose front pillars extended to the top of the upper porch. Downstairs were the parlor, dining room, and three bedrooms, with a hall running through the entire length of the building. A porch in the rear separated the dining room and one of the single-story bedrooms from the rest of the house. The kitchen, as was common in the South in those days, was detached and one reached it by a covered walkway. Meals were cooked over the kitchen's huge fireplace. (Separate kitchens helped protect the rest of the house from heat in the summer and lessened the danger of fire at all times.) Upstairs were two large bedrooms and a large attic which Welch used as a study and dispensary. There he kept such possessions as a skeleton and a huge mortar and pestle. The walls of the rooms were unplastered, though the parlor had wallpaper. Each room had a fireplace.[17] It seems to have been a house that for all its size and space, and even some architectural embellishments, was in some ways a rustic affair. How much, if any, of the building was already there when Welch moved into it, or was done by him afterward, is apparently not known.

Welch enjoyed company and entertained often. It was not unusual for him to have as many as fifteen or twenty guests. The work was made much easier by about sixty slaves who lived in a row of log cabins behind the main house; and one of the slaves, Rosh Davis, continued to live in the area for many years after Emancipation. Guests could enjoy the informal but attractive landscaping that included shrubs, trees, flower beds, jasmine, wild peach, magnolias, and crepe myrtle. The plantation was almost self-sustaining, for it produced most of its food and had also such then-important facilities as a cotton gin and smithy.[18]

Welch, active for many years in Democratic politics, in some respects reminds one of Constantine Rea. One similarity was that they both seemed to enjoy controversy. For instance, in March of 1854 Welch had differences with J. T. Law that arose out of a legal battle between Law and E. Sage. Welch eventually published a denial of any malice in his testimony against Law, and the latter publicly apologized for statements he had made against Welch.[19] The dispute between Constantine Rea and Wesley W. Hall, Sr., already described, also involved Welch. And over the years he crossed swords with several others, though his "feud" with General William T. Sherman, which will be discussed later, probably was entirely in Welch's imagination.

Yes, Alamucha was a thriving town that had even the luxury of a stud horse named "John Bascomb." He was the property of Thomas H. Moody and was reported to be the sire of "Young John Bascomb" that won, among other prizes, a purse of $40,000 on Long Island, N. Y.[20]

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[16] Family records in possession of the late A. Jarvis Welch, Toomsuba, Miss.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 28 March 1854.
[20] *Ibid.*, 14 May 1855.

Perhaps not much smaller than Alamucha was Chunkyville in the southwestern part of the county. It was eventually absorbed by the village of Chunky in Newton County; but in the years before and during the Civil War, it was a community of some importance. The Stuckey family seems to have been prominent in the town before the war, and there was a parcel of some 400 acres nearby known as the Stuckey Tract, five miles from Chunkyville and eight from Enterprise. That land eventually passed to John Malone; and when he died in 1855, John B. Roberts and Martin Fikes were responsible for disposing of it. Chunkyville was not so large that the loss of several stores on one day could have been anything but a disaster. In July of 1855 someone accidentally dropped a burning match into a barrel of brandy. The resulting explosion and extensive fire injured two persons and destroyed three stores.[21]

As we have already seen, the site of present-day Toomsuba was settled very early. According to the late A. Jarvis Welch, a native Toomsuban who made a considerable study of the community and of his ancestors who helped settle the place, the village was originally called McLaurin or, after the railroad arrived, McLaurin Station. I was fortunate to have access to his research, which indicates that in 1866 the name was changed to Toomsuba, after a creek nearby.[22]

Some of Toomsuba's earliest settlers have already been named. According to one source, another early resident of that general area was J. R. Browell, who in 1836 began operating a sawmill and gristmill on Toomsuba Creek about a mile and a half north of Kewanee. This same source represents this mill as the first in the county. Browell is alleged to have dammed the creek to create a millrace that turned a large wheel which, attached to a shaft, worked a crosscut saw by an up-and-down motion. The shaft turned also a wheel that ground dried corn into meal. Browell had the assistance of four sons and three slaves. Employing a large cart whose axles were about four feet from the ground, he backed the cart over a log which was then hitched beneath the wagon. He then took the logs, mostly white oak, to the mill and cut them into lumber.[23]

All of this about Browell's mill could be true, but I have been unable to verify any of it and, in fact, have found nothing to indicate that anyone named J. R. Browell lived in the county in the 1830s or 1840s. There was, however, a mill in the late 1840's that may be the basis for the story. In August of 1848 Abraham and Franklin P. Brower applied for a permit to construct a mill on Toomsuba Creek in Section 22, about a mile northwest of present-day Kewanee. The request was granted and the proposed venture was declared a "public mill" that would not injure the vicinity.[24]

Peter Bozeman—he was generally addressed as "Captain" and his name often spelled without the *e*—migrated to the Toomsuba area in 1836 and in 1854 began construction of a residence that became a popular center for local society.

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[21] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 16 July, 27 November 1855.
[22] A. Jarvis Welch, *op. cit.*
[23] "First Known Mill,", *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition.
[24] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 92, 102f.

Timber on the place furnished the building materials, and Bozeman's slaves built a water mill on Toomsuba Creek where, with a "one-tooth, cross-cut saw," they turned logs into lumber for the residence, one plank taking about an hour to cut. The boards were twenty-four to twenty-six inches wide and often long enough to reach the width of an average-size room. Instead of pegs they used nails. Such items as doors were made by hand, and the whole operation was done so thoroughly that the construction produced very impressive buildings. On the south side of the main house were slave quarters, while on the west, at a good distance, was a turpentine still. To the east, on a hill behind the house, was an old Choctaw cemetery to which the native inhabitants returned occasionally to honor their dead.[25]

According to W. C. Rogers, Bozeman planted a water oak near the spot where the house was being built. The tree came to be called the Dollie Dodson Oak, after the sweetheart of a young man who was either a member of Bozeman's family or that of a neighbor. Dollie died just before the couple were to be married, and the melancholy event spawned a ballad of the type greatly esteemed in those days. The song seems not to have survived, but the tree eventually spread its branches so widely that in time they scraped against the house. Sometime in the 1920s or 1930s the tree was cut down to avoid damage to the building.[26]

About three miles west of Toomsuba were several lignite mines that were in operation when the railroad went through in the early 1860s. The lignite was loaded onto dump cars inside the mine and then rolled to the sidetracks to await trains that took it into Meridian. There the mineral was pulverized and used as filler in fertilizer. Eventually, a government study concluded that the product was not worth what farmers were paying for it, so the mines were abandoned and thereafter served mainly as an occasional refuge for outlaws.[27]

When the railroad from Meridian to Selma was being built in the early part of the Civil War, a contractor named Scott came from Virginia with a number of slaves to dig a cut through the hills between Toomsuba and Russell. Work went forward rapidly and was completed about 1862, but Scott and the slaves were still in the area when the war ended. Afterward the slaves took Scott's last name, and some of their descendants were living in the area into more recent times.[28]

Situated on the old road that ran through the county on a northeasterly-southwesterly route, the site of the future Lauderdale Springs became inhabited in the very first years of the county. As has already been shown, the community was first called Mingo Houma, named for a Choctaw sub-chieftain. When the public began to discover the attractiveness of the springs in the early 1840s, some of the residents found a livelihood in catering to seasonal visitors. And while those visitors were in the area, they could risk a pittance on the lottery run by W. P. Hobbs and T. Canterbury. This same Hobbs also ran the Railroad and Farmer's Blacksmith Shop and Woodshop. He

[25] A. Jarvis Welch, *op. cit.*
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*

must have been one of the area's earliest settlers; and his business, begun about 1844, was one of the largest such establishments in the county.[29]

In addition to Hobbs's enterprise, other businesses in early Lauderdale Springs included another blacksmith shop, five dry goods stores, several saloons, two hotels, and a bowling and billiard parlor. One of the dry goods stores was owned by J. F. Peyton, and another was probably owned by William Dearman, who on 18 September 1854 auctioned off his entire stock. Why he did so does not appear in the record; but since he died scarcely a month later, his health was probably the reason. S. K. Smith, a dental surgeon, was practicing in 1856 and announced his readiness to insert one tooth or even a full set of teeth "in the most durable manner." In 1858 J. W. Maury sold clothing and family groceries. Lauderdale Springs in these years probably gained more residents than it lost, though occasionally we see in the records such departures as that of William H. Plummer, who in early 1854 offered for sale his home and eighty acres.[30]

Lauderdale Springs was one of the first places visited in 1848 by a newly-arrived L. A. Duncan, later a citizen of Meridian. Upon arriving at The Springs, Duncan stayed a day or two with W. R. Walker. The resort was already becoming popular and, as Duncan later described it, "wealthy people [were] coming many miles, in carriages and buggies, mostly the former, with their families and servants. There were no railroads then, so supplies had to be brought from Mobile, chiefly by ox-drawn wagons."[31]

John F. Kennedy was a prominent physician in Lauderdale Springs. His name appears often in the records of the 1850s and 1860s, and he must have enjoyed both a comfortable living and the esteem of his community. During the mid-1850s Kennedy made an extensive tour of Europe and while there sent back a series of literate, interesting letters describing his travels for readers of the *Lauderdale Republican*. He spoke French and perhaps knew something of several other languages, and his letters reveal a surprising degree of erudition and sophistication. Kennedy became acquainted in Europe with the American sculptor Hiram Powers, whose statue *Melancholy*, suggested by John Milton's poetry, was attracting favorable attention as was also his nude sculpture *Greek Slave*, a type of art which most Americans of that day found disturbing.[32] As we shall see later, Kennedy's medical services were important during the Civil War to both the county and the Confederate government.

The result of all this commercial and social activity, plus the arrival of the railroad and the increasing popularity of the nearby resort, persuaded the state legislature, on 12 March 1856, to incorporate "the watering place known as Lauderdale Springs." The town limits were somewhat vaguely described as "beginning at the south-west corner of the tract of land on which said watering place is located, thence following the lines that divide the land owned by S. Moncrieff on the

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[29] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 24 January, 7 March, 27 June 1854.

[30] *Ibid*. 21 February, 27 June, 26 September, 28 October 1854, and 26 September 1856; Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 23 October 1858.

[31] L. A. Duncan, "Sixty Years Ago," Meridian *Evening Star*, 14 May 1908, 4.

[32] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 5 February, 4 and 11 March 1856. What most of the citizens of the county would have thought, *publically*, of Powers' *Greek Slave* can well be imagined.

west, W. R. Dennis on the north, A. J. White on the east, and the lands formerly owned by Wm. S. Patton, on the south, to the beginning…."[33]

The new town would be governed much as Marion was, in that a constable and justice of the peace would apprehend lawbreakers and adjudicate infractions of the town's bylaws that were passed in regular monthly meetings by a board of selectmen. One difference, however, from Marion's arrangement was that the justice of the peace would serve also as mayor and president of the board of selectmen. The new government began on Saturday, 5 April, as directed by the charter; when J. F. Patton, W. P. Hobbs, and B. B. Smith supervised the election of officers. Since there was no newspaper in the town, new ordinances were posted "at three public places…at least five days previous to their enforcement." There were also the customary arrangements for taxation, fines, and a program for keeping streets in good repair: "[The mayor and selectmen] shall have power to require all persons within the corporate limits liable to road duty to work, not exceeding six days each year, on the streets, or pay a street tax of three dollars per annum; said persons within the corporate limits to be exempt from working on all other roads and highways [outside the town]."[34]

Marion Station was one of the villages that sprang up when the railroad came through; but unlike such depots as Okatibbee, Marion Station endured and helped put its parent, "Old Marion," into decline and eventual oblivion. "The Station's" location was the result of the site's being the place on the M & O nearest Marion. If Meridian had been a place of any importance at the time, attention would very likely have been drawn there.

Though the fight over the location of the Courthouse will be discussed in a later chapter, it can be said here that Marion watched the establishment of Marion Station with an interest alloyed by apprehension and, at times, jealousy. In December of 1855, after the Mobile and Ohio had already reached the new depot, the *Lauderdale Republican*, not yet removed to there, described Marion Station somewhat wryly:

> This growing little village continues to increase in size; new buildings continue to go up and everything seems to be in a prosperous condition about the place. Some are already prophecying [*sic*] that the Court House will one day be removed thither—and that the glory of our little town [Marion] will forever set, and that everything will pass over to Marion Depot, our present entrepot; good gracious! The desolation of Babylon will be pleasant to our then condition, hear ye the prophet, and judge ye between deserted Marion and desolated Babylon.
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> In short our pleasant little town will be rendered a fit place for the meeting of Know-Nothing lodges, for where the owls are, there the bats must be also…and then our houses will really be full of doleful creatures….

[33] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, January, February and March, 1856* (Jackson: E. Barksdale,1856), 394.
[34] *Ibid.*, 394f.

God save us from such a fate, and may the little scion of a town [Marion Station] continue to flourish and prosper, as it heretofore has done.[35]

Three months later the paper remarked that Marion Station seemed about to become "a place off considerable importance." Several new buildings were going up, and the atmosphere was generally one of promise and vitality.[36]

But what about the Courthouse? The issue of its possible removal would not go away; and as Marion Station grew, so did the issue. Naturally, all those whose interests were in Marion were hostile to the Station's claims. Marion, they said, was a much healthier place. It was higher in elevation and less swampy than the new village. Besides, the railroad would very likely bring in such diseases as yellow fever. Editor Rea, editor of the local paper, complained that it was only those persons who would profit directly from a change that were advocating removal. (His opponents could have countered with the obvious corollary that it was those who would lose by removal that wished to keep the Courthouse where it was.) Rea said it was unfair to those who, believing the arrangement permanent, had bought and improved the land around the Courthouse.[37] Whatever merits that argument might have had, those property owners must have known that such arrangements were never fixed but were subject to the will of a majority of the county's electorate.

Tempers occasionally became heated, and relatively mild comments were sometimes blown out of proportion. In March of 1856 Rea, in the columns of his paper, discussed Marion Station with some droll remarks that were resented. Rea found himself obliged to protest that he was merely jesting. He was, he insisted, trying to be neutral on the issue of removal. "We are willing to let the people decide it," he wrote, "and we will take part in no useless bickering abut the matter, but we will do all we can to keep down the spirit of envy, covetousness and jealousy which now appears to pervade both villages."[38]

One of the large landholders in Marion Station was Joseph Clinton, who, as Lewis Andrew Ragsdale wished to do in Meridian at about the same time, tried to have the new town named for himself. Or perhaps Clinton had such plans only for his own fairly extensive holdings. One sees, for instance, in one of his deeds dated 1857, his use of the phrase "the Town of Clinton near Marion Station." In the same year Clinton and his wife Sarah bought two lots from the M & O Railroad, and the deed described the lots in relation to a plat of the "Town of Clinton" drawn by John Childe, Chief Engineer. Clinton's efforts never succeeded, perhaps because there was already in Mississippi a town with that name. He seems to have become reconciled to the fact, and in June of 1861 we find him selling land in Marion Station to A. Threefoot, and with no reference to a "Town of Clinton."[39]

In no time at all Marion Station took on such vitality that no one could ignore the challenge it presented to Marion or any other possible claimant. Some residents of Old Marion, attorneys such as J. Lowry, for example, left the old village and moved to the new one. Even the *Lauderdale Republican*, which under Rea's

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[35] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 25 December 1855.
[36] *Ibid*., 25 March 1856.
[37] *Ibid*., 11 March 1856.
[38] *Ibid*., 25 March 1856.
[39] *Deed Record Book I*, 135; *Deed Record Book H*, 326; *Deed Record Book K*, 96; in Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.

ownership had occasionally pooh-poohed The Station's pretensions, joined the migration to the more promising town scarcely two miles away.[40] Some businesses played it both ways, as did the law firm of Rea and Brooke; Con. Rea had his office in Marion and J. W. Brooke was in The Station.[41] When Marion Station got its first voting precinct on 2 February 1858, it merely helped further to highlight the obvious fact that the town was gaining at Marion's expense. Later that same year Joseph Clinton and J. J. Glenn offered to the Board of Police their bond of $1000 to build a courthouse at Marion Station in the event the voters chose that community as county seat. The Board, however, rejected the offer "for want of jurisdiction."[42]

Many people would probably agree that by far the most outstanding and interesting of the early citizens of the county was Samuel Dale, a man who was out of the ordinary in a number of respects. By all accounts his appearance and demeanor alone attracted attention, just as his character earned the respect of most people he met, friends and foes alike.

Dale, of Scots-Irish ancestry, was born in 1772 in Rockbridge County, Va. In 1775 his father moved the family to Glade Hollow, on the Clinch River, and in 1784 to near Greensboro, Ga. A short time later the parents' deaths left Dale to care for his younger siblings. Subsequently, Dale got much experience as an Indian fighter against the Creeks, then as a trader among those people and the Cherokees, and finally as a guide to groups of settlers moving into the Mississippi Territory. It was a large area that eventually included the present states of Mississippi and Alabama. In the War of 1812 Dale served against the Creeks, who were allied to Great Britain, and then against the latter by carrying messages for General Andrew Jackson at New Orleans. After the war, the ageing frontiersman lived at Dale's Ferry on the Alabama River where he was a merchant. In 1816 he served in the convention that created the state of Mississippi, and the next year was chosen for the first general assembly of the Alabama Territory. When the Marquis de Lafayette made his celebrated, extensive, and final visit to the United States in 1824-1825, Dale was among his escort in Alabama. A few years later, he moved to the area in Mississippi ceded in 1830 by the Choctaw Nation.[43]

By the time Dale moved to what was about to become Lauderdale County, Miss., he was already approaching legendary fame. His home and lifestyle at Daleville, as the settlement around his home came to be called, remind one of those medieval demesnes with respectful vassals and serfs clustered around their liege lord's manor. Visitors made their way to Dale's home in order to meet him or to renew old acquaintance.

One visitor, John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne, visited to get material for a biography that he published in 1860, nineteen years after Dale's death. Claiborne's book on Dale is very dated but is still almost the only monograph about

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[40] In 1854 Lowry lived in Marion but by 1859 he was practicing in Marion Station. See Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 28 February 1854, and *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.
[41] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 28 October 1858.
[42] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 262, 283.
[43] Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868), 771 (note).

the frontiersman, despite the passage since his death of more than a century and a half. Moreover, though it purports to be Dale himself who is telling his own story—through his amanuensis Claiborne—it nevertheless represents Dale as discussing at the end of the book the Mexican War, an event that happened after he had been five years in his grave.

Thomas S. Woodward, in his reminiscences, gave some interesting anecdotes that tend to make Dale a more credible figure than does Claiborne. And Woodward has considerable criticism of the picture of Dale drawn by Albert J. Pickett in his history of Alabama.[44] Woodward recalled Dale's scarred face, the result of a ferocious fist fight with John Wesley Webb, at Clinton, Ga., one of what Woodward said were "a hundred or more fist fights" in which Dale was involved. In a candid description of Dale, Woodward said that the frontiersman

> was honest, he was brave, he was kind to a fault, his mind was of the ordinary kind, not well cultivated, fond of speculation and not well fitted for it; a bad manager in money matters and often embarrassed, complained much of others for his misfortunes [and] was very combative, always ready to go into danger; would hazard much for a friend and was charitable in pecuniary matters, even to those he looked upon as enemies.[45]

It is a description that sounds plausible, and is one that in its less flattering parts sounds like most of us, and in its more favorable parts suggests a person above the average. Woodward goes on to say that Dale was not very familiar with the character of the American Indian but had kind feelings for that abused race.[46]

Dale moved to Lauderdale County shortly before it was established. He never married but his household at Daleville had, in 1840, at least thirteen people in it, nine of whom were slaves. Of the non-slaves one male was between five and ten years of age, one female was between fifteen and twenty, and two males—one of whom was Dale—were between sixty and seventy. Of the male slaves two were under ten years, one was between ten and twenty-four, and two were between thirty-six and fifty-five.[47] These data, plus some other information, raise an interesting question: Who was that other free male in Dale's household, a man in Dale's own age group?

Sam Dale for many years had a very faithful companion named Caesar who, though partly of black ancestry, apparently was not a slave. His life and origin are obscure, but Thomas S. Woodward, who knew both Dale and Caesar, said that the latter was the son of a slave named Bob, whose owner was a man named Sullivan. Bob was involved in the murder in Alabama of the Kirkland family on a stream later named Murder Creek after that grim event. Caesar's mother, named Tabby, was a slave who had been stolen from her owner in Georgia.[48]

No record that I have seen suggests when the association between Dale and Caesar began, but it was almost certainly before the start of the War of 1812 and the Creek Wars. The two men played dramatic roles in the famous "Canoe Fight" on

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[44] Thomas S. Woodward, *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians, Contained in Letters to Friends in Georgia and Alabama* (Montgomery: Barrett & Wimbish, 1859; reprinted by Southern University Press for Graphics, Inc., Mobile, Ala., 1965), 72-73.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] Edmiston, *op. cit.*, item 167.
[48] Woodward, *op. cit.*, 95.

12 November 1813, near Randon's Creek, on the Alabama River in present-day Monroe County, Ala. Of all Dale's companions in that desperate, exciting episode—James Smith, Jeremiah Austill, and Caesar—none acted more bravely than did Caesar, who rowed Dale's canoe and for a time kept it alongside that of their Creek antagonists. The story bears re-telling.

By late fall of 1813 Dale had somewhat recovered from the wound he had received in the Battle of Burnt Corn. He, Caesar, Austill, Smith, and others, were on a scouting party that took an indirect route eastward from Fort Madison to Fort Claiborne. Benson Losing, in his book on the War of 1812, tells what befell them:

> They marched southeasterly to a ferry, where Caesar, a free negro of the party, had two canoes concealed. In these the party crossed the river, and on a frosty night, with very thin clothing, they lodged in a cane-brake. At dawn [November 12] they marched up the river, the boats in charge of five picked men each, and keeping abreast of the party on shore. Some Indians were soon encountered on land and water, and, after a brisk skirmish, the dusky foe fled up the stream out of sight. Dale's party were then separated, some following the trail on the east side of the river, and others following that on the west side. At half past ten they reached Randon's Landing, where they found evidences of Indians near. Directly a large canoe, made from the trunk of an immense cypress-tree, came floating down the stream, bearing eleven naked and hideously-painted savages. They were about to land at a cane-brake, when Dale, calling his men to follow, dashed for the spot to contest their landing. They shot two of the Indians, and the others backed the great canoe out into deep water, three of the Indians swimming on the side not exposed to the bullets, and the remainder lying flat on its bottom
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> A stirring scene now ensued. One of the warriors in the water called to [William] Weatherford[49], who was in the neighborhood, for help. Dale stopped his [the warrior's] voice by putting a bullet in his brain, when the great canoe, deprived of the guidance of the three Indians in the stream, who had been killed, floated sluggishly down with the current. Dale ordered six men on the eastern bank to fetch the boats for the purpose of attacking the Indians in their huge craft. As they approached and looked into it, one of them screamed, "Live Indians, by God! Back water!" and they went back to the place of embarkation faster than they came. Dale was exasperated by their cowardice, and quickly ordered Caesar to bring a canoe. He jumped into it, followed by Jeremiah Austill and James Smith. It would hold no more safely. Caesar paddled it within forty yards of the craft of the savages, when Dale and his companions rose to pour a volley into the great canoe. Each gun misfired. Water had spoiled the priming. A moment afterward and the two vessels were side by side, when the stalwart Dale, ordering Caesar to hold them together, clubbed his musket, and, placing one foot in his own canoe and the other in that of the enemy, commenced a furious contest. Austill and Smith joined in the fray with clubbed muskets, but Caesar could not hold the boats together, the current was so strong. They parted, leaving Dale alone in the canoe of the savages, one of whom lay wounded in the stern, and four others, strong and

[49] William Weatherford, a remarkable and estimable man, was a Creek chieftain of European and Creek ancestry.

> fierce, confronted him as he stood defiantly in the middle of the great canoe.[50] Two warriors lay dead at his feet.
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> At the instant when Dale planted himself in the middle of the great canoe, the savage nearest to him directed a terrible blow at his head, which the soldier parried skillfully with the barrel of his gun, and, as quick as lightning, slew his assailant with his bayonet. The next one instantly sprang forward, when a bullet from Austill's rifle, sent from the boat that was drifting a few yards off, pierced his heart, and he fell in the bottom of the canoe. The third then made for Dale with his tomahawk, when he too fell, pierced by the brave captain's bayonet. The last warrior was Tar-cha-chee, a noted wrestler of powerful frame. He and Dale were old acquaintances. As the savage's keen glance met that of Dale, he shook himself, gave the horrid war-whoop, and then cried out, "Big Sam, I am a man—I am coming—come on!" He then bounded over his dead companions with a terrific yell, and directed a furious blow at the head of Dale with his clubbed rifle. Dale dodged it, but it fell upon and dislocated his shoulder. At the same moment Dale darted his bayonet into the body of the Indian, who exclaimed, as he tried to escape, "Tar-cha-chee is a man! He is not afraid to die!" Dale then turned to the wounded warrior, who had been snapping his piece at him during the whole conflict and was now defiantly exclaiming "I am a warrior! I am not afraid to die!" and pinned him to the canoe with his bayonet. "He followed his ten comrades to the land of spirits," said the rugged Indian fighter afterward.[51]

The battle had lasted about ten minutes. When it was over, Dale's party rushed to the bank of the river and yelled that Chief Weatherford was coming. Dale crossed the river, and he and the others made their way safely to Fort Madison.

As we lavish admiration upon Dale and his comrades, we ought also to accord an equal amount to Tar-cha-chee and his anonymous companions who were equally valiant men fighting for their homes and their ancient way of life. Keeping the influence of Hollywood and the adventure story in perspective, we must remember that there certainly were as many acts of valor and heroism among the Creeks; and yet there have been few interested enough to try to chronicle them. It is another corroboration of the maxim that it pays to advertise. Being on the winning side helps, too.

But to pick up our story about Caesar: When Dale moved to Lauderdale County, Caesar went with him. As has already been noted, the 1840 census does not list a slave in Dale's household who was in an age group corresponding to that of Caesar's, which must have been close to Dale's age. But we do find *two* free males between sixty and seventy. One, of course, was Dale himself; the other, I suspect, was Caesar. Dale died on 24 May 1841 and was buried according to the rites of the Masonic order of which he was a member. Where Caesar went immediately after Dale's death does not appear in any records I have seen, but by the mid-1850s Caesar was still living in the county and was "nominally" owned by a family named White—perhaps either Dr. John M. White or Capt. William V. H. White. They required no work of Caesar, who was certainly by then quite old. According to a contemporary account, he spent his time recounting all those exciting

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[50] Lossing says the canoe was thirty to forty feet long, four feet deep, and three feet wide.
[51] Lossing, *op. cit.*, 769-771.

events he had witnessed and in many of which he had participated.[52] How unfortunate it is that we have no record of when he died and where he was buried! By rights, he would share the limelight at the Dale tomb.[53] (Incidentally, it is possible that Caesar was still living in 1860. The census report for that year records only one free black living in the county, a man between ninety and a hundred years of age.)[54]

There were other old settlers who, like Dale, had seen early service either in uniform or as frontier movers. James Whitehead, born about 1755, was a pensioner of the Revolutionary War. In 1840 he was still alive and apparently even able to run his own household that included seven other persons.[55] It was probably Whitehead's widow, Margaret, who on 7 October 1846 filed a petition in the County Probate Clerk's office for her rights of dower. Specifically she filed for some 200 acres of land about a mile and a half east of the present community of Arundel.[56]

In addition to J. B. Hancock, previously noted, and Peter Ulrick, who is discussed later in connection with the start of the Civil War, there were in the county several other veterans of the War of 1812. Charles Blackwell, for example, born about 1792, enlisted 24 June 1812 at Chesterfield Courthouse, S. C., and was a private in John McNeill's company of South Carolina militia. He was mustered into service at Long Bluff on the Big Peedee River, at Hadwell Point, and was discharged there about 6 November 1812. Later, in Lauderdale County, he married Mary (Varnon) Dearman, a widow with several small children. They lived in Marion from 1850 to 1855 and in 1871 were living in Meridian.[57]

Ebenezer Holden, another veteran of 1812, enlisted on 18 September 1814 in Captain Nathan Hastings' company of Massachusetts militia and was discharged 30 November 1814. In later years he moved to Lauderdale County and lived in Marion, where on 15 June 1860 he married Julia White. He died in Marion on 18 December 1880 and was buried there. Holden was sometimes accorded the title "Colonel," though whether it was merely honorary is not clear.[58]

Of another veteran of 1812, Bradley (or Bradly) Jolly, we have a physical description. He was five feet eleven inches tall, dark complexioned, with black hair and eyes. Jolly was born in Georgia, and on 7 August 1814, at Ft. Hawkins, he enlisted in Captain J. G. Smith's company of Georgia militia. He was discharged on 23 December 1814, which curiously was one day before the conclusion of a peace treaty between the U. S. and Great Britain. Jolly moved to Perry County, Ala., where

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[52] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 18 July 1854.
[53] It is entirely possible that the White family, or whoever was caring for him, buried the old hero next to Dale. If so, they are once more separated; for Dale's meager remains were moved in the 1960s to the new memorial.
[54] *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Return of the Eighth Census under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 266-267.
[55] *A Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Services....* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1841), 151; see also Edmiston, *op. cit.*
[56] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 October 1846. She had apparently remarried, for her last name was given as *Loftin*.
[57] From photographic copies in the author's possession of originals in the pension records of the National Archives, Washington.
[58] *Ibid.*; see also Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 14 March, 11 April 1854.

he farmed for five years. Next he lived for four years in Tuscaloosa County, Ala., where his wife Elizabeth died in 1824. He then married Cynthia Miller on 17 May 1827 in a ceremony performed by George Cobb, a justice of the peace. They moved to Lauderdale County and had lived there seventeen years when Jolly died on 25 August 1853. The Jollys had about twelve children.[59]

The record of Hiram Lucky's service and subsequent life in Lauderdale County has added interest.[60] Lucky, who was born about 1794, was described by one person as "an unusually outspoken, candid man." Although there are some slight ambiguities in the testimony he gave in 1851 and later in 1872, he seems to have had at least two separate enlistments. In one stretch he served as a private in Captain James Cole's company in the First Tennessee Regiment. Apparently it was for this period of service that he was mustered in at the Ten Islands of the Coosa River, about 7 November 1813, and discharged at Huntsville, Ala., about 11 February 1814. Then at Fayetteville, Tenn., on or about 26 February 1814 he was mustered as a private into Captain James Tate's company of the Third Tennessee Regiment under Colonel Copeland. Lucky, whose services had been in the Creek wars, was discharged at Fayetteville about 12 June 1814. Later he moved to Lauderdale County where in 1872 he applied for and received a pension, partly through the help of A. J. and A. M. Gressett who testified to the truth of Lucky's statement of eligibility.

Then, without warning, Lucky's pension was stopped. On 30 September 1873 John G. Stokes, of the Pension Office in Knoxville, Tenn., wrote to J. H. Baker, Commissioner of Pensions in Washington, that Lucky's pension was undeserved. He based his action on a report from Robert Leachman in Meridian to the effect that Lucky had been supportive of the Confederacy and that his sons had served in the Southern army. Thus, on 3 October Baker ordered the Vicksburg pension agency, under Bryan Tyson, to stop the pension. Lucky, apparently with attorney W. G. Grace as counsel, made inquiry which prompted J. H. Baker to order the Vicksburg agency to find out exactly what Leachman had said and to interview other people who knew Lucky well and could testify regarding his attitude during the Civil War. On 5 September 1874 Tyson wrote Baker to report that the evidence supported Lucky's claims of loyalty, adding, "I presume, however, that nothing can be done more than to call your attention to the matter and that it will be investigated regardless of any testimony that may be furnished." On 7 September Leachman could not recall giving any information about Lucky's loyalty and said that he was not familiar with Lucky's attitude during the recent war.

It was all very strange, this apparent about-face by Leachman. Fortunately for Lucky, in addition to this statement from Leachman, Thomas J. Windham, who had served in the Confederate Army and had known Lucky for forty years, testified to having heard Lucky speak, prior to 1861, in opposition to secession. And Lucky, in an affidavit, described himself as having been a "union man" during the Civil War and denied that he had voted for secession. In fact, said Lucky, he had at that time been warned that if he voted the Union ticket, he would be hanged. He

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[59] Photographic copies in the author's possession of pension records in the National Archives, Washington. These records give Jolly's year of death incorrectly as 1855; 1853 is recorded in the *Minutes, Board of Police, 1847-1854*, 418.

[60] All of the following information comes from photographic copies, in the author's possession, of pension records in the National Archives, Washington.

prudently stayed away from the polls, as did probably many others. On 16 September 1874 his pension was reinstated.

Another old settler—I know nothing as to whether he was a veteran of any war—was Joseph Pigford, born in New Hanover County, N. C., on 11 March 1766. In 1830 he joined the Missionary Baptist Church and died at his home in the county on 8 September 1855.[61]

Libbeus Hunter's family came to Lauderdale at an early date, though the reports of his family's migration, as given in various articles in Meridian newspapers,[62] are almost certainly inaccurate. It is stated, for example, that Libbeus and his wife Clarkie Davis Hunter came to Lauderdale County from Cartwright County, N. C. While there is no such county in that state, there is one named Carteret. On the basis of the stated years and places of the births of their children, as given in Federal census reports, one can say that it is almost impossible that the family arrived in this area in 1805. They probably moved to Lauderdale County between the birth (about 1840 in Alabama) of Libbeus Hunter's son Osborn and the birth (about 1842 in Mississippi) of his son James. It is highly improbable that they could have acquired land as early as 1805 from the Choctaws near the future Whynot, or anywhere else. For one reason, the alleged sale of land by the Choctaws raises questions; and even if the Choctaws had made such a sale, it is questionable that the U. S. government would have recognized it. Also, it is doubtful that there was an Indian chief named Dancing Rabbit from whom, according to these reports, the family got their land.[63] (An examination of the land records in the Chancery Clerk's office in Meridian reveals one that refers to the Hunter family's acquisition of land. In one place the writing is a bit unclear and conceivably might, in a reference to the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, appear to some eyes as "Chief" Dancing Rabbit.)

Thus do fact and legend become at times almost hopelessly entwined. How much of a legend may be factual? How much of a seemingly well-documented story is myth? Anecdotes, names, places, and dates sometimes seem to have been placed into a mixer to produce a new concoction represented as local history.

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[61] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 18 September 1855.

[62] See, for example, "Settle in County," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition.

[63] *Ibid.*; see also the personal enumeration of the 1850 census for Lauderdale County, family no. 524.

Chapter 6: Agriculture Dominates the Economy.

It was inevitable that the county's economy, in the years before the Civil War, would be almost exclusively agricultural. The United States was still an agricultural nation, and the vast majority of new settlers in Lauderdale had followed that line in their former homes. Moreover, the county's location and geography made an agrarian economy practically mandatory. Its farming, however, was not comparable with that of counties in the Prairies to the north nor with those in large areas along the Mississippi River. And the evidence is that much of Lauderdale's early farming, as no doubt was true also in many other counties, was uninformed, clumsy, and wasteful. An unsigned letter in 1854 in the *Lauderdale Republican*, for instance, lectured the county's husbandmen for such egregious errors as clearing far more land than they needed and for plowing hillsides in such a way as to encourage erosion.[1]

Those farmers who could do so raised cotton, the crop that symbolized the South and that was becoming almost the object of patriotic idolatry. Certainly cotton in the Old South became strongly identified with orthodox Southern politics.

Corn, also important, probably was grown in Lauderdale County mostly for local consumption. It was, indeed, one of the most important elements in the diets of the county's residents; and as we shall see later, local farmers were criticized as late as 1860 and early 1861 for having concentrated too much on cotton to the detriment of corn production.

A comparison of census figures from 1840 to 1860 shows what a spectacular advance farmers in the county were making. Such comparison also has some surprises. We see, for example, that cane molasses, which we today often suppose has always been a staple in Southern diet, was almost unknown in ante-bellum Lauderdale County; and even in the state its production, never spectacular, actually declined. The production of tobacco was probably introduced by immigrants from states to the east where it was an important crop, though some people today may be surprised to know that the county ever produced tobacco. The decline in its production, from 1529 pounds in 1850 to a mere 170 pounds in 1860, probably indicates a realization of its unsuitability for the area. Also, the county's farmers were beginning to realize the importance of cotton, whose production in 1859-1860 trebled that of a decade before. It is strange that the production of horses and oxen remained about the same in the 1840s and 1850s. And though the number of milch cows decreased in the same period, the county's farmers were clearly learning the value and importance of mules and asses.

The following tables give some indication of the advances in the agricultural picture in Lauderdale and the counties surrounding it. The data are taken from the censuses of 1850 and 1860, and they reflect the years 1849 and 1859.[2]

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[1] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 4 November 1854.

[2] *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850. Embracing a Statistical View of Each of the States and Territories, Arranged by Counties, Towns, etc....* (Washington: R. Armstrong, 1853), 456-460; and, Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 84-87.

Agricultural Production in 1850 and 1860 in the Lauderdale Region

1850 Census

	Lauderdale	Neshoba	Kemper	Clarke	Newton
Percent farmland improved.	59	19	57	44	31
Cash value of farmland.	$426,689	$277,405	$796,137	$346,662	$234,555
Value of farm machinery.	*	*	*	*	*
Number of all equines.	2,498	1,296	3,337	1,331	1,331
Number of milch cows.	13,114	10,347	19,048	13,253	9,466
Number of swine.	28,481	14,672	33,852	18,891	20,325
Value of livestock.	*	*	*	*	*
Bushels of wheat.	2,808	1,703	238	215	305
Bushels of corn.	324,459	153,235	504,685	174,235	165,186
Pounds of tobacco.	1,529	*	*	*	*
400-lb bales of ginned cotton.	4,195	1,422	5,115	1,817	1,474
Bushels of beans/peas.	15,411	1,185	4,444	485	2,292
Bushels of all kinds of potatoes.	115,209	56,730	175,960	78,955	58,241

1860 Census

	Lauderdale	Neshoba	Kemper	Clarke	Newton
Percent farmland cleared.	64	31	52	43	34
Cash value of farmland.	$2,032,489	$969,192	$2,533,819	$2,293,619	$1,179,733
Value of farm machinery.	$139,059	$69,164	$168,841	$75,625	$64,273
Number of horses.	2,078	1,625	2,294	1,194	1,731
Number of milch cows.	3,965	2,922	3,842	2,610	2,678
Number of swine.	26,520	16,486	27,262	17,065	19,179
Value of livestock.	$657,607	$485,021	$665,306	$433,603	$438,160

	Lauderdale	Neshoba	Kemper	Clarke	Newton
Bushels of wheat.	3,252	15,918	4,902	3,121	1,332
Bushels of corn.	978,271	269,085	497,349	297,860	346,460
Pounds of tobacco.	170	1,371	570	80,050	*
400-lb bales ginned cotton.	12,700	5,692	15,404	9,196	8,205
Bushels of beans/peas.	58,109	4,743	20,206	17,564	18,997
Bushels of all kinds of potatoes.	134,030	65,688	120,421	81,794	57,010

*Left blank in original source.

The following information from the census for 1860 shows that Lauderdale County had a nascent manufacturing industry. There were no females employed in any of these businesses.[3]

Implements/goods	No. of businesses	Capital invested	Cost of raw materials	Number employed	Annual labor cost	Annual value of products
Agricultural implements.	3	$ 1,400	$ 1,200	6	$ 1,800	$ 3,600
Carriages.	1	1,600	1,500	6	2,880	6,000
Leather.	2	1,800	3,500	6	1,980	7,000
Lumber, sawed.	8	23,700	15,900	75	18,612	84,250
Tin, copper, & sheet-iron ware.	1	1,250	1,100	2	600	2,000
Wagons, carts, &c.	3	700	700	6	1,704	3,150

But the county remained tied to agriculture; and agriculture then, as always, was subject to the vicissitudes of a capricious Nature. Droughts were especially onerous. In the summer of 1845, for instance, much of the area suffered from a lack of rain; and the corn crop produced only about half the usual yield. The Paulding *True Democrat* spoke of the Chickasawhay Valley, spared the worst of the drought, as the "Egypt of the East." The paper tried to entice prospective immigrants in other drought-stricken areas farther to the east by suggesting that, despite the drought, corn and meat would be cheaper and more plentiful in certain areas of east-central Mississippi.[4] According to Frank Durr, a young slave at the time, 1850 brought so bad a drought that it was referred to as "the dry year."[5] An early summer in 1855 brought drought and temperatures near 100 degrees by May. The weather

[3] *Manufactures of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 288.
[4] Paulding *True Democrat*, 10 September 1845.
[5] Durr, *op. cit.*

blighted the cotton crop and damaged most garden vegetables, though corn and wheat were not so badly hurt. Speaking of those two crops, one observer in late spring of that year said that "if the wells and springs don't dry up, we can manage to do without rain for some time yet to come."[6] Two years later the area was weltering in heavy rains that damaged the cotton crop as badly as had the drought of 1855. Again, though, the corn stood it much better.[7]

The year 1859 was somewhat kinder to farmers, though E. J. Rew, in Sageville, suffered the inconvenience in March of losing his cotton gin house to fire. He had no cotton stored in it, but C. N. Gaddis did and sustained a great loss. Most farmers in the county that year produced a considerable quantity of cotton in the late summer and even managed a fairly good crop of corn.[8]

The year 1860 was the last untroubled season that farmers in the county and others in the nation would see for several years. In April the *Eastern Clarion* observed that the oldest citizens could not recall a spring "more favorable for plantation and garden work than the present has been." Spring began early, and warm temperatures and several good showers had vegetation two or three weeks ahead of what it usually was by that date. By mid-April much of the corn was already "knee-high" and the cotton was sufficiently advanced to be chopped. Gardens looked good and some residents were already enjoying early vegetables. Late in May vegetation was still doing well. Even the hot weather, the earliest some had seen it arrive, was of great benefit to the crops, especially cotton. Temperatures of eighty and eighty-five, even as high as ninety on a few occasions, seemed to make the cotton even more luxuriant than usual. The earlier cool mornings apparently had not hurt it. A reprint in the *Eastern Clarion* from another paper in a near-by region observed—ironically, in light of the gathering political disaster—"If some unlooked for calamity does not affect crops of all kinds there is bound to be 'peace and plenty' during the coming season." Nevertheless, as we shall see later, the crops for 1860 proved a disappointment in the county.[9]

The farmers in Lauderdale, though on the eve of a tragic period that would blight far more than just agriculture, were at last going about the business of farming more intelligently, and even scientifically. They organized the Agricultural and Mechanical Society of Lauderdale County,[10] an association that occasionally published its activities in the press. To encourage competence among its members and the area's farmers, the group sponsored fairs, exhibits, contests, and the writing of essays on scientific farming. Leading members of the society included the following: Dr. J. P. Welch and E. J. Rew (each of whom seems to have served as chairman around this time), Dr. Peyton King, C. E. Rushing, C. W. Henderson, Col. William A. Shields, D.

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[6] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 28 May 1855.
[7] Mobile *Daily Register*, 7 August 1857.
[8] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 9 March, 31 August 1859.
[9] *Ibid*., 25 April, 30 May 1860.
[10] The Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, in two separate articles in November, 1858, spoke of this organization, whose president was given as E. J. Rew, and another group named the Lauderdale Agricultural and Mechanical Association with its chairman given as Dr. J. P. Welch. Both names probably refer to the same association, and the difference in names and presidents was perhaps a result of reportorial error.

M. Currie, Dr. William J. Boyd,[11] Col. John C. Higgins, M. N. Brackett, J. W. Brooke, W. S. Gambrel, R. W. Ruter, H. D. Mahan, and Robert Leachman.[12] Toward the end of October 1858 the society sponsored a fair at Marion Station at which many men, women, and children entered their best products for judging. The following were the categories of products, the winners, and the prizes:[13]

Agricultural Products

W. J. Brown, most cotton produced on five acres……………….. $10
C. E. Rushing, 100 lbs. of the best grade of hay…………………. $ 3
Rev. W. C. Emerson, 1 bottle of "Chinese syrup"……………….. $ 3

Garden Crops

C. E. Rushing, 1 dozen largest and finest turnips…………………$ 2
Thomas L. Jackson, largest and best beet…………………………$ 2
Mrs. Ann J. McElroy, largest and best pie melon (?)……………. $ 2

Stock

L. M. Chandler, best 2-year-old "common" colt………………… $ 3
James F. Tinnon, best 2-year-old mule colt……………………… $ 2
Joseph Clinton, best mare colt "common stock," 8 months old…. $ 3
William Beeson, best male colt, 5 months old…………………… $ 2
R. W. Brown, best mule colt, 8 months old……………………… $ 2
Samuel Worbington, best 3-year-old saddle pony……………….. $ 2
T. L. Jackson, best gelding……………………………………….. $ 2
J. W. Mahan, Jr., best saddle pony……………………………….. $ 2
John C. Higgins, best buggy horse……………………………….. $ 2
F. C. Semmes, best saddle and brood mare………………………. $ 2
C. E. Rushing, best Durham bull, 3 years old……………………. $ 3
James F. Tinnon, best common stock bull………………………. $ 2
W. B. Wilkinson, best 9-month-old calf……………………….. $ 2
J. Parker, best thoroughbred 22-month-old heifer..…………….. $ 2
William S. Patton, best common sheep…………………………. $ 1
Dr. Peyton King, best pair improved pigs………………………. $ 3
George S. Pace, best pair guinea pigs…………………………… $ 2
William S. Patton, best common pig 6 (?) weeks old…………… $ 1

Poultry

Mrs. A. L. Burwell, finest rooster………………………………$ 1
" " " " , " hen…………………………….………………… $ 2
" " " " " dozen chickens……………….…………….. $ 1

Dairy and Household

Mrs. A. L. Burwell, best sample fresh butter………………….. $ 1
Mrs. N. E. Kinard, best sample butter "made in February"…… $ 2

[11] This name is partly a guess, for the print in the paper is dim.
[12] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 13 November 1858.
[13] *Ibid*.

Mrs. Dr. Welch,[14] best brandied peaches……………………… $ 1
” ” ” , ” pickles..……………………………….. $ 1
Mrs. Joseph Clinton, best vinegar……………………………. $ 2
Mrs. C. V. Jackson, best quince preserves…………………….$ 1
Mrs. Joseph Clinton, best jelly…………………………………. $ 1
” ” ” , ” dried figs….………………………… $ 1
” ” ” , ” preserved peaches.…….…………….. $ 1
” ” ” , ” ” apples…….……………… $ 1
” ” ” , ” dried apples…………..……………… $ 1
” ” ” , ” ” peaches………..…………… $ 1
Mrs. Dr. Welch, best blackberry jelly…………..…………… $ 1
” ” ” , ” muscadine jelly……………………..… . $ 1
” ” ” , ” preserved pears…………………….… . $ 1
Mrs. F. C. Semmes, best candles………………………….. . $ 1
Mrs. C. V. Jackson, best light bread………………………. . $ 1
Mrs. Mary S. Brooke, best sponge cake…………………….. $ 1
Mrs. Joseph Clinton, best dried ham……………………….. . $ 1

Manufacture of Leather

William M. Grigsby, best "gent's" saddle………………….. $ 3
William P. Andrews, best tanned leather…………………. . $ 3
" " " , " "Negro" brogans…………..……. . $ 3

Domestic Manufactures0

Mrs. J. P. Welch, best patchwork quilt…………………….. $ 2
Mrs. Mary S. Brooke, best patch silk quilt………………. . $ 2
Mrs. A. E. McShan, best counterpane…………………… . $ 2
Mrs. J. McKenzie, best hearth rug………………………. . $ 2

"The committee awarded to Mrs. Levi H. Love great praise for best specimen plaid homespun; also, to Mrs. Joseph Clinton, for second best patchwork quilt, and second best counterpane."

Fancy Work

Mrs. J. D. Tolson, best crochet work…………………… $ 1
Miss C. V. Ives, best netting……………………………. $ 1
Miss F. Rew, best baize, worsted work…………………. $ 1
Miss H. J. Clinton, best embroidery……………………. $ 1
Miss F. Rew, best knitting "in thread"…………………. $ 1
Miss Z. P. Meador, "only eight years of age,"
embroidery "in boss,"………………. . . $ 1
Miss J. F. DuBose, best specimen of bonnet………….. $ 1
Miss R. _____ (?), best specimen of braiding………… $ 1
Misses M. and S. Semmes, best leather frame………… $ 1

[14] In those days wives, when their husbands had special titles, were often identified as in this instance.

Mrs. L. A. Ragsdale, best specimen oil painting……… $ 1
Miss C. Meredith, best specimen of watch case……… $ 1
Miss A. V. McShan, best lamp mat………………….. $ 1

Workshop

Messrs. Bains and Reynolds, best carriage…………… $ 5
” ” ” ” , ” carryall……………… $ 5
Dr. J. P. Welch, best subsoil plow…………………… $ 3

The Society singled out several other entrants for praise. Absalom Scarborough received a prize of three dollars for a model of a "cotton protector screw" which the Committee regarded as "novel and very ingenious in its mechanism." Mrs. Joseph Clinton received praise for "a lot of apples and quinces," and James Moore and John Stinson were commended for "two other lots of apples." Though the report failed to give credit to anyone for them, the Committee had praise for a bottle of "native wine" and two bell pears, all of which the judges found of "superior quality," particularly describing the wine as deserving of a premium. They admired the stalks of "varnish" cotton that H. J. Arrington exhibited, as well as the "large and excellent potatoes produced by Messrs. Emerson and Coleman." Despite her husband's attitude toward alcohol, Mrs. John T. Ball submitted some wild cherry cordial, a concoction that found favor with the judges, as did also the "mammoth" sunflower shown by Mrs. Benjamin Goodman.

Other loose ends addressed by the Committee included special praise for Mrs. L. A. Ragsdale's paintings—"of superior artistic taste and talent"—and a commendation to Mrs. James Tolson for a chair that she "very ingeniously and tastefully constructed from a barrel." The Committee thought the frame of leatherwork presented by the two Misses Semmes to be of a "high order of talent." The same two young women and Miss Mary A. Ball had made "very tastefully arranged and highly beautiful" bouquets. E. J. Rew earned praise for a farmer's level which the Committee "earnestly recommended" to the local farmers; and the sugar cane syrup produced by C. W. Matthews "demonstrated the utility of its general manufacture in our section," a statement that seems to support my earlier observation that sugar cane apparently was not yet much produced by the county's farmers. A Captain Ives displayed an "African shawl" which had been in his family for a century and which the Committee pronounced "a creditable specimen of African manufactory," thus suggesting that it had been made by slaves in the eighteenth century.

To encourage scientific methods and general competence among the farmers of the region, the Agricultural and Mechanical Society sponsored the writing of essays, two of which the judges cited for their good quality. Dr. Peyton King won a five-dollar prize for an essay that demonstrated the cause of dry rot in cotton. King was asked to furnish a copy to the *Lauderdale Republican*, which published it as did also the Paulding *Eastern Clarion*. According to King, cotton was subject to three kinds of rot: 1) The wet-weather rot, produced by too much rain, or by dampness from the ground, when the bolls are about to open. 2) A rot caused by an adhesion of the bloom to the young boll. 3) A "constitutional defect or desease [*sic*] in the seed" that was "promoted or restrained to a considerable extent by the state of the weather."

The essay took about two full columns in an average newspaper, and it apparently caused much favorable comment, even beyond Lauderdale's borders. An essay on plantation economy was submitted by E. J. Rew. The Society's judging committee liked Rew's essay, but "not finding such an Essay provided for on the premium list," were perplexed about how to report it. Finally, "in consideration of the valuable information contained in the production," they recommended that Rew be awarded a prize of five dollars and that the essay be published in the *Lauderdale Republican*.[15]

D. M. Currie and a man named Smith entered a category somewhat out of the ordinary. Proposing a problem in the game of chess, they offered to anyone able to solve it a prize of five dollars. It went to William P. Evans.[16]

The fair must have been only one of a number of such events in the county, and its reporting by the *Eastern Clarion* provides for us today a charming glimpse into the everyday life of Lauderdale County in those final peaceful days of the late 1850s. It shows also that the farmers of Lauderdale, indeed the entire population, had made substantial progress in two decades. But all the hard work of the preceding quarter-century, at last beginning to bring some rewards, was about to be wiped away by war.

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[15] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 13 and 27 November 1858.
[16] *Ibid*., 13 November 1858.

Chapter 7: The Founding of Meridian.

We now arrive at a point that anyone familiar with Lauderdale County must regard as one of the most important parts of this history, namely, the establishment of Meridian. Relatively late in appearing, it quickly became, and has remained, the county's center of population and business.

I have heard or read a number of traditions and theories that attempt to explain where the name *Meridian* came from. The one that strikes me as most persuasive is that the site was considered a mid-point between Lauderdale Springs and Enterprise, two older settlements; and since the word *meridian* has something of the connotation of a middle point, that name was given to an early hotel at the site. That all three towns were situated on or near the old original road that antedated the county rather supports this theory.

In the 1840s and early 1850s the site of what later would be Meridian had several names. As with other areas that were not established communities, the place was sometimes identified by its best-known resident, as in the phrases "near Richard McLemore's" and "McLemore Old Field." Sometimes it was called "Sowashee Bridge," though it was often necessary to add "on the Paulding Road" to distinguish it from the Sowashee bridge on the Decatur Road nearer Marion. We find, for instance, that on 6 February 1855 the county police board ordered that, through a petition of Dr. G. W. Hamster, a road be laid out "to commence at or near *Whynot* & moving in a direction to Richard McLemore['s] old place." After the railroad reached there, other designations were used, as on 12 January 1857 when a road was ordered laid out "from Ebinezer [*sic*] Church to Sowasha [*sic*] Station." And with interesting variety, on that same day the Board of Police ordered that William Keeton be allowed $100 for building a bridge across Sowashee "on the road leading from Meridian to Whynot."[1] (This was perhaps the first use of the name *Meridian* in the records of the Board of Police.)

Even if John T. Ball was not the originator of the name, he seems to deserve the credit for the first public use of it for the little community. And though it was for a while common to see the place named for his store, Ball himself apparently preferred Meridian. (This fact, plus the modest proportions of his survey, as compared with that of Lewis Andrew Ragsdale's, would suggest that Ball had a less robust ego than did Ragsdale.) The earliest use of the name that I have seen—except, of course, that by the U. S. Postal authorities—was in the summer of 1854 when, as we've already seen, a news item in the *Lauderdale Republican* noted that William Owens had been stabbed in the cheek "near Meridian, in this county." Both Owens and the name for the village survived. In October 1855, when William M. Hancock was campaigning, it was announced that he would speak at "Meridian, or Ball's Store."[2]

When in October of 1848 L. A. Duncan first visited the county, the site of the future Meridian was, to use his word, a "blank." The "hill sides [were] covered with virgin forests of oak and pine, and its lower grounds in part exhibiting fields of corn or cotton." These fields would almost certainly have been those owned by Richard McLemore. In fact, McLemore was one of the few landowners whom Duncan saw in the county. But the nearest that Duncan got to McLemore's residence on that first visit was at what Duncan called "Miles' Store at Mr. Horeb," where on the

[1] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 71, 78, 175-176.
[2] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 29 August 1854, 16 October 1855.

way to Decatur he spent a night with N. M. Collins and the next night with the Rev. N. L. Clarke.[3]

It was perhaps about 1831 that Richard McLemore came to what soon would be Lauderdale County.[4] There is disagreement over where he was born. Some sources say Virginia (e.g., Grauel, page 5), but the 1850 census record for Lauderdale County (family 324) says South Carolina. W. B. Grauel, an employee for many years of *The Meridian Star*, did much delving into the county's past and knew several persons who had had direct contact with some of the early citizens. Grauel noted that McLemore purchased several thousand acres around the site of the future Meridian and Marion. He built a home of logs, a structure with a long hall and a stone chimney at each end. The house was on the old road from Lauderdale to Enterprise and stood where today Eleventh Street (near Sixth Street as it cuts through at an angle) crosses Eighteenth Avenue. In later years the old structure was enhanced and enclosed within a more imposing structure and as recently as the 1930s was the home of the Thomas H. O'Neil family, 1011 Eighteenth Avenue.[5] (In the course of "progress" in later years, the building was torn down.) According to W. T. Vance, a pioneer who after a long life recalled those days, McLemore built his house in 1835. It was, said Vance, known as the Travelers Inn, which suggests that McLemore's hospitality was perhaps more than private.[6]

According to one source, sometime later McLemore built a more substantial home on the present site of Fifth Street and 31st Avenue; though this same source also suggests that the house was built about 1833. Not only does this seem unlikely but also it disagrees with the statement, cited above, by W. T. Vance that the previous residence, the log house, was built in 1835.[7]

There was in McLemore's family an elderly relative named Mrs. Equilla Tiner. When she died, sometime after the 1850 census, the family buried her in what become McLemore Cemetery. In time other family members, including Richard McLemore himself, were buried there; and eventually the cemetery was opened to the public.[8] Since McLemore, a Baptist, played an important role in the development of that denomination in the Meridian area, this is a good point at which to examine the establishment of that and other churches in Meridian.

What is today the First Baptist Church of Meridian traces its history back to July of 1839 when a small group organized the Oaky Valley Baptist Church in a location not now precisely known but somewhere slightly southeast of the present city of Meridian. In early 1849 dissension arose over the issues of the education of ministers and what

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[3] Duncan, "Sixty Years Ago."

[4] Grauel, *op. cit.*, 5. But McLemore must have been in the state as early as 1827; because his daughter, according to the 1850 census, was born in the state at about that time. It has been held that his fourth child, Sarah, born probably in 1833, was the first white birth recorded in the county—see *ibid.*, 5. But even if true, it would not have been *technically* a county at the time, unless (to split hairs) she was born during the year's final week.

[5] Grauel, *op. cit.*, 6; "McLemore Fosters Meridian," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition.

[6] "Mansion Built 98 Years Ago Still Stands," *Meridian Star's* Lauderdale County centennial ed., 22 October 1933, 30.

[7] "McLemore Fosters Meridian."

[8] Grauel, *op. cit.*, 6; see also personal enumeration of 1850 census for Lauderdale County, family 324.

some members regarded as the inconsistency of several other members' making and selling liquor. When this schism occurred, the Rev. W. P. Carter was pastor, Richard McLemore was deacon, and J. B. Yarborough was clerk. A majority of somewhat more liberal members withdrew, but the smaller group retained the church records and continued to regard itself as the original church, though it had been reduced to an insignificant body. The smaller group gradually withdrew into itself and became, in the words of L. A. Duncan, "anti-mission in both faith and practice."[9]

The larger body, considering *itself* the original church, moved into a building some three miles east of present-day downtown Meridian. Pastor Carter resigned in 1853 and under his successor, the Rev. Isaac Spinks, the group decided at a conference in 1854 to move the church to the neighborhood of Richard McLemore's home. In September, McLemore, C. W. Matthews, and Silas Walston undertook to find a suitable location, and on November 4 reported that they had acquired title to a one-acre lot. A short time later the church erected a building thirty by forty feet and occupied it probably early in 1855.[10]

This Baptist church was not a log structure, as was commonly true in those years on the frontier, but rather a frame building. Situated across the main highway (today's Sixth Street) from the McLemore Cemetery—which in 1855 must have had very few graves—the church very soon became known as the Meridian Baptist Church. Some references suggest that at about this time the church even began to speak of itself as the *First* Baptist Church, of Meridian, though all contemporary references I have seen called it merely the Meridian Baptist church, even on into the 1880s.[11]

The building of this church near McLemore's home and family cemetery, doubtless with his financial help, plus the naming in later years of this body as the "First Baptist Church," has apparently led some sources to say flatly that McLemore built near his home the *first* Baptist church in the county. Actually, as we have seen, there were earlier ones, including the Salem Church. It could, perhaps, be said that McLemore built, or helped build, the first Baptist church *in Meridian*.

According to L. A. Duncan, during the Civil War Confederate authorities took possession of the Meridian Baptist Church "as a military necessity." They employed it first as a hospital, next as a commissary depot, and finally as an arsenal or ordnance room.[12] During the war, and especially after Sherman's destructive raid, there were few large usable buildings in Meridian.

This situation after 1861 meant that Meridian's Baptists had difficulty meeting their religious obligations. There is some evidence that McLemore built a more spacious, elegant church building called the Calvary Baptist Church. These reports place it on the same highway as the other church, but a little nearer the center of town, in fact, on the present site of the Dement Printing Company Building. This second church, according to one account, was later bought by the Dement brothers;

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[9] "1st Baptist Church near Centennial," *Meridian Star's* Lauderdale County centennial ed., 22 October 1933, 30. This article quotes from an account written in 1892 by L. A. Duncan.

[10] *Ibid*. See also *The College Mirror*, vol. I, no. 5 (March 1870). This monthly was published by J. B. Hamberlin of the Baptist Meridian Female College. The issue cited was owned in 1956 by Lawrence Hall McCraven, who let me examine it at that time.

[11] "Pioneer Resident of County Has Recollection of Early Sawmills," *Meridian Star's* Lauderdale County centennial edition, 22 October 1933, A:6; *Business Directory of the City of Meridian* (Meridian: Shannon & Tiller, 1884), 15.

[12] "1st Baptist Church near Centennial."

and its members moved their affiliation to the Meridian Baptist Church, which after the spring of 1865 occupied the same general site that it does today—the west side of Twenty-sixth Avenue between Seventh and Eighth Streets.[13]

Assuming that this Calvary Baptist Church was in existence during at least part of the Civil War, we can find some evidence that it did not completely solve the problems faced by Meridian's Baptists of finding a place to worship. Moreover, it may have fallen victim to Sherman's raid. Another account states that a number of Baptists sent out a call for help, and Elder J. R. Graves visited Meridian in 1864. His inability to find any place for the Baptists to meet confirmed what he had heard of the local members' problems. Undaunted, Graves preached under an oak tree near where the First Baptist Church would later stand. His sermons were well attended and brought in good donations toward the construction of a permanent structure. Early in 1865 these Baptists secured a former school building in Marion, moved it down to Meridian, and had it ready for use in April just as Confederate forces were surrendering.[14]

The Methodists were active at an early date in the Meridian area. One church, about which I have seen scarcely more than a brief mention, was located in the late 1850s (and perhaps into the early 1860s) in John Ball's Survey. The records are contradictory as to its exact location, and none gives its name. John Ball's "pocket" plat map, a document which would seem to deserve the utmost confidence, places a "Methodist Church" on the northwest corner of Central Avenue (Eleventh Street) and Meridian Street (Twenty-seventh Avenue). In contrast, two city directories, for 1873 and 1884, say that the church was on the corner of Meridian Street and Fleming Street (Tenth Street). This would be one block south of the place indicated on Ball's map, and at a place shown by that map as vacant. Carelessness, I believe, was not one of Ball's shortcomings; but on the other hand, both directories were close enough to the time to be accorded respect. Perhaps the church moved from one location to the other.[15]

But the catalyst for the growth of Methodism in Meridian was the little church that in time became the Central United Methodist Church. Its ancestor was the Salem Church, near today's Ninth Avenue and A Street, that was established by a clergyman named Dearman as part of the Marion Circuit. The building was of hewn logs and stood on a lot that included a two-acre cemetery. The cemetery, according to one source, contained at least a hundred graves, some of which were those of Confederate soldiers.[16] This would seem to show that though the Salem Church was apparently abandoned about the time of the Civil War, its cemetery continued to be used after the church had been moved to a new place. This new church was the embryonic Central Methodist Church.

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[13] Grauel, *op. cit.*, 6; *Business Directory of the City of Meridian*, 15.
[14] "1st Baptist Church near Centennial."
[15] See John Ball's original manuscript plat map of his survey, Mississippi Collection, MPL; see also Robert Desha (compiler), *Business and Complete Directory of the City of Meridian* (Meridian: Campbell and Powell, Star Printing House, 1873), 51; see also *Business Directory of the City of Meridian*, 17.
[16] Dennis, *op. cit.*; Desha, *op. cit.*, 42.

An account written only thirteen years after the event says that it was in 1860 that a Methodist church was built on what is now the block formed by Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets and Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Avenues.[17] An 1873 account described the building as a frame structure, and in 1933 Mrs. E. L. Marechal, who was contemporary with the event, agreed.[18] But Bill Dennis, also in 1933, testified that the church was made from hewn logs, though the floors were of dressed, hand-planed lumber.[19] The pastor was the Rev. O. P. Thomas who was assisted in the new venture by Dr. John H. Gibbs, I. S. O. G. Greer, and others. One of the first things the members did was to move at least some, if not all, of the bodies in the cemetery at the Salem Church to the new location.[20] (Though it is impossible to say from the records I have seen, removal may have involved only graves of Confederate dead.) By the beginning of the Civil War this church, though unfinished, was usable. At some point after the war began (most likely in 1863), the military authorities took over the property and built hospital, barracks, quartermaster, and commissary facilities on the site. The presence of a hospital, as well as the general military operations in the area, doubtless increased the size of the military burial plot around the church. Meanwhile, the church's congregation continued to make limited use of the church. When Sherman occupied Meridian in February 1864, his soldiers set fire to the Confederate facilities on the site and did not spare the church. Through timely action, however, the the church building sustained only minor damage.[21]

On 18 October 1856 the Reverend W. C. Emerson, acting under the direction of the Presbytery of Tombeckbee—the latter word was an older spelling of Tombigbee—organized the Presbyterians in Meridian. The little church consisted of six whites and two slaves. L. A. Ragsdale and John T. Ball became elders, and the Pesbytery employed Emerson as pastor for the rest of 1856 and the following year. The loss of the church's records makes it impossible to get much definite information about this group, including the church's location, from its founding until after the Civil War.[22] (The church may well have been where it was after the Civil War, that is, on the southeast corner of Seventh Street and Twenty-fifth Avenue.) Emerson continued in his capacity as minister, as well as that of one of Meridian's leading citizens. After the surrender he emigrated with a group to Brazil, where he died and is buried.

Though they made some earlier tentative forays into Lauderdale County and the Meridian area, the Catholic authorities got a somewhat delayed start by comparison

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[17] By the 1870s the site faced the S. C. Theilgaard home. In the late 1800s and early 1900s it was occupied by "Big Central" High School. The author's first memory of the entire block—in the mid-1930s—is as an unoccupied block known as "Red Clay Hill." While the block was vacant in the 1920s and into the early 1940s, it was sometimes used by carnivals and tent shows. In most of the 1940s, it was the location of the Teen Age Canteen, better known as the TAC, on the southeast corner. Later this building was used as a center for retired persons. Now the site accommodates Fire Station No. 1.

[18] Desha, *op. cit.*, 43; "Pioneer Resident of County Has Recollection of Early Sawmills."

[19] Dennis, *op. cit.*

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Desha, *op. cit.*, 43.

[22] *Ibid.*, 141.

with other denominations. On the other hand, one might with considerable justification say that their missionaries were probably the first non-natives to go into the Lauderdale area. The Most Reverend Richard Oliver Gerow, seventh bishop of the Diocese of Natchez, has described the early work of such daring and devoted priests as the Jesuit Mathurin le Petit, who in 1728 began his ministry to the Choctaws and established the Chickasawhay Mission in what is now either northern Clarke or southern Lauderdale County. In 1729 he was replaced by Father Michael Baudoin, who also made his headquarters at Chickasawhay. Baudoin, a typically intrepid Jesuit, spent twenty years at the post. He gave generously of himself but, as Bishop Gerow says, "the fruit of his labors was small." Nevertheless, his mission headquarters in this area were a welcome haven to other brave explorers such as the French officers Captain Joseph Christophe de Lusser and Regis du Roullet.[23]

From 1843 to 1862 the Rev. Father G. J. Boheme was pastor of the Catholic Church in Paulding, making his residence there with James J. Shannon's family. It was Boheme who would have been responsible for sending missionaries into Lauderdale County.[24] And though W. B. Grauel does not cite his source, he declares that Catholic missionaries came to the present site of Meridian in 1853.[25]

There were few Catholics living in the county during the Civil War, and very few in Meridian. Nevertheless, these few were not forgotten by their denomination. As Gerow says: "The few Catholics living here [in Meridian] during the War Between the States were attended by the devoted and zealous missionary, Rev. Father Baptiste Mouton, who may be justly called 'the Pioneer of the Faith in Northeast Mississippi.'"[26]

Another denomination that arrived later and never had many members in those years was the Protestant Episcopal Church. The first Episcopal service in Meridian, and probably in the county, was in 1856. It was conducted by Bishop William Mercer Green in the academy about a mile and a half from town, on the Upper Decatur Road and near the present East Mississippi State Hospital. Though there were not more than two or three members at that time, there were occasional services, sometimes in other church buildings such as the Methodist church on the corner of Tenth Street and Twenty-seventh Avenue, or in one of the area's Baptist churches. The Rev. Father George Stewart conducted these services.[27] On 24 November 1858 a parish mission was organized under the name Church of the Mediator, Bishop Green remarking at the time that "one of the proprietors of the place [Meridian] kindly offered me a site for a Church."[28] (That was very likely L. A. Ragsdale.) By 1861 there were still only about four communicants, but despite this meager growth there seems to have been some effort at that time to build a church. Had the Civil War not come, those endeavors might have succeeded. Father Stewart had secured $700 toward the $2,000 needed to

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[23] Richard Oliver Gerow, *Catholicity in Mississippi* (Marrero, La.: Hope Haven Press, 1939), 23-24. Bishop Gerow notes the lack of firm evidence that Chickasawhay Mission was established by le Petit.
[24] *Ibid.*, 141.
[25] Grauel, *op. cit.*, 4.
[26] Gerow, *op. cit.*, 219.
[27] Desha, *op. cit.*, 51.
[28] *Inventory of the Church Archives of Mississippi* (Jackson, Miss.: The Mississippi Historical Records Survey Project, 1940), 81.

carry out the plans developed by Henry Congdon, of New York City, with whom Stewart had been in contact.[29]

From time to time after his arrival in the county Richard McLemore sold or gave portions of his extensive real property to those he thought would make good residents; and it is even possible that he, like John T. Ball and Lewis A. Ragsdale, saw himself as the founder of a town. If so, he seems not to have gone about it very seriously. Thus, when Ragsdale came onto the scene about 1853, McLemore sold to him the remaining land and moved to a new home in the direction of Marion—though, as we shall see later, probably nearer Meridian than to Marion. According to one source[30] McLemore sold his land to Ragsdale, and even some to Ball, at only a dollar an acre. On the other hand, L. A. Duncan, who was a fairly acute observer and arrived only a year or two after the sale, says that McLemore sold Ragsdale "his plantation, including a large two-story residence for twenty dollars an acre."[31]

Ragsdale was fairly young when he left Alabama and decided to make his home in Lauderdale County. He had heard that two railroads, the Mobile and Ohio and the Southern Railroad (or Vicksburg and Meridian), were probably going to cross somewhere on or near the McLemore plantation. Ragsdale, thinking it a good opportunity for investment, moved to the county. His arrival was probably in 1853, for on 22 September of that year he purchased a considerable amount of land from McLemore, and bought land from others as well.[32] We learn, for instance, that in the winter of 1856 the firm of Ormond, Greer, and Swilley, probably in the role of brokers, advertised lands that Ragsdale had bought from McLemore and others, including 400 acres from Elizabeth Creel, William P. Dodd, Ferdinand and Martha Snow, and Harris T. and Eliza Jane Dearman—all on the same day, 6 November 1854.[33] (On 29 July 1857 Ragsdale *sold* eighty acres, to Thomas Ormond and I. S. O. G. Greer.)[34] One other person from whom Ragsdale bought land was R. Y. Rew, who on 1 January 1856 sold to him, for $8,000, 320 acres that were in what is today the eastern part of Meridian on both sides of the railroads.[35] Having taken these rather considerable and decisive steps, Ragsdale took one more that was hardly less so, one that committed him even more to his permanent residence in Lauderdale County. That is to say, on 5 March 1855 he was married to another county resident, Sarah McElroy.[36]

Ragsdale relished creating his large estate and felt an understandable solicitude for it. So, when he discovered that intruders were helping themselves to his timber, he advertised a warning that such trespassers were making his lands "valueless" and that from then on he would exact justice without regard to who the guilty parties might be.[37]

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[29] *Inventory of the Church Archives of Mississippi*, 81.
[30] "McLemore Fosters Meridian."
[31] Duncan, "Sixty Years Ago."
[32] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 18 March 1856.
[33] *Ibid.*, 18 March 1856; *Deed Record Book G*, 449f, in Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[34] *Deed Record Book I*, 74, Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[35] *Ibid.*, 85.
[36] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 26 March 1855.
[37] *Ibid.*, 26 February 1855.

He had better plans for his lands than to allow them to be plundered, for Ragsdale had now begun to fancy himself the founder of a town—nay, a metropolis. His reasoning was that not only were his holdings almost exactly in the center of the county—and thus suitable for the county seat—but also that in the very near future the Southern would eventually cross the M & O. Not too much later these would be joined by the Mississippi and Alabama Rivers from Selma, and the Northeast and Southwest from Tuscaloosa. Moreover, he predicted glowingly, "A road is chartered, and no doubt will be built, from said place [i.e., his city] *direct* to the city of New Orleans." His optimism helped him see even other roads converging there. The money generated by all that commerce would "doubtless *exceed* one hundred millions of money." "The amount of travel," he thought, "no one could conceive of." The courthouse would be moved there as a matter of course. His city's residents would find that the "pure air and water, sandy soil and undulating country ground" would make the city "one of the healthiest and most delightful places to be found." Perhaps exaggerating a little, Ragsdale insisted that "[m]any of the most enterprising, intelligent and wealthy persons in the country" had already—in 1858—determined to move there. Furthermore, he gushed, "If Atlanta, Ga., with the cars [i.e. trains] going in from *four* different directions, has grown to be a city of near 15,000 inhabitants in a few years, what may be expected of the city of Ragsdale, with the cars coming in from *seven* different directions…?"[38]

So there it was—the *city of Ragsdale*. His ego was reassuringly healthy, and entirely normal. He set the fifteenth and sixteenth of June, 1858, as the day when he would "offer for sale at public outcry in the city of Ragsdale, *alias* Meridian…about Five Hundred lots." Then, for some reason, Ragsdale had to postpone the sale until the following twentieth and twenty-first of October. His terms: a fourth down, another fourth by 1 March 1859, and the rest by the first day of 1860.[39]

The "city of Ragsdale, *alias* Meridian"! There was probably much implied irritation in Ragsdale's word *alias*, for it represented his only competitor, John T. Ball, who had plans of his own, and at about the same time that Ragsdale did.

Ball came into the area from Wahalak, Kemper County. For about thirteen years he was a general commission merchant in Kemper and Noxubee Counties and by 1854 had expanded his territory so that he had to divide his time between the Mobile area and Lauderdale County. Not yet a full resident of the county, Ball at first lived in Meridian only in the summer and fall, and in Mobile the other two seasons. When Ball was not residing in the Lauderdale area, C. W. Henderson and Company of Marion provided Ball's customers with such supplies as bagging and rope. For a brief period in 1855, Ball's agent in New Orleans was a Mrs. Samuel Barrett, whose place was later taken by Levi Hurlbutt, a native of New York State. But it must have taken Ball only a few months to decide to live exclusively in Meridian.[40] It was very likely sometime in 1854 that he built at Meridian what L. A. Duncan described as "a double log cabin for a residence" and "a rough hut for a store." It could have been a little

[38] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 August 1858.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 6 and 22 January, 25 September, 4 December 1855.

earlier.[41] At any rate, as we have already seen, Ball opened a post office there on 20 June 1854 with his employee Alfred Beck as postmaster.

Though Ragsdale had by far the larger amount of land, Ball had acquired a well-situated eighty-acre tract from a widow named Bird, or possibly Byrd.[42] Ball's survey extended originally from Twenty-seventh to Thirty-first Avenues and from the railroads to Fourteenth Street. It was divided into thirty-two blocks that ranged in size from the smallest ones nearest the railroads, thirty by sixty-seven feet, to the largest that were seventy-five by one hundred sixty-five feet. The smallest were probably intended for commercial buildings with common walls. Some of the most prominent citizens in the village lived on or adjacent to Ball's tract and included John Armstrong, L. A. Duncan, John H. Gibbs, Ed Anderson, and W. Massengale. County Surveyor M. N. Brackett bought lot number 1, block 31, on 28 July 1859.[43]

There was actually a third party involved in the business of creating surveys in this central part of the county on Sowashee Creek. Like very many other rail companies in those heady times, the Mobile and Ohio was enjoying the largess of generous and sometimes corrupt Federal officials who supported large—often preposterously large—tracts of land along proposed routes. Though the Federal government may have gone overboard with its generosity, the original intention was to help the developing railroads pay for part of their expensive construction by getting public land free, enhancing its value with rail transportation, and then selling it at a premium. Land on a railroad right-of-way could be expected to bring a handsome premium.

If one examines a map of the original proposal for a proposed route, the potential right-of-way of the M & O cut a swath through the virgin country in width from a conservative twelve miles to a prodigal thirty miles. The railroad did not, of course, get anywhere near all the land encompassed in those sweeping stretches, but it got a healthy portion of it, including much within Lauderdale County.[44] And in keeping with its almost royal status, the M & O in April of 1854 rather imperiously warned persons against cutting timber on any of the land given to it, which according to legal practice encompassed all even-numbered sections within six miles of the right-of-way and the odd-numbered sections between six and fifteen miles of the railroad's tract.[45]

To bring the M & O's landholding down to some specific details, the records show that in addition to those lands it received by grant, on 20 December 1850 the company purchased 441.76 acres in Township 8, Range 16 East, of Section 19. Also in Section 20 of the same township, on 20 September 1850, the road bought an additional 161.05 acres. A third purchase on that same day was for almost the entire

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[41] *Meridian and East Mississippi, Condition and Prospects* (Meridian: Gray and Murphey, 1895), 5.
[42] "Sees City Grow," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 November 1946, unnumbered pages, giving the recollections of W. T. Vance. The 1850 census (family no. 65) shows a Mary Bird, apparently a widow, age 42.
[43] *Deed Record Book J*, 347f; Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH. See also John Ball's "pocket" survey map.
[44] See *Map Showing the Mobile & Ohio River Railroad Grant in the States of Mississippi & Alabama*, by the General Land Office, no date, Record Group 77, Roads 107 Flat, NA.
[45] *Ibid.*; Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 11 April 1854.

640 acres of Section 36 of the same township. That was quite a day for the M & O, an acquisition of something like 1200 acres. Picking up a paltry 40.26 acres in the area on 11 August 1856 is hardly worth mentioning.[46] Checking a map of the county, one can see that much of this combined purchase was no closer to the actual M & O right-of-way than eighteen or twenty miles. Small wonder that with these and other go-getting activities, railroads in the middle and late nineteenth century became the objects of intense hatred. And that hatred was probably exacerbated in Lauderdale County when the M & O sold, at a minimum price of at least four times the price of public land generally, much of the acreage granted to it by Congress. There were auctions in the county at Lauderdale Springs on 23 June 1857 and on the next day at Marion Station. Terms were a third down, another third in one year, and the rest within eighteen months. There was an eight-percent interest on the unpaid amounts, and the lands were subject to resale in cases of default.[47] The profits that must have accrued to the railroad can be imagined.

It was on 20 September 1850 that Congress donated land to the states of Alabama and Mississippi to aid in the construction of the Mobile and Ohio [River] Railroad. For some reason, difficulties arose over many of the sales of land that the road later made to private parties. On 3 December 1858 the Mississippi Legislature, by a brief, sweeping statement, decreed that all those clouded titles issued by the M & O "shall be, and are hereby declared to be legal and valid, and shall vest in the purchaser, or purchasers, a good valid and lawful title to such lands heretofore sold, or which may hereafter be sold by said Mobile and Ohio railroad company."[48] For good measure the Legislature a few days earlier had requested Congress to approve and confirm the transfer by Mississippi and Alabama to the M & O.[49] But in those years legislatures and individuals wished desperately to aid the construction of railroads, and few if any considered acting differently.

Thus it was that through this great acquisition of real estate, the M & O had an original grant within the future Meridian of 120 acres, a tract that encompassed what was then the most vital part of town, where present-day Twenty-sixth Avenue meets the railroads.[50] Then, as though this did not give the railroad enough land, Lewis and Sarah Ragsdale sold to the road, for one dollar, "and the further consideration of the benefits to accrue to [the Ragsdales]," some five acres "exclusive of right-of-way" to be chosen by the company's chief engineer for the construction of a depot. (The Ragsdales made this grant amid the euphoria that followed the first train's arrival at "Sowashee" the previous day, 29 October 1855.) The land was to be chosen so as to meet the needs of the railroad, "including a full supply of spring water if obtainable upon said lands." (Was it chosen also because the southwest corner of the tract was next to a spot where Ragsdale, even in late 1855, perhaps realized a hotel could be advantageously located?) The Ragsdale gift was, in surveying terms, in the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 18, Range 16, Township 6. It straddled the railroad opposite 25th and 26th Avenues.[51]

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[46] *Book of Original Entries of Lauderdale County; U.S. Government Survey of Township 8,* no pagination, in Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[47] Mobile *Register*, 31 March 1857.
[48] *Laws of the State of Mississippi... November, 1858* , 122.
[49] *Ibid*., 228-229.
[50] See "Map of Meridian," on page "0" of Map Book 1, maps "not officially filed," Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[51] *Deed Record Book H*, 72f, Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.

LAND! It was the great magnet that, from the beginning of European colonization, had brought many settlers to America and lured them to keep pushing the line of settlement farther inland. Available cheap land assured a continuing stream of new settlers. Lauderdale's settlement was typical of this pattern, for individuals quickly bought land at the land office, and afterward often sold it to others. In fact, land was so often re-sold that one might suppose the majority were more interested in trading than in merely owning. Looking through the deed records of the times reveals a prodigious number of sales of large and small tracts. And some names appear in early Lauderdale County deed records with almost monotonous frequency—McLemore, Ragsdale, and Creel, to name a few. Land speculation was a great passion.

In 1854 there probably was not much on the Sowashee site to suggest to a traveler a town in embryo. Ball's log store was on what is now the southwest corner of Seventh Street and Twenty-sixth Avenue, where the Firestone automobile service has stood in later years. Seventh Street was apparently the route along which the Lower Decatur Road, branching off from the Enterprise Road (Sixth Street), passed through. It may have been the road that the stagecoaches used on their trips linking Marion, Enterprise, and Decatur. And it was at about this time that W. T. Vance was born on this old stage route, in a house that stood on the south side of the block now occupied by the First Baptist Church. The house, quite close to Ball's store, was a one-room cabin that had split pine logs for flooring.[52] Vance lived a long life and toward the end of it was still able to recall vividly those early years.

Quite close to Ball's store was the Meridian House, an inn opened about 1854, and probably by Robert Leachman. This hotel was probably very near where present-day Twenty-sixth Avenue crosses Fourth Street. It was definitely in operation by late summer, 1855, when the *Lauderdale Republican* described it as "newly opened." But the same notice described it also as "thoroughly renovated' which suggests that the opening was really a *re*-opening.[53] Though it is impossible to say certainly, the inn perhaps antedated Ball's post office and may have suggested to Ball the name "Meridian." Certainly the name would seem to have emphasized the inn's value as a halfway spot between nearby towns. It was doubtless a convenience to travelers going by stage, especially those going to or from the railroad's terminus that was still, by early 1855, some fifteen miles to the south. Weary and hungry wayfarers could break their journey at this inn.

As the M & O Railroad came closer to "Meridian," Leachman made a point of catering to the steadily increasing stream of travelers to and from the railroad's terminus at Okatibbee, about five miles south of Sowashee Creek. He kept the horses of those who had gone to Mobile and other places along the railroad, and he accommodated overnight guests and cheerfully conveyed them to Okatibbee and other nearby places in the fleet of carriages that he maintained. For those who were game for something a little more exciting, there was the "gravel train," apparently a crude

[52] "Sees City Grow."

[53] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 25 September 1855. See also the Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, of 14 October 1863, for the location of the Meridian House, at that time owned by Dr. W. C. Johnson.

construction vehicle that ran on the laid but unopened track down to Okatibbee in the days just before the regular trains entered the Sowashee location.[54]

In comparison with the greater amount of advertising that seemed to accompany the efforts by Ragsdale to establish his town, John Ball's efforts seem much more practical. If they were, it may be because Ball went about it more systematically, singlemindedly, and modestly. Ragsdale was involved not only in trying to develop his extensive survey but also in practically every other major county project. In addition, he was also greatly concerned with the extension of the Southern Railroad from Jackson to Meridian. Laudable as all these projects were, they nevertheless kept Ragsdale from concentrating his energies on the founding of a city to the extent that Ball was able to do.

There was understandable rivalry between the two men. We even read about contests involving them and the railroad authorities over the very name of the place. If these legends can be taken as substantially true, there must have been a real game as to whose sign could remain longest on the little Mobile and Ohio depot. One faction, so the story goes, wanted Ragsdale or Ragsdale City; another insisted upon Meridian; while the railroad allegedly held out, until 1861, for Sowashee, the original name it gave the station.

As a matter of fact, considering the distances that were involved, it could almost be said that there were in fact three different communities: Ball's store and the few residences and businesses around it and west of it, Ragsdale's area that extended a considerable distance to the east, and the vicinity of the railroad station. In fact, if we take the name Sowashee literally, we could admit to the possibility that the railroad depot was first situated exactly, or at least closer to, where the railroad crossed the creek than where the stations stood later at Twenty-sixth Avenue. It may seem today that those distances were inconsequential, but we must remember that in those days even what we call a short distance could be crucial. Recall, for instance, how less than two miles between Marion and Marion Station helped doom the former.

There was so little on the site of the future Meridian that the rail authorities did not think it necessary to build a station, and much has been made about John Ball's erecting one largely at his own expense. It appears, however, that local endeavor was necessary to build stations at other places along that line; so Meridian was perhaps not singled out in that regard. At any rate, after a station had been completed at Sowashee, the railroad agreed to grant station privileges provided the facilities were furnished to the railroad free. Though Ball's party agreed to this, the railroad for nearly two years continued to regard the little community with what the latter interpreted as disdain. Sowashee was, complained its inhabitants, nothing more than a minor flag station to the railroad. Sometimes it was not accorded even that distinction, and all the while Ball and his supporters maintained the building.[55]

Just why the Mobile and Ohio was hostile toward Meridian, if such was true, is something of a mystery. It could have resulted from strained relations between John Ball and the road's officials. With all his good qualities and with all the credit that he deserves for helping establish the town, Ball sometimes seems a petty, stingy, complaining man. If this characterization is at least partly accurate, he may have soured Meridian's cause in the eyes of the railroad's officers. They may simply have

[54] *Ibid*.

[55] "List as Store," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 November 1946, unnumbered pages.

had enough of his demands and importuning. (The relations between the railroad officials and Ragsdale were markedly different, at least much of the time.)

It was almost certainly a wholly unrelated matter when the Mobile and Ohio in the summer of 1859 began running trains only thrice weekly, but the citizens of the county seemed to take it as further evidence of that road's hostility. Nor did the public in nearby counties view it differently. The Paulding *Eastern Clarion* probably spoke for many in the area when it said: "The stopping of the daily trains on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad at this season of the year, will prove a very serious inconvenience to the people of East Mississippi. The business season is now about opening, and the travel on that road will of course be greater than at any other time. More especially it is desirable to have daily mails from the city [Mobile] during the business months…."[56]

A public meeting in Enterprise in December served as a forum for both the road's critics and its defenders. It was pointed out that the U. S. Post Office Department gave the road only a rating of third class and so made no provision for daily mail trains, and the railroad's officials considered the delivery of the mail the most profitable part of their operation. This, at least, seemed to take much of the blame off the Mobile and Ohio. "The country tributary to the road suffers greatly for the want of such a mail," said the *Eastern Clarion*, "and we think the Postmaster General ought to make arrangements to have us supplied with it."[57] Perhaps the mounting criticism was the cause of the resumption of daily mail and passenger service on December 27, to the great relief of the public generally and the newspaper publishers in particular.[58]

Perhaps the M & O's experience with Ball and his supporters gave pause to the officials of the Southern Railroad, which by 1856 seemed at last to be trying to retrieve its reputation and to make up for lost time. The Southern may have seen the route through Meridian—or whatever the name *du jour* was—as a luxury it could not afford; nor could the Southern regard the range of hills west of the community as anything other than a considerable barrier. Enterprise and Clarke County perhaps seemed more inviting,[59] and it did not help when the *Lauderdale Republican* published such comments as the following, in which it honored Enterprise with a sobriquet that ironically would one day be used to describe the little community struggling for existence in its own county:

> The queen city of the Rail Road [Enterprise] is continuing to improve, and bids fair to become a city, in deed, at no distant day.
>
> She has already laid all her rival villages far in the shade, and none now dare to dispute her laurels or to deny that she is the great emporium of the mighty East.

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[56] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 21 September 1859.
[57] *Ibid*., 11 December 1859.
[58] *Ibid*., 1 January 1859.
[59] William F. Gray, *Meridian Illustrated* (Meridian, Miss.: Tell Farmer, 1904), 3.

Many new buildings are going up and two spacious hotels are very nearly completed. The place is hourly improving and will certainly be the most important place on the [M & O] Railroad south of Columbus.[60]

Well! If Marion's newspaper was trying to slap down a potential rival town, it certainly illustrated the old adage of cutting off the nose to spite the face.

Fortunately for Meridian's future, Ball and Ragsdale, for once, were in agreement. Neither liked the prospect of losing all that increment that a second road would add to the value of his real estate; so both set to work, not necessarily in concert, but certainly toward a common goal. Each offered inducements to make a route through Newton and Lauderdale Counties as attractive as possible to the Southern's officials. And as one source put it, both "brought influences to bear that secured the Sowashee terminus of the line."[61]

The building of a railroad from Vicksburg to Lauderdale County, from the very start down to the day in 1861 when a train pulled into Meridian, was a clumsy operation that often courted failure. We have already seen how the company that was first commissioned to start construction became far more interested in banking than in building a railroad. The passage of several years and the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars could show scarcely more than a dozen miles of track.

Nevertheless, the decade of the 1830s, while disappointing in many ways to those Mississippians who were eager to unite the State by rail, was yet a time when some progress was made, if not in actual road construction, then at least in the formation of a plan. And if there was little actual track laid in those years, then that little could at least furnish an exciting and novel outing, as for a group of daredevils in the spring of 1838. It was a short excursion that was the first leg of a journey that would not be completed until almost exactly twenty-three years later at Meridian. "Yesterday evening," reported the Jackson *Mississippian*, "at 5 o'clock a large number of ladies and gentlemen left the Depot [at Vicksburg] in the passenger cars and proceeded about 5 miles over our Rail Road. We learn that the cars travelled rapidly and the whole party returned gratified with their trip."[62]

By November of 1839 "our Rail Road" had reached only as far as the Big Black River,[63] and on into the next decade there seemed to be little enthusiasm among the state's citizens, even those along the proposed route. The Paulding *True Democrat* wasn't surprised and attributed this indifference to the public's past experience with fraud and treachery. "They do," said the paper, "…have sufficient cause to detest the name of speculation." It elaborated:

Ask a Mississippian if he ever heard of the Banking System. Ask the hard fisted farmer, who knows no path but that of honesty and virtue, if he was not told, by the sycophant and "stock-jobber" that he had only to reach forth his hand and grasp an immense fortune; provided, however, he would subscribe to the grand theory by running a *very small* risk. Ask him now what the effect of this splendid speculation is and he will point you a bankrupt State, both in

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[60] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 6 April 1856.
[61] Gray, *op. cit*., 3-4.
[62] Jackson *Mississippian*, 25 May 1838, quoting the *Vicksburg Register*.
[63] *Ibid*., 29 November 1839.

> pecuniary affairs and in reputation, her fair prospects all blighted for a time, and he himself a living, practical example of fraud's ruinous effects.[64]

And yet, as though with a sigh, the paper urged the citizens of the state to try to forget the past and unite behind the ones dedicated to trying to revitalize the program.

It was not easy to whip up enthusiasm. The legislative act incorporating the Southern had permitted the company to sell stock, and on 4 May 1846 the company opened books for sales at the following towns (and amounts) in East Central Mississippi: $50,000 in Raleigh, Hillsboro, Decatur, Marion, and De Kalb; $40,000 in Paulding; and $20,000 in Philadelphia and Quitman. The books were closed in Marion at five P. M. on June 13, after an apparently disappointing sale supervised by E. G. Hussey, B. F. Parke, and Richard McLemore.[65]

In 1847 a series of meetings tried to hasten work on the Southern by increasing interest in buying shares in the company, at least among those living in counties on the proposed route between Jackson and the Lauderdale terminus. Someone came up with the figure $25,000 as the required amount to complete the road, explaining that it represented only about one-thirtieth of the value of one year's cotton crop in the counties of Rankin, Scott, Smith, Simpson, Jasper, Newton, Neshoba, and Lauderdale. The promoters even devised a graph that tried to show how the road would enhance cotton production in the eight counties:

County	Bales produced annually	Annual savings with railroad	Capital added to crop by RR	Estimated stock dividends
Rankin	$ 4,200	$ 806	$ 14,433	$ 6,000
Scott	1,600	1,779	29,650	2,500
Smith	1,650	2,689	44,517	2,500
Simpson	1,850	1,332	22,200	1,500
Jasper	3,000	6,000	100,000	3,000
Newton	1,200	2,000	33,333	2,000
Neshoba	1,000	1,500	25,000	1,000
Lauderdale	4,000	4,000	66,666	4,000 [66]

The Southern had to compete for investors with the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. Though not yet under construction as the Southern was, the M & O would eventually far outstrip the Southern once work began. The main reason probably is that the people in east-central Mississippi were more interested in a rail connection with Mobile than they were in one with Jackson, Vicksburg, and the Mississippi River. Mobile probably did seem a far better outlet for cotton, and it certainly was already familiar to many in the Lauderdale area as an *entrepôt.* So, when the M & O's first assistant engineer, a Mr. Troost, spoke in Marion on 26 June 1849, he very likely had a more receptive audience than did agents from the Southern. Troost announced that the proceeds of any stock subscribed would be expended only in the county where the stock had been sold. That certainly sounded good to Lauderdale ears. Even the Jackson *Mississippian* declared the proposal a "splendid enterprise," adding, "[I]f a proper line of road shall be selected, we have no doubt of its success through our State at least."[67]

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[64] Paulding *True Democrat*, 23 September 1846.
[65] Paulding *True Democrat*, 6 May and 23 September 1846.
[66] Jackson *Mississippian*, 30 July 1847.
[67] *Ibid.*, 8 June 1849.

Even by the mid-1850s there was still great skepticism in the Lauderdale area over the prospects of the Southern. Residents of Marion probably nodded in agreement with a reprint, in a local paper, from the *Vicksburg Sentinel* in which that paper remained coy on the subject and spoke dubiously of a trip north by Thomas A. Marshall, president of the Southern Railroad. Marshall reported that a contract to extend the road had been accepted "by a very wealthy and energetic company in the North" and that the work would begin soon and be completed by the first of July, 1856. The *Sentinel* admitted to being a "doubting Thomas":

> All that has been given to the public to inspire belief in the success of the road, is exactly after the order of certain "large and respectable political meetings" often held in different countries, where there were only a President, Secretary, and one to offer resolutions. All we now have is that an energetic and wealthy company, one that controls the politics in Pennsylvania, &c., &c., have taken the contract…and are to complete it within two and a half years, and upon terms favorable to the stockholders, and that will entitle the Engineer and President to the eternal gratitude of every man, woman and child (born and unborn) in the city of Vicksburg and feather somebody's nest for life. There ought to be nothing secret about the matter. Why not give all facts to those interested in the subject, give it [*sic*] to those seeking it; publish to them what has been done and with whom it has been done, and away with this silence and mystery.[68]

At about this same time—the late winter of 1854—a rumor began to circulate that did nothing to improve the Southern's bad reputation, at least among the residents along the proposed route. The report had it that the road's officials were considering an alternate route. The anger and indignation, especially among those who had bought land on the previously-proposed route, can well be imagined. The *Lauderdale Republican* contemptuously referred to the "new privileges" granted by the Legislature for the road to resurvey its route so as to run along the northern border of Lauderdale County and connect with another road planned from Montgomery. It would be outrageous, said the paper, and the damage that such action would do to those persons along the original route, and the stockholder, could be called nothing less than a detrimental *ex post facto* law.[69]

In the summer of 1854 several men in the county became convinced that if anything were ever accomplished, it would have to be done by those most interested in the success of the project. Thus, Captain S. Griffith and James D. Riddlespurger traveled to Jackson and concluded a contract with the Southern to begin construction on the line in Lauderdale County. "We hope others will soon follow the laudable example set by these gentlemen," said the *Republican*, "and we hope that at least that portion of it [the Southern Railroad] which lies in this county will be built by its citizens." L. A. Ragsdale advertised in October 1855 that he was authorized to receive bids for the grading, bridging, and construction of masonry on the line from Brandon to the Mobile and Ohio in Lauderdale County. He had the necessary "profiles" and could show them to interested contractors. The *Republican* had begun to take heart. There *had* been mismanagement in the past, but prospects seemed to be

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[68] The *Vicksburg Sentinel*, quoted in the Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 7 February 1854.
[69] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 7 March 1854.

brightening. The paper urged the people in the area and in the state to get behind these men and contribute more than good wishes.[70]

By the spring of 1856 the Southern's charter had been amended. Technically, the Southern Railroad was to run only between Jackson and the Alabama line, but the amendment allowed it to merge with the Jackson and Vicksburg road to make a potential line nearly 150 miles long. It would, however, be later excused from building farther east than Meridian. Already the road had been graded to about twelve miles east of Brandon.[71]

The *Lauderdale Republican* was at last convinced that there was now a new approach to railroad building in the area, and it wondered grandly

> why our citizens are not more deeply interested in the prosecution of this great work, which is bound to be the Pacific route, if proper exertion be made to complete it through Alabama, Mississippi and Texas…. Let us throw off our apathy; let us cease to depend upon others…. Let us have some confidence in ourselves, take hold of the great work, and every man contribute his mite to connect in bonds of iron the great Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.[72]

Despite all this rebirth of optimism, the end of 1858 found the road built no farther than Morton, where a line of stages met the trains daily to carry passengers on eastward. The Jackson reporter for the *Eastern Clarion*, discussing the state's railroads, wryly commented on the issuing by the Mobile and Ohio Railroad of free passes to legislators: "The other roads have not yet done so. May be, they are waiting to see what the Legislature will do for them before adopting so liberal a policy. And in my humble opinion, they are the more prudent."[73]

By mid-summer of 1859 the Southern was still stuck at Morton. In July, however, 2,000 tons of iron and 200 workers were sent over to the terminus and the crews were soon busily grading the right-of-way on into Meridian. The resident engineer of the eastern division of the Southern, a Mr. Crooker, was moved to make another of those rash predictions. He was sure the first train would enter Meridian "next year." It didn't, of course. The spring of 1860 found the road extended only as far east as Forest, which should have made William Spinks, editor of *The Meridian*, more cautious. Yet he took a trip along the entire route of the railroad and bravely announced its arrival in Meridian by October.[74]

The Brandon *Herald*, in contrast to the other prophets who ended by eating their prophecies, apparently had learned restraint; and for once someone took a less sanguine view. In the mid-summer of 1859 the *Herald* assured its readers that the Southern would not reach its destination before October of 1861—more than two years away.[75] It was a canny prediction that stands out amid all the other croppers. And while for a change the prediction overshot the mark, it missed by only four months.

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[70] *Ibid.*, 4 July 1854, and 9, 16 October 1855.
[71] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 1 April 1856.
[72] *Ibid.*
[73] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 27 November 1858.
[74] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859; Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 25 April 1860.
[75] Brandon *Herald*, quoted in *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.

When the first Southern train arrived in Meridian at 6:45 P. M. on 29 May 1861, it found an excited and apprehensive little town. Secession was history and a war had begun. Nevertheless, Meridian probably gave the train a sufficiently warm reception. In those days locomotives often had names; and this train's engine, described by one observer as "handsome," bore the romantic name of "Mazeppa," after a valiant Polish soldier in the 1600s, whom Lord Byron celebrated poetically in 1819. And also in the Byronic spirit, among the passengers was a military company from Vicksburg, 111 men, heading for training camp and the front.[76]

It has been said that W. C. Smedes, president of the Southern Railroad, supported calling the new town at the road's eastern terminus *Meridian* and that when he arrived there with the first train, he persuaded the M & O and other parties to accept that name.[77] Perhaps so, but it is difficult to see what difference his opinion would have made by May of 1861. As we will see shortly, the name had already been officially determined by the Legislature more than a year earlier.

Those living in the county east of Meridian had experienced the excitement of railroad fever in the developing plans for what would eventually be called the North East and South West Railroad, that would connect Meridian with central Sumter County, Ala. As far back as the summer of 1854 a party of Alabama engineers finished surveying a section of the planned route and concluded that the proper place to cross the Tombigbee River was at Moscow.[78] By the summer of 1859 grading was almost finished in Lauderdale County. The Marion *Observer* expected the railroad's early completion and, rather magnanimously, congratulated Meridian on its good fortune and its prospects generally. "They certainly have a most beautiful and healthy location," conceded the *Observer*, "and we hope that their anticipations may be fully realized."[79]

The Tuscaloosa *Monitor*, however, was apprehensive about the program of construction for the N E and S W Railroad. There was, said the paper, a little matter of $230,000 that was going to have to be raised somewhere to finish the road. The paper noted the old problem, the lack of enthusiasm among potential subscribers. Nevertheless, the railroad was completed from Meridian to York, Ala., before the Civil War started.[80] There were plans to extend the road toward Chattanooga, Tenn., but before it got farther than Sumter County, Ala., funding problems halted construction. In addition, there were Alabamans who believed that the NE and SW's route was probably not the best rail link between north Alabama and Mobile. Since the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad was already extended well past Selma in the direction of Meridian, that road eventually linked with the shorter NE and SW. That provided a relatively good rail link from the Trans-Mississippi region, through Meridian, and to Montgomery, Ala., and beyond. In 1864

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[76]W. G. Croom, *Complete History and Business Directory of the City of Meridian, Miss., 1882-83* (Meridian: Charles P. Dement, 1882), 3; Grauel, *op. cit.*, 4.
[77] Grauel, *op. cit.*, 4.
[78] Marion *Lauderdale Republican*, 27 June 1854.
[79] The Marion Station *Observer*, quoted in *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.
[80] Tuscaloosa (Ala.) *Monitor*, quoted in the Mobile *Daily Register*, 1 March 1859; *Meridian and East Mississippi: Condition and Prospects*, 5.

the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad changed its name to the Selma and Meridian Railroad.[81]

But while all that construction was being planned and executed, residents at places along the route east of Meridian could only watch the familiar sluggish progress and continue to use the old means of transportation that had served since the formation of the county. William Rogers recalled that in Toomsuba oxen and, as conditions improved, mules were used for heavier work. The rough terrain made most people save their horses for riding or for pulling small wagons, buggies, and other carriages. When a heavy load had to be taken, say, to Meridian, only oxen could negotiate the bad roads and steep hills. A trip from Toomsuba to Meridian by oxcart usually began about the middle of the afternoon and took a day and a half for the roundtrip. Rogers later described those primitive routines: "Sundown usually caught these pioneers making camp somewhere on the outskirts of Meridian. The next morning they went on into Meridian to sell their merchandise. The great speed of the horse[-]pulled carriages or surreys made the dusty or muddy trip to Meridian in three hours."[82]

Despite the rivalry between Ball and Ragsdale, the hostility of the M & O, and the contempt of nearby towns such as Marion and Enterprise, Meridian did make some progress—but not much. L. A. Duncan, visiting the place in the summer of 1856, was far from impressed.[83] There was little to see on the site and that little was primitive and unattractive. W. T. Vance recalled that at about this time there was, across the road from the site of the present Webb Funeral Home, a store run by a Mr. Jenkins. As the town began to develop in the area around where Twenty-sixth Avenue meets the railroads, Ball's store building was abandoned and, as Vance put it, "the last I remember of this store house the billy goats were using it as a home.[84] By 1859 several commercial establishments were in existence, including a saloon run by W. L. Bishop. In the same year there was a new firm run by two men named Brewer and Brown, though the nature of the business is not clear. Brewer had just retired from a commission mercantile business, apparently somewhere else in east Mississippi. A man named Ogletree, formerly of the firm of Ogletree, Dyess and Company, operated a grocery between what were even then being called Front and Commerce Streets, our present Front (or Second) and Fourth Streets. Whether this grocery was a "family" grocery or whether it was a "grocery" of more convivial nature is not clear. John Rutledge and his wife ran a photographic gallery in Meridian in 1859 and advertised their readiness to make stereotypes, as well as ambrotypes which could be "neatly inserted in pins, lockets, rings, &c."[85]

The list of businesses in 1859 is surprisingly extensive and seems to belie the contemporary comments about the village's unimportance and sparse population. In addition to those already named, there were the following: L.

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[81] Robert C. Black, III, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1952), 153-154; David L. Bright, *Confederate Railroads* (c. 2005, online site: www.csa-railroads.com).
[82] A. Jarvis Welch, "History of Toomsuba."
[83] L. A. Duncan's recollections in *Meridian News* of 1 March 1881, quoted in "Early Area Survey," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 November 1946, unnumbered pages.
[84] "Sees City Grow."
[85] Gray, *op. cit.*, 4; *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.

Ottenstein and Newman sold cloth, footwear, headgear, hardware, tobacco, candles, candy, "groceries," and "Yankee notions." They also offered to buy or barter for cotton, dry hides, chickens, turkeys, beeswax, eggs, etc. Grisham and Swilley were dental surgeons; and Dr. John H. Gibbs, who seems to have been an ordained clergyman as well as a physician, had an office next door to his residence. Gibbs would soon be elected Meridian's first mayor. B. Holmes sold animal fodder, corn, flour, bacon, and draft animals. Massengale and Hill ran a family grocery business that particularly advertised bacon, lard, flour, pork, sugar, coffee, molasses, wines, candles, nuts, cheese, and crackers. Most of these were important family staples in those times. T. H. Thompson, who described himself as "a permanent citizen of Meridian," sold clothing and dry goods, and William Massengale ran a shoe store. As early as October 1858, John C. Higgins, an attorney and solicitor in chancery, had his office in Meridian.[86]

As I say, all of this business activity seems to clash with the data, admittedly meager, about Meridian's population in the middle and late 1850's. But while available information seems sometimes offhand and even suspicious, we cannot simply disregard it. Though estimates varied widely, some were perhaps fairly accurate. One contemporary source described Meridian in 1858 as "now containing not a half dozen houses."[87] One problem with such a statement is not knowing whether the term *houses* referred to residences, or to businesses (for such was a common usage in those days), or whether it meant buildings of all kinds. Another description, a retrospective report, stated that in 1859 there were about fifteen families.[88] Roman Catholic Bishop Richard O. Gerow, writing many years later, said that Meridian's first appearance on any map was "as an insignificant railroad station," and that in 1860 its population was only sixty-one.[89] Another source, recorded only thirteen years after the time, says that the town's population in 1860 consisted of "8 families all told."[90] And still another record has this to say: "When the war broke out between the States, 1861, Meridian was a mere village of three or four stores, two or three hotels and a shingle machine. There were two churches, Baptist and Methodist with a union Sunday school."[91] It's all very strange.

And yet, despite this apparently casual, unimpressive, and even slipshod development, some highly-placed and influential individuals must have recognized the potential of the location and in 1859 supported its incorporation. The act that turned Meridian into a legal entity on 10 February 1860 was the fourth such charter issued in the county's short history; those two for Marion and the one for Lauderdale Springs were the first three. It is a curious fact that when charters were granted to Marion and to Lauderdale Springs, both of which were *relatively* vital and well-planned towns, each document of incorporation required scarcely two pages in the volumes of state laws. By contrast, Meridian, a place of little or no distinction,

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[86] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859; Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 23 October 1858.
[87] *Inventory of the Church Archives of Mississippi*, 81.
[88] Gray, *op. cit.*, 4.
[89] Gerow, *op. cit.*, 219.
[90] Desha, *op. cit.*, 42. This clashes with the source, just quoted, that states that Meridian had double that number of families the preceding year. Possibly at that time it was a matter of how large an area one thought Meridian encompassed. Many perhaps regarded much of Meridian's legal limits, slightly more than one and a half square miles, as outside the town.
[91] "See Sherman Act." *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 November 1946, unnumbered pages.

became a corporation by the terms of a document of nearly nine pages. And while Marion's second charter gave it, the county seat, 360 acres, somehow Meridian's first charter created limits that enclosed 1,040 acres! Meridian's supporters, men such as John Ball and Isom Sadler Orlando Grandison Greer—the latter of pentonymous fame—clearly knew what they were doing and how to do it. And the little community that had been burdened by almost as many names as was Greer, who had secured the charter, was now *officially* Meridian, whatever might be claimed to the contrary by Ragsdale, the M & O, or President Smedes of the Southern Railroad. John Ball had won that battle.[92]

The charter called for an election by mid-May 1860 to choose a mayor, four aldermen, a secretary, and city marshal or chief of police. These would serve until the first Monday in January 1861, when their successors would be elected for annual terms. Arrangements for the election were "posted up at three of the most public places" in town and published in William Spinks's newspaper, *The Meridian*.[93]

At the first polling, voters chose John H. Gibbs mayor, and for aldermen elected Isom Greer, John Ball, W. J. Berry, and M. Massengale. All five men were estimable, valuable citizens, but two men prominent in the town's development are conspicuously missing from the list. Richard McLemore, now living beyond the city's eastern limits, was of course ineligible. But what about Ragsdale? Was Ragsdale hurt that he held no office in the new city's government? It may be that he refused to be considered for any place among the city's officials. His plans for the city to be named for himself had already been dashed, and perhaps he was miffed. In fact, Ragsdale would not hold a city office until November of 1871 when, in the first election free of military influence, he was chosen an alderman. On four subsequent occasions he was elected alderman or councilman, but never would he serve as mayor of the city he had done so much to help create. John Ball hadn't made mayor, either, but at least he was an alderman.[94]

One of the first acts performed by Mayor Gibbs and his aldermen was to choose a city treasurer, tax assessor-collector, and other necessary functionaries and to determine their duties. The mayor and aldermen would meet monthly to enact bylaws and to determine punishment for their infractions, with penalties up to a fine of fifty dollars or incarceration not exceeding ten days. The city's new magistrates could levy as much as one percent ad valorem tax on real estate and taxes on personal estate "of not more than the State tax." The corporation could also tax "all transient merchants, vendors of lottery tickets, auctioneers, brokers, tavern-keepers, licenses, menageries, and all other public exhibitions" as might seem proper. Licenses could be granted to "livery stables, to carts and wagons, carriages, omnibuses, and other vehicles running for public hire, and not for private use, or for the supplies of the market" of Meridian. The usual road duties by private citizens were addressed, and the duty of keeping a list of persons eligible for such roadwork was assigned to the

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[92] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, November, 1859* (Jackson: E. Barksdale, 1860), 539f; Grauel, *op. cit.*, 4. Grauel shortened Greer's name to "I.S.O.G. Greer"; but the late William Louie Ellison, , known familiarly as "Colonel" and an employee of the *Meridian Star*, gave the full name as in the text above. The clipping of his article "Colonel's Corner" is from 1959 but without a month and day. More recently one of Greer's descendants verified for me his five names.

[93] *Ibid.*, 540.

[94] *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Meridian, 1889* (Meridian: Democrat Book & Job Print, 1889), 1-6.

city secretary. The mayor, in addition to his usual duties, had magisterial functions as well as the right to perform weddings and to take affidavits or oaths. He was also a police officer *ex officio* and could overrule the city marshal.[95]

Meridian's journalistic history starts in 1859 with William L. Spinks. The son of Enoch Spinks, he was born in Clarke County, Ala., on 21 August 1830, and reared in Kemper County, Miss. Despite the scarcity of schools, he received a good education that he used to advantage in later years as an editor. After he married Pauline R. Jagers, he settled down for a spell as a farmer but, dissatisfied, soon moved to De Kalb where he edited the *Kemper Democrat*, a weekly that probably first appeared in October 1856. He moved to Meridian in 1859 and founded *The Meridian*, whose first issue probably appeared on 19 May. Like the De Kalb paper, this newspaper, the first one published in Meridian, was a weekly that at first appeared every Thursday, though it later was published on Saturdays.[96] The paper's reporter was A. W. Malone, a young man who would live well into the next century.[97] When the Civil War began, Spinks joined the Meridian Invincibles, a volunteer group that became Company H of the 14th Mississippi Regiment; and he ceased publishing his paper shortly before the unit left for the front in late May 1861. Spinks was killed on 25 August 1864 while fighting in John Bell Hood's army near Atlanta and was buried in Opelika, Ala., though his family and this author have been unable to find his grave.[98]

From his journalistic writings one gathers that Spinks was erudite, enlightened, and witty. Both *The Meridian* and the *Kemper Democrat* were published for only brief periods, but in that short time Spinks developed a reputation for editorial ability and character. When in the winter of 1858 he visited his fellow journalists of the Mobile *Daily Register*, they noted the fact and described him as an "intelligent editor." *The Meridian* must have been a welcome novelty to its little home village and probably quickly attracted many subscribers, not only in the county but also in other cities such as Mobile and Jackson. Lauderdale subscribers included the Rev. W. C. Emerson, Dr. Ammon Lindley, William Gray, V. A. Evans, B. Graham, Lazarus Smith, Samuel Miller, Dr. Warren Massengale, William Reeves, Major Semmes, James Shackleford, Lofton Fairchild, W. V. H. White, A. Threefoot, Dr. L. W. Garrett, J. Y. Lacy, C. J. McLemore, George Vance, G. W. Ellerbee, and T. H. Hampton.[99]

Other newspapers, from outside the county, had subscribers in Lauderdale. As far back as 1846 the Paulding *True Democrat* had two agents in the county, Willis J. Richards, of Daleville, and Samuel Chapman, in Marion. Another paper in Paulding, the *Eastern Clarion*, enjoyed some patronage in the county. James J. Shannon, who became associated with the *Eastern Clarion* in the latter 1850s, shared the ownership in early 1861 with A. R. Carter and J. G. Markham. Shannon

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[95] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…November, 1859*, 540-545.
[96] *Kemper Democrat*, 8 April 1859; this issue is vol. 2, no. 27; "Settle in County," *The Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary ed., 12 November 1946, unpaged; *The Meridian*, 5 and 12 January 1861.
[97] Gray, *op. cit*., 4.
[98] "Settle in County." Another member of the Meridian Invincibles, H. N. Berry, incorrectly declared thirty-five years later, that Spinks was killed at the Battle of Franklin, in Tennessee—see letter of H. N. Berry to J. L. Power, 12 October 1900, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder X, MDAH. The date of Spinks's death is taken from company records at the National Archives (see *Compiled Records of Confederate Soldiers*).
[99] Mobile *Daily Register*, 3 February 1858; see also "Settle in County."

eventually became sole owner and, after a somewhat brief stint in the Confederate Army, moved the paper to Meridian as simply the *Clarion*.[100]

On the eve of the Civil War Meridian appears to have been poised for a period of boom and development. Looking back today, one seems to perceive the Southern Railroad's completion as the factor that had held everything else in suspense. Thus were the delays and rumors of route changes all the more frustrating. When completion of the road was at last accomplished, it was anticlimactic and overshadowed by the war. Ironically, there was then little possibility of municipal development except that of a military kind. John Ball himself has been quoted as saying that when the war began, Meridianites were so unsure of the safety of their property that no one bothered to make any substantial investments or financial commitments.[101] And in a short time materials for improvements became scarce.

Meridian, which in two or three years would become famous—or rather infamous—for its three or four hotels, seems to have had but one as late as 1860 and probably even later. The old Meridian House, which as we have seen was operating at least as early as 1854, was still in existence at least as late as October 1863. Robert Leachman, probably the first owner of the inn, had been living in Marion since about June 1857. The hotel passed into the hands of Alfred China who, like his wife Mary, was a native of South Carolina. They owned the inn until late 1860 or early 1861 when Dr. William C. Johnson bought it. It had become an institution, one at least as old as the town and perhaps the origin of its name.[102]

Also important at this time was the Meridian Institute, a school which accepted both males and females. Though references to its location are vague, it was probably the one situated near where the East Mississippi State Hospital now stands, that is, on State Boulevard, or what was then the Upper Decatur Road. The Rev. W. C. Emerson presided at a public meeting on 20 October 1858 to plan the school and to arrange for its construction. John Ball, very likely the chief mover in the project, was secretary. In addition to Emerson and Ball, there were the following officers: F. C. Semmes, treasurer, and a board of trustees consisting of Semmes, Emerson, J. P. Welch, C. W. Matthews, and J. J. Swilley.[103]

The school's supporters quickly raised enough money for the project and were soon able to instruct the building committee (W. J. Rew, James Moore, J. P. Welch, James Shackleford, and F. C. Semmes) to draw up the building plans and advertise in the *Eastern Clarion* for bids. Dr. John H. Gibbs, Col. John C. Higgins, and W. C. Emerson drafted a constitution and by-laws and had them ready for a meeting six days later on October 26. At this meeting, held at the Baptist church, Gibbs spoke on the subject of education. Afterward, everyone enjoyed "dinner on the ground." It was probably at this meeting that the Building committee presented its report calling for a main building measuring thirty by sixty-five feet and a music room

[100] Paulding *True Democrat*, 21 October 1846; Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 13 March 1861.
[101] "Many Interesting Events," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 November 1946, unnumbered pages.
[102] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 August, 3 October 1858; *The Meridian*, 5 January 1861; see also personal enumeration list of the 1860 census for Lauderdale County, family no. 227 (China).
[103] "See Sherman Act"; Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 23 October 1858.

fourteen by sixteen feet. Those wishing to check the details or to present bids were asked to see William F. Brown or John Ball.[104]

There was good progress, and by the next summer Ball was advertising for "A Gentleman and lady, to take charge of the male and female departments of 'The Meridian Institute.'" They would have to be ready for the opening of the first session on 15 September 1859. "A large edifice is nearly completed," said the announcement, "located in a lovely spot, that can never be other than healthy, with an abundance of the spring and well water convenient." Those hired would have to be competent in English literature, Latin, Greek, natural science, and music. The school's officers were willing to consider any qualified men and women, but they preferred a married couple.[105]

In 1857 Marion was outraged to discover that she had not one but two rivals for the honor of accommodating the county's government. It must have been galling to the older town, with its seniority, its beautiful Courthouse Square, and its streets carefully and neatly planned around that square, to have to give serious attention to claims from its offspring neighbor over on the railroad, to say nothing of that ridiculous, haphazard conglomeration of shacks down on Sowashee Creek, a so-called community that could not even agree upon a name. Nevertheless, that was the fact, and an act of the Legislature on November 19 put the unthinkable into law. By the terms of this law the county's Board of Police were enjoined to call an election at their next meeting, or as soon afterward as possible, "to ascertain the sense of the people of the county relative to the removal of the seat of justice...from its present site...to or near the depot on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad known as Marion Station, or to Maredian [*sic*], near the Mobile and Ohio Railroad…." (Even the legislative clerks were so unfamiliar with Meridian that in the act they spelled the name two different ways—and neither of them correct!) The ballots would be worded so as to make the choices "no removal" to keep the seat in Marion, or "removal, Marion Station" and "removal, Meridian" for partisans of one or the other of those two locations.[106]

On 2 February 1858, in obedience to this legislative act, the Lauderdale County Board of Police ordered an election "at all precincts in the county on the first Monday in July next 1858, to determine the removal or non-removal of the Court House." The election returns only further exacerbated an already volatile issue. Of 1,180 votes cast, an overwhelming sixty-two percent voted that the Courthouse be moved from Marion. That would seem to have decided the issue except for one catch: those 732 votes for removal were evenly split between Marion Station and Meridian! L. A. Ragsdale and his followers requested the Board of Police to nullify the election, but the motion was defeated. Instead, the Board directed Sheriff Benjamin Meador and "three respectable free holders of the County" to settle the matter. By drawing lots "fairly and publicly" they awarded second place to Marion Station, though what difference that made is not clear.[107]

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[104] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 23 October 1858.
[105] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.
[106] *Laws of the State of Mississippi…1857*, 120-121.
[107] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 265, 301.

Existing records testify that from this point, and for the next year, the county bubbled with unrest, anger, and confusion. In early August of 1858 the Police Board called another election for the following October. In late August they thought better of it, “the time not being sufficient to hold said elections in accordance with said [legislative] act.” A few months later the Legislature reversed itself and passed a second act to authorize another election, which the Board of Police set for 4 July 1859.[108]

If the situation had been confusing prior to that election, what followed was positively zany. Meridian came in third this time, though a majority still voted for removal. It might have then been a matter of simply calling a runoff, except that those who supported Meridian’s cause were more than merely disgruntled about several aspects of the election.

On Saturday, 23 July 1859, the leaders of Meridian’s cause called a post-mortem to discuss the late contest and decide what further measures, if any, to take. (Curiously, it would seem that John Ball, despite his vital interest in the issue, did not attend.) They invited other interested persons, especially those from Marion and Marion Station; and some, including Robert Leachman, of Marion, and Colonel Shields, of The Station, accepted. The meeting took place in the little Sowashee stationhouse, one of the few available buildings in the area. (At one point in the meeting, an arriving train temporarily disrupted deliberations.) Dr. Peyton King presided; and William L. Spinks, Meridian’s journalist, served as secretary, subsequently publishing the minutes in his paper, and with a request that other papers in the county and in Mobile reprint them.[109]

At least seven persons spoke. Col. John C. Higgins severely censured the methods used to defeat Meridian’s bid for the county seat, especially condemning the role played by the M & O Railroad. Peyton King, John H. Gibbs, and E. J. Rew spoke to the same effect, all of them deploring the late tactics but wishing to let the matter rest for the present—they were sure that the future favored Meridian. L. A. Ragsdale would not hear of it. He wanted to contest the election and insisted that his motion be put to a vote. Only one other person, not mentioned in the records, voted with him, but he vowed to continue to fight.[110]

At least two of the visitors spoke. Robert Leachman, now living in Marion, probably felt some sympathy for Meridian. He certainly remembered his recent residence there when it had had few residents and too many names. He probably was too intelligent to believe the issue was of more than procedural importance, and as a lawyer he was doubtless as willing to represent his clients in Meridian as in Marion or Marion Station. He seems to have been by nature neither a bitter partisan nor an alarmist. If there had been any unfairness in Marion’s role regarding Meridian, he regretted it and wished to apologize. Colonel Shields was equally conciliatory on behalf of Marion Station. He began by modestly depreciating his oratorical abilities and then simply stated his town’s claims, begging no favors but expressing willingness to accept with gratitude any support that Meridian might give his town in a runoff election.[111]

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[108] *The Meridian*, 301, 368; *Laws of the State of Mississippi…1858*, 114-115.
[109] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Ibid.*

After everyone wishing to speak had done so, the group drew up several resolutions. The election, they said, had been unfair, especially in the use of such tactics as spreading a rumor that the Southern Railroad was planning to change its route so as to miss Meridian and cross the M & O about a mile and a half north of the town. Other similarly-deceptive reports had been put out as well. Nevertheless, the group decided not to contest the election but to try again in the future, which they believed would eventually give the prize to Meridian. A lively debate arose as to whether there should be anything said in criticism of the M & O's role. The critics won and offered the following statement: "[Resolved] that our defeat was partly owning to and caused by the Mobile & Ohio railroad, through their agents, and that said road for some cause of which we are not cognizant is inimical to the prosperity of Meridian."[112]

Ragsdale probably left the meeting considerably less mollified than most of the others and perhaps even feeling a bit betrayed by some of his own townsmen. That Meridian might *eventually* have the Courthouse was not good enough. He had land to sell *now*, and the county's business was almost as great an enhancement to real estate as was a new railroad. Besides, "Ragsdale City" would simply have to be the county seat! William L. Spinks, with his usual moderation, gave his views on such a course as Ragsdale was planning:

> The Meridian friends refused to contest the election, but still if he [Ragsdale] chooses to contest the election in his own name, and on his own responsibility, he clearly has the legal right. As a retaliatory procedure he is justifiable; as he was made the scapegoat to bear off the sins of the late election, and the election was partly influenced against this place by stirring up wrongly a prejudice against him.[113]

On August 2 Ragsdale and his supporters appeared before the Police Board in Marion and asked that yet another election be held. Not surprisingly the Board refused.[114] They, like probably most others in the county, believed there had been quite enough balloting on the matter.

But the issue did not end here, for on 15 August, in pursuance of a writ of *mandamus* from the Circuit Court, the Board of Police ordered another election for the third of October. This election would give the voters a chance to vote to leave the Courthouse in Marion or to move it to The Station. When Meridian was dropped, Ragsdale brought suit against the Court's action. The case of Lewis A. Ragsdale *vs.* Joseph Clinton *et. Al.* went to the High Court of Errors and Appeal where the result was an order restraining the Board of Police from holding the October election.[115]

From this point on, the county's administrative executive, and judicial functions began to show signs of severe strain. The Police Board themselves broke into factions. One unauthorized rump session took place on 5 September to plead the impossibility of obeying the High Court's order, since "the Board has no power to revise or review its action at a former time" and "has no power to order the Sheriff to desist from the performance of a duty prescribed by law." A subsequent *official*

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[112] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859.
[113] *Ibid.*
[114] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 393-396.
[115] *Ibid.*, 393-396, 401-403.

meeting of the Board declared "the proceedings of the 5th day of September" to be "revoked and cancelled." There then followed bickering among almost all involved, with subsequent appeals, denials, orders, recisions, writs of prohibition, etc., etc.[116]

Like most human undertakings when everyone has a large axe to grind, this one did little credit to any of the principals. Soon all the furor had subsided into what was perhaps a bored acquiescence. There was no October election; and though Ragsdale and the others did not perceive it, events were imminent that would hold in abeyance for six years not only the issue of the location of the Courthouse, but almost everything else as well. Marion remained the county seat until 1866.

[116] *Ibid*., 401-403, *et seq.*

Chapter 8: The Road to Secession.

Like the majority of other Americans in earlier times, most Mississippians revered the Union and, at least up to the mid-1800s, deplored any efforts to destroy it. One of the jibes often hurled at the Whigs was their alleged connection with those disgruntled Federalists in New England who, peeved with the War of 1812, had threatened secession. Even when South Carolina, upset with higher tariffs, briefly defied Federal authority in the early 1830s, Mississippi responded with only a few tepid hear-hears. And why not? Did not the South loom large in national affairs? Southerners tended to control Congress and thus were able to squelch criticism of Southern policies and interests by members of that body. A decade later, against strong opposition in the North and especially in New England, Southerners and Westerners successfully engineered a war with Mexico. The Mexican War was popular in Dixie, for it furthered Southern aspirations for an expanded slavocracy. And during all these years, even the White House, except for the brief flap over tariff and the Nullification dispute, was generally supportive of Southern interests. Though by 1857 the political climate in the nation had changed, one could say that the Dred Scott case that year suggested that even the Federal judiciary was in the South's pocket.

The strong sectionalism, and especially the slavery dispute that led to secession, can be traced at least as far back as the ferment in 1818 caused by the proposed admission of Missouri as a slave state. There was at that time an equal number of slave and free states, an arranagement that protected the pro-slavery element in the U. S. Senate. Missouri's entry would upset that balamce. A solution was found in the so-called Missouri Compromise, which provided for the simultaneous admission into the Union of Missouri and Maine. As one of the terms of the compromise, the South acknowledged—and later regretted doing it—the southern boundary of Missouri as the northern limit for future slave states. Missouri would thus be the only state north of that line in the old Louisiana Territory. Since at that time the Louisiana Territory was the farthest west America reached, the compromise seemed to Southerners an acceptable and final arrangement. Tempers calmed for a few years but reheated and became even hotter over the admission of Texas and the acquisition of new territory from Mexico.

Anyone scanning a run of Mississippi newspapers in 1849 and the early 1850s is struck by a dramatic change in political attitudes among Mississippians. The proposed Wilmot Proviso in 1847 called for a containment of slavery within its traditional areas, so it quickly became anathema to many Southerners. Another such irritant came in 1849, following the Gold Rush, over the proposal to admit California as a free state. These two developments, along with several less important ones, brought a bitter response throughout Mississippi and the South. Temperate references to persons and events in the North became rarer; and more inflexible Democratic papers in Dixie discovered new epithets to hurl at those fellow Southerners who, fearing the consequences of glib threats of secession, urged compromise. For their pains, these cooler heads were called "submissionists," "traitors," and no doubt far worse names. Reading these newspapers today, I think I can detect a strong element of fear, often even among those who advised the most radical measures. Well might they all have been fearful! Though the Federal Union had never been an absolutely smooth-running entity and though a number of states on several occasions had toyed

with defiance of national authority, no state had actually done it decisively. It was a disturbing consideration. There was, for instance, the reluctance to give up what, despite all its problems, had proved a good government and to start anew, and with consequences that no one could predict. In addition, there was uncertainty as to whether the remaining states would passively watch it happen. History shows that governments are not inclined to act that way. History shows also that civil wars can be very ugly indeed.

It is interesting that during the three or four years of ferment around the late 1840s and early 1850s, Lauderdale County was apparently less bellicose and bumptious than were many other counties in the state. Why this was true, if indeed it was, is difficult to explain; though the presence of some influential Whigs and nationalistic Democrats must have been a factor. Men such as William S. Patton, Sr., were much more inclined to admire Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, and their spirit of compromise, than they were those who, with almost every breath, threatened reprisal, violence, and secession. The Whigs, of course, were a minority in Lauderdale County, but they were an influential minority.

Politics in Lauderdale County and the state during the campaign preceding the election of 1848, as well as even several months after the election, remained fairly routine with no more than the usual sort of bickering and name-calling. Such animosity that was expressed had to do with the insults that Democrats and Whigs had traded for years.

As far as anyone can tell today from accounts in old newspapers, Lauderdale was fairly safely Democratic. The Jackson *Mississippian*, the chief journal of the state's Democratic organization, praised Lauderdale as "the giant county of the 'East'" that had just sent "two sterling democrats [Benjamin Carroll and C. G. Clayton]" to the Legislature. When the county's Democrats met at the Courthouse on New Year's Day in 1848 to elect delegates to the party's state convention later that month, the ten delegates (E. A. Durr, John F. Chester, Charles G. Clayton, William P. Carter, B. R. Carroll, Shields L. Hussey, James McDonald, E. T. Hussey, Benjamin Meador, and W. V. Raney) pledged to support any candidates the national party might nominate, whether "from the East, West, North, or South, *provided they are not in favor ot the Wilmot Proviso*" (author's emphasis).[1] President Polk had earlier requested from Congress an appropriation with which to negotiate peace with Mexico. Opponents of slavery, such as Pennsylvania's Democratic representative, David Wilmot, suspicious that the money would be used to acquire additional slave territory, managed to attach to the appropriations bill an amendment that would ban slavery from any land so acquired. The "proviso" passed the House but failed in the Senate.

As the campaign of 1848 progressed and General Zachary Taylor was nominated by the Whigs as their presidential candidate, Lauderdale Democrats fell into line and began making the sounds expected of any solidly Democratic county. But apparently those sounds were not so loud as usual. At any rate, an anonymous Democrat in Lauderdale deemed it necessary to reassure the Jackson *Mississippian* that the county's Democrats were not taking too seriously any wanton comments about the national party: "You must not infer from our silence [that] the Whigs have succeeded in Taylorizing the democracy of Lauderdale.... The Whig absurdity of attempting to elevate to the presidential chair an individual who agreeable to their own showing could be hired to murder innocent women and children, is an inconsistency

[1] Jackson *Mississippian*, 19 November 1847, 7 January 1848.

too palpable and transparent to be believed by [even] the most illiterate." The writer was referring to reports that Taylor, during the war in Mexico, had committed atrocities. And elaborating on this theme, the writer said: "Is it not wonderful that the Whigs have forgotten that Gen. Taylor pointed his guns at Matamoras and that they have ceased to sympathize and their bowels of compassion stopped yearning for the innocent Mexicans. Oh! Sodom and Gomorrah is there no brimstone left to roast his begrimed and blood-stained soul for the abominable deed!"[2]

Another letter from Lauderdale to the *Mississippian* signed only "J. B. H.," but almost certainly from Jubal Hancock, said the writer had lived in Lauderdale for eight years and had never seen it "more firm and united" in a presidential campaign. "You doubtless frequently hear of changes from the democracy in this county," said the writer, who then assured the Jackson paper that it wasn't so.[33]

Well, maybe not, but such protestations of loyalty began to sound as though some Democrats were less than certain of the local party's solidarity. Obviously someone was saying something, and some of the comments must have had to do with whether there were many more Northern *Democrats* like David Wilmot, who would, if given the chance, interfere with the South's "peculiar institution." It also was somewhat unnerving, under the circumstances, when in the spring of 1849 a slave named Anthony almost killed a Mr. Tinnin in Lauderdale County. The slave was sentenced to be hanged.[4]

One of the earliest public expressions of concern in the county about Southern rights was that on 2 July 1849 when a group of citizens met at the Courthouse to discuss what they called the "Southern question." A resolutions committee, consisting of W. S. Ragland, E. A. Durr, S. A. Griffith, S. Evans, F. C. Semmes, J. B. Hancock, and J. A. Horne, issued a statement condemning what they considered an attempt by much of the nation to deny Southerners their constitutional right to take their property—a euphemism for slaves—into the territories. Those territories, said the resolution, were the common property of all Americans. A denial of that right was, in effect, a violation of the contract that had established the Union.[5]

When Henry Clay proposed his group of compromises in 1850, there were complaints from all parts of the nation, great numbers of whose citizens seemed in an especially uncompromising mood. Abolitionists were bitter about the proposal to strengthen the Fugitive Slave Law to return runaway slaves to their owners. On the other side, Southerners had little faith in the ability or desire of Federal agents to return escaped slaves. Southerners were alarmed that the admission of California as a state would upset the Senate's balance between free and slave states. John Calhoun's last act in the Senate was to be present while someone read the ailing senator's speech denouncing Clay's proposed compromises. Daniel Webster's grudging support of the compromises brought him bitter condemnation from his own New England. This was, in fact, the last great undertaking of these three eminent statesmen. Calhoun died shortly afterward, and both Clay and Webster followed within two years. The removal from national affairs of these three old giants was ominous and gave reflective Americans one more reason to be apprehensive.

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[2] Jackson *Mississippian*, 25 August 1848.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1 September 1848.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1 September 1848.
[4] *Ibid.*, 13 April, 27 July 1849.
[5] *Ibid.*, 27 July 1849.

While the North debated Clay's proposed compromises, Southerners were regaled by a debate over whether secession was advisable and whether it was a "constitutional" right or merely a "natural" right. And if secession was a valid option, should one support people such as Robert Barnwell Rhett, of South Carolina, who believed a state should act decisively and independently on secession, or was it wiser to follow those who were somewhat more circumspect and who recommended cooperative efforts with other states similarly inclined? In the midst of this turmoil occurred the Nashville Convention in mid-1850.

John C. Calhoun was the instigator of the Convention at Nashville, though he cleverly managed to have Mississippi issue the actual call for a "Southern rights" meeting. And though the Convention had been supported mainly by the radicals, or "fire-eaters," it came to be dominated by more moderate men, one of whom, the Mississippi Chief Justice William L. Sharkey, presided and opposed radical action. The Convention, originally conceived as a way to bring about Southern secession, was thus a failure. It did, however, help to define issues.

Lauderdale County quickly began to debate those issues. Shortly after the Nashville Convention ended in June 1850, citizens in Lauderdale proceeded to discuss its relatively harmless resolutions. An anonymous letter—it was probably written by J. M. Trussell—to a Jackson paper declared the people of the county in support of the Conventions' work. Nine-tenths of the county, said the writer, opposed Clay's compromises, adding, "The people, both Whigs and democrats [*sic*] are too well advised to be any longer deceived by great names."[6]

However, on 5 August 1850, in Marion, there was what one source called a "Large and respectable meeting" at which various resolutions agreeing with the Nashville Convention were adopted "by lopsided margins." The one proclaiming that the Federal government had no authority to restrict the spread of slavery passed unanimously. The meeting was a lively one and at one point produced an animated debate among S. Evans, W. M. Hancock, W. P. Carter, W. A. Durr, Greene C. Chandler, J. M. Trussell, and S. L. Hussey.[7]

Now the stage was set in the county and state for political party lines to begin to blur. On one side were those, mainly Democrats, who more or less advocated the pressing of "Southern rights" by whatever means were deemed necessary, including secession. Opposed to these were other Democrats and many Whigs who generally cautioned against extreme measures and advocated remedies that they hoped would unify the dividing nation and offer a platform on which all patriotic people of good will could unite. Thus, the radical Democrats were called "State Rights" or "Southern Rights" Democrats, and their opponents were often referred to as "Unionists" or the "Union Party."

The Unionist cause found considerable support in Lauderdale County, especially from such men as William S. Patton, S. L. Hussey, and William Penn Andrews, the latter a former Ohioan. As we have already seen, Andrews bought the old Marion *Banner* in the summer of 1851 and used its equipment to start a new paper called the *Lauderdale Republican*, a "Union paper in the town of Marion," as Andrews put it. That in itself would not have been too unusual, especially in Lauderdale, except that he was also a Free-Soiler. The Free-Soil Party, though *not* abolitionist, opposed the admission of more slave states; and since it also opposed the Compromise of 1850,

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[6] Jackson *Mississippian*, 26 July 1850.
[7] *Ibid*., 16 August 1850.

Andrews must have been experiencing some changes of heart. But for a while, his journalistic venture was a very considerable undertaking. The Jackson *Mississippian* was predictably indignant at these Free-Soil activities in east-central Mississippi, and its editor hoped that "the intelligent people of Lauderdale will have no use for his [Andrews'] services." Apparently they did not, for his editorship did not survive the year. While it lasted, however, Andrews spoke his mind with rare candor. Admitting to having opposed the last Democratic presidential slate (1848), he flatly stated that the only reason he had not voted for Martin Van Buren's candidacy on the Free-Soil ticket was that it wasn't on the state's ballot. Nevertheless, Andrews apparently still regarded himself as a Democrat. The *Mississippian* was contemptuous of this "advocate of the swindling schemes which were carried out by the last Congress."[8]

Apparently sometime in December of 1851 Andrews sold the paper to Greene C. Chandler and R. B. G. Harper. Chandler, who would edit the paper, was only in his twenties, though his writing ability had already attracted favorable attention in the state. The two owners announced their policy:

> The political columns of the Lauderdale Republican will be devoted to the advocacy of the Rights of the States, and of the South, under the present Government constitutionally administered. And as the democratic party of the South, as now organized, is the only one that maintains the Jeffersonian doctrine of State sovereignty, and as it alone occupies the true Southern ground on the slavery question, our energies will be appropriated to the advancement of its principles, in opposition to Federalism [i.e., the expansion of Federal power], Freesoilism, and modern Unionism. We shall know no party, nor support the claims of any man for office, the least tainted with Federalism or Freesoilism. Power and fanaticism are ever grasping. The tendency of our political institutions leads to centralism [i.e., the concentration of power at Washington]; and unless their purity is guarded with great vigilance by the people in selecting public servants who will administer the Government strictly within its constitutional bounds, our boasted free confederacy will soon end in a large consolidated despotism, alike destructive of our institutions, and the liberties of the people.[9]

Well, it certainly wasn't W. P. Andrews and Free-Soilism, but perhaps neither was it totally pleasant to the hotheads who might have pondered the sentence, "Power and fanaticism are ever grasping."

The state elections in 1851 served to heighten political animosity, though the outcome of the election apparently showed that a small majority of Mississippians were moving away from disunionist sentiment. Mississippi's U. S. Senator Henry Stuart Foote, more and more regarded by many in the state as their political problem child, was unpredictable in both his politics and his manners. To many he seemed bizarre and outrageous, but in this time of secession fever Foote was paradoxically becoming identified with the side of moderation. He returned to Mississippi and announced his candidacy for the governorship. The State Rights Democrats nominated General John A. Quitman to oppose him, but the government's

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[8] Jackson *Mississippian*, 11 July 1851.
[9] Quoted in *ibid*., 2 January 1852.

investigation into Quitman's connection with the disastrous Lopez filibustering expedition in Cuba eventually helped to force him out of the campaign.

Senator Jefferson Davis, who would become a candidate for governor after Quitman's withdrawal, stumped the state in support of Quitman and various other State Rights candidates. When Davis spoke in Marion on Saturday, 17 May 1851, he was received almost as a head of state. He was an ideal specimen of a public figure: a colorful career as a colonel in the Mexican War, a subsequent record as a scrupulously honest statesman, and a very engaging orator. As one in his audience at Marion later put it, "The people know that Jefferson Davis is no brawling demagogue, who agitates the political waters that he may rise to the surface…."[10]

Davis arrived in Marion on Friday evening before his Saturday speech and spent the night at the Mansion House. Next day as he prepared to go to the Courthouse, at least six hundred people turned out to cheer him. There was even a band for good measure, and the throng moved to its cadence toward the Courthouse. One of the crowd, a veteran of the late war with Mexico, was so overcome with emotion that he shouted out that this was not the first time the gallant Davis had led Mississippians. When they reached the Square and entered the building, Davis took the podium and apparently kept the audience enchanted for a full three and a half hours. Scarcely anyone moved or fidgeted; for it was, said one of the audience later, "one of the most pungent and eloquent speeches I ever heard him make." Furthermore,

> He exposed the humbug of disunion, and satisfied his hearers that it was a foul calumny upon the State Rights party, raised by the Submission party to divert the public eye from the issue; maintained that the assertion of rights guaranteed by the Constitution, tended more to the perpetuation of the Union than the acquiescence in the usurpation of rights, which would undoubtedly encourage the North to further aggressions, and thereby endanger the Union.[11]

Davis stated his belief in the "right of secession." But what of that? Wouldn't almost every other American of any section, under pressure, have said as much? Many in Lauderdale and elsewhere must have been greatly reassured when Davis told his audience in Marion that such a drastic remedy was not then necessary.[12]

Three days later, on the twentieth, Senator Foote, Unionist candidate for governor, spoke at Marion, although only briefly so as to save himself for a bigger occasion the next day at Lauderdale Springs. His two speeches had been advertised throughout the county on placards; but if Democratic sources can be believed, he drew a far smaller audience than Davis had, not more than fifty listeners at Marion. One of those Democratic sources belittled what Foote had to say in that brief Marion speech:

> He didn't do much more than tell us what "me," "I," and "myself" had done in Congress, and elsewhere, and what this same Ego and his distinguished friend at his side, Gen. [John D.] Freeman, were going to do, provided the sovereigns [i.e., voters] did not precipitate a most unfortunate dissolution, which under

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[10] Jackson *Mississippian*, 30 May 1851.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*

> present appearances was much to be dreaded—and that was a dissolution between these gentlemen and the offices to be conferred by the state.[13]

Freeman, the Unionist candidate for Lauderdale's congressional district, was appearing jointly in Marion with Senator Foote, and like Foote saved himself for the next day in Lauderdale Springs. Apparently overshadowing Foote at the resort, he harangued a mostly-Whig audience for the customary three hours. And how were the speeches? Well, in the opinion of a political opponent, "Their speeches at the Springs were the same as on the day before [at Marion]; that of Freeman the same, *verbatim et literatim, et gesticulatum, et vulgariter*."[14] The liquor, said critics, was far more potent than was the oratory.[15]

After all the witty sallies, the jeering, and the political hyperbole have been noted, some interesting and far more important deductions can be made from the visits to Lauderdale County by Davis, Foote, and Freeman. One is that though Davis was speaking on behalf of such State Rights candidates as John Quitman, he clearly was not advocating any of their radical ideas about immediate secession. One suspects that Davis was merely trying to be a good party man and that he was as uneasy as many in Lauderdale County must have been about the secessionists. As a "Voice from Lauderdale" put it in the columns of the *Mississippian*, Davis was by no means "marshalling men, women and children, in the name of Quitman, [John Isaac] Guion, and the rest of the fire-eaters of the State, for the bloody contest to be waged immediately with the abolitionists of the North upon Mason & Dixon's line."[16] Strange! A calm, unimpassioned statesman was becoming the spokesman for the State Rights radicals, while a fiery eccentric represented the more peaceful Unionists.

A second possible deduction from all this is that there really was a paradoxical reaction to Davis in Lauderdale, and for the regular Democrats an embarrassing one. Lauderdale residents clearly were not swept off their feet by the Unionists, but they also were far from being under the spell of the State's regular Democrats, from the gubernatorial candidate on down. And when Davis's moderate speeches in support of the State Righters drew such favorable responses in Lauderdale and elsewhere, the radicals must have suffered considerable embarrassment to realize that much of the credit was Davis's and that the mood of many in the state was against those for whom Davis spoke. The greatest indignation in Lauderdale against the Unionists seemed to arise not from Unionist attacks on Quitman and his fellow State Righters, but from their attacks on Jefferson Davis, who was not at that time a candidate for office.

Lauderdale had not seen the last of the candidates in this exciting campaign. The county was becoming important to the state's Democracy, something of a bellwether for East Mississippi. Thus, in August of 1851 the congressional district's two rival candidates, Unionist John D. Freeman and regular Democrat William McWillie, made four joint appearances: on the ninth at Marion, the eleventh at Lauderdale Springs, the twelfth at Daleville, and back at Marion on the twenty-

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[13] Jackson *Mississippian*, 6 June 1851.
[14] The critic intended some meaning such as *word for word and literally, in both gesture and vulgarity*.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*

ninth. Quitman spoke in Marion on the twenty-seventh.[17] It was all more exciting than a public hanging.

The political climate was running against the State Righters and in favor of the Unionists. In the late summer a sort of plebiscite on the issues of the day proved that a majority of Mississippians regarded secession as a less-than-timely solution. The Unionists edged the radicals in the state by about six thousand votes. Lauderdale gave the more-moderate Unionists a razor-thin margin of 622 to 599.[18] But the moderates had won; there would be no secession this time.

Lauderdale, however, was still obviously not comfortable with the Unionist Party, and especially not with the unpredictable Foote. Many in the state were annoyed that Foote was seeking the office of governor while still a U. S. senator. The complaint was general that he ought to resign his Senate seat, and one hundred men in Lauderdale County decided to put pressure on him. Foote had been scheduled to speak in the county on August 30; but when he failed to show up, a hundred voters in the county composed an open letter to him and sent it to the press:

> Dear Sir:
>
> The undersigned…would be gratified to hear an answer from you to-day on the following questions:
>
> 1st. Do you believe a State in this Union has the right to secede for any cause whatever?
>
> Our reason for this question is based upon the fact that, by some, you are represented as holding to the right of State secession, whilst by others you are represented as denying that right.
>
> 2d. Do you intend resigning your position as Senator of this State before the November election? And, if not, please let us know your reason for holding one office…while asking for another.
>
> The reason for this question is fixed upon the fact, that if you are elected Governor you must resign; and if you are not elected, the people decide against you, and you are morally bound to resign. Why not then resign now, and relieve many of your fellow-citizens in relation to the purity of your motives?[19]

The letter was followed by the names of the hundred signers—I give them here, in alphabetical order, as spelled by the *Mississippian*: James Agnew, W. P. Agnew, Henry Alexander, W. J. Anderson, H. L. Bailey, J. H. Bailey, Abraham Batchel, Esward (Edward?) G. Beeson, J. Beason, Samuel A. Beeson, A. C. Bishop, John Bishop, W. L. Bishop, J. A. Blackman, C. E. Boarman, C. C. Bruister, J. W. Bruister, William Brumer, James Bungard, Sr., L. F. Bunyan, T. W. Burkhalter, S. Busbey, W. P. Carter, Green C. Chandler, M. Chandler, E. J. Chatham, Joseph Clinton, P. Coker, A. Cook, William Dearman, Jr., William H. Drewat, Elijah Edwards, T. M. Edwards, N. B. Elliott, S. Fisher, William T. Fisher, A. N. Gillespie, Charles Gordon, J. P. Gordon, James B. Gordon, R. T. Gordon, W. M. Hancock, Charles W. Henderson, Ephraim Henderson, J. B. Henderson, James Henderson, Tyree Henderson, William Henderson, Alfred Hooks, George Hummons, R. M. Humphrey, Quinea O. Jordan,

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[17] Jackson *Mississippian*, 20 June, 1 August 1851.
[18] *Ibid*., 12 September 1851.
[19] *Ibid*.

John Keeton, Milton Knight, J. G. Lacy, W. P. Lasley, Mathew Lee, J. Lowenstein, Joseph Lowry, Daniel McArthur, James McDaniel, R. McElroy, W. B. McElroy, J. T. McIlvain, James McIlvain, Robert McLain, C. H. McLemore, Richard McLemore, Nathan McMullen, H. H. Rainey, W. H. Rainlings, F. B. Randal, C. Rea, E. Q. Sawyers, William Shers, G. W. Sims, John G. Sims, William A. Sims, Charles Smith, J. B. Smith, David Stabler, William W. Stringer, J. M. Trussell, Arthur Tucker, Thomas Tucker, John L. Turner, B. Upchurch, Daid (David?) B. Walker, William P. West, Walter Welch, A. F. Whiles, Eli Williams, Richard Williams, Ephraim Wilson, W. T. Wise, and J. C. Yoes.

The letter created something of a sensation within the state and put Senator Foote at some disadvantage and embarrassment, not so much over his views on the state's right to secede—most Southerners at that time probably conceded the right under one condition or another—as it did over whether he intended to resign his Senate seat. His position was about to be made even more difficult by John Quitman's withdrawal from the gubernatorial race. There was probably an almost audible sigh of relief among the State Righters when their party's nominating committee named the increasingly-popular Jefferson Davis to fill the vacancy. And immediately upon his acceptance Davis announced his intention to resign *his* seat in the Senate. Foote answered the Lauderdale One Hundred with a somewhat disingenuous "I have constantly announced my intention to resign my office of Senator at some moment anterior to the November election." He then went on to hedge on the matter, leading the Jackson *Mississippian* to jeer, "He Will and He Won't!"[20] Perhaps Foote came to regret his failure to appear at Marion for that speaking engagement. On the other hand, perhaps he did not show because he knew that the political leaders in Lauderdale were eager to ask questions hard to answer.

The results of the November elections showed not only that both Mississippi and Lauderdale County were far from being on a determined, radical course but also that the secession scare had shaken confidence in many politicians. Even Jefferson Davis, with his poise, polished oratory, and clear superiority to many of his contemporaries, in either party, was unable to carry the state for the State Right Democrats. Too many voters regarded that element as tainted with radicalism. Davis lost to Foote, though that was probably mostly a result of the unpopularity of many of Davis's colleagues, as well as Davis's becoming quite ill at one point in the campaign and having to curtail his campaigning. In Lauderdale County, however, Davis squeaked by Foote 671 to 626. Of seven important state or district offices for which Lauderdale voters cast ballots, only one State Rights Democrat was elected. Among county voters, however, four of the State Rights candidates received majorities. A Unionist candidate for secretary of state, J. A. Horn, was a citizen of Lauderdale County and beat his opponent in the state and county, getting a winning margin in Lauderdale of 735 to 571. But most races were closer; and as we have seen, Davis carried the county by only forty-five votes. Within the county, the candidates for the U. S. House of Representatives were separated by only twenty-two votes. Candidates for chancellor, treasurer, and auditor of public accounts were separated by only nineteen, eight, and four votes respectively.[21]

The crisis had passed, temporarily as it proved; but the new political alignments persisted for yet a while. Instead of the old designations of Whig and

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[20] Jackson *Mississippian*, 26 September 1851.
[21] *Ibid.*, 30 May, 14 November 1851.

Democrat, now candidates generally gave such labels as Unionist, State Rights Democrat, Union Democrat, and Union Whig. A few held doggedly to the old names Democrat and Whig, and in the 1852 state Legislature one finds even one member, J. A. Orr of Chickasaw County, who boasted the name of "Jefferson Democrat." Shields L. Hussey of Marion, representing both Lauderdale and Newton Counties in the state Senate, described himself as a Democrat. William S. Patton, Sr., of Lauderdale Springs, one of Lauderdale County's two representatives in the lower house, gave his party as Union Democrat; while the county's other representative, John R. McLaurin, of Marion, preferred the term State Rights Democrat.[22]

The State Righters grumbled when a rather small group of Unionists met in Jackson in January, 1852 and called themselves the state convention to choose delegates for the Democratic National Convention that met later that year in Baltimore. Only eighteen counties sent delegates: Adams, Carroll, Claiborne, Covington, De Soto, Holmes, Jasper, Leake, Lauderdale, Madison, Monroe, Noxubee, Pontotoc, Rankin, Smith, Tippah, Tishomingo, and Warren. Lauderdale's delegates were William S. Patton and Shields L. Hussey. This Union Democrat Convention—"that other assemblage," as the *Mississippian* sneeringly described it—had apparently misread the recent election as an endorsement for a continuing split in Democratic ranks. In addition to having a poor turnout of the state's counties, the convention itself drew criticism by trying to create fictitious delegations from counties not present, prompting the *Mississippian* to ask sarcastically "where they got their authority to manufacture delegates." There were internal problems as well, as for instance when the majority voted to endorse the Democratic national platforms of 1840, 1844, and 1848. This prompted a number of old Whigs to walk out. It must have been a lackluster affair; and after Lauderdale's Colonel Hussey addressed the convention "at some length," the delegates dispersed, probably with palpable relief.[23]

The Union Democrats had, however, made a contribution to one more decade of relative peace; and it has often been suggested that had secession come in 1850 instead of 1860, the story could have had a very different outcome. The Union Democrats had deplored the effort, as they put it, "to engraft upon the Democratic creed…a dangerous heresy," that is, the "right" of secession. They pointed out how President Jackson had condemned any such doctrine and that even the Mississippi Democratic Convention of 1834 had warned "that a Constitutional right of secession from the Union…is utterly unsanctioned by the Federal Constitution, which was framed to establish and not to destroy the Union of States; and that no secession can in fact take place, which will not virtually amount in its effects and consequence to a civil revolution."[24]

Well, tempers cooled. Franklin Pierce, a New Englander elected president in 1852, was friendly to the South and much influenced by the South's leaders. He was therefore very popular in that region. Jefferson Davis, who had come out of the turbulent political scene of 1851 as one of the few real winners—not at the polls but in stature—took the post of secretary of war in Pierce's cabinet and began his ascent to the role of Southern spokesman, vacant since the death of John C. Calhoun.

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[22] *Legislature of Mississippi, for 1852* (Jackson: Dobson & Dickey, printers, 1852?). This is a broadside giving political and personal data on the members for 1852. From an original in the Auburn University Libraries, Special Collections.
[23] Jackson *Mississippian*, 9 and 16 January 1852.
[24] *Ibid.*, 16 January 1852.

In Lauderdale County the citizens could again turn to less dangerous topics of interest, such matters as the completion of the Southern Railroad, the Know-Nothing mania, or whether communities would allow grocers to sell liquor "in less quantities than one gallon." Even William S. Patton managed to get back into the good graces of the staunchly Democratic Jackson *Mississippian*, which in June of 1852 thanked him "for the largest list of subscribers yet sent in for our Campaign paper," adding, "His exertions in behalf of the good cause are fully appreciated."[25]

Unfortunately for the nation, the subsidence of extreme Southern sectionalism in the early 1850s was to be brief. Throughout the rest of the decade a series of events served to keep alive and to exacerbate sectional bitterness. The mild and, at times, seemingly pro-Southern administrations of Presidents Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan during the years 1853 to 1861 could scarcely alleviate Southern fears raised by Abolitionist propaganda, a fear that overestimated the influence in the North of that radical element. Abolitionist newspapers, tracts, and books infuriated many in the South and sometimes spawned laws to ban such writings. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was particularly irritating to those south of the Ohio and Potomac Rivers. From 1854 onward every year brought at least one new, major crisis to either North or South. In 1854 a new party calling itself Republican appeared. Avowedly anti-slavery, the new party's rapid growth and influence were viewed in Dixie with mounting concern and disgust. The term "Black Republican" quickly became a common Dixie pejorative. In 1855 and 1856, politics in Kansas and on the floor of Congress deteriorated until blood flowed in both places. Also in 1856, the new Republican Party achieved an astounding second place in the presidential election, thus supplanting the moribund Whig Party.

By 1857 it was clear to those in Lauderdale County, as it was to many other Southerners, that the presidential campaign of 1860 was going to be unusually critical. They needed a candidate they could support, and that meant one whose views on slavery were satisfactory. When Stephen A. Douglas, senator from Illinois, introduced his Kansas-Nebraska Bill into the Senate, he became highly popular in Dixie with his proposal to let the voters in those two territories decide for themselves whether to have slavery or not—*popular sovereignty*. This would, in effect, nullify the Missouri Compromise, which for some thirty-five years had maintained relative calm on the slavery question. But it had also limited slavery's expansion, and Southerners generally regretted having accepted it. The Kansas-Nebraska bill seemed a godsend to them. Congress passed it and President Franklin Pierce, who favored the measure, readily signed it into law. Its passage was the signal for pro- and anti-slavery factions to pour into Kansas and to turn that territory into a battlefield. This bellicose spirit spilled even onto the floor of Congress when Representative Preston Books, of South Carolina, beat Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner into insensibility. Southerners were pleased with developments, including the clubbing of Sumner. They had won a significant political victory, and Stephen A. Douglas, "the Little Giant," just might do as a candidate in the next campaign for the presidency.

In 1857 a slave named Dred Scott managed (with his white backers) to have his plea for freedom brought before the Supreme Court. Scott's contention was

[25] Jackson *Mississippian*, 25 June 1852.

that his having been taken into free territory effectually made him a free man. The Court declared that since a slave was not legally different from any other personal or real property, to set him free would violate his owner's constitutional right to property. Therefore, Scott was still a slave and, as such, had no right to sue in the courts. If the Court had stopped there, perhaps little would have been made of the matter. But Chief Justice Roger Taney went on to rule that Congress had no constitutional power to abolish slavery in the territories, and the Missouri Compromise was therefore unconstitutional. The anti-slavery forces were appalled.

But Southerners were delighted. This judicial decision was better even than what Douglas had been advocating. Douglas thought so, too, and at once accepted what the Court had done. Now, not even an anti-slavery *majority* could exclude slavery in new territories.

Stephen A. Douglas, with his Southern supporters, was riding high and doubtless having equally elevated hopes of moving his office from Capitol Hill to the White House. First, though, 1858 meant that he had to be re-elected to the Senate. To challenge Dougas the upstart Republican Party nominated an upstart candidate, the relatively-unknown Abraham Lincoln. The pro-slavery forces were already calling Lincoln a "black Republican" for such statements as his paraphrasing from the Bible, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," and the assertion of his belief that the nation could not remain divided but must become either all slave or all free. Between 21 August and 15 October the two candidates met in a series of debates that attracted much attention throughout the nation. The most critical debate turned out to be the one at Freeport, Illinois. Attacking Douglas on his main source of political strength, popular sovereignty, Lincoln asked his opponent whether the inhabitants of a territory could lawfully exclude slavery from a territory prior to its becoming a state. Douglas, finding himself in a difficult position, was forced to admit that "slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulations." Caught in a bind, he had chosen his own popular sovereignty instead of the Dred Scott decision. Many Northern Democrats were irritated by Douglas's "Freeport Doctrine." To them the Illinois senator seemed to be splitting hairs. But more unfortunate for Douglas was the disgust in the South that the senator had opted for his popular sovereignty instead of the more-sweeping ruling in *Scott vs. Sandford*.

The abortive raid by John Brown on the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Va., in 1859, with the intention to use the weapons to cause an uprising of the slaves, convinced many Southerners that their worst fears were well founded; the Abolitionists did indeed intend a race war. The ultimate irritant came in 1860 with the Presidential campaign and election.

The Lauderdale Rifle Company, at their meeting on 16 July 1859, had no inkling that in almost exactly two years some of them would be engaged in the first major battle of a civil war that would slaughter hundreds of thousands of their brethren and revolutionize the lives of the survivors. To Capt. W. P. Evans, 1st Lt. M. H. Whitaker, 2nd Lt. W. A. Shields, 3rd Lt. W. L. Mayfield, 1st Sgt. H. D. Boutwell, Secretary W. H. Curtis, and all their men, their July meeting was a lark, like a Masonic picnic, except with a bit more he-man panache. Like their Northern counterparts, they were learning about the science of war but nothing of the art of compromise. With alacrity they held

their meeting, did their posturing, and set the date for their next meeting. It was on Saturday, October 15.[26] On the next day John Brown, equally inept at compromise, and probably a little balmy, attacked the U. S. arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, an act that as much as any other prepared the two sections for their four years of carnage.

As prospects for a good harvest gratified the region in that summer of 1859, the residents of Lauderdale County followed the gubernatorial contest that would put John J. Pettus, the ardent secessionist from Kemper County, into the governor's office. He seems to have scheduled only one speech in Lauderdale County, the one in Marion on August 5.[27] Perhaps he believed he was sufficiently known there, or perhaps it was because of that "general indisposition to become excited" about politics that the *Eastern Clarion* noticed in some areas of Eastern Mississippi. Congressional candidate O. R. Singleton also spoke only once in the county—in Lauderdale Springs in September—though M. D. Haynes, candidate for state treasurer, spoke in Lauderdale Springs, Marion, and Chunkyville.[28] There would, however, be no "general indisposition to become excited" a year later!

The Democratic National Convention met in Charleston, S. C., on 23 April 1860. Douglas had more support than any other candidate, but a majority of the Southern delegates would have none of him and his popular, or "squatter," sovereignty. Quickly realizing that there was so great a disagreement over issues that they could not choose a candidate for the presidency, the non-Southern delegates adjourned to attend a second convention in Baltimore. There they nominated Stephen A. Douglas. Eight Southern delegations, disgusted and defiant, held a separate convention, also in Baltimore. They picked John Cabell Breckinridge.

Shortly after the Charleston convention adjourned, Lauderdale County's Democrats met on 19 May in Marion's Courthouse, but in an atmosphere suffused with fate and probably very disturbing to many thoughtful, less-jingoistic residents. The meeting had been called by a number of "old-line Democrats" with W. W. Hall as chairman and L. A. Ragsdale as secretary. There had been some mystery about the meeting, and a number of persons such as J. D. Tolson arrived with questions about its purpose. Upon Tolson's queries, William L. Spinks arose and said the meeting had been called to choose members to a new state convention that would in turn choose delegates for the second *National* Democratic Convention, in Baltimore. This announcement occasioned an angry hubbub and a heated discussion. Chairman Hall indignantly stated that he would not preside over such a meeting, and he abruptly left the chair. Constantine Rea rose and, adding his objections to Hall's, said he would have no part in such a scheme. The delegates who had walked out of the Charleston convention and formed their own, he said, had acted in accordance with their instructions and ought to be supported. Rea spoke eloquently and with vehemence; the audience applauded him vigorously.[29]

Though at this point a majority were clearly opposed to sending delegates to the second national convention in Baltimore, someone made a motion (that was carried) for all those opposed to this second convention, to withdraw and let those wishing to compromise have their meeting. Only three remained, one of whom

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[26] *The Meridian*, 28 July 1859. The company's meeting was probably in Marion Station, for the item was reprinted from the *Lauderdale Republican.*
[27] Jackson *Mississippian*, 20 July 1859.
[28] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 17 August 1859.
[29] *Ibid.*, 30 May 1860.

was Spinks, probably by now very depressed as to what all this portended. Was there any point in trying to continue? One of the majority, W. P. Andrews, had stayed behind out of curiosity, and Spinks asked him to take the chair. This native Ohian and former Free-Soiler declined, and the small group, realizing the hopelessness of their position, adjourned.[30]

This was the signal for the majority to march back into the hall and resume their meeting, with Hall presiding. J. D. Tolson, Constantine Rea, and W. G. Grace were appointed to a committee to draft resolutions explaining the sense of the meeting. After they withdrew to perform their work, E. J. Rew delivered a rousing speech in defense of the South's political position. When the resolutions committee returned, they presented a list that included the following points:

- They approved the way the state's delegates had performed at Charleston, S. C.
- They supported a meeting in Richmond, Va., on 11 June of all Democrats in favor of the Southern position.
- The delegates to a Richmond convention should be accredited as delegates also to the Democratic adjourned convention in Baltimore (i.e., the one called by Northern Democrats) so as to be prepared to attend should the results of the Richmond meeting so warrant.
- They endorsed substantially both the platform adopted by the State Democratic Convention of June 1859 and the one adopted at the Democratic Convention of 1856 in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- They insisted that slavery be protected in the territories.
- They opposed efforts by any state or individual to foil the intent of the Fugitive Slave Law to return escaped slaves.
- Naturalized citizens should be as diligently protected in their rights as native-born citizens were in theirs. (This was a slap at the old Know-Nothing Party, now virtually defunct.)
- The island of Cuba ought to be acquired "at the earliest practicable period." (The hope was that it would be added to existing slave territory.)
- A railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific was "one of the greatest necessities of the age," and its construction should begin as soon as possible.[31]

After these resolutions were adopted, there remained only the appointment of county delegates to the state convention in Jackson. They were as follows: Alamucha Beat: I. K. Pringle, S. H. Shannon, P. H. Bozeman, and W. W. Hall. Center Beat (Marion): E. A. Durr, Constantine Rea, and L. A. Ragsdale. Chunkyville Beat: D. E. Ritch (*sic*), W. H. Lacy, and William Keith. Daleville Beat: __? D. Williamson, James Trussell, and Dr. Peyton King. Lauderdale Springs Beat: __? Miller, Nelson Moore, and G. W. Null.[32]

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[30] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 30 May 1860..
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 30 May 1860.

The Jackson *Weekly Mississippian* published, under the title "Skies Bright in Lauderdale," a letter whose writer was identified only as "R." (It could have been written by Constantine Rea.) The writer reported on the Democratic meeting in Marion and how the effort to disapprove the actions of Mississippi's delegates in Charleston had been a "*complete failure*." The writer added, "The Democrats of Lauderdale are as true as steel."[33]

From this point on events moved rapidly to the final rupture. After the Southern Democrats nominated the presidential ticket headed by John C. Breckinridge, there were ratification meetings in many counties. The Democrats of Lauderdale met at the Courthouse on 7 July, when speakers such as E. A. Durr, Constantine Rea, W. W. Hall, and Dr. R. N. Parker addressed what an observer called "a respectable number of the citizens" of the county. Capt. W. V. White presided and C. W. Henderson acted as secretary. One of the resolutions resulted in the creation of a "National Constitutional Democratic Association" in the county. Colonel Durr was chosen president, J. B. Hancock and W. V. White vice presidents, C. W. Henderson and L. A. Ragsdale secretaries, and W. G. Grace treasurer. An Executive and Corresponding Committee consisted of the following: Colonel Campbell, Con. Rea, Dr. W. H. Burton, Joseph Lowry, D. C. Smith, H. D. Boutwell, W. W. Hall, J. D. Tolson, W. V. Raney, John McElroy, Dr. J. S. Knox, Dr. R. N. Parker, and J. M. Trussell. The Association voted to meet monthly.[34]

On 6 November 1860, thanks to the schism in the National Democratic Party, Abraham Lincoln got a majority of electoral votes, though only a plurality of popular votes. Lincoln, of course, was not on the ballot in Mississippi, but the other three candidates were. In Lauderdale County the Southern Democratic candidate Breckinridge received 951 votes; John Bell, the Constitutional Union candidate, got 353; and the regular Democratic candidate, Stephen A. Douglas, came in last with 141.[35] Both Lauderdale County and the state agreed in their preference for Breckinridge, but the peculiar workings of the Electoral College had put Abraham Lincoln into the White House. This development, regarded as ominous and unacceptable by the more outspoken Southerners, was the catalyst for the last stage in the events leading to secession.

On November 12 a large number of the county's excited citizens met in Marion to decide what steps to take now, in light of the outcome of the national election. William S. Patton, who presided, was described as a "Union man of '51." That is, he had opposed secession during the crisis of 1850-1851. It was a curious meeting attended by such persons as Dr. D. U. Ford and Major W. P. Evans, who like Patton had supported the Constitutional Union candidate Bell in the late election, and others such as William L. Spinks, who had been, and probably still was, strongly opposed to secession. All of them doubtless saw the futility of further efforts to preserve the Union, what with so much passion and fear exciting the state's citizens.[36]

A committee to draft a set of resolutions—one might almost call this period the "Era of Resolutions"—was appointed, the members of which were Con. Rea, J. M. D. McElroy, G. W. Roberts, Dr. D. U. Ford, W. W. Hall, C. W. Matthews, and W. L. Spinks. After several lively speeches by such men as Robert Leachman, W.

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[33] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 30 May 1860.
[34] *Ibid.*, 24 July 1860.
[35] Burnham, *op. cit.*, 560.
[36] Jackson *Weekly Mississippian*, 21 November 1860.

L. Spinks, and M. H. Whitaker, the resolutions committee presented the results of their work. There was a preamble:

> Whereas, Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin have been selected President and Vice President…by a vote which is purely sectional, and as both of these gentlemen are the representatives of a party whose principles strike directly at the very existence of our institutions, and believing also that the aims and objects of that part are to destroy our rights and impair our equality. And believing also that it is the sacred duty of American citizens to defend our Constitutional and reserved rights against all encroachments whatever. Therefore, be it resolved….

And here followed a list of points that included a charge that the late election had violated the Constitution "in spirit" and should be fought "by all means consistent with the duty and allegiance we owe to the State of Mississippi." The Federal government was the creature of the states and each state, as a sovereign entity, could secede if it believed the contract that created the national government had been violated. The Constitution preserved a citizen's property, including slaves, a right that had been violated. Under this compact no citizen giving primary allegiance to his state could be held treasonable by the Federal government, because one's first duty was to one's state. Thus went such reasoning. This was not the first time such doctrines had been expounded in American history, nor would it be the last. The meeting also endorsed Governor Pettus's recent request to the Legislature to call a convention "to take into consideration the mode and measure of resistance to Black Republican aggression," for "we commend secession to the delegates hereafter elected [for a convention], as being the only means of preserving the rights and equality of the South. That the dissolution of the Union and [formation of] a Southern Confederacy is [*sic*] our only hope of safety; and, to this end, we invite Southern men of all parties to unite with us."[37]

The last two resolutions implied the need for new parties and new designations, and they ended with a phrase that sounds familiar to anyone who has read the Declaration of Independence:

> That all national parties heretofore organized, broken down as they are by the will of an aggressive majority, are incapable of protecting the rights of the South. Therefore we cordially unite together in abandoning old party issues, wiping out party lines, party distinctions and party prejudices…. That hereafter we be known as members of the Southern Rights party, and to maintain the principles contained in the preceding resolutions, We pledge our lives, fortunes and our sacred honor.[38]

The resolutions had been read aloud to the assembly by Con. Rea, who was frequently interrupted by what the *Weekly Mississippian* called "loud and continued applause." The document containing the resolutions was then signed by Rea, D. U. Ford, W. W. Hall, C. W. Matthews, J. W. McElroy, W. L. Spinks, and G.

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[37] Jackson *Weekly Mississippian*, 21 November 1860.
[38] *Ibid.*

W. Roberts.[39] There was, of course, a touch of self-conscious drama about the meeting and the resolutions, and probably no small amount of equally self-conscious posturing. And yet there was without question a genuine aura of grandeur in the proceedings, an awareness of being on the threshold of the great adventure of nation-making. For what these men and others around the state were contemplating was the transformation of Mississippi into an independent republic. It is forgivable if they occasionally thought of similar proceedings in 1776. But in light of what we know of William L. Spinks—and there must have been others like him at the meeting—what must have been the sadness and apprehension that oppressed him, even as he signed the resolutions! A little later we shall get some idea of what his thoughts may have been on this occasion.

Just before Christmas, and on the same day that South Carolina voted to secede, Mississippi's counties elected delegates to a secession convention in Jackson. Lauderdale County chose as delegates James B. Ramsay and F. C. Semmes, who took their seats with the other delegates when the convention opened on 7 January of 1861. The two Lauderdale men, though apparently not among the most active and vocal representatives, appear to have been wholeheartedly among the ones most determined upon radical action. On the third day of the convention, some of the delegates less eager for secession offered two amendments. The first would have made an ordinance of secession of no effect "until at least the States of Georgia, Florida and Louisiana shall through their respective Conventions resolve to secede from the Federal Union and resume their sovereignty." The second amendment would have kept an ordinance of secession from taking effect until it had been ratified by a subsequent state plebiscite. Both amendments would have been in keeping with the advice of Mississippi's Senator Jefferson Davis, that is, to avoid precipitate or rash action. But both proposals failed, the first by a vote of 74 to 25, the second 70 to 29. On each issue both Lauderdale delegates voted with the majority. On that same third day of the convention both Ramsay and Semmes were part of an overwhelming majority of 84 to 15 who passed an ordinance of secession.[40]

The rest of the convention was comparatively routine and undramatic. Lauderdale's Ramsay, with J. Winchester (Adams County) and W. E. Barksdale (Yalobusha County), was appointed to a committee on enrolled bills. On the eighth day the delegates, with some sense of the drama of the occasion, signed the Ordinance of Secession and then resumed deliberation on whether to join other seceded states to form a confederacy; and on a motion by L. Q. C. Lamar, they decided to do so. On the fifteenth day of the convention Ramsay was named to a committee of five to design a state flag and coat of arms.[41]

Citizens in the county who still felt a love and loyalty for the Old Flag and all the traditions behind it were probably a little giddy with apprehension, though it is difficult to know whether they were a majority. If only those in both North and South who had helped bring on the Civil War, or at least had done nothing to try to prevent it, had been the only ones to suffer, one could be philosophical about it. But

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[39] Jackson *Weekly Mississippian*, 21 November 1860.

[40] Original manuscript *Journal of the [Secession] Convention of the State of Mississippi*, 12-13; RG 1, MDAH. The phras "resume their sovereignty" must have jarred those delegates who denied that it had ever been laid aside, a nice distinction of the sort beloved by legal metaphysicians.

[41] *Ibid., passim.* The flag was solid blue with one white star in the center, and, according to some historians, was the "Bonny Blue Flag" that inspired the song of that title.

philosophy offers little solace in the face of an impartial Nemesis that punished all parties. A reluctant and saddened William Spinks found repose in a soldier's grave just as surely as did Constantine Rea, who had done everything he could to bring on the grisly confrontation. There were doubtless Northern parallels equally poignant; but this is the story of a Southern county, a present-day native of which is thankful *not* to have lived through so appalling a period. Revolutions usually bring wars, and wars are far easier to start than they are to win.

Chapter 9: The Civil War Begins.

Alexander Hamilton Stephens, after having distinguished himself as one of Georgia's statesmen in Washington, decided in 1859 to get out of national politics. When someone asked why, the future Confederate vice president answered: "When I am on one of two trains coming in opposite directions on a single track, both engines at high speed, and both engineers drunk, I get off at the first station."[1]

It is common for undiscriminating readers about the American Civil War—or whatever other fine names one wishes to call it—to romanticize the events of that horrible episode and to imagine a Confederacy of united patriots toiling steadfastly and heroically for independence against a cruel invader. Southerners, according to this scenario, were the aggrieved party and wanted only to live in peace on their plantations that thrived on a beneficent economic system based on the willing labor of three million slaves who loved, and were themselves loved by, their masters. When war was forced upon the Confederacy, the populations in its eleven states enthusiastically answered the call for soldiers and worked closely with their elected officials in Richmond to bring the war to what they hoped would be a successful conclusion. Outnumbered and outproduced, the Confederates gradually succumbed to the inevitable, but not before they had given to history an unprecedented example of civilian devotion, heroism by the individual soldier, and expert leadership by the military commanders.

There are some factual elements in this version, but there assuredly is a strong element of romance in it. In like manner, a great deal of nonsense has been repeated about the North's role in the Civil War. Much similar stuff has been alleged even for the Revolutionary War. As a matter of fact, opposing sides in war generally try, *post bellum*, to make their respective roles look as seemly as possible. Besides, most individuals find myth more engaging than fact. And though the vast majority of persons prefer prose to poetry, their thoughts and emotions are more likely to struggle toward the imaginative realm of poetry and romance.

A number of historians insist that secession was carried through by a minority of Southerners; and though it is probably impossible now to settle the issue one way or the other, there is some evidence to support their thesis. It certainly takes no imagination to appreciate the bravery often required—amidst so much hoopla, impassioned rhetoric, and threats—to vote without benefit of the secret ballot. Clement Eaton, for instance, says: "First, it [secession] was carried out with remarkable swiftness…by an extremist minority acting on an inert majority (the way so many movements have been effected in history). Second, even the lower South moved reluctantly toward secession and the founding of a new nation."[2]

Eaton goes on to observe that the vote for secession in several states was close, and he cites evidence which suggests that had it not been for the dedicated vehemence, and threats of retaliation, of a small group of radicals, the vote for secession would likely have been far smaller. One gets the impression that these determined, bellicose people created an atmosphere in which many others, lukewarm at best in their support of secession, went along with the radicals for fear of being called "submissionists," or even traitors, and of being dealt with accordingly. Ignoring the advice of persons such as Alexander H. Stevens and even of Jefferson Davis, the

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[1] Rudolph Von Abele, *Alexander H. Stephens, a Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1946), 171.
[2] Clement Eaton, *Jefferson Davis* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 122.

Southern people, says Eaton flatly, "were rushed into secession by an emotional wave."[3]

Lauderdale County presented an interesting microcosm of a people's reaction to a grim development in which many if not most of them had had little more than passive roles. There were in the county, of course, zealots who itched to put on uniforms and fire away at every Yankee in sight. But there were also those who saw grave consequences in secession and who later, as the war worked its gruesome way to a disastrous end, clamored against the mess that they became increasingly convinced was a result of bad advice and often inept leadership. Today there is probably as much disagreement on such matters as there was in 1861.

New Year's Day, 1861, found the citizens of Lauderdale in a state of suspense. The election of Abraham Lincoln had already led to South Carolina's withdrawal from the Union on 20 December. The Palmetto State had, in fact, declared itself an independent nation, and conventions in several other states were about to meet on the issue. Like the inhabitants in other areas throughout the region, most people in Lauderdale were unable to do much but watch.

There seems little doubt that a feeling of apprehension and gloom was strong in Lauderdale County. Fateful events were rapidly coming to pass at a time when, to make matters worse, the economy was depressed and showed no signs of improving. For all its auspicious beginning, 1860 had been a bad year for farmers in the area. Corn, an important food crop, was especially scarce.[4] Unfortunately, farmers had already borrowed heavily on their anticipated crops of 1860; and when those crops proved disappointing, the improvident husbandmen were even worse off than before. Editor William L. Spinks, of *The Meridian*, chided his rural neighbors for their poor planning:

> How many men have money enough to buy corn and groceries, except by the indulgence of merchants? But few. The reason is, everybody owed his last year's crop. Farmers, you see this thing; for your sakes, for the good of the country, stop it. You can do it, and do better…. If everyone had proceeded on the safe plan last year, and had not drawn on the cotton of that year, why the cotton would now go for the purchase of corn.[5]

Farmers around Daleville met to discuss how to deal with their merchants who were almost to the limit of their ability to advance credit. A majority of the farmers decided to give their creditors the very last bales of cotton toward payment of the old debts, even if this left them nothing with which to buy corn. It was a commendable gesture and drew praise, though some of those making the promise later reneged. Some debtors flatly declared that they were going to think of themselves first and, if necessary, live at the expense of their creditors.[6]

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[3] Eaton, *Jefferson Davis*, 122-123.
[4] *The Meridian*, 5 January 1861.
[5] *Ibid*., 12 January 1861.
[6] *Ibid.*

Local analysts believed that money was scarce because it had flowed to Mobile. Whatever the cause, it had hurt even the manufacturing of shingles, which for the past year or two had supported quite a number of people in the county. Before the economic slump, shingle production in Meridian alone created a considerable demand for the product, and even greater quantities were shipped north to points along the M & O Railroad. To some extent the boom in the shingle-making industry resulted from earlier crop failures that had forced farmers to seek other sources of income, and for a while they did well enough. Putting the shingles upon the boxcars at four dollars per thousand generated an income that briefly supported at least sixty families in the Meridian area.[7]

But by the end of 1860 unemployment was critical. One might suppose that work on the two railroads coming in from east and west would have furnished employment for as many as the area could supply, but most of those jobs had already been parceled out to slaves and to Irish immigrants brought in expressly for the work.[8]

Against the advice of those county residents who wished to avoid spreading news of Lauderdale's distress, William Spinks turned his paper into a crusading organ to plead for those in other areas to buy Meridian's shingles. He appealed particularly to the prairie counties in the northeastern part of the state. They were obviously much better off, he thought, because he saw great quantities of lumber on the trains going into that area. "The most monied men [in Lauderdale County]," he wrote, "are troubled—confidence destroyed—credit gone—no demand for labor—and nothing that poor people can do to earn a support." And ignoring the complaints that he was humiliating Lauderdale, he flatly begged: "We appeal to the people above us to send down orders for shingles. Send the money with them. It will help relieve the destitution in our midst, and give employment to a large and respectable class of our fellow citizens."[9]

As for himself, Spinks admitted quite openly to his own straits. In a fetching little piece he warned his creditors:

> Cash Notice! In order to give our creditors lawful notice not to rush into danger, we give them this timely precaution. Don't you come here. Don't! Our office is well garrisoned. Our stove is filled with ashes, the stove-pipe loaded to the muzzle with danger, the devil[10] has the shooting stick, compositors look terrific, editor out at the elbows, cow-hide shoes, wool hat, homespun breeches, and a look of independence as though he did not have a dime in his pocket, which, unhappily, is the case. We warn you, creditors, there is danger. If you regard your feelings, and want to preserve friendly relations, don't come. No, if you want money do like we have, borrow it at three per cent a month and don't disturb our philosophic equipoise. Who'd have money? The love of it is the root of all evil. Do like we do, learn to hate it. In any event, do as you please, but don't come to us for money.[11]

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[7] *The Meridian*, 5 and 12 January 1861.

[8] *Ibid.* This illustrates one reason why some of the Southerners who owned few or no slaves—and they were a great majority—were often less than enthusiastic in their support of slavery, though some of these hoped eventually to own slaves. And slave owners, not the slaves, got any wages paid for work on public projects.

[9] *Ibid.*, 5 January 1861.

[10] A "devil" was an apprentice in old-time printing shops.

[11] *The Meridian*, 5 January 1861.

Yes, Spinks had quite a sense of humor, but beneath all the levity was an awful foreboding. He gave his subscribers the benefit of his musings:

> Well, a new year is upon us. It has turned up unbidden, unwelcomed. No one wanted it. Not that they would stay the circuit of the spheres or pull back time by the foretop. But a new year has brought increased responsibilities and burthens….
>
> How strange the contrast of a year! One year ago! A sigh reveals the intuition of the difference. We know it is so. A failure of the crops, and the dismemberment of the Union. The loss of a good Government and the receding tides of prosperity revealing the roughness, where tarried once plenty. Credit gone, confidence destroyed, and an aching void for the welfare of our State in the perilous way she is upon. These are the concomitants of 1861. These herald its approach, these beleaguer and dim and gloom the new year.

Having declared his apprehension, Spinks then tried to give a little advice to mitigate the gloomy prospect:

> But it's a long lane that has no turn. Let us improve upon ourselves. We all will bear it. Up and be scratching and doing something. As certain as that day succeeds day, as year follows year in quick succession, so will peace and good government crown patriotic and honest exertions and labor…. Live at home and spend no money. Lay up enough money to pay taxes punctually, and go to meeting on Sunday. Keep up your spirits, not at the expense of the distil[l]ery, but by the consciousness of good behavior.
>
> About politics. Don't fret over it. The Union is gone….
>
> Let secession men and co-operation men, and everybody dry up so much repining. Look saucy. We saw some gentlemen the other day from the Prairies. We accused them of eating biscuits and sausages, their looks betrayed them and they had to acknowledge it. If we have none to eat, let us console ourselves with the thought that good living is close by us.
>
> The long and short is, the new year is upon us, and with it a great many matured debts. If we can't pay them, let's put them off, "and jog along, keep jogging."[12]

What a charming little homily! And what a tragedy that he, like so many others, was pulled willy-nilly into that horrible catastrophe of miscalculation and rashness! William Spinks lost his life in a war he had worked to avoid. With the Secession Convention due to meet in Jackson in two days, nothing records more eloquently Spinks's feelings than his failure to comment about it, in his issue of January 5, beyond a *pianissimo* reference to "the perilous course" that the state was taking.

With relief many turned to pleasanter matters closer to home. And there were some, despite the economy. The argument between John T. Ball and William Brevard over which produced better shingles was good for a chuckle. Ball had run an ad that warned the public against "various *new fashioned* Shingles" that

[12] *The Meridian*, 5 January 1861.

were "being *puffed* into public notice" and suggested that purchasers of them might end up "*paying for their experience*." Brevard lashed back without recourse to italics: He was a local man, "a laboring man" who did not deceive or cheat, always paid his debts, and did not misrepresent himself. His shingle machine, he said, "cannot be slandered or put down by our worthy merchant whose commissions are made by swapping a few pounds of Coffee, Rice, &c." (Ball had signed his ad "Commission Merchant.") "But the greatest commission he [Ball] has made lately," said Brevard, "was when he committed the sin of trying to slander my Machine." "I am sorry," said Brevard, "I cannot sign my name as a commission Merchant, that is, if that is necessary to give evidence in the public mind."[13]

Christmas, 1860, had offered a bit of innocent amusement and respite from the somber news from Washington and Charleston. There were parties in various places about the county. One in Marion Station perhaps took its cue from the Mardi Gras celebrations in Mobile and New Orleans, or even a mummers parade. The celebrants donned grotesque masks and traipsed around the town carrying festive transparencies. What these transparencies displayed or proclaimed does not appear in the record, but they were apparently a popular way to celebrate Christmas and New Year's in Lauderdale County of long ago. And, of course, there was much singing and dancing. Despite some criticism from some of the area's puritans, there was, said one of the participants, "nothing immoral or objectionable."[14]

A rare snowfall on Christmas Day did not keep the editor of Meridian's newspaper from visiting his neighbors. Spinks went to "friend Cole's" where he had some choice eggnog, that (so he averred) was a far better commodity than any of those shingles that Ball and Brevard were arguing about. As he helped dispose of a Christmas turkey at the home of E. H. Williams, Spinks humorously observed to the host that the old gobbler "had gobbled his last gobble." Later in the day he joined several others for supper at the store of a Mr. Warren.[15]

The economy and national events could not stop local politics. William F. Gillespie, of Marion Station, was running for county surveyor, C. W. Henderson was Circuit Clerk; and even Editor Spinks himself must have been some sort of political functionary, for he performed a marriage on 3 January 1861, when he married Milton Carr and Rebecca Wiggins at the home of the bride's mother, Jessee Wiggins. "Well," observed Spinks, "we helped *switch* that carr off. May he be well switched in the future."[16]

New residents were arriving in impressive numbers. In just the first week of 1861 two rather substantial newcomers gave Meridian some hope of better times ahead. Dr. W. C. Johnson, formerly of Selma, Ala., arrived and immediately bought the old Meridian House that had been owned by Alfred China. Johnson was a physician and would prove to be a prominent citizen. The other newcomer was Col. M. F. Crumpton, an attorney from Pleasant Hill, Ala. He bought the former Trott residence. A mechanic named Combs and a brick mason named Day were two other arrivals.[17]

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[13] *The Meridian*, 5 January 1861.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.*, 5 January 1861. Johnson Street, or what later was the angled, downtown section of 25th Avenue, was perhaps the namesake of Dr. Johnson.

There were already well-established businesses. W. R. Ethridge, for example, made and repaired wagons, carriages, and wooden items, and operated a blacksmith shop. R. H. Breckenridge was a carpenter and mechanic whose business was prosperous enough for him to advertise for a "Negro Mechanic" and "a Negro boy to learn the trade." He was, he said, "prepared to furnish Plans, and make Estimates." Another carpenter, or joiner, in Meridian was R. A. Davis. A. Smith and M. H. Whitaker were attorneys who practiced in Marion and Quitman, and Frolichstein and Ottenstein ran a dry goods store in Meridian. In the latter place the physician W. J. Berry had an office. In Marion Station the firm of Rushing, Smith, and Mahan sold flour, corn, bacon, sugar, etc. They had just published an almanac for 1861.[18]

There were several schools operating in Meridian by this time. The East-Mississippi Classical and Military Institute had begun the previous October with R. Anderson as superintendent. In addition to the usual courses, Anderson offered what he described as "Military tactics, with civil and military engineering." For somewhat more than fifty dollars per ten-month term, a pupil could have a tolerably full schedule, and for an additional twenty dollars he could play soldier. Anderson also ran the Meridian Female Seminary. The Meridian Institute was still in full operation. Perhaps a more prestigious school than any other in the area, it was now in its second year. Its trustees had surveyed forty acres of the school's grounds into lots and were offering them for sale to families interested in living near a school for the convenience of their children. The location, probably on the Upper Decatur Road and near today's East Mississippi Hospital, was on land described as beautiful and as having plenty of good spring water.[19]

A remarkable amount of real estate in the county was for rent or for sale in January 1861, and most of it stayed on the market a long time, doubtless a result of the economic depression. Since the previous June, John Dearman had offered one- to four-acre lots a half-mile north of "Sowashee Depot" where there was "high table land" and the "best well water." John Ball still had not found a tenant for a "small dwelling house" with three rooms, kitchen and smokehouse, new outbuildings, and a convenient spring that was enclosed with a plank fence. And for the past six months Isom Greer, the prosperous citizen who had procured Meridian's charter, had been trying to find a buyer for either his farm near Lauderdale Springs or the one in Meridian where he lived. (His residence was not included.) Both farms, he said, were choice land but were more than he needed. In Daleville Elisha Mosely had been trying for ten months to sell his 240-acre farm. It was two and a half miles northwest of town and contained good buildings, a fishpond, and saw and gristmills. He offered also "15 or 20 likely young Negroes."[20]

Some of the gloom accompanying 1861 was lessened by "railroad fever." By New Year's, 1861, the Southern was running as close to Meridian as Newton. Workers had bridged the streams and gullies with admirable speed and had nearly finished the somewhat larger bridge over Tallahatta Creek. The one over Chunky River was under construction. William Spinks rather recklessly predicted that a Southern train would chug into town "in about twenty days" but admitted, "We have watched this road with so much anxiety that a week seems like a month."[21] Instead of

[18] *The Meridian*, 5 and 12 January 1861.
[19] *Ibid.*, 5 January 1861.
[20] *Ibid.*, 5 and 12 January 1861.
[21] *Ibid.*, 12 January 1861.

twenty days, it was almost exactly that many weeks before the first Southern train pulled into the little station at the foot of what soon would be named Lee Street, the downtown, diagonal section of our present Twenty-sixth Avenue. Progress on the North-East and South-West Alabama Railroad between Meridian and the Tombigbee River was running into snags, particularly one caused by the governor of Alabama, who was balking at paying the balance of a state loan to the project. The road's contractor, a man named Scott, offered to continue work on the road from Meridian to Jones' Bluff, on the Tombigbee, if the railroad would pay him enough to feed and clothe his laborers. There was no shortage of ties or rails, and by March enough of them had been acquired to finish that stretch of the road.[22]

Did many in the county realize that in a few weeks their old way of life would disappear as quickly as that Christmas snow? There must have been many who felt elation at being witnesses to what they believed was the birth of a new nation, but there must have been many others whose love for the old Union made them sad for the security the flag symbolized and apprehensive about anything that smacked of rebellion or treason.

But, yet a few weeks more of the old life. Up in Lauderdale Springs B. B. Smith announced the opening on the first of May of his new season at that popular resort. Those planning to visit, he said, had better put in their reservations early so as to be sure of an opportunity to "remain among their Southern friends instead of with their Northern enemies." Also in Lauderdale Springs Dr. W. R. Moseley announced his medical practice. Down in West Enterprise, in Clarke County, at the Young Ladies High School, L. Gould and his wife, late of the Gaston Institute in Alabama, were operating their seminary with probably no intimation that in about two years they would open a school a few miles north at Meridian, a tiny hamlet that in early 1861, neither in size, importance, nor beauty, could compare with Enterprise. The new law firm in Marion of Lowery and Baker sought public patronage, and a new household got underway on June 20 when H. L. Williamson performed the wedding of H. W. Denton to Miss I. A. Keith, at William Keith's home. In Meridian William Spinks advertised his wish to exchange his large hand press for a smaller one. In a short while he would never again need a press of any size.[23]

Almost at once the residents of the county, with alacrity or with resignation, began to prepare for the possibility that the secession of the Southern states would be contested. It was in this atmosphere that a school for training cadets was set up in Meridian and by early March was in full operation.[24] Those with less taste for rebellion learned to be circumspect in their declarations and actions, and to leave the stage to the "fire-eaters," as a popular term of the day had it. One of those fire-eaters was L. J. McCormick, earlier in Marion but now residing in Lauderdale Springs.

McCormick was a teacher and an author of school textbooks and what he called the "McCormick system of education." He railed against Northerners and "Southern traitors and treason," which latter charge included all those who refused to buy his books and accept his educational theories. Governor John J. Pettus was the

[22] *The Meridian*, 12 January 1861; Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 21 March 1861.
[23] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 13 February, 19 April, 28 June 1861; *The Meridian*, 5 January 1861.
[24] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 13 March 1861.

recipient of one of McCormick's sizzling essays. "The friends of the South," wrote McCormick, "could never teach her patriotism or sense; and I now hope & pray that her enemies, with Old Abe at their head, will bring her to her senses. I hope, Sir, that the South will never obtain peace, prosperity, mercy or justice so long as an abolition School Book or Newspaper is used on her soil." The South, he insisted, was getting poetic justice in that "as the South has treated me just so is the North now treating her." As a parting thrust he threatened to "rely on the British flag for that peace and prosperity so long refused me by my mother-land."[25]

One wonders how many of McCormick's claims were merely hot air. Was his system really the simplest method for mathematical calculation, embracing "all and the only improvements made in the English numeral since the invention of logarithms by Lord Napier"? Did his system really obviate most rules and make problems solvable with only one-fifth the figures of other systems, and would his method have educated "many teachers who now avoid Boards of Examination, and continue to insult and degrade the Confederate States with their Abolition Nurseries, called schools"? He threw out a problem which, said he, such dunderheads would be unable to solve: "A Steam-Engine, of 100 horses power, works a Fly Wheel of philosophical weight; what would be the power of this Engine if the weight of its Fly Wheel were reduced three-fourths, without changing its diameter?"[26]

That little exercise probably took the Governor's mind off the war for a few minutes! He had a real humdinger of a patriot over in Lauderdale Springs, just next door to his own home in Kemper. Perhaps Governor Pettus wondered whether, as McCormick claimed, the teacher really had "erected the best framed building" in the state, or "furnished the specifications and proportions for the First-Premium engine, exhibited at the Crystal Palace" in London, England. Was Pettus alarmed or was he hopeful when McCormick threatened to emigrate to Britain? Well, Pettus had a war on his hands and could give scant attention to the exuberance of an opinionated, ranting pedagogue. As for McCormick, he probably thought Pettus deserved every headache he got.[27]

Other letters that poured in to Pettus were of a somewhat softer nature, some making recommendations, some offering help, and some begging favors. Peter Ulrick,[28] a resident of Daleville, was a veteran of the War of 1812—"an Old Sea Dog," as he put it. He had served on the U. S. S. *Constitution* in its battle with H. M. S. *Guerrierre*, and on the *Nantucket* he had helped capture the *Caledonia* off Tybee Light House, near Savannah, Ga. After "a few weeks rest and having some *damages* repaired that I received in the *action*," he went on into the Gulf of Mexico to keep an eye on the British fleet there. During this period he engaged in action against Jean Lafitte and his pirates and was subsequently captured by the British. Though he had been living in retirement for some years, Ulrick was excited to learn that Mississippi had "weighed anchor and joined the glorious Confederacy." He offered to command "any craft, to Scour the coast and bays of Miss., Alabama & Florida and defend the same from any Foreign power or State." He added, "I could be of great Service to the

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[25] L. J. McCormick to Gov. John J. Pettus, 11 May 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Peter Ulrick and his wife Elizabeth had perhaps been residents of Lauderdale County at least since January, 1837—see *Deed Record Book A*, 53, in Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH. However, they do not appear in the personal enumeration of the 1840 census—see Edmiston, *op. cit.*

Teaching [of] young officers their *duty*, and train them in the right way." And finally, he tendered his services "in the Capacity of Commander from a Gun Boat to Seventy four—or in any Capacity where big guns are used [so as] *once more to stand in defense of my Country*." He offered to be ready in twenty-four hours.[29]

From Sageville, Edward J. Rew sent Pettus a drawing that illustrated Rew's scheme to blockade the Mississippi River against enemy navigation.[30]

Most of the Governor's letters from Lauderdale dealt with the formation of new military units, one of the earliest of which was the Lauderdale Rifles. The leader of this unit was our old friend Constantine Rea, who simply could not resist a good scrap. He seemed able to smell one when it was brewing and probably suspected that the situation at Fort Pickens, Fla., offered some promising possibilities.

On 26 December 1860 Major Robert Anderson, fearing his Federal garrison at Charleston, S. C., unsafe in Fort Moultrie, moved his men to Fort Sumter at the mouth of Charleston harbor. Sumter was still un-finished but was at least protected on all sides by ramparts and the sea. For similar reasons, the Federal garrison at Fort Barrancas, near Pensacola, Fla., moved to nearby Fort Pickens on 12 January 1861. The governors of both Mississippi and Alabama proceeded to dispatch troops to bolster what they regarded as Florida's weak military situation.

Governor Pettus ordered the Mississippi militia to assemble at Enterprise, Miss., on January 12, and on the following day they proceeded by rail to Mobile where they joined two Alabama companies. From that seaport they continued by boat, in bad weather and over a rough sea, to Pensacola. Seasickness became a problem for many—not a very propitious beginning for what was supposed to be a glorious military undertaking. The Mississippi men were quartered in the marine hospital near the Navy Yard. Fort Pickens' nearness allowed the Southerners to see their Federal foes who, without firing, merely stood gawking from the fort's ramparts. The Mississippi companies, on January 17 organized themselves into a regiment and chose as colonel Capt. Charles A. Abert, of the Columbus Riflemen.[31]

Everything was happening too fast for Governor Pettus. When he informed the Mississippi Legislature four days later about his dispatching of a force to Pickens, he could give the lawmakers few details. The companies had left on the 11th, but as he confessed to the Legislature, "The result of the expedition is not yet known to me." Something else that the Governor did not know was that not seven companies, as he told the two houses, but eight had ridden the M & O to Mobile on their way to Fort Pickens. Constantine Rea had apparently organized, equipped, and prepared his company without any word of it getting back to Jackson. Rea may have preferred it that way. At any rate, Rea's Lauderdale Rifles joined the so-called regiment—it had two fewer companies than the standard ten. The eight companies were the following: Chickasaw Guards, Columbus Riflemen, Lowndes Southrons, Prairie Guards (Noxubee and Lowndes Counties), Noxubee Rifles, Enterprise Guards (Clarke

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[29] Peter Ulrick to Gov. John J. Pettus, 1 April 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.

[30] Edward J. Rew to Gov. John J. Pettus, 20 August 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 53, MDAH.

[31] Dunbar Rowland, *History of Mississippi, the Heart of the South* 2 vols. (Chicago; Jackson: the S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), I:844f. Occasionally, Col. Abert's middle initial is given as *H*. Rowland gives it both ways in this account.

County), Quitman Light Infantry (Clarke County), and Lauderdale Rifles. These were the first military units to leave the state after secession.[32]

How quickly Rea had organized his company is difficult to say, but it must have been a really expeditious performance. With himself as captain, he procured as other officers 1/Lt. M. H. Whitaker, 2/Lt. A. J. Crawford, and 3/Lt. James Lasley. The problem of how to get arms must not have seriously troubled the voluble, resourceful Rea. There were weapons at Marion Station, but those responsible for them were adamant in their refusal to issue them without clear orders. To do so would have risked not only official censure but probably loss of their posted bond as well. Nevertheless, somehow Rea was able to persuade the custodians to hand the arms over to the Lauderdale Rifles, a move that apparently angered at least some of the other companies on the expedition. Rea's task was made easier by a previous, somewhat ambiguous order from Governor Pettus about the distribution of arms for the expedition. Rea's glib sophistry convinced those guarding the armory in the county that there was not a moment to lose; and, a Rea later put it, that since the weapons had to go, "a Lauderdale boy should go with them." The "Lauderdale boy" meant nothing dishonest; and if his action was excessive, it was so only in its zeal. A few days later, when Rea and all the others were safely in Pensacola, he wrote to Governor Pettus to assure him that there was nothing to worry about and that everything was going well. "We now have the guns and expect to make good use of them," wrote Rea. "This is the whole history of the matter and I hope you are satisfied with my action in the matter." All ruffled feathers had been smoothed, Rea assured Pettus, and "the best of feeling now prevails between the companies."[33]

If the Governor had been annoyed, he must have been at least partly mollified by Rea's explanation and especially by the charming bombast that Rea sent back to him from the field of battle, such items as the following: "I do not know when we will make an attack, there are only one hundred men at Fort Pickens, and it seems to me that we might take it now, though it is said to be an exceeding strong position, and…the Commandant, says he will defend it to the last. He is a Yankee, and from his blowing I don't believe he will fight."[34]

For two weeks the Southerners waited, watched, and drilled. It was all very anticlimactic. On the first of February General Charles Clark mustered the Mississippi soldiers out of state service.[35]

There had been no fight, and not because the Federal commander was a blowhard nor because Rea and the other Mississippians were cowards. (Kennon McElroy, for instance, one of the Lauderdale Rifles, would later lead the Lauderdale Zouaves and lose his life as commander of the 13th Mississippi Regiment.) The expedition had been peaceful, mainly because those Southern senators in Washington, who were most vitally concerned, would not countenance any fighting at Pickens.[36] There was not yet any kind of Southern government and not a trace of reasoned strategy to support any such risky undertaking. The whole affair was an ill-planned, gung-ho operation, quickly got together by some over-zealous patriots with an eye for theatrics but with apparently little appreciation of political and military realities. Soon

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[32] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 35-37.
[33] Rea to Gov. Pettus, 17 January 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] Rowland, *History of Mississippi, the Heart of the South*, I:845.
[36] *Ibid.*

enough these eager recruits would be fighting in deadly earnest, and certainly giving good accounts of themselves. But this expedition to Fort Pickens was more in the realm of comic opera, a chance to play soldier without having to dodge bullets.

But there had been bickering within the Lauderdale company. While in Mobile, Rea became disgusted by the behavior of Alexander Smith, who had been intoxicated and was arrested for disorderliness. Smith subsequently took French leave—the French call it *filer à l'anglaise*!—and persuaded twenty-three others to leave with him. According to Rea, Smith later "circulated a thousand lies to my prejudice" around Marion. This dispute had the effect of breaking up the Lauderdale Rifles, though the name was later carried over into another company in which Rea was an officer. William A. Smith, apparently the same person who had crossed Rea in Mobile, managed to organize a company in the Marion area and called it the "Pettus Guards," perhaps thinking thereby to profit from a compliment to the Governor. Most of those who had deserted with Smith in Mobile joined it, and Rea's disgust was compounded when Smith managed to get himself elected second lieutenant.[37] But more of the Pettus Guards later.

Rea described himself as having "always had a penchant for a military life." As a young man he had served both as a private and as an officer when he volunteered in 1842 in the army of the Texas Republic.[38] The experience whetted his appetite for more, and the relatively peaceful 1850s must have bored him. Anyone who studies Rea's career in that period, whether in journalism, law, or politics, will be impressed by his militant—I was about to write *military*—approach to everything he undertook.

The Lauderdale Rifles was not the only unit that caused a flap by getting possession of state weapons; two others were the Attala Guards and the Monroe Riflemen. These two, with the Lauderdale Rifles, took at least 150 percussion rifles, and Adjutant-General W. L. Sykes complained to Governor Pettus of the difficulty of getting them back.[39]

Getting those rifles back was not so serious a problem for Sykes as was trying to determine the number of men in the state eligible for military duty. His records showed 39,263, but sixteen counties had not answered his request for data. Lauderdale was one of them.[40]

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1861 there was a feverish military activity in and around Lauderdale County, especially after the attack by the South Carolinians on Fort Sumter on 12 April. Later, at about the time that the opposing armies were poised for their first big clash at Bull Run, south of Washington, D.C., Governor Pettus announced that camps of instruction—"basic training," we might say today—would be located at two places in the state, Brookhaven and Marion Station. (More were quickly opened.) Thus, all volunteer companies were ordered to report to one of

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[37] Rea to Gov. Pettus, 11 June 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 52, MDAH.

[38] Rea to Gov. Pettus, 3 April 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.

[39] Sykes to Gov. Pettus, 18 January 1861, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereinafter cited as *Official Records*) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), IV:1:68.

[40] *Ibid*.

those two places. The plan was to accommodate at each camp fifteen companies, the components of one and a half standard regiments.[41] The camp at Marion Station was called Camp Beauregard.[42] As we shall soon see, a second camp, Camp Barksdale, was established a little later, also at Marion Station.

One of the first volunteer companies organized in the county in 1861 was the Lauderdale Zouaves, which came into existence at Lauderdale Station early in January. The women of the town presented the new unit a flag on which was written "God and Liberty, Victory or Death." A Major Martin (the writing in the record is a little faded) made an appropriate address. The group's commander, Capt. Kennon McElroy, merely twenty-one years old, received the flag for the company and assured the assembled citizens that "if its silken folds should ever be tarnished or trailed in the dust, it would be when the boys of the Lauderdale Zouaves lay bleaching on the hardest fought fields of the war," which is exactly what happened to McElroy and twenty-four others of his unit.[43] But the horror of the battlefield was probably far from the minds of the eager Zouaves in the early part of 1861. If they thought of death at all, it was more likely the romantic notion of a glorious, manly tempting of death, of bravery rewarded by the envious praise of their sires and grandsires and by admiring smiles from the faces of village belles.

Meanwhile, awaiting the call to war, the Zouaves spent more than a month impatiently importuning state officials for arms; though in this respect the sons of Lauderdale Station had much company. It is difficult to know whether the problem was primarily one of unavailability or one of uncoordinated bureaucracy. Whatever the cause, Captain McElroy and his company managed to get their uniforms but had to do much of their drilling without weapons. Their frustration is reflected in a somewhat terse letter to Governor Pettus in which McElroy complained, "We are uniformed now & orders accompanied with *Guns* [his emphasis] would be the most acceptable."[44]

In studying the story of the Lauderdale Zouaves, the first company to leave the state after the establishment of the Confederacy, we are fortunate to have their unit history which, though often very difficult to read, has survived intact. We can follow their adventure from their mustering into state service on 30 March 1861 to their transfer to Confederate service at Corinth, Miss., on 13 May. There, on the fifteenth, these eighty-seven men were incorporated into the 13th Mississippi Regiment as Company C (Company F after reorganization a year later) under regimental commander Col. William Barksdale. Shortly thereafter, the regiment moved to Union City, Tenn., but the camp's terrain at that place was so unhealthful that the unit moved to Jackson, Tenn. After only one day there, however, the news from northern Virginia was such that the regiment was rushed to that area and arrived on the Bull Run, or Manassas, field of battle on the morning of 21 July. The Lauderdale Zouaves' "Historical Memoranda" later reported that "we double quicked alternately from point to point until near the close of the battle when we participated in the final charge." At the end of the day the Zouaves had suffered two casualties. J. D. Pool, of De Kalb, and Asa Simmons, of Lauderdale Springs, had both been mortally wounded.

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[41] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 26 July 1861.
[42] Robinson to Gov. Pettus, 17 September 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 53, MDAH.
[43] "Record of the Lauderdale Zouaves…," CR RG 9, vol. 7, folder I, MDAH.
[44] McElroy to Gov. Pettus, 29 April 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.

Simmons lingered for four days.[45] The Zouaves went on to see action in October at Ball's Bluff—they called it "Leesburg"—in Virginia, comporting themselves so admirably that the unit was complimented by Gen. D. H. Hill.[46]

Though they did not know it, when the Zouaves and the other two of the county's companies fought at First Bull Run and later at Ball's Bluff, it is alleged that one of their fellow soldiers was one of the strangest figures in the history of American warfare. It is probably impossible to prove, but many insist that a certain Lieut. Harry T. Buford, serving as an independent Confederate soldier, was in reality a young woman named Loreta Janeta Velazquez. Later we shall examine her story in more detail when we see how her other role as a Confederate spy took her briefly to Meridian in the middle of the war. At this point let it be said merely that she especially praised the men from the county and the state for their energy and valor at the Battle of Ball's Bluff. And if her story can be believed, Miss Velazquez herself, with her dapper uniform and fake mustache and imperial, apparently gave as good an account of herself.[47]

In the spring of 1862 the Lauderdale company, along with the rest of the 13th Mississippi—it included also the Alamucha Infantry and Marion's Pettus Guards—moved east of Richmond to contest Gen. George B. McClellan's Peninsula Campaign. Here, after reorganization, they served under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston and, after he was wounded, under Robert E. Lee.[48]

The Peninsula Campaign of 1862 was McClellan's vain attempt to move inland along the Yorktown Peninsula and capture Richmond. At Malvern Hill on July first the 13th Mississippi's entire brigade, under Gen. Richard Griffith, formed a battle line in a wood that was being bombarded by Federal batteries and by enemy gunboats on the nearby river. At about six P.M., as the Confederates tried to overrun the enemy's batteries, Lt. Col. J. W. Carter, the regiment's commander, was wounded. Lauderdale's Kennon McElroy, now a major in the regiment, took charge and was shortly afterward promoted to lieutenant colonel. Two Lauderdale Springs men, J. W. Finley and J. D. McNeil, were killed.[49]

On 17 September 1862 the Zouaves arrived on the field of Antietam—they called it Sharpsburg—several hours after the war's bloodiest day had begun. They were exhausted by nearly a week of hard marching and by a sharp engagement at Maryland Heights on the thirteenth, but they quickly moved into a field that was being sprayed by a terrific artillery barrage; and despite the intense firing, they drove the enemy from the nearby woods, held the position, and repulsed a subsequent flank attack. As was true for all units in that battle, however, the Lauderdale men had to pay a price. Lt. Col. McElroy was wounded but continued to exercise command. 1/Lt. Henry Eason, a resident of Sumterville, Ala., was killed.[50]

1863 was a staggering year for the Zouaves and their comrades. At the battle that the Lauderdale men called Second Fredericksburg (but was fought during the action at nearby Chancellorsville) in early May, the Rebels were engaged in a fiercely fought contest in which B. F. McNeil, of Lauderdale Springs, was wounded.

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[45] "Record of the Lauderdale Zouaves"; Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 67.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] Loreta Janeta Velazquez, *The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 118-120.
[48] "Record of the Lauderdale Zouaves."
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*

Gettysburg, in the first three days of July, was an awesome military engagement that involved two huge armies on the rolling hills of Southern Pennsylvania. It cost the life of Brig. Gen. William Barksdale, first commander of the 13th Mississippi and the brigade commander at Gettysburg. In addition, 28 of the regiment died and 137 were wounded. Four of the dead were from the Lauderdale Zouaves: J. K. Mooney, Charles Moore, E. T. Moore, and a man from Kosciusko named R. B. Ramsey. A. J. Clay was captured and later died in prison. Seven Zouaves were wounded, one of whom was G. W. Price. He had just recently enlisted and this was his first battle. B. F. McNeil had scarcely recovered from wounds received two months before at Second Fredericksburg, and now he, too, was caught in that second day at Gettysburg. July second proved unlucky also for T. I. Murphy and R. J. Seegers, both of whom were among the severely wounded. John Eakens, John A. Hand, and W. D. McFall were not only wounded but captured as well. Among those taken prisoner were R. H. Bourdeaux and G. B. Simmons. James Yates was captured on July 3 and remained a prisoner for the duration of the war. When Gettysburg was over, B. F. Waters was missing, not to be heard from again. It had been a severe toll. At Chickamauga in September, C. R. Hand was wounded, but the Zouaves experienced nothing there like Gettysburg. Nor was it like Knoxville, in late November, where on two days, the 18th and 29th, the Lauderdale men were engaged. The 29th was far the worse day. In the attack on Ft. Loudon, near Knoxville, Kennon McElroy, by then a full colonel, led the 13th; Gen. B. G. Humphreys led the brigade. The following account is by Rowland:

> After working their way through a tangled abatis, they [Humphreys' Brigade] charged the works, through a wire netting and deep ditch, and clambered up a parapet ten or twelve feet high, slippery with ice. Some of the officers and men gained the summit of the parapet but they were shot down and dragged others down in falling. All the time they were under a furious fire from another part of the fort. Here Kennon McElroy was killed. "The loss of the heroic McElroy is irreparable," wrote General Humphreys. "He was shot at the angle of the wall at the head of his regiment," wrote General [James] Longstreet. "He was a man of very fine courage, united to a self-possession on all occasions, with a knowledge of his duties and a natural capacity for command which inspired confidence and made him always conspicuous.[51]

Other Zouaves who were killed at Second Knoxville are R. C. Jemison and J. P. McFall. J. M. Jackson was wounded, and W. R. McKinley was severely wounded. Three men were captured: J. A. Seale, W. T. McNeil, and a Lockhart man named J. J. Radford. McNeil spent the rest of the war in prison.[52]

In the middle of April 1864, the Zouaves and their regiment rejoined Lee's army in Virginia until July, when they were sent to serve under Gen. Jubal Early in the Shenandoah Valley. In November they were ordered to Richmond and took a position on the north bank of the James River and were still there when their unit's historian and commanding officer, Capt. Archibald A. Currie, completed his account on 27 March 1865.[53] The war was essentially over.

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[51] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 72.
[52] "Record of the Lauderdale Zouaves."
[53] *Ibid.*

The following were the officers of the Lauderdale Zouaves, though this is not necessarily a complete list:

Captains: Kennon McElroy; Robert A. Daniel; Richmond C. Jemison; Archibald A. Currie.
1st Lieutenants.: John R. Walker; Henry T. Eason; Richmond C. Jemison; Archibald A. Currie; William R. McKinley.
2nd Lieutenants.: Robert A. Daniel; Richmond C. Jemison; Archibald A. Currie; Anthony D. Bourdeaux.
3rd Lieutenants: Elias J. Moore; Craggle H. Fluker; Joel P. Walker; Archibald A. Currie; Anthony D. Bourdeaux; William R. McKinley.[54]

There seems to be agreement between Dunbar Rowland's findings and the records I have seen that the total number of men who served with the Zouaves was 136. There is also agreement on the following statistics:

Killed or died of wounds………… 25
Died of disease……………………25
Discharged for disability…………17
Discharged for wounds…………… 9
Resigned………………………….. 2
Transferred……………………….. 5
Transferred for promotion…………3
Deserted……………………………4
Discharged by substitute…………..2
Discharged for being underage……3
Discharged for being overage……..1

The Lauderdale Zouaves served through some of the most severe battles in the entire war, at least twenty of them. Some of its men got through them all; some, such as Henry Britton, who died before First Manassas, never had to face the enemy. Others made it almost to the end; J. R. Carmichael, for example, died on 4 December 1864 when peace was nearly in view. Whatever their fates, one cannot read these records thoughtfully without a sense of pity, horror, and futility.[55]

Another unit from Lauderdale Springs, the Lauderdale Springs Greys, became Company C, Fifth Mississippi Infantry Regiment. The Greys seem to have been formed much later than were the Zouaves, although existing records are less informative on the Greys. Company C was mustered into service sometime in August 1861. Dunbar Rowland says the unit was mustered at Lauderdale Springs on the 6th, though it may have been on the 24th, and perhaps at Enterprise. (The terms *muster* and

[54] *Ibid.*; see also Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 67; also, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi* (hereinafter cited as *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*), M269, 427 microfilm reels (Washington: National Archives Trust Fund Board, National Archives and Records Administration, reels 210-220.
[55] Company unit records, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder I, MDAH.

enlistment were often used loosely, and one also has to distinguish between whether they were being used relative to *state* service or *Confederate* service, not always an easy task.) A list of the members of the Greys—it isn't specifically called a muster roll and is not dated—contains fifty-eight officers and men. The officers during the unit's existence included the following:[56]

Captains: B. B. Smith; S. W. Mosby.
1st. Lieutenants: D. O. McWhorter; S. W. Mosby.
2nd Lieutenants: S. S. Dennis; W. R. Bishop.
3rd Lieutenants: W. R. Bishop; C. H. Canterbury.

Just as in the case of the Lauderdale Zouaves, the Greys had to go through the frustrations that seemed to accompany the formation of all the early county units. Captain Smith, who doubtless had plenty of other more serious matters to worry about, even found it necessary on one occasion to plead with officials in Jackson for two hundred large buttons and two hundred small ones to make twenty-five of their uniforms usable.[57] Did he perhaps wistfully recall former days at his resort at Lauderdale Springs?

The Greys experienced some hard-fought battles, though their first time on the front, at Pensacola, Fla., in February 1862, was fairly easy. But, then came the severe test of Shiloh, or Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn., on the sixth and seventh of April. The next month they were in the siege of Corinth, Miss., and following that were at Chattanooga under Braxton Bragg. They fought at Stones River on the last day of 1862; and a member of the company, J. J. Smith, was one of those in the regiment chosen for the Roll of Honor for their services in that engagement. In September of 1863 the Greys helped defeat the Federal army under Gen. William S. Rosecrans at Chickamauga, where at one point the Lauderdale Greys' regiment and the Eighth Mississippi pushed the Federals back almost a mile. They held the position until forced to pull back when the rest of their brigade's line broke. The Greys and their brigade acted bravely the following day against the log breastworks of Federal General George H. Thomas, and among those selected for the Roll of Honor after that battle was the Greys' John Kittrell. The company was also at Missionary Ridge in Cheatham's Division. Later, they fought through the grueling Atlanta campaign against Gen. W. T. Sherman. Among the casualties in the Battle of Atlanta, on 22 July 1864, were the following Greys: Lt. S. S. Dennis, wounded; and Lt. (once the 4th sergeant) James T. Hobgood, missing. After the Battles of Jonesboro and Lovejoy's Station, the Greys went northward into Tennessee and were in all the heartbreaking and gory experiences that Gen. John B. Hood's army endured near the end of the war. In the last few weeks of the Civil War some of the remnants of Hood's army joined Gen. Joe Johnston in North Carolina and were surrendered by that officer on 26 April 1865.[58]

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[56] *Ibid.*; see also Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 165-168; see also, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 147-151.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 166-170.

Company E of the 13th Mississippi Regiment was composed of the Alamucha Infantry. This unit's formation offers an illustration of what might happen to companies in those frantic, confused early weeks of the war. Some groups spent so much time being processed that they lost many of their recruits, who drifted away to other units. Then, more recruitment was necessary, which entailed further delay. In the records of the Alamucha Infantry, for instance, we find two different muster rolls. What is apparently the earlier one contains (besides officers) forty-eight names. The second, dated 4 July 1861, contains but twenty-four names, not one of which appears on the earlier list. Another roll, undated and perhaps a much later roster made when the company had become well established, contains seventy-four officers and men.[59]

Part of the problem was the impatience of many recruits in the early days to get into battle before (so they thought) all the Yanks had been killed or captured. And others simply wanted to go to other units where friends or relatives were members. An amusing case that illustrates both these motives is contained in a letter to Governor Pettus from James M. Bates, at Marion Station. Bates wished to be transferred to the Pettus Guards, a group that had already left Marion and was in Leesburg, Va., near the front. Besides, Bates had a brother in that unit. With perfect logic Bates wrote, "I apply to you this day for a passport…as I wish to fight and cant fight here as there are no yankys here to fight."[60]

But back to the Alamucha Infantry.

For all its early confusion, this company's Unit Record for the entire war period has survived and offers the historian a rich source of information. We know from that record, for instance, that 136 men served at one time or another in the company after it was taken into Confederate service.[61] And though the writing is very faded, we can learn much of the records of these men—the battles they were in; their sicknesses, injuries, and deaths; their promotions; their civilian livelihoods; etc.

The Alamucha Infantry were mustered into the Army of Mississippi on 23 March 1861, at Alamucha, by Capt. G. W. Weir. Jacob Perry Welch, a town resident, attended the ceremony; and he, his wife Martha, and Benjamin Porter made addresses. Miss Sophronia McElroy presented a flag, a gesture that was apparently *de rigueur* for all volunteer companies. Officers were Capt. Peter H. Bozeman, 1/Lt. William H. Burton, 2/Lt. John J. McElroy, and 3/Lt. James F. Ford.[62]

The officers of the group impatiently awaited their commissions. The state's inspector general had earlier promised to send them to Governor Pettus for his signature; but as in many other cases during what must have been a modest bedlam in Jackson, the commissions were delayed for several weeks. Meanwhile, Captain Bozeman and Lieutenants Burton, McElroy, and Ford fretted. When a rumor circulated through the county in April that Pettus had issued a proclamation calling out 3,000 men, Lieutenant Burton hastily wrote to the Governor: "If the rumor is true please count the Alamutcha Infantry as one company *regularly* in. I with others of the Company have contended for secession both in private debate & in public declamation (though I was unable to vote for it) & we wish now to maintain on the point of the

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[59] Company records, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder H, MDAH. The Alamucha Infantry was Company A before reorganization in April 1862.
[60] Bates, at Marion Station, to Gov. Pettus, 11 November 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 54, MDAH.
[61] Unit Record, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder H, MDAH.
[62] Burton to Gov. Pettus, 11 April 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.

bayonet as a dernier resort what we have proclaimed in speculation."[63] The company got its chance, for on 11 May 1861 it, along with two other county units, was ordered to Corinth. Members such as David T. James (who later lived in Meehan where he died in 1923 at the age of ninety) would now get their wish.[64]

After the unit moved to Tennessee, 1/Lt. Burton and Pvt. Samuel H. Jones had a dispute, the cause of which is now a mystery. Joseph M. Eastis, in a letter to his wife Mary, referred to the brouhaha but gave no particulars:

> We had a perfect gale in our quarters yesterday morning on account of a difficulty between Sam Jones & Dr. Burton. The first I knew Col. Barksdale was on the premises & ordered all hands to their tents, which was very cheerfully obeyed. Burton has resigned his office and they elected John McElroy in his place. I could give you a full detale [*sic*] of the whole transact[ion] but Dr. Burton will be home in a few days and he can tell about it.[65]

Two days after the Burton-Jones dispute the company held an election to fill the vacancy caused by Burton's resignation, the two candidates being 2/Lt. John J. McElroy and Pvt. Alfred A. Willis. McElroy's commissioned status perhaps was a factor in his being chosen 44 to 11. Colonel Barksdale asked the adjutant and inspector general of the Army of Mississippi, William H. Brown, to send McElroy's commission, as well as the commission for Hugh D. Cameron, who was elected to fill McElroy's vacant former office.[66] Only three months later the post of 1st lieutenant was again vacant. We get something of the immediacy and reality of a moment of camp life through the faded, scrawled record by some anonymous soldier—perhaps Captain Bozeman—who at eight A.M., on 12 September 1861, near Leesburg, Va., tallied the votes, using the same method familiar today—four vertical strokes with the fifth drawn diagonally. John A. Cameron beat G. W. Roberts 44 to 37.[67]

The military history of the Alamucha Infantry is essentially the same as that of the Lauderdale Zouaves (discussed earlier) and the Pettus Guards of Marion Station, all of which units were in the same regiment. The following data for the Alamucha Infantry, as given by Rowland, are probably fairly accurate:

Captains: Peter H. Bozeman; Hugh D. Cameron; 1st Lieutenants: William H. Burton, John J. McElroy, John A. Cameron, Thomas J. Hearn; 2nd Lieutenants: John J. McElroy, Hugh D. Cameron, Thomas S. Maxwell, John A. Cameron; 3rd Lieutenants:

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[63] *Ibid.*
[64] Unit Record, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder H, MDAH.
[65] Joseph M. Eastis, Camp Barksdale near Union City, Tenn., to Matilda Mary (Dyer) Eastis, 14 June 1861; typescript in MPL's Mississippi Collection, from original in possession of Dorothy P. Lawrence, Jennings, La.
[66] Col. Barksdale, near Union City, Tenn., to William H. Brown, 19 June 1861, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder H, MDAH.
[67] *Ibid.*

James F. Ford, Thad Berryman[68], Jackson V. Shelton. Total killed or died of wounds, 21; total died of disease, 24; total captured, 14.[69]

At Marion Station in February 1861, Samuel J. Randell, M. H. Whitaker, George Broach, and W. G. Grace organized a company named, as a bit of flattery for the Governor, the Pettus Guards. Their somewhat quixotic idea seems to have been to make their company directly subject to the Governor's orders, perhaps in some special way like a praetorian guard. The members intended to furnish their own arms and to pride themselves on their unique character.[70] Romance surrendered to reality, however, and on 30 March the Pettus Guards were mustered routinely into the state's service under the general ordinance. Major W. P. Evans carried their records to Jackson and got commissions for the officers—Capt. Samuel Randell, 1/Lt. M. H. Whitaker, 2/Lt. William A. Smith, and 3/Lt. William F. Brown. The Pettus guards became part of the 13th Mississippi Regiment which also contained the Alamucha Infantry and the Lauderdale Zouaves. The Pettus Guards at first constituted Company H, then Company K after reorganization a year later.[71] Their military record is the same as that, already noted, of the Lauderdale Zouaves. The following were officers of the Guards:

Captains: Samuel J. Randell, to reorganization (April 1862); Lawrence L. Barker, killed at Malvern Hill, Va., 1 July 1862; William F. Brown.

1st Lieutenants: M. H. Whitaker, later elected lt. col.; William A. Smith, to reorganization; William F. Brown, promoted to captain, 1 July 1862; Charles E. Meader, died of wounds 14 July 1862; William W. McElroy, wounded at Spotsylvania, Va., in 1864.

2nd Lieutenants: William A. Smith, promoted; William F. Brown, promoted by election; Charles E. Meader, promoted; William W. McElroy, promoted; William F. Moseley.

3rd Lieutenants: William F. Brown, promoted; R. K. Curtis, to reorganization; William W. McElroy, promoted; Daniel (David?) H. Strebeck, died of wounds at Knoxville, Tenn.[72]

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[68] So included by Rowland, though I do not find the name on the U. S. Archives microfilm records.

[69] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 67; also, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, reels 210-220. Rowland shows 2nd Lt. McElroy as *John A.*., but *John J.* is probably correct.

[70] Randell, Whitaker, Broach, and Grace, at Marion Station, to Gov. Pettus, 23 February 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH. Such grand ideas were common in the early days of the war, before men became familiar with war's unromantic reality.

[71] Randell, Marion Station, to Gov. Pettus, 30 March 1861, in *ibid.*

[72] J. C. Rietti (comp.), *Military Annals of Mississippi: Military Organizations Which Entered the Service of the Confederate States of America from the State of Mississippi* (only one volume published) (Jackson: n. p., n. d.), 165-168; also, Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 68; also, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 210-220.

Several from this company went on to posts in the regiment, including Lt. Col. M. H. Whitaker, Commissary Sgt. David C. Smith (Smythe?), and Colonel's Courier James T. Broach.

Meridian was still a small town when the county's men, both young and others not so young, were having attacks of war fever. This did not, however, keep the hamlet from responding as enthusiastically as did some larger, older communities. As early as 22 April 1861 the Meridian Invincibles, soon to become Company H of the 14th Mississippi Regiment, tendered their services to the state.[73] Earlier a number of young Meridianites, not having a home company, had gone over to the Pettus Guards that were already organized in Marion Station. This exodus had the effect of retarding briefly the development of a Meridian company. Some local recruits were still available, however, and a considerable number came in from the western and southeastern portions of the county to join the Meridian group. Even a few from Newton County joined. Said one observer of the formation of the group: "A finer looking set of men, or a body of more respectable men will probably not travel the Lincoln Road."[74] The Meridian Invincibles were mustered into service officially on May first by Capt. Samuel J. Randell of the Pettus Guards. His unit was probably present also.[75]

William F. Crumpton was elected captain of the Invincibles; and the first lieutenant was William L. Spinks, who had ceased publishing *The Meridian*. John H. Gibbs and E. Pickens Anderson were chosen second and third lieutenants respectively. Non-commissioned officers were 1st Sgt. Robert B. White, 2nd Sgt. William R. Ethridge, 3rd Sgt. Joshua M. Vineyard, 4th Sgt. John L. Williams, 5th Sgt. William H. Combs, 1st Corp. William H. Moore, 2nd Corp. James D. Harten, 3rd Corp. John S. Miller, and 4th Corp. Elijah Nichols. The ensign, whose duty it was to carry the unit's flag, was Daniel F. Jones.[76] First Sergeant White was promoted to third lieutenant on 27 November 1861; he died on 8 April 1862 while a prisoner at Camp Chase, Ohio.[77]

The town treated the Meridian Invincibles handsomely. It collected enough money to buy the cloth from which Meridian women made uniforms for the entire company. At this time the Confederacy had not agreed upon a color for its uniforms, so Meridian arrayed its unit in striking ones of a beautiful deep *blue*![78] Somewhere along the way—and soon—there would have to be some slight alterations! (Throughout the war Confederate uniforms were far from *uniform*.)

Meridian watched with pride as the Invincibles drilled to the cadence of a large bass drum which a citizen had presented to the group. Another citizen, not to be outdone, gave them a kettle drum. (These two unmelodious instruments must have justified the title "musician" given to Privates Robert C. Burt and John H. Moore.) Considering the disastrous condition of the economy of the area, it must have been a real sacrifice for the local population to make any sort of donation to their company;

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[73] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 17 May 1861.
[74] *Ibid.*, 14 June 1861.
[75] CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder X, MDAH.
[76] Muster roll of 8 June 1861, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder X, MDAH; also, Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 June 1861, which shows some slight variation in some of these names; and even in the records of the unit itself one finds inconsistency; see also Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 221.
[77] *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers,* roll. 227.
[78] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 June 1861.

but in addition to the items already mentioned, Meridian's citizens managed to donate also about a thousand dollars. One widow alone gave one hundred dollars.[79]

On 21 May 1861 the Meridian Invincibles, along with forty-nine other Mississippi companies (including the Jasper Grays of which James J. Shannon, later to be editor of the Meridian *Clarion*, was captain), were ordered into active service and told to proceed as soon as possible to the camp of instruction at Corinth. They would take with them whatever arms and military property they possessed, and any deficiencies would be remedied at Corinth. They were ordered to take also "cooked rations sufficient to subsist them to Corinth." Railroads were obliged to furnish transportation.[80] Allowing enough time for one of their officers to hurry to Jackson to report their readiness, the Meridian Invincibles decided upon 28 May as a departure date.

The number of men in the group at the time of departure is apparently impossible to determine precisely. One anonymous Meridianite who was there said they numbered "seventy-nine or eighty." The unit's muster roll of that date shows only seventy-six, as does a second muster roll of that date. Another muster roll made in Corinth on 8 June records the same number. Those who in later years cited the figure of eighty were perhaps either depending upon dim memories or else were reaching for round numbers.[81]

Getting organized and into uniforms had been a considerable undertaking for the Invincibles, and there was the customary complaint—no weapons. On May first, mustering day, Daniel Jones, "secretary" of the unit, wrote Governor Pettus: "Sir, it is the earnest request of the Company that you forward their guns to them as soon as possible so they can be practicing the manual of arms." But when the company got on the train to go north, they were still without arms and some other equipment.

The Invincibles, in their formation, are another example of the administrative confusion that must have been common, especially in these early units. For example, a muster roll of May first, when the first official mustering occurred, contains sixty-five names, though one, W. J. Berry's, has been marked off; and his name was omitted on another—and apparently later—roll made the same day and containing only sixty-two names. The list of 28 May has seventy-six names as does that of 8 June. Pickens Anderson is on the first list of May first but not on the second list of that day. He had been shown as 3rd lieutenant, while the second list has that post vacant. The first list shows W. L. Spinks as 1st lieutenant, but he is not on the second list. He appears again on the list of 28 May as 1st lieutenant, and Pickens Anderson is back on the 28's list as 3rd lieutenant.[82] There seems to be no end of it!

The boys were sent off with a splendid celebration that included a public barbecue. The women of Meridian prepared a "small but quite handsome silk flag" and presented it to the company at two P.M. on 28 May at a stand that had been constructed for the occasion. Miss Maria Anderson, a teacher in the local Female Institute, and probably a daughter of the school's owner, made the actual presentation "with a few appropriate remarks." Captain Crumpton received it from her, made a short address described by an observer as "full of feeling and in fine taste, that did

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[79] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 June 1861.
[80] *Official Records*, ser. I, 52:2:105-106.
[81] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 June 1861; see also CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder X, MDAH.
[82] CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder X, MDAH.

honor to his heart and mind." Crumpton handed it to Ensign Daniel F. Jones "who received it with a fervid and feeling declaration to the ladies, that it should never be lowered or disgraced while in his possession without every means in his power being used to prevent it." When these ceremonies ended, the crowd moved to the little railway depot where after a rather touching farewell, the Meridian Invincibles left at four P.M. on a northbound train for Corinth, Miss. Accompanying them were three other companies.[83]

The Meridian soldiers, as Company H, served in the 14th Mississippi Regiment with three companies from adjoining Clarke County: the Shubuta Rifles, the Enterprise Guards, and the Quitman Invincibles. The regiment saw some of its earliest action at Fort Donelson in February 1862, where the Confederates were defeated and the 14th became prisoners of war. Third Lt. (originally 1st Sergeant) Benjamin F. Beaman (his name is given as Bauman in some sources), of the Invincibles, and sixteen others in the regiment were killed, and eighty-five wounded. The men of the 14th were subsequently exchanged and ordered into north Mississippi. Later, they were part of Gen. Joe Johnston's army in the effort to relieve the besieged city of Vicksburg in the spring of 1863. When Vicksburg fell, the regiment retreated to Jackson.[84]

When William Sherman led the Federal thrust across the state from Vicksburg to Meridian, in February of 1864, the 14th Infantry was in Loring's Division at Canton and under the overall command of Gen. Leonidas Polk, whose headquarters were in Meridian. At about the same time that Sherman reached Jackson, Loring's men moved to Morton; and when Polk retreated to Demopolis, the Meridian company was part of his force. It was humiliating to all the Mississippi soldiers in Polk's army to be ordered to retreat and leave their state to Sherman's mercy, but it must have been doubly so for the men from Lauderdale and Clarke Counties. Both of those counties would be singled out for punishment by the invaders.[85]

Later in 1864 the 14th Mississippi was in the Atlanta campaign as part of Gen. John Adams' brigade, in which 1/Lt. William Spinks was killed. Toward the end of that year the regiment was with Bragg's army in Tennessee. Dunbar Rowland says that in December at the Battle of Nashville, Maj. William F. Crumpton, who had been the first captain of the Meridian Invincibles, was killed. The bedraggled Confederate force was ruined by the fighting in Tennessee, and the pitiable remnants of this army staggered into camp near Tupelo, Miss., some of them even down to Meridian. In February they moved eastward into the Carolinas and made their last stand with Joe Johnston's army.[86]

W. C. Day operated an academy at Marion on the eve of the Civil War; and when that conflict began, he drew heavily from perhaps both his students and his alumni to form a company styled the Southern Sentinels. In time, the new unit, at first designated as Company B, became Company H of the Eighth Mississippi, the same regiment that included also the Confederate Guards from Rushing's Store (discussed below).

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[83] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 14 June 1861; see also, Croom, *op. cit.*, 3.
[84] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 221-224.
[85] *Ibid.*, 224.
[86] *Ibid* , 225.

Dunbar Rowland says the Sentinels were mustered into the state's service on 27 April 1861 and that they enlisted on 4 May.[87] But during these times the terms *muster* and *enlistment* were very inexactly used; the members of the units, even their officers, seemed often not to understand the distinction. In a letter from Lt. M. H. Whitaker to Governor Pettus, on 4 May 1861, we find the following: "In accordance to an order from the Head department of the Army of Miss. I this day mustered into the service of the State and Confederate Army the following named gentlemen for the term of twelve months as authorized by the State ordinance." But the National Archives' microfilmed records state that the company's men were mustered into Confederate service at Enterprise, Miss., on 18 October 1861[88]

The following were officers in the Southern Sentinels during the war, though this list is not necessarily complete:[89]

Captains: W. C. Day; James Lasley.
1st Lieutenants: E. F. Kendall; J. W. Wilkinson.
2nd Lieutenants: James Lasley; Darling C. Coker.
3rd Lieutenant: William H. Curtis.

There was a considerable range in ages among the men of the Southern Sentinels. At age thirty-six Kendall was the oldest. J. W. Bruister, J. N. Coker, Miles Gardner, Alex. Hagwood, George W. Jones, W. A. Knight, and M. A. G. Talley were all seventeen. James F. Irby was only fifteen.[90]

The old familiar problems of impatience and boredom plagued the Sentinels. Their strength by mid-summer of 1861 was nearly one hundred, and then about thirty of them bolted to the 13th Mississippi Regiment. With his force thus diminished, Captain Day hit the recruiting trail again and managed to fill most of the vacancies. The chief problem had been the anger of many in his company when they learned that the Legislature had decided to arm only those units enlisted for three years. The Sentinels had enlisted for only one year; but Day wrote Governor Pettus that he was sure his men would be willing to sign up for two additional years, or the duration, if they were guaranteed arms and equipment.[91]

Captain Day's problem of retaining his recruits was typical of what to our eyes seems the casual approach to recruitment that prevailed in those days when few Americans could conceive of or tolerate a military system that could effect rigid control over fiercely independent men who submitted to discipline only when persuaded by emotional fervor. And even under those conditions such submission was hardly complete. After their mustering on 4 May, the company heard that they were likely to be enjoying the comforts of Camp Barksdale, at Marion Station, for some time longer. It was then that the disgusted thirty got permission from Day to go into

[87] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 191.
[88] CR, RG 9, vol. 4, folder 23, MDAH.
[89] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 191; see also, William Richey's Confederate Military Service Memoranda, in CR, RG 9, vol. 4, folder 23, MDAH. See also *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 168-173. Rowland says also (page 194) that G. W. Jones, who began as a private, led the company as a lieutenant at the Battle of Atlanta where he was wounded. On page 195 Rowland states that Lt. S. J. Willis was killed at the Battle of Franklin, 30 November 1864.
[90] CR, RG 9, vol. 4, folder 23, MDAH.
[91] Day, in Marion, to Gov. Pettus, 3 August 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 53, MDAH.

another regiment. Unfortunately, the company's orderly sergeant, or "secretary," was among the seceders, and he either took the company's records with him or else disposed of them. The new "O. S." had no guide as to the unit's membership and administration. The only thing he could do was to make out an entirely new roster and take no notice of the unit's former members. And another procedure that could be confusing to researchers in future years was that those who came into the unit later were enrolled as though they had been mustered on the original occasion of 4 May. Sometime on or shortly after 30 September 1861, the Sentinels had ninety-seven officers and men. A pay roll of 16 October seems to show that two more privates had been added, giving the company ninety-nine members—one short of the ideal number for a company.[92]

The Southern Sentinels endured some rough fighting. In 1904 William Wiley Ritchey recalled how it all began for him when he stood before enlisting officer John W. O'Ferrell and swore to defend his state against the Yankees. It started him on a road that led through such battles as Murphreesboro, Missionary Ridge, and Chickamauga. At Resaca, Ga., he was captured and sent to Rock Island Prison, where he sat out the rest of the war. He made new friends and acquaintances during the war and recalled them with pleasure forty years later. Among them were William Coker, Travis D. Russell, Thomas R. Deal, and James C. Lucy, all of whom were still vividly in his memory. And he recalled clearly the Battle of Chickamauga, a bloody mess but nevertheless a Southern victory, where he was wounded and where his friend Lem S. Warren was killed.[93] Perhaps the filtering of time made the experience, in retrospect, seem almost pleasant; but there is nothing in the records to show that anyone felt so at the time. And the grim last Battles of Franklin and Nashville were, if anything, worse than any before. After the disastrous Tennessee campaign, the remnant of the Eighth Mississippi staggered eastward to join Joe Johnston for a last stand.

In the Eighth Mississippi Regiment with the Southern Sentinels was a company called the Confederate Guards, raised in and around the little village of Rushing's Store in the northwestern part of the county. Here on 17 April 1861 about fifty-five men were enrolled for one year in the state's service and were apparently received into Confederate service on 15 August. The company's original designation was Company G. A list of the officers for what later became Company I includes the following: Captains: Jackson G. Knox and Marquis D. L. House; 1/Lieutenant: Cornelius R. Pace; 2/Lieutenants: Marquis D. L. House; and 3/Lieutenant: Alsa C. Pace.[94]

Among other officers and non-commissioned officers who served in the Confederate Guards were Lt. Isaac S. Ethridge (killed at Dallas, Ga.) and two first sergeants: R. S. Stokes (killed at Atlanta) and Philip W. Davis. J. W. Stokes was secretary and orderly sergeant in the early days of the company's existence and

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[92] CR, RG 9, vol. 4, folder 23, MDAH.

[93] Confederate Military Service Memoranda in Reference to William Wiley Ritchey, CR, RG 9, vol. 4, folder 23, MDAH.

[94] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 192-194; also, letter of Stokes, at Rushing's Store, to Gov. Pettus, 18 June 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 52, MDAH; see also *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 168-173.

perhaps even later. When the several companies in the regiment chose their men for the Roll of Honor, the Confederate Guards named Joel Foster.[95]

The records of the Confederate Guards show us something of the pay given to soldiers, at least in the early part of the war. On 16 October 1861 at Enterprise, Miss., the non-commissioned men in this company received their pay for the month preceding 24 September. Or, to be precise, they received *part* of their pay; each man got only ten dollars. For the privates that was all but one dollar of their monthly eleven dollars. Full pay for a first sergeant was supposed to be twenty dollars, while each of the other four sergeants was paid seventeen. The pay for all corporals was thirteen dollars.[96] Of course, these were the early days when patriotic ardor was high and money *relatively* easy to get. As time went by, Confederate soldiers' pay was often several months in arrears, and paid in increasingly depreciated currency. Payday became a rare and much-acclaimed occasion.

The military experience of the Confederate Guards was the same as that of the Southern Sentinels whom they follow in this narrative.

At the start of 1862 a new company was formed in Marion Station. The Cole Guards would become Company D of the 41st Mississippi Infantry Regiment. Captain James M. Hicks was company commander, and he seems to have remained in that office until the end of the war, or at least until the company merged with several other remnants in the last days of the war. First Lieutenant L. K. Latham, also, perhaps held his position until the war's end. Those who at one time or another were second lieutenants include the following: W. G. Grace, Thomas J. Terry, Benjamin J. Allen, and William B. Brown.[97]

From 27 February to 30 June 1862 the Cole Guards were in the area of Corinth and Tupelo, Miss. Afterward, they moved into Tennessee, first at a camp near Knoxville and then to the area of Shelbyville, from where they operated during November of 1862 through April 1863. During this period they engaged in a skirmish near Murfreesboro on 3 January. During July and August the company were stationed near Harrison, Tenn., and did much marching about the country, including to Chattanooga. The next two months involved a southward march that involved them in the Battle of Chickamauga, in which two of the company were killed and twenty-two wounded. The Cole Guards were stationed in Dalton, Ga., in November and December and took part in the Battle of Missionary Ridge. In mid-1864 they were involved in the Confederate resistance to Sherman's Atlanta Campaign. On about 9 April 1865 the 41st Mississippi Regiment was combined with the 7th, 9th, 10th, and 44th Regiments of Mississippi Infantry, as well as the 9th Mississippi Battalion (Sharp Shooters), to form what was designated the 9th Regiment Mississippi Infantry.

The Cole Guards saw some very severe battles. This company, which had about 154 men during its existence, sustained at least 52 casualties in all its engagements. James D. Williams, W. H. H. Shedd, and David Patterson each suffered

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[95] *Ibid.*

[96] Pay voucher signed by W. W. Edmonson, quartermaster, Enterprise, Miss., 16 October 1861, CR, RG 9, vol. 4, folder 24, MDAH.

[97] This and the following information about the Cole Guards is taken from the National Archives' *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 386-391.

two woundings; and at least one member, B. A. Sanderford, survived three—at Chickamauga, Murphreesboro, and the Atlanta Campaign. The list of those killed included the following: James T. Burris, Samuel Warbington, T. J. Wilson, R. B. Carpenter, A. B. Warbington, and W. D. Zachry.

William S. Patton, Sr., was an energetic man, one of several who seem to have dominated the history of the county from the 1840s well on into the 1870s. During the Civil War he was a very busy patriot whose time must have been quite monopolized by military affairs and politics. At the very start of the war Patton was busily communicating with the state's capital on his plans to organize Home Guard No. 1 in Marion. It was perhaps made up of men who were too old to be considered prime prospects for regular units, at least in 1861. Patton's group met for mustering on 28 April, but their service apparently never took them very far from the county and was of relatively short duration. As to their getting sufficient arms, they were on a level with other units. In the spring of 1861 Patton's company made overtures to take over the state's weapons that the Pettus Guards had once possessed, but Patton understood that his men were eventually to receive new weapons.[98]

Toward the end of 1861 Patton appears in the records as colonel of a "sixty-day" regiment that was formed on November 30 and in one company of which 1/Lt. O. S. Holland, 2/Lt. William H. Jackson, and 3/Lt. Joshua McLemore were officers.[99] On 6 March 1862 men from both Lauderdale and Clarke Counties were organized into a unit known as Patton's Company, or Patton's Mississippi Boys. In addition to those officers shown in the earlier sixty-day unit, other officers included 1/Lt. William P. Evans, 2/Lt. John W. Bailey, and 3/Lt. Lafayette J. McInnis. A return for July 1864 shows also Lt. J. B. McClelland and 1/Sgt. W. G. Grace. This unit eventually became Company A of the 37th Regiment.[100]

Another unit in that regiment with Patton's Mississippi Boys was Company I, the McLemore Guards of Lauderdale County. They were organized on 23 February 1862 with the following officers: Capt. W. P. Andrews, 1/Lt. John C. Ellerbee, 2/Lt. John W. Williams, and 3/Lt. C. H. McLemore.[101] Among the enlisted men was Pvt. J. G. Clark, born near Whynot in 1844. He was in the Battles of Franklin and Nashville and survived a wound received in the latter. Clark was paroled at Jackson on 12 May 1865 and eventually moved to Hico, Texas. Capt. Andrews, in an invitation to the state's adjutant general to visit, promised that the McLemore Guards were "the soberest set of

[98] Patton, at Marion, to Gov. Pettus, 19 April 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.
[99] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 324.
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] *Ibid.*, 325; also, CR, RG 9, vol. 13A, MDAH. As is mentioned elsewhere in this work, the McLemore Guards were apparently known also, unofficially, as the Feaster Foy Grays, after the Marion citizen who is said to have paid for equipping the company. However, I have never seen Foy's name used in any of the unit's records.

chaps you ever saw," because they "can't get any whiskey."[102] One wonders which Andrews was doing, boasting or complaining.

The regiment containing the Patton and McLemore companies was organized on 28 April 1862, on which day field officers were elected. The 37th Mississippi Regiment served in North Mississippi against Generals Grant and Rosecrans and in the Vicksburg campaign, at the end of which service the men were made prisoners and then paroled. Like other prisoners paroled after Vicksburg, the men of the 37th were sent to the parole exchange camp at Enterprise, Miss.; and when General Sherman advanced on Meridian in February 1864, Confederate Gen. Leonidas Polk sent the regiment to Mobile. It was on 17 February 1864, while Sherman was imposing himself on the Lauderdale area, that the Confederate Congress tendered official thanks to the 37th for its services. Later in the war the regiment served against Sherman in North Georgia, and toward the war's end its men had to endure Hood's ill-fated campaign in Tennessee.[103]

Lauderdale County contributed at least one cavalry unit to the Civil War, a company known as the Lauderdale Cavalry which was enlisted at Lauderdale Station on 8 March 1862. It became Company C of the "Second Regiment—Cavalry." According to Rowland this regiment was somewhat confusingly given other numerical designations: "Forty-seventh in the consecutive list, called Forty-second in early rolls and Fourth in official reports." Its men saw service in North Mississippi under Gen. Sterling Price in 1862 and toward the end of that year were in skirmishes around Oxford and Water Valley and in the Battle of Coffeeville. The unit's officers included the following:

Captains: William V. Raney; William A. Rogers.
1st Lieutenants: William A. Rogers; N. R. Carter.
2nd Lieutenants: John M. D. McElroy; Joel P. Walker.
3rd Lieutenant: Solon J. Willis.[104]

The Lauderdale Rifles formed a part of the Sixth Battalion and eventually was Company F of the 46th Regiment. This company was apparently in some degree a direct descendant of the unit of the same name that Constantine Rea had been instrumental in organizing for the campaign, already discussed, against Fort Pickens in early 1861. Rea perhaps suggested keeping the same name when, in the spring of 1862, the second Lauderdale Rifles was organized in April at Meridian, and he probably helped form a battalion on the 19th of that month. Other companies in the battalion were Co. A, the Gaines Invincibles, of Wayne County; Co. B, the Covington Rebels; Co. C, the Yazoo Pickets; Co. D, the Rankin Farmers; and Co. E, the Jeff Davis Rebels, of Yazoo and Warren Counties. The following were officers at one time or another in the Lauderdale Rifles:

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[102] Mamie Yeary (comp.), *Reminiscences of the Boys in Gray, 1861-1865* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, 1986), 326-330.
[103] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 326-330.
[104] *Ibid.*, 402, 404; see also, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 8-12.

Captains: Constantine Rea; Thomas P. Wiggins; Richard N. Rea (Constantine Rea's son).
1st Lieutenants: William F. McKinnon; Richard N. Rea.
2nd Lieutenant: Thomas P. Wiggins.
3rd Lieutenants: S. S. Williams; Richard N. Rea.[105]

On the fifth and sixth of September 1862, the Fifth Regiment (Minute Men), under Col. H. C. Robinson, was organized at Meridian and, according to Rowland, "remained there doing heavy guard and fatigue duty until about October 12, when [it was] ordered to Columbus, Miss." There the regiment remained until 7 April 1863 doing guard and picket duty. The men were then sent to Vicksburg, and between 8 May and 4 July, during the siege, served in the trenches or on guard or picket duty on the river and elsewhere. After the surrender of Vicksburg on 4 July, the regiment was paroled; and on 21 September, at Columbus, Miss., the men were paid and mustered out.[106]

The Fifth Regiment (Minute Men) contained two companies formed in Lauderdale County, neither of which seemed to sport a special unit name. (Perhaps by the middle of 1862, and especially after such battles as Shiloh and Malvern Hill, catchy names had begun to seem a little childish, and the war a little too grim for such affectations.)

Company C of the Fifth regiment enlisted at Marion Station on 2 August. Its roster of officers eventually included the following: Captains David Maggard and John Stinson, and Lieutenants G. S. Pace, Robert Aiken, J. W. Williams, and Elias Barefield. There were eighty-eight men in the company originally, but after the surrender of Vicksburg only twenty-five remained to be paroled.[107] The men in Company E of this regiment were enlisted at Marion Station on 11 August 1862 and eventually had among their officers Capt. J. M. Harmon and Lts. John Lamkin, Francis Lansing, and Peter Nicholson. There were fifty-four men enrolled but only thirty-two remained after Vicksburg. At that time, according to Rowland, the officers were Capt. John Lamkin and Lts. E. F. Breland, W. J. Sadler, and Peter Nicholson.[108]

As with other counties in Mississippi and other states, patriotic enthusiasm tended to wane as the war dragged on into an increasingly dreary, dispiriting, and bloody routine. But during those first heady months of the conflict, when thoughts of founding a new nation mitigated even the worst discomforts, the volunteers of Lauderdale County responded with enthusiasm.

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[105] Rowland, M*ilitary History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 178-180; see also, *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm reels 411-414.
[106] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 506.
[107] *Ibid*.
[108] *Ibid.*

Chapter 10: The Empire County Becomes a Military Center.

Before 1861 most Americans had conceived of an army as a somewhat loose organization of state militias, but during the course of the Civil War both the South and the North developed huge national armies in which local concerns often had to defer to national necessity. These armies were, of course, still composed of state and local regiments and companies; but such units, originally composed mainly of men from the same community, tended to become heterogeneous as time passed. And they often came to operate under laws and officials far removed from state capitals. Though some units in the South did remain under state control, many eventually went into Confederate service.

Brig. Gen. John C. Higgins commanded the Second Brigade of the Second Division of Mississippi Militia, a unit that included companies in Lauderdale County. When he assumed command, probably early in 1861, he was surprised to find little organization in many of his counties, particularly in Lauderdale and Clarke. In some cases there had not been elections for captains and lieutenants for years. Quickly Higgins contacted the various colonels and required them to fill all vacancies at once. Despite his prodding, there was still much reluctance to comply, and in some cases General Higgins found that newly-elected officers were both morally and intellectually unfit. It was as though the citizens on the home front were convinced that the regular army would be able to handle any emergencies and that the militia would never be called out.[1] As the complacency in and around Lauderdale County changed to mounting concern, however, the organizing of various groups of local military and paramilitary units became commonplace. After May of 1864 it became almost mandatory.

At various times during the war, but more commonly in the earlier part, swashbuckling men showed up in the county to advertise for volunteers to form some special or elite group, or one advertised as such. John S. Swann, a Mississippian, was one such organizer. He arrived in Meridian in May of 1862 and announced in the area's papers the formation of what he called a "Regiment of Sharp-Shooters for the War." Its formation would carry out, so he averred, a commission from President Jefferson Davis to organize a unit of light infantry in the state. He said he had served for eleven months "in most of the battles in Western Virginia [and]…in the Central West." Playing to the concern of those concerned about the new draft law and dubious about the thoroughness of regular camp training, he exhorted the men of Lauderdale: "Men of Mississippi, if we would be free, we must strike quickly, and to strike effectually, and not be cut up on the battle field the field officers must be skilled in the drill and manoeuvering of forces." Swann, who represented himself as being thus skilled, offered transportation and a bounty of fifty dollars a year extra for clothing. He needed at least sixty-four men to form a company, and he would remain in Meridian until a group was organized.[2] Well, how long he stayed and how successful he was are uncertain. There was yet some desire to challenge the heathen foe; but the two bloody days at Shiloh were still very much in the memory of citizens in the county, many of whom had seen and talked with the wounded who had been piled into the hospitals in the area. Some of those injured probably now occupied fresh graves on Lauderdale soil.

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[1] Higgins, in Meridian, to Gov. Pettus, 18 January 1861, in GP, RG 27, vol. 51, MDAH.
[2] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 16 May 1862.

It seems probable that as the war wore on and its drain on the county's male population became a concern, there was more enthusiasm for raising units to defend Lauderdale County than there was for sending men to fight in far-off places that few knew much about and fewer had seen. The possibility of slave uprisings, for a century or more a common concern in the South, now appeared much more threatening; and if the army monopolized all able-bodied men, who would guard against such dangerous events? Or even against white renegades; for as the war progressed, there was an increasing problem with white riffraff and deserters from the Confederate Army. Those in places such as Lauderdale Springs, Marion, and Meridian had less to worry about, for groups of soldiers were always nearby. But places in more remote areas of the county felt less secure.

The citizens at Daleville in the summer of 1864 became concerned when Governor Clark's call for militia involved men up to the age of fifty-five. According to local calculations, that would leave only three white men in Daleville. To emphasize the danger, there was in early August a rumor, perhaps well founded, that some of the slaves were plotting to get arms and horses and fight their way to Union lines in Vicksburg. Another slave, however, who had become frightened at the possible consequences, divulged the scheme to his owners. This same informant warned that the plotters were hoping to take advantage of the reduction in the number of white adults in the area. At about the same time, and also in Daleville, a male slave had gone into his master's house at night, while the latter was away, and entered the bedroom of two young women. The women were frightened and roughed up a bit, but apparently not otherwise harmed. (The record fails to say what, if anything, was done to the culprit.)

O. F. M. Holladay, a Daleville resident, recommended that the state provide adequate protection for the communities "or else take all the Negro fellows off and put them in the army so they can be controlled." From what he knew of the Daleville area and had heard from other places, he was convinced that "the Negroes are in Motion."[3] They very likely were; for when Sherman's army gave slaves safe passage to Union lines in February 1864, many followed him.

Into the training and formation centers at Marion Station and Meridian streamed recruits from surrounding counties, and by March of 1862 both places were bulging with fledgling soldiers. As early as the middle of March, U. B. Chrisman reported that there were already sixteen companies at Meridian awaiting organization and that ten were about to form a regiment.[4] Perhaps these were the companies which a week or so later were organized into the 36th Mississippi Regiment under Col. D. J. Brown and Maj. W. W. Witherspoon, both of Copiah County, and Lt. Col. Sterling G. Harper, of Noxubee County.[5]

Camp Beauregard at Marion Station was, as we have seen, one of the state's earliest training centers. It was the first real taste of military life for many young, green Mississippians such as Robert Masten Holmes, of the Kemper Rebels, a

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[3] Holladay, in Daleville, to Gov. Pettus, 10 (?) August 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH. It is possible that Holladay and others, for their own reasons, were exaggerating these dangers.
[4] Chrisman, in Meridian, to Gov. Pettus, 11 March 1862, in *ibid.*
[5] *Macon Beacon*, 26 March 1862.

company commanded by Capt. Robert P. McKelvaine. Holmes enlisted on 8 July 1861 and was formally mustered into service at Marion Station on 10 September. His regiment was trained there until November first when it was transferred to Camp Pillow, Fla.[6]

The training facility at Meridian was named Camp Jacob Thompson, after the Mississippian who had already distinguished himself as a politician. Thompson was presently adding to his dossier such other roles as soldier, foreign commissioner, secret agent, and embezzler.[7] By March of 1862 Camp Jacob Thompson was turning Meridian into a very busy, and hectic, place. Companies of raw recruits, in varying degrees of innocence (or guilt), patriotic fervor, and unpreparedness, poured into the little village at the junction of the three railroads. Government property shipped into the area piled up around the two dimunitive depots where every available square foot seemed laden with stacks of boxes and barrels filled with one commodity or another. The area seemed to be also a favorite gathering place for soldiers and civilians. There usually was interesting news, or what passed for news, brought in by passengers and crews on the trains and, later that year, by the telegraph.

But the most striking sight that greeted arriving passengers at Meridian in that spring of 1862 was the great number of white tents that seemed to radiate for acres in every direction from the depots. They were the temporary quarters of the many fledgling companies waiting to be trained and organized into regiments and brigades. Ideally, a hundred men constituted a company, commanded by a captain, but usually a company had fewer than that. Ten companies made up a regiment and was commanded by a full colonel. Following such organization, everyone had to go through the ritual of electing other regimental officers.

The formation of the 36th Mississippi Regiment must have been fairly typical. Soon to become known as "the Bloody Thirty-sixth,"[8] it consisted of the following companies: (A) Mount Zion Guards, (B) Zollicoffer Avengers, (C) Harper Reserves, (D) Yankee Hunters, (E) Hazlehurst Fencibles, (F) Hillsboro Rebels, (G) Copiah Rebels, (H) Edwards Tigers, (I) Stephens Guards, and (K) Dixie Guards.[9] (Companies seem never to have been designated by the letter *J*.) On 12 March 1862 the ten companies were enlisted in the Confederate Army for a period of one year. In the vote for regimental officers the position of colonel was a contest among the captains of the several companies, and there must have been the usual amount of politicking before the event. At such times it was not unusual for candidates to treat the men to whiskey. The winner, Capt. Drury J. Brown, of the Dixie Guards, received ninety-six votes, fifteen more than his nearest rival, Capt. R. D. Ogleton, of the Stephens Guards. The other two positions were filled by men not among the company commanders, Lt. Col. Sterling G. Harper and Maj. W. W. Witherspoon.[10]

Nor had all the companies of the still-unnumbered regiment settled the issue of their own company officers. The following Tuesday, 18 March, the Edwards

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[6] Robert Masten Holmes, *Kemper County Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Robert Masten Holmes C.S.A.* Ed. by Frank Allen Dennis. (Jackson: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 6.
[7] Report of an election for regimental officers, CR, RG 9, vol. 13, Company K, MDAH. Col. D. J. Brown, in a communication to Jackson, called the location "Camp Jake Thompson."
[8] A. J. Brown, *History of Newton County, Mississippi, from 1834 to 1894* (Jackson, Miss.: Clarion-Ledger Co., 1894), 92.
[9] W. J. Tancig, *Confederate Military Land Units, 1861-1865* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1967), 60.
[10] Election returns, Meridian, 12 March 1862, CR, RG 9, vol. 13, MDAH.

Tigers notified officials in Jackson of a company election on 22 February in which S. K. Smith had been elected captain, and James N. Jackson, R. F. Weaver, and N. M. Pace had been chosen first, second, and third lieutenants respectively. Their clerks added a note to request that commissions be sent for their officers, in care of "Meridian Station." The clerk originally wrote his regiment as "29th Miss.," and marked that out and penciled in "1st."[11] But that wasn't right, either. (The *Macon Beacon* had called it the 28th!)[12]

What the devil *was* the regiment's number? Even the newly-elected colonel, D. J. Brown, didn't know. On Tuesday, 17 March, the Dixie Guards had to inform their superiors in Jackson that the company had chosen a new captain to fill the vacancy created by Brown's elevation. (Alexander Yates beat A. B. Terrell 88 to 2.) Colonel Brown certified the accuracy of the report and then used this opportunity to try to end the mystery of his regiment's correct designation. Company K's clerk had begun the communication to Jackson, "In pursuance of an order from Col. D. J. Brown of the ____ Mississippi Regiment…." The notification ended with a hastily scribbled note from Brown himself: "Please send no. of my Reg. with authority to fill up blank."[13]

Nor was the number of his regiment Brown's only problem. Even more pressing was what to do about the sharks who were stealing his men. In a letter to Governor Pettus, Brown complained that "for the last ten days men, who pretend to be engaged in raising war troops, have been here, and have been using their best exertions to get men to leave this Command and join them, [and] they have succeeded in getting many names, and say that they are acting under authority from you."[14] Poor Brown probably got no help from Pettus, for it was a common problem which under prevailing conditions had no easy solution. It illustrated one of the main hazards facing commanders whose units took too long in the organizational process.

Eventually this conglomeration of rustics was designated the 36th Mississippi Regiment. At their camp somewhat east of the depots and near the crossing of the two railroads (on the edge of present-day East End), the new regiment prepared to ship out. At six P.M. on 15 April they left on an M & O train for Corinth. Since a large number in the Harper Reserves (Company C) were from Lauderdale County, quite a crowd of local citizens gathered at the track to give the regiment a good send-off.[15] Company C had been enlisted in Meridian but it contained a number of men from Newton and Smith Counties, as well.[16]

Many years later George P. Clarke, a veteran of C Company, recollected many details about the war record of his company and regiment. His company's first captain was Dr. C. P. Partin, and a later captain was G. M. Gallaspy. Sergeants included Asa Scarborough, W. E. Jones, E. W. Partin, G. W. Warren, Joel Hughes, B. F. Watkins, and Clarke himself. Company C was the regiment's "color company" and thus was often exposed to danger—a color company carried the regimental flags. A phrase frequently used at the time to describe the Harper Reserves was that this was a company "that would do to tie to in a close place." This tribute to its dependability

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[11] *Ibid.*, vol. 13, Co. H.
[12] *Macon Beacon*, 26 March 1862.
[13] CR, RG 9, vol. 13, Co. K, MDAH.
[14] Brown, in Meridian, to Gov. Pettus, 3 April 1862, GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.
[15] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 229, 234.
[16] Recollections of George P. Clarke, in CR, RG 9, vol. 13, Co. C, MDAH.

was severely tested in such battles and campaigns as Vicksburg, Kennesaw Mountain, Smyrna Church, Atlanta, Franklin, Murfreesboro, and Nashville. At the very end of the war in the spring of 1865 it fought at Spanish Fort, near Mobile.[17]

Getting to the training facilities in Lauderdale County could be a tiresome but eventful adventure, as the Kennedy Guards, Co. G, 27th Mississippi Regiment, discovered.[18] They left their home in Augusta, Perry County, on 15 September 1861 and marched as far as Robert Hinton's farm where his wife hailed them and filled their wagons with cakes and cooked meats. They camped near the Hinton's farm, much to the relief of all the marchers, especially those who were breaking in new shoes. They spent the next night in Wayne County at a Mr. Holley's home. Some of the women in the neighborhood prepared supper and, next morning, breakfast, after which their hosts cheered them on their way.

Another long march took them to Allen Sherley's home where some of the group asked for a cup of coffee. He charged a dime per cup and a quarter for a cup of clabber. Some of the group asked for dinner and paid from fifty to seventy-five cents for beef and cornbread. Sherley's opportunism seemed to go too far when he charged some of them one price for tobacco and charged others more than double that price for the same quantity—and out of the same box that, according to one of the group, was "rotten." One aggrieved soldier, writing about it later for the folks back home, said, "When you kill some hogs send him a few tails." This was obviously no place to spend the night so they plodded on until within ten miles of Shubuta where, with almost no provisions, they found themselves benighted in a pine forest.

Sidney Hinton and Lieutenant Myers reconnoitered and found a farmhouse at a manageable distance, but the farmer had nothing in his house that could have come close to feeding an entire company. Then it occurred to him that one of his grazing herd of cattle would serve; whereupon, he and several of the men butchered a bullock and barbecued it. In gratitude, the company paid their host a good price for their supper. Late the next day the men from Augusta finally trudged into Shubuta where, to their relief, there was the M & O Railroad that would take them to Marion Station. As an added treat, the ladies around the town stood along the roadside waving Confederate flags. The recruits answered with lusty cheers and marched lightheartedly to the railroad station, where many citizens greeted them with baskets of food. Lieutenant Denham, of their company, met them at the station and flourished a banner made by the young ladies back home. What a gala evening it had been! And when at ten P.M. they left Shubuta on a northbound train, they were tired but entirely happy, scarcely able to wait until daylight for a really good look at their new banner.

Sometime in the pre-dawn hours they got off at Marion Station and bivouacked around the depot. As soon as it was light, there were demands to see their banner. Someone unfurled it, and there followed a chorus of "Let me see!" "Hold it up!" "Hands off!" "Don't soil it!" Everybody wanted to hold it and everyone wanted to be the ensign whose duty it would be to carry it. That honor finally went to William Lambert. Since he was the tallest, everyone reasoned he could carry it most conspicuously. (What these eager, green recruits did not know, however, was that the man carrying a unit's standard tended to be a special target for the enemy.) It was apparently Captain Kennedy who sent word back to the ladies of Perry County that the gift had been well received. "At last [said Kennedy, somewhat grandiloquently] I feel

[17] Recollections of George P. Clarke, in CR, RG 9, vol. 13, Co. C, MDAH.
[18] The following account comes from the Paulding *Eastern Clarion* of 11 October 1861.

fully authorized to say to the young ladies, that the boys are determined to hold it despite the vandal hosts of the enemy, in honor of them, their country and themselves, to lay their manly forms at the feet of their new nation, and there pay the debt they owe their country and their God."

Lauderdale County, served by three important railroads, became the scene of much military activity that increased dramatically after the middle of 1863. Toward the end of that year Meridian became the headquarters for the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana—"East Louisiana" was that part of the state east of the Mississippi River. In addition to the training and organization centers at Marion Station and Meridian, the military moved into other places in the area. Early in the war, for example, the Confederate Army took over the old resort compound at Lauderdale Springs and established an encampment and a large hospital. As the war went on its protracted way, other camps, hospitals, supply depots, and related facilities were established, especially at Meridian which in time came to resemble a military post more than it did a town.

In addition to the training and organizational facilities in the county during the earlier part of the war, by late 1862 or early 1863 regular camps had taken over large amounts of unoccupied land in and around Meridian. It was during this period, for instance, that young Lt. Charles Boarman Cleveland and his unit, the Third Missouri Infantry, went into winter camp at Meridian. Cleveland later recalled it: "We had a nice camp during the winter (1862-63) in Meridian, every soldier having a reed bed, made of canes, or fishing poles, and moss, covered with blankets, to lie on; we were comfortable, well fed, and passed a very pleasant time."[19] While at camp in Meridian, Cleveland was ordered to take charge of a detail to get supplies. They took fifty-two wagons down to near Pushmataha, Choctaw County, Ala., where they loaded them with plenty of sweet potatoes and other edibles. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston made a point of commending Cleveland for his diligence in this period before impressment of civilian goods made such work less-often necessary.[20]

To add further to Meridian's military appearance, Dr. W. LeRoy Broun, in the spring of 1862, moved his small arms factory from Holly Springs to Meridian. The defeat of the Confederate army at Shiloh in April made Holly Springs too dangerous a place for such weapons manufacturing. This gun factory was very likely the origin of the arsenal that eventually was operating in Meridian and that the Federal raid in 1864 destroyed. By that time Dr. Broun had long since gone to Richmond, Va.[21]

Once the presence of military units had become more or less a permanent feature in Lauderdale County, the civilian population set about trying to adjust to them. It was not easy. Cheers for the departing volunteers during the first weeks of the war had hardly died away, when the people keeping the home fires burning discovered some surprising and annoying facts. One was that civilian life had become so altered that at times it must have seemed almost past enduring. A second was that when thousands of young Southerners were wrenched out of the restraints of family and community life and thrown into a rather gamey atmosphere, they acted pretty much as most other soldiers have done, and still do, in similar circumstances. Throughout the memoirs and letters of Southerners of that period there runs a note of

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[19] Charles Boarman Cleveland, "With the Third Missouri Regiment: Reminiscences of Charles Boarman Cleveland, Late of Miami, Fla.," *Confederate Veteran* (January 1923), 31:18.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] P. H. Pell, "Dr. W. LeRoy Broun," *Confederate Veteran* (May 1902), 10:225.

indignation at the outrages perpetrated by their own soldiers. In fact, trying to discover which army, Confederate or Union, engendered more denunciation, one tends to conclude that Southern critics were rougher on the one more recently encountered.

As early as September 1861 civilians in the Lauderdale area began taking a much more critical look at the military units around them. The novelty was gone, and there seemed to be no danger from invasion. In short, the many military units were becoming an annoyance. In a letter to Governor Pettus, B. C. E. Estes, at Marion Station, complained that all these soldiers weren't needed, that the home guard could easily handle emergencies. Lecturing the Governor further, he maintained that such large numbers of soldiers were "costing the State an amount in addition to the tax already laid by the Congress which will be grevious [*sic*] to our citizens." "Now, sir," he concluded, "I have given you a few hints of what is a float [*sic*] in east Miss. and hope you will act accordingly."[22] Though there continued to be much patriotic support for the Confederate cause, it waned somewhat as the war dragged on; and, as we shall see later, there was in the county evidence of growing disaffection and a somewhat strong element loyal to the old government.

But early in the war there were many patriotic campaigns such as that in July 1861 when the Confederate government appealed for a "cotton loan." The Confederate treasury was practically empty, and there were few practical ways to fill it. Those with cotton were asked to lend some of it as a backing for bonds or as an exchange item for gold to pay for prosecuting the war. William M. Hancock and Judge J. W. Brooke canvassed the county in support of the drive, speaking often and with considerable success. One observer described citizens of the county as "subscribing liberally," and adding, "Let men of mind and energy take hold of this matter, and Old Abe will quake in his boots before he suppresses the riot and disperses the rebels of the South."[23] These were the Confederacy's palmy days when news of First Manassas was still thrilling Southerners. What these Southern patriots could not have known was that their efforts in the cotton loan were almost wasted. The Davis administration placed an embargo on the export of cotton for about a year, by which time the Federal blockade was much more effective. The rationale behind this policy of the Davis administration was that the European market would be desperate for cotton and would send their ships over for it, thus challenging the Union blockade. But the British manufacturers had something of a surplus of cotton in 1861. Later, when the British might have liked to get new shipments, a more effective Federal blockade, as well as the way the war was going, made the British reluctant to challenge the United States. When the Richmond government realized its error, it was too late.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to take as good a look at Meridian during these times as old records permit. To be sure, in 1861 it was still a small place completely overshadowed by such towns at Lauderdale Springs and the Marion/Marion Station area. But the little railroad center was quickly changing.

As we have already seen, there was by July of 1859, perhaps even earlier, some attempt to give names to a few streets. Both Front and Commerce (the

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[22] Estes, at Marion Station, to Gov. Pettus, 6 September 1861, GP, RG 27, vol. 53, MDAH.
[23] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 26 July 1861.

latter today's Fourth Street) had names easily suggested by circumstances. This does not, however, prove that the little "city" had any well-defined streets; and William P. Chambers, a young Confederate soldier who first saw the town in March 1862, flatly described it as without streets.[24] It still was essentially a motley collection of a few stores and houses scattered along two or three main roads.

Something has already been said about these roads in Meridian. The Decatur Road, with its two branches, went westward, and the older road came into town from Lauderdale Springs and Marion, and went on southward to Enterprise. This Enterprise-Lauderdale Road almost certainly came in by way of our present Old Marion Road and Sixth Street. This hypothesis is supported by a comparison of several old maps, by a glance at a modern map of the city, and by the fact that Richard McLemore placed his home, church, and cemetery on the main road from Marion, that is, along what is now Sixth Street. There is one more very important detail that supports this theory: the old name for Sixth Street was *High* Street. The word *high*, then as it does today, meant *main,* as in *high road*, and as we say today *highway*.

A second road branched off this older one and led westward toward Decatur. Again, it is impossible to be absolutely sure, but this road probably left the Enterprise-Lauderdale road to run along what today is Seventh Street, on which John T. Ball erected his store. To the north of it, perhaps at no great distance, there was another road called the Upper Decatur Road. The lower one perhaps took a route westward that roughly followed the present Old Eighth Street Road and its extension that makes its way back and forth along modern Highway 19 North. The Upper Decatur Road branched off at some point in, or perhaps just north of, Meridian. It could have followed what today is Fourteenth Street and what became in 1860 the northern city limit. At any rate, an examination of John Ball's plat map indicates that a main road led out of Meridian at modern Thirty-first Avenue and Tenth Street.[25] This road probably followed present-day State Boulevard, which runs today suspiciously at an angle and on an otherwise irregular course that suggests an ancient origin. The two branches merged some miles west of Meridian. (Incidentally, the map made by General Sherman's engineers clearly shows these two roads, over both of which the Federal force moved into Meridian.)[26]

Some of this is speculation but it is based on several concrete facts. Using it as a working hypothesis, one can see how the peculiar pattern of Meridian's streets could have developed. It has often been suggested that disagreements between L. A. Ragsdale and John T. Ball caused the irregularity. Well, one suspects that the personalities of both men were such that disagreements happened, but an examination of their two original surveys scarcely suggests a connection with the pattern of the streets. However, keeping in mind such factors as the routes of the highways, the angle at which the railroads passed through town, and even the limits established by the original charter, I find it all very suggestive. Those few streets downtown between the diagonal main highway and railroads also ran diagonally. All other streets west of 26th Avenue, however, tended to take their orientation from the route of the Southern Railroad, the east-west pattern of the Decatur Road, and the vertical and horizontal

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[24] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 229.
[25] See John Ball's original pocket or plat map of his survey, Mississippi Collection, MPL.
[26] *Map of the Country between Vicksburg and Meridian, Miss.*... Surveyed by Lt. H. M. Bush and Assistants S. Davis and S. O. Dunning, under the direction of Capt. A. Hickenlooper, Chf. Engineer [U.S. Army], 1864; RG 77, drawer 138, sheet 35, NA.

section lines of the town's limits in the first charter. Besides, at some distance from the railroads and High street, it probably seemed more logical for streets to run with the main points of the compass.

The early development of streets, in retrospect, is vague and probably not subject to much clarification. There must have been some discussion of it among the city's first administration; but if so, we are not the better informed for it, as the records do not seem to have survived. Even so interesting a matter as the origin of the names of the streets seems to be lost, except of course where the origin would seem to be obvious, as with High, Front, and Commerce. Fleming Street, modern Tenth Street, could have been named for the M & O's Chief Engineer and General Superintendent L. J. Fleming, who was often in Meridian during the Civil War; and W. C. Smedes, president of the Southern Railroad around 1860, was perhaps the one honored by what is now Ninth Street. Other names are often less suggestive. If Lee Street (downtown Twenty-sixth Avenue) was named for Robert E. Lee, it could hardly have been given that name prior to the summer of 1862 when Lee took over from the wounded Joseph E. Johnston.

But streets or no streets, in no records that I have seen does Meridian in this period receive any favorable comments from visitors. Long before Sherman left his mark, it was the butt of many snide observations and unfavorable allusions. Brandon might be called pretty, as even some of Sherman's soldiers declared it, and young William Chambers could find Enterprise attractive and conducive to philosophical musings. The county's own Marion was often described as pretty. But Meridian became a byword for all that was crude, expensive, and uncomfortable. As F. D. Daniel, a Confederate surgeon, wrote in later years, "Every Confederate soldier knows Meridian. It had the hardest name of any place, unless it be Andersonville, Ga."[27] (Andersonville was the site of the most notorious Civil War prison.)

Pvt. William Pitt Chambers first saw Meridian in the spring of 1862. As a young recruit at that time, he spent a number of weeks there and visited it several other times during the war. Chambers, a sharp observer and a very conscientious young man, kept a detailed journal which is unusually informative. He arrived in Meridian on a Southern train at 1:30 P.M. on Sunday, March 30. The platform at the depots and the area all about them were thronged with soldiers. The "confused piles of barrels of molasses and other Government supplies" looked very unattractive to young Chambers. About two hours after arriving, his group were moved over to an area some 350 yards from the railroad stations. There they erected their tents on a "gentle elevation at the edge of the woods." This was probably in the area bordering the railroads and present-day Davis Street and Twenty-sixth Avenue.[28] Certainly, the men were so close to the railroads that sleep at night must have been problematic.

As soon as Chambers found an opportunity, his curiosity sent him exploring. "I expected to find a 'town' at Meridian," he wrote in his journal, "but was sadly disappointed. In fact, there is not a fine building in the place, no stores and no streets." The only thing that did impress him favorably was "a dark blue range of

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[27] James W. Silver (ed.), *Mississippi in the Confederacy, as Seen in Retrospect* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 196. The quotation is from F. D. Daniel's *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon, or In the Doctor's Sappy Days.*

[28] The Southern and the Mobile and Ohio depots were located a few yards west of the present subway on 26th Avenue. The Southern station was about 200 feet northwest of the M & O station—see John Ball's pocket map of his survey, Mississippi Collection, MPL.

hills, with two or three higher peaks" that he saw to the south. "Someday," he added, "I hope to visit those hills and climb those peaks." Mount Barton looked imposing to a youngster from the relatively flat area of Covington County. But the town's appearance obviously depressed Chambers; and though he attended an evening religious service, he ended his first day in camp feeling "spiritually unimproved."[29]

Chambers, of course, like many of the other commentators, was seeing the town through the din and confusion of camp life; but Chambers often wandered off on his own or with congenial friends to see the larger area. He also met a number of Meridian's citizens such as Richard McLemore's family. The young soldier cared about quality and humanity, he was introspective, and he was often troubled by an ugly world around him.

There is a rather fetching entry in his journal for Friday, 11 April 1862. It had been set aside as "wash day" and rest; but since he had already done his washing, he decided it was time to visit the inviting hills he had admired on his arrival. Striking out back of his tenting area, he crossed the railroads and then Sowashee Creek, which he called "a beautiful stream of water." Soon he reached the foot of the hills where he stopped and observed his surroundings. "A Sabbath like stillness pervaded the scene," he wrote, "and the birds made the air vocal with their song." Chambers' journal usually displays a writing style that is straight-forward and unpretentious, sometimes even moving. But on this occasion, he almost slipped into language seen today as overly ornate, or "purple":

> Ascending the rugged side, I at last stood on the summit of the loftiest elevation in sight, and the scene before me amply repaid me for my trip. Some two miles North of me lay the town of Meridian, its scattered cottages contrasting with the dark green background, while the white tents of the soldiers appeared like tombstones in some "City of the Dead." Beyond the pine forests seemed to grow in terraces till the last one literally blended in with the smiling valley of the creek with its myriads of quivering leaves, and to my ears was borne the sweet song of the birds, as they chanted their vernal hymn of gladness.[30]

At last Chambers had found some beauty in Meridian, but other critics during the next few years were less kind than Chambers usually was. A more typical reaction, published the next year in London, England, appeared in a book whose author was identified only as "An English Merchant." Actually, the author was W. C. Corsan, who poked about the Confederacy during the early part of 1863. While west of Meridian, he received a pass to go on to Mobile. He caught a Southern train for Meridian, which he described as "a wretched place…where we spent another miserable night (two and three in a bed, and several beds in a room)." To his relief, he left on the train next morning for Mobile and at last saw something he liked—the Chickasawhay, which he declared "a fine stream."[31] In the spring of that same year, Lt. Col. Arthur Fremantle, another English visitor, saw Meridian briefly. While he said nothing bad about the town, it is rather telling that he said next to nothing at all

[29] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 229.
[30] *Ibid.*, 232-233.
[31] W. C. Corsan, *Two Months in the Confederate States, including a Visit to New Orleans under the Domination of General Butler* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 102.

about it. He reached the place on Sunday, 24 May, at 7:30 A.M. after a very trying trip over the Southern from Jackson. His train was five hours late which, though annoying, at least kept him from having to while away the pre-dawn hours at the crude little depot or—horrors!—sleep (as Corsan had put it) "two and three in a bed" at the Meridian, Ragsdale, Burton, or Jones Hotels. Fremantle's train for Mobile left at 9 a.m. Whether he spent those ninety minutes eating a Meridian breakfast is not recorded.[32]

In July 1864 a Union prisoner named Jesse Hawes was housed for a while at the prison stockade in Meridian. Later he recalled his general impression of the town that had recently been sacked by Sherman:

> Meridian at that time was possessed of one house that was worthy of the name—the "Jones House"—a hotel situated near our stockade, perhaps a block away. All other buildings had been recently erected, and were one-story shanties made of rough boards and unpainted; nearly all, I think, were used for military purposes.
>
> The town before the war was one of little importance, but the large amount of Confederate property gathered there in the early part of 1864 rendered it of more value at that time….
>
> Much of the land surrounding the hamlet was low, and covered with a dense growth of pine trees….[33]

Such reports as this indicate that post-Sherman Meridian was for all practical purposes not a town of civilians but rather a military camp and depot; though the town, even as late as the last year of the war, was deficient even for some military purposes. For instance, a clerk in the ordnance section of the headquarters of the state troops complained to Governor Clark that there was no place in Meridian for the troops to store weapons.[34] His meaning was that, thanks to Sherman's visit, there was no place to store weapons *at that time*, even assuming the troops could have found any weapons.

But all indications are that even before Sherman wrecked the town, Meridian's growth had been erratic and without plan or aim for beauty, or even municipal need. Because of early problems of land ownership, the reason for which is not clear in surviving records, many landowners apparently did not have clear titles. This may partly explain why some builders were careless about boundaries and regulations and about appearances. Many structures had been carelessly placed. In November 1863, for instance, the Southern Railroad hit back at encroachers on its property. Unauthorized buildings on property belonging to the railroad, the road's officials warned, would be removed within twenty days.[35]

Col. James J. Shannon, in his office of the *Daily Clarion*, must have laughed one day in July 1864 when he picked up a copy of a Mobile newspaper. It

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[32] Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States* (New York: John Bradburn, 1864), 127. Back in the late 1940s in Mobile I saw the old Battle House Hotel's register from 1863. Flipping through the pages, I found Col. Fremantle's signature. There he probably found fairly good accommodations.

[33] Jesse Hawes, *Cahaba: A Story of Captive Boys in Blue* (New York: Burr Printing House, 1888), 111-113.

[34] Brown, in Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 16 August 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.

[35] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 25 November 1863.

contained a letter that ribbed Meridian and the hotel keepers. Shannon impishly reprinted it, a part of which said:

> Perhaps as Meridian is the Headquarters of the Lieutenant General, it might be *prudent* to call it a garden spot, but I must "beg to be excused," for if I were to give utterance to a lie so abominable, I fear it would be entered up against me as "the unpardonable sin." But there's one thing I can say about Meridian, with a great deal of truth, …that it is the *buggiest* little hole on top of the ground. Before the Yanks were here it was "chock full" of rats, now it seems to be as equally full of bugs of all sorts, sizes, and colors—except "grey backs" [i.e., body lice], for I confess, I have seen some of them.[36]

Perhaps the greatest put-down of Meridian during the Civil War, that I have seen, comes from a recollection by James H. McNeilly, who after the war became a clergyman in Nashville, Tenn. In recalling Meridian of those years, McNeilly recounted an anecdote which, as he said, "expressed the opinion of many soldiers on that little wooden town at the railroad crossing, with its hotels of exorbitant charges and poor fare." McNeilly spent three months in the General Hospital at Lauderdale Springs. While there he heard a story about a soldier of fortune named Capt. Sankowitz, who was being treated at the hospital for typhoid fever. Sankowitz was very sick, for a while even delirious. Later his lucidness returned but he was still weak. On one occasion Sankowitz called an attendant:

> Sankowitz (feebly): I want you to take me to Meridian.
> Attendant: Why do want to go to Meridian?
> Sankowitz: Because I am bound to die.
> Attendant: But what has Meridian to do with your dying?
> Sankowitz: My dear sir, I have traveled all over the world and served in many countries, and I think I could leave this earth with less regret from Meridian than from any place on the face of the planet.[37]

The foregoing anecdote, according to Washington Bryan Crumpton, was a stardard one told on several places in the South where there was much sickness. He recalled, for example, hearing a similar story about Tupelo, Miss.; and in that version the sick soldier was a lad in a hospital in Virginia.[38] But I have seen Meridian cited as the heavy in at least two versions of this story of dark humor, and the sense of the anecdote hangs well with Meridian's general reputation.

There would be little more useful and interesting in a discussion of Meridian's appearance in the first year of the war than a look at a typical recruit's routine in Meridian, and we fortunately have a good description in the journals of young William

[36] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 6 July 1864.
[37] James H. McNeilly, "A Good Place to Die," *Confederate Veteran* (January 1918), 26:45.
[38] Washington Bryan Crumpton, *A Book of Memories, 1842-1920* (Montgomery, Ala.: Baptist Mission Board, 1921), 67-68.

Chambers.[39] In April and May of 1862 he and thousands of others were quartered in tents pitched around the railroads. Some units, such as the 36th Mississippi Regiment, were camped east of town close to where the railroads crossed. Chambers' unit, as we have seen, was quite near the depots. He could look several hundred yards beyond his company's tents—that is, west and north—and see the tents of four or five other companies. About 150 yards to the side, for example, probably toward John Ball's old store (at the corner of present-day Twenty-sixth Avenue and Seventh Street), Capt. W. K. Easterling's Rankin Farmers were camped. And all of these companies were in varying stages of regimental organization.

On the first of April Chambers' company made their first attempt at drilling, but Chambers, on a special detail marking and numbering their tents, missed the practice. As he worked, he looked around at the new April foliage and thought, *I love the trees and the flowers*. He did manage to get in a little squad drill, while all the time he kept seeing more soldiers pouring into the station and being marched off to unused camp space. About 4:30 P.M. a train arrived from Mobile. Two young lieutenants hopped off sporting new uniforms and swords and thus were the center of admiring attention. At five P.M. the 36th Regiment, situated eastward up the track, held a "dress parade." Chambers strolled over and watched, at the same time admiring some young women who also had come to watch their knights in gray. Too bad his pal Lotan Sullivan was sick, thought Chambers; he would have enjoyed all this. (Some believed Sullivan had the measles.) Chambers later walked back to his tent where, after supper, he and several of his fellows sang some of the old traditional songs. Homesickness made them all a bit subdued.

The next morning, Thursday, 3 April, was rainy, though this did not keep Chambers' company from being mustered into Confederate service at one P.M. Despite the rain they drilled a little in the morning and afternoon. Chambers glanced out the back of his tent and saw a coffin being carried to one of the companies behind his area and thought of the tragedy that, as he put it, "Some soldier died away from home and most likely without the gentle ministrations of a mother or a sister." Shortly afterward he learned also that a friend back home had died. All of this and a rainy night depressed him, though by the next morning the mood had passed. It was Friday—"wash day in the morning, squad drill in the afternoon." He looked around during drill and concluded that they certainly were an awkward bunch. However, that problem seemed insignificant compared with a rumor that a battle was being fought to the north near Corinth. But nothing definite, yet. Closer to him was his friend's condition—Lotan Sullivan's measles had turned out to be chicken pox. Sullivan would have to go home on furlough, for Meridian had as yet no hospital. Chambers hurried to his tent and dashed off several letters for Sullivan to carry home. (By December 1862 there was the Warren Hospital in Meridian—see record of James E. Mitchell, 37th Miss. Regt., *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*.)

Saturday, 5 April, brought more drilling and new and more substantial reports of troop activity north of Corinth, Miss.. Also, more disturbing reports came in from New Orleans where a Yankee fleet was threatening the city. But everything was deucedly vague and tantalizing. Chambers managed to squeeze in attendance at the Baptist Church, where he listened to a sermon preached by a soldier who was soon to go to the front. The speaker must have lacked fervor, for Chambers slept through

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[39] Chambers, *op. cit.*; the following extended narration draws on pages 229 to 238 in Chambers' account.

most of the sermon. Late in the day he and a friend, J. V. Reddock, went out about two and a half miles east of town to visit Reddock's relative, Richard McLemore, whom Chambers found to be "an elderly man in easy circumstances" with "a pleasant family." As he was lying in a comfortable bed that night at the McLemores', he could not help contrasting his surroundings with those of thousands of his comrades.

Sunday morning, 6 April, Chambers and his friend Reddock must have tarried awhile before leaving their hosts' home; for by the time they had trekked the two and a half miles back to town, it was too late to go to church. Oh well, McLemore had lent Chambers a book against infidelity, so he read that and some chapters in the New Testament. When reading began to pall, he strolled over to the 35th Regiment's camp. As he walked, he thought it strange that there were no more rumors about the battle near Corinth. Just as he got to the 36th Regiment's area, he witnessed the sudden death of a young soldier and sensed a special poignancy when he learned that the young man had joined the army against his parents' wishes. Chambers wondered gloomily whether he would ever become accustomed to witnessing death!

When he got back to his company, Chambers saw his captain, T. D. Magee, get off the train from Jackson. Magee had gone there to get supplies but returned with only canteens. Chambers and the others went to bed that night unaware that since early morning two opposing armies had been mauling each other at Shiloh Church, near Pittsburg Landing, Tenn. It was the first of a two-day battle that would be one of the bloodiest in the war and that would be an ominous defeat for the Confederates.[40] The Union commander was a relatively unknown fellow named U. S. Grant. One of his subordinates was a red-headed dynamo named William Tecumseh Sherman. But if anything disturbed Chambers' repose that Sunday night, he did not record it.

After breakfast Monday morning, 7 April, Chambers and his company drilled a little. *Were they really improving,* he wondered? One of his officers came by to say that apparently there had indeed been a terrible battle somewhere near Corinth. The hospital at Lauderdale Springs had just received 175 wounded soldiers, and the hospital at Columbus was expecting to receive around 2,000. A Dr. McInnis in Chambers' company and Lt. A. Fairley were preparing to go to the scene of the battle, and Chambers rashly wished he might go with them. The excitement on Tuesday, the eighth, was intense. Even if it had not rained, drilling would have been difficult. Chambers tried to read but had difficulty concentrating. He did enjoy a letter from Miss Collier. It was she who had shoved a little flag and a note to him through the window of his coach as his train was leaving Brandon on the way to Meridian. He answered her letter at once.

All the while reports of the battle at Shiloh kept coming in. News that 2,000 Federal prisoners would pass through on the morning train created a sensation. An excited crowd formed at the little depots long before the train was due, with many of Meridian's women jostling among the soldiers and male civilians. Even the drenching rain seemed to have little effect on the crowd's excitement and determination to miss nothing. The train arrived—but with no prisoners. Human affairs invite anticlimax! Sleep seemed out of the question for Chambers and everyone else, so e walked over to the depot again at ten P.M. and met a party of men from Lawrence County on their way to Virginia. They had just learned of a battle at

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[40] I remember hearing my grandmother, born near Shiloh two months before the battle, repeat a common expression of that day, "After Shiloh the Confederacy never smiled again."

Gordonsville, Va., in which (it was said) all but nine of the company called the Lawrence Rifles, of the 13th Mississippi, had been killed or wounded.[41] Chambers and the others had been talking for nearly two hours when the midnight train pulled into town. Still no prisoners—but what a scene! There were men who had been in the battle, and all had horrible tales to relate. And perhaps the saddest sight was an old gentleman from Scott County who was bringing home a coffin that contained the body of his son, a casualty of Shiloh's first day. Lauderdale County and young Chambers were beginning to find out what war really meant. Both had much more to learn.

The rest of the week brought more tantalizing snippets of news, interspersed among undramatic duties and routines. To be sure, the recent battle was still a hot topic and bits of news about it kept coming in. But the weather turned cold on Wednesday the ninth, always a cause for concern for those trying to survive in tents. Chambers' company drilled again and later were inspected by a squad of physicians. Four in the company were sent home as physically unfit; but the company picked up seven new recruits, so planned organization was not threatened. By Thursday several of the group were sick, probably because of the change in the weather. Also, about 200 federal prisoners from Shiloh *finally* came through on the six A.M. train. Most of them were Ohioans who had been captured at Shiloh on Sunday. And the wounded kept coming; nearly every train carried some, one of whom was Mississippi's own General Charles Clark, destined to follow Pettus as governor. Chambers and his fellows were irked to learn that the promised evening news bulletins would be given only to the officers. On Friday Chambers made the hike, already described, out to the hills south of town and returned to learn that another friend, a school chum named William M. Reddock, was dead, killed in the Sunday fighting at Shiloh. Friday night a torrential rain with great gusts of wind almost carried their tents away. Chambers got drenched helping to save it, so there wasn't much sleeping that night.

On Saturday another group of Federal prisoners arrived from Jackson, some 2300 of them, all captured at Shiloh. Over a hundred were officers, including Brig. Gen. Benjamin M. Prentiss and his staff, and several regimental commanders. Chambers thought them fine-looking men, especially General Prentiss, who Chambers thought would have stood out in any crowd, quite aside from his rank. He didn't think the non-coms quite so impressive, however, as those who had passed through on Thursday.

Among the prisoners whom Chambers and others saw on that arriving train at ten A.M were about a thousand Iowans, from the 8th, 12th, and 14th Regiments. Years later such members of these units as Erastus B. Soper and Byron Plympton Zuver collaborated on a written account of their service, particularly describing the arduous trip by rail from Shiloh to Memphis, then to Grenada and Jackson, Miss., to Meridian and, finally, to Mobile. Much of their trip from Jackson had been in the early morning hours of darkness, so Meridian was their first good chance to find food. During the five hours required in Meridian to get everyone switched from the Southern Railroad to the Mobile and Ohio, the men looked about them for anything edible. Orderly Sgt. Robert W. Hilton bought a bunch of onions and divided them among his fellow prisoners "by the bite," as the units' chroniclers later put it. A

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[41] Either Chambers or the bearers of the report were incorrect. The Lawrence Rifles constituted Company K in the *12th* Regiment. As we saw earlier, the 13th contained three county units—Co. E, Alamucha Infantry; Co. F, Lauderdale Zouaves; and Co. K, Pettus Guards.

number of the prisoners were delighted to find some sugar scattered from several broken hogsheads on the station platform, but they were kept away from it by what one of their number described as their "gentlemanly guards." The train left Meridian at three P.M. for Mobile.[42]

On Sunday, 13 April, Chambers attended the Presbyterian Church but neglected to learn the minister's name. (It may well have been W. C. Emerson.) The sermon was based on the 20th Psalm and Chambers liked it. The speaker tried to show that God would answer prayers offered on behalf of a nation quite as readily as those offered for individuals. (And prayer for the Confederacy was beginning to seem a very prudent course.) In the afternoon their regiment received a supply of "Western" rifles with their barrels reamed for a larger bore. After learning that the following Tuesday had been set aside for reorganization, Chambers strolled a few hundred feet into town where a photographer named Lipscomb made an ambrotype of him. His family back in Covington County would perhaps like to have it. Back in camp later that evening he learned that, in typical military fashion, those plans for reorganization had been changed yet again. Two more companies had arrived, both of them to be added to Chambers' regiment. They were the Gaines Invincibles under Capt. Angus Taylor and the Jeff Davis Rebels under Capt. John W. Jones. This unexpected increment meant that Chambers' battalion would rate a lieutenant colonel, for whatever that was worth. Reorganization would be delayed from Tuesday to the following Saturday.

Tuesday the 15th brought more drilling—and a new concern for Chambers: He was getting sick. Nevertheless, he moped about and tried to remain active. The military officials appraised the double-barreled shotguns that the men in Chambers' company had brought from home, and decided to buy them. Chambers strolled up the track to see the 36th Regiment leave for Corinth. Later, back at his company's compound, he and his friends had another session of the "old songs." He woke up the next morning, the 16th, too sick to drill; so he lolled around and read, first a letter from his friend J. N. Easterling, in the 7th Mississippi, and then extensively in his books. He wrote a little, too. By Thursday he was so ill he stayed in bed. His friends J. V. Reddock and Thomas J. H. Sullivan were also sick now, Reddock with chicken pox. Chambers had a headache, sore throat, high fever, and a bad cough; but he began taking medicine and felt a little better on Friday. This was, of course, "wash day," which meant no drilling; so several in the battalion took advantage of it to do some politicking. Capt. W. K. Easterling and Major J. W. Balfour, the latter "an outsider," were both candidates for the post of lieutenant colonel of the regiment. (Chambers says "major" but elsewhere he makes it clear that the contest was for lieutenant colonel.) Meanwhile, the whole camp talked excitedly about the reported passage of a new law by the Richmond government that would establish a military draft. And in the afternoon Chambers stumbled upon a new, and for him a very unpleasant, experience. An escaped slave, who had been captured and returned, was publicly whipped. Chambers' only comment: "It was a painful sight."

Saturday the 19th was election day, so there was no drilling; though for some unrecorded reason two companies boycotted the election. At ten A.M. Major J. W. Balfour was chosen lieutenant colonel of the regiment, and J. W. Jones of the Jeff Davis Rebels became major. Attempting to get off on the right foot, the new

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[42] Mildred Throne (ed.), "Iowans in Southern Prisons, 1862," *Iowa Journal of History* (1956), 54: 67, 70-71.

lieutenant colonel treated the men in each company to one or two gallons of whisky, which produced a rather enlivened camp. Next day, Sunday, Chambers had a slight relapse and stayed in bed. And though on Monday he was a little better, there were three new cases of measles in camp. In fact, there was so much sickness now that the officials began moving the worst cases to an unoccupied house a few hundred yards away. On Tuesday Chambers was still sick but managed to finish reading the book that McLemore had lent him. The author was David Nelson, and in it he described his own struggle with unbelief. Chambers always referred to it as *Nelson on Infidelity*, the title on the spine, though the actual title was *The Cause and Cure of Infidelity*. Chambers found the book "a powerful argument in favor of revelation."

On Wednesday Chambers was well enough to help move the battalion's encampment to the ground where the Rankin Farmers had already been camping. Besides that unit and Chambers' Covington Rebels, there were also the Gaines Invincibles under Capt. Angus Taylor, of Wayne County; the Jeff Davis Rebels from Yazoo and Warren Counties, under Capt. J. B. Hart; and the Yazoo Pickets, under Capt. J. C. Clarke. The Rankin Farmers were commanded by Capt. W. K. Easterling.

Chambers was still too sick on Thursday the 24th to perform any duties, but he did get around a bit on Friday. Several trains coming in from Jackson had some disquieting freight—quantities of artillery and a horse belonging to General P. G. T. Beauregard. All of that tended to confirm the rumor that New Orleans had fallen to the enemy. (The city was captured that very day.) Heavy rains in the afternoon, in addition to his physical condition, did not help Chambers' spirits, though he was glad to see Lotan Sullivan who had recovered from his chicken pox and was now back from home. The next day, Saturday, Chambers had a bad headache all day, and T. J. H. Sullivan was very sick as well. Another company, the Raleigh Rangers from Smith County, under Capt. W. A. McAlpin (Rowland's *Military History* on page 180 spells the name *McAlpine*), arrived and soon would be added to Chambers' regiment. On Sunday Chambers was well enough to go to services, this time to the Methodist Church. He again failed to learn the preacher's name but did recall that the text was from First Peter, chapter 4, verses 17 and 18: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Chambers found the sermon very moving and noticed tears in the eyes of many in the congregation.

For the next two weeks Chambers was so sick that he failed to keep up his journal, but toward the end of the month he was somewhat better. Sometime on the morning of Tuesday, 29 April, an old schoolmate, G. W. Michel—thus did Chambers spell the name—dropped by Chambers' tent. Michel was on the way to his unit; but being in no hurry, he spent all day with Chambers and decided to stay overnight and leave next morning. After supper, Chambers, Michel, Z. A. Easterling, and George G. Robertson meandered over to the tracks where an empty passenger coach stood on a siding. They climbed up into the dark coach, relaxed on the seats, and talked long into the night. At one point Chambers became morose and predicted the four of them would never meet again. Our young diarist did not record how the others responded to this somber prediction. The next morning he was feeling poorly again and sought out Dr. John Milloy, a private in his company, who apparently helped him; but by now sickness was pretty general in camp. On Saturday, 3 May, a

soldier died from mumps and on Sunday another succumbed to typhoid fever. On Monday, the fifth of May, Chambers' own company had its first fatality. W. W. Lee died of what was called "inflamation of the lungs," a result of measles. Lee and the soldier who had died on Sunday were given military funerals. The burials must have been in Meridian, because Chambers later wrote: "Our Battalion accorded a soldier's funeral to the man who died Sunday and also to Young Lee. I was too unwell to attend the burials. May the turf rest lightly on their graves."

The problem of organization had become so complicated now that the men in Chambers' company were probably going to have to re-enlist and try again to get on with it. A number of new men joined the camp, which meant some new mess mates and a move from old "no. 6" into a new tent. At least Chambers' sickness wasn't a total loss, for he managed to read a number of articles in *Harper's* magazine. He read also J. F. H. Claiborne's recently-published biography of Samuel Dale, who Chambers was interested to learn had helped settle Lauderdale County and was buried but a few miles north of town. On Sunday, the 4th of May, Chambers was well enough to go to preaching both in the morning and afternoon. This time he was able to remember the preacher's name. It was the Rev. W. C. Emerson, the local Presbyterian clergyman, who centered his sermon on swearing. It was not a problem that Chambers had, though he no doubt heard plenty every day from those around him.

On Wednesday, 14 May, Chambers and his brigade reenlisted "for the war"—no more of this "twelve-month" business. But it meant something of a break in routine, so Chambers decided to take a furlough. He, Warren Blackwell, and a Dr. Crawford planned to go together and leave on the midnight, southbound train for De Soto. Waiting at the station must have been tedious, for the "midnight" train dragged in at 6:30 the next morning. At least this afforded the ever-curious Chambers the advantage of daylight to scrutinize the countryside along the track. He observed the little station of "Oaktibbe"[43] on the railroad opposite Sageville, and thought Enterprise and the Chickasawhay River very pretty. In the next few months Chambers developed a special love for Enterprise and the river, and later was received into the Baptist Church there and baptized in the river.

Chambers returned very weary to Meridian after his furlough. The walk to the railroad at De Soto had been a lonely one, and he had been unable to get a train until ten P.M. on Friday, 23 May. Worse, when the train pulled in, it was packed, so Chambers had to stand on the platform for the entire distance to Meridian. To cap it all, Chambers arrived in Meridian only to learn that his unit had gone to Vicksburg. A train would leave in half an hour, so he bought a ticket quickly and "double-quicked it" to the camp. He was unable to learn anything and rushed back to the train to be sure to get a seat. And true to the feast-or-famine rule, he was the only passenger in the coach. Chambers had already fallen into a deep sleep when the train started.

[43] As he spelled and probably pronounced it, thus giving it three syllables instead of the four that the present vogue affects. As a child in the 1930s, and even on into later years, I always heard it pronounced with only three syllables.

We now leave young Chambers' story, though we shall return to it a number of times; for he was in and out of the county on several occasions during the next three years, and his accounts of his visits are always interesting and illuminating.

Chapter 11: The County Adjusts to the War.

Had Meridian not been a rail center during these years, the county's history would have been very different.

By 1861 the United States had about 30,000 miles of railroads, perhaps a third of which was in the South. Rail transportation, undoubtedly one of the chief weapons of war for both sides, was of vital importance to the Confederacy; and its inability to operate them effectively after the war had lasted a year or so was a major factor in its defeat. The Confederates eventually had to give preference to the more important lines and neglect the rest. But even the favored lines were often in poor condition, and the concentration by invading armies on the destruction of rail facilities had great bearing on the war's outcome.

During the Civil War locomotives had the capacity for greater speed than was actually used in that period; but without better trackage and a way to apply brakes simultaneously on every car, trains had to creep along at not more than twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. Traveling at much greater speed would have risked wrecking, and braking at any greater speed would have dragged a braking train an unacceptable distance. (George Westinghouse did not invent the airbrake until 1869.) Some roads in the state, such as the Mobile and Ohio above Okolona and the Southern between Jackson and Meridian, were eventually in such poor condition that ten miles per hour was regarded as the maximum safe speed.[1]

By mid-1861 it was obvious to the Confederate government that the lack of a rail connection between Meridian and Selma, Ala., was a serious impediment to the war effort. President Jefferson Davis, when going from his home below Vicksburg to his inauguration in Montgomery, had been obliged to avoid Meridian and to take a circuitous route. His memory of this must have added urgency to his insistence, as President, that the remaining work be accomplished. With the completion of the railroad from Meridian to York, Ala., there remained only a relatively short gap in Central Alabama.[2] In December of 1861, Davis informed Congress that the completion of the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad, as the project was officially called, was "indispensable for the successful prosecution of the war." Congress agreed and in February 1862 passed an act authorizing the President to lend $150,000 to the road's directors to finish the work.[3] By late 1862 the road was completed. Thus, with the exception of a steamboat connection on the Alabama River between Selma and Montgomery and a ferry crossing on the Tombigbee River, there was a railroad from Vicksburg to Richmond, Va.[4]

Though one sees almost nothing in contemporary records about the matter, Meridian's railyard and station facilities must have been greatly improved and enlarged after the war began. Even after the Southern reached Meridian, and before the war brought an increased number of trains, getting to and from both stations was probably not difficult. Eventually, however, one train standing, say, at the Southern depot was a barrier to those persons trying to get just south of it to the M & O depot.

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[1] See, for instance, "Sherman's Great Expedition," *New York Tribune*, 15 March 1864; see also, Fremantle, *op. cit.*, 127.
[2] *Meridian and East Mississippi: Condition and Prospects*, 5.
[3] *Official Records*, 4:1:941.
[4] E. Merton Coulter, *The Confederate States of America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 271.

Some had to walk around a blocking train, though others sometimes went through the platforms of the obstructing coaches. Occasionally someone foolishly climbed *under* the coaches. In June of 1863 the *Meridian Journal* printed a supposed letter from someone named "Ella" who was fed up with the situation: "Please ask the railroad agents here to use all their influence to keep the trains out of the way, so that persons can have access to the depot without being obliged to climb over or crawl under the cars. Have these agents no pity for the ladies? A fig for such gallantry."[5]

As of 2 February 1862 a trip between Vicksburg and Meridian was scheduled to take about fifteen hours. For instance, one could leave Vicksburg at 12:05 P.M. daily and get into Meridian at three A.M. One left Meridian daily at seven A.M. and arrived in Vicksburg at 10:55 P.M. (Freight trains ran daily, also.) A year later there still was a daily train that left Meridian at 7 A.M. Though it arrived in Jackson an hour and forty minutes sooner than the schedule had allowed a year earlier, it did not go to Vicksburg, which by 1863 was in Union hands. To go from Jackson to Meridian in the summer of 1864, one left Jackson daily at nine A.M. and arrived in Meridian at 6:20 P.M. In May 1864 the superintendent, C. A. Reading, announced there would be no more freight trains and that express freight would be sent on the mail trains. It was part of a general austerity that all Southerners were experiencing in many ways.[6]

In the fall of 1863 passenger trains from Mobile arrived in Meridian at 3:20 A.M.; those from the north came in at nine P.M. (Passengers probably could ride mail trains, as well.) Trains left for Mobile at 9:30 P.M. and for the north at four A.M. Trains on the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad left for Selma at six A.M. and arrived from there at 6:15 P.M. After Sunday, 3 April 1864, "mail" trains left for Selma at six A.M. and arrived there at 4:15 P.M. They left Selma at 7:40 A.M. and pulled into Meridian at 5:50 P.M. Though these seem to have been the main runs, there were some others such as "accommodation" trains to Mobile that in late 1863 left Meridian at 6:10 (or perhaps 6:40) A.M., and there were some special "mail trains."[7] These were the schedules; they were often violated. In addition to the lack of a good braking system, all of the railroads were plagued by washouts, the variety of rail gauges (though not around Lauderdale County), a need to ferry larger rivers, and, as the war progressed, the difficulty of replacing worn-out track and rolling stock.

By 1863 many of the railroads in the South had long been in critical condition. The British visitor Arthur Fremantle described the problems facing anyone traveling from Jackson to Meridian in the late spring of 1863:

> We drove [from Jackson in a government ambulance] to the nearest point at which the railroad was in working order, a distance of nearly five miles.
>
> We then got into the cars at 6 p.m. for Meridian. This piece of railroad was in a most dangerous state, and enjoys the reputation of being the very worst of all the bad railroads in the South. It was completely worn out, and

[5] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863.
[6] *Ibid*., 20 June 1863; see also, Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 19 July 1864.
[7] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863; Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 25 November 1863 and 19 July 1864.

> could not be repaired. Accidents are of almost daily occurrence, and a nasty one had happened the day before.[8]

An even nastier one had happened earlier that same year, on that same line. On the evening of February 19 a westbound train carrying both freight and passengers had just left Meridian and reached Chunky River, ordinarily a trifling stream but one then swollen by a winter flood. The small river was a torrent and had overflowed its banks and even covered the tracks. The train was loaded with passengers, many of whom were soldiers. Four cars plunged into the water and drowned nearly eighty persons.[9]

Major S. G. Spann, in later years the Commander of the Dabney H. Maury Camp of Confederate Veterans, Meridian, was present at this Chunky bridge disaster. He and his command, which included a number of Choctaw Indians, were at their camp nearby; and when the call for help was given, Spann and many of his men rushed to the scene. All the Choctaw Confederates were present and performed many acts of daring and bravery. A young Choctaw named Eahantatubbe, better known as Jack Amos and described as one of Pushmataha's grandnephews, worked with Elder Williams and other Choctaws to retrieve as many bodies from the water as possible. Every Choctaw present stripped and plunged into the cold, raging stream and brought out ninety-six victims, twenty-two of them soldiers who revived and eventually returned to their commands. The dead, as Spann later describe it, "were crudely interred upon the railroad right-of-way, where they now [1905] lie…except nine, who were afterwards disinterred by kind friends and given a more honorable burial."[10]

Such wrecks and less serious ones became almost routine. As early as 25 April 1862, about eight miles south of Meridian, a wreck on the M & O killed six soldiers and injured fifteen others.[11] And when an organizational meeting of the state's Ladies Confederate Soldiers Aid Society met at Meridian on 14 March 1863, Mrs. J. G. Moore, the group's president, regretted that the condition of the railroads had kept attendance lower than it would otherwise have been.[12] In June of that same year a train left Meridian with many soldiers going to help the beleaguered force at Vicksburg. Just west of Meridian the rails spread suddenly and hurled several cars down a thirty-foot embankment. A number of soldiers were killed.[13]

Nevertheless, even under these bad conditions, rail travel of necessity continued to be the chief mode of transportation for both civilian and military personnel in inland areas. Even at eight cents a mile for white passengers and five cents for slaves, it was almost the only way to travel.[14]

It is clear that during the Civil War the railroads were good for the county's business, but it is also clear that Lauderdale County was good for the

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[8] Fremantle, *op. cit.*, 127.
[9] John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi: The People and Policies of a Cotton State in Wartime* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 142; Mobile *Register and Advertiser*, 21 February 1863.
[10] S. G. Spann, "Choctaw Indians as Confederate Soldiers," *Confederate Veteran* (December 1905), 13:560f.
[11] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 235.
[12] *Macon Beacon*, 1 April 1863.
[13] Edwin C. Bearss, *Decision in Mississippi: Mississippi's Important Role in the War between the States* (Jackson: Mississippi Commission on the War between the States, 1962), 347.
[14] *Macon Beacon*, 18 November 1863.

railroads. For example, extant records of the M & O Railroad for the years 1862 and 1863 show that at Meridian the road realized more income through passengers, freight, and other sources than it did at any other station except Mobile. For those two years Meridian generated a total income of $229,897.19, of which $84,410.18 was from passenger receipts and $145.487.19 from freight. No other station north of Mobile even approached this figure. Statistics for the other stations in Lauderdale County were as follows: Marion Station $19,936.71, Lauderdale Springs $19,464.17, and Lockhart $3,247.28. The following are the cities bringing the ten highest incomes in 1862 and 1863 for the M & O Railroad:

$ 467,505.59 – Mobile
229,897.37 – Meridian
95,439.39 – Okolona
72,177.87 – Enterprise
60,936.70 – Columbus
47,429.46 – Macon
32,718.10 – West Point
32,296.00 – Gainesville Junction
31,379.40 – Shubuta
29,751.40 – Egypt[15]

The importance of rail transportation for military purposes was dramatized in July of 1862. Starting on the twenty-third, Gen. Braxton Bragg moved the greater part of his army at Tupelo, Miss., to Chattanooga, Tenn. Historian Kenneth W. Noe has described the exercise as "one of the boldest" of the war. Over a period of several days, over 30,000 infantrymen were transported in record time, via six different railroads and a ferry ride at Mobile, Ala., to Chattanooga, a distance of 776 miles. It was no doubt a stirring sight for citizens of Lauderdale County as the Confederacy's defenders, 5,000 of them each day, poured through on southbound M & O trains. The soldiers were elated not only by their delivery from depressing inactivity in northeast Mississippi but also by the enthusiastic receptions they received along their route. Cities and town sent their most charming women to offer food, beverages, and floral tributes to the men. Even rural stretches presented well-wishers.[16] Lauderdale Springs, Marion Station, and Meridian, in particular, must have been in an especially gala mood.

It is difficult for those of us in a time of instant communication to appreciate fully how important letter writing was to those living in the 1860s. It seems that nearly every literate person wrote letters—even illiterates often employed amanuenses—and the novelty of the age, the railroad, both increased the appetite for letters and helped to satisfy that appetite. Up to May 1864 ten cents would carry a half-ounce letter to any part of the Confederacy; after that time the charge was twenty cents.[17]

[15] Mobile and Ohio Railroad individual ledger, January 1862 to December 1863, 23-30, in Illinois Central and Gulf Railroad Collection, University of South Alabama Archives, Mobile.
[16] Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 30.
[17] *Macon Beacon*, 14 July 1863; Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 5 May 1864.

Freight and passenger trains might have run less and less often and sometimes were completely dispensed with, but the mail trains operated relentlessly. In the latter part of 1863 the "Selma Mails" from Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee, and Mobile and eastern Alabama arrived in Meridian at seven A.M.; and local mail to those points left Meridian shortly after 2:30 P.M. Mail from Greensboro and Marion, Ala., arrived in Meridian at 9:30 A.M., and mail from Meridian for the west had to meet a deadline of six P.M. Mail trains on the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad arrived at 2:30 P.M., with eight A.M. the deadline for mail going to the areas along that route.[18]

Another communication marvel, the telegraph, was established in Meridian sometime in 1862,[19] probably after the spring, since Pvt. William Chambers in his journal says nothing about a telegraph in his rather detailed chronicle. And as we saw earlier, news from the Battle of Shiloh, somewhat slow in getting to Meridian, seems to have been brought by the railroad . The company that operated in Meridian during the Civil War was the Mobile-based South-Western Telegraph Company, whose president at that time was John Van Horne. The general rate of transmission seems to have been twenty cents per word; and during the latter part of the war, when Meridian was the departmental headquarters for the Confederates and for the state troops, President Van Horne's company must have profited indeed. There are still extant great quantities of original military messages that traveled the South-Western's wires in those exciting times.[20]

Around the first of June 1864 the *Daily Clarion* criticized the local South-Western Telegraph Company for what the paper regarded as exorbitant charges for its services. The company hit back and forced the *Clarion* to agree that the company had not advanced its charges excessively nor discriminated against any area it served. (It offered services from Meridian to Mobile with main lines running east from those points, as well as west and north of Meridian.)[21]

The telegraph office in Meridian, situated somewhere on Twenty-sixth Avenue near the railroads, was one of the most popular places in town. The war brought a tremendous patronage and prestige to its operations and generated a volume of traffic that prompted its employees to caution anyone sending a wire. To guard against mistakes in transmission of very important messages, the company suggested that a recipient repeat a received message to the sender. Though this increased the price of the message, the company obliged by charging only half-price for a repetition. Even so, the South-Western warned that it "would not be responsible for mistakes or delays in the transmission or delivery of repeated messages beyond an amount exceeding two hundred times the amount paid for sending the message." And the company absolutely refused responsibility for mistakes or delays when messages were *not* repeated, when messages were interrupted, or "for any mistake or omission of any other Company, over whose lines a message is to be sent to reach the place of destination…."[22]

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[18] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863.
[19] Desha, *op. cit*., 62.
[20] See, for instance, the many wires in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.
[21] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 9 June 1864.
[22] See any of various telegrams in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.

As we have already seen, William L. Spinks stopped publishing his newspaper *The Meridian* even before he left with the Meridian Invincibles in late May 1861. The city was then probably without a newspaper until almost the end of 1862. It is possible that Spinks sold his printing equipment to Willis Brewer, who published the first issue of his weekly *Meridian Journal* very likely on Saturday, December 20—number 27 of the first volume was published on 20 June 1863. By the early part of 1863 the draft was getting uncomfortably close to Brewer, who sought exemption on the grounds of his being a printer and of his paper's being the only one published in the county—he also did the printing for Kemper County. Brewer offered to show the authorities proof of his physical disability, and he declared that he employed no conscripts. "I have no doubt," he wrote Governor Pettus, "that I could be of more service in my present position than [in] any other." He apparently failed to receive an exemption, for he did not publish his paper later than about the end of June. The *Meridian Journal*, in fact, seems to have ceased publication just as Col. James J. Shannon moved his *Eastern Clarion* from Paulding to Meridian.[23]

The *Clarion*, probably Meridian's third newspaper, became the most important paper published in the county up to that time. Shannon, of Paulding in Jasper County, had led a unit in the early days of the Civil War, but by 1863 he was again running his paper and recuperating from his military service. In March he sought exemption from further service and sought it also for his two office assistants. "I design removing to Meridian and publishing a daily paper," he wrote Governor Pettus.[24] Shannon planned to begin publication at Meridian on June 10, but it was probably later that month that he brought out the first issue in that town. As late as the 20th the expiring *Meridian Journal* was announcing that "The next issue of the 'Clarion' will be published at Meridian." In that same issue of the *Journal*, Shannon's prospectus said:

> It [the *Clarion*] will contain the latest news by telegraph, with a variety of reading matter, and will be the *cheapest daily paper* in the Confederate States….
>
> The *Eastern Clarion* [i.e., the Meridian *Clarion*] will be published weekly on a full sheet, and enlarged as soon as the paper size can be obtained. It will contain the choicest of the matter published in the daily, general and telegraphic news, and agricultural department, and a selected or original story in each number.[25]

Shannon dropped the "Eastern" in his paper's name and used instead "Daily" or "Weekly" as appropriate. Under his ownership it became an excellent paper, as anyone who has examined its old files would probably agree. After the protracted war made materials and manpower increasingly scarce, the *Clarion* became the only paper in the county and the only daily in the state. It therefore was depended upon by both the state government and the Confederate military authorities for the dissemination of important information. All of this led directly to Shannon's being chosen state printer in late 1865. Sherman's occupation of Meridian, in February

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[23] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863; see also, Brewer, in Meridian, to Gov. Pettus, 11 February 1863, in GP, RG 27, vol. 59, MDAH.

[24] Shannon, in Paulding, to Gov. Pettus, 6 March 1863, in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.

[25] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863.

1864 chased the *Clarion* over into Alabama, but by early April it was back in Meridian and by the third week in April had resumed publishing its regular issues. At that time a subscription cost three dollars a month, eight dollars annually. Its popularity is illustrated by a letter, signed "Stella," from Tupelo in early 1865: "If you were to see the rush to the cars everyday when the down train arrives and the loud demands for the 'Clarion,' you would give information upon almost any subject within the wide range of your learning."[26]

At least two other papers, both refugeeing in the county from other cities, also got out a few issues in Meridian during the war. The Memphis *Appeal* was driven from its home city in the spring of 1862 when the enemy overran that area. Its odyssey, which earned it the nickname "moving *Appeal*," took it first to Grenada and then to Jackson, where it barely escaped the army under Gen. U. S. Grant in May 1863. It fled down the Southern Railroad to Meridian and was there for several days. The press was moved on to Atlanta, but the proof press and a few cases of type remained for about a week in Meridian, where a few small dailies were issued.[27] The other paper was the Jackson *Mississippian*, edited by Fleet T. Cooper. In 1863 the Bluecoats chased it out of Jackson, and by late August it had established its editorial department temporarily in Meridian, while the proprietors were in Selma, Ala.[28] The Meridian office, according to a note in the paper, "was housed in the north room of the small building in the vicinity of the Eastern Clarion office some fifty yeards south of the Meridian [Dr. Johnston's] Hotel."[29] (The brackets and misspelling of Johnson's name are in the original.) In other words, the office was probably about where Front Street and Twenty-sixth Avenue cross today.

To a considerable extent Meridian's wartime business life centered around the town's hotels. Not only could one get meals and lodgings (so to speak) at these houses, but also one was most likely to meet any persons of importance who might happen to be in town. The oldest hotel was probably Dr. W. C. Johnson's Meridian House, a hostelry dating back to about 1854. But by 1863 the best-known inn was probably the Ragsdale Hotel owned by Lewis Andrew Ragsdale, one of the city's founders. Just as perhaps with all of the other hotels, the Ragsdale House was on Twenty-sixth Avenue, but south of the railroads rather than the more-bustling north side. It stood at what is today the southwest end of the Subway. It is difficult to say when Ragsdale opened his inn, but it was already in full operation in September of 1863—an old ad dated 23 September of that year mentioned it as "still open," thus implying that it had already been around awhile.[30] According to one source that apparently quotes L. A. Duncan, when that pioneer resident first saw Meridian in the summer of 1856, L. A. Ragsdale "kept the only hotel." Since we know that the Meridian House was in operation in 1856, Duncan's memory probably failed him on this point and made him confuse the

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[26] *Macon Beacon*, 13 April 1864; Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 5 May 1864 and 28 March 1865.

[27] Robert Ambrose Halley, "A Rebel Newspaper's War Story: Being a Narrative of the War History of the Memphis Appeal," *American Historical Magazine* (April 1903), 138-139.

[28] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 29 August 1863.

[29] Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 14 October 1863. The Dr. "Johnston" was Dr. W. C. Johnson.

[30] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 31 January 1864—the ad's date was much earlier than that of the paper's issue.

Meridian House with the later, and more famous (or *infamous* to many Confederate soldiers), Ragsdale House.

At least as early as September 1863 W. H. Cain was operating the Burton House, and the phrasing of an advertisement at that time suggests that it, too, had been established by some previous owner, perhaps someone named Burton. Cain had had the place thoroughly renovated and furnished with new bedding, and he promised the public to "spare no pains" to give satisfaction. His table, he announced, "will be furnished with the best the country can afford," which by that date was only so-so.[31]

Josiah Jones opened his hotel in early May 1863, possibly without having taken over from any previous owner. Ads stated his rates as "reasonable" and invited the public to "Try him." Jones's house, also called the Southern House,[32] was destined to be one of the few structures in Meridian to escape Sherman's demolition crew. It is a reasonable assumption that this hotel was situated on the same lot on which it was standing some twenty years later, that is, on the northeast corner of what is today Twenty-sixth Avenue and Fifth Street.[33] (Just behind the Jones Hotel was the military quartermaster's office presided over by such men as Major W. H. Dameron, Capt. John M. Young, and the latter's assistant, a Dr. Bass.[34]

Another hotel seems to have existed in these years of war, but it must have been less known and prosperous than those just mentioned. I have seen only one reference to the Rail Road Hotel owned by R. R. Cullen, who in the early part of 1864 was advertising for "a reliable gentleman (a disabled soldier preferred) to take charge…for the year 1864."[35]

A Confederate surgeon, F. D. Daniel, visited Meridian late in the war and put up at one of the town's hotels—"put up *with*" is perhaps an apter expression. He later described his experience in graphic and harsh details. The proprietor was, said Daniel, "an old man named Dr. Johnson," almost certainly Dr. W. C. Johnson, proprietor of the old Meridian House. Daniel's visit to Meridian seems to have been post-Sherman, when Johnson's original hotel was probably only a memory. The hotel described by Daniel would therefore have been one hastily erected by Johnson during the times when materials for civilian use were difficult to obtain.

In those last months of the war there were likely only three hotels from which Daniel could have chosen: Dr. Johnson's, the Jones House, and of course the Ragsdale House, whose proprietor had re-built since its destruction by the Federals. It is likely that Daniel found the Jones House full, for it was a much better building than those of its competitors and thus had its pick of guests. That left, downtown, only Ragsdale's establishment, conveniently standing near the railroad stations where Daniel arrived and whence he would have to leave the next morning.[36]

But by that date the Ragsdale House, bearing an especially bad reputation throughout the Confederacy, had become an object of jokes and ridicule. The word generally was: *Avoid it, especially "room forty."* This phrasing was not intended to imply that there were that many rooms in the place, for it likely had not

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[31] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 25 November 1863.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] Ibid., 13 January 1864.
[36] Silver, *op. cit.*, 196-199. All of Daniel's narrative comes from this source.

half that number. Soldiers and others using the term meant that the large attic room contained that many bunks. It was a crude affair that matched its building and town, for Ragsdale had rebuilt his inn as a two-story barn-like structure whose lumber apparently had not been planed. "Room forty" was the attic area whose "ceiling" was the building's roof and rafters. (Ragsdale in all seriousness told his guests that the rafters "came in handy to hang things from.") The usable floor area measured about forty by sixty feet. This did not count the space just below the eaves, which Daniel said served only as a haven for "rats, cats and other varmints. There were three rows of bunks, two along each wall and one down the center of the room. The bunks were as crudely constructed as was the building and contained straw mattresses and two horse blankets of Confederate gray for each occupant. It was notorious that all blankets and bunks were infested with a variety of non-paying "guests." What some soldiers did when obliged to stay there, said Daniel, was to "swig enough Meridian whiskey to stupefy themselves" and then sleep in relative contentment, or at least contented insensibility. Their snoring would then serenade all the teetotalers whose only recourse was to sit up and while away some of the night playing cards and smoking, and the rest of it in cursing the snorers, the varmints, the hotel, and probably a long list of other villains that included the war, Lincoln, and the incompetents in Richmond. They probably had special imprecations for Ragsdale. He seems to have been expending little on his premises and reaping splendid profits from civilians and soldiers, many of whom generally had little choice in the matter of accommodations. Perhaps the only concession that Ragsdale made was to charge less for those enjoying the luxury of his "Room 40" penthouse.

With such a choice before him, Surgeon Daniel went about half a mile west of town to Dr. Johnson's "retreat," a term, said Daniel, that Johnson used "in dead earnest." Daniel approached the inn, on the edge of an extensive pine forest, and beheld a crude log house that consisted mainly of two rooms separated by a passageway, at the back of which had been added two "shed" rooms that were slightly longer and one of which had the inappropriately-elegant name of "dining room." Running across the front of the inn was an eight-foot-deep gallery that extended the full width of the building and at each end of which was a small room made of rough lumber. Each room was about eight feet square.

When Daniel entered, he learned that two or three other "unfortunates" were staying there and that they had just finished "dining." Daniel told Johnson that he would like lodging and also supper and breakfast. The price, in depreciated Confederate currency, was the same that Ragsdale would have charged downtown--$300—and, as was customary, in advance. Daniel was taken back to the dining room. "The table," wrote Daniel afterward,

> was there, and some crumbs of cawn [*sic*] bread the others had not eaten; and in a dish was a piece of very fat bacon, about as large as an egg, swimming in an ocean of clear grease—simply lard in a liquid state. There was a bottle of alleged molasses—it was home made sorghum syrup. These dainties, with a cup of "coffee" made of parched cawn meal was the "menu." (Between me'n you I didn't eat a whole lot.)

After supper Daniel was shown to his room, one of the two adjoining the front porch. He found it unceiled and unplastered, with "nothing between me and

the winter blasts, except the 'weatherboarding.'" The studding, to which it was nailed was visible on the inside. The room, said Daniel,

> was lighted, or, it would be more proper to say—the darkness was intensified by a solitary candle (home made, of course), about two inches long, stuck in the neck of an empty whiskey bottle. This, the "landlord," as all proprietors of "hotels" in the South are called, set up on a little shelf nailed up to the wall. I seated myself, on the stool chair, the sole representative of the chair family present, and it without a back, and calmly surveyed my quarters.

The bed, besides the stool the only furniture, was a bunk about two and a half feet wide built into a corner of the room. Resting on it was a coarse cotton mattress filled with straw, and at the head was a pillow of similar manufacture. There were no sheets, of course, only two horse blankets of Confederate gray. Without undressing, Daniel gingerly lay down on the bunk and pulled the blankets over himself. Almost immediately his meager candle went out to reveal to the apprehensive guest the stars shining through chinks in the roof, an extra touch that seemed to dramatize the chill of the room. But presently he had more immediate concerns: "I soon discovered [said Daniel] that this luxurious couch had been pre-empted and was held by a large colony of the *cimex lectularius* [bedbug] family; they were there in force, and [since they were] asserting their rights, I had to give possession. I did so with alacrity on the first 'notice to quit.' They began to work on the tenderest part of my anatomy the moment the candle went out."

What to do? Sleep was impossible and the unheated room was oppressively cold and lonely. The wretched cell was too small for exercise that might have warmed the discomfited visitor, but Daniel swung his arms, pounded his chest, and stamped his feet to try to keep warm. In the end he had to settle for sitting on the stool and smoking his pipe. Puffing away for some hours, he eventually heard a cock crow, then the hoot of an owl. At long last he heard the scream of a locomotive, the one pulling the southbound train that would take him home. Rushing, he got to the station just as the train was pulling in.

Wallace Wood, who in 1903 was living in New Orleans, recalled at that time his experience with Meridian's hotel life in the 1860s. On that occasion he put up at what he facetiously called the "Hotel de Ragsdale." He knew he was going to have to manage carefully his twenty-dollar bill, for it was all he had to pay for food and the cheapest available accommodations. Wood stepped up to the counter and asked for a room. "Five dollars per bed, and cash in advance," said Ragsdale. (This was either before inflation had become as serious as it eventually did, or else was the price of only a bunk in Ragsdale's famous Room Forty.) Wood asked whether that included breakfast, to which Ragsdale replied, "No, sir, breakfast is five dollars more." This presented a real problem, but Wood was too embarrassed to back out now. Wistfully he brought out his twenty-dollar note, mentally bade it farewell, and surrendered it to Ragsdale. There was one little candle on the counter—the "good old days when they were fashionable," recalled Wood with irony—that was bravely trying to light the drab "lobby." And either the candle's feeble light, or perhaps Ragsdale's poor eyesight, caused the proprietor to return to Wood a hundred-dollar bill instead of the correct ten dollars change. Whether through shock or through need, Wood simply took the money without comment. Ragsdale then turned to his "boy" and told him to

"show the gentleman to No. 28."[37] With a tallow dip in one hand and a key in the other, the youngster ushered the guest into a wide hall running the full length of the hotel. According to Wood there were nearly one hundred bunks (let us hope an exaggeration) lined up, some fifty of them occupied. Wood's face must have registered his full shock, for he was met by howls of derision which unnerved the young "bellhop," who dashed back downstairs. Whatever problems Wood may have had adjusting to the comforts of the "Hotel de Ragsdale" were no doubt somewhat alleviated by his excitement over his hundred-dollar note and visions of the welcome food he would buy on the morrow.[38]

Another very typical reaction to hotel life in Meridian was Confederate soldier Ephraim Anderson's. He was had been in Demopolis, Ala., convalescing from illness and decided in the latter part of 1863 to spend the rest of his period of recovery with relatives in Brandon. Pretty obviously speaking of Ragsdale's hotel, here's how he told it:

> Leaving Demopolis, I reached Meridian the same day, and was compelled to remain all night for a train. I found the hotel, both bed and board, to be rather a little harder than any place my good or ill-fortune had ever got me in before: this fact is within the knowledge of any one who stopped in Meridian during the war and slept in room number forty; there were not that many rooms in the house, but number forty had that many beds or bunks in it, the furniture of which was by no means familiar with the wash-tub.[39]

One would ordinarily suppose that these hotels put forth their best efforts to try to please the public, or at least not to irritate them too severely. But it is easy to get the impression that to some extent, some proprietors were taking advantage of a situation in which the public had little recourse and few options. Certainly, those of the public who left any record of having visited Meridian's hotels during the period of the war were, with the apparent exception Josiah Jones's Hotel, almost always disparaging.

In the latter part of 1863 a Meridian hotel played host briefly to a woman whose life, if one can believe her autobiography, was unusually adventurous and romantic and whose experiences during the Civil War must have been very nearly unique. Her name was Loreta Janeta Velazquez, and she came from an old distinguished Spanish family on her father's side and American ancestry on her mother's. Loreta was born in 1842 in Havana, Cuba, where her father was serving in an official capacity for the Spanish government. When she was still quite young, her parents sent her to New Orleans to be under the care of an aunt, who carefully

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[37] Whether Wood was mistaken in his recollection of the room "number," and the number of beds in it, or whether he was describing another of Ragsdale's marvels, is not clear. Nevertheless, other commentators have generally spoken of "room 40" and its forty (perhaps, give or take a few) bunks. Also, what Wood called the *third* floor must have been in fact the attic, because others have described the hotel as two-storied.

[38] Wallace Wood, "What a Fellow in Need Did," *Confederate Veteran* (June 1907), 15:267.

[39] Ephraim McD. Anderson, *Memoirs, Historical and Personal; including the Campaigns of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade.* 2d ed. (St. Louis: Times Printing Co., 1868; reprint, 1972, by Morningside Bookshop, Dayton, Ohio), 379.

superintended her education, a strict routine set down by the aunt and a formal instruction by the Sisters of Charity.[40]

All during this time Loreta entertained a fascination for masculine pursuits and a resentment of the role forced upon women by her Latin culture. She envied her brother's freedom and often stood before the mirror to model male attire, carefully practicing male gestures and mannerisms. But her private dreams of following in Joan of Arc's footsteps and her secret posings before a glass did not keep her from winning the heart of a young man whom, against her aunt's strongest efforts, she managed to marry. The young bride was scarcely fourteen.[41]

The Civil War gave Loreta the chance she had secretly craved. Against the understandable opposition of her husband, she decided to assume male garb and join the Confederate Army. From time to time during the next four years, using the alias Harry T. Buford, she allegedly served honorably and bravely as an officer, and fought in such battles as First Bull Run, Ball's Bluff, and Shiloh. Concealing her gender with difficulty, she had many close calls; and once or twice her real identity was discovered.[42]

Not less spectacular than her military service were the daring exploits she engaged in as a Southern spy. Espionage carried her all over the North, into Canada, into New Orleans where the occupying Federals arrested her briefly—like almost everyone else, she had a run-in with the infamous General Benjamin "Beast" Butler—and abroad through the Union blockade. Her successes as a spy are perhaps even more remarkable than was her service under fire; and a measure of her success is that she deceived even Lafayette C. Baker, Washington's chief of the Secret Service, and not an easy man to fool. It was her work as a spy that took her to Meridian.

Sometime during the fall of 1863 she arrived in Mobile and put up at a hotel. Shortly afterward she received what she described as "a rather mysterious note in a masculine hand" asking her to meet the writer that evening at a corner of Bienville Square. Overcoming her qualms, she reasoned that some of the Confederate authorities with whom she had already worked might be trying to contact her. And besides, she was fairly sure she could take care of herself should there be any skullduggery. Hardly had she arrived at the appointed place when a man approached and began a conversation, eventually introducing himself as Lt. Shorter, of Arkansas. After some superficial chitchat, the following conversation ensued:

> Shorter: Well, you must excuse me for asking for a secret interview like this, but the matter I wanted to talk to you about is of great importance, and, as in these times, we don't know whom to trust, it was necessary that I should have an opportunity to carry on our conversation without danger of being watched or overheard. You have had considerable experience in running through the lines, and in spy and secret service duty, have you not?
>
> Velazquez: Yes, I have done something in that line.
>
> Shorter: You have usually been tolerably lucky, haven't you?

[40] Velazquez, *op. cit.*, 40-41.
[41] *Ibid.*, 42-48.
[42] *Ibid., passim.*

Velazquez: Yes, I have had reasonably good luck. I got caught once in New Orleans, but that was because the parties to whom I delivered my dispatches were captured. [Gen. Benjamin] Butler tried his hand at frightening me, but he did not succeed very well, and I managed to slip away from him before he had any positive evidence against me which would have justified him in treating me as a spy.

Shorter: Well, you're just the kind I want, for I have a job on hand that will require both skill and nerve, and I would like you to undertake it, especially as you seem to have a talent for disguising yourself.

Velazquez: What kind of job is it? I have risked my neck pretty often without getting very many thanks for it, and I don't know that I care a great deal about running all kinds of risks for little glory, and no more substantial reward.

Shorter: Oh, come now, you must not talk that way. Now is the very time that your services will be worth something; and this bit of business that I am anxious for you to undertake, is of such a nature, that it would not do to give it to any but a first-rate hand.

Velazquez: Well, what is it? When I know what you want me to do, I will be better able to say whether it would be worth my while to do it.

Shorter: Wouldn't you like to take a trip through the [enemy's] lines?

Velazaquez: That depends. What do you want me to make the trip for?

Shorter: I will tell you that, when you tell me whether you will go.

Velazquez (after a moment of consideration): Yes, I will go, if it is for anything to serve the cause.

Shorter: That's the way to talk. I am in the Secret Service, and I want you to take a despatch through the lines and give it to a certain party. It will be a big thing if you succeed, as I think you will, or I wouldn't have picked you out for the business.

Velazquez: Well, I will make an effort, and do my best to succeed.

Shorter: Oh, you must succeed; for there will be the devil to pay if the Feds discover what you are up to, and you will have to do your prettiest to prevent them from even suspecting that you are up to any unlawful tricks.

Velazquez: I'll do my best, and I can't do any more than that; but as I have fooled them before, so I guess I can again.

Shorter: Well, that's all right. Now, what I want you to do is to meet me to-morrow evening in Meridian. I will have everything ready for you, and will give you your instructions, and you be prepared for a hard journey. In the meantime, keep quiet, and don't whisper a word to anybody.[43]

[43] Velazquez, *op. cit.*, 348-350.

Velazquez and Shorter bade each other goodnight; and she returned to her hotel, as she put it, "to do a heap of thinking before I went to sleep." She was concerned that Shorter was well named, for he had been short on details. With no inkling about her destination, she was going to have to guess about what she ought to take with her to Meridian—and beyond there. The next day she got a very plain suit of female attire and a small bundle of basic necessities. She then caught the train that would put her into Meridian at the appointed hour.[44]

The train ride was not an especially pleasant one. In fact, Velazquez was feeling unwell when she stepped off the train in Meridian and found Lt. Shorter waiting at the little station. Together they walked up Lee Street, past the office of the *Clarion*, past the telegraph office, and past military buildings, until they reached the Jones Hotel. Josiah Jones and his wife received them pleasantly, and Janeta later recalled how Mrs. Jones had gone out of her way to accommodate her. "I appreciated her kind attentions the more highly," wrote Velazquez later,

> as I was far from being well, and felt that I was scarcely doing either myself or the others interested justice in undertaking such an enterprise, under a strong liability that I might be taken seriously sick before concluding it. I had a great deal of confidence, however, in my power of will, and having promised Lieutenant Shorter that I would go, I was determined to do so, especially as he represented the business as being most urgent.[45]

Velazquez and Shorter managed to get a room in the hotel where they could talk privately. Lt. Shorter explained to his companion that a spy employed by Federal Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut had been captured with papers on his person giving surprisingly accurate, critical data on the forces of Confederate Generals James R. Chalmers, Nathan Bedford Forrest, R. V. Richardson, and Samuel W. Ferguson. Shorter proposed to alter these captured documents and return them to the enemy as a deception, and he told Velazquez that her job would be to convey those bogus reports to Union Gen. Cadwallader C. Washburn, in Memphis. At the same time, said Shorter, she was going to have to persuade Washburn that she had received the reports from his spy and that everything was therefore quite genuine. And after that rather considerable performance, the young and intrepid Loreta was to seek out a Confederate agent in Memphis to whom she would give a report that Shorter had prepared for General Forrest. Added Shorter, "I will know by the success of the movement that Forrest is to make whether you are successful or not."[46]

Having covered the crucial details, Shorter turned to some minor ones. He recommended that Velazquez change her apparel in order to give the impression of a poor, rural widow, a Unionist fleeing into the Federal lines for protection. Shorter provided her with letters to the various Confederate commanders she would see, asking them to assist her in her dangerous undertaking. To pay her expenses, the lieutenant gave her the $136 in U. S. greenbacks which had been taken from the spy captured earlier. Should she need more, he assured her, any of her Confederate contacts would help her. The next day she caught the M & O for Okolona.[47]

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[44] Velazquez, *op. cit.*, 351.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*, 351-352.
[47] *Ibid.*, 352.

According to her own account, Velazquez proved herself worthy of confidence by the Confederate authorities. From Okolona she made her way through and beyond Holly Springs, procured a donkey for her trip north toward Memphis, and was taken into custody by Federal military officers who were convinced by her story of the need to get an important dispatch to General Washburn. After that, she also succeeded in getting in touch with the Confederate agent who relayed her report to General Forrest. Forrest made his raid, and its success told the Confederates that the remarkable Loreta Velazquez had been equally successful.[48] And it had all been plotted at Josiah Jones's hotel.

Businesses in Lauderdale County during the war, when not being shot at or burned out, were often much indebted to the conditions of war for a relative prosperity. The enlisted men were not always paid regularly, but they were paid occasionally; and as with soldiers in every other place and time, many tended to spend the money as soon as they got it. County merchants probably did a good trade with the officers, too, as many contemporary ads in newspapers testify. The military commissaries in the county, in particular, were substantially dependent upon the Lauderdale area for supplies.

An example of this dependence was the procuring of alcoholic beverages for the military. Liquor had always been important to American soldiers in earlier times, and it proved to be an important commodity to both armies of the divided nation. One is even tempted to describe it as a staple. Before temperance movements and social uplift had seriously shaken the practice, a military force supplied with adequate amounts of wet goods was regarded as a much finer army, or at any rate a much more contented army. In October of 1863, Capt. John T. Schaaff, Chief Commissary for the Fourth District of Mississippi, solicited sealed bids for furnishing whiskey to the army. The quantity had to be between a thousand and fifteen hundred gallons. It could be delivered to Meridian or to any other rail point in the state and had to be "in good strong oak barrels, to be good merchantable quality, free from any impurities, and not below proof."[49]

Civilian consumption of alcoholic beverages was curtailed in early 1864. A state law in effect restricted the use of spirituous liquors to medical purposes and set up in each county authorized distributors from whom products of the state's distillery could be purchased. The regulations required that a purchaser produce a written certificate signed by a "*regular practicing* physician" residing in the county, the certificate to be phrased as follows: "I _______, a resident practicing physician of ______ county, do certify upon my professional honor that _____ [patient's name] needs for medical purposes ____ [amount] of spirits."[50]

The new law provided for a limited number of liquor agents in each county, two being allotted to Lauderdale. John T. Ball, apparently acting under pressure to contribute in some way to the war effort, applied to the state for appointment as one of the county's agents. It is somewhat ironic that Ball, a professed dry and an ardent churchman, got the appointment, and that W. C. Emerson, a

[48] Velazquez, *op. cit.*, 352-374.
[49] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863.
[50] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 10 November 1864.

Presbyterian cleric, furnished a testimonial! Of course, Ball's other security was James J. Shannon, who as a good editor probably knew when liquor was "not below proof."[51] In his letter to the Governor, Ball wrote:

> I have concluded it would suit me very well to act as one of said agents, if you are disposed to appoint me. I expected to be appointed to discharge public duties of some kind for the Govm't, having been declared by the "Examining Board" on two separate occasions as unfit for "Field Service," but advised to take service in one of the "Dpts." I had intended doing so in a few days, but from the situation of my family (demanding my attention constantly, together with my frequent liability to severe attacks of Dysentery), I much prefer employment that will enable me to be *at home* the most of my time.

Ball went on to assure the Governor that "there is no one in the State that has uniformly been more opposed to 'Groceries' [i.e., saloons], and the Sale of Liquors than myself." If his application were approved, Ball asked Clark to reply by Monday or Tuesday—Ball wrote on Saturday—"as I may have an opportunity of accepting or rejecting by that time, a position that would be next most desirable to this."[52]

Ball got his appointment within the week, and the Meridian merchant sent his $5,000 bond and sworn oath to Jackson. He proved to be a very conscientious state functionary. During the next year of his service, he furnished the state with detailed records that oozed scrupulousness. There is, for example, one "Statement of the Dispensing of One Bbl [barrel] 'State Liquor' up to night of 1st Inst. [i.e., that same month] together with the Physician's Certificates," statements of freight, and accounts of "Gross amt. Of Sales." To avoid the possibility of any question about any seeming inconsistency in the records, Ball explained in a letter at the end of the war why on one occasion the amount of his unsold liquor was more than his total sales might have seemed to indicate. "This [discrepancy] is caused," he wrote, "by the fact that some persons did not have vessels to hold their full qt. or pt. and I gave the State the benefit of it." Ball also requested reimbursement for a trip he had taken to the temporary state capital in Macon to get one of his consignments. And near the war's end, when the two men's world was crashing down upon them, Ball bombarded Clark with many petty details about a threatened attack by Federals. What, for example, should Ball do with the liquor barrel if Meridian were attacked by a hostile force? A drunken Union cavalry might be worse than a sober one. Ball had already urged physicians in the area to advise their patients to get to the store as soon as possible so that he could supply their medicinal needs.

Here was Governor Clark facing possible arrest and being informed by Ball that Meridian's liquor supply somehow constituted a *crise d'état*. Clark must not have known whether to laugh or weep as he read Ball's account of how the latter had finally taken the extreme measure of smashing the barrel "in consequence of information rec'd from the…Authorities of a threatened raid upon all Liquors & Gov't Provisions." Scribbled along the margin of the letter to Clark was Ball's plaintive "I rec'd no answer to my letter to you."[53] Small wonder! It was May 1865, and

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[51] Ball, in Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 21 April 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.
[52] Ball, in Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 16 April 1864, in *ibid.*
[53] Ball to Gov. Clark, 21 April 1864, and Ball to Gov. Clark, 4 April 1865, in GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH; see also Ball to Gov. Clark, 5 May 1865, in *ibid.*, vol. 57.

Governor Clark had far more serious concerns than a barrel of booze in Lauderdale County.

For all their ironic and comical character, these curious relics of those grim times do offer a welcome laugh and a brief, relieving glimpse into something other than acres of corpses and war-ravaged countryside. In this case it shows us something of the drinking habits, "for medical purposes,"of some of the county's population. In early 1865 a pint of liquor cost $1.50 and went up to $1.75 after March 2. Ball's best customer by far was Dr. W. C. Johnson, who between 24 February and 29 March, for instance, bought a total of five and a half quarts. C. W. Matthews bought one pint on each of three dates during the same period, and Mrs. Levi Hurlbutt bought one quart on each of two occasions. Others who made at least one purchase in that period include L. A. Duncan, Julia Campbell, John Armstrong, R. Ulmer, A. L. Avara, D. Rosenbaum, J. R. Smith, William S. Patton, A. L. Broach, A. C. Barnett, and James J. Shannon.[54]

The other county liquor agent was J. M. Roberts in Marion Station. On 2 May 1864 he sent his application and personal bond to Jackson. Dr. H. R. Wilson, apparently living in Marion, applied for the position but was unsuccessful, despite the recommendations of such luminaries as William S. Patton, Probate Judge J. W. Brooke, Circuit Clerk C. W. Henderson, and Probate Clerk W. L. Mayfield.[55] In contrast to John Ball, Roberts did not pester Governor Clark with the details of his work.

With regard to the statement above that Dr. W. C. Johnson was John Ball's best customer over the whiskey barrel, it should be remembered that Johnson was a dentist; and in those days it was not unusual for dentists, lacking any other amesthetic, sometimes to use liquor to make patients less apprehensive and sensitive to pain.

Distillers were not alone in experiencing increased trade from wartime conditions. In Meridian, for instance, businesses were functioning merrily after soldiers began to pour into the area and were back in operation almost before all the dust had settled following the departure of Sherman in early 1864. R. H. Breckinridge, a merchant whose store in late 1864 was the first building north of the railway depots, was again soliciting consignments of goods which he sold on commission. On one occasion, for example, he sought to purchase "a lot of Louisiana Cane Seed."[56] Other merchants operating on commission included Taylor and Bass, who less than three months after Sherman's raid were back in business. They announced on May first that they had "reopened their house near the post office." The phrasing of the ad seems to indicate that they had been doing business in Meridian for some time previous to the Federal raid. They described themselves as "receiving, forwarding and commission merchants" and sought such commodities as 500 pounds of "good sugar" for which they advertised in July 1864. They specified that it had to be in fifty-pound quantities and about five dollars per pound.[57] R. Y. Rew & Company also had a "receiving, forwarding, and commission" house in Meridian. The

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[54] "Account of State Liquor Dispenser by John T. Ball in Lauderdale County," includes dates 23 February to 1 April 1865, GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.

[55] Roberts, in Marion Station, to Gov. Clark, 2 May 1864; Brooke, Henderson, and Mayfield, in Marion, to Gov. Clark, no date but accompanying letter from W. S. Patton has 19 April 1864; all in GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.

[56] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 9 June and 10 November 1864.

[57] *Ibid.*, 5 May, 6 June, and 19 July 1864.

firm opened probably around the first of 1864 and advertised as having "rooms for the storage of any amount of baggage and all sorts of merchandise besides accommodations for any number of Negroes that may be sent for sale here." They also operated stockyards for mules, cattle, hogs, "&c., &c.," and added "we flatter ourselves that a trial will be sufficient for a continuance of patronage." A statement that "Negroes and stock will be kept on as reasonable terms as the time will admit" is eloquent testimony of one aspect of a general attitude of those times.[58] Along that same line, and at the same period, the firm of Smith and Griffin had just opened a slave market in Meridian where, as they put it, "those in need of negroes can always be supplied."[59]

The best-known general merchandise establishment in Meridian, and the oldest, was John Ball's, who by 1864 had been a county resident for about ten years. He seems to have dabbled in a little of almost everything, and one gets the image of a man perhaps almost obsessed with money coming in and the fear of its going out. At his store "on the hill" he dispensed food items, sewing supplies, shoes, hardware, stationery supplies, drugs, hats, military books, and probably other things.[60]

Ironically, the destruction caused by the Federal occupation probably represented a windfall to some businesses in the area. Though at that time re-building was difficult for an already damaged economy, some reconstruction was absolutely essential, and there were beneficiaries of it. The railroads, for instance, had to be restored to at least minimal standards. The M & O, labeling the expenditures "Yankee Raid," spent at least $35,855 in March 1864 on services rendered by such businesses as the Mobile and Great Northern Railroad and the company that owned the steamship *Virginia*. Individuals who provided various unspecified services included J. C. Patton, A. Gordon, R. D. McCann, Isaac Donavan, C. F. Myerhoff, K. (?) Hunnicutt, J. C. Hopper, T. (?) J. Clay, J. P. Fresenius, and L. R. Kimball, some of whom were perhaps not in the Lauderdale area. Such firms as Calhoun and Smith, Leak and Turner, and King and Wheeler also profited.[61]

Perhaps more than in any other area of the state, Lauderdale County saw the war as a boon to journalism; and in East Mississippi, if not in the entire state, the press was monopolized by the genial giant, James J. Shannon, owner of the *Clarion* and a job printing office. He sold probably great quantities of blank forms, especially those for legal and military documents; and his newspaper and printing business had, by late 1864, so prospered that he sought two compositors to whom he promised permanent employment and high wages.[62]

There were also other businesses doing well. Rew and Newman advertised in April of 1864 for two able-bodied slaves to work for the balance of the year at their Sageville tannery. Wilson and Chadwick operated a drugstore in Meridian and in November 1864 advertised "125 gallons paregoric, warranted full strength for sale cheap by gallon or pound." There was a tailoring establishment at Marion Station run by J. M. Shortridge who had opened probably around the first of June 1863, and promised to do all kinds of tailoring "with neatness and dispatch."

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[58] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 31 January 1864.
[59] *Ibid*.
[60] *Ibid*., 25 November 1863 and 5 May 1865.
[61] Mobile and Ohio Railroad book of expenditures and other financial records, from January 1861 to September 1865, page 291; in Illinois Central and Gulf Railroad Collection, University of South Alabama Archives, Mobile.
[62] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 9 June and 10 November 1864.

Sylvanus Evans and J. B. Hancock had a law office in 1864 in Marion, and in Meridian Dr. S. K. Smith practiced dentistry. He offered his services also in other parts of the county, as well as in Kemper County.[63]

One of the county's oldest and best-known merchants was Levi Hurlbutt. A native of New York state, he came to Mississippi before the war and sometime before 1864 established a mercantile business on Front Street. Like so many others, he lost both his home on Eighth Street and his business to Sherman's raiders. According to his daughter, Edna Hurlbutt Woods, who recalled the events of those difficult times, Hurlbutt's business required him to travel back and forth between Meridian and New Orleans. She stated that he even engaged in a little smuggling of gold, carrying it out of New Orleans and delivering it into Confederate hands for use in the war effort. On one occasion Hurlbutt's mother-in-law, Jane Rogers, volunteered to get gold out of New Orleans and to Meridian, even though it meant having to run the blockade which the Federals had established around the captured city. The voluminous skirts then in fashion proved ideal for such activities, and Mrs. Rogers put the gold into little bags and sewed them inside her skirt. Even Hurlbutt's little seven-year-old daughter Minnie carried a bit of gold in her little petticoats, only to complain later that her legs were very sore from the prolonged pounding of the heavy bags.[64]

Hurlbutt was trapped for a while in New Orleans after the city fell to the Federals in the spring of 1862. Throughout that summer he was in very gloomy spirits. He did not expect to live to see the end of the war unless some European nations came to the Confederacy's aid. Hurlbutt bemoaned the lack of foresight that had kept him, at the beginning of the war, from protecting his property, which included several slaves. He was sure he could have realized $20,000 cash for his property if he had taken timely action, but by mid-1862 he was certain that his assets would not bring half that. He complained that his slaves, their status in captured New Orleans now ambiguous, were becoming what he called "very saucy" and were threatening to leave. "I have two women," he wrote to a relative in Upstate New York, "that have young children, [and] I tell them when they go they must take their children with them, that I don't want to raise their children and have them run away from me when grown." He wished himself out of New Orleans but found it impossible to leave without heavy sacrifice. "I am in no business," he said, "don't go into the City more than twice a week, [but] I am making garden enough for my own use." He was sorry that "this unholy war" would probably keep him from ever again visiting "Butternuts," his old home in New York. And he mused that "we know not why it is that God has afflicted us with this civil war—He knows—He afflicted the people of old because of their sins, why should He not us[?]"[65]

As the war dragged on into its second, third, and fourth years, the lives of those in Lauderdale County, as did the lives of many elsewhere in the Confederacy, became a

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[63] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 20 June, 21 October 1863; 31 January, 5 May, 20 June, and 10 November 1864.

[64] "Deeds of Valor," *Meridian Star's* fiftieth anniversary edition, 12 November 1946, unpaged.

[65] Hurlbutt, in New Orleans, to his niece Hettie Hurlbutt, in Otsego Co., N.Y., 20 July 1862; from a transcription in author's possession of the original that in 1956 was owned by Marjorie Woods Austin, of Meridian. I have no knowledge of where the original is today.

contest with poverty, fear, sorrow and, on occasion, even boredom. But perhaps the very routine of living was of some help, even though that routine itself was sometimes interrupted.

Entertainment seems to have been rare, except such ones as groups of persons might occasionally organize around the simplest themes and with the barest of means. On rare occasions local groups tried to organize more ambitious programs. In October 1864, for instance, several persons in Meridian put together what they called the Southland Minstrels along the lines of the then-popular white imitations of black humor. A contemporary described the effort as talented and full of "good music and capital jokes." Any money the program made went to the aid of needy soldiers, a purpose often served by such programs throughout the South. A number of residents in Lauderdale Springs gave a similar benefit in the form of "Tableaux and Charades" on Friday, 8 July 1864, for the benefit of the wounded from Gen. Nathan B. Forrest's command, who were recuperating in the hospital there.[66]

The Masons in the county managed to continue to function. In Lauderdale Springs the Patton Lodge in June 1864 announced the next regular convocation of "Patton R. c. c. No. 52 and William S. Patton Council No. 24" for the sixth to the eighth of July. William S. Patton was "H. P. & T. I. G. M.," and R. McKinley was secretary and recorder. Longstreet Masonic Lodge, in Rushing's Store, tendered their sympathy to the widow of E. T. R. Miles, recently deceased, of the Confederate Guards, Co. I, Eighth Mississippi Regiment, "who fell in defence of his country." H. L. Williamson, J. G. Knox, L. M. Horton, and O. S. Mason signed the resolution that called for a thirty-day period of mourning.[67]

News from the battlefields was followed avidly, especially after Colonel Shannon moved his newspaper to Meridian in June 1863. The war even affected nomenclature in the county. It has already been suggested that the name for Lee Street in Meridian probably had such an origin. And on the first of August 1862 the town of Marion Station became officially "Stonewall," probably named for General Thomas Jackson, who received his sobriquet in July 1861 at the First Battle of Bull Run.[68] That change of name, however, did not seem to take very well and apparently did not last beyond the end of the war, if that long. One sees occasional use of the new name but quite as many instances of a continuing preference for the old name. When J. M. Shortridge published his tailoring ad, noted earlier, he gave his location as Marion Station, not Stonewall, though the change had officially taken effect nearly a year earlier.[69] In announcing certain election returns in the fall of 1863, the *Weekly Mississippian*, temporarily being published in Meridian, played it safe by using the phrase "Marion Station, or Stonewall."[70] That was a method that many often used to avoid confusion.

For a while there was a considerable support for the war and for the new government in Richmond. Anyone searching the later records, however, becomes aware of a

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[66] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 8 July and 21 October 1864.
[67] *Ibid.*, 25 June and 6 July 1864.
[68] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 1 August 1862. Not to be confused with the later town in Clarke County.
[69] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863.
[70] Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 14 October 1863.

cooling of ardor as troubles multiplied and as the officials in Richmond and some of the military commanders seemed to show varying degrees of incompetence. In that regard, however, the Confederates were probably no more vexed than were their counterparts in the North. Be that as it may, a growing number of citizens of Lauderdale County expressed a sense of disgust and sometimes even a suspicion of having been betrayed. When General Polk retreated impotently before Sherman's army, for example, or when the state seemed, in the last year of the war, to have become a prey to first one and then another roving band of soldiers, morale in the county and state dropped dramatically. When a group of about three thousand Federals occupied Jackson briefly in the summer of 1864, James Shannon in his prestigious *Clarion* commented glumly:

> The people will be disappointed if Generals [Wirt] Adams and [S. J.] Gholson, and Cols. [John S.] Scott and [R. C.] Wood, allow [Maj. Gen. Henry W.] Slocum and his mixed set to get back to Vicksburg. Half of Slocum's force is said to be negroes, the other half garrison scrapings, without much organization or discipline. In point of numbers we think we equal the Yankees. So we may reasonably expect a good deal from Gen. Adams.[71]

At the same time that Slocum was raiding Jackson, the *Clarion* published several acts and amendments from the Richmond congress. They included the following:

- Farmers had to pay a tenth of their sweet potatoes to the Confederate Government, but those who had produced the previous year, 1863, could make instead a monetary payment for a tenth's equivalent, at a rate set by impressment commissioners.[72]
- The already-existing "tax in kind" on bacon could be commuted to a collection of its equivalent in salt pork.
- The hiring of substitutes in lieu of military service was discontinued.[73]

Such acts were understandable from Richmond's point of view, what with shortages of provisions for its soldiers and problems of filling the depleted ranks of its armies. But public resentment was also understandable. Except perhaps for the last point, which was probably approved by most of the less-affluent citizens, who could scarce afford to hire substitutes, such acts as the first two seem to have been violated as often as they were observed, particularly as the Confederate policy of impressment became more common and unpopular.

Sometimes the state and Confederate governments, instead of resorting to impressment, advertised for goods or for workers. In November 1863, for example, Capt. John W. Young, Assistant Quartermaster in Meridian, advertised for "Fifty able bodies [*sic*] Negroes for Government work at this Depot, Twenty dollars a month hire,

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[71] Meridian *Clarion*, 7 July 1864.

[72] Impressment commissioners, and their subordinates came to be hated by many Southerners. It was their duty to procure various commodities and services for the Confederate war effort. This they did by legal confiscation of a long list of items, though with a degree of compensation. This will be discussed later.

[73] Meridian *Clarion*, 2 July 1864.

good food and good care taken of them in case of sickness."[74] The ad did not say whether this was for state or Confederate use, though probably the latter.

The war and all its concomitant headaches gave tipplers one more reason to imbibe, although as we have already seen, drinking for pleasure became more difficult after early 1864. Like most other commodities, liquor was harder to get as the articles in its manufacture became scarce. Non-drinkers heaped scorn on those who turned corn, an increasingly precious staple in those days, into liquor. Many in the county doubtless agreed when C. W. Henderson, of Marion, complained of the "'Shylocks' and distillers" who were contributing to the distress of the families of soldiers.[75]

The state government, after being run out of Jackson in the spring of 1863, entered upon an odyssey that took it to, among other places, Meridian. But Meridian had inadequate accommodations for conducting the state's affairs, especially its legislative functions. The military were already monopolizing all available space in the town. But by 13 May the local press announced that Meridian was the state capital "until further notice." This involved mainly the executive and civil departments.[76] It appears that the state used the office of J. J. Shannon's newspaper and job printing business, for the state paid Shannon twenty-five dollars a month in June and July "For rent of office at Meridian…for State officers."[77] But both Governors Pettus and Clark seem to have performed some of their work in or near Meridian on other occasions as well. In the late summer and early fall of 1863, for example, Pettus and President Davis conferred there a number of times on the matter of conscription. They used the telegraph several times between 8 and 13 August while Pettus was in Meridian, from which place the Governor asked Davis to suspend Confederate conscriptions so that Mississippi could raise a local force to patrol river transportation. Davis queried Pettus as to his intentions, for there was at this point a growing conflict between Mississippi and the Richmond government over recruitment. In the highly competitive contest for new men, Mississippi had the advantage, since state service tended to keep men closer to home. And as greater areas of the Confederacy were overrun by the enemy, that was where most men concerned about their homes wanted to be. Eventually Pettus and the President held several meetings at Lauderdale Springs, at which time Pettus agreed to allow Richmond to have any "unattached" companies that might result from an imminent reorganization of state forces, provided Richmond did not break up such units and place them under new commands. After the Lauderdale Springs meetings, however, Pettus reneged on some of his promises, pleading his fear that, despite the agreements, the groups would be broken up.[78]

On other brief occasions Meridian was a convenient spot from which the governor could operate or rendezvous with other officials. For example, on 5

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[74] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 25 November 1863.

[75] Henderson, in Marion, to Gov. Pettus, 8 November 1862, GP, RG 27, vol. 58, MDAH.

[76] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863.

[77] Statement of indebtedness by state to J. J. Shannon & Co., no date or place, but Shannon received the money in Columbus on 3 November 1863; in GP, RG 27, vol. 61, MDAH.

[78] Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis—Constitutionalist* (Jackson: Printed for the Miss. Dept. of Archives and History, 1923), 5:587; also, Robert W. Dubay, *John Jones Pettus, Mississippi Fire-Eater: His Life and Times, 1813-1867* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1975), 191-192.

September 1864 Governor Charles Clark telegraphed his aide, Col. William H. McCardle, to send him the number of state troops at the several places where Clark planned to visit. Clark was then at Meridian and told McCardle, "I stay here today."[79]

Either in spite of the worsening economic condition or perhaps because of it, residents of Lauderdale County continued to offer real estate for sale or rent. We find, for instance, J. R. Dial, who was at the time living near Ramsey Station on the Gainesville Railroad, advertising for rent a plantation two and half miles southwest of Meridian. It had four hundred acres of cleared land and "necessary buildings" for at least twenty hands. One could apply either to Dial himself or to "Maj. Semmes, near Meridian." On 26 December 1863, L. A. Ragsdale sold to James J. Shannon square number forty in Ragsdale Survey, today the location of the old Stevenson School. In September 1864 Feaster Foy advertised for rent his plantation near Marion Station—he ignored the new name of "Stonewall"—that consisted of 350 acres of cleared "mostly fresh bottom land," good cabins and fences, under a lease of two or three years. There were also estate sales that involved land. W. F. Alford, administrator, announced the sale on 28 November 1864 of lands once owned by the late Abram Bell. The property was situated immediately northwest of Alamucha. A. D. Pigford, estate administrator for the late William M. Pearce, announced earlier that same month the sale of lands southwest of Toomsuba. And Catherine Mooney in Merdian offered for sale "a small house situated near the Southern railroad depot, together with some household and kitchen furniture."[80]

Politics was occasionally overshadowed, though not eclipsed, by more interesting, if deadly, contests on the battlefields. In some cases veterans came back from the war to campaign for office, perhaps expecting their battle laurels to offer an advantage over their opponents. Thus, Lieut. Lafayette J. McInnis, Company A, 37th Mississippi, announced in July 1864 his candidacy for sheriff, a job which was itself increasingly taking on a military aspect. Charles Clark, himself a veteran general wounded in action, was elected governor in late 1863. Lauderdale gave him a whopping majority over his two opponents, one of whom was Reuben Davis, also a military officer. In 1863 Constantine Rea seems to have sought a respite from military life by running for the Richmond Congress, though the voters decided to keep him at the front where, the next year, he was killed. William S. Patton, who appears to have been indefatigable as well as ubiquitous, ran for the state Senate, though he continued to figure prominently as an officer in the militia. So did W. G. Grace, a candidate for the state's lower house. Other candidates for office in the autumn of 1863 included J. R. McLaurin, W. F. Crumpton, E. H. Williams, S. Williams, H. S. Williamson, E. J. Rew, M. D. L.

[79] Telegram from Gov. Clark, in Meridian, to Col. McCardle, in Macon, 5 September 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.
[80] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 25 November 1863, 15 September and 10 November 1864, and 28 March 1865; see also *Deed Record Book K*, 292, in Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.

House, J. N. Rhodes, and Sol Street, all of whom were running for state representative.[81]

In 1864 J. S. Shedd announced his candidacy for re-election as county coroner; and Robert Leachman, destined to be an important figure during Reconstruction, both as politician and judge, served as president of the County Board of School Commissioners. Candidates for various offices in the summer of 1864 included Sheriff W. F. Alford running for re-election, opposed by P. H. Higgins, of Company C, 41st Mississippi, and by his opponent in 1863, Lieut. Lafayette J. McInnis; Circuit Clerk C. W. Henderson, up for re-election; County Treasurer L. B. Hancock, running for re-election; Elisha Mosley running for probate judge; and Probate Clerk W. L. Mayfield, opposed for re-election by Granville Henderson. The election was in October.[82]

It is difficult to say what effect, if any, the war had on crime in the county. Greene C. Chandler's recollections would seem to suggest that there was an increase. Certainly various citizens continued to misbehave; and if there was more crime, perhaps part of the reason was the war's disruption of civilian life. Another cause could have been the new laws and prohibitions brought on by the war. Chandler was a member of the Legislature in 1861 and after a brief military career was for some reason exempt from further service. (As we shall see later, however, he does seem to have served again briefly toward the close of the war.) He was elected prosecuting attorney for the Eighth Judicial District, which included Clarke and Lauderdale Counties. According to his later autobiographical account, circuit court was held in some counties only when required; but in other counties, especially Lauderdale, there were regular sessions in February and August of 1864 and February 1865. Judge William M. Hancock presided over sessions that often lasted a week or more. All of this suggests that crime was a greater problem in Lauderdale than in most other counties in the district. At the August term, 1864, there were some thirty grand jury indictments in what Chandler called "a general clean-up of law violators." Twelve women were indicted for selling liquor to Indians, and a man was indicted for stealing salt at Meridian—salt was a precious staple for the palate and for preserving meat in those years. Another man got ten years for beating his mother. In the February term of 1865 there were several cases involving impressment of civilian property, an area that almost invited skullduggery.[83]

Horse stealing, as one can well imagine, was common; though some of the cases seem to have been more a matter of stretching the practice of borrowing military property. Others were plain theft. In June of 1864, six miles west of Lauderdale Station, J. W. Clayton lost a "fine blood bay mare" nine years old. In March of 1865 Maj. C. B. Dyer, in Meridian, offered a five-hundred-dollar reward for the recovery of a horse, a large "Blood Bay, thin in order" that was seven years old and "shod all round with Yankee shoes with eight nails in each."[84]

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[81] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 6 July 1864; Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 14 October 1863.
[82] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 6 July 1864; *Deed Record Book K*, 155, Chancery Clerk's Office, LCCH.
[83] Chandler, *op. cit*., 70-71.
[84] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 6 July 1864, 28 March 1865.

On several occasions during the war enterprising thieves took advantage of the opportunity presented by the large numbers of guests at Meridian's hotels. An agent of the firm of Harrison and Hyatt, for example, was passing through Meridian on 20 October 1863 and put up at the Ragsdale House. The next morning he discovered that he had been robbed of over $9,000 in various kinds of negotiable paper. When by late November no progress had been made in solving the case, the company advertised a reward of $5,000 for the return of the notes. The stolen bundle contained Confederate Treasury notes, both interest-bearing and non-interest-bearing ones.[85]

In addition to the inducements that Meridian's hotels offered to thieves, the town's three railroads and a burgeoning military base made the swollen village a bonanza for a variety of unscrupulous persons. Droves of passengers moving into or through the place, and the great quantities of merchandise coming in or leaving by rail must have been a very great temptation to con artists and thieves. Probably without much hope of recovering it, C. C. Nettles placed an ad in the local paper in June 1863 about a black trunk stolen at the Meridian depots. The trunk contained clothes, shoemaking tools, several deaf and dumb alphabets, and some other items.[86] And with the same lack of success Col. Shannon put an ad in his own paper in May 1864 about a theft in his office near the rail terminals, and ended on a note of dry humor: "Stolen—From our desk on Monday morning an Adams self-cocking five shooter. The purloiner will return it to us or call and get the case, with mould, wipers, screw-driver, flask, &c., belonging to the same, as we have no further use for them."[87]

In Meridian in June 1864, Major John W. Young of the quartermaster section, Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana, let it be known that some of the Army's horses and mules were drifting into the civilian sector. The animals were branded with "CSA," and civilians holding them, said the Major, were breaking the law. All responsible officials were to search for them and retrieve them, unless the animals had the Government's "condemned brand" on them or unless the civilian holders could produce valid bills of sale.[88] Who knows? It's possible the Confederate government had acquired these animals through the unpopular impressment process. If so, civilians perhaps regarded them as not morally or even legally Confederate property.

When James Benson, a soldier convalescing at the hospital in Marion, decided that the hospital's food was inadequate for his convalescence, he and several other soldiers went to a nearby millpond and cut the dam to drain the pond and get the fish. The soldiers thought fresh fish far more conducive to recuperation than what they regarded as "old stale beef." The owner of the pond was furious, but for some reason nothing was done until after the war. Then, since Benson was the only one of the culprits who resided in the county in the spring of 1867, only he was charged and indicted. Benson was convicted of "malicious mischief" and sentenced to three months imprisonment in the county jail. Immediately after sentencing, the jury and District Attorney C. A. Smith petitioned Governor B. G. Humphreys on Benson's behalf. Benson had made a good soldier, said M. H. Whitaker, and was a poor man whose family depended wholly upon him. The damage to the pond's dam was minor

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[85] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863; Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863.
[86] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863.
[87] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 5 June 1864.
[88] *Ibid.*, 9 June 1864.

and had been repaired within twenty-four hours. What action, if any, Governor Humphreys took is not in the record.[89]

There was another case that involved an unusual and successful outpouring of support for the accused. In the summer of 1864 an impressive number of women in the Lockhart area sent a petititon for clemency to Governor Charles Clark. Burwell Jones, a resident of Lockhart, had been sentenced to two years in prison in Macon for "selling spirituous liquors in less quantities than one gallon to a slave." After his conviction, the petitioners reminded the Governor that the jury had "sincerely commended him to the mercy of the court, the Governor and the citizens." The petititon spoke favorably of Jones and commented on the circumstances of the case:

> The majority of us has been intimately acquainted with Mr. Jones for a number of years and can safely say we have never knew any thing of him but a true, upright, honorable man. We believe that he was indicted through a malicious design. Mr. Jones was acting as Station Agent at this place [Lockhart] (and done us many favors in the way of transacting business) [and] in consequence of there being no one to fill the vacancy the station cannot be attended to. He was an advantage to the community in various ways, ever ready to help the destitute families whose only dependence for support are now on the battle field struggling for Southern Independence. Mr. Jones is a worthy and in every way a reliable man, a good citizen, and has many friends that are anxiously awaiting his return to his destitute family. Knowing you, Gov., to be ever desirous to promote the happiness of our country we trust you will comply with this our humble request.[90]

A short time later a large number of male citizens from around the county sent Governor Clark a petition to reinforce that sent by the women. All of this outpouring of concern had its effect, for Clark apparently pardoned Jones on 2 November 1864.[91]

In late June 1864 two young white women in Meridian had walked to the post office and on the way home were met by a young male slave who hit both women and attempted to rape one of them. A man living nearby heard the women's screams and came running in time to find the attacker gone and one woman unconscious on the ground. The news spread quickly. General Stephen D. Lee, temporary commander of the department, ordered all slaves in Meridian to be

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[89] Whitaker, in Marion, to Gov. Humphries, 13 March 1867, GP, RG 27, vol. 68, MDAH.

[90] Letter, with petition, from 41 women, Lockhart Station, to Gov. Clark, 5 September 1864; also, a petition undated, from a large number of male citizens in county, both documents in GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH. Among female signers were following: Mmes. S. E. McConnell, C. L. Wright, M. Obrick (?), Martha Obrick (?), Lizzie H. Pigford, A. I. Pigford, C. C. Bannacastle (?), Julia A. Campbell, S. A. McMahun, Louise Catsburger (?), Fannie Radford, Mary Radford, Susan McLemore, Louise Hamburg, Margaret Harrington, Caroline Shackle, Samanthy Radford, T.(?) E. Hussey, L. A. Fowler, Julia Cole, F. E. Killingsworth, Anna (?) Monk, A.(?) A. Killingsworth, Eliza Brooks, Sarah Tanner (?), Mary G. Bancroft, Annie R. Bancroft, C. H. Miller, A. R. Miller, Salley C. Null, Mary E. Lewis, Amanda Mosely, Lizzie Mosely, Mary Hales, Bettie Hales, Narcissus Thomas, Jane Thomas, E. C. Page, and M. J.(?) Page. Among male signers of second petition were following: State Sen. William S. Patton, D. Rosenbaum, J. B. Hancock, A. Lowenstein, W. G. Broach, Circuit Clerk C. W. Henderson, Sheriff W. F. Alford, R. Leachman, L. A. Ragsdale, the Rev. James W. Phillips (Presbyterian clergyman), plus the names of the grand jury that brought the indictment.

[91] *Ibid*.

assembled so that the women could try to identify the man who had attacked them. Subsequently, they pointed out a slave who belonged to a Lieutenant Whitfield, assigned to the Ordnance Office. The accused man was arrested. Then a group of citizens met and called for an investigation and trial and, if the slave was found guilty, his execution.[92]

At this point the case was turned over to the authorities, whether civil or military is not clear from the record. The trial took place on Saturday afternoon and evening, July 2. The slave was found guilty and ordered committed to jail, apparently without formal sentencing. The judge had scarcely finished when a group of soldiers from the First Mississippi Regiment burst into the courtroom, grabbed the slave, and carried him outside to a nearby tree, from which they hanged him.[93]

The *Clarion*, remarking that the lynching had been "quietly and speedily done," apparently approved, as perhaps did many others in Meridian. The paper supposed the incident would serve as a warning to other slaves in the area. Shannon published, and probably wrote, an article that spoke of other similar incidents in the past but added that this was the first one in which someone had been identified as guilty. The paper was critical of some owners, who, so the article alleged, allowed their slaves "loose rein." Further evidence of how the paper viewed the incident came in the juxtaposing of an article on how the term "lynch law" originated, and with no indication that the *Clarion* condemned the practice.[94]

As with other peoples during bloody, protracted wars, the citizens of Lauderdale found death perhaps the most awesome aspect of that fight for Southern independence. Almost every issue of the *Clarion* carried a list of casualties in the state's military units, and sometimes the somber lists in fine print went on for more than a column. The military units in the county, their men housed in crowded and often unhealthful conditions, assured the county's civilian and military populations plenty to ponder. The hospitals in Lauderdale, Meridian, and Marion/Marion Station obviously had to dispose of a large number of the dead. Though some bodies were shipped home, many others were buried in local civilian cemeteries and in such military cemeteries as the one near Marion and the larger one at Lauderdale Springs. In Meridian a considerable number of soldiers were buried in the cemetery that used to be at the top of the hill encompassed today by Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Avenues and Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets. One wonders how many others were hastily buried, or perhaps even left unburied, in the wilder, outlying areas.

But it was on distant battlefields that the greatest number of fatalities occurred. In late 1863, for example, the *Clarion* gave some somber statistics. Lem S. Warren, of Marion Station, a member of the Southern Sentinels, had been killed at Chickamauga; and fellow soldiers John Shannon and William C. Waller were severely wounded. Those from the Sentinels with slight injuries were Sebron M. Smith, George W. Jones, M. G. Butler, and James Irby. From the Confederate Guards, of Rushing's Store, Benjamin F. Wooton was dead; and Joel Foster, John C. Barnes, and Redden D. Taylor were badly wounded. Three others from the Guards—Nathaniel M.

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[92] Meridian *Clarion*, 8 July 1864.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Ibid.*

Collins, James F. Smith, and James M. McNeese—were more fortunte and received only slight wounds.[95] From various engagements around Kennesaw Mountain, Ga., the area's casualty list included D. G. Grantham, of the Lauderdale Rifles, a unit that Constantine Rea had once commanded. The *Clarion's* notice did not say whether he had been killed, but he died on 17 June 1864 at the R. and D. Hospital, Marietta, Ga.[96]

Major Rea himself was injured on 9 July 1864 in the fighting around Atlanta and the Chattahoochee River. His injuries required the amputation of his right leg, an extreme but common recourse. In this instance the operation proved futile, for Rea died on 14 October. His body was shipped back to his home in Marion and lies next to his wife Margaret's grave in the old Marion Cemetery.[97] Rea's son Richard survived the war. He served dutifully right to the end, which found him, and his fellow countian Robert Leachman, in the last, pathetically-hopeless action around Mobile in the spring of 1865. With them was William P. Chambers, from whose journal this history quotes liberally.[98]

Shannon's *Clarion* took special notice of a civilian's death. Charles Rush Gates was born in Pendleton District, S. C., 15 June 1815; and while the son was still young, his father moved the family to Greene County, Ala. Gates attended the University of Virginia and later was married on 8 August 1849 to Louisa Foster, of Lauderdale County. Until about 1862 they lived in Chickasaw County, Miss., but then moved to Lauderdale County and lived near his wife's family in the "Foster Settlement." There, in his in-laws' home, he died on 26 October 1864. His wife and four children survived him.[99]

The heavy fighting of the Atlanta campaign accounted for the deaths of a number of soldiers who, like Constantine Rea, had ties to Lauderdale. One, not battle-related, was that of Crawford Bridges, of Co. I, 46th Mississippi, and a native of the County. At the age of twenty-one he died of typhoid pneumonia in an Atlanta hospital.[100] Another death was that of a soldier who, though not a citizen of the county, had been closely associated with it; for on 14 June 1864 Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk died of a wound received in the fighting near Atlanta. There were perhaps many in the county who, still resentful of what they considered Polk's incompetence in the face of Sherman's raid earlier that year, found the general's death a little easier to take than those of many other soldiers. Nevertheless, Lt. Gen. Stephen D. Lee, temporarily in command of Polk's old department in Meridian, on June 18 issued General Orders No. 81. It gave official notice of Polk's death and ordered that "the colors of the troops of this command will be draped in mourning for the period of thirty days from the receipt of this order."[101]

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[95] Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 9 October 1863.
[96] Meridian *Clarion*, 2 July 1864; *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers*, microfilm roll 412.
[97] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 329; also, Rea, *op. cit.*, 22. Rea's son, writing sixty-one years later, described his father as a lieutenant colonel; Chambers, writing presumably shortly after the death of Constantine Rea, but perhaps less authoritatively, stated his rank as major.
[98] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 361, 368.
[99] Meridian *Clarion*, 10 November 1864.
[100] *Ibid.*, 8 July 1864; Tancig, *op. cit.*, does not show the 46th as having a Company I.
[101] Meridian *Clarion*, 22 June 1864.

The heavy mortality that resulted from this type of war produced another situation as heartbreaking as that of the long lists of battlefield casualties: What could be done about children who had lost fathers and whose mothers were either destitute, deceased, or incompetent? It was a serious problem throughout the state, and at least as early as September of 1864 several individuals, concerned about the situation, formed a somewhat loosely-organized association with R. Paine as chairman and W. C. Johnston as secretary. They called a meeting for 6 October 1864 in Columbus, Miss., and invited clergymen and members of all religious denominations, and all "patriotic and benevolent citizens." Their purpose was to form a general association for the state, with local auxiliary groups to direct the work in the several counties. They pledged to give all funds not needed at home to the general association for use in the poorer sections of the state. Such funds would be collected and distributed annually.[102]

What connection, if any, this group had with a similar effort by Thomas C. Teasdale, J. R. Graves, D. E. Burns, and J. T. Freeman is difficult to say from existing records. Teasdale's group canvassed the state in the interest of what they called "The Orphans' Home of the State of Mississippi." Since their work was contemporary with that of Paine and Johnston's group, there probably was at least cooperation between the two efforts. When Teasdale's group realized the state's meager resources would make difficult the equipping of such an institution, they concluded that extraordinary efforts were necessary. Teasdale, a native of New York, was acquaianted with both Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln, as well as with other high officials. Thus his group selected him to travel to the more prosperous North to secure the necessary supplies and equipment. But his hardest task was to persuade officials on both sides to allow an exchange of cotton to pay for the supplies. Teasdale saw both Presidents and got their approval in writing. President Davis wrote: "Referred to the Sec'y. of Treasury, and the Sec'y. of War for conference with Rev. Dr. Teasdale, in connection with the praiseworthy effort in which he is engaged," and signed it on 3 March 1865. Subsequently, President Lincoln wrote directly under Davis's statement: "Gen. Canby [in Mobile] is authorized, but not ordered, to give Rev. Mr. Teasdale such facilities in the within matters, as he, in his discretion, may see fit. A. Lincoln, March 18, 1865." Thus both Davis and Lincoln became benefactors of the Orphans Home that after the war was opened on the grounds of the old resort and military installation at Lauderdale Springs.[103]

The average citizen of Lauderdale County must have thanked Heaven for routine, which helped occupy one's thoughts and sometimes gave one the comforting feeling of making some contribution to the war effort. The women, especially, actively participated in projects on the home front to aid the hard-pressed armies. The shortage of rags for bandages, for instance, provided an incentive to the Ladies Confederate Soldiers' Aid Society to get into the war effort. Mrs. S. A. Coleman, of Stonewall (or Marion Station) and president of the group, announced on 20 November 1863: "We are much in need of linen, cotton, or woolen rags or strips of cloth to dress the wounds

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[102] Meridian *Clarion*, 15 September 1864.

[103] Thomas C. Teasdale, *Reminiscences and Incidents of a Long Life*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: National Baptist Publishing Co., 1891), 1, 185-207.

of soldiers in this Hospital [apparently the one in Marion]. Address packages to the undersigned, and they will be thankfully received." Either by coincidence or by strange (and thus hard to understand) design there appeared, immediately below this appeal, the *Clarion's* own ad: "Rags. We wish to obtain by the first of December THREE THOUSAND POUNDS of clean cotton or linen rags. The highest market price will be paid…GOOD PAPER can only be made of rags, and to save all your rags and scraps of cloth is not only economy but a benefit to the country. Lose no time in sending your rags."[104]

Well, reading the *Clarion* was certainly an important part of one's daily routine. One could examine the many ads, for instance, and see such notices as one announcing that W. F. Alford, administrator, petitioned to have the late David Hall's estate declared insolvent; or that on 27 June 1863, in Lauderdale Station, Peter Higgins would sell the property of the late William Strait, whose estate included a female slave named Rachel. Another ad invited those interested to apply to the telegraph office to see the "good saddle and buggy horse" advertised for sale by George McMurchy.[105]

John Ball's routine often involved putting in a good word for himself where it would do the most good. If known at the time, it must have caused some amusement when Ball, in October 1861, wrote a letter congratulating Governor Pettus on nabbing a bride. "Permit me to send through you," he wrote, "my best respects & compliments to your Lady, who is an old friend & favorite of mine, and at the same time to congratulate you on the *happy choice* you have made in her as a 'partner for life.'" Then, having taken care of the preliminaries, Ball literally got down to business:

> If you give me business in the Army in this State, either as Commissary, Quarter Master or other honorable position that will afford a support to my family, I would like to receive it and be obliged to you at the same time. The War has broken up all of my business matters for the present, and deprived me of support for my family in that way. I am willing to give my time, experience in business &c to my country if I can at the same time derive from it *a decent support* for *my family*.

In justice to Ball it must be acknowledged that he was *replying to* a letter from Pettus, who had asked Ball, an acquaintance from Kemper days, to forward to Jackson some of the Governor's freight when it reached Meridian.[106]

But importuning letters and grumblings of adversity seem to have been so characteristic of Ball that one never knows how to interpret his requests and complaints. Also, I have never come across anything to suggest that the Ball family were having more trouble than most others, and they were almost certainly better off than many. But, again, why shouldn't Ball have asked for this appointment? Didn't it seem that everyone else was getting something? So why not Ball, who was an old and useful citizen? He had as much right to preferment as, for example, W. F. Alford and

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[104] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863.
[105] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863; Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863.
[106] Ball, in Meridian, to Gov. Pettus, 11 October 1861, in GP, RG 27, vol. 54, MDAH.

F. C. Semmes, who had recently been appointed agents in the county to oversee the issuance of Treasury notes and bonds.[107]

There were always excitement and diversion down at the railway stations. One might pick up some news from the soldiers or from passengers and train crews going through. And sometimes there were such uncommon and gratifying sights as a load of Yankee prisoners on their way to Cahaba Prison, in Alabama, or some other prison larger than the small, ramshackle stockade in Meridian. For example, on the evening of 19 October 1863, 165 prisoners arrived in Meridian on their way eastward. General Chalmers' forces had captured them during fighting between Vicksburg and Jackson.[108]

After the war had lasted a year or so, prisoners ceased to be a novelty in the county. On 14 June 1864 a large number of Billy Yanks reached Meridian in the evening, 969 of them, all captured by Gen. Forrest's force at Columbus, Miss. One observer regarded them as "about as motley a set of human beings as we ever saw," and added "more are yet to come." And more did, some 1,100, probably late the following day or early the next. At any rate they left Thursday morning, the 16th, on the train for Selma, Ala., there to be put into Cahaba Prison. The wounded prisoners remained at the hospital in Lauderdale Springs. In addition to these prisoners, there were also eighteen flatcars loaded with captured artillery and wagons, also from Forrest's command. The equipment arrived Thursday afternoon, the 16th.[109] It was perhaps on such an occasion, though earlier in the war, that a woman in Meridian made the mistake of contemptuously spitting on a Union prisoner passing through Meridian. He bitterly remembered the incident and the person; and after he was exchanged, he just happened to return to Meridian with Sherman's army. At that time he got his revenge—but that belongs at a later point in this narrative.

And there was some diversion from grim reality in the funny anecdotes which Shannon liked to use as fillers in the *Clarion*. Following another Federal foray into the Jackson area, the *Clarion* sneered at the female cotton speculators from Federal lines in Vicksburg. Always one step behind the Union raiders, they tried to get their purchases of cotton in the Jackson area back across the Big Black River into safe territory before the Federal raiders returned west. Said Shannon: "Whenever you see ladies coming from the enemies' lines to buy cotton, commence moving your valuables away to a place of safety, for the Yankees will soon be along. These fair ones, who have recently become troubled with 'cotton on the brain,' are the avaunt [*sic*] couriers of raids."[110]

Or readers could laugh when the *Clarion* spoke of that "miserable renegade" Andrew Johnson, the Tennessee senator who had refused to follow his state out of the Union. Shannon reported that Johnson recently had come "very near losing

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[107] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 3 May 1861.

[108] Meridian *Mississippian*, 21 October 1863.

[109] Meridian *Clarion*, 15 and 17 June 1864.

[110] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 6 July 1864. Gen. W. T. Sherman had no patience with this Unionist trafficking in cotton, a bale of which exchanged for at least $300 in gold. In his memoirs he complained that Sec. of the Treasury S. P. Chase encouraged the business "so that hundreds of greedy speculators flocked down the Mississippi, and resorted to all sorts of measures to obtain cotton from the interior, often purchasing it from negroes who did not own it, but who knew where it was concealed. This whole business was taken from the jurisdiction of the military, and committed to Treasury agents appointed by Mr. Chase." From *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles L. Webster, 1892), I:294.

his 'light' in Nashville the other day. A drunken Yankee officer fired at him with a pistol, the ball grazing the skin and going through his coat. What a pity the ball didn't graze his heart," wrote Shannon. And one might see something such as the following in Meridian's daily: "A young gentleman of prepossessing appearance and good address—not liable to military service—desires a partner for life. The lady must be pretty, amiable, and accomplished. Wealth is no object. Communications strictly confidential." What with the male shortage in the county by that date, one must not sneer at the searcher's prospects, though perhaps the county's eligible females reasoned that if by 1864 the military was not after him, he was probably damaged goods. And while the females in the county pondered those possibilities, the men might do the same about an ad from W. H. Cain, proprietor of the Burton House. He offered for sale three "new and complete" heavy copper stills.[111]

Anyone interested could go by the *Clarion's* office to gaze in admiration at the one and a half-pound, fifteen-inch beet that R. Y. Rew had harvested and given to that paper's popular printer and editor. And while there to view this natural wonder, one could ask Shannon whether anyone had bought that fine Chickering piano that his paper had advertised about three months earlier. Or what about the ad that H. T. Henry had put in earlier, about two strayed oxen, "one black and white…very poor, the other speckled, sore neck and in good order." Did he ever find them? And what about that ad back in November 1863 from someone called "Refugee," who described himself s "A gentleman, by profession a Teacher, with unquestionable credentials as to fidelity, capacity and success as Instructor of youth." Did he get a job? And why wasn't he with the army?[112] Sometimes weddings added some luster to what was often an array of disheartening news. On 17 June 1863, while everyone was hanging breathless on Vicksburg's fate, William L. Van Hook, of Columbus, Miss., was married at Frank Taylor's home in Meridian, to Lizzie S. Pickel, of the same town. The Rev. W. C. Emerson performed the ceremony. On 3 July 1863 another marriage served as a welcome distraction to Vicksburg's impending surrender. J. H. Tagart (*sic*) and Miss H. F. Canlish (?) were married at her mother's home in Meridian.[113]

Schools, private of course, continued to operate during the war. Despite all his threats and tirades against what he called Northern corruption and Southern failure to combat its influence, and despite his threat to "rely on the British flag" (previously discussed), L. J. McCormick was still, at least as late as October 1861, holding forth as a teacher in Lauderdale Springs.[114] In late 1863 L. Gould and his wife, who together had earlier operated a school in West Enterprise, Miss., moved to Meridian. On 24 December they announced that on Monday, 4 January 1864, they would begin their first session of the Meridian Female Seminary. Whether this was an entirely new school begun by the Goulds, or whether they took over the school of the same name run by R. Anderson, does not appear in the record. The Goulds would be in Meridian for some years to come, and their institution became a civic ornament in the post-war city.[115]

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[111] Meridian *Clarion*, 15 June, 19 July, 15 September 1864.
[112] *Ibid*., 25 July 1863, 8 July, 19 July, 25 July 1864.
[113] *Meridian Journal*, 20 June 1863; Meridian *Clarion*, 6 July 1864.
[114] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 25 October 1861.
[115] Meridian *Clarion*, 31 January 1864.

Private tutoring still had some popularity. The capture of New Orleans caused one of its female citizens to flee with her daughter to Lauderdale County. To support herself she advertised for a position in a private home as a tutor, offering as an extra inducement that her daughter "performs well on the Piano" and could give lessons. Following the preference for female anonymity in those days, she did not give her name in the ad but indicated that she could be reached in Marion Station at the home of P. H. Higgins.[116]

The citizens of the county had come a long way since those exciting times when they waved fond and proud goodbyes to the volunteers of 1861. The sobering experience of living with the military, the discomfort of limited supplies of necessities and amenities, and the horror of killed or maimed relatives and neighbors—all of this had certainly transformed the county's civilians themselves into hardened veterans. They carried themselves surprisingly well as they became part of the only generation of American civilians to experience total war—as of this writing.

[116] Meridian *Clarion*, 15 September 1864.

Chapter 12: War's Hardships and the Problem of Morale.

The deterioration of morale, obvious after about a year of war, was a result of raids and invasions by the enemy, shortages of goods, and increasingly severe destitution. There were also the serious problems created by the new military draft, the impressments by governmental authorities of private goods for public use, and the increasing suspicion by many that the war was being mismanaged. There arose ominous complaints about the suspensions of businesses, of high prices and extreme inflation, and of reduced wages for labor. There were almost blasphemous suggestions that some *Southerners* were extortioners and profiteers preying on their own people. And, of course, there were the terrible casualty lists.

A year before it moved from Paulding to Meridian, Col. James J. Shannon's *Eastern Clarion* published an editorial—probably its own, for there was no reprint credit—in which it predicted lower living standards for the state's inhabitants. Ultimately, said the paper, morale on the home front and the battlefield would deteriorate, with dire consequences for the Confederate cause. In fact, said the paper, it was a matter "second only in importance to the desperate struggle for liberty and independence in which we are now engaged, and indeed the success or failure of that struggle itself is intimately connected with it."[1] The paper lambasted the "unheard of prices," even for necessities, that hurt everyone "except the speculators and extortioners," and adding, "Famine—gaunt and hideous famine—will stalk through our land." Obviously angry, the writer implied a threat:

> The cry for bread will drown all other cries and as its hollow notes reach the ear of the husband or father who is periling his life on distant fields in his country's defense, it will not be thought strange that he should mutter a silent curse and sigh for an opportunity to visit upon the extortioner at home the punishment due his country's enemies.

To those such as Jefferson Davis who protested that market prices had to be set by supply and demand,[2] the *Eastern Clarion* said *bosh!* Such sophistry was merely an excuse to practice extortion. If the speculators wished to fight that way, why then public action could become a far more potent and immutable law than that of supply and demand, and could be a very effective agent in regulating prices. Laws of trade "are deaf and blind, and can neither be influenced by reason nor sympathy." But what if public opinion fails? Then "the military arm will doubtless have to be invoked, for the 'money changers' who now hold high carnival in the temple of our liberties must be speedily driven out or we are lost."

It was a potent editorial with dark overtones, and it suggests again the old saying that public order is the last thing a people is willing to surrender.

In November of that same year, 1862, there was concern in Lauderdale County and the area around it that many families, especially those of soldiers', were on the verge of starvation. Corn, probably the most important item of food, was especially scarce. According to C. W. Henderson in Marion, there was still plenty of it in the prairie counties to the north, but most of that was going to speculators.

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[1] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 2 May 1862. The following quotes are from this article.
[2] See Eaton, *op. cit.*, 200.

Henderson thought the state ought to try to ship some of that corn to the counties to the south.[3]

In the middle of the war the Meridian *Clarion*, trying to help the Lauderdale residents laugh through these and other problems, published humorous observations, or perhaps jokes such as the following:

> Can't you trust me, Mr. Butcher, for a little more meat this morning?
> No, you owe me for that already on your bones.[4]

It is pathetic to think that the Lauderdale area, already fully concerned with the war, had the added burden of wretched weather, which hit the region during the growing periods of 1862 through 1864. In 1862 the drought was so bad that by August it was clear that the corn crop in East Mississippi and West Alabama would be a dud. Other areas, however, were somewhat better off. Georgia's papers were giving optimistic accounts of that state's production of corn which sold sometimes for twenty-five cents a bushel. Florida also reported good corn crops. In 1863 another drought in the Lauderdale and Clarke areas threatened crops, especially those of peas and potatoes.[5]

Sometime in the early part of 1863 Samuel W. Waldrop, a young Georgian going to his unit in Vicksburg, came through Meridian and apparently found destitution at that place bad enough to comment on it in a letter to his wife: "We left Atlanta on Sunday and went to Montgomery, Alabama and there took the steamboat to Mobile and there took the car [train] to this place [Meridian]. Times is hard here."[6]

Young Waldrop just happened through the county at a time when that area, as well as the rest of the state, was becoming heated over a disruption in shipments of corn and meat coming in from northern Louisiana. They were moved by barge across the Mississippi River at Vicksburg and sent to Jackson by train. Some of it was shipped from there up to Grenada to feed Confederate soldiers defending that area. More of it was sent over to Meridian, at which point M & O trains carried it down to Mobile. Toward the end of 1862, however, Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton decided that he needed to amass a greater quantity of both corn and meat to supply his army around Grenada. This required, so he thought, the interdiction of those shipments going elsewhere, especially those to Mobile. Pemberton took over the several railroads in the area and also commandeered all rolling stock on the M & O south of Meridian. Then, on 12 December, he issued his unpopular "corn order" that forbade the M & O to ship to retailers or merchants in Mobile, or to anywhere else outside the department. His quartermasters subsequently imposed controls over rail traffic and forbade both the Mobile and Ohio and the Southern to make further shipments to civilians.[7]

Pemberton's orders were strongly enforced during the winter of 1862-1863, even though Richmond apparently made some effort to countermand the rulings. There was much protest in Mississippi and southern Alabama. The Mobile *Advertiser*

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[3] Henderson, in Marion, to Gov. Pettus, 8 November 1862, GP, RG 27, vol. 58, MDAH.
[4] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863.
[5] Paulding *Eastern Clarion*, 1 August 1862; Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 14 October 1863.
[6] Samuel W. Waldrop, Meridian, to his wife Nancy, no date but early in 1863; from a transcription in author's possession of original owned by Joseph E. Aldy, a great-great-grandson.
[7] Jeffrey N. Lash, *Destroyer of the Iron Horse: General Joseph E. Johnston and Confederate Rail Trransportation, 1861-1865* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 53-54.

and Register called Pemberton's orders "simply preposterous and a public outrage."[8] Mother Nature was one thing, but outrage joined misery when individuals were responsible for food shortages.

In 1864 the early prospects for crops were encouraging, and there was a good harvest of spring wheat. Even as late as June the editor of the *Clarion* was getting letters from around the state with positive reports. But then—disaster. That summer the corn crop, even in the northern prairie counties, was a flop. To make matters worse, many farmers living in the sections that had been recently invaded, just did not plant crops. Even their ambition, it seemed, had fallen victim to war. This was especially true of the area between Jackson and Meridian that had been ravaged the previous winter by Sherman.[9]

Sherman's destructive raid contributed to the county's severe destitution in the last year of the war, but it was by no means the only cause. One must consider also the scarcity of farm animals, worsening inflation, and the general disruption of transportation. And that transportation problem was not all Sherman's doing. On top of all these was the less tangible, but equally important, matter of civilian morale. The desire to be productive and to plan for the future must have almost dried up.

Though the county had little money for public uses during the war's final year, it spent at least $18,979 for the general relief of the poor. Some of the money came from the county's poor fund, but there were drafts also on the Military Relief Fund and even the school funds. Between May 1864 and February 1865 the following amounts from all sources went to ease destitution in the five beats: Beat 1, $4,851.00; Beat 2, $3,251.50; Beat 3, $1,837.50; Beat 4, $1,837.50; and Beat 5, $3,300.00. The dispensing of these monies was directed by such men as C. E. Rushing in Beat 1, J. L. Simmons in Beat 2, C. S. Mason in Beat 3, J. C. Walker in Beat 4, and William Clark and J. B. Eaves in Beat 5.[10]

During the last year of the war these expenditures for the abatement of the worst cases of poverty and want took several forms. In November 1864 and February 1865, for example, a total of $1,167 was appropriated to buy provisions for the county's poor house, then under the supervision of Silas Batchelor. Salt, a critical item for preserving meat and for general seasoning, was supplied to destitute families in the summer of 1864 after an appropriation of $2,000 for that purpose. Other necessary items bought for the poor included medicine, which Dr. A. C. Richards was allowed to buy in September of 1864, and a supply of corn in April of that year for the poor, especially those in Beats 1 and 3. By 1864 it was not easy for the county to find the money for such programs as these, so the officials had to be alert to any other available sources and methods. When Sheriff W. F. Alford was ordered in August 1864 to get rid of a great quantity of old iron and metal fixtures at the county's jail, he managed to sell them for $1,300 and included in the auction a young male slave named Matt, who brought $3,040.50. All proceeds went to the Military Relief Fund. And when in January 1865 County Treasurer L. B. Hancock was authorized to convert four-percent bonds into Confederate money for school funds, that money very likely was used as much to relieve poverty as to educate children. Some supplies for these charities did not come through purchase but rather through the controversial device of

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[8] Lash, *Destroyer of the Iron Horse*, 53-55.
[9] Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi…*, 151.
[10] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1864-1870*, 32, 39, 64, and *passim.*

impressment, which suggests that some citizens in the county were hoarding commodities.[11]

An anonymous Confederate soldier stationed at Lauderdale Springs gave a humorous look at the otherwise tragic situation in the county. He had just returned from the retreat with Polk's army to Demopolis, Ala., and in April 1864 was trying to find his way back to his new camp at "The Springs." As he trudged along, carrying a chicken he had found somewhere, he came upon a farmer who lived near the former resort. The soldier's version of the encounter seems written for humorous effect but, archaic dialect included, is probably basically factual:

> Soldier: …I see you have a fine chance of shelots [shallots]. I want to get a few.
>
> Farmer: Yes but I don't pull them for myself nor they won't do you any good.
>
> Soldier: Such vegetables are a great rarity among the soldiers and we will pay any price for them.
>
> Farmer: Yes & steal them either if you get a chance.
>
> Soldier: Have you lost much by the soldiers stealing from you?
>
> Farmer: Yes, everything I had but the old woman and the children.
>
> Soldier: You can't sell me any onions?
>
> Farmer: Nary one, Mister. Them hospital fellows [at The Springs] are always running out here to buy sich like but I have just planted 'em and [am] d—n sure you won't trade any here.
>
> Soldier: Well, can you tell me where I can buy some chickens or eggs or butter or peas or potatoes or milk?
>
> Farmer: No, Sir, there ain't none to sell in the neighborhood. Have you had dinner? [Soldier indicated he had not.] Well, if you hain't, you are d—n sure not [going to] get any on the road today.
>
> Soldier: Well, Sir, good day; how far is it to camp?
>
> Farmer: How do I know? Whar is your camp?
>
> Soldier: Not far from Lauderdale Springs I know.
>
> Farmer: Which side are you encamped on?
>
> Soldier: How do I know? I haven't been there.
>
> Farmer: Is that rooster you've got there a game chicken?
>
> Soldier: Yes, he is that. Can whip anything you've got or that's on the bill for fifty dollars.
>
> Farmer: Would you swap him?
>
> Soldier: Well, I do not [know], mister. If you've got a turkey gobbler about the place that's fat, I might trade.
>
> Farmer: I'd like to have him but ain't got no turkey. Would you sell him for inyuns [onions] or taters?
>
> Soldier: No, I can't think of such a *fowl disgrace* as that, old fellow. This chicken's been in several battles and deserves

[11] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1864-1870*, 29, 31, 39, 42, 44-45, 51-52, 56, 67.

> more consideration than to be bartered off on such common articles as are produced in this poor *piney wood*. Besides, he is a soldier regularly enlisted in the Confederate Army and might steal your old woman which you say is all the soldiers have left you. Good day, Sir, I am in a hurry.

The soldier closed with a comment on the general condition of the Lauderdale area: "From all accounts the forage in the country don't pay for straggling. The people generally are disposed to divide what they have but on one side of us the Yankees swept every thing clean and the other has been foraged upon by the hospital until it is almost impossible to get anything for love or money."[12]

This *foraging* that the anonymous soldier spoke about was often just plain thievery. The Confederate people were, as law enforcement deteriorated, increasingly the victims of roving hoodlums and bandits—*bushwhacker* was a term often used to designate such a person. It frequently mattered little whether the local civilians were dealing with Yankee or Rebel soldiers, or for that matter other civilians. They all wore the same uniform, that of rascality. Sometimes it had a quasi-official veneer as when some of General Polk's retreating army were the *guests* of Jacob Perry Welch, of Alamucha. According to Welch, they filled the neighborhood, used his home as a headquarters, and "took nearly all the provisions of corn and meat—stock—oats—potatoes—in fact everything they could find for supplies." Not content with all that, they burned not only all of his fence rails, for firewood, but even those "along the road lane reaching across Alamutcha [*sic*] Creek…nearly two miles in extent, amounting to many thousand rails." As far as Welch was concerned, "our army was nearly as bad, in seizing upon anything wanted, as was the enemy, with the exception of burning up houses, e[t]c."[13]

There is nothing like a war to bring out the wanton destructiveness of the human animal, a trait that seems to be part of Adam's legacy. William P. Chambers, in and around Meridian a number of times during the war, commented in his journal on several cases of senseless destruction or thievery that he observed. One of the most outrageous incidents he witnessed happened when he and a group of soldiers were traveling by train east of Meridian:

> Nothing of interest occurred on the trip, if we except one shameful practice that some of our soldiers indulged in, and that was the shooting of [live]stock along the road as we passed. I never saw such lawlessness, such wanton destruction of property before. And the perpetrators of this outrage were Confederate soldiers, and their victims were citizens of the Confederate States. We profess to be fighting for the "right of property," among other principles involved, and here were men acting as hardly a savage would act. I felt hurt at what my fellow soldiers did, and I wondered why Col. [W. H.] Clarke, who was in command did not have it stopped. Such disgraceful conduct has led many citizens to look upon our own soldiers as ruffians and thieves.[14]

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[12] "Notes by the Wayside," *Camp Journal*, 7 April 1864.
[13] Jacob Perry Welch, typed, unpublished autobiography in possession of Welch family, Toomsuba.
[14] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 314.

There were rascals in both gray and blue uniforms, and how much was done conscientiously by the better-disposed officers, on either side, to stop notorious "foraging" and blatant vandalism is difficult to ascertain. Obviously, nothing was done in instances such as that just described. Both armies were guilty of vandalism, though there were doubtless in both armies officers who would not countenance such acts and men who would not commit them. Army stragglers were particular pests; though General Sherman recorded that on his Meridian Expedition there was little trouble with stragglers. The Confederate cavalry watched the invaders closely, and those Yanks who strayed very far from the main columns were either captured or killed.

Ephraim Anderson wrote about an episode one Sunday morning in Meridian when everyone was summoned to formation on the "color-line." He assumed there was going to be an inspection. Very shortly, though, they were treated to some choice entertainment. Suddenly the band appeared and began playing the *Rogue's March* used on all those occasions when soldiers were publicly humiliated. Three soldiers of his brigade, just back from one of their private foraging expeditions, were each richer by one hog. As the band came into view, the crowd spied the recipients of the exhibition, "three soldiers…each of whom bore a hog upon his shoulder." According to Anderson,

> The novel squad of veteran "mud lark" hunters elicited shouts of laughter; and as they moved on, one little fellow broke down with his hog, when a stouter comrade came to his assistance, taking it on his shoulder, and walked briskly along with two, and kept time to the music which played merrily in front. They passed along the entire extent of the line, and afforded considerable amusement to the men; doubtless the example was calculated to have a salutary effect.[15]

As the war approached the end of its fourth year in early 1865, Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor, commanding the Department in Meridian, informed Governor Clark by letter that his efforts to aid the destitute had been unsuccessful. His plan had been to persuade the officials in Richmond to allow privately-owned or state-owned cotton to be exchanged for supplies. But Taylor did get some encouragement from General Beauregard, who promised, if not sooner forbidden to do so, to grant the necessary authorizations for such cotton exchange if the governors of the several states would request it in writing. Taylor therefore urged Clark to apply at once to General Beauregard for the authority to take the measures that would relieve the worst cases of destitution.[16] In retrospect one is grateful to Generals Taylor and Beauregard, and one wonders what Secretary of War Seddon, or anyone else in Richmond, would have sacrificed of their plans, at that late date, by following Taylor's humane suggestion.

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[15] Anderson, *op. cit.*, 377f.

[16] Taylor, in Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 21 January 1865, in GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH. Several months earlier the issue had first arisen and the Sec. of War had refused permission. Taylor told Gov. Clark that a Major Sanders was in Jackson exchanging Confederate cotton for army supplies. If Clark would turn state cotton over to Sanders, the Major would provide supplies "on the same terms as those for the Confederate Government"—telegram from Taylor, in Selma, Ala., to Clark, 15 October 1864, in *ibid*., vol. 60.

Empty bellies and years of anxiety quickly fueled other grievances. When the military or civilian authorities demonstrated incompetence, the public often complained strongly. And the complaints became howls of anger when a note of cruelty crept into those sloppy procedures. When General Joe Johnston had his headquarters in Meridian, his command included Choctaw County in which there was an incident that illustrates the attitude of Governor Clark toward overbearing and cruel conduct of military officers. It involved mistreatment by a Lieutenant Brock of Mrs. Martha Cragin. Governor Clark wrote to Johnston in Meridian explaining what had happened, closing with, "To these matters and the question involved, I ask your early attention." To several persons in the county involved, Clark wrote more forcefully:

> If the cruelty charged to him [Brock] can be proven, I doubt not [that] Genl. Johnston, to whom I send your letter, will remove and punish him. But why do you not have him accused before some justice of the peace and a warrant issued? You say that he defies arrest. Has your Sheriff tried to arrest him? Let the warrant [be] issue[d] and your Sheriff *do his duty*. Let him call out, as he can, the force of the county and if that is not sufficient I will assist him. Do not let your civil officers say they *cannot do their duty*. They *must* do it or *resign*.[17]

General Johnston, commanding his somewhat scattered forces from his headquarters in Meridian, was himself getting a slightly tarnished image, whether deserved or not. One of his units was the Noxubee Riflemen, Co. D, 20th Mississippi, which in October 1863 was in the vicinity of Canton. Said a critic singing himself "P. T. F.": "There is nothing transpiring in Johnston's army at present that can interest your readers [of the *Macon Beacon*]; I can by no means make anything readable out of a dull organized camp." He pronounced their camp a dump and their water supply a disgrace. But was that unpatriotic complaining, he asked sarcastically. Then, gaining momentum, he blasted a number of handy targets:

> Our very excellent President [Davis], in his late address to the armies…has declared…that self-denial is the crowning virtue of a soldier, and that all malcontents and sowers of discord are preparing for a harvest of slaughter but that is no reason why this brigade should drink such [stagnant] water and not complain, and when so much better is very accessible.

The writer was also weary of hearing the various military and civilian officials call upon the soldiers for the war to be "vigorously prosecuted":

> Vigorously prosecuted! Those two [words] would make a splendid subject for a leader [*i.e.*, lead editorial]. How many times, Mr. Editor, have you seen them in print since the war began? Can you reckon how many times they have been prostituted to mean and vile purposes? How many blantant [*sic*] patriots have vigorously assented to some vigorous resolution or proposition, and then took the next train for Okolona and vicinity, where he purchased potatoes at two

[17] Gov. Clark, Columbus, Miss., to Gen. Johnston, 6 December 1863; Gov. Clark, Columbus, to John N. LeGrand *et. al*., 6 December 1863; in GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.

> and three dollars per bushel, and other supplies at corresponding rates, and shipped them to Meridian or some camp and disposed of them at eighteen and twenty dollars? Such arrant hypocrites should be hooted from the land; but without reflecting upon any particular individual, wouldn't it be hard to find, in this speculating day, any one to cast a stone…?

Then he mentioned the story of a brave Virginia soldier who was wounded but went back into battle vowing "to live a free man or die a soldier":

> That is what I call vigorous. If this Government, if this people, prosecuted this war as vigorously as that young man, if officials in high places, if aspirants for honors, if vigorous prosecutors who deal in necessaries of life and thereby amass money had but a part of the nobleness of soul of that young man, what a different aspect affairs would wear now….[18]

In the spring of 1864 the Jackson *Mississippian* ran an editorial that released all the pent-up frustrations that Mississippians, especially those recently in Sherman's wake across the center of the state, had been feeling for two years. James J. Shannon in Meridian reprinted the editorial without comment in his *Clarion*, indicating probably that he not only agreed with it but also believed it could not have been better expressed. It suggested that Mississippi was the most abused state in the Confederacy, abused by both the Federals (understandable) and the Confederates (outrageous). President Davis, so the editorial alleged, had made the state "his Botany Bay for incompetent generals."[19] Furthermore,

> There is scarcely a county that has not been penetrated by Yankee thieves, or visited by those paragons of insolence who style themselves Government impressment agents…[who] are oftentimes spurious. She has been literally stripped of her resources, and ground down between the upper and the [nether] millstone[s]. Horses, oxen, bacon, corn &c., have been pounced upon by both parties without mercy.[20]

The editorial said that though the state had endured all this "almost without a murmur," Mississippi had much less productive capacity than either Alabama or Georgia. Yet, with even that little the state had been "remorselessly plundered" by a Confederate force of 25,000 to 60,000 which had been unable to keep her from being further plundered by Federal forces of 30,000 to 100,000.[21] It is an interesting and very telling editorial in that it originated in F. T. Cooper's newspaper, the *Mississippian*, the most important paper in the state's capital, and was copied intact by Shannon's *Daily Clarion*, by then the only daily in Mississippi and thus an organ of consequence.

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[18] *Macon Beacon*, 17 November 1863.
[19] This was an allusion to Great Britain's previous practice of shipping many of its criminals to Botany Bay, Australia.
[20] Meridian *Clarion,* 5 May 1864, reprinted from the Jackson *Mississippian*.
[21] *Ibid.*

The law that allowed private goods to be impressed for public use was somewhat similar to *eminent domain*, and under existing conditions it was perhaps inevitable in the Confederacy. The inability of Southern production and distribution of farm goods and manufactured items to keep abreast of need, the severe impairment of the transportation system, and perhaps even the reluctance of some Southerners to contribute to the war effort, all of these made some such procedure necessary. The unpopularity of the program was exacerbated by the clumsiness of some governmental agents, and especially by the possibilities it opened to those rascals who pretended to be acting for the government. But even when confiscations were legitimate, farmers often resented the taking of their hard-earned produce, especially when the price offered by the government was below what the producers thought they might have received on the open market. Depreciation of currency further complicated a delicate situation. Thus, impressments became something of a disaster, one more irritant that lowered morale and caused dangerous levels of civilian disaffection.

In some cases the government was not to blame, however, as in an early example of bogus impressment agents in Daleville. Several persons were going about the area in April 1861 representing themselves as agents of the state authorized to seize horses for the state's use. One of their victims, Elisha Mosley, challenged them to produce a token of their authority. When they could not, he notified Jackson. Mosley was supporting a large household of twenty-seven, including two daughters and their six children. He needed his horses.[22] As this illustrates, impressment was a system that almost invited fraud.

It was in 1863 that the program of impressment became earnestly pressed; and Lauderdale County, because of its military importance, felt the full force of the law. Major W. H. Dameron, Chief of Commissary, had his headquarters in Meridian as did also Capt. John T. Schaaff, who was appointed to the agency in November of 1863.[23]

In the latter part of 1863 the state issued a list of goods liable to impressment and the prices to be paid, prices that varied slightly among the several districts of the state. Another list was published in July of 1864; and though a comparison of the two shows the effects of inflation, it does not show how bad inflation eventually became.[24] By July 1864 the state had been divided into the following four districts (and their counties) for purposes of buying impressed items:[25]

First—Carroll, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Holmes, Issaquena, Kemper, Lowndes, Monroe, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Smith, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Wayne, Wilkinson, Winston, Yalobusha, Yazoo.

Second—Amite, Attala, Bolivar, Claiborne, Clarke, Coahoma, Copiah, Franklin, Jasper, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Marion.

[22] Mosley, in Daleville, to Gov. Pettus, 27 April 1861, in GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.
[23] Meridian *Mississippian*, 21 October 1863; *Macon Beacon*, 18 November 1863.
[24] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863 and 8 July 1864.
[25] *Ibid.*, 8 July 1864.

Third—Calhoun, DeSoto, Itawamba, Lafayette, Madison, Marshall, Panola, Pontotoc.

Fourth—Adams, Covington, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Jackson, Jones, Perry, Simpson, Tippah, Tishomingo, Warren.

In the Confederate government's specifications as to various grades or types of items, one today sees terms that are no longer generally familiar. As we have already seen, the term *to bolt* referred to sifting or treating grain, especially to remove moisture. *Mast*, for feeding hogs and other animals, referred to the acorn and fruit of other forest trees. And though many Americans, especially Southerners have heard peanuts called *goobers*, the old term *pinder*, also meaning peanut, is largely unfamiliar. It was much used in the South, particularly in South Carolina.

The prices paid by Confederate impressments agents did not vary much among the state's four districts, and what differences there were seem to have resulted mainly from the amount of the goods produced in, or at least available in, a particular district. The following table, from the 1864 list, gives the prices paid in Lauderdale's district for a number of important items:[26]

Apples (dried, peeled), bushel of 28 lbs., $5.00
Axes (with handles), $7.00; without handles, $6.50
Bacon (sides, corn fed), per lb., $2.20
" (sides, mast or pinder fed), per lb., $2.00
Beans, bushel of 60 lbs., $3.00
Beef cattle (first class, stall fed), per lb. gross, $ .35
" " (other kinds), per lb. gross, $ .25
Blankets (first class, woolen thread), per pair, $30.00
Brandy (first class, peach or apple), per gal., $8.00
Bricks, (first class), per thousand, $20.00
Candles (first class), per lb., $4.00
" (tallow), per lb., $3.00
Coffee (first class, Rio), per lb., $6.00
" (first class, Java), per lb., $8.00
Corn (prime shelled), per bushel of 56 lbs., $2.10
Cornmeal (prime bolted), bushel of 48 lbs., $2.50
Flour (excellent family), barrel of 196 lbs., $35.00
" (superfine), barrel of 196 lbs., $30.00
Hatchets (new, with handles), each, $5.00
Hogs (fat, corn fed), per lb., $1.20
" (fat, mast or pinder fed), per lb., $1.00
Horses (first class, artillery), each, $1,000.00
" (second class, artillery), each, $800.00
" (first class, cavalry), each, $1,000.00
Lard (good, corn fed), per lb., $2.00
" (good, mast or pinder fed), per lb., $1.50
Leather (good, harness), per lb., $5.00
Molasses (good, West India cane), per gal., $10.00

[26] Meridian *Clarion*, 8 July 1864.

Mules (first class), each, $800.00
" (second class), each, $700.00
Oats (good, sheaf, baled), per cwt., $2.50
Onions (good), per bushel, $5.00
Pans (new, mess, sheet iron), each, $5.00
Peaches (good, dried, peeled), bushel of 38 lbs., $8.00
Peas (good), bushel of 69 lbs., $3.00
Potatoes (good, Irish), bushel of 69 lbs., $5.00
" (good, sweet), bushel of 69 lbs., $2.00
Rice (good), per lb., $20.00
Salt (good), bushel of 50 lbs., $15.00
Soap (extra, hard), per lb., $ .75
" (soft), per lb., $ .30
Socks (woolen, for soldiers), per pair, $2.00
Sugar (choice), per lb., $3.00
Tea (good, green), per lb., $15.00
" (good, black), per lb., $10.00
Vinegar (good, cider), per gal., $3.00
" (good, manufactured), per gal., $2.00
Whiskey (good), per gal., $5.00

In administering this sensitive program, Major Dameron tried to explain that it was not his purpose to impress small amounts of goods intended for family use. He instructed his agents, when in doubt, to err on the side of restraint and to accept simple affidavits by the owners that the goods in question were for private use and were not to be sold or bartered. The two exceptions allowed by the Major were those of bacon and beef which, he said, were in such short supply and were so important to the military that he was, with regret, authorizing their seizure wherever found. He explained another difficulty he faced: private speculators were willing to pay such high prices for commodities that his agency often could not compete. Impressment seemed the only recourse.[27]

In addition to the government's purchase of privately-produced goods, there was also a policy for the seizure, for limited periods of time, of horses, wagons, and slaves. The schedule included the following reimbursements in the summer of 1864:[28]

- Hauling, per mile - $5.00.
- Hire of 2-horse team, wagon and driver, rations furnished by owner, per day - $10.00; rations furnished by Government, per day - $8.00.
- Hire of 4-horse team, wagon and driver, rations furnished by owner, per day - $12.50; rations furnished by Government - $10.00.
- Hire of 6-horse team, wagon and driver, rations furnished by owner, per day - $15.00; rations furnished by Government - $12.50.

[27] *Macon Beacon*, uncertain date, but on microfilm roll at Miss. Dept. of Archives and History this item is between issues for 21 October and 4 November 1863.
[28] Meridian *Clarion*, 19 July 1864.

- Hire of laborer, rations furnished by owner, per day - $2.00; rations furnished by Government, per day - $1.50; hire of laborer per month, rations furnished by Government - $25.00.

The Commissary Department even allowed the shipment, by families, of goods for private consumption outside Mississippi. Private persons wishing to make such shipments had merely to apply to Major Dameron in Meridian, and he would grant an order for shipment of any provisions for family use.[29] This, of course, did not apply to beef and bacon, which Dameron had earlier excepted. I have seen nothing in the records to suggest that Major Dameron was other than honest and able in his efforts to show every consideration to private civilians and at the same time meet the needs of the military.

Major Dameron appears to have been both a conscientious officer and an affable fellow devoted to his family. When still a captain, he was appointed on 23 May 1862 to be assistant commissary in the Provisional Army of the Confederate States, and he probably arrived in Meridian at about the same time that General Johnston made that city his base of operations in the summer of 1863. As early as October of that year Dameron wrote from Meridian to tell his wife about his efforts to make the best of his time away from her. "You would be astonished to know or to see how good a cook I am." But Dameron's cooking must have been only an occasional task; for he had acquired one servant, a man whom he instructed in the culinary arts and finally declared to be "a good cook." Somewhere Dameron managed to borrow a cow that furnished him with fresh milk for breakfast and dinner (noon meal). "I eat no supper," he told his wife, "taking dinner late, or eating enough to last till next day." He had also acquired a good horse and buggy. In fact, the only thing he still desired was "a sweet kiss from my dear sweet wife." "But," he added, "I must bide my time, do my duty, and she will love me the more and I respect myself the better." "I have spent more money," he told her, "than I make, as few can avoid doing in my situation and be honest." And with a considerable amount of speculation and jobbery going on, both among civilians and military personnel, Dameron found especially repulsive the amount of corruption he saw, the "vile speculators" who missed no opportunity to enrich themselves at others' expense.[30]

The following May 1864, shortly after Sherman's destructive raid on the area, Dameron brought his wife up to date on his situation. He attended church services when there was a minister at one of the two churches in Meridian, Baptist and Methodist. But since neither church had a regular minister, Dameron had to depend upon visiting clergymen or military chaplains. But despite the damage done three months earlier by Sherman, Dameron told his wife in early May that his many good friends had kept him supplied with jars of pickles, dried fruit, a bucket of butter, and several other items. As he told his wife, "I live well in this 'starving country.'" And during the cold winter of 1865 he told Mrs. Dameron that the cold weather had brought a light snowfall. However, "When alone in my snug cabbin [*sic*] with a cheerful pine knot fire, my thoughts hover around our own dear hearth…."[31]

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[29] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 June 1864.

[30] Dameron to his wife, Meridian, Miss., 15 October 1863; in the Norton, Chilton, and Dameron Papers, Series 1, folder 8, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, N. C.

[31] Dameron to his wife, Meridian, Miss., 15 November 1863, 6 May 1864, and 27 January 1865, in *ibid*.

Shortly after Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor was appointed in the late summer of 1864 to command the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana, and had assumed his duties in Meridian, he attacked one aspect of impressment abuse, the appointment of provost-marshals (military police) to commandeer private property. The practice created a situation in which, as Taylor sarcastically put it, "every little post commander exercised the power to appoint such officials." Taylor elaborated with heat:

> The land swarmed with these vermin, appointed without due authority, or self-constituted, who robbed the people of horses, mules, cattle, corn, and meat. The wretched peasants of the middle ages could not have suffered more from the "free companies" turned loose upon them. Loud complaints came up from State governors [within the Department] and from hundreds of good citizens. I published an order, informing the people that their property was not to be touched unless by authority given by me and in accordance with the forms of law, and they were requested to deal with all violators of the order as with highwaymen. This put an end to the tyranny, which had been long and universally submitted to.[32]

While Taylor's efforts perhaps lessened the abuses, they did not end them. As late as February 1865, at the Circuit Court's docket in Marion, there were several indictments of military officials for improper impressments. All the defendants were represented by Confederate Senator James Phelan and Col. Charles E. Hooker. Greene C. Chandler, Sylvanus Evans, and Confederate Congressman Walter Brooke prosecuted.[33] Oddly, the jury did not reach a verdict; perhaps the obviously-imminent collapse of the Confederacy made the issue seem academic.

The Meridian *Clarion* saw the need for some degree of impressment and commented in early 1864 about the starving condition of many families of men serving in the Army, though the paper's estimate of the corn supply is open to argument:

> There is more corn in the country than was ever known before, but the planters of Lauderdale, Newton, Jasper and Clark[e] counties (and perhaps others) as a general rule, refuse to sell a bushel. There is, then, but one course left, and that should be adopted at once which is for each Commissioner to notify the Board of Police of his county how much corn is wanted for his Beat, and then let the Board order the corn *pressed* as the late law of the State authorizes and directs. This is the only chance, and the sooner it is done, the better. The bad condition of the roads in the prairies above, together with the great pressure upon the Rail Road for transportation, makes it next to impossible to get a supply from that source.[34]

The same shortages of food and clothing that afflicted the civilians bedeviled the soldiers as well, usually more so. Hardships for the man at the front

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[32] Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction; Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955), 254-255.
[33] Chandler, *op. cit.*, 71.
[34] Meridian *Clarion*, 31 January 1864.

provided the opportunity on the home front, especially for the women, to aid directly in the war effort.

A number of women from around the state met at Meridian on 14 March 1863 to organize a statewide Ladies Confederate Soldiers Aid Society. Mrs. J. G. Moore, of Newton County, had led in its organization and persuaded President Jefferson Davis to give it his blessing. The delegates came from local aid societies in the area, including Enterprise, Garlandville, Columbus, Meridian, Stonewall (Marion Station), Aberdeen, and Center Point. Following an invocation by the Rev. W. C. Emerson, the group elected Moore president. Delegates from Meridian were Mmes. T. A. Killy and John T. Ball. From Marion Station came Mrs. S. A. Coleman and a Mrs. Lacey. Moore declared herself "delighted to see that the patriotic fire of 1776 glowed so brightly in the bosoms of the ladies of Mississipi." She stated their goal as that of furnishing clothing, blankets, and other comforts, as well as hospital supplies to soldiers in Mississippi and the other states east of the Mississippi River.[35]

The convention drew up a constitution and made plans to cooperate with, and coordinate the work of, the various local groups whenever they announced themselves. The decision was to hold semi-annual meetings in March and October. They urged similar groups in other states to cooperate with one another and to take the same name as that used by the Mississippi association. They recommended also the following regional arrangement: Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida could send their contributions to the Eastern front; Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, and that part of Louisiana east of the Mississippi might apply their efforts to the "Western Division," the area immediately east of the Mississippi River; and Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, and Western Louisiana could serve the area west of the Mississippi River.[36]

The approach of winter in late 1863 showed the seriousness of the emergency. Major L. Mims, chief purchasing quartermaster for the state, from his office in Enterprise, again put out a plea "for Blankets, or any thing calculated to answer the purpose of blankets, for the army."[37] Meanwhile, the citizens of Lauderdale County could read such disturbing accounts as the following, from a letter in the *Clarion* from Col. O. S. Holland, 37th Mississippi Regiment, in Walthall's Division of the Army of the Tennessee:

> Citizens of Clark[e], Lauderdale, Jasper and Smith Counties…More than a hundred men in my regiment are barefooted. The regiment needs One Hundred and Fifty Pairs of Shoes. Will you send them to us? I must also ask the ladies to send us Three Hundred Pairs of Socks. The weather is very severe and as we advance northward, many a good soldier must fall by the way, unless we are provided with shoes and socks. Do your part. We will do ours.[38]

The next summer, 1864, Capt. C. Blackwood, writing to the *Clarion* from Columbus, Miss., explained that he had been authorized to receive donations for his brigade (Adams' Brigade, Loring's Division, Army of the Tennessee) of socks,

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[35] *Macon Beacon*, 1 April 1863.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863.
[38] *Ibid.*, 10 November 1864.

shirts, pants, and drawers. He suggested that the *Clarion* might find someone who could collect the items and pack them for shipment to the units in North Georgia where, as Blackwood described it, their situation was getting worse:

> This Brigade of Mississippians *have never received donations from any* Aid Society in this State—formerly they were in the State and near home, hence they supplied themselves—but now they actually *need a change of clothing* and hope the good people at home will fully and immediately supply them with a change of clothes. During this campaign it has been impossible for the troops to carry their "knapsacks"…hence many of these brave men have been nearly two months without a change of clothing, and we are now in actual need.[39]

That these efforts continued to the very end of the war is illustrated by a program put on by the LCSAS women on Friday, 24 March 1865, scarcely two weeks before Robert E. Lee's surrender. In it they sponsored an "Entertainment" by a Professor Herr which raised $164 for the benefit of the soldiers.[40]

The several hospitals in Lauderdale County during the Civil War did outstanding work healing bodies and lifting morale. Probably the best, and almost certainly the largest, was the medical complex in Lauderdale Springs, where several hospitals (each with its own name) occupied the grounds and facilities of the former resort. James H. McNeilly, who spent three months in this hospital, described it years later as "very large and well-equipped."[41] Usually called General Hospital, it was perhaps the oldest in the county; for we have already seen that it was receiving patients from the Battle of Shiloh, in April 1862.[42]

Lauderdale Springs' General Hospital always seemed to contain large numbers of patients. Episcopal Bishop William Mercer Green visited the nearby town on 13 April 1863 and recorded in his journal that he found there "a large hospital containing more than a thousand of our sick and wounded soldiers." After the headquarters of the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana had been moved back to Meridian from its exile following Sherman's raid in 1864, the officials ordered the "Camps of Disabled Soldiers" to be moved to Lauderdale Springs. And it was to this place that large numbers of soldiers, recommended by medical examining boards for retirement from the field, were ordered to report, unless they forwarded a written application accompanied by a physician's recommendation for relief from active service.[43]

There is a charming account of how a female attendant at the Lauderdale Springs hospital helped make the Confederacy's last Christmas a bit more

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[39] Meridian *Clarion*, 19 March 1864.
[40] *Ibid.*, 28 March 1865.
[41] McNeilly, "A Good Place to Die."
[42] See, for example, Meridian *Clarion*, 23 June 1864. Though it is possible that "Forrest Hospital" and "General Hospital" were two separate institutions on the same ground, I suspect they were alternate names for the same hospital.
[43] William Mercer Green, "The Civil War Journal of Bishop William Mercer Green," ed. by Charlotte Capers, *Journal of Mississippi History* (July 1946), 8:142; Meridian *Clarion*, 22 June 1864.

festive for some of its patients.[44] Later identifying herself only as "Violetta," she recalled how she and her servant Tempe occupied one of two small rooms of hewn logs and standing a few feet off the ground. A passageway, open at both ends, separated "Violetta" from the other cabin's tenants, a physician and his wife. Outside, she enjoyed the thick pine woods which, at this season, appropriately were covered with a snowfall. The immediate area was covered also with more white, that of the tents filled with the sick, wounded, and dying soldiers. As she later described their situation, "Hospital supplies were scarce, our rations of the plainest." And items that earlier in the war had been considered necessities were now "priceless luxuries."

> Eggs, butter, chickens, [she said] came in such small quantities that they *must* be reserved for the very sick. The cheerfulness, self denial, and fellow-feeling shown by those who were even *partly* convalescent, seemed to me to be scarcely less admirable than the bravery which had distinguished them on the battle field.

"Violetta" had been giving considerable thought to how she and Tempe might prepare some special Christmas food for the patients. It seemed an impossible task. One morning she went to visit some wounded soldiers who had arrived during the preceding night. One of them lay in his bunk, his head and face bandaged and bloody. He had been shot in the mouth and could eat only very soft foods. By his side sat a comrade, also wounded but less severely, who was occupied with trying to feed his friend some corn bread that he had soaked in cold water. "Don't give him *that*!" exclaimed "Violetta"; "I'll make him some mush and milk, or some chicken soup." The helpful soldier set his cup down and, through squinting eyes, said, "Yer gassin', ain't ye?" She assured the skeptic that she was quite serious and at once sent a nurse for chicken soup. It arrived; and while Violetta was carefully feeding spoonfuls of it to the injured soldier, the compassionate friend stood watching, visibly overcome with admiration and emotion. She finished her charitable task, turned to the other soldier, and asked, "Now, what you *you* like?" He hesitated a moment, then replied, "Well, lady, I've been sort of hankerin' after a sweet potato pone, but I s'pose ye couldn't *no* ways get *that*?" "Violetta" looked thoughtful and told herself that this was exactly what she *would* do.

Securing permission from the surgeon-in-charge, the next day, Christmas Eve, she went out among the area's farmers to solicit the ingredients for the feast she planned. The hospital even put at her disposal an ambulance that was eventually filled with a quantity of sweet potatoes, several dozen eggs, and some butter. Heeding the ambulance driver's warning that "them taters has to be taken in out of this cold," she piled all the supplies inside her cabin and, for the next day's preparation, enlisted the help of the physician's wife in the adjoining cabin. After completing her night's rounds among her sick charges, she seated herself at her own fireside and had a supper of corn hoecake, some smoked beef, and a cup of "coffee" made of browned corn.

The night was so cold that "Violetta" did not undress but simply wrapped a blanket around herself and lay down in her bunk. Tempe lay similarly wrapped before the fire. At some point during the night, "Violetta" was awakened by

[44] This concerns an anonymous female known in the records only as "Violetta." Her account is in "The Last Confederate Christmas," *The Southern Bivouac* (February 1884), 2:6, 273-275.

Tempe, who was screaming that an earthquake had hit. There definitely *was* a disturbance, for the boards of the door—they weren't nailed but only leaned against the doorway—were banging noisily. A group of hogs had smelled the potatoes, and one was attempting to enter and have a Christmas feast. An earthquake would have indeed been preferable, said "Violetta" later, for she had always been terrified of swine. "I shivered with terror," she said, "but Tempe now grasped the state of the case, and being 'to the manner born,' leaped forward to execute dire vengeance on the unfortunate hog." Tempe seized a burning stick and mounted a frontal assault upon the surprised animal that, wedged between boards, could neither retreat nor advance. Tempe's cries alerted others in the area, and their quick arrival routed the intruder and its partners. Though "Violetta" did not say they did so, the hospital staff would have been both justified and fortunate to capture the hogs, which would have been a godsend for the holiday season. As it was, the compassionate nurse later reported: "My potatoes were a great success. All who were allowed by their surgeon partook of them. I had two immense panfuls brought to my cabin, where those who were able brought their plates and cups, receiving a generous quantity of the pone and a cup of sweet milk."

The Lauderdale Springs hospital was so large and apparently so well operated that many soldiers, both Confederate and Union, could vividly recall it in later years. Orren A. Hearne, for example, remembered his experience there when a timely case of pneumonia saved him from fighting at Shiloh. With other ailing or wounded soldiers he was sent south to the already impressive hospital where, after recovery, he remained for at least a year as ward master. By the time he left to rejoin a unit in the field and to fight at Murphreesboro, Tenn., he had managed to acquire at the hospital what he later described as "some good and rather fancy clothing." Upon his arrival later at his new command, he was somewhat embarrassed to be met with hoots and catcalls about those clothes. "There goes your hospital rat!" "Come out of them clothes!" and "Oh, what a pretty shirt!" are a sampling of the greetings his comrades offered.[45]

The General Hospital at Lauderdale Springs had an impressive staff that included Dr. John F. Kennedy, a member of a prominent family in the community nearby. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, Kennedy was well educated and had traveled extensively in Europe. Other physicians in the hospital were Surgeon Edward Lea and three men named Thomas, Haldeman, and Furniss.[46] In the summer of 1863, and perhaps longer, Dr. Robert Anderson was chief surgeon.[47] In February 1865 Dr. Robert H. Peel took charge of the hospital and remained until the end of the war.[48] Another physician who served at the hospital was Ferdinand Eugene Daniel, a native of Emporia, Va. He had enlisted at Jackson, Miss., in May of 1861, only to be later discharged to enter the medical field. He was then commissioned as a surgeon with the rank of major and eventually was assigned to the facility at Lauderdale Springs. His assertion that he "had charge" of the hospital, however, is dubious. Nevertheless, he perhaps did serve there to the end of the war.[49]

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[45] Yeary (comp.), *op. cit.,* 322.
[46] *Prescription Book for General Hospital, Lauderdale Springs, Miss.*, pages 49, 53, 65-66, 69, 79; RG 109, chap. VI, vol. 643, NA.
[47] James H. McNeilly, "End of Vicksburg Campaign," *Confederate Veteran* (March 1920), 38:96.
[48] "Dr. R. H. Peel," *Confederate Veteran* (April 1904), 12:190.
[49] Yeary (comp), *op. cit*., 172.

Another member of the staff at the General Hospital was a matron-nurse named Mollie Tample, born in Baton Rouge, La., of French ancestry. In the early part of the war she was serving in a hospital in Columbus, Ky., but by the summer of 1863 was at Lauderdale Springs. "Miss Mollie" was very popular wherever she went; and O. T. Foster, later of Murray, Ky., recalled with pleasure the nurse's considerate attention at "The Springs" after he had been wounded at Jackson, Miss., in August of 1863.[50]

From extant records it would seem that the physicians at Lauderdale Springs often described ailments more fully in their case books than did those in the other hospitals in the county, and it is probable that more serious cases were sent there. The Lauderdale physicians frequently made their diagnoses and prescriptions more impressive by writing them in Latin. For example, in the case of Wesley Hollingsworth, 41st Georgia Regiment, the physician's diagnosis was "Gastritis Chronica" and the prescription "Rx Argenti Nitrat." And "Pulv. Acaciae."[51] On the other hand, they were less dramatic with Samuel Adams, who suffered from typhoid fever and was told simply to take "Whiskey three times a day" for four days.[52] And nothing indicating the contrary, one assumes he recovered. H. W. Cannon and C. A. Thorpe were both diagnosed as having "Ascites," which is rather serious—dropsy of the peritoneum—but their prescription was "Chalybeate water," meaning apparently that they were told merely to drink the water from the nearby springs. Their treatment lasted for several weeks and eventually included dosages of extra iron and sulphur. Their cases finally disappeared in the obscurity of the casebook records.[53] Dr. Edward Lea treated a case of syphilis at Lauderdale's hospital with such medicines as potassium iodide and hydrogenous iodide. Treatment lasted about two weeks, after which the patient was declared "convalescent"—just one more little tragedy in this grandly tragic period.[54]

Chaplain (Capt.) James H. McNeilly was a Confederate who became very familiar with the hospital at The Springs. Around August 1863 he participated in the hard retreating between Jackson and Vicksburg, and the heat and dust of those marches caused him and many others to suffer severe inflamation of the eyes. McNeilly was sent to Lauderdale's General Hospital, where he found a camp of about four thousand men in various stages of illness, convalescence, and malingering. At that time the chief surgeon was the rather renowned Robert Anderson. He was so highly esteemed that he was the personal physician for Joseph E. Davis, elderly brother of the President. In fact, Joe Davis and his wife had followed Anderson to Lauderdale Springs, where they occupied a cabin.[55]

Chaplain McNeilly was assigned to a pleasant room and put under the care of one of Anderson's assistants who was himself an oculist of some reputation. By this time McNeilly was nearly blind; and after an examination, the oculist told him that he had "purulent conjunctivitis, with a strong tendency to granulations." It sounded terrible to McNeilly, who desperately asked, "Do you think it will kill me?"

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[50] "Matron of Kentucky Hospital," *Confederate Veteran* (August 1918), 26:374.
[51] *Prescription Book for General Hospital, Lauderdale Springs, Miss.*, 5.
[52] *Ibid.*, 1.
[53] *Ibid., passim.*
[54] *Prescription Book for General Hospital, Lauderdale Springs, Miss.*, 65 *et seq.*
[55] McNeilly, "End of Vicksburg Campaign," 96.

The oculist replied reassuringly, "No, it's only sore eyes. You will soon be all right."[56]

The Chaplain was favorably impressed by the physicians at this hospital and elsewhere in the Confederacy. But even at The Springs he was chary of the spread of infection. Despite the ignorance in those years of the septic origin of many illnesses and the value of sterilization, McNeilly, whose instincts were strangely ahead of his times, was suspicious of the sponges that the hospital used casually among the patients. With some difficulty he managed to get his own sponge, a "big beautiful sponge," as he put it, as well as his own pan and towels. Subsequently, he stated his conviction that his precautions had kept him from getting gangrene, "although the back of my neck was deeply blistered."[57]

McNeilly observed with interest the various cases and personalities among the patients. Some were recovering from wounds, and others were suffering from sicknesses often unrelated to the battlefield. Said he:

> The wounded men were full of energy and eager to get back to their regiments, but long spells of sickness seemed to have exhausted the vitality of the [other] victims, and they would sit about and talk of their symptoms and whine over their condition. Of course when they got well they went back to service, and in the companionship of fighting men they soon forgot their petty aches and pains.[58]

One day, while passing the tent of one of those whiners who sat sunning himself, Chaplain McNeilly stubbed his toe on a small tree stump that extended aboveground. The whiner, who according to McNeilly "didn't look like he had sufficient energy to make a remark," drawled: "Now, mister, didn't you know you couldn't dig up that stump with your toe? You ought to have better sense. Git you a grubbin' hoe."[59]

McNeilly was very admiring of the work done by the women at and near Lauderdale Springs:

> While I was in the hospital I noticed that the women from far and near were sending or bringing everything they could spare that would minister to the comfort of the sick and wounded. It seemed to me that every home must have been stripped of everything except the bare necessities of life, and the wonderful skill shown by the ladies in making things was equal to that of the men in their discoveries and inventions. The ladies of Dr. Anderson's family made beautiful hats from palmetto growing so abundantly in the South. The loyalty and skill of Southern women has never been equaled.[60]

While at Lauderdale Springs, McNeilly became well acquainted with President Davis's aging brother Joseph, then about eighty. Joseph Davis's home had been ransacked and burned by the Yankees in 1863 during the Vicksburg campaign;

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[56] McNeilly, "End of Vicksburg Campaign," 96-97.
[57] *Ibid.*, 97.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] McNeilly, "End of Vicksburg Campaign," 97.
[60] *Ibid.*

and the Davises, with what they and some of their slaves could carry, escaped to Jackson. When that city became threatened, the family fled farther eastward, finally halting on the Tombigbee River in Choctaw County, Ala. There they found pasturage for their cattle and a deserted three-room cabin for themselves. After three weeks, however, they moved back into Mississippi and took refuge at Lauderdale Springs. It was a healthful, beautiful area; and the military hospital was a godsend for the aged Davis and his ailing wife Eliza. The recent destruction of her home, the subsequent difficult travel, and the rustic cabin in which they lived at The Springs further damaged her health. Eliza rarely left her bed after arriving there. Though her condition was hopeless, it was conforting to her and Joseph that their physician and friend, Robert Anderson, was stationed at the military hospital.[61]

When President Davis arrived in Meridian in mid-October 1863, he took time out of his busy schedule to ride the train up to Lauderdale Springs to visit his brother and sister-in-law. Joseph, many years older than Jefferson, had always seemed more like a father than a brother to the younger sibling, and the Confederate President was heartbroken to find his beloved brother in such an abject condition. He was especially grieved to realize there was little he could do for him. It was perhaps through his initiative, however, that Mississippi's Episcopal Bishop William Green visited Mrs. Davis and administered a last communion. With a heavy heart, President Davis left them to return to his full schedule of duties and travels. Eliza died just after the President had left and was on the train between Meridian and Mobile.[62]

The Davises were Episcopalians; but since there was no priest of that denomination at Lauderdale Springs, Joseph asked Chaplain McNeilly to conduct Eliza's funeral. He performed the duty so compassionately that the two men became close friends. Eliza's body was temporarily placed in a friend's vault in the area until it was later moved to the family graveyard near their home.[63]

After Chaplain McNeilly's eyesight began to improve, he often dropped by Davis's cabin and read aloud to him from, among other books, Horodotus' history of the Persian Wars. Joseph Davis and brother Jefferson corresponded frequently, almost weekly. Chaplain McNeilly was frequently invited to see these letters and noticed how pained President Davis was from the criticism often directed at him.[64]

McNeilly gave a grim description of a common way that Confederate wounded were transported to hospitals and how, on one occasion, a callous and pompous general made one trip even more unpleasant than it would have been.[65] McNeilly, again having vision trouble as a result of his participation in General Hood's disastrous Tennessee campaign, was sent back to General Hospital at Lauderdale Springs. After his condition improved, he decided to spend his convalescence in Mobile. Discovering that the only available transportation was by railroad boxcars and cattle cars, he summoned his courage and made preparations. McNeilly arrived at the station to discover that his train was loaded with sick and injured men assigned to the various hospitals along the railroad. The floors of the cars

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[61] James H. McNeilly, "Last Days of the Confederacy," *Confederate Veteran* (March 1894), 2:71; Hudson Strode, *Jefferson Davis, Confederate President* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 486.
[62] Strode, *op. cit.*, 486-487.
[63] Strode, *op. cit.*, 486; McNeilly, "Last Days of the Confederacy," 71.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] This account comes from James H. McNeilly's "Recuperating in the Far South," *Confederate Veteran* (October 1918), 26:446-447.

were covered with straw and the men fairly well supplied with blankets, but the winter wind coming through the chinks in the sides of the cars must have been an ordeal. With fine irony, McNeilly commented that with straw and blankets the men managed to be "quite comfortable." But the chaplain could find no room except in a slatted cattle car that had been set aside for the "stronger" men. Said McNeilly: "A norther had come, and the wind was very cold and piercing. I was suffering intensely with neuralgia, and I felt that if I were exposed to that wind all night I would not only lose my eyesight permanently, but probably my life."

In addition to the boxcars and cattle cars there was on the train one passenger coach occupied by a brigadier general and his staff, and several of their slaves. The stove gave off a cheerful, inviting heat, but the coach was not for common soldiers. To avoid losing the heat and to prevent intrusions, the doors to the coach were locked and guards stationed at each end. Chaplain McNeilly, though a captain, had no mark of rank on his uniform; so when he went to one of the doors to beg admittance, the general curtly dismissed him with the suggestion that he "go with the men where you belong." McNeilly was furious:

> I scarcely knew what to do after this brutal refusal. While I stood on the platform an elegantly dressed young officer came to the end of the car and, noticing my suffering, asked where I was going and what he could do for me. I did not tell him I was a chaplain, but he said at once: "You must go in this coach, which goes all the way to Mobile." I then told him that I had just been refused admittance. He seemed very indignant and said that he had charge of the whole train and that it was for him to say who should go in any car. He told me to wait there, and…[shortly afterward] put me in a comfortable seat near the stove in the rear of the car….
>
> The brigadier looked at me very contemptuously and angrily, and directly one of his negro servants sat down in the seat by me. Whether sent by his master or not, I do not know, for I was almost unconcscious with pain. But the negro seemed to pity my suffering and went forward and called the surgeon, who was as kind as he could be. He prepared for me a pill of opium and watched over me until it took effect.

McNeilly was much better for the rest of the trip, especially since the unfeeling brigadier general rode only as far as Meridian. A few more officers like this one could have made considerably more onerous the work of the South's hospitals. The chaplain's subsequent recollections were categorical:

> The conduct of this brutal brigadier was so exceptional that I made some enquiry as to his war record; but I could not find that his service was commensurate with his pompous manner and his large personal staff, for I did not hear of his having distinguished himself in battle. I will not try to recall his name, lest I do some man an injustice. I think I have mentioned [elsewhere] that grand "Old Joe" [Gen. Joseph E. Johnston] rode all one night from Meridian to Mobile on the platform on a camp stool rather than take one of the seats offered him by the soldiers on the train.

Other hospitals in the county included one in Marion referred to in a letter from M. H. Whitaker to Governor Benjamin G. Humphreys after the war.[66] And at one time or another there were several in Meridian. The best known was the Wayside Hospital, sometimes called simply Way Hospital. It was in existence as early as November 1863 when the official in charge was Surgeon J. M. Hoyle, assisted by G. W. Pearce and W. L. Scalfe (Scaife?). The post surgeon for Meridian at that time was J. M. C. Smith. The Wayside was in existence right to the end of the war and there is in the National Archives a register of the hospital's patients for 7 January through 1 April 1865. There is also in the National Archives a register of patients, from the first to the twelfth of April 1865, for a hospital in Meridian named the Yandell.[67] Other hospitals, to avoid enemy movements, spent short periods in Meridian. There was, for instance, St. Mary's Hospital of Dalton, Ga., which was in Meridian for a month beginning 5 November 1863, and the Empire Hospital, originally in Atlanta, that was in Meridian for a brief period in 1864.[68]

While the hospital in Lauderdale Springs was perhaps more imposing, Way and Yandell in Meridian were nevertheless important. It would appear, however, that the hospitals in Marion and Meridian handled less-serious cases. The records are not easy to interpret with assurance, but those that I have seen seem to show that the two names Way and Yandell refer to the same institution, perhaps indicating either a change of name or perhaps an alternate name. An extant register of admissions, containing 407 pages, includes patients at both hospitals. The first 360 pages are for Way and are for the period 7 January to 1 April 1865. The remaining pages are for Yandell Hospital, but there is no apparent break, and the same person continued the second section under the name Yandell—the handwriting, ink, and method of listing are the same.[69]

David Wendell Yandell was one of the most prominent physicians and surgeons in America. Born in Murfreesboro, Tenn., in 1826, he enjoyed the advantage of medical training at such institutions as the University of Louisville, as well as experience in hospitals in London, Dublin, and Paris. He simultaneously developed a flair for language and produced some excellent literature in the field of medicine. His personality, beautiful speaking voice, and ability with language made him in later years a very popular teacher of clinical surgery. And though his surgical technique has been described as lacking in originality, he seemed ahead of his time in mechanical skill and in his insistence upon cleanliness, even at a time before the need for sterilization was understood. During his time in the Confederate Army he served under such generals as Bureaugard, Hardee, and Albert Sidney Johnston. Precisely what connection Yandell had with hospitals in Lauderdale County is uncertain. But in the summer of 1863 he was assigned to Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's command when that officer was moving his headquarters to Meridian. On 28 May Johnston requested that Yandell be assigned to his command as medical director, and two days later Secretary of War J. A. Seddon did so.[70]

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[66] See chapter 11.
[67] Henry Putney Beers, *Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America* (Washington: National Archives, General Services Administration, 1968), 186.
[68] *Ibid.*, 184.
[69] *Register of Patients, Way and Yandell Hospitals, Meridian, Miss.*, RG 109, NA.
[70] *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Scribner's, 1936), XX:596-597; *Official Records*, I:24:1:223.

An examination of the register of patients for Way-Yandell reveals that the institutions handled probably several thousand cases just during the last three and a half months of the war. Finding about thirty-four names per page, and multiplying that figure by 202 pages—names were listed on every other page—we arrive at a figure of 6,868. Even with some possible duplication of names, that is a very large number of patients, especially for that short a duration.[71]

Except perhaps for battle injuries, diarrhea was the most common complaint listed at the Way-Yandell Hospital, though diarrhea is often merely a symptom of a more-serious sickness. Other diseases recorded include bronchitis, scabies, pneumonia, "debility," chilblains, rheumatism, toothache, dysentery, syphilis, cararrh, fever, paralysis, typhoid, measles, and one entry that had simply "sick." (By this late date probably almost everyone was sick of something, especially of the war.) On 12 January 1865 there were thirty-one cases of pneumonia and forty cases of diarrhea, all of which were transferred to Marion, Ala. On March 23 Capt. W. McCoy (175th Ohio), Lt. A. H. Lakin (97th Ohio), and Capt. ___ [*sic*] Hanke (4th Ohio) were described as "wounded on the train from Selma" and a bit later as "Yanks going to be Ex"—exchanged? From February 17 on to the end of the list the records tended to be more carefully composed. Through the entire register one finds a large number of patients who were transferred or furloughed to Mobile, Montgomery, Lauderdale Springs, Demopolis, and other places.

There were several hospitals in the Confederacy named Way or Wayside. There was, for example, one in High Point, N. C., and another in Selma, Ala. The one in Meridian was perhaps the best known, probably because there was more military activity in Meridian than in either of the other two places. In early November 1863 the Rev. M. Howard, pastor of the Gainesville, Ala., Baptist Church announced from his pulpit that a woman in that county had offered $5,000 to establish a "Wayside" hospital, probably at Meridian. In addition to medical attention, the hospital would offer food, clothing, and lodging "to all who may be in need."[72] This was apparently the beginning of the founding of Meridian's hospital of that name. Meridian's Wayside was probably the second or third of that name, because the Wayside in High Point was opened in that city's Barbee Hotel apparently on 1 September 1863.[73]

William Pitt Chambers was one of the thousands who came to appreciate the good work of Meridian's Wayside. Having just returned from a furlough at home, he was in Meridian from Wednesday, 28 December, until the last day of 1864; and the town seemed especially gloomy to him. He learned of the desperate plight of Hood's army in Tennessee, and witnessed the removal of government property in Meridian in anticipation of an enemy raid. To add to his distress, the weather was bitterly cold. Chambers tarried around the railroad stations and found them "a sorry resting place after the comforts of home." Though depressed, he was cheered by his belief that everything was in his Creator's hands. Sitting in the sunshine to keep warm, he up-dated his journal.

Where he spent Wednesday and Thursday nights he did not record, but they must have been cheerless. On Friday, however, he checked in at the Wayside Hospital, not because he was ill but because it offered also quarters and meals that

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[71] *Dictionary of American Biography*, XX, 596-597; *Official Records*, I:24:1:223.
[72] *Macon Beacon*, 11 November 1863.
[73] Beers, *op. cit.*, 187; Chambers, *op. cit.,* 346.

were not only free but probably at least as good as anything Ragsdale or his competitors could have provided. Chambers described the accommodations at the Wayside as good. In fact, in his journal he called it the Wayside Home. While there, his spirits were probably lifted at religious services when the preacher spoke of the "New Birth." The cleric, a man named James, was a missionary to Confederate hospitals. Even the terrible wind and rain that night, and the severe cold on Saturday, probably were not enough to erase the pleasant effect created by the Wayside.[74]

Right up to the end of the war the Wayside persevered in its noble mission of ministering to the maimed in body and spirit. And we find it in late March 1865 still working hard in an almost final, and somewhat pathetic, effort to offer a few comforts to its harried guests. It advertised its desire to trade some extra sugar for Irish potatoes, tallow, and beeswax.[75]

Something has already been said about the negative effect that confiscation of private property had on morale, but scarcely less damaging was conscription. At first there was a generous response by volunteers; but as the war became a protracted ordeal of attrition, there was a rise in desertions and an increasing resistance to the draft. Union invasions into extensive sections of the South gave Confederate soldiers, often great distances from their homes, an even more compelling reason to desert or at least to take unauthorized leave. Worry about the safety of their families was demoralizing to already harried soldiers. When desertion became epidemic, there was a yet greater strain on an already-weakened battle line.

How many citizens of Lauderdale County opposed secession and the war, but were subsequently drafted, is probably impossible to know. But there must have been others, perhaps many others, like Meridianite Joshua R. Smith. A native of the county, he was asked during Reconstruction why he had turned traitor, as some put it, and joined the Republican Party. As he explained, his position *after* the war was the same as it had been *before*. He had thought secession unwise, and in the election of 1860 he voted for the Democratic candidate, Stephen A. Douglas. As he later wrote in an editorial, and using the editorial "we":

> We had a choice offered us, almost as good as Hobson's, to enter the ranks of the rebel army or to avail ourself of the 40-day expatriation edict of a quondam President of a belligerent people, (we cannot say power). We preferred not to leave our native country, and we denied the crusader's right to force us away, nevertheless we were compelled to choose and we chose the former. With the ephemeral Confederacy likewise vanished the unholy allegiance to its usurpations. But the four years of bloody war swept like a flood over the country, and the cessation of hostilities permitted people to espouse their own political views, except secession and that was swallowed up in the whirlpool of war. We have resumed our position on the anti-war platform, which declared against war and which says to-day the people would have been better off without it. The people among whom we lived, and whom we loved, deserted us then and forced us to follow them under penalty of death

[74] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 348-349.
[75] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 28 March 1865.

> or expatriation, and to-day, when we look upon the flag to which we pointed them in the day of their reckless enthusiasm, we think how much better would it have been for them and for us had they stood where we did and where we stand to-day.... [76]

It appears that before 1864 opposition in the Confederacy to the conscription laws was not widespread, nor was desertion a particularly critical problem. During the early months of the war, a considerable number of men of eligible age in Lauderdale County were sufficiently supportive of the war to volunteer. And after the volunteer "fever" waned and a draft law had been passed in April of 1862, men tended to submit with reasonable willingness to the inevitable. Lieut. R. L. Henderson had been for a time the enrolling officer for the county, and according to one source[77] was relieved of that duty in early June 1864 in order to take over similar work for the state. Though the record is unclear, he may have been put back into his old job in July. At any rate, he continued to be involved with recruitment and in the summer of 1864 urged all males seventeen to fifty years of age, not already enrolled, to report to him.[78] In the following November he advised all those eighteen to forty-five, who had been detailed by the Bureau of Conscription as well as those who held deferments because of pending applications for detail, to report to him at once "or be considered deserters."[79]

We can detect in these advisements evidence of the deterioration of the system of conscription. There was, quite aside from evasion, an increasingly common practice of trying to be put on "sick detail" or some other kind of detail to avoid more dangerous assignments.

And there were other ways to try to avoid military service. C. A. Reading, general superintendent of the Southern Railroad, reported from Meridian that several soldiers had each proposed to furnish him with "ten able bodied Negro men" to work on the railroad if by so doing they could be exempt from further military duty with the state troops. Reading was having real difficulty keeping his road in operation, so he liked the offer. There is nothing in the record to suggest how the proposition fared.[80] This practice, similar to the hiring of substitutes, was doubtless unpopular with poorer citizens and those who owned no slaves.

In the early part of the war Confederate law allowed a person, liable to the draft, to hire, as a substitute, someone physically fit but otherwise exempt, perhaps because of his occupation. As the war dragged on and created a military manpower crisis, those hired substitutes themselves often became liable for service and, hence, no longer able to take someone else's place. This, of course, had the effect of making again eligible the persons who had originally hired them.[81]

At first the conscription laws allowed exemptions for a number of occupations regarded as critical for the war effort or for sustaining the home front. Schoolteachers, for example, were declared exempt, as were Confederate and state officials, millers, druggists, and some other positions. Clergymen were exempt though

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[76] *Meridian Chronicle*, 14 April 1868.
[77] Meridian *Clarion.*, 6 June 1864.
[78] *Ibid*., 19 July 1864.
[79] *Ibid*., 10 November 1864.
[80] Reading, in Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 13 October 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.
[81] A good discussion of this subject can be found in Albert Burton Moore's *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924).

many of them entered the service as chaplains. Newspapermen also were exempted, but President Davis vetoed a bill that would have extended exemptions to publishers of magazines and similar periodicals. As Albert Moore notes, the exemption system opened up an extensive endeavor, by those who preferred mufti to the uniform, to become involved in some "critical" occupation. Says Moore, "Amorphous drugstores, county schools, mills, salt pits, impromptu shops, and backyard tanneries spontaneously sprang into being."[82]

Realizing how extremely vital to the war effort farm produce was, the Confederate government exempted farmers, with the understanding that they would contract to furnish foodstuffs to the government. Some farmers, however, accepted the contract but then proceeded to keep their surplus for their families or to sell them at a profit. It was noticed that the smaller farmers often seemed to produce more surpluses than did those with large plantations.[83]

Congress passed a new exemption law on 17 February 1864, but it quickly became clear that the new law was not having the desired effect, namely, to make more men available for service and still to allow exemptions based on fairness and on criteria that would keep the home front productive. It was devilishly difficult to distinguish malingerers from those with valid excuses. Also, under this law many civilians were unsure of the validity of their claims for exemption. They often applied anyway and thus could continue as civilians pending the resolution of their cases by the authorities. It was a delaying tactic resorted to by many who saw the advantages to be gained from a sluggish bureaucracy. Even if the exemption was denied, the person might then appeal to Richmond and gain even more time. And if all of this failed, one could then seek to get a certificate of medical disability. Says Moore: "Some who could not by their own ingenuity and the connivance of officials qualify in any of the exempted classes, developed physical disabilities. There was a tendency in some localities for the general health to break down. Those were the days of strange and malignant physical and mental disorders."[84]

Similar to the problem of impressments was that caused by state agents—and probably some frauds posing as such—who at times became overbearing and brutal in their endeavor to round up those trying to escape conscription. Stephen C. Beck, an Illinois soldier on Sherman's Meridian Expedition, later recalled seeing an example of this practice as the Union force was leaving the Meridian area. Beck was traveling perhaps somewhere in the northwestern part of Lauderdale County when his unit passed a large residence. Some of the soldiers went over to one of the outbuildings and found a middle-aged man tied up. When asked what was happening, the man replied that the owner of the place was a conscript agent for the government, and it was the business of such agents to track down every man able to bear arms, to use bloodhounds if necessary, and force him into the army. When asked where the agent was, the man pointed to a thicket nearby. Several Federal soldiers went over to it and found the agent whom they took to their headquarters where his victim identified him. After the Federal officers had heard the evidence, they ordered the conscript agent tied to an army wagon and provided his late victim with a revolver to guard him. As soon as the Federals got back to camp, they put the agent on trial. He was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment on Dry Tortugas, the island prison off

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[82] Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*, 55-58, 90, 111-112.
[83] *Ibid*., 88.
[84] *Ibid*, 111-112.

the coast of southwest Florida, where imprisonment often was the equivalent of a capital sentence. According to Beck, the trial brought out evidence that the agent had caused a number of deaths. More, the agent was to receive a stated amount for every man he succeeded in handing over to the government.[85]

The medical examining boards performed a very critical and sensitive duty. Since it was in their power to free a prospective conscript of the unpleasant duty of leaving his fireside to confront the rigors of the front line, the pressure on them, from both sides, must have been terrific; and we read of charges that they occasionally showed undue bias. The military authorities were sensitive to this danger, and the Department in Meridian issued General Orders No. 135 in which the boards were cautioned not to endorse uncritically any former certificates of physical ineligibility. When a man applied to a board, a new certificate had to be issued on the basis of a new examination. These records would then be forwarded to Surgeon P. B. Scott, medical director in Meridian.[86]

There were at least two examining boards in Lauderdale County. The one in Lauderdale Springs met daily, except Sunday, from nine A.M. to noon. Dr. John F. Kennedy, in addition to his position as senior surgeon in the hospital at The Springs, was president of the board. The Meridian board met every day nine A.M. to noon.[87]

While decisions by medical examining boards aroused suspicion among harried military recruiters, those by private physicians became absolutely unacceptable. The Department in Meridian ordered that since medical examining boards were very conveniently located throughout the Department, any soldier who on the strength of a certificate of disability from a private physician was absent without leave after 26 October 1864, would be regarded as a deserter. The order added, "A rigid enforcement of this order is enjoined upon all Post Commanders."[88]

Beyond mere malingering were the more serious problems of ignoring conscription laws and the sometimes fatal act of desertion. By early 1863 skulking and desertion had become common and were seriously threatening military effectiveness. The total number of absentees at the beginning of 1863 in the armies under R. E. Lee, Braxton Bragg, and John C. Pemberton was about 90,000; by June it had reached 136,000. Obviously the Confederate Army could not long continue to function with such a situation. And yet, trying to stop this drain became increasingly difficult. As Albert Moore points out, even in those parts of Mississippi and Tennessee still controlled by the Confederacy it was almost impossible to get the men out of the thickets, swamps, and mountains. Efforts to do so, however, especially under such vigorous Confederate prosecutors as General Gideon T. Pillow, did have some success. But even supposing a man was captured and sent back to the front, there was usually no way to ensure his staying there. Furthermore, the War Department was unwilling to turn General Lee's army into what would be almost a prison camp.[89]

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[85] Stephen C. Beck, *A True Sketch of His Army Life* (Edgar (?), Neb.: n.p., 1914), 22-23; this is a 51-page pamphlet about the 124th Illinois Regiment.
[86] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 10 November 1864.
[87] *Ibid.*
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] Moore, *op. cit.*, 202, 211, 213-215.

On 22 October 1863 Major D. O. Merwin, assistant adjutant-general at the Office of Conscription in Enterprise, Miss., put out a circular that said: "There are very many subject to military duty who are avoiding by all subterfuges and contrivances, the service [of] their country. I call upon all good and patriotic citizens to give their aid to our struggling cause and country, by advising [the government] of the names and residences of all who are skulking from the army, either deserters or conscripts." He asked the sheriffs and other county officials to report "all deserters and white men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, not exempt by law from military duty."[90]

Military and civilian officials made occasional offers of amnesty to give deserters a chance for redemption. While still in Demopolis, Ala., and before returning to his headquarters in Meridian, Gen. Leonidas Polk issued a proclamation on 13 April 1864 in which he offered amnesty to all deserters or AWOLs.[91] In the fall of 1864 Governor Charles Clark toyed with a similar measure and planned to discuss it with President Davis. The President was to be in Montgomery on 28 September, and Clark hoped that Davis would be able to go farther west to meet him, perhaps in Meridian. Gen. Richard Taylor, by that time commanding the Department in Meridian, informed Governor Clark that Davis would be unable to visit beyond Montgomery but that he [Taylor] would lay the matter before the President.[92]

That Davis liked Clark's idea or whether he ever learned of it is uncertain, but the Governor later issued an amnesty proclamation on November first. He announced that he was authorized by General Taylor to say that "all deserters from the Army and others absent without leave, who will forthwith report for duty, will not be punished by death or any ignominious and grievous punishment." He reminded those concerned that "Deserters have incurred the penalty of death, and if they do not avail themselves of this offered amnesty, the fearful punishment will be inflicted." Clark added that this privilege had been obtained by his "earnest solicitation," which suggests that Davis had given some sort of approval. Clark reminded the public further that if deserters were avoiding service because of their concern for their families, "What assistance can you render them, when you can have no opportunity to labor or care for them, hunted as you will be like wild beasts, and in constant danger of immediate death and fear of capture and ignominious execution?"[93]

Governor Clark sent to all the state's sheriffs a "Circular," dated 16 November 1864, in which he reminded those officials of his proclamation and of their duty under its provisions. They were obliged to make appropriate arrests, and they could call out the *posse comitatus* if necessary. He continued: "Summon those [of the county home forces] especially who neglected to respond to my late call for the militia. All such who will arm themselves, and serve *faithfully and diligently for thirty days* will be excused from the penalties for their disobedience of orders; if they refuse they are, in addition to those penalties, liable to indictment by a grand jury."[94] As for the regular soldiers, the sheriffs were to give each man surrendering himself a

[90] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863.
[91] *Ibid.*, 5 May 1864.
[92] Taylor's telegram, from Montgomery, to Gov. Clark, 27 September 1864, GP, RG 28, vol. 60, MDAH.
[93] Meridian *Clarion*, 10 November 1864.
[94] "Circular to Sheriffs," from temporary executive office, Macon, 16 November 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH.

certificate showing the date, and then send the Governor a list of names, companies, and regiments involved “that I may make my promise sure”; but, he warned,

> Such as refuse or neglect to deliver themselves up must be captured, and if they resist they must be shot. If the force of the county is not sufficient you must have such additional force as may be necessary…. But a few days only can be given before the Proclamation will be revoked, of which you will have notice…. If you perform this duty you will render the highest service to your country in this her hour of peril.[95]

William P. Chambers, returning to Meridian, gives a grim description in his journal of his encounter with several deserters some miles west of the Lauderdale area. In late December 1864 he and a friend, John Self, had left home after a furlough and were heading back to their units:

> After traveling three or four miles, we suddenly came upon a squad of deserters. The first intimation I had of their presence was as I was fording a very small creek. On the opposite bank, partly screened by bushes and less than fifteen feet away stood four men with double barreled shotguns cocked and pointed full at my breast. I was personally acquainted with every one of them—in fact, one of them belonged to my company, and until after the fall of Vicksburg, made a good soldier. I looked them squarely in the face, as I rode by them, and though each one addressed me by name, I made no response.[96]

When the Governor threatened deserters with death, he was not just indulging in rhetoric. Desertion by that date had become practically epidemic, and almost every issue of a newspaper carried lists of those who had taken this desperate step. (Some soldiers charged as deserters were later found to be guilty of nothing worse than being AWOL.) The Meridian *Clarion* often listed at least three or four, and on 17 June 1864 it listed thirty-four. The previous week it had named eighty non-commissioned officers who had deserted from several Louisiana and Mississippi regiments.[97] Some of these deserters probably became fugitives from justice and lived by thievery and murder.

In early June 1864 Dr. J. P. Welch, at his home at Alamucha, was puzzled by what he described as “quite a number” of soldiers passing his plantation on foot. (They may have been some of the last elements of Polk’s army returning from their retreat to Demopolis, Ala.) When he asked where they were heading and why they were traveling in such a manner, they gave what he considered vague responses about being “paroled” and “going home on furlough.” They were heading generally toward Enterprise and claimed to be going to their homes in such counties as Covington, Lawrence, Smith, and Jones. Welch happened to have read a proclamation on desertion put out on 6 June by Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Lee; and suspecting that all these men were deserters, he so informed Lee who was commanding the Department in Meridian.[98]

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[95] *Ibid.*
[96] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 347-348.
[97] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 9 and 17 June 1864.
[98] Welch’s letter, from Alamucha, to Gen. Lee, 9 June 1864; copy in Welch family records.

The consequences of desertion could be grim. On Monday, 19 October 1863, three convicted deserters from the Third Mississippi Regiment, Featherston's Brigade, were shot in front of the command in Meridian. "We hope," said a journalist, "this severe punishment will serve as a warning to others, and that in future we shall hear no more of Mississippi's sons dying so ignominious a death."[99]

It is possible that this was the same execution that Mathew Andrew Dunn later described in a letter to his wife. At any rate, it was also in Meridian and in the same month; and Dunn indicates that another execution was scheduled for later that same week:

> On yesterday our Brigade was ordered out to witness a Scene that I hope my eyes will never behold again—but it is to be the case next Friday. That is Seeing men Shot for Desertion. I Saw three Shot yeste[r]day—they were Seated on their Coffins with their arms confined and blindfolded—the executioners were placed about fifteen paces in front—two were Shot dead—the third one never fell—one of the Non-Com-Officers had him to kill. He walked up to him very deliberately and Shot him through. [T]his was a horrible sight and a painful duty to perform, but the affair was well conducted—one of them had a family—one of them made his escape from the guard yesterday morning before their execution—the Corporal Shot at him twice but failed to Stop him. Skirmishers were immediately thrown out for him when he was found and brought in again—it was him that had to be killed by the Sergeant—this war is calculated to harden the Softest heart—I am very uneasy about Some of our Boys—but my dear you will never hear of that being my fate—I want to live & die honorably.[100]

In another of his letters to his wife, this same Dunn made further reference to the problem of desertions. And since President Davis visited the county at about the same time as those executions on 19 October 1863, it was very likely this same presidential visit that the soldier spoke about in the following passage:

> Jeff Davis Said in a Speech he made in Meridian a few days ago that in a Short time we would hear Some thing that would be cheering to us—So I hope day is beginning to dawn—Every thing seems to be quiet now. I think we will remain here for Some time—Our duty would be very light if it was not for the Deserters we have to guard. Our Cavalry bring them in and we keep them under guard until they can be tried by a Court Martial. Some are wearing a ball and chain which they have to wear during the war and live on bread and water a portion of the time—More of them I expect will be Shot….[101]

In his *Memoirs* Ephraim Anderson tells of witnessing in Meridian, toward the end of the war, the execution of three Mississippians who had deserted and been captured. All the other soldiers in the area attended the execution, said

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[99] Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 15 October 1863.
[100] John K. Bettersworth (ed.), *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), 183-184.
[101] *Ibid*., 184-185.

Anderson, as did even the sisters and parents of two of the condemned. "The kindred of the sentenced men took [their] leave," wrote Anderson later,

> and they were marched out and shot by a file of soldiers. It was a sad, sad scene—one of the horrible accompaniments of war. Under the circumstances, it could hardly be called a necessity, for it was too late to have much, if any, effect. At an earlier period, some benefit might have resulted from such severity, but desertion now was an every day occurrence in conscript regiments; and while thousands of others were only brought back and placed again in their commands, without any punishment, it was a hard fate with these poor fellows, to be consigned to death.[102]

On 22 June 1864 two men of the Fifth Tennessee Regiment were tried by court-martial in Meridian and sentenced to death by hanging. By deserting to the enemy they had forfeited their right to what was regarded as the more honorable death by firing squad. The sentences were carried out probably on 24 June (though the *Clarion* is somewhat vague on that point). The editor of the *Clarion* remarked that he hoped "for the success of our cause and the reputation the Southern troops have won, through the world, [and] that the cause for which these men were executed will be effectually checked." Shannon thought the executions entirely justified as a warning "to others who may have wayward inclinations," adding, "The evil was increased by our leniency at the commencement of the war."[103]

The problem persisted to the end of the war. In mid-December 1864, during a period when Mississippi was bracing for an anticipated enemy thrust from the area around Mobile, William S. Patton took his unit to Buckatunna, from which place he sent a telegram to Governor Clark: "Five deserters cavalry state forces ordered to Mobile captured. What shall I do with them?"[104]

Civil War prisons, on both sides, are notorious in history. It would be difficult to prove which side offended more, though Andersonville Prison, in Georgia, has been most publicized, and it doubtless was one of the worst. Among Southern veterans, Rock Island, Illinois, had one of the worst reputations. An unidentified Meridianite described in 1879 how he and L. D. Belk, a Meridian businessman, had fared years earlier in Rock Island:

> When I go into Mr. Belk's restaurant which I frequently do whether I want anything to eat or not, as he is most splendid company, I can not help contrasting the surroundings there to things as they were at Rock Island Barracks. At Rock Island the bill of fare was: a small loaf of bread, often made of kiln-dried meal…and a diminutive piece of beef—always forequarter, (Belk, what on earth did they do with all the hind-quarters?). And in addition to the little piece of bread and beef, issued daily, we got a mess of grits every ten days and a lot of vinegar always accompanied the grits, and the vinegar

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[102] Anderson, *op. cit.*, 378.
[103] Meridian *Clarion*, 6 July 1864.
[104] Patton's telegram to Gov. Clark, 14 December 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.

wound up the rations business so far as the U. S. Government was concerned—just as soon as the vinegar was issu[e]d Uncle Samuel made a full stop.[105]

In February 1865 several citizens of Lauderdale County were sent as prisoners to Camp Chase, Ohio. One of them, Joel P. Walker, was a Meridianite. Like thousands of other prisoners, both Union and Confederate, he had to live with the physical and emotional stress common to such circumstances. But, unlike most other prisoners, Walker managed to give expression to some of his feelings in the form of a rather moving poem, which Dr. B. F. Duke admired and recalled many years later. The poem is in iambic pentameter characteristic of much of the verse of the eighteenth century. Duke remembered the poem as follows:

Almighty God, Eternal Sire and King!
Ruler Supreme, who all things did create;
Whose everlasting praise the angels sing;
Whose thought is mercy, and whose word is fate.

Trembling before thy awful throne I kneel,
Beseeching mercy at thy gracious hand;
Praying that in compassion thou wilt heal
The bleeding wounds of this most suffering land.

We know our sins are manifold, O God!
And that thy anger ’gainst us is but right;
For we have wandered widely from thy Word,
And things committed wrongful in thy sight.

But thou, O God, art powerful to save!
Full of love and full of mercy art thou:
Else had I not the courage thus to brave
Thy righteous wrath, and at thy feet to bow.

O’er all our land where late the genial air
Struck rustling music from the waving grain;
Now the sad earth lies stark and bare,
And groans beneath the burden of our slain.

O’er all our hearths where late the genial fires
Beamed bright on scenes of innocent delight,
Now little children vainly call their sires,
And fly their burning homes with sad affright.

But as thou led’st thy chosen people forth
From Egypt’s sullen wrath, O King of kings,
So smite the armies of the cruel North,
And bear us to our hopes [homes?] on eagles’ wings.

[105] *Meridian Mercury*, 20 December 1879.

But if thy wisdom still defer the day—
The wished-for day when freedom shall be won—
Grant us the humility to say:
"Not human will, but thine, O God, be done!"[106]

On 29 January 1864 five prisoners escaped from the stockade prison in Meridian, which caused this snide report in the Meridian *Clarion*:

> Five prisoners confined here in the rickety building known as the "prison house," made their escape on Friday night and are now at large. Two of them, George H. Dunford and J. S. Tibbets, are spies; the third Capt. V. B. O'Neal, of the 2nd Kentucky cavalry, is under sentence of death, for desertion and murder; the fourth, Geo. M. Pate, is a bushwhacker and Tory; and the fifth, L. Volentine [*sic*], of this state, is accused of harboring deserters. We are not at all surprised at their getting away; our only astonishment is [that] so few escape.[107]

Perhaps few fugitives actually reached safety, but several escapes, both successful and otherwise, from this "rickety" prison are on record. Another episode involved twenty-three Union prisoners, one of whom, Emmet C. West, left an account of it. He was captured in western Mississippi and spent a brief stint at the Meridian facility with Stephen Woodward, M. G. Ellison, John A. Brown, Thomas Howard, Horace Gibbs, Joseph Corning, Willis Lashure, Martin Oleson, William Whiting, Edward Pierce, William C. Albee, E. A. Fisher, Moses Goodwin, John Laudon, Matt Landgraff, Peter Donoher, William McCormick, Scott Rensimer, James Cook, William P. French, Josiah Williams, and James Logue. All except Logue lived to reach Union lines. All were from Company E, Second Wisconsin Cavalry Regiment except Williams and Logue, who were from Company F. Emmet West afterward described the journey to Meridian:

> The next day we crossed the Big Black river and marched to Canton, 15 miles, and were put on an old freight car, and taken to Meridian and were put in the stockade there. They gave us some corn meal which we boiled in a kettle and ate the best way we could. [William] Whiting was paroled at Meridian, having found friends through being a [M]ason. After two or three days they put us on a car and our next stopping place was at Selma, Ala., where they kept us in the streets a long time in a hard rain. At last we moved on and finally reached Cahaba, Ala., and were put in the prison there….[108]

Greene C. Chandler described in later years how his brief time in the state militia during the latter part of the war involved the Meridian prison. He helped

[106] Joel P. Walker, "Prayer for Submission in Prison," *Confederate Veteran* (February 1900), 8:64. Verse five, line three, seems to lack two syllables which may have been lost in transcription. One possible addition that could restore proper meter is "Now the sad earth lies *ever* stark and bare."
[107] Meridian *Clarion*, 31 January 1864.
[108] Emmet C. West, *History and Reminiscences of the Second Wisconsin Cavalry Regiment* (Portage, Wisc.: State Register Print, 1904), 16.

recapture seven men who had escaped. They were, he wrote, "more than half-starved," so he gave them breakfast at his home and returned them to Meridian.[109]

The prison at Meridian[110] was probably situated next to a growth of pines immediately west of present-day Twenty-sixth Avenue, just north of the railroads. It apparently stood quite near the street, for it was only one block from the Jones Hotel which, as we have seen, was very likely on what is today the corner of Twenty-sixth Avenue and Fifth Street. The prison was a crude stockade that covered about an acre, its walls consisting of sixteen-foot logs (probably pine) standing on end and sunk to a depth of two or three feet in the earth. Near the top, and along the outside, was a walkway from which guards could peer down into the enclosure. The only entrance was at the front where guards stood duty during the day. At night extra guards stood watch on the catwalk along the outside of the wall. Inside were at least two log cabins, each of which could accommodate twenty to thirty men. Though such segregation was perhaps not always rigidly enforced, one cabin was for Confederate conscripts, deserters, etc. It was off-limits to military personnel, guilty of lesser misdeeds, who crowded into the other cabin. There was, in effect, another stockade nearby, but it was operated as a sort of hospital where the worst cases of sickness were "accommodated."[111]

The stockade's water supply, described by Jesse Hawes as "abominable," came from a hole in the ground about six to eight feet deep. When the water had been undisturbed for ten or twelve hours, as at night, it collected about a foot of *relatively* clear water. Those who reached it first in the morning found it thus, but during the day it became fouled by the many users who stood at the bottom of the pit with their tin cups to dip up the murky liquid. And since this only source of water was a mere fifty feet from the "sink," into which as many as several hundred prisoners dumped their refuse and excrement, it is obvious that the prisoners' walfare did not have high priority. As Hawes later wrote, "No prisoner with us ever saw a cup of clear, clean, palatable water in Meridian, and the quality of the water was an explanation of the severe typhoid fever and chronic diarrhoea seen there."[112]

Hawes and his fellow soldiers had been captured at the Battle of Tupelo, 13-14 July 1864. They were loaded onto a train that was also bringing wounded Confederates south, probably to the hospital at Lauderdale Springs. Hawes and his group arrived in Meridian early in the evening and were taken at once to the stockade, which was then apparently uncrowded. They had already received some supplies before arriving in Meridian, so they needed only to give their names to the provost marshal before moving into the log cabin assigned to them. Already there were a dozen or so others, one of whom was an injured black Union soldier who had been captured near Memphis while defending his post. Another person in the hut was a man from Skowhegan, Maine, who had been living for years in Alabama but had managed to avoid conscription. There were also some Confederate deserters and a few conscripts awaiting return to their regiments. One of the others was an elderly man who, said Hawes, "would have been noticeable among hundreds":

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[109] Chandler, *op. cit.*, 71-72.

[110] The following account is from the detailed description by Hawes, *op. cit*. In later years Hawes was a physician, and his interest in medicine no doubt gave his extended narrative of the Meridian prison the benefit of an educated curiosity.

[111] *Ibid.*, 112-114, 280, 283.

[112] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 346.

> His tall form was stooped; his long hair, once as black as night, was now streaked with gray, and brushed back from his brow, showed a noble forehead, but most remarkable were his keen, flashing eyes. The guards always mentioned him as a political prisoner against whom a more than common crime was charged; apparently he was a leader of uncommon sagacity and force. He never conversed with our men; he would only answer questions briefly, always with urbanity. With Confederates he was scarcely more communicative. I have always been deeply interested to know his fate.[113]

Hawes and his exhausted fellows fell asleep quickly. After they had been up for two or three hours the next morning, a sergeant entered the compound and asked for the leaders of their group. The new prisoners had chosen no one, but the others asked Hawes to serve. Thus, as "captain" or commissary for the group, Hawes chose two others to help him, and the three walked down to the Meridian commissary area and got two-days' rations of meal and bacon. Each man's daily share of cornmeal was somewhat less than a pint and a half, and Hawes estimated the amount of bacon as "equal in size to the index and middle fingers." The meal was coarse and contained bits of cobs and husks, and the bacon was often "rusty" or "wormy." Said Hawes: "I am safe in saying that there was no day when a man with an ordinary appetite would not only be able to eat his supply of food but be hungry for another ration of equal amount." They received nothing else except a small quantity of salt. For cooking, the prisoners received cast-iron kettles, some with tops and some without, one to each squad of ten men. Their "coffee" was made by browning meal in the kettle and then boiling it in water. The kettle was used also to boil cornmeal mush, to bake cornbread, and to fry the bacon. Thus the kettle was much in use, what with two "messes" of five men each using it three times daily. It was an excellent regimen for losing excess weight.[114]

Later that first day Hawes was called in to see Provost Marshal J. J. Fitzpatrick. Observing that Hawes was from Illinois, Fitzpatrick remarked that he had once lived only twelve miles from Hawes' home. That helped establish something of a common interest and they became fairly well acquaianted. The Provost Marshal, born in Ireland and reared in Illinois, had moved to Mississippi several years before the war as a railroad contractor. Shortly after the war began, he became provost marshal in Meridian, and, according to Hawes, had apparently made some money out of the job. Hawes described Fitzpatrick:

> To me he was always pleasant, sometimes even "chatty," seemingly on account of having lived in a portion of Illinois in which I was acquainted. To all others he was harsh, vindictive, cruel. One of his peculiarities was that he always gave his orders for the punishment of prisoners with such a smile on his face as most men wear when performing an act that gives them pleasure, and such as is expected to please the recipient. His face at such times wore none of the lines of hatred. "Pud," our Iowa boy, after studying him carefully for a long time, declared he was the man whom Byron had before him when he described his Corsair,

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[113] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 107, 111, 113-114.
[114] *Ibid.*, 114-115.

"As mild a mannered man
As ever cut a throat or sunk a ship."

Hawes and the others had not been in the Meridian stockade long before they were shipped out to the much larger prison at Cahaba, Ala. The change came just as he and one other man had begun to plan an escape.[115]

But Hawes' association with Meridian had not ended. On 19 October 1864, some two months later, he and a large number of other prisoners were sent by steamboat and train to Meridian, where the small stockade, designed for scarcely a fourth that many, was swamped by the arrival of about 400 Union prisoners.

Hawes again went through the ritual of receiving rations and began again to try to acclimate himself to the place. Only a few of the new arrivals could squeeze into the one log cabin assisgned to them; the rest had to sleep outside. But there was an advantage here that was not offered at Cahaba: The prison commander allowed some of the prisoners the use of an axe to cut firewood outside the stockade and to try to get materials with which to make a shelter. As commissary, Hawes was allowed outside the stockade each day and thus was enabled to search for scraps or odds-and-ends that could serve as tools. There wasn't much lying about, but he did find a plank about six inches by three feet. The real discovery was a battered tin baking pan.[116]

During the next few weeks there were the usual attempts to escape. One young man named Ordway fashioned a crude saw from a table knife and tried to hack through two of the upright logs in the stockade wall. He labored for several nights only to be discovered before he had completed his work. Provost Marshal Fitzpatrick later declared that he had already found out about the plan, but delayed stopping Ordway in order to increase his own pleasure in making the prisoner work even harder to no purpose. Fitzpatrick forced the would-be fugitive to saw both pieces of timber into small pieces the size of his knife's blade and then split them into kindling. And the work was, of course, done with the crude saw. Then, this good kindling went not to the prisoners but to Fitzpatrick.

Another escape attempt was somewhat more successful. The plotters included the following: Andy Conn, George Trenaman, and Hamilton J. Buffington, of the 47th Illinois; a man named Tubbs, who had deserted from the Sixth Mississippi early in the war; and a man named Green. After escaping and wandering erratically toward Union lines in Vicksburg, they met a slave who told them that they were still only three miles from Meridian! Somehow they had turned. But they got help from some Union sympathizers and actually walked to within about thirty miles of Vicksburg before being recaptured. Buffington, however, fell ill, became separated, and finally reached Union lines.[117]

Hawes and several of his fellow prisoners, by considerable begging, received permission to go with a guard a short distance outside into the pine thicket nearby to get armfuls of boughs to spread on the ground as a protection from dampness. It took much cajoling and a complaint that one of their number was sick with a fever from sleeping on the ground. By now the October nights were getting

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[115] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 116-117.
[116] *Ibid.*, 277-279.
[117] *Ibid.*, 285-331.

nippy; and when it rained, the prisoners generally sat "hunched up" on the ground with knees drawn up against the chest and the head resting on the knees, or else cross-legged—"Turkish fashion," as Hawes put it—with an elbow on the leg and the hand supporting the head. Not a good way to sleep but better than lying on the wet ground. On dry nights, said Hawes, "two or three would sleep side by side, 'spoon fashion.'" Matters were a little better when, after about three weeks of collecting bits of materials, Hawes' mess managed to build a hut. They drove two forked limbs, each about three feet high and both five feet apart, into the ground. Then they laid a stick across the two forks. From the cross-limb they laid boards and sticks slanting backward about four feet to the ground. To afford a little more protection against rain, they piled earth, chips, sod, etc., on top of this lean-to, and then closed the sides as best they could. Thus, the shelter allowed them to put their heads to the back, and only their lower legs extended outside. It was laborious work for men in their physical condition and they made only six or eight of them. These extremely crude covers at least alleviated somewhat the discomfort of exposure to the weather.[118]

Nevertheless, bad health afflicted in some degree the entire group of prisoners. Sometimes a case of illness was so severe that the victim's senses were dulled. Such prisoners were perhaps among the more fortunate. Hawes, who in later years become a physician, wrote somewhat clinically of the cases of diarrhea, dysentery, dyspepsia, ague, and all the other symptoms of deteriorating health that ran the course "from cramps, pain, fever, thirst, headache, backache, and groans to whining, dulness, stupor, and at length to kind death, that terminates all of these." He continued:

> As an example, I recall a tall young boy, a member of the [114th] Illinois Infantry. When I first noticed him, he had just begun to have diarrhoea and dysentery. The miserable polluted surface water, the coarse meal, poorly cooked, the exposure to the cold rains, had produced their legitimate results, and he was going often to the "sink" [latrine]. A few days later his journeys were fully as frequent, but his steps were slower, his face more hollow, his eyes more dull. He growled at first, then complained in a hollow voice; the lines of pain and long-suffering deepened upon his face; his steps grew slower, weaker, sometimes staggering; he neglected to fasten his clothing; feces ran from his bowels as he slowly dragged himself to the "sink." A day later he sat all day resting his chest upon his knees, his head falling forward. The next day he lay upon his side on the ground; some one gave him all he had—some boughs of pine—for a bed. He was too weak to go to the "sink" now. The drawn, haggard, suffering face showed less of the agony he manifested a few days before, and more of weakness, dulness. The eyes grew more sunken, the discharges from the bowels were only a little bloody mucous. He could answer questions if one asked him anything; he asked occasionally for a cup of water, never for food. He was getting more stupefied. During the day we placed over him whatever we could to render him as comfortable as possible. I went to him in the night—he was only a few feet away from us—and found him dead.
>
> A cold rain started in before morning, and at daylight some one pulled off his ragged garments to cover his own shivering limbs. A detail of our men

[118] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 281-282.

bore him out of the gate and left him where he was enduring less of suffering than those of his comrades he had left in the stockade.[119]

One of the many terrifying effects of this sort of confinement was its invoking and nurturing of the animal instincts that we all have in us and that circumstances can quicken. Hawes commented on the never-ending influx of prisoners, many of them conscripts and deserters, who often entered with relatively good clothing and perhaps some bedding. On such occasions many of the more desperate cases took silent notice of these new opportunities. Hawes described the result:

> A common method of securing blankets and clothing was to mark those who were well supplied, wait till it was known that they were ordered to the front, and "appropriate" their property; blankets, shirts, socks, anything was acceptable. The train for the Rebel front left Meridian in the morning before daylight. During the night preceding men rendered desperate by their long suffering from cold would pass near the conscripts sleeping upon the ground or in their house, snatch from the sleeping forms their covering, or from beneath their heads a bundle containing socks, shirts, or drawers, toss them to a comrade standing, waiting, and ere the victim could realize the situation both had disappeared into the shadow. Then, upon the part of the conscript, would be cursing, wrath, and gnashing of teeth; but his fuming would be useless. To find his blankets during the night would be an impossibility, and before the dawn a guard of Confederates would enter the stockade, call the names of those who were to pass out, the line would be formed, the command "forward" given, the gate would close behind the departing column of Confederates, and many who had not known a night of comfort for weeks would, on the following night, wrap themselves in a luxury they had not known since their captivity.
>
> But such foragings were not unattended with danger to our marauder. Often the Rebels would keep one of three or four awake, and when a hand would be outstretched to grasp the prey, swiftly would a club wielded by a brawny Rebel arm descend upon the member with severe effect….

Hawes rationalized that the Rebels, once outside, could probably procure new supplies, while the wretched prisoners had probably themselves been the victims of such thievery. It reminded Hawes of the Bible's verse to the effect that people "borrow of their neighbors and repay not."[120]

There was one bright spot in Hawes' sojourn in Meridian's prison—his acquaiantance with Sergeant Nichols, a young native Mississippian of a fairly good education. Hawes described him as "the only man I met in the Confederacy [with one exception] [*sic*] who ever manifested to me the least feeling of sympathy for us in our hard treatment, and who expressed a desire to ameliorate our condition." But Nichols was powerless, in his work in the Confederate Commissary at Meridian, to do anything to help the prisoners. One day when Hawes was outside getting his group's

[119] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 283-284.
[120] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 232-234. Hawes was perhaps recalling Psalm 37: "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth."

rations, he met Nichols who declared himself fed up with the way his superiors were running the prison; he was going back to his regiment. Hawes pleaded with him not to think of leaving since it would just worsen their situation. They discussed it:

> It was a pleasant afternoon that day [wrote Hawes], and he and I sat down upon the outside of the stockade for a half hour of conversation upon the matter. I secured his promise that he would remain though I felt assured that his duty was to him one most irksome. He knew as well as we, and so stated at that time, that men in charge of prisons very rarely had any regard for the welfare or comfort of their captives.[121]

At some point during his second confinement at Meridian, Hawes and a number of other prisoners worked on a plan of escape similar to the one which had been interrupted earlier by the move to Cahaba. The idea was to dig a tunnel from one of their lean-to huts, preferably one as close as possible to the stockade wall, to a point outside the stockade. Picking the best spot to begin, they started digging and pushed the job as fast as possible. It required about three weeks. If that seems a long time to dig a tunnel only about twenty feet long, consider that they were not in the best of health, that all dirt had to be placed in haversacks and carried over to the latrine—and they had only two or three haversacks—that all work had to be done at night, and that near the latrine there stood a guard whose suspicion they could not afford to arouse. In addition, they had to assume that not everyone in the compound could be trusted. And finally, their only tools were a wooden knife, a spoon, and a small tin cup.

At last the tunnel was completed. All that was needed was a suitable night, preferably moonless, or perhaps even a rainy one. An acceptable night soon arrived. As a cover, a group of prisoners gathered around the strategic hut to sing, romp, or talk boisterously so as to distract the guards' attention and to drown out any tale-tale noises. Nor must the guards see too many prisoners going into so small a hut, without some coming back out. The exciting story is best told by Hawes:

> At length the "boys" settled down to singing the songs so familiar to our soldier life—the "Red, White, and Blue," "Star-Spangled Banner," "We Are Coming, Father Abraham," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," etc. The guards remarked that "the Yanks are having a mighty jolly time to-night"; but as we all seemed in good humor, no opposition was offered to our "enjoyment." More than thirty had entered the tunnel and escaped before I could squeeze myself in; so many were anxious to do the same thing, and it was so essential we should arouse no suspicion by a squabble as to who should go first, that I deemed it best to exercise patience. At length I crawled into the house and down into the tunnel; along its cramped sides and muddy bottoms I dragged myself, until there was only two or three feet more to crawl through, and I would be out into the open air and outside the stockade. The tunnel was jammed full of men. In front of me was an Ohio boy; just before him was a young Kentuckian, who had just emerged into the open air; behind me was a big fellow from Illinois, and between us hardly an inch of space. Every nerve was thrilled, every muscle tense; liberty was just ahead of us. The man in front of me had just pushed his head outside the tunnel when I heard the cry "Halt!

[121] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 344-345.

> Halt!" and the sharp report of a gun. Its flash lighted up the tunnel, for it was directly in front of us; the Ohian stopped and began to crawl backward, and a reversed action was inaugurated along the whole line of creeping men. In a few moments I was back in the house, muddy outside and sick at heart within. From the Ohio boy ahead I learned the cause of our disaster. The Kentuckian was beside himself with excitement, and instead of creeping carefully away from the stockade until he should be beyond fear of creating an alarm, as soon as he was fairly outside and able to raise himself to an erect posture, he stood for a moment trembling with excitement, then sprang forward with all possible speed. Of course he was instantly seen, ordered to halt, and a bullet sent in close proximity to him brought his short but brilliant (?) career to a close. Oh, how mad we were at the idiot! Indeed, the fact that he was brought back was some consolation to our disappointed souls.

Shouting oaths, the prison officials rushed into the compound, found the tunnel's entrance, and proceeded to tear down every lean-to. Once again the prisoners all slept as they dined—*al fresco*. It meant the end of "privileges" and the beginning of a much stricter system. As far as Hawes knew, not one of the thirty-nine who had managed to get through the tunnel made it to Union lines.[122]

To those running the stockade the episode was one more embarrassment, for they had already been warned the preceding June by Gen. S. D. Lee, commanding the Department at Meridian. At that time he had made a new ruling:

> The escape of prisoners having become of common occurrence, officers in charge of Guard Houses from which any prisoner in future may escape will be held responsible, unless they bring the parties responsible for such to account. Upon the escape of any prisoners a special report will be made to these head quarters, giving the circumstances of the case, accompanied by charges against the responsible party.[123]

On at least one occasion Federal prisoners in the Meridian stockade put their complaints on record. On 1 February 1865 Capt. John T. Hesser, of the 61st Illinois, and Capt. David D. Negley, of the 124th Indiana, wrote a letter to the commander of the Meridian post, Capt. J. H. Trezevant:

> We are at present confined in a stockade with a lot of Confederate prisoners who are there for most every offense, and many of them are bad characters, disposed to steal everything they can lay hands on. Our quarters are heated by a fire built in the center which fills the apartment with smoke. The grounds surrounding them are very filthy, the whole having been used as a common sink. We would respectfully ask that we may be granted a parole and be assigned to certain limits outside the stockade. We have at times been allowed the privilege of a parole, which privilege we have in no respect violated.

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[122] Hawes, *op. cit.*, 334-338.
[123] Meridian *Daily Clarion*, 2 July 1864.

Confederate Capt. W. R. C. Lyons, 25th Louisiana, corroborated their claim to having fulfilled the terms of their parole, during his charge, though they had had opportunities to escape.

Capt. Trezevant, to whom the request had been addressed, was absent; and John M. Morey, post adjutant, passed the letter on to Col. W. R. Miles, who was also absent. It therefore fell to E. Surgent, assistant adjutant-general in Meridian, who wondered whether they could not do something to keep Federal prisoners separate from the Confederates; and Post Adjutant Morey suggested that the cartel between the two governments required at least the separation of officers and enlisted men. At that time the little stockade contained about seven hundred Federal prisoners; and, as Morey acknowledged, "The sanitary condition of the Federal stockade is even worse than that of the Confederate." (Either he meant *hut*, not *stockade*, or else perhaps a second stockade had been built.) He noted that the Federal officers had offered to build their own separate facility if the Confederate authorities would let them.[124]

How the affair ended, or whether it was ended only by the end of the war three months later, is not in the record. But Meridian's crowded little military prison certainly had a hideous reputation that, had the prison been larger, might have been far worse. Its grim routine was scarcely mitigated by occasional humanitarian gestures. But one such gesture came in late February 1865 when Confederate Gen. D. H. Maury replied to a Federal effort to have clothing sent to Union prisoners confined at Meridian and at Cahaba, Ala. Maury was quite willing to cooperate but suggested waiting to see the results of a new agreement for the exchange of prisoners. However, if any considerable delay occurred in prisoner exchanges, or even if the Federal authorities wished not to wait for an exchange, Maury offered to cooperate fully.[125]

The citizens of Lauderdale County had their first sense of threat from an enemy force in April 1863. As it turned out, the threat never was more than that; but at the time it caused great consternation.

In the spring of 1863 Federal Maj. Gen. U. S. Grant, preparing the final phase of his operations against Vicksburg, thought that a diversionary raid through Mississippi, somewhere well to the east of Vicksburg, would relieve some of the pressure on his forces around the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." The plan was to send Col. Benjamin H. Grierson and the Sixth Illinois Cavalry from La Grange, Tenn., through most of the length of Mississippi and on to Baton Rouge, La. Events would prove that Grant's choice of Grierson was a wise one. Grierson's raid is one of the most colorful episodes of the Civil War and has been the subject of a number of books, as well as Hollywood's fanciful treatment of history.[126]

As Grierson moved south, he sent out small detachments to either side of his main column. This confused the Confederates as to his numbers, his line of march, and his intentions. Rumor piled upon rumor about his movements, and his sending out of detachments made him seem to be simultaneously in several different places. This tactic succeeded so well that when thirty-five of his men under Capt.

[124] *Official Records*, II:8:168-170.
[125] *Official Records*, II:8:316.
[126] The 1959 film *The Horse Soldiers*, starring John Wayne and William Holden. In this film the Grierson character does not have that name.

Henry C. Forbes arrived in the vicinity of Macon, the report was that a Yankee force of about five thousand was moving upon the town.[127] Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton wired Brig. Gen. Abraham Buford, in Meridian, to move all his men up the M & O Railroad to Macon in order to "ascertain the state of affairs in that vicinity."[128] On 23 April two thousand soldiers from Meridian arrived in Macon at three A.M. and, of course, found nothing.

The east-central part of the state, however, had not seen the last of Captain Forbes. Colonel Grierson and the main force reached Newton, Miss., where they did considerable damage, especially to the railroad; but remembering that their main purpose was diversionary, they did not tarry. They continued southward; but Captain Forbes, arriving in Newton too late to join the main body, mistakenly understood that his commander had headed southeastward toward Enterprise. So that's where Forbes' group struck out for, all the while traveling through swamps, woods, and streams in search of their main force.[129] Forbes' group attracted attention.

Meanwhile, in Meridian at about nine A.M. on Saturday, 25 April, Maj. Gen. W. W. Loring received word that Grierson's entire cavalry unit was threatening the important government stores and railroad equipment at Enterprise. Loring at once ordered a force to board a train to intercept the invaders before they could reach that point. Included in this expedition was Col. Edward Goodwin's 38th Alabama Regiment, in which there was a young lieutenant named Albert T. Goodloe. Goodloe later described how the operation worked. "We beat [the Federals to Enterprise], and, leaping instantly from the train, we double-quicked down a dirt road to a bridge near the town, which Grierson was also briskly approaching, but which we reached first." This was at about one P.M.[130]

Captain Forbes was within a mile of Enterprise when he sensed danger. He quickly devised a ruse that for daring and comedy is delightful and very characteristic of the whole Grierson expedition. Bluff seemed the only recourse. Captain Forbes put up a white flag, boldly rode up to Goodwin and, in the name of Colonel Grierson, demanded the surrender of the town. Goodwin, quite taken aback, asked for two hours to consider the matter and to remove the women and children—Richard W. Surby said that Goodwin asked for but one hour. Probably trying to look determined rather than relieved, Forbes agreed and, when asked by Goodwin where he could be found later, blandly declared that he would fall back to the "reserve." Forbes and his men made good use of that time by putting as much distance as possible between themselves and the men in gray.[131]

When the Confederates realized what had happened, many no doubt agreed with Lieutenant Goodloe who declared it a "rascally trick." Two more regiments arrived from Meridian, but, said Goodloe, "the Yankee horseman [*sic*] who could gallop heroically (!) through an unprotected country, and call it a 'great raid,' had put themselves out of our reach."[132] And what about Captain Forbes and his men? Richard Surby later wrote: "I do not know whether Enterprise did really surrender or

[127] D. Alexander Brown, *Grierson's Raid* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954), 85.
[128] *Official Records*, 1:24:3:776.
[129] Richard W. Surby, *Two Great Raids* (Washington: National Tribune, 1897), 34.
[130] Albert T. Goodloe, *Confederate Echoes* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Smith & Lamar, 1907), 148-149; see also, *Official Records*, I:24:1:544. Though he wrote in 1891, Goodloe apparently still believed that Grierson himself had approached Enterprise.
[131] Surby, *op. cit.*, 34-35; Goodloe, *op. cit.*, 149.
[132] Goodloe, *op. cit.*, 149-150.

not, but an article in the…Memphis Appeal of April 26 stated that 1,500 Yanks had demanded the surrender of the place."[133]

After the soldiers from Meridian learned that the whole affair had been a trick and that their quarry had escaped, they were greatly mortified and spent many wearisome and unrewarding hours scouting the area for a trace of the recent visitors. Not until the night of 28 April did the tired Confederates have what appeared a chance for a full night's rest. But just as the force had settled down, they heard the command "Fall in!" Believing the enemy had returned, they roused themselves quickly and willingly enough. Imagine their disgust, however, when they learned that they were going to face not the enemy but rather another of those patriotic pep talks that were then quite common in America, but that among soldiers, especially Confederate ones, were becoming capital bores. Poor Colonel Goodwin was naïve enough to think his men would regard it as a treat to trade a good night's sleep for a chance to listen to Brig. Gen. Reuben Davis, who was staying at a hotel in Enterprise and had been persuaded by Goodwin to address the soldiers. Goodwin's men could hardly believe it and marched the half-mile to the hotel in a foul mood. Goodwin instructed his men on proper etiquette: He would halt them before the hotel, give the command *order arms!*, and then he would call out *Davis! Davis!* and let the men take up the cry.

All seemed to go well enough until the time to call for Davis. The disappointment and stress of the last two or three days had strained nerves and tempers, and the interruption of a good sleep finished the job. While some of the soldiers called out as instructed, others began to shout, "Come out of there, Reuben; I know you are in there!" Another shouted, "Get through as quick as you can; we are all mighty sleepy!" Colonel Goodwin was annoyed and embarrassed by all this, but Davis finally appeared on one of the hotel's balconies and made a speech consisting of compliments to the soldiers and "good news from Richmond" about how several European powers were on the verge of recognizing the Confederacy and would soon come over and break the blockade, etc., etc. The soldiers had heard this sort of thing so many times that they were thoroughly sick of it. A voice rang out: "Tell us something new, General." When Davis assured the troops that a large French fleet was nearing the coast and would no doubt engage the Yankee ships and open Southern ports, another heckler shouted, "Those are awful slow boats, General; they have been on the way ever since the war began, to my certain knowledge." By this time both Goodwin and Davis realized that the soldiers were simply in no mood for speeches. The men went back to their camp and merciful sleep.[134]

But Lieutenant Goodloe's troubles did not end with Grierson's departure and Davis's peroration. It was in Enterprise that he had his first "palpable" experience with the army louse, usually called the "grayback." On the Monday morning following the interlude with Captain Forbes's cavalry, Goodloe left the covered bridge in which he had spent the night and went a short distance up the Chickasawhay River for a bath. After disrobing he found himself infested with the tiny pests. Later, giving the matter some weighty musing, he decided that since the grayback had not been a pest "until Lincoln's soldiers came…the easy presumption is that they brought him along with them…." What puzzled him, however, was that they

[133] Surby, *op. cit.*, 35.
[134] Goodloe, *op. cit.*, 150-153.

had apparently taken him back with them after the war, though "the pests generally which they brought with them remained."[135]

But Goodloe and Confederates would have two more years to endure the graybacks, the Bluecoats, and the orators. One wonders which they came to despise most.

[135] Goodloe, *op. cit.*, 216-219.

Chapter 13: Meridian Becomes Department Headquarters.

The fall of Vicksburg in July 1863, while doubtless alarming to Lauderdale residents, probably did not unduly disrupt their lives. Even enemy activity in or near Jackson was nothing like having such invasion and destruction on one's own land. It meant merely that the enemy had come closer and that food and other supplies, already often in short supply, would become a little more so. It meant also that one could no longer board the Southern and ride to Vicksburg; but since at this time most citizens of the county would not have done that anyway, that deprivation probably caused no radical change in daily living.

But radical changes were happening in east-central Mississippi. After the middle of 1863 the county became more than just a training and organizational area. The *Meridian Journal*, in one of its last editions, announced that since 25 May the headquarters of the Mississippi militia had been at Meridian "till further orders."[1]

Confederate prisoners paroled after the fall of Vicksburg were ordered to appear at camp in Enterprise for re-organization and training, a program that, under the rules of wartime protocols between North and South, was of debatable propriety and was later challenged by Union officials and even by some in the Confederacy. Lt. Gen. W. J. Hardee assumed the job of administering this program after the parolees had returned from a well-earned furlough.[2]

Many soldiers paroled at Vicksburg were loath to report to camp at Enterprise. They probably believed they had endured quite enough during the late siege to earn them a very long furlough; and many believed also, perhaps correctly, that they would be violating parole by reporting to even an "organizational" camp. Confederate authorities, however, were not inclined to allow even their paroled soldiers to remain at large for a long period. It might make them less inclined to return to active status. Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk, who succeeded Hardee as head of parolees at Enterprise, vigorously stated official Confederate policy on the issue:

> It is not enough, soldiers, for you to say, that you will come to the camps when exchanged. The cartel which authorized the parole under which you were released, was framed by two parties, of which your Government was one. It [the Confederate government]…has the power to construe for you its meaning and intention…[and] has construed…that there is nothing…to deprive either Government of the right to assemble its paroled prisoners in camp, for organization and discipline, to be held subject to orders for active field duty so soon as exchanged.[3]

But Federal officials suspected that the Confederates were assembling their paroled soldiers in camps for more than just "organization and discipline." Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, in a letter to Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, vented his fury at what he regarded as Confederate perfidy:

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[1] *Meridian Journal*, 20 July 1863.
[2] Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations—Directed during the Late War between the States* (New York: D. Appleton, 1874), 254-255.
[3] Meridian *Clarion*, 25 November 1863.

> It is now ascertained that the greater part of the prisoners paroled by you at Vicksburg, and General Banks at Port Hudson, were illegally and improperly declared exchanged, and forced into the ranks to swell the numbers at Chickamauga. This outrageous act, in violation of the laws of war, of the cartel entered into by the rebel authorities, and of all sense of honor, gives us a useful lesson in regard to the character of the enemy with whom we are contending.[4]

During Sherman's Meridian Expedition, a Federal detachment that went to Enterprise found this camp of paroled prisoners and declared the town to be "one of the most pestiferous nests that the sun shone on in all the limits of Dixie." Some of the parolees were still there and allegedly told the Federal officials "that the Confederate authorities had been forcing many of their number into the army again, telling them they had been exchanged." Reports went back to the North that in the post office in Enterprise someone had found a letter from a paroled lieutenant who had been thus forced back into the army. Writing home, so the report had it, he expressed a fear that he was going to be sent to Mobile where he would risk capture as a parolee who had violated exchange protocols. The Federal report further averred that the lieutenant was "indignant in the extreme at the want of Government faith, which had placed him in such a painful predicament."[5] Whether or not the Federal charge was correct, it is a fair assumption that both sides violated the agreement to some extent, though the South, with fewer men to draft, perhaps had more incentive to do so.

Gen. Joseph E. Johnston took the train to Atlanta to attend a post-mortem on the loss of Vicksburg. While in Montgomery he requested Hardee to send Gregg's and McNair's brigades, in Meridian and Enterprise, to help Gen. Braxton Bragg in his campaign in north Georgia. The two brigades were replaced in the Meridian area by those under Featherston and Adams.[6] When the Atlanta hearing on the Vicksburg disaster was cancelled, Johnston was disgusted, for he had wished the matter thoroughly debated. He returned to Mississippi about the middle of September and officially established his headquarters in Meridian. "Little Joe" was clearly in limbo and had little to do except nurse his resentment and anger toward President Davis. Shortly after his return to Meridian, he heard from Bragg that the latter's campaign in North Georgia had defeated the Federal army under Rosecrans and had pushed them out of the state. Bragg would return McNair's brigade and would send Ector's in place of Gregg's.[7]

The next few months would be quite peaceful for Johnston. He settled down in Meridian and found a decent building for a headquarters and residence. He even sent for his wife, who set up housekeeping in what she described as "a little cabin" just outside town. Despite the hardships of war, she managed while in Meridian to buy some clothes that had slipped through the blockade. In a letter to

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[4] Sherman, *op. cit*., I:384.
[5] "Sherman's Great Expedition."
[6] Johnston, *op. cit*., 255.
[7] *Ibid*.; see also Craig L. Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 224-225.

Charlotte Wigfall she described the acquisition as "a box from Paris filled with the most delicious *under* garments of all sorts."[8]

Charlotte Wigfall's husband, Confederate Congressman Louis Trezevant Wigfall, wrote to Johnston in Meridian about a mutual acquaintance's narrow escape when his horse was shot dead under him. Johnston, who was beginning to find his time in Meridian a little tedious, answered in late November:

> To have a horse killed under one puts a tall feather in his cap. (I hope, however, it was not the sorrel mare.) Even at present prices I'd freely give a good horse to the same fate. I have been having a very quiet time since July. Almost a peace establishment so we have gone to house keeping. I say we, for Mrs. Johnston joined me two weeks ago.[9]

Even the newspapers were commenting about "Little Joe's" new-found obscurity. Perhaps Johnston noticed that the *Weekly Mississippian*, temporarily published at Meridian, had picked up an item from the *Atlanta Register*, that was perhaps alluding to John Pemberton and Braxton Bragg in its reference to Richmond's "favorites":

> The Columbus Sun says Gen. Johnston has been hid out of sight of late. Frequent enquiries are made relative to his whereabouts. He is supposed to be under the ban of the powers at Richmond, who have decided that Pemberton must have a partner in the history of the Vicksburg campaign. In order to build up the reputation of one favorite, and revive the sinking fortunes of another, Johnston is kept off the stage for the present.[10]

Perhaps General Johnston saw also in the local paper a suggestion that the process of "bolting" would preserve cornmeal longer for the soldiers. Wheat had become so scarce and expensive, said the paper, that cornmeal was the only practical grain to feed the soldiers. (The paper didn't say so, but many soldiers probably preferred cornmeal to flour, at least as a regular item; though wheat bread provided an agreeable occasional change.) The problem with cornmeal, however, was that the porous bran in it absorbed moisture and was thus prone to rapid spoilage. Removing the bran, however, or perhaps kiln-drying the meal until all water had evaporated, preserved it for at least a month.[11]

Even before Vicksburg fell, Lauderdale County had begun to take on a decidedly military character. After that event in early July 1863, the transformation continued with even greater speed. Among the units that moved into the county in the latter part of that year was the brigade under Gen. John Adams. Its organization included five Mississippi regiments, one of which was the Sixth, known as the "Bloody Sixth." As happened with other units, Federal thrusts from around Vicksburg forced them to

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[8] Symonds, *op. cit.*, 247.
[9] Quoted in Mrs. D. Giraud Wright's *A Southern Girl in '61* (New York: Doubleday, 1905), 155.
[10] Meridian *Weekly Mississippian*, 14 October 1863.
[11] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863.

retreat in stages eastward from Jackson. The Sixth arrived in Meridian on 10 September and camped in the pine forest outside town, perhaps a mile or so west of Meridian. A few days later the men in Adams' Brigade were delighted to receive an issue of clothing which, while far from sufficient, was still much more than they had received for over a year. Before the brigade had had enough time to get used to life in Lauderdale County, however, they were ordered back to the area of Brandon and Jackson.[12]

Other units moved into Meridian in the fall of 1863. One was the division under Maj. Gen. Samuel G. French, which arrived on 19 October. Brig. Gen. Francis M. Cockrell's brigade, consisting of Missouri regiments, also arrived. They were sporting their splendid new guns and equipment, and all the units under French were apparently well cared for. Almost immediately the men set to work building permanent winter quarters.[13] On 10 November Lt. George W. Warren took time out to write in his diary a description of this cheerful activity:

> We have been hard at work two days on our "kitchen," as we call it. It only requires to be daubed, when the job will be finished, and right comfortable quarters we will have. It is built against the rear wall of one tent and by ripping up the middle seam both rooms are thrown into one. We have a large fireplace in the farther end which draws beautifully.
>
> The different regiments have clubbed together and constructed a large log meeting house in the rear of regimental headquarters; all the timber and shingles were gotten out by the men and the building up without the use of nails, like Solomon's Temple, except the hammering. Dr. Wolfe, of our company, has organized a chess-club, which meets over there every night [that] the building is not engaged with religious exercises. The doctor plays a fine game, I understand. There is also some talk of debating societies and theatricals in the church to help make the long winter nights pass agreeably.[14]

Ten days later Warren recorded the following:

> It is well for us that we built the log addition to our quarters, the constant rains we have been having would have cut us off from many a square meal. Plenty of "Marion's sweet potatoes," [a reference to the town of Marion?] which we think good living, are issued to us, and these baked, with beef, make a dish on which we are thriving wondrously.

When there was no rain, said Warren, General Cockrell drilled the men for three or more hours, and they thus became quite proficient. Their route to the drill field took them directly past Gen. Joe Johnston's headquarters, where he was often standing on his porch. As the men marched by, "Little Joe" would always give them a cheery greeting. Sometimes Johnston had his musket with him and endeavored to perform

[12] H. Grady Howell, *Going to Meet the Yankees: A History of the "Bloody Sixth" Mississippi Infantry, C. S. A.* (Jackson, Miss.: Chickasaw Bayou Press, 1981), 201.
[13] R. S. Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades, 1861-1865. And from Wakarusa to Appomattox, a Military Anagraph* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1879; reprinted 1985 by Inland Printer, Ltd.), 227.
[14] *Ibid.*, 228.

the manual of arms with the men. He explained that he was simply trying to "keep up" with his soldiers. Warren said that all of this "pleases the boys immensely and makes the old hero a prime favorite with them."[15]

Thus Johnston was apparently as popular with the men under him as he was unpopular with President Davis. The animosity between the two men went back at least to the First Battle of Bull Run, and some historians insist it went back to their days at West Point. The feud even spread to their wives, who during their early days in Richmond came to dislike each other strongly.

Davis's messages to Johnston, usually telegrams, were even more stilted and impersonal than the somewhat cold President's messages tended to be to almost everyone. It is interesting that when Davis was in Meridian and Enterprise in October 1863, he apparently saw as little of the General as possible. This was probably mutually gratifying. (As has already been noted, some of Davis's time in the county at this time was used to visit his elderly brother and sister-in-law in Lauderdale Springs.) Davis arrived in Meridian on October 20. While he was there, he seems to have communicated with Johnston through intermediaries, when that was possible. He sent two letters to Johnston on the 23rd, both of them written by *aides-de-camp*, one by Robert E. Lee's son G. W. C. Lee, and the other by William Preston Johnston, son of the deceased Gen. Albert S. Johnston. The letter written by Lee contained the following:

> The President directs me to state to you that the rule in reference to conscripts enrolled in any State is to distribute them equitably among the regiments of that State in proportion to the numbers effective for service.
>
> It is a misapprehension to suppose that it has been intended to assign conscripts to any one Army of organization without reference to the general demands of the service.[16]

The other letter, ostensibly from Colonel Johnston, began with the usual "The President directs me to inform you that" and told Johnston that Lt. Gen. W. J. Hardee was being relieved of his duties in the Department and would be replaced by Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk.[17]

General Polk was a bishop in President Davis's own Protestant Episcopal Church, which may have been one of the reasons for the hefty cleric's popularity with the President. Davis's telegram to Polk informing him of his new position was sent the same day as the two letters above, and despite the limitations of telegraphy, this one had a hint of friendly warmth, as when Davis wrote: "I leave [Meridian] tonight for Mobile. Will remain tomorrow and next day at that place and then proceed by R. R. to Montgomery. Would be glad to meet you at either place as may be convenient to you."[18]

Apparently Davis could not avoid seeing Johnston on at least one occasion in the Lauderdale area. On Tuesday, 20 October, probably shortly after Davis arrived in Meridian, both men appeared in Enterprise for a review by the

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[15] Bevier, *op. cit,* 228.
[16] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863; Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 9:63. Neither army was particularly eager to have conscripts when volunteers were available.
[17] Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 9:63.
[18] *Ibid*.

President of the troops there. The two men presumably rode the same train which arrived at eleven A.M. After the review, Davis for half an hour addressed a large crowd from the gallery of a hotel and was frequently and enthusiastically applauded. Perhaps the cheers came from the same promise of good news that he had earlier made to the soldiers in Meridian. But what Davis thought when Johnston was loudly called for can only be surmised. Johnston apparently spoke very briefly, perhaps with only the following words: "Soldiers! I thank you for this expression of your kindness. I hope soon to see you with arms in your hands confronting the enemy."[19] Was this a veiled reference to Johnston's recently-imposed obscurity?

William P. Chambers was present for this gala occasion, though he erroneously says it was on Thursday the 22nd. He missed Davis's speech but did see the President, as well as Johnston and several other generals. Chambers later wrote, "It was a grand and imposing display of the pomp of war, and the glory of the world."[20] And so much for war's pomp and the worlds's glory! At least, that's what Chambers seemed to be saying.

On 14 November Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, fast becoming a legend, visited Johnston in Meridian. Forrest had been in Atlanta and Montgomery and later stopped off in Selma where he visited the arsenals to try to get better equipment for his command. While Forrest was in Meridian, Johnston published an order assigning him to the command of West Tennessee, an area severely compromised by Union forces. The Federals apparently appreciated the significance of the change, for Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut reported to U. S. Grant, commander in the West, that he understood that Forrest had replaced Gen. Chalmers. "If so," added Hurlbut, "there will be more dash in their attacks."[21]

Among Johnston's command were part of the First Alabama Regiment. In early December three companies of the unit were assigned to guard the bridges along the M & O, while the remainder were assigned to provost duty at Meridian. These assignments proved so onerous that the regiment's officers complained successfully for easement. The rest of the month passed well enough. But rumors of Federal activity around Vicksburg were probably the reason for sending Companies C, H, and K to Jackson. There, these men were employed in work that would allow locomotives and cars to be ferried across Pearl River, for the bridge had been destroyed the preceding spring. The Federal movement eastward two months later stopped their work and sent them back to Meridian, where they became part of the rear guard in Polk's retreating army.[22]

New units continued to move into the county, though many parts of Johnston's command were scattered throughout central Mississippi. After the Yanks occupied Jackson in July 1863, McNair's brigade and its division fell back to Morton and then to Forest. On 7 August they were ordered to Meridian, though a few units remained between there and Jackson. McNair's Brigade arrived in Meridian on the eighth and immediately camped a mile and a half west of town, probably on the Lower Decatur Road, and possibly in the general area of today's College Park. They named

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[19] Meridian *Daily Mississippian*, 21 October 1863; Bettersworth, *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It*, 184.

[20] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 287.

[21] Robert Selph Henry, *"First with the Most" Forrest* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1944), 202.

[22] Daniel P. Smith, *Company K, First Alabama Regiment, or Three Years in the Confederate Service* (Prattville, Ala.: Published by the survivors, 1885; republished in Gaithersburg, Md., by the Buttertnut Press, 1984), 89-90.

their encampment Camp Bowen, in honor of Maj. Gen. John S. Bowen who had died in Clinton a few weeks earlier during the Vicksburg campaign.[23]

There was in this brigade a surgeon bearing the patriotic name of Washington Lafayette Gammage, who wrote a chatty account of his stay in the Meridian area. His narrative, which gives details of camp life, is especially interesting in that it was published only a few months after the events.

At the time of their arrival, Gammage's regiment had just suffered about fifty desertions, so Col. H. G. Bunn published a circular on 22 August to try to forestall any others. There was a difference of opinion, however, as to whether these men had deserted or had merely used poor judgment. They had not gone over to the enemy nor even slunk back into civilian life. They had, rather, gone west of the Mississippi River to join the forces in that department. Gen. Kirby Smith, department commander, had ordered all his soldiers to remain there; and that seemed attractive to those in Bunn's regiment who were residents of the Trans-Mississippi region.[24] When men were hundreds of miles from home, it was demoralizing to hear that enemy forces, or even local bushwhackers, were threatening their families.

Gammage's unit was one of those sent in September to help General Bragg in North Georgia; but by the 28th they were back at Camp Bowen, on Meridian's west side. Happy to be back and especially happy to hear that they would be joined by General Ector's jolly brigade of Texans, Gammage's brigade eagerly anticipated the renewal of some very pleasant associations. Said Gammage:

> An account of the meeting of the two brigades, after such a long separation, would make one of the most affecting episodes of the war. Both commands, [were] alike exiled from their home and almost entirely cut off from every communication with their families and friends by the intervention of the Mississippi river. Their long-continued service side by side in camp, on the march and on the battle-field, had stimulated a feeling of reliance upon, and confidence in each other, which I have never known to exist anywhere else in the army.[25]

Gammage and his comrades were moved again on 19 October, this time back to Brandon. They camped on the railroad near good spring water and plenty of firewood, which, as he said, were "two indispensable articles for a soldier." It was here that he noticed a considerable improvement in their food, thanks to the new law that taxed civilians a tenth of their farm produce in order to augment army supplies. Previously, potatoes had been a rare treat and, even when available, were of poor quality and expensive at three or four dollars a bushel. Now Gammage said they were issued to the men daily in two-pound rations and sold to officers at a dollar a bushel. Morale improved markedly.[26]

On the seventh of November the brigade was ordered to Camp Bowen, at Meridian, and arrived next day. A few days later Colonel Coleman, brigade commander, ordered the men to construct cabins, and for several days the woods west

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[23] Washington Lafayette Gammage, *The Camp, the Bivouac, and the Battle Field* (Selma, Ala.: Mississippian Book and Job Office, 1864), 94-95.

[24] *Ibid*., 97-99.

[25] *Ibid*., 99, 107.

[26] *Ibid*., 107-108.

of Meridian were noisy with activity. In a short while the white tents of Camp Bowen had been replaced by neat log cabins. The cabins had good roofs and chimneys, and the men added such rustic furniture as stools, shelves, beds, tables, and even pegs on which to hang clothes.

Along with the more substantial nature of Camp Bowen came a new discipline. A heavy guard remained on duty around the edge of the compound, and no one was allowed outside without the countersign, or password. But it would be a very secure system that someone could not beat; and Meridian's bustle and urban delights, less than two miles to the east, were too tempting. The biggest obstacle to a night in town, however, was the roll call every four hours. On one occasion a soldier explained to Gammage how to solve that and other problems:

> Gammage: Mike, tell me how it is the boys manage to go out and in from camp to town or the country whenever they please, and yet report regularly at roll-call.
>
> Mike: Oh, that's easy enough, if one only knows the trick. There are a great many ways of getting out—one is, a fellow picks out his sentinel, and taking his gun on his shoulder, slips down to the guard lines and begins to walk backwards and forwards as if on guard; all at once he approaches his victim, and appearing to be in great trouble, says to him, "Look here, sentinel, what in the mischief is that countersign—I have forgotten it already?" The sentinel, taken by surprise, gives you the word—you walk backwards and forwards a time or two, and when his back is turned toward you, all you have to do is to drop outside of the lines and go where you wish. Of course this is all done in the night.
>
> Gammage: Mike, suppose you want to go to town and you can't get a pass, and there is a guard at the edge of the town to stop every fellow who has no permit?
>
> Mike: Well, then I'd be a detail.
>
> Gammage: How is that, Mike?
>
> Mike: Oh, very easy, just "wait for the wagon and take a ride."[27] Or in other words, watch for a commissary or quartermaster's wagon going into town; you can jump into it and go on; the sentinel will conclude you are a detail to help load the wagon, and so you are safe.
>
> Gammage: But, Mike, suppose a fellow is on horseback and wants to ride into town for a few minutes, what would he do then to pass the sentinel?
>
> Mike: Oh, just get a large envelope—no matter how old it is—and before you get to the guard, put spurs to your horse and gallop past him with your "document" in your hand, crying, "Courier! Courier!" and you'll go by slick enough.[28]

Meanwhile, in Meridian General Johnston bided his time doing such relative trivialities as helping seventeen-year-old Pvt. R. J. Wilbourn get a discharge from the Mississippi militia in order to join his elder brother with the Signal Corps of Lee's

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[27] Mike was, of course, quoting from the song from 1851 whose lines invite one to "wait for the wagon and we'll all take a ride."

[28] Gammage, *op. cit.*, 108-109.

army in Virginia.[29] And of course Johnston continued to bicker by telegraph with President Davis. Davis was having armaments sent to the Trans-Mississippi and, as he often tended to do, was getting involved in the details. To get them across the Mississippi, said the President, "deserted houses will furnish material for the construction of ferry boats." In another telegram Davis expressed pique at hearing from Bragg that Johnston felt, as Davis put it, "restricted by my orders to sending [*sic*] two brigades to his assistance."[30] One more telegram from Davis and Lauderdale County would see the last of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. On 15 December 1863 President Davis sent Johnston the following wire: "You will turn over the immediate command of the Army of Mississippi to Lt. General Polk and proceed to Dalton [Ga.] and assume command of the Army of Tennessee. Give to Lt. General Polk full information as to the condition of the Department and leave with him the officers of the general staff. A letter of instructions will be sent to you at Dalton."[31]

Johnston was not in Meridian when this wire arrived. It reached him on 18 December while he was visiting General Ross's brigade of Texas cavalry near Bolton's Depot. Later, Johnston described somewhat snidely his reception of the message that had promised "I should find *instructions*" in Dalton.[32] Both Johnston and the Lauderdale area were on the threshold of very difficult times.

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[29] Col. E. J. Hanie, in Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 28 November 1863, GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH.
[30] Telegram from Davis, in Richmond, to Johnston, 24 November 1863, and telegram from Davis, in Richmond, to Johnston, 20 November 1863, in Davis, *op. cit.*, 6:80, 87-88.
[31] Telegram from Davis, Richmond, to Johnston, 16 December 1863, in *ibid.*, 132.
[32] Johnston, *op. cit.*, 261.

Chapter 14: "Now is the time to strike inland at Meridian…."

Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk was a Protestant Episcopal bishop who exchanged his priestly vestments for a uniform. And though a graduate of West Point, he was probably a better bishop than he was a general. There were occasions when he showed some ability on the battlefield, but his military service on the whole was not spectacular. At Meridian, in the face of Sherman's expeditionary force, Polk seemed irresolute and confused; and members of his family, after visiting him at Meridian, believed him weighed down by grave doubts as to the outcome of the war. He even evinced a marked fear of death, an ironic dread in light of his priestly calling. But whatever the truth may be, I cannot help believing that he would have done better to remain in his diocesan chair. The crozier is safer than the sword, and a dean and chapter are much less trying than a hostile army.

One historian, Jeffrey N. Lash, gives Polk high marks in at least one area—an appreciation of the value of railroads to the movement and supplying of soldiers, and the necessity to protect trackage and rolling stock. Lash maintains that in this respect Polk was far ahead of Joseph E. Johnston.[1]

It is a matter for speculation whether the county's and state's fortunes would have been different if Johnston had remained in command another two months. One can only guess whether he would have contested Sherman's bold move across the state, or whether like Polk he would have fallen back without offering resistance. The Confederate force at Meridian was inferior in numbers to Sherman's army but not so seriously outnumbered as many often assume. Sherman had probably between 25,000 and 28,000 men. Polk's force had about 20,000 men. More than a few of them lived in the area, and their intense concern itself could have been the equivalent of several more regiments. In Mobile Polk had a few thousand more who were able and even eager to advance against Sherman. The Mobile and Ohio Railroad was in relatively good working order between Meridian and Mobile and could have helped move men either to block Sherman's path west of Meridian or, since Polk had strong fears for Mobile's safety, to transport men quickly to that point had the need arisen. Besides, military history, including that of the Civil War, offers many instances in which numerical disparity was more than balanced by competent, resolute leadership. And Polk, as one of President Davis's special favorites, could probably have wheedled a few more men from some other quarter.

As early as the summer of 1863 Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman had urged the necessity of subduing the area around Lauderdale County with its concentration of railroads and military supplies and personnel. In his opinion a program of reconstruction in the South was going to require working with a defeated planter class, however distasteful a victorious Union might find them. But Sherman knew that these proud people were far from chastened, even after two years of terrible war. He believed the Mississippi Valley was the key to the whole war and that whoever dominated it would determine the outcome of the struggle. The fall of Vicksburg and the consequent closing of the Mississippi River to Confederate use was a big step toward Union domination of the Central Gulf area, but Sherman believed there yet

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[1] Lash, *Destroyer of the Iron Horse….*, viii, 95, 136, 138.

remained two more battles to complete the great strategy. One would have to be fought near Meridian in November of 1863 and the other the following February or March near Shreveport, La. "When these are done," said Sherman, "then, and not until then, will the planters of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi submit."[2] Sherman's involvement around Chattanooga in late 1863 delayed his plans. They had to wait until early 1864.

Even as Polk entered upon his duties as Department commander in Meridian, General Sherman was planning a movement from Vicksburg eastward across the state to Meridian, and perhaps beyond, in order to break up the railroads centering there and to attack the Confederate forces in the area. This would help ease pressure on the Union forces in their coming campaign near Chattanooga. On 10 January 1864, from his headquarters in Memphis, Sherman wrote Gen. James B. McPherson, "Now is the time to strike inland at Meridian and Selma," adding, "Keep this to yourself and make preparations."[3]

Sherman's plan was to move from Vicksburg with about 25,000 men while Brig. Gen. William Sooy Smith moved from Memphis with a cavalry division of 6,500. The two groups would rendezvous at Meridian on or about the tenth of February. From that point the combined forces would move as circumstances might suggest, perhaps upon Selma and Montgomery or even south against Mobile. If none of these possibilities should serve, a return to Vicksburg would still justify the expedition. A simultaneous diversionary movement up the Yazoo River and perhaps a feint by the Union Navy against Mobile would be useful.

By the middle of January preparations were complete. On 15 January General Grant wrote to General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck in Washington:

> I shall direct Sherman, therefore, to move out to Meridian with his spare force (the cavalry going from Corinth) and destroy the [rail]roads east and south of there so effectually that the enemy will not attempt to rebuild them during the rebellion. He will then return unless the opportunity of going into Mobile with the force he has appears perfectly plain.... The destruction which Sherman will do to the roads around Meridian will be of material importance to us in preventing the enemy from drawing supplies from Mississippi and in clearing that section of all large bodies of rebel troops.[4]

Sherman was reasonably confident of good results but laid great stress on the importance of keeping the Confederates in ignorance of his intentions. On 16 January he explained to Gen. N. P. Banks: "Of course I want to preserve the utmost secrecy, which I can do unless the 'free press' steal it from some of our clerks who may derive their knowledge from letters placed in their hands for record."[5]

The *free press*! There was tremendous sarcasm in Sherman's use of those quotation marks. For news correspondents the fiery, red-headed general had a hatred that went back to the beginning of the war. Many Union generals and civil officials feared and courted journalists. Uncomplimentary dispatches from the front could

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[2] Sherman, *op. cit*., 1:364.
[3] Henry Van Boynton, *Sherman's Historical Raid: The Memoirs in the Light of the Record* (Cincinnati: Wilstach, Baldwin & Co., 1875), 89; *Official Records*, I:32:2:61.
[4] *Official Records*, I:32:2:100-101.
[5] *Ibid*., I:34:2:431.

bring down upon a hapless officer the wrath of a civilian population, angry at what they might consider gross incompetence. Many of the North's generals deferred to the press or, if driven to criticize, responded cautiously.

But not Sherman! His mildest feelings on the subject was contempt for the civilian newsmen who, so Sherman thought, were avoiding enemy bullets and slinking like hyenas into the leeward side of battlefields to scavenge for tidbits to sell back home. But Sherman's almost pathological hatred was evoked when he became convinced that journalists, however well-intentioned, were supplying strategic information not only to the people back home but to the enemy as well.

His hatred of newsmen began in 1861 when friction between him and the press culminated in the allegation by the Cincinnati *Commercial* that Sherman was insane. From then on it was open warfare between him and the press. It reached a melodramatic stage when the hot-tempered general insisted upon a court-martial for a newsman who had managed to tag along secretly on the abortive attack at Chickasaw Bayou near Vicksburg in late December 1862. The journalist's report on Sherman's generalship was not complimentary, and Sherman responded with a military trial in which the entire press felt under attack. Repercussions reached all the way to President Lincoln.[6] It was therefore no surprise that Sherman forbade journalists on the Meridian campaign.

So adamant was Sherman's determination to carry this expedition off in secrecy and so great was his distrust of newsmen, that, as one source put it, "Before he started on his Meridian raid…Sherman had given orders that if any newspaperman was found accompanying the army he was to be tried by a drumhead court martial and shot before breakfast." He made one exception, a twenty-two-year-old friend named De Benneville Randolph Keim, a reporter for the *New York Herald*. Keim had heard about the exclusion of the press and went to Sherman:

> Keim: How about this order of yours? Does it leave me out? Can't I go?
>
> Sherman: I won't have a damned newspaperman on the expedition, not one, but that doesn't apply to you—you are a volunteer aid[e] on General McPherson's staff.
>
> Keim: So I am. I had nearly forgotten that.

So Keim accompanied Sherman's expedition and got something of a scoop. Of course, he was unable to have his five-column story published until over two weeks after the expedition arrived back in Vicksburg. And though it was a sensation, on the same day that the *Herald* published it, the *New York Tribune* came out with a similar, if less authoritative, article.[7]

Despite all the secrecy, the Confederates began to suspect that a Federal movement into Mississippi was imminent. As early as 11 January Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest received word from Capt. Thomas Henderson that some such move would come soon. Forrest passed the word on to General Polk in Meridian, and Polk

[6] Louis M. Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 71, 170-182.
[7] J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), 552-553; De Benneville Randolph Keim, "The Sherman Expedition," *New York Herald*, 15 March 1864; "Sherman's Great Expedition."

informed Gov. Charles Clark to alert the state forces. On 9 January President Davis told Polk that Federal Admiral David Farragut was planning to attack Mobile. Thus Polk became so certain that Mobile was the object of the enemy's plans that he would not believe otherwise until Sherman was nearly in Lauderdale County. Meanwhile, Forrest visited Meridian where on the thirteenth Polk appointed him commander of a new department called Forrest's Cavalry Department that included all cavalry in West Tennessee and North Mississippi down to a line across the state just north of Columbus, Grenada, and Cleveland.[8]

At about the same time that Forrest was in Meridian, another visitor was there also. We do not know who he was, but his purpose was to learn as much as possible about the town and the area. He carefully observed General Polk and his movements. He noted that Polk had two divisions of infantry, one posted at Canton under Gen. William Loring, the other at Brandon under Gen. Samuel G. French, and also two divisions of cavalry scattered about the state. As far as the anonymous visitor could ascertain, Polk was completely unaware of what Sherman was planning. Quietly the Federal spy returned to Vicksburg to see Sherman, who arrived by steamboat from Memphis on February first. On that same day the recent visitor to Meridian briefed Sherman on his objective.[9]

Sherman left Vicksburg on 3 February. Stephen C. Beck, a soldier in the 124th Illinois Infantry, later gave a good description of how an army of about 26,000 men moved:

> The 16th Corps, twelve thousand strong, and the 17th Corps, about fifteen thousand strong, with some Cavalry and artillery sufficient to make a force of thirty thousand men was under the immediate command of Major General W. T. Sherman. The 17th Corps was in advance. This size army, on a single road in marching order, including the necessary wagons that had to be taken along, would cover a fifteen-mile stretch of road. A government wagon is hauled by a six-mule team, with one man as driver, sitting on the near-wheel mule, driving with a single line. The Artillery had from six to eight horses to each gun, the same number to a Caisson or Ammunition chest.[10]

Beck explained also that the advancing army deployed two regiments in line of battle and posted skirmishers in front to clear the way. This formation made it almost suicidal for the Confederate cavalry to do much more than annoy the Federals in their advance. In fact, the Confederate presence not only caused little harm to Sherman's army but actually aided the invader somewhat by discouraging stragglers from wandering too far out of the ranks.[11] The Confederate cavalry was led by Maj. Gen. Stephen D. Lee, an excellent commander but unable to do much under the circumstances.

Sherman's two army corps, the 16th under Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut and the 17th under Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, met no opposition until, when just west of Jackson, Hurlbut reached the plantation owned by Joe Davis, the President's brother, and McPherson arrived at the old battlefield of Champion's Hill, or Baker's

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[8] Henry, *op. cit.*, 214, 220; Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 6:5.
[9] Sherman, *op. cit.*, 1:418.
[10] Beck, *op. cit.*, 20.
[11] *Ibid.*

Creek. After skirmishing past both places, the entire force moved on and reached Jackson on the evening of the fifth. Without halting, the Federals entered Morton on February 9. Here Hurlbut's Sixteenth Corps took the lead and kept it for the remainder of the march.

Despite harassment by Confederate snipers and small groups of cavalry, the march was going as well as Sherman could have wished. The weather was good, the Yanks were in excellent spirits, and the entire undertaking smacked more of a pleasant jaunt than what it really was, a very unorthodox and risky venture. As one of Sherman's soldiers later wrote:

> Sherman had cut entirely loose from his base and all communication from the outside world. The whole nation looked on in wonder at this bold move. Various were the conjectures concerning his movements. Some supposed that he was going through to Mobile. Others thought that he was going to join Grant….[12]

Meanwhile, Sherman confidently assumed that Brig. Gen. William Sooy Smith had already left Memphis and was hastening with his cavalry to Meridian for a link-up. As it would soon prove, Sherman's assumption was wrong. It was the only fly in some otherwise pretty good ointment.

In Meridian events were turning General Polk into a very worried man. His wife and daughter Sally had paid him a visit in January at his Meridian headquarters and stayed until Sherman's approach created an obviously dangerous situation. Polk's other daughter Katherine later wrote: "Before their departure, father for the *first time* seemed to doubt the success of the Confederate cause; at least there was a suggestion of such a feeling; he was very sad at parting with his wife and child.[13]

Those in the Lauderdale area began to realize that something beyond the usual was developing. Exactly two weeks before Sherman's force reached Meridian, the *Clarion* reported "rumors" from the area around the Big Black River but admitted to having "no authentic information of the Yankees having as yet commenced the march to Jackson." It noted the influx of troops from Memphis into the Vicksburg area but had no theory as to what it signified.[14] On the same Sunday that the *Clarion* published the preceding report, Episcopal Bishop William Mercer Green preached in St. Paul's Church, Columbus. His plan was to go on with his parish visitation, even into enemy lines, for he had received permission from Union authorities to do so. On 6 February he set out on that errand but on reaching Meridian learned that an enemy force seemed to be "rapidly advancing on that place":

> I deemed it prudent, therefore, to return home, and wait a more auspicious moment for resuming my visitation. While in Meridian, I preached on Sunday,

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[12] Lucius W. Barber, *Army Memoirs of Lucius W. Barber, Company "D," 15th Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago: J. M. W. Jones Stationery and printing Co., 1894), 132.
[13] Katherine Polk Gale, *Recollections of Life in the Southern Confederacy, 1861-1865*; manuscript in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
[14] Meridian *Clarion*, 31 January 1864.

7th, to a large and attentive congregation, composed chiefly of officers and soldiers, and in the afternoon baptized the infant son of an officer from Tennessee.[15]

Closer and closer to the Lauderdale area came Sherman, while Polk and President Davis made heavy use of the telegraph. And wires to the east sizzled as the President argued with Gen. Joe Johnston over the latter's reluctance to send three of his divisions to Polk's aid. Johnston finally agreed to send General Hardee with the three divisions under B. F. Cheatham, Patrick Cleburne, and W. H. T. Walker.[16] Polk, still believing that Mobile was Sherman's objective, on the evening of the ninth ordered Gen. Stephen D. Lee to cover the M & O Railroad south of Meridian so that a borrowed garrison could be returned to Mobile. On the eleventh Generals Lee and Ferguson met four miles south of Newton. Ferguson also had been sent to protect the M & O; but since Lee was convinced that Meridian, not Mobile, was in danger, he took it upon himself to order Ferguson to the road from Decatur to Meridian so as to get in front of the enemy.[17] Meanwhile, Polk's confusion increased. As Lloyd Lewis expresses it: "Muzzling the press, Sherman made his march with swift secrecy while Polk was enjoying his habitual war sermons against 'the barbarous hordes of fanatics and puritans and German infidels' who are trying to 'crush our altars.'"[18]

Polk had not only Sherman and President Davis to contend with but the state militia as well. When Polk refused a request by the Mississippi militia for rifles, their officers rushed a messenger to Demopolis, Ala., on the seventh to try to get a thousand mukets and equipment.[19] The next day Governor Clark was informed that the weapons would arrive in Meridian by passenger train on the eighth, but as often happened when *sure* supplies of weapons were involved, no weapons had appeared even by the ninth. Then General Polk found that he could spare a thousand seventy-five caliber "British Muskets" plus ammunition, though he had no accoutrements. The militia had somehow scrounged 1,000 cartridge boxes and about 700 cap boxes, but they still had no belts for them.[20] To complete this picture of confusion, Polk, having already been a party to all this negotiation over weapons, blandly wired Governor Clark on the eleventh, "Any arms you may require for state troops may be had at Demopolis [Ala.]."[21] Clark was probably almost as annoyed with Polk as he was discomfited by Sherman.

Another person probably annoyed with Polk was Gen. S. D. Lee, who at ten A.M. on the thirteenth let his irritation show when he wired Polk: "I am at a loss as to my moves, not knowing what your intention [is] as to offering battle, &c." Lee informed Polk that Dr. Robert J. Hicks, of Lee's staff, would visit Polk and, "if you think proper you can intrust a message to me by him." It is often a matter of

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[15] Green, *op. cit.*, 143-144.
[16] Earl Schenck Miers, *The General Who Marched to Hell* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 60.
[17] Report of Maj. Gen. S. D. Lee, *Official Records*, I:32:1:366.
[18] Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman, Fighting Prophet* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), 333.
[19] Telegram from F. L. Brown, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, undated, in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH. The wire was sent probably on February 7, the same day it was received in Macon.
[20] Telegram from F. L. Brown, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, undated; and F. L. Brown's telegram, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, undated; both in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH. The first wire was received in Macon on the eighth, the second on the ninth.
[21] Telegram from Polk, Newton, Miss., to Gov. Clark, no date but received on the eleventh, in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.

guesswork to ascertain, from the printed word, just what a writer's mood is, but the following seems suffused with sarcasm for an indecisive commander:

> My command [wrote Lee] is much reduced by the recent *active service* [author's emphasis] and long marches.... I think I could do much to annoy [the] enemy on march since my dash yesterday evening, as they were much frightened by it. Will endeavor to get above them if possible and between the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, but I fear it is too late.[22]

On that same day Polk was chided gently in a telegram from his patron in Richmond: "Have received nothing from you since dispatch of 9th...." Davis informed Polk of the report received in Richmond from Montgomery that the enemy had struck Enterprise "and is evidently moving on Mobile." Though erroneous, it was a plausible report and must have given Polk, in his present state, a rather nasty turn. The rest of the wire was probably just as distasteful:

> It is needless to call attention to importance of striking him [the enemy] on the march, impeding his progress and preventing him from using the supplies on his route. He should be met if possible before he reaches the Gulf and establishes a base to which supplies and reinforcements may be sent by sea.[23]

In fairness to both Davis and Polk, it must be admitted that their fears for Mobile's safety were not groundless. For some time Admiral David G. Farragut's blockading fleet had been hovering just south of the entrance of Mobile Bay, and it was pretty obvious that sooner or later the Union Navy would attempt to "run" the forts guarding the bay's mouth and to threaten Mobile. Confederate Gen. Dabney H. Maury, charged with Mobile's defense, was increasingly apprehensive about the city's safety, and reluctant to lose any of his men to other areas. Furthermore, perhaps to deter Maury from sending any of his soldiers to meet Sherman's advance, Farragut timed an attack on Fort Powell, near Fort Gaines, to coincide with Sherman's advance upon Meridian. For a week Farragut's guns bombarded Powell. There was little to show for all that pounding; but by filling both Davis and Polk with apprehension, it perhaps did help Sherman substantially.[24]

Jumping ahead for a moment, we find that even on the fifteenth Davis was still urging Polk to action, though the only action Polk had taken by that time was to be already on his way to Demopolis, Ala., a jump ahead of the invaders. And Sherman's army were already spending their second day in Meridian. Nevertheless, Davis wired the unhappy, retreating commander: "I hope you will be able to delay the enemy so much that he will consume his supplies, and press him so closely that he cannot forage to replenish them, in the unproductive region through which he must pass before reaching Mobile." Then Davis suggested a chilling possibility: "Beware lest his movement [toward Mobile] be a feint, and his real purpose be to move eastward for

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[22] Lee to Polk, 13 February 1864, *Official Records*, I:32:1:336-337.
[23] Telegram from Davis, Richmond, to Polk, 13 February 1864; in Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 6:175.
[24] Chester G. Hearn, *Mobile Bay and the Mobile Campaign: The Last Great Battles of the Civil War* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1993), 49.

reasons which you will readily anticipate."[25] The President was no doubt referring to such sensitive objectives as Selma's arsenal and shipyard, as well as Atlanta's railroads.

But though on the thirteenth Davis still thought Mobile Sherman's probable objective, Polk, with the Yankees practically in Lauderdale County, at last realized that the invaders were advancing on Meridian, though he apparently could not understand why. If Polk had ever intended putting up more than token resistance, he had long since replaced it with a determination to retreat. During the evening of the thirteenth Polk sent Stephen D. Lee, in Chunky, an order to move to Meridian to cover the retreat of the Confederate force on its way to Demopolis. The Federal advance was so rapid, however, that only one of Lee's brigades succeeded in getting to Meridian. The other had to detour to the right.[26]

The bedlam that prevailed in Meridian that Saturday night can be imagined and was by no means limited to the military. J. J. Shannon, taking no chances, had closed the office of the *Clarion* on the twelfth and high-tailed it to Demopolis.[27] One wonders how many remaining civilians, had they had the means, would have left, too. Some doubtless hoped by staying to save their property, and perhaps others were cheered by the prospect of seeing again a blue uniform and the Stars and Stripes. Some of these latter would follow Sherman's army back to Vicksburg.

In the invading army the Yanks continued to treat the expedition as a lark, and compared with many other military operations, that's what it was. To many of the soldiers the area between Jackson and Meridian was new and strange, but not all of them agreed on impressions. Randolph Keim, Sherman's lone journalist, already hard at work taking notes for the *New York Herald*, was not enthusiastic:

> The country through which the army passed [he wrote later] was mainly uninviting in prospect and quality of soil. The land is poor and in many parts sandy or low and swampy. The country between the Pearl and Mississippi rivers is much more fertile than that between the Pearl and Tombigbee. Agriculture in the first mentioned section receives some attention…but east of the Pearl the land is almost worthless, and hardly repays the primitive [un]economical manner of its cultivation.[28]

Keim stated that a consequence of the poverty of the land was that "its population is very sparse, and the few inhabiting it are an abject and ignorant class, who know perhaps as little of the present struggle…as possible for human beings, and seem to exert no influence and feel little concern as to the issue." He did, however, suggest that the extensive pine forests would open "a fine field for an enterprising Yankee" when peace returned.[29]

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[25] Telegram from Davis, Richmond, to Polk, 15 February 1864; in Jefferson David, *op. cit.*, 6: 175.
[26] Report of S. D. Lee, *Official Records*, 1:32:1:366.
[27] Mobile *Register and Advertiser*, 13 February 1864.
[28] Keim, "The Sherman Expedition."
[29] *Ibid.*

A reporter for the *New York Tribune*, though presumably not on the march and thus writing in Vicksburg *ex post facto* and from hearsay, spoke of the area traveled by Sherman's army as "indescribable." Nevertheless, he proceeded to describe it at some length. He recalled the extreme bitterness and hatred felt by the people in the area through which Sherman had passed, and said that "in many cases it is intensified, accompanied by an utter recklessness as to personal consequences which is often fearful." He cited the great sacrifices made by those people and how their frustration and fury were often vented "upon some unfortunate negro soldier falling into their hands, or an occasional white straggler from our army who is careless enough to be taken…." The strongest emotion, however, was "despondence at the idea of Southern independence, of weariness with the war, and a willingness to return to the Union rather than to continue a hopeless struggle." The reporter believed the people so much under the sway of military rule that they were effectually cowed. He spoke of the rigid travel system by which anyone going about the country needed a pass. An engineer told him that his train always carried a lieutenant and six soldiers to enforce the rule:

> No one could pass from one town to another without his papers being in order, and even then they were scrutinized with the greatest carefulness and frequency. He [the engineer] himself was not permitted to cross the Pearl River at Jackson, and after the news reached there of our movement three soldiers were placed on the engine and tender to insure his faithfulness in running the train loaded with Confederate soldiers out of the reach of Yankee bullets.[30]

The reports left by lower-ranking men on Sherman's march were less involved with politics and ideology and were centered on more immediate interests and matters of personal concern. Quite contrary to the view of the country given by the news reporters, Lucius W. Barber described the country as inviting. And an Illinois soldier such as Barber was more likely to judge soil accurately than was a city slicker from the Northeast:

> Our route [wrote Barber] lay through a splendid looking country, remarkably level, rich soil and well watered and timbered…. The country through which we passed was bountifully supplied with bacon and cured hams, and the citizens, in order to put them out of the reach of the soldiers secreted them in swamps, but it was impossible to get them out of the reach of the soldiers. When our keen scent and argus eyes failed us, it did not require much coaxing to get some confidential darkey to reveal the hiding place, and sometimes from out some swamp, load after load of the nicest hams ever taken. The Southern people surpassed the North in curing hams. I never ate so sweet meat as in the South. They use a great deal of saltpeter and molasses in curing them and smoke them but little….[31]

William Martin must have been a young man of few words, for his memoirs were not inclined to dawdle very long on any one topic: "We stayed at

[30] "Sherman's Great Expedition."
[31] Barber, *op. cit.*, 135.

Vicksburg nearly the whole winter, then we marched to Meridian," he stated flatly. "We burned eight towns: Branden, Chunkey, Hillsborough, and others," as he spelled them. He seemed fascinated by the Choctaws he met, some sixty of them, on what he called Dancing Rabbit Creek but which must have been some stream such as Chunky.[32]

Two soldiers in two different companies mentioned an event on the march that particularly upset them. Stephen C. Beck, of the 124th Illinois, the "Hundred and Two Dozen" as it was often dubbed, called it "the saddest sight that I saw while in the army," and Lucius W. Barber, of Company D of the 15th Illinois, called it "a very melancholy incident." The Confederates had taken a position just beyond the residence of a widow and her three little children. The Southerners were led by a dashing officer on a white horse who, said Barber, was apparently Gen. Wirt Adams, and "seemed to bear a charmed life." During the exchange of gunfire the mother, having gone to her door out of curiosity, was shot dead. The children, not realizing that she was dead, clung pathetically to her body. Gen. Sherman, upon learning of it, had a notice put on the house describing the event and ordering the premises to be regarded as sacred ground. Barber was unable to say which side had fired the fatal bullet.[33]

Ebenezer Z. Hays had little to say about the march but rather abruptly mentioned that his 32nd Ohio Regiment "made a detour to a small town called Chunkeyville, which we burned, as we had been instructed to do." It is very possible that he meant Chunky, but at any rate the unfortunate town was near Lauderdale County, if not in it. A Major Crumbaker in Ford's unit stepped into a private yard to ask directions and, said Ford,

> He was assailed immediately by a large pack of blood hounds. The brutes seemed determined to get hold of him, but drawing his sword and slashing right and left, he fell back through the gate in good order, his face to the foe, and giving the command to fire, that pack of hounds was soon worthless for pursuing conscipts, the use their owner had been making of them….[34]

Stephen Beck, perhaps also confusing Chunky with Chunkyville (which had no railroad), later wrote of destroying the railroad depot, track, a bridge, two strong stockades, and "a vast amount of cotton." He mentioned an incident that happened apparently in Lauderdale County and is interesting for his comments:

> During the afternoon's march, in passing a pretentious plantation house, an officer of my company said, "I will carry any man's gun and accoutrements who will go into that house and bring me a coverlet." John [a fellow soldier] said, "I'll do that." So it was arranged and carried out. Soon after, we went into camp. Shortly after, a woman, with some small children came into camp, all crying, and went to my Colonel, saying that his men had taken all her bed clothes. The Colonel told her to go through his Regiment, and anything that

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[32] William Martin, *"Out and Forward" or Recollections of the War of 1861 to 1865* (Manhattan, Kas.: Art Craft Printers, 1941), 26.
[33] Barber, *op. cit.*, 133-135; Beck, *op. cit.*, 20.
[34] Ebenezer Z. Hays (ed.), *History of the Thirty-Second Regiment Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry* (Columbus, Ohio: Cott & Evans, 1896), 50.

> she found that belonged to her, she should have. Suffice it to say the poor woman did not find what had been taken from her. What I have related about John shows that all who wore the "Blue" were not built alike…. This taking of personal private property was all wrong at that time, as at any time before or since.[35]

Lucius Barber was obviously a young man of unusual humanity, in *any* army and at any time, for he was civilized enough to have a bad conscience about the pillage, destruction, and thievery he witnessed. He commented in his memoirs in terms that his Confederate antagonists would have applauded:

> Sherman's army left fire and famine in its track. The country was one lurid blaze of fire; burning cotton gins and deserted dwellings were seen on every hand. I regret to say it, but oft-times habitations were burned down over the heads of occupants, but not by orders. Those gangs of ruffians, who always follow in the wake of armies to pillage and destroy, seemed on the march to give loose reins to their passions. I have seen the cabin of the poor entered and the last mouthful taken from almost starving children. No one, who has a heart that beats in sympathy for the sorrows of others, can look on these things without the strongest feelings of compassion for the victims. The wretches who caused this suffering were brought to punishment as often as [they were] caught, but the most vigorous measures could not always stop it.[36]

Sherman's army was a conglomeration of rural innocents from the Midwest and hard sophisticates from the Northeastern cities. Some were scoundrels, some were gentlemen, and at least one was a lady, or at least a female. Her actual first name seems not to have been known, but her family name was Hodges, or possibly Hodgers. She and a twin brother were born in Clogher Head, Ireland; but following her father's death and her mother's remarriage to a man named Cashier, the family emigrated to America and she drifted into Illinois. There, as she had been in Ireland, she became a farmer; and usually dressed in male clothing, she herded sheep with her brother. As a soldier she went by the name Albert D. J. Cashier. In August of 1862, at the age of nineteen, this auburn-haired, blue-eyed woman enlisted as a private in Company G, 95th Illinois Infantry and served with that unit throughout the war. She was in the fighting around Vicksburg and, after the Meridian campaign, in the Red River expedition. In 1864 she fought at Guntown, Miss., and later participated in the Battle of Nashville and the pursuit of General Hood's army. After the war she returned to Illinois and to farming and herding cattle. Granted a pension in her old age, she lived at the Soldiers' Home in Quincy. On one occasion she was struck by an automobile, and it was during the treatment of her injury that her true sexual identity was discovered. The examining physician honored her request not to reveal her secret and to let her return to the Soldiers' Home. She died in 1915.[37]

One of the roughest units under Sherman was the 17th New York Regiment made up of old zouaves and toughs from New York City. The only way their officers knew to control them was to subject them to a discipline which in that

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[35] Beck, *op. cit.*, 22.
[36] Barber, *op. cit.*, 138.
[37] "Women as U. S. Soldiers," *Kansas City* (Mo.) *Star*, 13 April 1923, 26.

relatively innocent time was foreign to most Americans, North or South.. In fact, the men of the 17th New York were treated almost as criminals. They started the march to Meridian with heavier knapsacks than the other soldiers carried and had to subsist on only half-rations. Colonel William T. C. Grower subjected them to hard marching and required the guard before his tent, even after the day's march, to carry a full load for two hours. They were used as guards for the wagon train and were strictly forbidden to forage. The poor, half-starved wretches, trying to salvage food that the others had discarded, often went scrounging around the messes of other units. And yet, there was apparently little complaining from any of them, and they proved themselves good soldiers.[38]

During the eleven-day march, General Sherman stayed active and made a point of constantly moving about to check on the various units. Philip Roesch, of Company H, 25th Wisconsin Regiment, told of seeing Sherman at least twice. Roesch and his pal Bill Patterson were marching along one day when what appeared to be a "well-dressed gentleman" overtook and passed them on foot. Patterson commented, "I guess that's some fool chaplain." Rosesch, watching the man get on ahead of them, replied, "He looks it, and very likely he jay-hawked [i.e.,stole] those clothes, for they look too good for a soldier." If the man heard them, he gave no indication of it but stopped some twenty paces ahead of Roesch and Patterson to speak with some officers and orderlies on horseback. After the "chaplain" left, the two soldiers asked one of the party who the man was and were told it was, as Roesch later put it, "the best general we ever served under."[39]

On another occasion Roesch's regiment was ordered about two o'clock one morning to build a 140-yard bridge over a swamp. The men chopped pine trees and laid them from stump to stump as beams and then placed other trees over the beams as planking. Around eight o'clock Sherman came along with the rest of the army, arriving just in time to see the regiment's colonel waist-deep in the water and hard at work. Sherman apparently was not pleased but made no great fuss, saying merely that there was no need for a colonel to do that kind of work. Colonel J. M. Rusk replied, "I'm no better than any of my men." Sherman merely answered that he wanted to talk with Rusk and called him out of the water and to the roadside under a tree where the two officers talked until the bridge had been finished.[40]

The Yanks on their march to Meridian became accustomed to having civilians along the route come almost daily to buy supplies from the nearest units. These visitors were usually women who wanted such things as gloves, medicines, and the like, but rarely food. Two articles that were sought more often than many of the Yankees would have expected were pipe tobacco and cigars. Stephen Beck professed to being shocked, and he found most of the women "a sorry looking outfit." His opinion was categorical: "To see a woman returning home with a great cigar in her mouth was a disgusting sight to us Northern men. The women of the South use

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[38] Barber, *op. cit.*, 136-137. The *Official Records,* I:32:1:169, refers conspicuously to this New York unit as "veteran."

[39] Philip Roesch, "Memorandum of Philip Roesch, Co. H, 25th Reg., Wisconsin Volunteers; Kept All during His Service," page 8; typescript owned by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, which kindly made a photo copy available to the author.

[40] *Ibid.*

tobacco in some form, smoking, chewing, or [taking] snuff as a generality or did at the war period."[41]

Stephen Beck recorded that soldiers on a march such as this had to eat "on the run," and meals were usually cold. A man had to carry his own rations and he could eat it any time he chose during the day. At night or early in the morning he might have time to build a fire to boil his coffee and, as Beck put it, "warm his 'sow belly,' if he had any," to go with his hardtack. If he had anything else, such as sweet potato or chicken, it wasn't because Uncle Sam had provided them. One used one's own wits to get such special treats.[42]

On Saturday, the thirteenth, the Yanks reached Tallahatta Creek. They were now nearly in Meridian, but the Confederate civilian population outside of Sherman's line of march were hard-pressed to get information. A Mobile newspaper remarked wryly on this dearth of news and made a remarkably astute assessment of the situation:

> One of the marvels of the day is the utter absence of any credible data on which can be predicated a rational idea of the programme and purposes of the enemy. It seems Gen. Polk has laid an embargo on the telegraph, but from all accounts, he knows but little himself of what they propose to accomplish. At all events, one would naturally so suppose, from the extraordinary movements that have been going on for some days in his Department.

Doubting that Sherman's expedition was a movement against either Mobile or the area beyond the Tombigbee, the paper observed:

> It would not reflect much credit on the superior sources of information of our military authorities, if the whole affair turns out to be a mere raid of Sherman, having for its object the destruction of the interior railroads, and the driving back of Gen. Polk, while Jackson and Canton are being fortified and made posts for the protection of the Mississippi River and the [Mississippi] Central Railroad.[43]

General Sherman also had his anxious moments. When his army reached Tallahatta Creek, he was irritated and somewhat apprehensive to discover not only that the bridge had been burned but also that the retreating Confederates had felled trees to block the way. Here he was scarcely twenty miles from his objective, and it occurred to him that the Rebels were trying to stall him to gain time to remove railroad property, whose destruction was one of his chief objects. Something would have to be done quickly. At four P.M. Sherman dispatched a message to McPherson ordering him to send forward as many axes and workers as could be spared and to

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[41] Beck, *op. cit*., 20. The writer's great-great-grandmother, Nancy Waldrop, who lived near Jasper, Ga., and was by this time already a widow of the Civil War, grew and enjoyed tobacco which she smoked in a clay pipe. She moved to Lauderdale County in the late 1800s and is buried in Bethel United Methodist Church Cemetery, Midway Community, near Meridian.

[42] *Ibid*., 20. Hardtack, a dry, hard biscuit made with flour and water, was a military staple. Because of its hardness, it was also sometimes wryly regarded as a potential weapon.

[43] Mobile *Register and Advertiser*, 16 February 1864.

make allowance for relief units so that the work could proceed without interruption. Wishing to take no chances on the enemy's stripping Meridian, Sherman also ordered McPherson to send one of his brigades at daylight over another road through Chunky so as to bypass the present bottleneck and to meet the main road across Chunky River. "We are now said to be eighteen miles from Meridian," he added, "but I fear the obstructions will delay us much."[44]

In order to travel as rapidly as possible, Sherman ordered the supply trains to be corralled at Tallahatta Creek, with four regiments and one battery of artillery and Gen. Alexander Chambers' brigade left as guard. In addition, all sick and disabled men were left behind; the rest pushed forward toward Okatibbee Creek, just west of Meridian.[45]

Meanwhile, as Sherman had ordered, Brig. Gen. Manning F. Force's First Brigade, composed of the 20th, 31st, 45th, and 124th Illinois Regiments, moved upon Chunky Station. Everything went well until about nine A.M. when, almost in the town, they learned that Confederate Gen. Stephen D. Lee was at Chunky with Adams' and Starke's cavalry brigades. The 45th Illinois was in the lead and sent a company forward as skirmishers. The rest of the brigade followed rapidly and surprised the rear guard of the Confederates at breakfast about a mile from the railroad station. Two of the Federal regiments quickly got into a line of battle on both sides of the road while the other two went in a column down the road, driving the Confederates across the river. General Force later described the skirmish: "The rebels left blood on both sides of the creek, and our fire made some confusion among them. They held with some obstinacy a stockade, which commanded the bridge, but their loss was undoubtedly small."[46]

After the Southerners retired across the creek, the 124th Illinois set to work destroying the bridge—a "fine trestle" railroad bridge of eight trestles and two abutments. From across the creek came severe firing directed at those engaged in ruining the bridge, and two more companies moved in to give the workers a cover against the Rebel sharpshooters. Falling back, the Confederates abandoned six wagons which their foes burned. In addition to the bridge, the Federals destroyed the railroad station and several other buildings, including a large structure filled with cotton. They also wrecked the water tanks, two smaller trestles, and several hundred yards of railroad. The entire operation took about an hour and a half, and at 10:30 A.M. they marched northeast to join the main column on the Meridian-Decatur Road.[47]

While Sherman fretted about possible delays, W. A. Campbell and his fellows, in a Rebel cavalry unit that sniped at Sherman's men, experienced an amusing incident. Here's how he described it thirty-nine years later when he was a resident of Columbus, Miss.:

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[44] Report of Sherman, *Official Records*, I:32:1:175; Report of Col. J. B. Moore, *ibid*., 243; Sherman to McPherson, *ibid*., I:52:1:517.

[45] Report of McPherson, *ibid*., I:32:1:211; report of Col. J. B. Moore, *ibid*., 243.

[46] Report of McPherson, *ibid*., I:32:1:211; report of Gen. Force, *ibid*., 227; report of Lt. Col. John H. Howe, *ibid*., 235-235; report of Maj. John O. Duer, *ibid*., 233-234.

[47] *Ibid*.; also, Richard L. Howard, *History of the 124th Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, Otherwise Known as the 'Hundred and Two Dozen," from August, 1862, to August, 1865* (Springfield, Ill.: H. W. Bokker, 1880), 191.

> My company was going on picket at night not far from Meridian. The captain and Maj. Erwin, of the general's staff, were at the head of the company, and two of the men were riding thirty or forty yards in advance and going up a slight elevation, at the crest of which there was a farmhouse with a picket fence around it. Suddenly a volley of musketry fire rolled out, and one of the two men in advance was shot from his horse; the other came tearing back. The captain immediately gave the command to "about face," but just then a panic ensued, and every man wheeled his horse and went tearing down the road. Trees had been felled across the road to delay the Federal artillery, so in the dark men and horses tumbled over them and pandemonium ensued, and men were scattered throughout the woods like a flock of birds. Among those in the stampede was a man who had a Maynard rifle across his lap. In the darkness his horse ran between two small trees, close together, and his gun, catching breech and end of barrel, was bent to a considerable curve. The soldier was much distressed by this accident to his fine gun, and spoke of having it straightened; but some of the boys advised him against it, saying it was the very gun to keep, as he could get behind a tree and shoot without any risk to himself, the enemy not being able to see anything but the muzzle of his gun.[48]

Undoubtedly, few people in Meridian got much sleep that Saturday night, the thirteenth. The civilians feared for their lives and property; the soldiers awaited orders to move east; and General Polk sent messages like mad, though the telegrapher was preparing to leave also. At one A.M. Sunday, Polk ordered General French to move his command at five A.M. along the road from Meridian to Alamucha, Gaston, and Moscow;[49] and although the other divisions did not move simultaneously, they all used the same route.

In all the confusion Polk had the assistance of a very efficient civilian. L. J. Fleming, chief engineer and general superintendent of the M & O Railroad, helped get the rolling stock out of the area and secure supplies for the army's trek to Demopolis. At 4:30 A.M. Sunday, Fleming told Polk that all the bacon and ordnance stores from West Point, Brooksville, and Macon had arrived. All the trains from the north had passed except one from Columbus, which had left that place at three A.M. and was expected in Meridian at eleven A.M. Sunday. Fleming reported that all other preparations had been carried out and that all the supplies in Meridian had been loaded and would go forward on the train which carried Polk. "If the enemy can be held in check until eleven o'clock," he added, "our last train will be safe."[50]

General Polk departed at 10:30 Sunday morning, and at noon the operator at the South-Western Telegraph Company in Meridian closed his office and fled with whatever equipment and office valuables he could carry. According to the Mobile *Register and Advertiser*, the Confederates retired "in good order" toward the Tombigbee River. The last train left at one P.M. Those on that train reported that as

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[48] W. A. Campbell, "Advantage of a Bowed Gun—Humorous," *Confederate Veteran* (February 1903), 11:68.
[49] Gen. Polk to Gen. French, *Official Records*, I:32:2:737.
[50] L. J. Fleming to Gen. Polk, *ibid.*

they were pulling out, the entering army of Bluecoats was in full view but made no effort to delay or attack the train, even though they were cavalry.[51]

Some of the retreating Confederates stopped for several hours on the property of Jacob Perry Welch in Alamucha. Welch recorded rather acidly in his journal that the soldiers were his *guests* for a day, taking supplies and committing acts of vandalism. Perhaps Welch was not being entirely candid in his journal, for there are records that show that Polk's army—which did indeed sojourn with him briefly on its retreat and which no doubt did get supplies from him and did cause some damage—paid him somewhat over $1,230 for 537 bushels of corn. Welch demanded three dollars a bushel, which brought complaints from Quartermaster E. A. Banks. Nevertheless, General Loring ordered that Welch be paid his price, for as Loring later said, "We were upon retreat and corn could not be had at any price." In another instance General Polk himself approved the purchase of 114 bushels of corn from Welch. In addition, on 18 February 1864 Ferguson's Brigade paid Welch $324 for 1,245 fence rails, presumably to replace at least some of those that, according to Welch, the soldiers had used for firewood.[52]

While he was in Alamucha, General Polk had his headquarters at Salem Church; Generals Loring, Lee, and Ferguson were at the Welch home. Loring suggested that Welch's son William, who was slightly under the minimum age for military service, might join his command, promising to put the lad into his own escort and look after him. Welch agreed to let William go "as soon as we could hastily fix him up." The Confederates, still in a hurry, left some of their guns and ammunition on the Welch farm, whose owner then boasted a "well supplied neighborhood."[53]

Welch probably believed the ammunition would come in handy, for he had a quaint notion that *he* was one of the reasons Sherman had made the 140-mile trek from Vicksburg. Earlier in the war, said Welch, he had written an article making "sarcastic comments relative to the prowess of the northern red mouth Yankee [Sherman]." Welch said the article later appeared in a New York newspaper and, according to General Loring, Sherman saw it. As a consequence, Welch and his family expected to be burned out by the unwelcome visitor. Their expectations never materialized, however; for, as Welch even more quaintly put it, Sherman "in a few days took alarm and hurried back to Vicksburg."[54]

Just before leaving Meridian, Polk had placed Gen. S. D. Lee in command of all the cavalry west of Alabama. Lee began immediately to communicate with Gen. N. B. Forrest and at the same time moved his command toward Marion in advance of Sherman.[55]

Playing it safe, the correspondent for the Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser* retired from Meridian a day or so before the Federals arrived. Then, from the relative security of Enterprise he proceeded to lecture the Confederate authorities on strategy: "We think here it would be a good move for Gen. Maury [in Mobile] to come up here and get in the rear of the enemy, while Gen. Johnston advances from

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[51] Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser*, 16 February 1864; report of Sherman, *Official Records*, I:32:1:175-175.
[52] Jacob Perry Welch, *op. cit.*
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] Report of Gen. S. D. Lee, *Official Records*, I:32:1:366.

Georgia to the front, meeting on the Alabama river, and that a splendid victory would be the result."[56]

Sherman tarried impatiently on the banks of Okatibbee Creek on that Valentine's Day Sunday, awaiting word from his scouts. His army had begun its march about 5:30 that morning and pushed forward hastily. Robert J. Campbell of the Third Iowa Infantry scribbled in his diary that the morning was cloudy and looked like rain. He reported the "Rebs in full retreat."[57]

This was going to be a Valentine's Day that Meridianites would remember for a long time. It might have helped mitigate the situation, just a bit, had they known that this hated Yankee general, Sherman, would die on this same day twenty-seven years later.

The bridge over Okatibbee Creek was burning that Sunday morning when Sherman and Hurlbut reached it. A nearby cotton gin furnished enough wood for another bridge, and in two hours they could cross.[58] But without waiting for the new bridge, a group of Federal cavalry, probably Col. Edward F. Winslow's unit, pushed on into Meridian to survey the situation.[59] This was almost certainly the group seen by the people who left on the last train. Some Confederate cavalrymen saw the Union cavalry, too. Lt. Col. Frank A. Montgomery and his unit of Independent Mississippi Cavalry had paralleled the Federal advance for some time and entered Meridian just in advance of the Federal vanguard. Montgomery later recalled the occasion:

> We entered Meridian…passing through, for the enemy was entering in force by one road [probably the Lower Decatur Road], as we came in by another [apparently the Upper Decatur Road], and they nearly succeeded in cutting us off. As it was, we passed through the northern part of town on the road leading toward Lauderdale Springs, and here halted and formed to give our artillery time to move on and out of danger. The enemy attacked us, and we [sustained] a slight loss and retired, but they did not pursue.[60]

Colonel Winslow, whose cavalry it probably was that chased Montgomery through Meridian, moved on a short distance beyond the town and bivouacked at three P.M. on the Richard McLemore plantation, about two miles beyond Meridian.[61]

This skirmish between the Rebels and Winslow's cavalry occurred around noon, or perhaps shortly before, while Sherman was still on Okatibbee Creek anxiously awaiting confirmation of a report from a man just captured that the Rebels

[56] Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser*, 13 February 1864.
[57] Wirt Armistead Cate (ed.), *Two Soldiers; the Campaign Diaries of Thomas J. Key, Dec. 7, 1863-May 17, 1865, and Robert J. Campbell, Jan. 1, 1864-July 21, 1864* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 236.
[58] Report of Sherman, *Official Records*, I:32:1:175.
[59] Keim, *op. cit.*
[60] Frank A. Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War* (Cincinnati: The Robert Clark Company Press, 1901), 152.
[61] Report of Col. Winslow, *Official Records*, I:32:1:250.

had abandoned Meridian. When Sherman heard the report, he walked silently back and forth for several moments, then suddenly burst out excitedly, "This is worth fifty millions to the Government!"[62] At 12:30 P.M. he sent a message to McPherson warning that S. D. Lee was on his (McPherson's) right flank and ought to be watched carefully.[63] At about the same time the entire Third Division, under Brig. Gen. Andrew J. Smith, began crossing Okatibbee. By two P.M. Sherman had still received no word from his reconnaissance group but decided to move forward anyway. He sent another message to McPherson advising him to move his command into Meridian or else camp it on the creek "where there is good ground," at the same time suggesting that McPherson might employ some of his men at Tunnel Hill and Chunky Station. Sherman also told McPherson to see him that night "in person."[64] That done, Sherman moved forward and, as he later wrote, "entered Meridian at 3:30 P.M. of the 14th with little opposition, and that was soon overcome by a battalion of Colonel Winslow's cavalry fighting on foot."[65] When Sherman reached the railroad stations, he was vexed to find that the Confederates had moved their rolling stock beyond his reach. He found only one locomotive and a train, both of which were burning. Perhaps he had a momentary notion to pursue beyond Meridian. If so, he squelched it. "I knew we could not overtake the enemy before he would cross the Tombigbee," wrote Sherman, "and in fact I was willing to gain our point without battle, at so great a distance from the [Mississippi] river, where the care of wounded would have so taxed our ability to provide for them."[66]

Besides, there was the matter of Gen. Sooy Smith, who was supposed by now to be not far north of Meridian and hastening to his meeting there with Sherman. There had thus far been no information from Smith, though rumors on the thirteenth placed him about thirty miles north of Meridian.[67] But Sherman was not at the moment as concerned about Smith as he was with preparing his soldiers for their work of destruction.

While Sherman prepared, and those Meridianites still in town quaked, Southerners elsewhere fumed at Sherman's audacity and what they regarded as Polk's incompetence and cowardice. The Mobile *DailyRegister and Advertiser* expressed itself in terms that probably found widespread agreement:

> The situation is bad, but its worst feature is the disgrace that belongs to it. It is disgraceful that a column of 32,000 [*sic*] Federals should march one hundred miles into the heart of Mississippi without opposition, except such as could be given by Gen. Lee and his cavalry. A Confederate army of tried men, at least half as strong as the enemy has confronted the enemy and retreated without giving battle.

After observing that Generals Bragg, Johnston, and Robert E. Lee had fought with similar disparities, the paper added, "But that is past. What are the duties of the present hour? Shall 32,000 men be allowed to march through the great States of

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[62] Keim, *op. cit.*
[63] *Official Records*, I:52:1:519.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] Sherman's report, *ibid.*, I:32:1:175.
[66] *Ibid.*, 176.
[67] *Official Records*, I:52:1:519

Mississippi and Alabama? What becomes of the boasted sovereignty of the States if this is permitted?" Insisting that the situation was "bad, but not desperate," the Mobile paper, by implication, expressed its opinion of Polk. There were, it said, 25,000 soldiers ready to oppose Sherman. "Let an equal number of citizens seize their arms and rally to the troops, and let the President send us a General to lead them against the enemy."[68]

The Federal army came in for its share of denunciation, and the Mobile paper used some picturesque phraseology: "It remains to be seen whether so audacious and hazardous an enterprise can be successfully prosecuted. The Yankees have thus far shown a mortifying contempt for our military energy and resources—it is to be hoped that before they return—if, indeed, they are ever *permitted* to *return* to Yankeedom, they may be taught a better appreciation of both."[69]

Other critics were even more severe in their denunciation of Polk. E. S. Dargan wrote to Secretary of War James A. Seddon that the consensus of the populace regarding Polk was that the latter could not "inspire the army or the country with confidence." Consequently, morale in the area was low and many eligible men were avoiding military service and even threatening to resist the authority of the government. "In one word," said Dargan, "public sentiment to a great extent is demoralized." He suggested that General Beauregard would be a good officer to revive the spirit of the people, as evidenced by "the universal expression both from the army and from civilians." And finally, "Aside from the raid of Sherman and scarcity of provisions, we should be in good spirits; but let Beauregard come if possible." Secretary Seddon showed the letter to President Davis, who must have been sorely hurt to see his esteemed bishop-general so attacked. In an acknowledgment of Dargan's letter Davis wrote tersely: "Read and returned to the Secretary of War, who knows the position and responses of General Beauregard. I have little knowledge of dissatisfaction with General Polk and still less of any just ground for it."[70]

The men in General Polk's command, especially those who were Mississippians, must have felt great indignation at their commanding general's order to retreat eastward without offering any except token opposition. William L. Nugent's laconic comment in a letter to his "Dear Nellie" was probably much kinder than were those of men whose homes were nearer the enemy than was Nugent's Greenville, Miss. After it was all over, Nugent said merely, "Had we been as active as we might, Sherman would have been annihilated before leaving Meridian."[71]

One can also imagine the feelings of the two Lauderdale companies in Polk's command—the Meridian Invincibles and the Lauderdale Cavalry. When Sherman began his march, the Invincibles, part of the 14th Mississippi Regiment of Gen. William W. Loring's Division, were at Canton and fell back to Morton as the Federals entered Jackson. Back, back, ever retreating! The Meridianites had even more cause than did most of their brothers to be fearful and angry at the order to retreat. They were probably even more resentful than were the Lauderdale Cavalry in Gen. Wirt Adams's Brigade, for the men on horseback could at least partially assuage

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[68] Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser*, 16 February 1864. The figure 32,000 was an excessive estimate of Sherman's army and thus adds cogency to the paper's complaint.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] E. S. Dargan to James A. Seddon, *Official Records*, I:3:2:635f.

[71] William L. Nugent, *My Dear Nellie. The Civil War Letters of William L. Nugent to Eleanor Smith Nugent*. Ed. by William M. Cash and Lucy Somerville Howarth (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 158.

their anger and frustration by sniping at the hated invaders. But they, too, were *retreating*.[72] It was all very demoralizing to Southern patriots.

Nevertheless, the appearance of the Federals was perhaps almost welcomed by those who still felt some affection for the Union, and within Lauderdale County there were some strong pockets of Unionism. In the western part of the county, for instance, a company of men was formed for the purpose of joining the Federal army. Dr. Garrett E. Longmire, a citizen of Garlandville, in Jasper County, headed the group which held its meetings at the home of a man named Joe Mayberry.[73]

Most Mississippians, however, probably felt as did William P. Chambers, the conscientious young soldier who had spent much time in and around Meridian. Like many others, he was saddened and appalled at what seemed to him the supine response of those who were supposed to be his state's defenders. Chambers was in Mobile and got his news through the somewhat vague reports and rumors that filtered across the miles. A week before Sherman entered Meridian, Chambers and his unit had arrived there by train from Mobile. The coaches were crowded and cold and the men slept but little, hardships that soldiers seemed not to have minded unduly when critical action was imminent. Arriving at Meridian about four A.M. on Sunday, the seventh, they gladly built fires to try to keep warm; and the entire area around the railroads was aglow and thronged with soldiers awaiting a train that was to carry them westward to meet the Federal advance.[74]

When day began to break, Chambers walked over to his old campground and saw the familiar pine forest to the west. Perhaps he looked up again at the hills south of town and walked over to the Sowashee that he had earlier found picturesque. He strolled around town which at that hour probably seemed deserted. It looked about the same, though he did notice a few new houses, most of which he thought rather shabby. When he got back to the railroads, he learned that the men would have to wait several more hours. Since he knew that the Federal soldiers to the west *weren't* waiting, he was annoyed; but it gave him enough time to pay a visit to his Meridian friends, the Richard McLemores, at their home east of town. There he enjoyed what he thought "a nice dinner." Before leaving their house, he gave Mrs. McLemore some clothing to hold for him and about 175 pages of his manuscript journal.[75]

Chambers' brigade received orders to be at the railroad station at daylight on the ninth to board a westbound train. At last they would be able to serve their state by confronting the enemy who were now almost to Morton. But when they got to the depot, there was no train, for orders had *again* been changed. They were now told to be able to leave at 12:30 P.M. Another frustrating delay! But long before the new departure time they learned that they would not be sent west at all. To Chambers' intense chagrin and anger, they were ordered back to Mobile! His comments are moving and must not be paraphrased:

> As Mississippians, we were greatly hurt at this announcement. We had come home as it were to check the progress of the invader who was marching

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[72] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 224, 402; *Official Records*, I:32:1:333.
[73] A. H. Polk to T. F. Sevier, *Official Records*, 1:32:3:579-580.
[74] Chambers, *op. cit*., 299.
[75] *Ibid.*

> through the center of the State. With indignant hearts, we learned of his advance, and the wholesale destruction that attended it. We knew that our forces in his front were steadily falling back; but *now* the whole State was to be abandoned without a single blow. No wonder the hearts of her sons burned within them; and no wonder if they learned to distrust the policy that gave their homes to the torch and their families to the tender mercies of the foe. And all this time it was stoutly maintained that our force was greatly superior to that of the enemy.[76]

No wonder if they learned to distrust the policy that gave their homes to the torch and their families to the tender mercies of the foe. It is perhaps difficult to exaggerate the damage that the Confederate responses to the Federal campaigns at Vicksburg in 1863 and Meridian in 1864 did to morale in the state and region. And there remains a nagging suspicion that egregious bungling was involved in both cases.

Chambers and his command must certainly be regarded as typical, and they were totally disheartened by the sorry mess. Chambers was so disgusted, in fact, that in his initial passion he resolved to leave the regular army and help organize an independent command "and fight the enemy nearest my home." His fellows were totally with him, officers and all.[77]

After the first wave of anger had passed, however, Chambers looked at the situation more objectively and decided that he could not "abandon the Government in its dark hour." More:

> It is true, I believed that incapacity, if not worse, characterized the Department at Richmond, and many of the minor departments, that the Government as at present organized will fail to establish itself, and that if the war is continued a great while longer, it will be by small independent organizations in which each man will feel responsible for the success of every undertaking.[78]

And so he thought, and struggled with his thoughts, while on that Tuesday, 9 February, he and his company fretted around the little stations in Meridian, awaiting transportation *away* from the invader. About noon a train arrived carrying the rest of their brigade who had earlier been sent a few miles westward but were now returning without having challenged the enemy. The dreary afternoon dragged by. At about ten P.M. they boarded a train, but, said Chambers, "so many had left the regiment that some companies were slimly represented." More of Chambers' company planned to leave the train at Shubuta; so Chambers, weary as he was, forced himself to stay awake in order to say goodbye to his friends. On the way they kept begging Chambers to go with them, promising that if he would, they would make him their leader and then all of them could attack the Federal invaders. They would not even go home first. Chambers demurred at their suggestion of disobedience and later observed: "I doubt if I ever see one of them again, but *these men are neither traitors*

[76] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 300.
[77] *Ibid.*, 300-301.
[78] *Ibid.*, 301.

nor deserters."[79] (The emphasis is Chambers'.) When the regiment got back to Mobile, it had in it only 146 men, barely enough for two companies.[80]

Completely depressed, Chambers went on to Mobile. There on the following Monday he wrote in his journal:

> The enemy has Meridian…. It is a shame!—a stigma on the fair name of the Confederacy, that thirty-five thousand hostile men should march entirely through Miss. and Ala., and no obstacle be placed in the way to impede their progress!…. Never did I once think that such degradation could come upon my beloved State, so long as she had *one* son left whose heart beat true to freedom, home and God! An apathy seems to have fallen on our armies, and stilled the energies of our people. We are lying still till the chains of Slavery are forged, and the manacles are fastened on our wrists![81]

Incidentally, this journal that Chambers kept so conscientiously had an interesting adventure during and after Meridian's occupation. Mrs. McLemore, like many other persons in the county, hoped to save as much of her family's property from seizure or destruction as possible. She placed some of her more valuable possessions into a trunk, along with the pages of Chambers' journal that he had given her earlier. Then she sent the trunk away, and it was subsequently captured and its contents rifled. A few months later, through a series of curious events, the missing pages, except those for September 1863 and January 1864, were restored to Chambers.[82]

The Confederate response to Sherman's invasion inspired contempt also on the Union side. Wisconsin volunteer John F. Brobst expressed himself in terms that would doubtless have been seconded by many others in Sherman's army. Writing later to "Friend Mary" back home, he said: "We were 25 thousand strong on this raid and the rebs say 42. Now you can see by that how near they came to it. They acknowledged they had 23 thousand but did not have enough to risk a battle with us. Oh, the poor Godforsaken cowards. I am ashamed of them, if they are not ashamed of themselves."[83]

Pretty obviously, many in Mississippi had begun to believe that the Confederate authorities were giving short shrift to many areas of its broad domain, and none more so than Mississippi.

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[79] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 301.
[80] Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi, 1803-1898*, 364.
[81] Chambers, *op. cit*., 302-303.
[82] *Ibid*., 300, 315, 320.
[83] John F. Brobst, *Well, Mary: Civil War Letters of a Wisconsin Volunteer.* Ed. by Margaret Brobst Roth (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 38.

Chapter 15: "Meridian…no longer exists."

Sherman's army did not begin arriving in Meridian in substantial numbers until very late Sunday afternoon, St. Valentine's Day. That time of day in mid-February, especially in cloudiness, does not afford much more daylight, and Sherman undoubtedly wished to allow his men to find reasonably good shelter from the rain that seemed imminent. (Modern meteorologists would speak of an approaching cold front, and this one was bringing some very cold air with it.) In some cases the men were allowed to occupy private dwellings, a custom practiced in later times by invading armies, including American ones. The Sixteenth Army Corps, much of which went in with Sherman on Sunday, camped in the northern and eastern sections of the town; the Seventeenth Corps, which entered for the most part on Monday, took the southern and western portions.[1]

Probably little work of destruction was done on the remainder of the Sunday of Sherman's arrival, or, thanks to heavy rain, even on the next day. Sherman "rested" his army on Monday and issued orders that "The destruction of buildings must be deferred until the last moment, when a special detail will be made for that purpose." But the army apparently did not completely rest on that first full day, for Maj. Gen. James McPherson said that in the afternoon he set Brig. Gen. T. Kilby Smith's brigade to work "destroying railroads, machinery, &c."[2]

The majority of the enemy's force almost certainly weren't resting, either. No one who reports it says when the incident occurred, but at least three soldiers tell of it, Stephen C. Beck and R. L. Howard of the 124th Illinois regiment, and Lucius W. Barber of Co. D, 15th Illinois Regiment. None of the three identifies the soldier, his unit, or his victim; but all agree on several basic details. One of Sherman's soldiers, taken prisoner some months earlier at Vicksburg, had been subsequently transported through Meridian where, while his Confederate guard sought food and refreshments for his charges, a local woman walked up to the Union prisoner and spat in his face. That Yank was eventually exchanged and now found himself back in Meridian, his fury still lively. He quickly sought out the woman's residence, reminded her of what she had done, and set fire to the house. Barber says the soldier first piled up her furniture and told her she had better get out if she did not wish to burn with her furniture and house. Beck says she saved some of her property and carried it to another house, whereupon the soldier promptly burned that one, too, and even a third one where she again had sought refuge. Howard says only two houses were burned. The soldier was arrested but, as Howard later wrote, "it is almost useless to add that he was not punished."[3]

It is impossible to say with certainty where Sherman stayed. If all the various sources can be believed, he must have used several locations for his headquarters. Present-day legend sometimes suggests that he used the building known today as "Merrehope." It must be remembered that this house, as we see it today, is mostly if not entirely of later construction. And though existing data are inconclusive, it is even possible that nothing of the present structure stood on that site in 1864. But it is interesting that a report from 1882, only eighteen years after the time, in speaking

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[1] McPherson's report, *Official Records*, I:32:1:211.

[2] Sherman's report, *ibid.*, 1:32:1:176; Special Field Orders no. 17, *ibid.*, 186; McPherson's report, *ibid.*, 211.

[3] Barber, *op. cit.*, 137; Beck, *op. cit.*, 22; Howard, *op. cit.*, 195-196.

of the buildings spared from destruction by Sherman's army, includes "a house that *stood* [past tense and my emphasis] on the site of Mr. J. C. Lloyd's present residence"—that is, the house that we now know as Merrehope.[4] However that may be, Sherman would likely have regarded any building on that site as too far from the center of town, especially when there were buildings at the railroad junction that were both sufficiently commodious and conveniently situated.

A Meridian city directory of 1882 says Sherman occupied a house that stood at the present address of 2607 Seventh Street, the location in later years of the residence of Dr. R. H. Whitfield.[5] One of Sherman's soldiers, William B. Smith, comments in his memoirs that during the night of Tuesday to Wednesday, a violent gale spread a fire that forced Sherman to change his headquarters three times.[6] That could be the occasion mentioned by Lucius Barber who tells that some soldiers started a fire—whether intentionally he does not say—which destroyed the building that Sherman was using, and elicited Sherman's complaint that "the boys might have waited until [I] got out before burning [my] quarters…."[7]

Sherman possibly did stay at more than one location, but there is one report on the matter that impresses me more than any of the others. On March 5 a reporter from the Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser* was in Meridian. The recent events were still fresh in everyone's mind, and a reporter usually is by habit and necessity a more careful investigator than the average person. He informed his paper that Sherman had occupied the Ragsdale House and McPherson had stayed at "Gen. Polk's old headquarters."[8]

It is understandable that there have been, in later years, several conflicting reports about which generals stayed where. During the occupation few Meridianites probably could be exactly certain who was who, and all that a local citizen might have known was that some officer or other, in a blue uniform and a beard, stayed in such-and-such a house. Doubtless, there seemed to be officers everywhere, three of whom were major generals. Meridianites at that time had probably heard of Sherman, but it is unlikely that many could have identified him.

Randolph Keim, reporting for the *New York Herald*, told of having a house pointed out to him as General Polk's unfinished headquarters. He went on to describe Meridian as "a village of three hundred inhabitants" and one obviously "of immense importance to the enemy, in a military point of view [that had been] the centre of much of the material [*sic*] of war, belonging to the confederacy in this section." He further commented:

> From the character of the buildings and improvements of the town it was evidently the intention of the enemy to establish here the great military post of the Southwest. An arsenal, extensive depots and warehouses, barracks and hospitals, all new, and some still unfinished,

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[4] Croom, *op. cit.*, 5. This should in no way be taken as a detraction of the project that established Merrehope. It is a praiseworthy undertaking and, I believe, the first real effort to preserve beautiful things in Meridian. Merrehope, whatever its age, is an ornament deserving the county's care and pride.
[5] *Ibid.*, 5, 191.
[6] William B. Smith, *On Wheels and How I Came There; A Real Story for Real Boys and Girls, Giving the Personal Experiences and Observations of a Fifteen-Year-Old Yankee Boy as Soldier and Prisoner in the American Civil War* (New York: Hunt & Eaton; Cincinnati: Cranston & Curtis, 1893), 117.
[7] Barber, *op. cit.*, 137.
[8] Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser*, 5 March 1864.

> were found upon our occupation…. Many other buildings were being constructed, probably with a view to the accommodation of officers.[9]

Apparently at least some of the Meridian residents received food rations from the Federal army. R. L. Howard mentions particularly a Miss Davis who, though born in Massachusetts, had become what he termed "the most bitter rebel" one could imagine. One day as she returned from where she had drawn her rations, she saw a Union soldier. She showed him a dozen ears of corn she had just received and complained that she had been unable to get anything more. But, she added, she would be willing live on corn for a year if only the South could win. Commented Howard: "Such was the spirit manifested by nearly all the women of the south. They seemed to glory in their sufferings."[10]

This same Howard described some rather amusing episodes that occurred in Meridian when many of the Union soldiers were having to eke out their own provisions. An officer, whom Howard called the "grave Maj. Mann," had been trying, with middling success, to bake a corndodger on a board. Less successful was his attempt to catch a stray pig. Major Mann attacked it with his saber, but the pig escaped. Howard told of other foraging efforts in Meridian:

> Company H foraged a couple of sheep one day, which "Wash" Baker, the under-cook, tried to roast over a pit of live coals in a sort of barbecue style. But Snedeker declares they were "awfully cooked, and not *much* tougher than the sole leather." Companies C and H secured about three barrels of pea-nuts, or "goobers," as the southerners call them, which came very timely, and John Eagle, our regimental blacksmith, ever on the alert, made a discovery of some flour, sugar, etc. So he went to our Quartermaster for assistance, who laid the case before the Colonel [John H. Howe]. He, with visions of nice warm biscuits before his eyes, sent for a detail and gave the command to John, who marched directly to a somewhat prominent house and demanded admittance. This was refused, but he played the officer so well as to finally effect an entrance and soon found quite a quantity of flour, with some sugar and saleratus [baking soda], hidden under some carpets. All this was rolled out, an old wagon, pressed into service for the purpose, was loaded up, and the whole was at headquarters directly. After the barrels were emptied, the Quartermaster had the wagon taken off another way and the barrels burnt, so as to hide the tracks, and then officers lived on the top shelf again. The owner made an effort at headquarters to have the flour returned, but did not succeed.[11]

General McPherson sent Edward C. Downs out alone to locate a gristmill that could grind a sufficient quantity of corn for the army; the Union forces needed meal in Meridian and would need plenty more in the future. Downs found a mill two miles outside Meridian but it needed repairs. The owner directed him to another he described as six miles farther down the stream and in working order. Downs had not gone far when he saw a Rebel force of both cavalry and infantry:

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[9] Keim, *op. cit.*
[10] Howard, *op. cit.*, 195.
[11] *Ibid.*, 194-195.

> From appearances I judged them to be quite strong. I then retraced my steps toward camp. On my way I met a captain, with a detail of forty men, going after forage. I advised them to go back. I told them the strength of their [Confederate] forces, and that if he undertook to go on the rebs would gobble him up. He insisted upon having his way, and went on. Two men of Company K, of the 17th Illinois Infantry, who knew me, heard what I said to the captain, and, not liking very well to be captured, fell back a short distance to the rear of the squad, and watched the motion of things. The result was the captain and his men were surprised and all gobbled up without firing a shot or making any resistance, except the two that fell back, and they made a narrow escape.[12]

Downs rushed back to camp with the news but a search party of cavalry failed to find the lost squad or their captors.

But the primary purpose of the expedition was not to find gristmills, nor to pay social calls on a contemptuous civilian population, nor to describe the area for readers of the *New York Herald*. It was destruction, and just after his arrival Sherman explained it in some detail:

> The destruction of the railroads intersecting at Meridian is of great importance, and should be done most effectually. Every tie and rail of iron for many miles in each direction should be absolutely destroyed or injured, and every bridge and culvert completely destroyed…. The troops should be impressed with the importance of this work, and also that time is material, and therefore it should be begun at once and prosecuted with all energy possible….[13]

This work was divided between the two corps. The roads east and north were assigned to Hurlbut's command, while McPherson's men were to be responsible for those railroads running south and west. Half the men in each corps were to destroy railroads and the others were to remain in town "to watch the enemy now retreating eastward." To give the impression that Sherman was pursuing the Confederates, Col. Winslow's cavalry would accompany the Federal demolition crew working eastward.[14]

Some Federal soldiers who prowled around the community of Toomsuba were perhaps some of Col. Winslow's cavalry. Sixteen-year-old William C. Rogers waited tensely at his home on a hill somewhat west of Toomsuba, for he knew a raiding party was headed generally in the direction of his family's home. An unnerving gunfire heralded their approach, but it also gave the inhabitants time for at least some precautions. After the Rogers family had buried about five hundred pounds of ham, young William and a cousin took the horses and mules out into the woods where they kept the animals well hidden behind some large rocks. Such animals would have been a prize catch for Sherman's Bluecoats.[15]

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[12] Edward C. Downs, *The Great American Scout and Spy, "General Bunker"* 3rd ed. revised (New York: Olmsted, 1870), 310-311.
[13] Special Field Orders no. 17, *Official Records*, I:32:1:186.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] A. Jarvis Welch, *op. cit.*

The Yanks did arrive; and though the situation was tense, they spent only about five minutes rummaging about the house and grounds, just long enough to find the two hams hanging in the smokehouse where the family, to avoid being too conspicuously without food, had deliberately left them. A Confederate soldier, sick with pneumonia in the house, was not molested, though a Federal soldier took his spurs as souvenirs.[16]

A few months later young Rogers was able to work off some of his hostility in the Confederate Army. He went to Enterprise for his military training and at the age of seventeen fought in the Battle of Tupelo. Though a soldier at Rogers' side was killed and a cannon ball barely missed him, Rogers survived the war. Seventy years later his memory of all those stirring events was still vivid. His opinion of the Federal invaders was equally vivid, too, for he never ceased to regard Lincoln and his soldiers as contemptible creatures.[17]

In their work of destroying the railroads around Meridian, the Federals developed an efficient system. Often entire regiments were strung out along a track with one man to each tie. They then pried the ties up and battered them from the rails with sledges what Sherman called "clawbars." Sometimes they removed the outside spikes and merely rolled the rails off the ties. Then they stacked the ties in wedge-shaped piles about five feet high, balanced the rails across them, and set fire to the ties. Eventually the heated rails became soft and, with the help of tongs, could be twisted around trees "as iron cravats," said one soldier, "until the track of the old Mobile and Ohio Railroad had so many twists and turns in it that its best iron horse could not have followed it."[18]

Monday, 15 February

Most of the remainder of Sherman's army, mainly the 17th Army Corps, reached Meridian on Monday. The weather, which had hitherto been good, changed. Sunday had been overcast, and early this morning rain began falling and developed into a heavy downpour with a subsequent drop in temperature. For those still on the march the change in weather added major problems, discomfort, and delays. Lt. Col. John H. Howe's 124th Illinois Infantry, for instance, did not reach Meridian until Tuesday morning, after having "marched or waded" twelve miles on Monday.[19] In his brigade's report, Col. Cyrus Hall, Fourth Division, 17th Army Corps, mentioned the heavy rain but said that it had "but little effect" on his troops, since Sherman allowed them "to occupy the houses of the citizens of Meridian."[20] Capt. Lucius M. Rose, acting chief signal officer, of the 16th Army Corps, reported, "Took possession of a house, and proceeded to dry ourselves and make ourselves as comfortable as possible."[21]

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[16] A. Jarvis Welch, *op. cit.*
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] William B. Smith, *op. cit.*, 115-116.
[19] Report of Howe, *Official Records*, I:32:1:236.
[20] Report of Hall, *ibid.*, 246.
[21] Report of Rose, *ibid.,* 221.

Also, Philip Roesch's 25th Wisconsin Infantry arrived on Monday. His account suggests that either on that day or the next they "put a lot of gunpowder under Rebel Gen. Polk's house and blew it all to pieces," which if true, effectively eliminates that location as one used by Sherman or anyone else as a headquarters, unless briefly. However, this conflicts with the report, already cited, by the reporter for the Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser* to the effect that McPherson used Polk's old headquarters.[22] Another possibility is that McPherson stayed in the house that Polk had just vacated, whereas Roesch was talking about a newer building that was being built for Polk, perhaps the uncompleted house that Randolph Keim mentioned in the *New York Herald*. My guess is that Roesch was simply making an offhand remark about an act of destruction that occurred during the occupation.

On Monday Sherman congratulated his force "for their most successful accomplishment of one of the great problems of the war." Said he, "Meridian, the railway center of the Southwest, is now in our possession, and by industry and hard work can be rendered useless to the enemy and deprive him of the chief source of supply to his armies."[23] If orders were obeyed quickly and in secrecy, he said, the desired result would be accomplished, "a peace that will never again be disturbed in our country by a discontented minority."[24]

By noon Monday the town was bustling with Bluecoats, many of the soldiers having arrived at various times during the morning. The march from Vicksburg had on the whole been a pleasant experience, and Meridian had been taken almost effortlessly. Even the hard rain could not seriously dampen the spirits of the men.

Whenever several thousand soldiers are gathered in a comparatively small area, there is always apt to be what today would be called "horseplay." Somewhere in Meridian a soldier, perhaps wishing to test his water-soaked weapon to see whether it would still perform, found the old piece still responsive. The shot was immediately answered by another soldier within earshot, and then another, and another until there was a general firing. Fearing the presence of a Confederate force, some Yanks snatched up their weapons and prepared to "fall in"; but the fusillade subsided after about five minutes.[25] If the soldiers were startled, it is a fair conjecture that the remaining civilians were terrified.

In Company K of the 14th Illinois Infantry, in Col. Cyrus Hall's Brigade, there was a youngster not more than sixteen years old. William B. Smith in later times recalled his experiences, giving the impressions of a young lad in those years of terrible fighting. His brigade arrived in Meridian about noon on Monday and halted near one of the city's skyscrapers, a four-story, frame structure which Smith thought a hotel. (If it was a hotel, perhaps it was the Burton House, or even the Meridian House. It is unlikely that it was the Ragsdale, for reasons already given, nor the Jones, for reasons about to be given.) Smith in his youthful curiosity began wandering and strolled behind a residence where he found a detached kitchen of the type then common in the South. Hoping to find some food, he discovered instead a bottle of some kind of clear liquor. Young Smith knew nothing about such matters but

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[22] Roesch, *op. cit.*, 9.
[23] *Official Records*, I:32:1:187.
[24] Report of Sherman, *ibid.*, 176.
[25] William B. Smith, *op. cit.*, 111-112.

knew someone who did. And this connoisseur just happened to be passing that moment when young Smith reached the street:

> "Uncle Jimmie" Scott, who, like the rest of us [said Smith], was very wet and chilly and looked somewhat dejected; but as he caught a glimpse of the bottle in my hand his gloomy countenance brightened up a little, then clouded and drooped again, as he said: "Well, it's a bad fashion these Sacesh [Rebels] have of puttin' strichnine [*sic*] in whiskey for the Yanks, an' ye's lucky, me b'y, if ye's don't get pizened." Believing if there was anything on earth "Uncle Jimmie" was a good judge of it was the article I had in my hand, thoughtlessly I handed it over to him, and before I had time for a second thought about what the tall, bony Irishman was up to, or he had time to find out whether there was any extra poison in it or not, he jerked out the cork, clasped the flask firmly in both hands, placed it to his lips, and, quickly turning his face and the bottom of the flask up toward the descending rain, he closed his eyes, and before I could prevent it by my many quick and vigorous jerks on his long arms he let the whole of its contents gurgle down his thirsty throat.[26]

"Uncle Jimmie" later told Smith that the liquor was "very good quality of old Kimmel whiskey"; and when Smith's messmates heard about it, they "were as mad as wet, chilly soldiers could well be" and let the scoundrel know about it.[27]

It was at about noon when Smith walked back to where his messmates were preparing their lunches. Wrapped in their oilcloth blankets, they were trying to keep warm and dry as they broiled their bacon on the ends of their ramrods. While a large coffeepot steamed pleasantly, Smith sat down and prepared his own lunch of bacon and hardtack. Then, just as they were finishing their meal, flames began pouring from the windows of the large building nearby. The edifice—hotel or whatever—was constructed of yellow pine and burned rapidly with intense heat. It was furnished but entirely deserted, except for cats and rats which, scurrying out to escape the fire, afforded target practice for some of the soldiers. The fire provided the soldiers camped near it a chance to dry themselves and their clothing. No one seemed to know anything of the origin of the fire; but since Smith's unit were camped nearest to it, they were blamed and made to camp a half-mile outside town as punishment.[28]

Thus did the unwelcome guests spend their first full day in Meridian. There were a few small groups which had not yet entered. Brig. Gen. Alexander Chambers and his Third Brigade had not arrived, and Major John Duer's 45th Illinois Infantry was ordered on Monday night to guard the bridge over Okatibbee Creek until the former had crossed.[29]

<u>Tuesday, 16 February</u>

By Tuesday the heavy rain had ceased and was followed by a considerable drop in temperature, but the cold did not keep the invaders from beginning what Sherman termed a "systematic and thorough destruction" of railroads.

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[26] William B. Smith, *op. cit.*, 112-113.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*, 114.
[29] Report of Major Duer, *Official Records*, I:32:1:234.

A few more small groups reached Meridian, among which were the 31st and 124th Illinois Infantries, both arriving in the morning.[30]

General Chambers' brigade still had not arrived, but during the day he reported that "nothing of importance" had happened in the vicinity of Tunnel Hill, though "on all sides" were small parties of Confederates with whom his men were exchanging shots from time to time. He reported a party of Confederate cavalry on Okatibbee Creek beyond the Matthews' farm—somewhat east of present-day Nellieburg. They were thought to be Texans and were probably waiting to join another party of some sixty Texans in an attack on Sherman's train if an opportunity offered. General Chambers was encountering many refugees and deserters from the Confederate army, and some of the local civilians told him that about 400 Southern renegade conscripts were skulking in the woods in that area.[31]

Lt. Col. John H. Howe's 124th Illinois Regiment, of Leggett's Division, arrived in Meridian at eleven A.M. R. L. Howard, a soldier in the regiment, noticed that the town was already "sadly injured by fire" but that Meridian still showed that it was of "considerable consequence" to the Confederates. He particularly noticed the large barracks, storehouses, arsenal, and hospital; but he saw also that they were all new and of cheap wooden construction. He doubted that they would be difficult to destroy. Colonel Howe, following instructions, took his regiment to a spot in the southwest part of town and had them make camp. There was still enough daylight left for his unit to try their hand at bending rails, and they managed to destroy about a mile of track.[32]

Col. James H. Howe's Second Brigade set out up the M & O Railroad toward Marion Station, damaging the road as they moved. Their advance guard was made up of three companies of Lt. Col. John Rheinlander's 25th Indiana Regiment. As the brigade approached the town, they met opposition from Confederate cavalry; and Howe deemed the situation serious enough to send word back to Meridian for his First Brigade to come up on the double. It took Col. Milton Montgomery only an hour and a half to get there, but they arrived just in time to see Howe's brigade begin to prevail. Philip Roesch, a soldier in Montgomery's brigade, got to the edge of town and saw a group of Rebels take a stand behind several houses. A young boy appeared in the doorway of one of the houses; and a Union soldier, mistaking him for one of the enemy soldiers, fired and killed him. He was about twelve. The Confederate losses were three or four killed and several wounded. The Yankees occupied Marion Station and remained there until Sherman's army set out on its return march on the twentieth.[33]

Brig. Gen. Marcellus Crocker's division moved down the railroad toward Enterprise where a correspondent for the Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser* waited uneasily. At one P.M. he reported to his paper the "latest intelligence," that the Federal force had divided, one column going toward Selma and the other toward Marion. He added, "It is thought here that the rear of Sherman's army is still in Meridian." All in all, not a bad summing up of Sherman's deployment of his forces. One wonders at the correspondent's sources. He reported that Enterprise was bracing

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[30] Report of Major Harry Almon, *ibid.*, 232; report of Lt. Col. John Howe, *ibid.*, 236.
[31] *Official Records*, I:52:1:520-521.
[32] Report of Lt. Col. John M. Howe, *ibid.*, I:32:1:236; Howard, *op. cit.*, 193-194.
[33] *Official Records*, I:32:1:202-207; Roesch, *op. cit.*, 9.

itself for a cavalry raid, adding, "If they don't come, you will hear from me again to-day."[34]

Well, they did come, and it was more than just cavalry. In fact, the reporter must have left quite soon after sending his message; for the advance of Gen. Crocker's division reached Enterprise at 3:30 P.M. They had left Meridian about seven A.M., and all were in camp on the Chickasawhay River at Enterprise by six P.M., having driven out a small force of Confederates in the process.[35]

The bridge over the Okatibbee three miles from Enterprise had been destroyed, so some of the Yanks forded the creek and others crossed on the railroad bridge. The Confederates had stripped Enterprise of all public property and valuables that could be moved. General Crocker learned from the local residents that all Confederate troops at Enterprise had retreated to Demopolis, except two brigades that had gone to Mobile. Crocker decided it was too late to accomplish anything that day, but he intended the morrow to be a busy one. Not only would there be plenty to do around Enterprise, but he would also send Brig. Gen. Walter Gresham's brigade farther south to Quitman.[36]

It was already getting colder, the wind was rising, and young William Smith in Col. Cyrus Hall's second Brigade was having a rather rough time of it. He and his unit had camped just outside Enterprise on a bald knob overlooking the town and very much exposed to the biting wind. Company G of his regiment was composed entirely of Germans, who, deciding they could do better for themselves, went down into town with their blankets and returned with them full of cotton. They piled the cotton on the ground and quickly fell asleep in the luxury of that soft warmth. During the night, however, some sparks ignited the cotton and the flames spread from pile to pile. The commotion woke Smith who peeped out from under his old gray blanket. "I beheld such a scene of excited Dutchmen [Germans]," said Smith, "and heard such cartridge explosions as I had never seen or heard before. The contents of the cartridge boxes were snapping and popping like bunches of cannon crackers, while the Germans were jabbering and jumping out of their fiery beds and away from the cartridge explosions in a most lively manner."[37]

Wednesday, 17 February

It had been a cold, windy night in Meridian, too. There had been some burning—whether accidental is not recorded—that tended to spread in the strong winds. As already stated, the flames allegedly even forced Sherman to change his lodgings three times.[38]

For some reason, Lt. Col. John Howe moved his regiment from the southwest part of town to a new campsite on the southern edge, probably because it was nearer the arsenal which Gen. McPherson had ordered them to guard. Before evening, however, they turned that job over to the 58th Illinois. Howe's group had heavy, round-the-clock picket duty. There were 180 men and eight officers posted during each period, which meant that they were missing the fun of destroying the

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[34] Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser*, 17 February 1864.
[35] Cate, *op. cit.*, 236.
[36] Report of Brig. Gen. Marcellus M. Crocker, *Official Records*, I:32:1:238.
[37] William B. Smith, *op. cit.*, 117.
[38] *Ibid.*

railroads. They remained in camp Wednesday through Friday completely involved in this rather tedious but very necessary detail. It would be partially made up to them on Saturday, however; for some of their companies would be the last units to leave and thus would have the agreeable assignment of setting fire to the town, or whatever might be left of it.[39]

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Meridian and vicinity the work of demolition had to spare some soldiers for other tasks such as gathering intelligence and doing regular guard duty. Capt. Andrew Hickenlooper of the Fifth Ohio Battery detailed a Lt. Bush and his assistant, one S. Davis, to make sketches of Meridian and the surrounding area.[40] Lt. Col. Daniel Bradley and his 20th and 58th Illinois Regiments took turns guarding the arsenal, while the 20th and the 31st Illinois changed their quarters to opposite sides of town. And, of course, picket duty—eternal picket duty.[41]

While Sherman's men thus busied themselves on this Wednesday, Confederate Gen. S. D. Lee, in his headquarters at Alamucha, was closely watching the Union forces. On Tuesday Ross's brigade had arrived at Daleville, and today they skirmished with the Federal force near Marion. In the evening Polk notified Lee that an enemy cavalry force of 8,000—it was Gen. Sooy Smith's cavalry—was moving against General Forrest in the north. Upon receiving orders to move north and join Forrest to halt this advance, Lee at once prepared to execute the orders and at 7:20 P.M. notified Polk that Brig. Gen. William Jackson, with Ross and Starke, was above Lauderdale Springs on the M & O Railroad.[42] Lt. Addison Harvey and his Confederate scouts had been previously ordered to Enterprise to report on the enemy from that point and were thus unaware of the order to join Forrest. Consequently, they would be in the area three days later to harass the Yankees on their retrograde movement and would follow them as far west as Canton.[43]

Enterprise awoke to as cold a Wednesday as Meridian did, but in Enterprise Crocker's men had the advantage of warmth from the burning town. Robert J. Campbell, of Maj. George W. Crosley's Third Iowa, wrote in his diary: "Cold morning: destroy RR; town set on fire and general destruction going on; plenty of forage; *lots* of forage; Mobile and Ohio Railroad destroyed at Enterprise; night cold."[44]

Gresham's brigade left Enterprise at seven A.M. for their march to Quitman, and upon their arrival had a minor engagement with some of the local citizens. A mile or so below Quitman the Federals destroyed a 210-foot, covered railroad bridge over the Chickasawhay. Just north of the bridge was a 600-foot trestle, ten to thirty feet high, which they also destroyed. In Quitman the invaders burned the public buildings and some private houses. Among the victims reported by Gresham were the railroad station,"[l]arge and elegant hospital buildings, recently erected," a

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[39] Report of Lt. Col. John M. Howe, *Official Records*, I:32:1:236.
[40] Report of Capt. Andrew Hickenlooper, *ibid.*, 217.
[41] Report of Lt. Col. John M. Howe, *ibid.*, 232, 236.
[42] Lee to Polk, *ibid.*, I:32:1:363.
[43] Report of Harvey, *ibid.*, 381.
[44] Cate, *op. cit.*, 237.

large steam flour mill, and a large steam sawmill. Having marched twenty-seven miles and worked for four hours, the brigade made camp at eight P.M.[45]

By this Wednesday Federal cavalry were swarming all about Marion, and it may have been today that an incident occurred that J. J. Hall described many years later for *Confederate Veteran*. Hall was a young man almost ready to join the Confederate Army, which he did a few weeks later by enlisting in General Forrest's command. He later wrote admiringly of Capt. George W. Doerner, a native of Brooklyn, Ala., who enlisted in Company B, Fifth Mississippi Cavalry, under Forrest. Doerner was part of a small detachment sent to scout the country for Yankee cavalry that were moving about the area. Five miles east of Marion the Southerners sighted an enemy regiment. Quickly leaving their horses about 200 yards in the rear, they took refuge behind a little shop about twenty yards off the main road and waited until the enemy were within about forty yards of them. The Rebels fired one volley that killed the Federal colonel's horse and made their own retreat immediately necessary. Doerner and one other reached their horses first. Doerner headed eastward, but the other's horse became frightened and rushed instead toward the front of the enemy regiment. The horse carried its rider right down the open column and into the provost guard, who captured both horse and rider. The Yankee cavalrymen pursued and captured the rest of the small group of Confederates, except of course Doerner, who had made his escape. At a safe distance Doerner stopped and observed his comrades' capture. Resuming his escape in the opposite direction, he arrived about an hour later at the home where youg Hall and his family were having dinner. Of course they invited him to dine with them, and during the meal Doerner related his recent adventure. Hall later said that the captain's story "made a very deep impression on my mind, young as I was." Fifty-one years later Hall was delighted to find that the same dashing cavalryman was living in Collinsville, Miss. Doerner died there on 22 November 1917.[46]

At her home in Marion, Margaret Rea had been terrified by Sherman's arrival in the area. She had not only her two little daughters to worry about but also her family's home and a large amount of personal property that included much silver and about $3,000 in gold. Her husband Constantine Rea and her two sons were in the Army; so any defensive measures would be entirely up to her. Late one night she piled the silver and gold into a box and buried it under a large, beautiful water oak in the front yard of her home. All she could do then was wait, and hope.[47]

The existing records are not clear about it, but the Federal force that had moved out to Marion Station on Tuesday probably arrived in Old Marion early Wednesday morning. Mrs. Rea recalled that a Wisconsin regiment was in the lead, probably either the 25th under Lt. Col. Jeremiah Rusk or the 32nd under Maj. Charles De Groat. Several cavalrymen rode into the Rea's yard and tied their horses to the branches of the water oak. Margaret Rea and her little girls, having gone outside to confront the callers, began to spar verbally with them. Meanwhile, one or more of the prancing horses revealed the place where Rea had hidden her valuables, and the soldiers quickly unearthed the box and began to parcel out the contents among

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[45] Report of Brig. Gen. Walter Gresham, *Official Records*, I:32:1:248; Mobile *Register and Advertiser*, 18 February 1864. Gresham states that his unit went to Quitman on Tuesday, but the 4th Division reached only as far as Enterprise by late afternoon that day.

[46] *Confederate Veteran*, (Sept. 1918), 26:405.

[47] Rea, *op. cit.*, 22.

themselves. In desperation Rea made the distress sign recognized by members of Masonic bodies—she had years before joined a women's Masonic organization. A captain of one of the Wisconsin companies recognized the gesture, and he and others drew their weapons and intervened. The captain subsequently recovered every item that had been taken and placed a guard around the house. As long as the Federal force was in Marion, this captain kept close watch on the house and even slept on the Rea's gallery. Of course Margaret Rea was grateful, and she vowed to pray for the captain's safe return to his home and assured him that she would never forget his kind act.[48]

According to Richard N. Rea, Margaret Rea's son, there was another, more serious outrage committed in Marion while the Federals were there. A group of renegade cavalrymen—Rea did not say whether Yankee or Rebel—made a practice of going about the area to terrorize the older men still at home and try to force them to surrender their valuables. One of the victims was Feaster Foy, who was at home with his wife when the hoodlums rode up. On his refusal to give them money, they put a rope around his neck and, with his wife watching aghast, threw the rope over the limb of a tree and proceeded to tighten it until Foy was actually suspended in mid-air for a moment, then let him down. Now would he tell them? No! A second time they drew him up, and a third, each time followed by Foy's refusal. By this time the poor fellow was considerably the worse for the ordeal. Suddenly a large group of Confederate cavalry appeared and drove the rascals away. These rescuing Confederates were very likely part of Col. Lawrence S. Ross's Second Brigade, which was in the Marion area on Wednesday and skirmished with an enemy force.[49]

Richard Rea in later years described Foy as a fine old citizen and a good planter. Legend has it that at his own expense he uniformed and equipped a company known, in his honor, as the Feaster Foy Grays (better, and officially, known as the McLemore Guards), commanded by Capt. W. P. Andrews. Foy lived to be quite old but never fully recovered from his close call with criminals.[50]

While they were at Old Marion, the Union soldiers used the first floor of the Courthouse as a stable for their horses. Upon their evacuation of the town, Sherman's men set fire to all the public buildings, including the Courthouse, the town's pride. Margaret Rea, her two little daughters, and perhaps others, managed to douse the flames and save the building, on the second floor of which were the county's records.[51]

Shortly before nine o'clock this evening, some five hundred miles to the east near Charleston, S.C., the C.S.S. *Hunley* made naval history by becoming the first submarine to destroy another vessel. It successfully activated an explosive device that sank the U.S.S. *Housatonic*. The Confederate craft, with all aboard, sank as well; but it had demonstrated the practicability—and much room for improvement—of such underwater vessels.[52]

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[48] Rea, *op. cit*, 22..
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid*. 23.
[51] *Ibid*., 22.
[52] E. B. Long and Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac 1861-1865* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985; originally published 1971 by Doubleday), 465.

Thursday, 18 February

This was another cold day, and a light snow fell.[53] The weather, however, did not keep the division at Enterprise from giving a good account of themselves as they continued to lay waste the railroad in that area. Because of his age and size, William Smith was given a somewhat lighter job. Older and larger men did the prying loose of rails, the stacking of ties, and draping of rails over the piles of ties. Smith later wrote that "we little fellows, by common consent, were appointed firemen on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, a position that I very much enjoyed, even though I had to walk and the pay was small."[54] He did not describe what method he used to set fire to the stacks of crossties.

The crews of demolition must have been an impressive sight as they lined the railroad and rearranged the track. Later, Smith gave a rather colorful description:

> The second day [Thursday], while engaged at this work, we had a light fall of snow, which added very much to the picturesqueness of the busy scene. At that point the road passed through a long avenue of tall, stately evergreen trees. On either side of it, as far as the eye could penetrate the feathery flashes of falling snow, could be seen long stacks of guns and tall piles of knapsacks, which, together with the graceful evergreens and the ground around, were covered with a mantle of fleecy whiteness. In marked contrast with these, the roadbed itself was covered with thousands of busy bluecoats, whose uniforms were kept clear of the falling snow, as was also the roadbed, by the heat of the high-leaping flames from the burning ties. So there could be seen at once the red flames, the white snow, and the blue coats—our national colors, displayed as if in high carnival, with a lively crowbar accompaniment.[55]

On their return from Quitman, Gresham's men, moving through Alligator Swamp, destroyed a mile and a half of trestle, nine to thirty feet high, as well as two and a half miles of railroad north of the swamp.[56] They finished their work around noon and returned to their division at Enterprise where, in addition to the railroad and buildings, they destroyed a considerable quantity of cotton and miscellaneous supplies.[57]

At Enterprise the Yanks discovered a small gristmill which could grind about ten bushels of corn per hour. General Crocker, knowing the importance of that staple, reported the discovery to McPherson, telling him that about 300 bushels of meal had already been produced. He added, "Have heard no complaints of scarcity of food yet."[58]

Two miles southeast of Meridian, Maj. Harry Almon's 31st Illinois Infantry found another gristmill and ground a quantity of cornmeal, while the rest of

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[53] Report of Capt. Andrew Hickenlooper, *Official Records*, I:32:1:217.
[54] William B. Smith, *op. cit.*, 115.
[55] *Ibid.*, 116-117.
[56] Report of Brig. Gen. Walter Gresham, *Official Records*, I:32:1:248.
[57] William B. Smith, *op. cit.*, 117.
[58] Gen. Marcellus Crocker to Gen. James McPherson, *Official Records*, I:32:1:522.

the regiment stood guard.[59] The product of this mill and that of the one in Enterprise would make a big difference on the return trip through a devastated country.

Today the First Brigade of the 17th Army Corps' Third Division straggled into Meridian, probably the last group to arrive. They had been at the corral seventeen miles west of Meridian, and the 45th Illinois Regiment of the group had been at Okatibbee Creek awaiting the arrival of General Chambers' brigade, after which Major Duer led his regiment on into Meridian.[60]

Sherman's headquarters issued Special Field Orders No. 20 that announced: "Having fulfilled completely and well all the objects of the expedition, the troops will return to the Mississippi River to embark in another equally important movement." The return would begin on Saturday, the twentieth. Hurlbut's command and Winslow's cavalry would march from Marion Station to Union and Hillsboro, while McPherson's force would leave Meridian by the Lower Decatur Road over which he had arrived. The two columns would meet at Hillsboro.[61] Sherman had given up hope of seeing Gen. Sooy Smith and his cavalry from Memphis. Said Sherman wryly, "It will be a novel thing in war if infantry has to await the motions of cavalry."[62]

And what indeed about General Smith? Gen. S. D. Lee telegraphed Governor Clark that General Forrest, with a much smaller force, had completely routed Smith's cavalry and sent it ingloriously back to Memphis. In a three-page telegram Lee gave Clark the details. Lee's wire quoted Forrest, who had the sad duty to report his own brother's death:

> We have had severe fighting all day with the enemy. The engagement closed about dark. We have killed about forty of the enemy & captured about one hundred. Our loss not known, but not so heavy as that of the enemy. The prisoners captured report two Colonels & one Lt. Col. Killed this evening. Col. [Jeffrey] Forrest was killed this evening. [Lt] Col. [James A.] Barksdale badly wounded in the breast. [Lt.] Col. [Robert] McCullough wounded in the hand. We have captured four or five pieces of artillery. Gen. [S. J.] Gholson came up this evening & will follow after them & drive them as far as possible. The fighting commenced near Okolona & late this evening was obstinate, as the enemy were forced to make repeated stands to hold us in check & save their pack mules & from stampeding [*sic*]. The fight closed with a grand cavalry charge of the enemy's whole force. We repulsed them with heavy loss & completely routed them.[63]

Forrest was not exaggerating; it was a grand victory, a rarity for the Confederates by this time and a matter of galling comparison with the very different approach to problems by such as the Federal General Smith and the Confederate General Polk. But for Forrest the victory could scarcely compensate for the loss of his brother.

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[59] Report of Almon, *ibid.*, I:32:1:232.
[60] *Ibid.*, 226; report of Maj. John O. Duer, *ibid.*, 34.
[61] *Official Records*, I:32:1:187.
[62] Lewis, *op. cit.*, 336.
[63] Telegram from Gen. S. D. Lee (quoting one to him from Forrest and received from Starkville *via* Artesia, Miss.) to Gov. Clark, no date, in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH; see also Andrew Nelson Lytle, *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company* (New York: Putnam's, 1931), 267.

Near his headquarters at Alamucha, General Lee had a skirmish with a Federal force today,[64] but his chief concern was to march to Forrest's assistance. He did not yet know that Forrest was doing quite well by himself. At 7:40 A.M. Lee sent a message to Brig. Gen. William H. Jackson to inform him of the planned march to join Forrest. Gen. Wirt Adams would leave Alamucha at ten A.M., and Lee would follow at noon with Gen. S. W. Ferguson's brigade. Since Lee considered the Lauderdale Springs Road too risky, they would use the road through Tamola and Scooba.[65] Lee made good time and at 6:15 P.M. sent Jackson another message, this time from the Harris house seven miles east of Lauderdale Springs. Jackson was to move in the morning toward Cuba where Lee would "probably" meet him. Jackson was also ordered to communicate with Forrest to let the latter know that aid was on the way; and the message added: "Have the telegraph line tapped frequently, in order that you may keep informed of the enemy's movements, and may keep General Lee informed also."[66]

Friday, 19 February

By this time, the Federal army's last full day in the Meridian area, the group at Enterprise had completed their work. They must have felt more than ordinary satisfaction, for Enterprise had come to have a particularly bad reputation in the North. This had to do with the military camp there and the suspicion that the officials running it had violated the parole protocols after Vicksburg. The devastated town moved one Yank to say: "Enterprise, all and singular with its improvements, public and private, its paroled camp, and its conscript camp with its associations, historic, poetic, and Secesh, has been—according to camp parlance—wiped out."[67] Robert Campbell's diary for today said: "Day cold; leave Enterprise at 7 A.M.; great number of refugees and negroes come along; we march 18 miles and bivouac on Chunky River; boys all well, plenty to eat; nights cold."[68]

Col. Benjamin Potts, of Leggetts' Division, took his brigade along the Southern Railroad as far as Chunky to burn anything still intact there and to destroy all bridges and trestles over an eighteen-mile stretch. Force's and Maltby's brigades of the same division spent the day destroying the railroad and government buildings at that place.[69] At the gristmill two miles east of Meridian, the 20th Illinois and the 31st Illinois took turns guarding.[70]

From Marion Station two regiments under Col. Howe marched north through Lockhart and as far as Lauderdale Springs, where the Yankees found in the hospital there thirty Confederates who had been wounded in actions against Sherman's force. Bridges, culverts, railroad stations, lumber, and hospitals—all fell victim to the torch and the crowbar. After a thorough job the troops returned to Marion Station in the evening.[71]

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[64] Mobile *Register and Advertiser*, 21 Feburary 1864.
[65] William Elliott to Gen. W. H. Jackson, *Official Records*, I:52:2:624.
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] "Sherman's Great Expedition."
[68] Cate, *op. cit.*, 237; *Official Records*, I:32:1:213.
[69] *Official Records*, I:32:1:211-212.
[70] *Ibid.*, 231.
[71] *Ibid.*, 207; report of Col. E. F. Winslow, *ibid.*, 250.

Philip Roesch had gone with his regiment on Thursday to grind corn at a gristmill near Marion Station. They worked all that day and until noon today. During their work someone went to a nearby smokehouse to get some bacon and, rummaging around, discovered a jug full of what appeared to be wine. All the soldiers had at it in eager fashion, but an elderly woman appeared and with considerable anger told them that the jug contained a medicine prescribed for her by her physician and that it would make them sick. It was, of course, a canard; all they got, said Roesch, was a little friskier.[72]

Back in Meridian Dr. Seneca B. Thrall seated himself to write a letter to his wife in Iowa. Thrall and his unit had been corralled seventeen miles west of Meridian at a place where their commanders had expected attacks on the wagon trains. They successfully fought off a minor attack and finally got into Meridian on Thursday, the eighteenth. Dr. Thrall tried to describe for his wife how the army had moved and the destruction he had seen along the way to Meridian:[73]

> No resistance worth mentioning has been made east of Jackson, though they have 10 to 15000 troops running away from us, and I do not think our force exceeds 23000, though we have an *immense* wagon train, probably 800 wagons. The country is the poorest I ever saw, one immense pine forest, and on our line of march has been entirely destroyed—*all* houses not inhabited being burned, and *all* provisions and corn being taken to feed the army. *All* business and public houses, and very many private houses in Jackson, Brandon, Hillsboro, Decatur, Lake Station, *and all along the road* were burned. Burning houses, fences, and forests marked our line of march, and the country behind us is now a desolate uninhabitable wilderness. I do not approve of the indiscriminate destruction and its horrors can only be realized by witnessing them. We have taken many prisoners and *many* deserters have come to us. I have seen a number of small boys 14 to 17 years of age, who were captured with arms, most of them had become *tired out* and laid down to rest and were found *sleeping* by the side of the road.

Thrall tried to give his wife some idea of how Meridian looked:

> We are here in the center of the Southern confederacy and seventeen days out from Vicksburg. Yesterday was one of the coldest days we have had this winter. Last night it froze *very* hard, though it freezes nearly every night….
>
> Here at Meridian were immense depot buildings, warehouses, hospitals, and barracks to accommodate 20,000 to 30,000 troops, gun factory, etc., but very few houses now remain in Meridian and our forces are engaged in *totally* destroying the RR south 30 miles, *east* and north as far as possible. Our advance came into Meridian on the 14th and have since been busily engaged in the work of destruction….

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[72] Roesch, *op. cit.*, 9.

[73] Mildred Throne (ed.), "An Iowa Doctor in Blue: The Letters of Seneca B. Thrall, 1862-1864, *Iowa Journal of History* (April 1960), 58: 177-181. These quotations from Thrall are all from this source.

Saturday, 20 February

During his stay in Meridian, Sherman had appreciated the potential danger of the deployment, situated as his army was about 140 miles from its base. The danger was all the greater in light of Sooy Smith's failure to appear—Sherman did not yet know of Smith's defeat by Forrest. Lloyd Lewis in his book on Sherman says:

> Sooy Smith's failure to keep the rendezvous at Meridian strengthened Sherman's belief that as an instrument for achieving major results in war cavalry had been much overrated. Late in leaving Memphis, Smith had been early in returning—driven back by Forrest, whose numbers had been ridiculously inferior.[74]

At daylight all those commands still in Meridian were moving briskly in preparation to return to Vicksburg, a briskness generated by both anticipation and the cold weather. Many units had, during Thursday and Friday, been dispatched in various directions on many tasks; but by Friday evening most had returned. Now all was activity as the 16th Army Corps under Hurlbut prepared to move with Sherman on a somewhat different route. As stated earlier, they would go up through Marion Station, through northwest Lauderdale County and southwest Kemper County, and then bend gradually westward to link up with the other force around Decatur or Hillsboro. This would allow Sherman to probe the territory to the north on the chance that he might learn something of Gen. Smith and his horse-soldiers.[75]

The weather was clear and cold when Sherman's command began leaving town at 6:30 A.M.; and Capt. Andrew Hickenlooper, probably undaunted by the nippy morning, took charge of his detail of two companies to give the *coup de grâce* to Meridian.[76] R. L. Howard and his fellows in the 124th Illinois would now be compensated for all that moving of camp and picket duty. They burned the Ragsdale Hotel and possibly the Burton, though the latter may have already been burned. The general procedure on such buildings, for some odd reason, was first to remove the furniture and stack it outside—Sherman said he wished nothing to be destroyed except what might be used by the Confederates. (This nice distinction is somewhat curious, but let that rest.) The Jones Hotel was spared, because women and children had taken refuge inside it.[77] Other buildings burned included warehouses, barracks, and hospitals, as well as a large building referred to as the Soldier's Home but that was probably the Wayside. (One hospital, very likely the Wayside, was described as "capable of accommodating 2,500 to 3,000 patients.")

The last building to go was the one that many of the soldiers had been eagerly waiting for. If Sherman's mapmakers can be depended upon, the armory or arsenal was situated south of the railroads and very near today's passenger station.[78] R. L. Howard, who had spent some dreary hours guarding the arsenal, watched with fascination when "the heat discharged the guns and fired the shells," adding that "the

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[74] Lewis, *op. cit.*, 336.
[75] Keim, *op. cit.*
[76] Report of Hickenlooper, *Official Records*, I:32:1:217.
[77] Desha, *op. cit.*, 63.
[78] Howard, *op. cit.*, 194; also, *Map of the Country between Vicksburg and Meridian, Miss.*

music was lively and some scampering was done." There was disagreement as to just how valuable the contents of the arsenal were. Capt. Hickenlooper spoke of "about 1,000 stand of worthless guns,"and Howard mentioned "a great many old shotguns and rifles." William Martin, however, wrote that there was "a large gun shop with guns in every stage of manufacture, and I suppose that the destruction of this shop was our objective here." The correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, who admittedly was probably writing from hearsay, said: "The State Arsenal was stacked with valuable machinery for the manufacture and repair of small-arms and all sorts of ordnance stores, the destruction of which will prove a serious blow to the enemy."[79]

Other than the Jones House, the only other buildings left standing were John Ball's residence, Dr. W. C. Johnson's house (where Jack Murdock lived in later years), and the house (already mentioned) that stood on the present site of Merrehope, on Thirty-first Avenue. Perhaps one or two other houses were left standing. The very last unit in Sherman's army to leave the city was Capt. John S. Foster's Fourth Independent Company of Ohio Cavalry under the command of Lt. S. D. Porter. It was their duty to guard against looting or unauthorized destruction.[80]

On his return march General Hurlbut, accompanied by Sherman, moved through or quite near the present communities of Obadiah and Shucktown, passing plantations owned by such families as Baker, Stevens, White, and Holliday. The latter farm, almost in Kemper County, was very likely a brief stopping place; for Brig. Gen. James C. Veatch specifically noted it in his report, describing it as "a large plantation." Having traveled about sixteen miles, he rather dubiously said later that they went into camp "at the junction of the Chickasawha [*sic*] and Pinder Creeks at 5 o'clock."[81] (Certainly *not* the Chickasawhay.)

So they were out of Meridian and the county! What a silent town it must have seemed that cold Saturday. The population, those who had stayed behind, were probably too dazed to sense any relief or to savor the return of solitude. And they were very likely less angry at Sherman, from whom they had expected no better, than they were at General Polk and the Confederate government generally, who they probably thought had abandoned them. It was a desolate scene with the odor of smoke and charred wood clashing with the fragrances from the peach and plum trees that were beginning to bloom.[82] Would the early blossoms survive the cold?

With Polk in Alabama

When Gen. Hardee's column from Georgia reached Demopolis on the 21st of February, Polk began preparations to move across the Tombigbee River against the enemy.[83] But it was now too late and he must have known it. Nor were Polk's men, who had just made a tiring and embarrassing retreat, in a very good humor. One can see this in the reminiscences of Albert Goodloe when he wrote of an incident that occurred while Polk's soldiers, licking the wounds to their self-esteem, were in the presence of the state's governor. We have already seen Goodloe's recollection of the

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[79] Report of Capt. Hickenlooper, *Official Records*, I:32:1:217; Howard, *op. cit.*, 194; "Sherman's Great Expedition"; William Martin, *"Out and Forward" or Recollections of the War of 1861 to 1865* (Manhattan, Kas.: Art Craft Printers, 1941), 26.
[80] Croom, *op. cit.*, 5; Desha, *op. cit.*, 63.
[81] Report of Gen. Veatch, *Official Records*, I:32:1:202.
[82] Howard, *op. cit.*, 196.
[83] *Official Records*, I:32:1:337.

discourtesy shown to Gen. Reuben Davis the previous year at Enterprise, Miss. A similar heckling awaited Alabama's governor.

On this occasion Governor Thomas Hill Watts prepared to give Polk's men a rousing address to spur them on to great deeds. As Watts was introduced, he was greeted by a yell from somewhere, "Howdy, Governor; how are all your folks?" One can detect in Goodloe's description what the men thought of this kind of oratory that a later generation would call "spread-eagle." Said Goodloe: "He [Watts] poured forth great torrents of eloquence, heroism, and chivalry, as he tiptoed in his stirrups, for he spoke on horseback…. The more he spoke, the braver he seemed to become; and it was only too plain that his speech was moving himself more than his audience."[84] Governor Watts told a story to illustrate his idea of bravery, apparently intimating that the soldiers present should emulate the example:

> A daring and dashing color bearer was shot down in a furious charge; but the flag was instantly caught up by another soldier and waved in defiance of the Yankees, when he too received a death shot; then another and another did the same thing and met the same fate in quick succession…. "What a set of fools those fellows were!" rang out from the mouths of several listening privates. And "We don't believe in putting our heads in Yankee cannons for the fun of having them shot out."

The men evidently, said Goodloe, "had no ear for the civilian's bugle note." They were tired and believed "that rest was a better nervine than a speech, though it be from a governor." Furthermore, observed Goodloe, "They felt that they were already better patriots in the most important sense than those, unarmed, who would fire their patriotism, endurance, and courage." The impression of the men listening was "that it was out of taste for the speaker to undertake to stir up the bravery of men whose courage had already been abundantly tested."

Rumors of Sherman's Actions

For several days rumors were current throughout the nation that Sherman had gone to Selma, or that he had moved upon Mobile, and still others that he had been defeated and perhaps captured. Federal Gen. Henry Halleck, who was famous for not committing himself if he could help it, wrote General Banks on 5 March that there was no late information from Sherman. Halleck was inclined to disregard the reports that Sherman had gone either to Mobile or to Selma: "As I understand General Sherman's plan, after reaching Meridian, he was either to return to Vicksburg or to act further against the enemy, as the circumstances of the case might seem to justify. A movement on Mobile was a possible contingency, but no part of any definite plan."[85]

Nor were the Confederates any better informed as to Sherman's intentions or whereabouts. "The various rumors," reported Brig. Gen. W. R. Scurry, "are so utterly unreliable that, although I have felt it my duty [to] report everything of

[84] This and the remainder of the paragraph are from Goodloe, *op. cit.*, 154-156.
[85] Halleck to Banks, *Official Records*, I:34:2:501.

interest I hear, I have not thought it necessary to trouble you with them."[86] But as late as the first of March, Scurry had no definite statement to make regarding Sherman except to say, "It is well known that the Federal officers regard him as being in a perilous position, in which he must either capture Mobile immediately or lose his army."[87] It is difficult to understand just whom the Confederates or anyone else might have thought in a position to threaten Sherman.

Results of Sherman's Expedition

Estimates of the results of Sherman's raid tended to vary widely between the Federals and Confederates. On the Federal side such adjectives as "great" and "glorious" saw considerable use. Obviously, Sherman was pleased with his expedition, and to quite an extent he had a right to be. The often-quoted passage in his report may end with exaggeration, but not much. "For five days," wrote Sherman, "10,000 men worked hard and with a will in that work of destruction, with axes, crowbars, sledges, clawbars, and with fire, and I have no hesitation in pronouncing the work as well done. Meridian, with its depots, store-houses, arsenal, hospitals, offices, hotels, and cantonments no longer exists."[88]

Well, maybe so and maybe not. Any of the Confederates catty enough might have said, upon returning to Meridian, that the town looked not much worse than it had before Sherman's visit. Naturally, both the Yanks and the Rebels wished to put the best face on everything.

The raid was pretty universally acclaimed in the North, if for no other reason than that Sherman had performed something nearly, if not quite, unique. Letting his soldiers seize provisions in the country invaded had obviated the army's need to carry great quantities of supplies. Moreover, Sherman had deployed his units on the march in a manner that made it almost impossible for an enemy, except by committing himself to a full-scale attack, to accomplish more than minor harassment. By design, Sherman had developed the destruction of railroads into a very effective technique. And as has already been suggested, another aspect of his raid and the Confederate response was the damage to both civilian and military morale in the immediate area and throughout the Confederacy. That, indeed, may well have been the raid's most important accomplishment.

An illustration of the raid's effect on morale can be found in William Chambers' journal. Fretting at his post in Mobile on the day Sherman entered Meridian, Chambers wrote:

> Sometimes I wonder what posterity will think of this war, after the last spark of Southern resistance is extinguished in blood? Why such wholesale destruction of life and property? Why such rivers of undying hatred? What induced thirty millions of the human race, living under the same government, all speaking the same language and having a common origin, to engage in such an unholy strife. Already three quarters of a million of the best and bravest of the land have given up their lives. A hundred thousand widows and nearly half a million orphans fill the land with lamentations. With us in the South, the

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[86] Report of Scurry, *ibid.*, 1016-1017.
[87] Report of Scurry, *Official Records*, I:34:2:1016-1017.
[88] Report of Sherman, *ibid.*, I:32:1:176.

wheels of social progress are stopped, religion is retarded and the arts and sciences are laid away and covered with dust, forgotten are the amenities, and all that elevates, enobles and adorns. And for what?[89]

These are not the words of some shallow, prating coxcomb strutting in a uniform and playing the he-man. They were written by a thoughtful young man who, despite his extreme disappointment, chagrin, sorrow, and anger, refused to desert a government that many thinking persons believed had mismanaged its responsibilities and wasted its human and material resources. Chambers' ideals and faithfulness deserved a better setting, and he is my choice for the subject of the next piece of sculpture on some haunted battlefield. I am thankful that he survived the bloodbath!

A demoralized Confederacy was exactly what Sherman had been aiming for. A disheartened civilian population would in turn weaken the resolve of the soldiers on distant battlefields. However one may view the morality of such tactics, psychological warfare waged against both soldiers and civilians became, and has remained, a useful and an accepted policy. Sherman seems to have believed that to attack morale was, in the long run, kinder than to kill enemies on the battlefield. Then, at the end of the madness, more of the former enemies are at least still alive and ready for a better day.

A fairly typical Confederate assessment of the results of Sherman's raid is the following that appeared in 1866:

> Sherman in his first experiment of "the movable column" obtained only the cheap triumphs of the ruffian and plunderer. He was compelled to make a hasty retreat over one hundred and fifty miles of a country he had ravaged and exhausted; he accomplished not a single military result; he demoralized a fine army; and of the cavalry which was to co-operate with him this master of billingsgate in the army declared "half went to H-ll, and half to Memphis."[90]

One might make a plausible case for the proposition that Meridian's fate was ultimately decided by the clashing personalities of Jefferson Davis and Joseph Eggleston Johnston. Both men had sensitive, brittle personalities, and they came to despise each other. Their feud, whether of long or recent standing, would have been unproductive in peace; in time of war it was disastrous.

President Davis had fumed and fretted while Sherman was in Meridian. He and Gen. Joe Johnston continually sparred by telegraph, while between bouts Davis alternately issued gentle warnings and comforting words to Polk. The President had hinted strongly, before Sherman reached Meridian, that Johnston ought to send some of his force to Polk's'aid. When Johnston balked and cited danger from the enemy near him in Georgia, Davis on 15 February countered, "I cannot reconcile the report of your scouts in relation to the enemy in your front, with the various statements made by others…." Davis went on to explain that he had not meant that Johnston should abandon his own line. Besides, any aid Johnston might give Polk would, said the President, ultimately help Johnston himself by protecting Mobile. Acknowledging

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[89] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 303.

[90] Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause—A New History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E. B. Treat & Co., 1866), 492. It is difficult to agree that Sherman demoralized an army, unless one means Polk's army.

that Johnston would probably have more current information than he (Davis) had, the President still insisted that unless Johnston was "more immediately threatened than your communications have indicated that you detach…enough infantry…to beat the detachment which the enemy has thrown back so far into the interior of our country." Johnston still hesitated, and two days later Davis wired him peremptorily: "You will…detach General Hardee with the infantry of his Corps except Stevenson's Division, and direct him to proceed with all possible dispatch to unite with General Polk…." The matter closed when Davis peevishly wired Johnston: "Information just received from General Polk indicates that the reinforcements you were directed to send him are too late. Recall those which have not passed Montgomery."[91]

To Polk on 5 April, Davis had G. W. C. Lee wire a rather remarkable message that included the following sentence: "The President desires me to thank you for your letter of February 22d, giving an account of the movements of the enemy in your department and the unsuccessful termination of his campaign."[92] Of course, in justice to Davis it must be noted that the President probably still believed that Sherman's major purpose had been to go on either to Mobile or into central Alabama.

It is interesting that despite the kudos in the North for Sherman, there was a less-than-ecstatic assessment of the Meridian expedition from the journalist for the *New York Tribune*:

> While granting the immense importance of its results, in some respects beyond what could have reasonably been expected of it, I am nevertheless compelled to deny that it has achieved that complete success which Gen. Sherman and those associated with him are disposed to claim for it [though] I am not by any means disposed to dispute with him, nor belittle more magnificent results which he has actually effected.[93]

As soon as the Confederates reoccupied Meridian, they made a survey of the extensive damage. Lt. A. H. Polk in his report on 3 March said, "The enemy wherever they went stripped the people of provisions, and I am afraid that some of them will suffer."[94] This is corroborated by such statements as that by an Ohio soldier: "Houses were broken open and plundered, every horse, cow, and chicken in the place was seized, not a fence was left, the commissary stores were destroyed, and the slaves carried away with the army."[95]

The Federal army had subsisted heavily on supplies taken from the invaded area, and they returned with about 400 prisoners, 5,000 slaves, 1,000 white refugees, and 3,000 pack animals. Sherman's command lost some horses, mules, and wagons on foraging expeditions but replaced them with captured animals. The Federals reported their casualties as 21 killed, 68 wounded, and 81missing.[96]

In his official report Capt. Andrew Hickenlooper, chief engineer on the expedition, gave the report of destruction; and his figures generally agree with

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[91] Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 6:175, 177-178, 188.
[92] *Ibid.*, 219.
[93] "General Sherman's Great Expedition." It is possible that the *Tribune's* man was miffed at having been excluded by Sherman, who had made an exception in favor of Randolph Keim, the *Herald's* reporter.
[94] Polk to Lt. Col. Sevier, *Official Records*, I:32:3:580.
[95] James Wilford Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi* (New York: Macmillan, 1901), 13-14.
[96] Report of Sherman, *Official Records*, I:32:1:175-176.

Confederate reports. There was major destruction over a fifty-nine-mile stretch of railroad, including 15,285 feet of trestles and six bridges. Six warehouses, three water tanks for locomotives, three miles of telegraph, and four tanneries were ruined, along with such incidentals as car wheels, army wagons, locomotive extension rods, drill machines, and wheel lathes.[97]

The damage done by Sherman to the roads around Meridian was a major blow, for by this time Southern railroads generally were in an extremely critical condition and very hard pressed to keep track in good order and maintain rolling stock. Many roads were practically useless. Even such critical ones as the Mobile and Ohio were very poor relics of their former conditions.

Since the M & O may be regarded as fairly typical of the *better* roads in the South, the following comparison of the condition of that road's rolling stock in 1860 with that of 1865 is instructive:[98]

	1860	1865
Operating locomotives----------------------------------	59	15
" " under repair----------------	8	4
" " out of order/repairable---	----	38
Operating passenger coaches-------------------------	26	11
" " " under repair-----------	----	7
Operating baggage cars--------------------------------	11	3
" " " under repair----------------	----	2
Operating freight cars---------------------------------	721	231
" " " under repair------------------	----	88

It is also interesting that in 1864 the road's expenditures for "freshets, accidents and raids" increased from January's $3,608.70 to February's $6,083.75, March's $73,954.30, and April's $30,935.65.[99]

The trackage of the county's three railroads suffered badly, as well, from Sherman's soldiers. Between Jackson and Meridian the Southern Railroad lost 51 bridges totaling 4,198 feet. Of four miles of track torn up, the iron was badly burned and bent, and most of the crossties were burned. The estimate was that repair would require 5,000 crossties, 300 iron rails, and 500,000 feet of bridge timbers. On the Alabama and Mississippi Rivers Railroad, between Demopolis and Meridian, the Federals destroyed three bridges, with a total length of 160 feet, and 600 feet of trestle-work Nine miles of track was ruined, the iron badly burned and bent and half the crossties burned. A hundred rails were rendered entirely useless. On the Mobile and Ohio, 47 miles of sporadic destruction extended from Lauderdale Springs southward to about five miles below Quitman, with damage heaviest between Enterprise and Marion Station. However, the type of damage along the line was not consistent. Sometimes rails were pried up but not damaged; elsewhere they were heated and bent. Many but not all crossties were burned; though in one sixteen-mile

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[97] Enclosure to report by Capt. Hickenlooper, in *ibid.*, 221. Those three miles of telegraph lines were at Morton. Sherman's army seems to have left it intact everywhere else, as well.

[98] *Affairs of Southern Railroads: Report 34, March 2, 1867.* (Washington: Govt. Printing Off., 1867), 840.

[99] *Ibid.*, 851.

stretch almost all ties were burned. All bridges and trestles between Lauderdale Springs and just south of Quitman were destroyed.[100]

By 5 March the Confederates were well involved with repairing the damage caused by the late raid. After twenty-six working days the railroads were again operating, although under much more straightened circumstances. This was an important reason why the Southerners insisted that the raid had been a failure. Fortunately for the Confederates in their repair work, the Federals had hardly touched the railroad tunnel west of Meridian at Tunnel Hill, except to damage the masonry slightly at each end. It was a strange oversight. Extensive damage, for example from a powder charge, could have caused a very long delay in restoring service on the Southern Railroad.[101]

The Meridian Expedition had been an experiment; and even if it had not accomplished Sherman's fondest hopes, it had notable successes and brought some new tactics and methods to the science of warfare. No doubt learning from his mistakes, Sherman was better prepared to put his ideas into practice on a larger scale in his famous March to the Sea, when in late 1864 he moved his army from Atlanta to Savannah. Sherman himself called the Meridian Expedition "the forerunner of the great movements in Georgia."[102]

For Mississippi those terrifying days in February 1864 meant that for the rest of the war the state would be nearly defenseless against all but minor raids. The Trans-Mississippi and the south-central areas had been almost neutralized. Richmond seemed now to regard the Confederacy as just the states along the Atlantic Seaboard.

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[100] Samuel Tate's report of damage, 8 March 1864, *Official Records*, I:32:1:344.
[101] Mobile *Daily Register and Advertiser*, 5 March 1864; Lewis, *op. cit.*, 333; Lt. A. H. Polk to Lt. Col. Sevier, *Official Records*, I:32:3:579.
[102] Sherman's report to Sec. of War Edwin M. Stanton, *Official Records*, III:5:495.

Chapter 16: The Last Year of War.

While Lauderdale County was recovering from the shock of Sherman's visit, the Confederate military moved back into the area. Among these units was the Second Missouri Infantry, which in April set up camp near Lauderdale Springs. However, one member of that unit, Ephraim McD. Anderson, was ailing with what a medical examining board had diagnosed as hepatitis and dyspepsia, so he remained behind a while longer at Demopolis. We have already seen (chapter 11) how his delayed return involved him in the delights of Meridian's hotel life.

Another unit that moved back to the Lauderdale Springs camp was that of Brig. Gen. Matthew D. Ector's brigade that consisted mostly of Texans. On or shortly after the seventh of April it began its return march. Along the route the soldiers were hailed by many in all the little towns, for the people turned out in great numbers to see their defenders and to hear the regimental bands. Sometimes a fetching belle offered a bouquet or bonbon to a weary but flattered warrior; and it was on one of these occasions that a soldier returned a flower with an attached note to a young woman who, though he did not know it, was married. The verse was,

> The Rose is Red the violet blue
> The Pink is Pretty and so is you.
> I chuse you out, among the rest,
> Because I thought I loved you best.

The soldier was certain he had made a conquest, said an observer, but the married lady was "plagued," a quaint way at the time to say *embarrassed*.[1]

Some of the officers were accompanied by one or more slaves who, observing how marching was conducted, followed along behind their masters' units in good military form. The slaves observed also, and were much impressed by, how the officers dealt with straggling soldiers; and whenever any slave broke ranks, his fellows would often take him by the arms and legs and swing him several times against a sapling or tree. When passing a group of spectators, the slaves often broke into song.

For these and other anecdotes from this army's return to Lauderdale, we are indebted to what is perhaps a single surviving issue of the *Camp Journal*. An anonymous, self-appointed editor, and perhaps several others in Ector's Brigade, went to considerable trouble to compose this remarkable manuscript newspaper. The date of the issue, 7 April 1864, was when the writing was begun in Demopolis, Ala., just before Polk's army began to return from its retreat. But except for the first short item in the upper left-hand corner, and written in Demopolis, everything else seems to have been written after their return to Lauderdale Springs. One supposes that the soldiers did it for their own amusement and that of their comrades, but it is so cleverly composed that one suspects there was some journalistic experience behind it. (The Library of Congress has the original, a photostatic copy of which the author used for this history and later donated to the Meridian Public Library.)

Our amateur journalist—if indeed he was an amateur—aped what in those days was the common policy of apologizing for a scarcity of interesting items: "Owing to the fact that we have changed our base [from Demopolis, Ala., to Lauderdale Springs, Miss.] we are without our usual Telegraphic dispatches. Since we

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[1] *Camp Journal*, 7 April 1864. This and the following items are from this single issue.

have got off the bank of the ever-memorable Tombigbee, we are without our accustomed mail facilities. Here we have no boats to ply up and down the river (if we had such a stream) to catch all the rumors astir." And an even more typical apology: "We hope in our next issue to be able to give our readers a much more interesting paper than we at present offer them. Owing to the confusion of the recent move to this place and being on the march a great portion of the time we have had a poor opportunity to set up a paper worthy of the intelligence of our readers."

All of which was nonsense, for the unusual paper is really very clever, witty, and well written. And except for one item—a poem by Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, about "a woman that reigns in Hell"—the paper seems to have been original. In fact, it is worthwhile to examine in detail some of its material. One whimsical item, "Tactics for Hugging," amusingly reduces the points to military terms so that, as the Rebel soldier put it, even a soldier could understand. For instance, just as is true today, a soldier in the 1860s correctly referred to his weapon as a *piece*. Thus:

1. Place the piece [i.e., the young woman] on the right side as in Hardee's [manual of] order arms, cast the eyes to the right without turning the head, extending the right arm, pass the hand behind piece, grasping just above or about the middle band or belt.
2. Make a right half wheel, raise the left arm, place it on the shoulder of the piece, the eyes resting about two inches below the top or head band; at the same time move the left foot oblique about twelve inches; bend the right knee keeping the toes at an angle of forty-five degrees.
3. Keep the hand to the right, bring to the body with a firm grasp, to prevent its jostling; place the left ear against the cheek of the piece, and at the command "four" hug in double quick time.
4. At the command "arms bent" come to the position of a soldier and look military—like a sheep.

Another item described one of several "battles" at the camp at Lauderdale Springs, one that involved the Texans in Ector's Brigade and the Missourians in Cockrell's Brigade. Weapons were missiles of burning pine cones. Our waggish journalist called the fray the "Battle of 700 Pines," a humorous allusion to the more famous Battle of Seven Pines:

> We have all heard of the battle of seven pines in which the Confederate force achieved a great victory…. Another great battle of pines has occurred which if not so bloody was highly exciting and is said to be by old soldiers one of the prettiest scenes ever beheld. On the night of the 4th inst. [probably May], Ector's Brigade was suddenly surprised and attacked in their camp near Lauderdale Springs, Miss., by an overwhelming force of Missourians. For several hours the few of the gallant little Brigade, who could be gotten together, fought with a stubbornness rarely equalled in history, and although outnumbered three to one bade fair to hold their position until those who had retired for the night could dress themselves and come to the rescue. But their attack was so impetuous that they could not be checked until they had possession of a greater portion of our camp. On the night of the fifth the attack

> was renewed and waged with great fury until 9 o'clock at night when our Brigade was completely routed…. The weapons employed was [*sic*] blazzing [*sic*] pine burrs and when the engagement became general, the scene was indeed beautiful. Maj. Gen'l [Samuel G.] French was out on the last night to witness the conflict.

The battle ended when Capt. Jacob Ziegler, of the 10th Texas Regiment stepped into a hole and broke his leg.

To interject another brief account (from a different source) into this material from the *Camp Journal*, I cite a similar item in a separate account by one of the Missourians who opposed the Texans in this fiery demonstration at Lauderdale Springs. R. S. Bevier records that the two brigades were camped near each other and had become friendly:

> The two commands would prepare themselves with huge piles of pine burrs; and, when night came, with these on fire, flying through the air, charge and counter-charge, flank movements and skillful skirmishing, accompanied by every yell and war-whoop known in battle, gave fine representations of real fights. The objective points were the mess kits of the opposing forces, and when a company happened to lose their cooking "turn out," they were compelled to do without eating or become objects of charity, until they could succeed in recapturing them on some ensuing night's contest.[2]

Bevier describes another occasion when Gen. French was absent and Gen. Francis M. Cockrell was temporarily in command of the division, and Col. Elijah Gates of the brigade. Gates decided the antics were getting out of hand and tried to stop them. In retaliation the men sneaked into his mess and stole *his* cooking implements. For a while Gates fumed. Then, after diplomacy and a sense of humor got the better of spleen, he nibbled at his mustache, chuckled, and sent word to the men to return his kitchen utensils. Growled Gates with displeasure in his voice but a twinkle in his eye: "You rascals, you! There's no doing anything with you except when you are marching or fighting."[3]

But back to the *Camp Journal*. Another article took issue with the Jackson *Mississippian*, which in a recent edition had mentioned "only ten pitched battles in which the Brigade had been engaged." There were also, insisted the *Camp Journal* with indignation, "the numerous *skirmishes*, *cross roads & grocery* [saloon] fights our boys have participated in." In yet another item the paper offered congratulations to Lt. T. B. Trezevant, the brigade's adjutant general, who had gone to Richmond to be married and had heard exciting news there about potential allies. In an apparent parody of the popular topic in Richmond, alleging that a number of foreign nations were about to recognize the Confederacy and come to its aid, the *Camp Journal* quoted "A Reliable Gentleman from the Flat-Head [Indian] nation" who "gives us a most encouraging account" of how the "natives of that province" had been so impressed by the Battle of Little Bethel (cf. the actual Battle of Big Bethel) that they "were greatly enthused with the idea of a war with the Northern Government which they consider inevitable."

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[2] Bevier, *op. cit.*, 231.
[3] *Ibid.*, 231-232.

An article titled "In Memorium [*sic*]" joshed a Major Tyler of the brigade for a speech—whether real or fictitious is not clear—in which he was said to have sounded off on various current topics. (He seems to have been what later times call a "blowhard.") Parodying the period of enlistments in the Confederate military, the article said the speech had been given at a meeting held after the brigade had reenlisted "for 99 years or during the war" and passed resolutions to prosecute "this cruel war." Major Tyler was said to have taken a "fling" at the Confederacy as well as "the rest of Mankind" and

> very kindly and gratuitously furnished us some information concerning our "Lone Star State" new to us and unheard of by either the authorities or the "oldest inhabitants" of our said State, viz. "That treason is stalking at mid-day, and rascality flourishes like a green bay tree, &c&c,"
> Therefore,
>
> *Resolved*—That Major Tyler is entitled to great credit for his deep penetration and important discoveries and deserves…his name [to be] enrolled (not among the conscripts) but [among] the great men who assemble periodically at Richmond who are termed by the "Boys" (in derision) Congressmen. That he be allowed to preside over that body in the capacity of "Speaker" for his fruitful imagination can always furnish [a] substitute when facts and statistics cannot be procured.
>
> *Resolved*, That many of us who have recently visited Texas and had opportunities of observing the condition of affairs there & in all portions of the State, failed to discover any indications of the "villainy" imputed to our state by Maj. Tyler except perhaps a small business in the way of hog or cow stealing, which though considered disreputable among some "very nice people" is far from being considered disgraceful in many other sections of the Confederacy, for we are informed that in certain localities, especially the Pan Handle District of Va., an aspirant for a seat in the Legislature is not considered eligible unless he has one of the above offences clearly proven against him.

All of this fairly bristles with what almost certainly were "in" jokes. One wishes one knew the stories behind them and behind such statements as that the Major was disqualified for keeping a "Tavern in a large town." He ought, said the writer, to be appointed "Military Adviser" to the Commanding General in Texas where, instead of Enfield cartridges, he should be armed with 100,000 rounds of then-popular laxative pills "to be used by him in regulating affairs in Texas, and that he be strictly forbidden the use of any of the pills himself as it is essential if he is placed in the position suggested that he should not again permit himself [to be] 'worked' in a passion." Furthermore, the Major apparently was a storehouse of unsolicited information, which caused our commentator to resolve further

> That Maj. T. be requested to deliver an address to this organization at his earliest convenience "on the state of our finances." He has probably ascertained in his deep researches and dives into science and politics who the individual was that struck "Billy Patterson" and in the course of his remarks

> will explain the origin…of that oft repeated saying "Here's your mule"[4] and will also be able to relieve our anxiety and suspense as to the fate of that individual who went up Salt River.
>
> *Resolved*—That when he arrives in camp to deliver said address, he be received with a salute of three guns from a certain well known Battery, and that he be accorded the high honor of loading the pieces himself.

It was delightful nonsense and even today is very funny, though it was probably much funnier to someone at that time familiar with all the allusions and particularly with such persons as Major Tyler. One is pleased, in long retrospect, that those hard-pressed soldiers had not lost their sense of humor. Such demonstrations of irreverent wit and independent thought show that if the Confederate soldiers had ever laid their external enemies low, they would have proceeded to make mincemeat of their domestic ones.

After Gen. Sherman's raid into the county, everything else tended to be anticlimactic—except, of course, to Sherman. It had begun to dawn on the state and the Confederacy that defeat was a very plausible prospect, and the implications of that were awesome. Well, there was little to be done about that now; better simply to do whatever repairing and rebuilding was possible, and then try to concentrate on better things.

In Lauderdale County everyday life tried to return to something like normality. And what better means to reestablish routine than a good tavern? Josiah Jones, fortunate still to have his hotel building, opened again for business and in June 1864 renewed his license to keep an inn or tavern. So did Dr. W. C. Johnson, proprietor of what had been the Meridian House. Up in Lauderdale Springs, E. L. Bramlett, a native Ohioan who would later figure prominently and tragically during Reconstruction, was already running an inn and tavern and renewed his license in February 1865. Two men, William Tucker and Jeptha Shedd, opened similar businesses in Marion Station and then moved their taverns to Meridian in August of 1864. Tucker opened his place in a new building on a lot owned by Joseph Eakens. Shedd built in Marion Station in the spring of 1864 and later that year put up another tavern in Meridian, on the lot where the Burton House had stood.[5]

The county's roads were in wretched condition and, because of meager funds and few workers, apt to remain so. Fortunately, individuals sometimes undertook to make improvements near their homes as W. W. Stokes did in July 1864. He repaired the bridge over Okatibbee Creek near L. B. Moore's mill on the Philadelphia Road. A grateful county paid him fifty dollars.[6]

Some bridges just could not be rebuilt immediately and thus afforded a few enterprising persons a remunerative line of endeavor. Reuben M. Harrison, for

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[4] This phrase, very much used during those years and featured in at least two songs during the Civil War, occurs most familiarly today in the still-sung "Goober Peas," in which it appears as "Hey, Mister, here's your mule!" Apparently it was simply one of those phrases, characteristic of particular eras, that are nonsensical, are often of unknown origin, and always get a laugh.

[5] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1864-1870*, 29, 35-36, 42, 66.

[6] *Ibid*., 39.

example, operated what was termed a "ferry" on Okatibbee Creek where the Lower Decatur Road crossed it near C. W. Matthews' farm. The meager details are tantalizing, but one wonders what this so-called *ferry* consisted of. Since it apparently was not a bridge, perhaps it was a device with a mechanism for moving a platform from one side of the creek to the other. Whatever it was, the county gave him a two-year monopoly, forbidding any bridge or ferry within five miles in either direction on the creek. The county also established the following prices for those using the ferry:

> man and horse, 4c
> pedestrian, 2c
> two-horse wagon, 16c
> four-horse wagon, 32c
> two-ox wagon, 16c
> four-ox wagaon, 32c
> horse, 20c
> cow, 10c
> sheep, 5c
> hog, 5c
> buggy horse, 16c.[7]

The chief industry in the county became again the military. After Polk left the Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana, Lt. Gen. Stephen D. Lee commanded briefly. He was in charge, for example, in June when President Davis wired him that citizens in Wilkinson County were suffering from enemy raids—by this time such raids were plaguing much of the state. Wilkinsonites reported two attacks in one week and begged Davis, "Do not let us be abandoned." Davis hoped that Lee could "meet the necessities of the case."[8] Lee's brief tenure as department commander in Meridian was followed by a similarly brief incumbency by Maj. Gen. Dabney Herndon Maury, whose duties otherwise kept him in Mobile.[9]

One of the truly outstanding, and almost legendary, military figures at that time was Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, respected by both Blue and Gray. He made many trips to or through Meridian and must have attracted an admiring crowd whenever his presence was known. For example, Forrest was in Meridian in the summer of 1864 to visit Gen. Maury, while the latter was temporarily commanding the Department. Maury later recalled an episode of that visit:

> One evening we were sitting together in the veranda of my headquarters at Meridian, when his [Forrest's] bodyguard came by on their way to water. I said, "General, that is a fine troop of men and horses." [Forrest replied:] "Yes, it is; and that captain is the eighth captain who has commanded it. The other seven have all been killed in battle!" Such was the

[7] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1864-1870*, 55, 69.
[8] Telegram from Pres. Davis, Richmond, to Gen. Lee, 29 June 1864, in Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 6:278.
[9] Maury also resumed temporary command on 23 November 1864 in the brief absence of Gen. Richard Taylor. See Maury's wire, from Mobile, to Gov. Clark, 23 November 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 66, MDAH.

influence of his success and fame, that there were always daring applicants for vacancies in Forrest's bodyguard.[10]

In the first week of September 1864 Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor assumed command of the Department in Meridian and allowed Maury to return to his post in Mobile. Taylor was a son of the late President Zachary Taylor and thus President Davis's brother-in-law. Richard Taylor could be as plain-spoken as old Zach had been. When he arrived in Meridian, he found the records left by the late General Polk, as well as the officers of the general staff. These latter, Taylor remarked wryly, "had nothing especial to do, and appeared to be discharging that duty conscientiously." This dry witticism reflected more on policy than on the officers, whom he found to be "zealous and intelligent" and who briefed him very quickly and ably. Among the things Taylor learned was that General Maury had just ordered Forrest to Mobile in order to defend that place against an attack that Maury considered imminent. In fact, Forrest would pass through Meridian that very evening on the way to Mobile. Well, Taylor had just received information that showed Maury's fears to be premature. There would almost certainly be no attack on Mobile anytime soon; but General Hood, in North Georgia, was most assuredly under attack and in need of all the help he could get against the county's old *bête noire*, Sherman.[11]

Taylor quickly gave orders to meet Forrest's train and to bring him to the Meridian headquarters.[12] Taylor had never met Forrest but had heard plenty about him. When Forrest entered Taylor's office, the latter carefully studied the famous cavalry commander. He saw a tall, robust man whose hair was starting to gray, whose face showed no uncouth fierceness, and whose speech was disarmingly homely. Taylor came right to the point and briefly told Forrest that Hood was in far greater peril than was Maury. Forrest therefore needed to take some of the pressure off the Confederates around Atlanta by harassing Sherman's communications north of the Tennessee River. And it had be done at once.

Forrest's immediate response surprised and disappointed Taylor. The cavalryman, who had wrought so many seeming-miracles, often with far inferior numbers, seemed diffident and hesitant. He asked many questions: How would he cross the Tennessee? How would he get back if hard-pressed? What would he do with prisoners? And there were other questions. Taylor thought him lacking in resolution; he sounded almost gutless. Was this the great hero?

Then Forrest's manner changed completely. He began an analysis of the problem, considering his chances of success or failure and carefully enumerating the elements of both possibilities. It reminded Taylor of a chemist experimenting in his laboratory. Suddenly Forrest rose and asked for L. J. Fleming, the able and energetic superintendent of the M & O Railroad, who had come down on the same train with Forrest. Fleming entered the room a few minutes later, and Taylor observed this small man who exuded confidence and energy. He was scarcely impeded by the crutches he carried as a result of having recently broken his leg. And Forrest! No longer was he the slow-talking, passive man he had seemed at first. In a few terse sentences he spelled out his requirements to Taylor and Fleming: He would leave a

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[10] Dabney Herndon Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican and Civil Wars* 2nd ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1894), 218.
[11] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 242.
[12] This account of the first meeting between Taylor and Forrest can be found in *ibid*., 242-243.

staff officer to get his supplies—he wanted an engine to take him twenty miles north to where his troops were—and so on. He intended to march at dawn and expected to give a good account of himself.

Forrest, who was as good as his word, was to Taylor an interesting study. “Nature made him a great soldier,” Taylor later wrote.[13] What if the Confederacy had had a few more like him! For that matter, what if the North had had *one*!

It probably was on that same visit to Meridian that Forrest wrote to Gov. Charles Clark to express his gratitude for a recent resolution by the Mississippi Legislature in which that body had expressed the state’s official thanks for all of Forrest’s magnificent services. The letter was almost certainly written by someone else, for Forrest did not express himself well in writing. But his amanuensis, no doubt taking his directions from the honored commander, penned a very gracious letter that made liberal use of capital letters:

> The Compliment is the more highly appreciated Since it Comes from the State of my Early adoption, the home of my youth & Early Manhood. A promise of Continued devotion to the interests of the State and her people, is all that I can offer in return for the high Estimate placed upon my Services…. It was under your order Governor, That I first drew my maiden Sword. [In the early part of the war, Clark had been a general.] I regret that our intercourse was of such short duration, for it was one of unalloyed pleasure and harmony. I have often mourned your absence from active field Service where you were doing such valuable Service to the Country, and often have I Sympathized with you in the Suffering you have endured from wounds received in defence of the Sacred Cause.[14]

The scribe finished the letter with the usual flourish, “I remain, Governor, Very Respectfully Your Obdt. Svt.,” and left a space below which he added “Maj. Genl.” In the space provided, Forrest wrote his plain, clear “N. B. Forrest,” contrasting with the scribe’s more ornate script.

The people in the county eventually must have become accustomed to seeing famous political and military figures, for the three busy railroads and the presence of the military department’s headquarters guaranteed a steady passage of such visitors. President Davis was there on several occasions, and the area’s population could also gape at such bigwigs as Joseph E. Johnston, one of only six full generals originally commissioned in the Confederacy, and such outstanding officers as Stephen Dill Lee and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Some of the famous who passed through the area were truly great; others had simply been thrust into great positions.

Occasionally it was not just a celebrity but a group of them. One such was the Nelson Rangers, from Columbus, Ga., who so impressed S. D. Lee that he made them his escort. The Nelson Rangers, who took their name from their leader,

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[13] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 243.

[14] Gen. N. B. Forrest, Meridian, to Gov. Charles Clark, 6 September 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 66, MDAH.

Capt. T. M. Nelson, were an independent group. With about seventy-five men reporting for active duty and 130 on the muster roll, they were regarded by some as the largest cavalry company in the Confederacy. Gen. Stephen Lee used them not only as couriers but also as men whom, as one contemporary source put it, could be put "advantageously into a fight." Most of the men were young and many were prominent socially. As late in the war as the summer of 1864 they could claim to have been very fortunate in that few of their members had been killed or even wounded, a remarkable fact in light of Gen. Lee's' vigorous manner of combat. Sometime in the spring of 1864 Captain Nelson was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and G. G. Ragland became captain. The other officers were 1/Lt. William Wise, 2/Lt. John S. Owens, and 3/Lt. John L. Lewis.[15] They must have become a very familiar sight in the county, especially while Gen. Lee commanded the Department from May into September of 1864.

The residents of the county seem to have maintained reasonably good relations with the Department's military. From time to time James J. Shannon, in the columns of his *Clarion*, threw attention or bouquets to various members of the Department, such as when he observed that Tom Taylor was the new provost marshal general with a Captain Bullock as assistant.[16] On that same occasion Shannon said that the First Mississippi Regiment, stationed in town, was reported to have been unpaid for eighteen months. Shannon wondered whether it was true. The item immediately brought a response from "Dixie," who confirmed the report and added: "I am authorized by the regiment to say, that they are not fighting for money, but would not object to a little once a year, for a change, if the government has it to spare, but we still do duty, hoping that some day, the authorities will find out the regiment is in the field, and have them paid off."[17] It was a fine bit of judicious pressure, with overtones of a reprimand, and Shannon may very well have initiated it.

Commanding General Richard Taylor often took trips to nearby, and some not-so-nearby, places to confer with various officials such as Governor Clark, or General Maury, or even President Davis. At least once, in the late fall of 1864, he moved his headquarters to Selma, Ala., until that place "ceased to be of importance," and then returned to Meridian where he met with Forrest again and ordered him to continue to cooperate with General Hood. At the same time, said Taylor, "Maury was made happy by the information that he would lose none of his force" in the effort on Hood's behalf.[18]

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[15] From the Columbus, Ga., *Sun*, reprinted in the Meridian *Clarion*, 22 June 1864. The article names Capt. Nelson as "A. R." Nelson, almost certainly incorrect—see William Frayne Amann (ed.), *Personnel of the Civil War.* 2 vols. (New York: Yoseloff, 1961), 1:107; see also *Official Records*, 1:32:1:333. One member of Nelson's Rangers was Samuel Spencer, first president of the future Southern Railway—see Burke Davis's *The Southern Railway, Road of the Innovators* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 19.
[16] Meridian *Clarion*, 6 July 1864.
[17] *Ibid.*, 6 and 8 July 1864.
[18] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 254. See also Meridian *Clarion*, 10 November 1864, as evidence that Shannon's paper continued to report the activities of the Department headquarters, even while they were temporarily in Selma. We see in the issue of 26 October that the headquarters were then still in Meridian.

From about the middle of November until the end of the war, Taylor's attention was occupied with, first, the literal disintegration of Hood's army following the defeats at Franklin and Nashville, and, second, with Federal threats upon central Mississippi and Alabama. Hood asked to be relieved of duty, so Taylor left Meridian and went up the M & O to Tupelo to meet with the unfortunate and disheartened general. From November on into January, a series of very severe cold spells added to the misery of the remnants of Hood's army, some members of which died from exposure.

In the middle of November 1864 Gen. R. E. Lee asked Taylor to make a fact-finding trip into Georgia to try to learn the situation there with regard to Sherman's movements. Taylor took the train to Montgomery, then moved on to Columbus, Macon, and Savannah, Georgia.[19]

From the beginning of his tenure as department commander to the war's end, Taylor found himself battling not only the Union forces but to some extent Mississippi's as well. He found himself on occasion trying to reconcile the often conflicting interests of his own army and those of the state and home guards. But though dealing with the resulting tension was a large part of his duties, the governors of Mississippi and Alabama were never so abrasive as many found the governors of Georgia and North Carolina to be.

Actually, Taylor's relations with Governor Clark were fairly amicable. For example, in the fall of 1864 we see Taylor trying, over a period of about two weeks, to arrange a meeting with the governor to discuss several critical issues. (By this time Clark had his office in Macon, north of Meridian, on the M & O Railroad.) On the nineteenth of September Clark, who had been expecting a visit from Taylor, learned that the latter had been very ill but was obliged to leave on the twentieth for Montgomery to meet with Alabama's Governor Thomas H. Watts. "If you will let me know when I can meet you at Meridian or even above there," wired Taylor, "I will go to see you as soon after returning from Montgomery as possible."[20] By the next Sunday Taylor wired Clark from Selma that he was returning to Meridian and would meet Clark there, or "If you cannot conveniently meet me there, I will proceed to Macon." Taylor promised to wire Clark if circumstances made him change his plans.[21] They did, for he was obliged to meet with President Davis; Meridian and Macon had to wait.[22] On the second of October Taylor wired Clark again that he was leaving for Meridian and was being accompanied by Maj. Gen. Frank Gardner, who was to be placed in command of the Confederate forces in Mississippi. Again Taylor offered his accommodating "If it will cause you any inconvenience to meet me there [Meridian], will push on to Macon soon as possible."[23] Finally, after so much delay, Taylor was able to tell Clark that he could expect him on the fifth of October.[24]

Governor Clark must have become very familiar with that signature "R. Taylor." He no doubt also learned to appreciate Taylor's obliging manner. Clark, of course, had had some real experience as a military commander under fire, and this may have simplified his relations with Taylor. Perhaps if Governor Joe Brown, of

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[19] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 257, 261, 263.
[20] Telegram from Taylor, Mobile, to Gov. Clark, 19 September 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.
[21] Telegram from Taylor, Selma, to Gov. Clark, 25 September 1864, in *ibid.*
[22] Telegram from Taylor, Selma, to Gov. Clark, 26 September 1864, in *ibid.*
[23] Telegram from Taylor, Selma, to Gov. Clark, 20 October 1864, in *ibid.*
[24] Telegram from Taylor, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 4 October 1864, in *ibid.*

Georgia, had had to dodge a few bullets in Confederate service, he might have been a little less abrasive with military officials.

Nevertheless, there was occasional friction between Taylor and Clark over interpretations of duty. One such disagreement was over the use of the state militia. Just before Christmas 1864 Taylor sent an aide up to Macon to try to iron out a disagreement on that subject with Governor Clark. If they could not agree, Taylor offered to muster the militia out of service.[25] Ten days later Taylor courteously refused Clark's offer to call out the militia to meet a possible enemy thrust into the area between Meridian and Mobile. Taylor offered to contact the Governor again after he, Taylor, had received better information.[26]

Such disagreements as did develop between departmental headquarters in Meridian and the state's authorities seem to have been rarely a matter of politics or authority, as more frequently happened in other states, but were more likely to stem from a difference of opinion over such things as the distribution of weapons and the deployment of forces. In August 1864, for example, when Maury was acting-commander of the Department, the state militia (as with most other military forces in the Confederacy by 1864) were poorly supplied with arms. When F. L. Brown, a clerk in the state's ordnance department, got to Meridian, he was delighted to find two thousand Enfield rifles; and the state militia's officials wired Gen. Maury in Mobile for permission to take them. Maury replied that the arms were intended for Confederate forces in Brandon and "must go forward and that he [Maury] had 500 there [in Meridian] reserved for Miss. troops." In Meridian Col. Steward, of the state's ordnance department was annoyed and stated somewhat tartly that unless the state could get a sufficient quantity of arms, the state forces would remain unequipped. Maury had his chief of ordnance wire Capt. Evans, a Confederate ordnance officer in Meridian, to try to do something. But when Brown called upon Evans, the latter replied that he had no arms on hand but would have 250 sixty-nine-caliber muskets sent from Mobile "in the morning" and that the militia ought not to expect anything better. And even later, when Brown was telling Governor Clark about what later generations would call a "royal runaround," Mobile still had sent nothing. Said Brown wearily to Clark, "I will telegraph you immediately upon the arrival of any arms." Maury apparently did eventually send something. But whatever it was must have been stored at some distance from Meridian, for there was at that time no suitable facility anywhere in the county.[27]

Just before Maury turned over command of the Department to Taylor in early September 1864, the former had to deal with a possible Federal thrust by Brig. Gen. John W. Davidson against the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. Maury thought the threat only minor and was convinced that if it occurred, Brig. Gen. Wirt Adams could deal with it. And certainly there was no need, he thought, to send the militia into the area; for, said Maury, "It is important that I should have a force to guard some of the important tressels [*sic*] on the M. & O. R. R." He recommended sending Col. Greene C. Chandler of Lauderdale County and Lt. Col. Frank A. Montgomery's unattached

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[25] Telegram from Taylor, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 18 December 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.
[26] Telegram from Taylor, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 28 December 1864, in *ibid.*
[27] Brown, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 16 August 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 56, MDAH; see also letter of Brown, in Mobile, to Gov. Clark, 23 November 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH.

cavalry down to Buckatunna. The cavalry could do the scouting, he suggested, and Chandler's unit could be sent to any threatened point.[28]

Again, in November, while General Taylor was out of the Department and Maury was temporarily in charge, the latter wrote to Governor Clark and again urged the threatened condition of Mobile and how that city's safety, as well as the M & O's, should have been a matter of concern to Clark and his state as much as it was to Maury:

> You will appreciate [wrote Maury] the obligation which rests upon me to urge your most earnest and active cooperation with me in placing Troops in service at once, when I assure you, that, with the force now in the Dist. of the Gulf, it will be a very practicable and a very sound Military enterprise for the enemy to undertake on any night to possess himself of Mobile by a coup de main [surprise attack]. [29]

Maury gracefully added, "Please let me know at your earliest convenience how far you can aid me if at all." Maury assured Clark that he was pleased to "renew our official relations." In a jocular postscript he added: "You will be amused and surprised to hear that I received very 'severe reprehension' from the Secretary of War, because I seized those Trans-Mississippi Arms for your Militia last summer. I was tempted to cite you as a witness in my behalf."[30] Maury was in effect reminding Clark that he had done the Governor a favor and now would like one in return.

Toward the end of that November the enemy's threat to the area north of Mobile seemed so serious that Gen. Frank Gardner wired Governor Clark from Jackson to ask him to assemble the militia in Meridian and Brandon—those in Summit had already been called out. He reported an enemy force moving up the M & O north of Mobile. On that same day Gardner asked Clark to order the officers of the militia in Meridian and Brandon to receive, organize, and arm their soldiers. Gardner said he would order his officers to muster them and provide supplies, but he reported nothing further as to the enemy's movements.[31] Two days later Governor Clark ordered that Captain William A. Shields' company be armed and equipped and that it report for duty under Capt. W. G. Grace, in Meridian. The enemy, he wrote, was "advancing in the south."[32] In Meridian Col. William S. Patton, Sr., fretted over administrative details while awaiting orders as to his own next move.[33] By the fifth of the month W. H. Chamblis, in Enterprise, had organized a group of men, above the age of fifty, into Company A, Second Mississippi State Troops.[34]

On the evening of the 7th, the state militia's infantry prepared to leave Meridian on a southbound M & O train while Maury, in Mobile, was urging Governor Clark to "Push your Militia to Shubuta & Buckatunna as rapidly as possible." And since the moment seemed critical, Maury ordered the telegraph operators to stay on duty all night.[35] On 8 December Brig. Gen. B. M. Thomas was in Shubuta, apparently

[28] Maury, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 5 September 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH.
[29] Maury, Mobile, to Gov. Clark, 23 November 1864, vol. 60, in *ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] Two telegrams from Gardner, Jackson, to Gov. Clark, 29 November 1864, in *ibid.*
[32] Telegram from Clark, Jackson, to Col. T. B. Lenoir, Jackson, 1 December 1864, in *ibid.*
[33] Two telegrams from Patton, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 2 December 1864, in *ibid.*
[34] Telegram from Chamblis, Enterprise, to Gov. Clark, 5 December 1864, in *ibid.*
[35] Telegram from F. L. Brown, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 7 December 1864, in *ibid.*

unaware that state troops were on the way. Certainly none had arrived, and he needed them "as soon as possible."[36] One reason for the delay was in Meridian where Colonel Patton and his regiment were running into irritating delays. The weather was cold, and, as in many other such times and circumstances, the soldiers were awed by the clumsiness of the bureaucracy around them. Though the troops had been ordered to Buckatunna and were to have left on the train at seven P.M. of the 8th, at midnight they were still sitting in the coaches at Meridian. Patton reported them "cold and dissatisfied." In fact, Patton must have been rather so himself, for he ended his message to Governor Clark with a terse "Answer immediately." It was not until the morning of the tenth that they reached Buckatunna, where they found no enemy. Thus, Patton suggested to Clark that they go on to Citronelle. In Meridian Capt. W. Hough was importuning Governor Clark for more militiamen—"inform me by letter where & when the twenty companies [of] State troops will be rendezvoused for inspection & muster into Confederate States service."[37] Well, that almost surely was not going to happen, even if the danger south of Meridian had developed into a real threat. It didn't and attention went back to the appalling condition of Hood's remnant of an army as it made its way down from Tennessee. In a futile gesture General Taylor urged Governor Clark to send every man possible to Hood's aid.[38]

While conscription did make heavy inroads into the Confederacy's supply of males, and though the age limits were widened as the war dragged on, there were nevertheless more men than one might suppose who were still not serving in the state or Confederate forces. Most of these, of course, were males below or above the age limits; but there were also others who managed somehow—sometimes by bribery or by well-placed acquaintances—to elude the uniform. And there were men regularly mustered into service who had managed to have themselves placed on special "detail," that is, non-combatant duties, theoretically to await possible new assignments.

Many of the males on the home front were obliged occasionally to serve on the "patrol," that famous Southern institution which did police duty in a county and became especially vigilant as the potential for slave uprisings increased. The threat of being caught by the patrol seems to have been a special fear among slaves who often voiced their dread of it and even sang about it—sometimes in black dialect the word came out "patterol." The patrol system in Lauderdale County existed at least as far back as August of 1859. Each member of the Board of Police appointed in his beat a patrol leader who was empowered "to summon six men subject to patrol duty to meet said leader at such times & places as he may designate." The patrolmen were obliged to inspect their beat at least every three weeks.[39] They were alert for any signs of suspicious activity on the part of the slaves. Even as late as January 1865, Beat Two's Police Board member, W. C. Wood, instructed his patrolmen to administer

[36] Telegram from Thomas, Shubuta, to Gov. Clark, 8 December 1864, in GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH.
[37] Telegram from Patton, Buckatunna, to Gov. Clark, 10 December 1864; and telegram from Hough, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 11 December 1864, both in *ibid.*
[38] Telegram from Taylor, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 17 December 1864, in *ibid.*
[39] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1854-1860*, 380.

up to thirty lashes to any slave caught abroad without a pass. All unlawful assemblies were to be broken up.[40]

These ordinary problems of keeping order in the county and state, coupled with the growing concern over the danger of sudden enemy raids, slave uprisings, and depredations from local riffraff, persuaded Governor Clark on 9 May 1864 to issue a proclamation ordering all officers and men exempted from Confederate service to form military companies for local defence, and to assist in enforcing the laws. They would be mustered in under the following regulations: "One company of cavalry and one of infantry may be formed in each county, with one captain for each…. Each company will be allowed one Lieutenant, one Sergeant and one corporal, for each detachment of twenty men comprising the company. No company of less than twenty men will be received."[41]

The sheriff of each county would muster the companies and commission the officers, and these would obey his summonses and help him enforce the law. No company would be forced to do duty outside the county except in emergencies and when so ordered by the commanding officer or the governor. The men would receive no bounties and would furnish their own arms, accoutrements, etc. They would not be entitled to pay, rations, or forage for their horses, except when on emergency duty outside the county. When their captain requisitioned ammunition, it would be issued by the state's chief of ordnance.[42]

Perhaps in response to the Governor's request, that as time passed assumed the nature of a command, the "exempted and detailed men" at Marion met on Saturday, 4 June, to organize a company for local defense. They chose as officers Capt. William S. Patton, 1/Lt. William G. Grace, 2/Lt. P. H. Bozeman, and 3/Lt. C. W. Henderson.[43] This was probably not such a unit as those defined in the Governors' proclamation for a strictly county unit, or standing *posse comitatus*. For one thing, at least some of these names appear at times on records of state troops and, for another, this Marion group had three lieutenants, whereas Clark's proclamation allowed but one.

Shannon's *Clarion* lent its support to the Governor's call and reminded the county that "to beat the enemy is now our absorbing business."[44] The paper displayed prominently an ad by Capt. W. G. Grace who, apparently under the terms of Gov. Clark's proclamation, planned a company in the county and needed, as the ad put it, "A few steady young men."[45]

Shannon was what some, looking for a pejorative term, might call a "bitter-ender." But it was the outcome of the war that today seems to put Shannon's role in what some might regard as a bad light. Had the South gained its independence, some of his writings might remind one of some of Thomas Paine's *Crisis Papers*, written at dark times during the American Revolution. At any rate, one would be unlikely to find any defeatist sentiment in his editorials, although he could sometimes be contemptuous of inept officials. On one occasion, very near the end of the war, Shannon wrote:

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[40] *Minutes, Board of Police, 1864-1870*, 56-57.
[41] Meridian *Clarion*, 2 July 1864.
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] Henderson, Marion, to Gov. Clark, 6 June 1864, GP, RG 27, vol. 65, MDAH.
[44] Meridian *Clarion*, 6 July 1864.
[45] *Ibid.*, 15 September 1864.

> There is no reason why the conflict against inhuman oppression should not go on as vigorously as before. We can take no step backward. Our only course is onward with vigor and energy, calling for and using all the resources of the nation until the desolator is made desolate and the tyrant overthrown. Let the people bear their burdens cheerfully; let them sustain the Government and soldier in adversity, and respond with promptitude to the many demands the conflict may make. We have not yet learned to battle with adversity like the Greeks, Dutch and Colonists. When our territory is all overrun, our armies dispersed and the people suffering from famine, we will learn what other nations have paid for their independence. If the people remain firm and don't give way under misfortune, we will never be reduced to this condition, bu[t] with strong armies and well filled larders, we will achieve that grand triumph which will bring forth paeans of praise from freemen in every part of the world.[46]

Some of Shannon's articles in the *Clarion* disturbed the Department officials in Meridian. The fear was that the local journalist, now editing the state's only daily, would inadvertently upset the public with faulty information or unsubstantiated rumors. In early January of 1865, for instance, Shannon received the following caveat from General Taylor's office:

> …From the fact that your paper is published so near headquarters of [the] department, it has occurred to the general that more importance will be attached to your assertions than if they appeared in sheets published elsewhere. He therefore requests that you will hereafter, on receipt of such information as that referred to [relative to military movements in the area of Grenada, Miss.], give him the opportunity of either verifying or contradicting the same, as the publication of such rumors must cause much unnecessary alarm and uneasiness to those persons having friends or other interests at or near designated points. I am further instructed to assure you the lieutenant-general commanding will at any time take pleasure in furnishing you for publication all information received at headquarters which can be properly be [*sic*] made public. [47]

There were plenty of others who, like Shannon, continued to be hopeful until the very end, which was indeed bitter. Few, however, were such extreme cases as Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, who committed suicide rather than face a restoration of Yankee rule. Nor were most as bitter as was the Meridian Presbyterian minister William Curtis Emerson, who after the war led a group of emigrants to Brazil.

For citizens of Lauderdale County, the spring of 1865 must have seemed to mock the symbolism of the renewal of life usually associated with the season. Death and destruction were everywhere, and perhaps to many life seemed almost worse than

[46] Quoted in the *New York Times*, 26 February 1865, 2.
[47] Bettersworth, *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It*, 331-332.

death. To those inclined to temper their existence with philosophy, perhaps the obtrusive omnipresence of death, the patently mortal condition of the Confederacy, and the arrival of spring were all reminders of the paradox of life eclipsing death, as many religions have celebrated. Perhaps even the death of the Confederacy offered to some the hope of peace and renewal under the restoration of the old Union.

On 28 March the *Clarion* published the obituary of Joseph P. Brown, a young soldier from Louisiana. He was a member of the West Feliciana Rifles, Fourth Louisiana Regiment. Said the paper in a sentiment and style then quite popular: “It will be a consolation to his friends at home to know that he had every attention paid him during his illness and that he was attended in his dying moments by kind lady friends, who ministered to his every wish and did all that mortals could to alleviate his sufferings.” Brown had typhoid fever and, at about twenty-four years of age, died on 26 March at the home of Mayor John Gibbs.[48] The Confederacy survived him scarcely a month.

And near Richmond, Va., late that same month Capt. A. A. Currie, commanding the Lauderdale Zouaves, wrote in earnest to complete the historical records of his unit. Outside, lowering skies further depressed his spirits and threatened to add downpours and mud to the already long list of woes faced by what remained of Robert E. Lee’s army. Currie must have realized that the story was almost ended and that it ought to be written down while memory was still vivid. He wrote of that mustering four years before, almost to the day, and of the flag presented by the ladies of Lauderdale Springs, and the flag’s motto “Victory or death.” Now there were no victories, only defeat and death. He recalled the Peninsula Campaign of 1862 which had happened only a few miles from where he sat writing. He described Chickamauga, the pursuit of the Yankees to Chattanooga, action on the Rapidan, their move to Petersburg. Now, glum and spent, they brooded on the north side of the surly James River. Currie ended his historical account by recalling how Captain McElroy and many of his comrades had given their lives. He added a line from an ode by the Roman poet Horace: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country.” Currie finished his narrative, signed it, and wrote the date—“March 27th/65.”[49] In less than two weeks it would all be over for Lee’s men.

Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor was too intelligent and too much a realist not to see that the end of the Confederate experiment was inevitable and probably imminent. At the start of 1865, he seemed to be performing his duties in a measured manner, not wishing to be premature but trying to make as smooth as possible the restoration of peace and re-union. Beyond pursuing his routine, a sort of holding pattern, he seemed more concerned with trying to relieve civilian distress (as we have already seen) and with trying to minimize the needless destruction by the enemy of valuable machinery and equipment which would be needed for the rebuilding process. On 17 February at Meridian he wrote to Col. George William Brant, Assistant Adjutant General, in Richmond, for advice as to what measures to take if, as his latest information indicated, the enemy should overrun Mississippi and Alabama. Neither his own troops nor those at Selma, Montgomery, and elsewhere could, he said, “resist anything more

[48] Meridian *Clarion*, 28 March 1865.
[49] “Historical Memoranda” for the Lauderdale Zouaves, CR, RG 9, vol. 7, folder I, MDAH.

than a mere cavalry raid." Should valuable equipment "be left to chances of being exposed to nothing stronger than cavalry raids[?]" And would removal eastward increase its chances of survival?

> I cannot [he continued] decide these questions in advance of full information of the situation in Carolina. You are requested to place these questions before General Beauregard for his decision. If that is impossible advise me fully of the situation and chances of the campaign in Carolina, that I may have some idea upon which I can act advisedly.[50]

As Taylor would later write in his memoirs, the situation in Alabama gave him the greatest concern. Federal Maj. Gen. Edward Richard Sprigg Canby, whom Taylor knew and respected, commanded U. S. forces in the Central Gulf region and was obviously positioning some 50,000 men in Pensacola and at the mouth of Mobile Bay for an attack on Mobile. It was the last major port held by the Confederacy, if a city in such a situation could be called a port. The other problem was at the other end of Alabama where Federal cavalryman, Maj. Gen. James H. Wilson, had what Taylor termed "ten thousand picked mounted men" who threatened central Alabama and its critical ordnance manufacturing.[51]

Taylor left Meridian for Selma, Alabama, to direct General Forrest in a move against Wilson, but Forrest was so badly outnumbered that even that resourceful cavalryman was forced to retreat. Taylor himself narrowly avoided capture. He later described the experience:

> My engine started toward Meridian, and barely escaped. Before headway was attained the enemy was upon us, and capture seemed inevitable. Fortunately, the group of horsemen near prevented their comrades from firing, so we had only to risk a fusillade from a dozen who fired wild. The driver and stoker [of the locomotive], both negroes, were as game as possible, and as we thundered across Cahawba [*sic*] bridge, all safe, raised a loud "Yah! Yah!" of triumph, and smiled like two sable angels.[52]

On 8 April the telegraph operator in Senatobia, Miss., tapped out a routine message to Governor Clark from James E. Matthews, who was declining some unspecified appointment. Following the main message, the telegrapher added: "Meridian operator tells me Richmond fell by assault on 3rd [April]. No particulars." The Senatobia operator added, "I *believe* the information came from Northern papers via Jackson."[53]

Well! Here was news indeed, if true. And no one who read the papers could have thought it implausible. But this news came on Saturday. The next day, Palm Sunday, brought even more portentous news from Appomattox Court House, a little county seat some distance west of Richmond, where Robert E. Lee had at last

[50] Taylor, at Meridian, to Col. Brant, 17 February 1865; original in possession of William Hal Robbins, Jackson, Miss.
[51] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 267.
[52] *Ibid.*, 268-269.
[53] Telegram from Matthews, Senatobia, to Gov. Clark, 8 April 1865, GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAH.

accepted the inevitable. Taylor, at Meridian, did not learn of Lee's surrender until just before D. H. Maury abandoned Mobile on the 12th. Blakely and Spanish Fort, Ala., had fallen in late March, and the entire Confederate garrison, or what was left of it, made a desperate dash into the interior toward Cuba Station, Ala., and Meridian. Gen. Maury had some 4500 men who might, with luck, be able to join Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's army in North Carolina. It was during Maury's evacuation and retreat that what Taylor called the "last engagement of the civil war" occurred—a minor cavalry affair between the Federal advance force and the Confederate rear guard.[54]

In Meridian Taylor received the "astounding" news of the assassination of President Lincoln and announced it to his troops. "For a time," he later wrote, "they were silent with amazement, then asked if it was possible that any Southern man had committed the act. There was a sense of relief expressed when they learned that the wretched assassin had no connection with the South…."[55] Nor was that all the bad news Taylor had for his men. The surrender of Lee's army left them with little hope of success; but so long as Johnston remained in the field, they were obligated to try to get to him. Besides, the Confederate President and other officials were making their way southward and perhaps needed protection.[56]

The assassination of Lincoln might well have given pause to Southerners. It took no special perceptiveness to realize that such a deed, whether committed by a Confederate or not, could easily become a pretext for extremely harsh reprisals when the war ended. The *Clarion* perhaps had this in mind when it expressed a sentiment that probably found considerable agreement among many of its readers: "We hope the crime was not perpetrated by a Southerner, whom its very barbarity would disgrace…. We deem the independence of the South eminently desirable, but never dreamed that it was to be achieved by assassins. Providence rarely rewards crimes against which humanity revolts."[57]

Civil, political, and military matters were fast moving toward chaos. Governor Charles Clark, fearing a complete collapse of law and order, on 18 April sent a message to all of the colonels in the militia: "Keep counties [i.e., county units] ready. Organize thoroughly the militia as minute men to protect life & property. Let militia officers report to the sheriff, keeping one third members [?] on duty & balance ready at a moment's notice. Remain at District Head Quarters."[58]

The message went to colonels in Okolona, Macon, Summit, Brandon, Canton, and Grenada. Clark, already in Meridian, would see that Lauderdale authorities, especially Col. William S. Patton, got it. The message was in Clark's own handwriting, which showed by its unevenness that the writer was under extreme pressure. After all, he was in bad health and faced an uncertain future.[59]

Our young, idealistic soldier, William Chambers, who had anticipated the future so confidently when he arrived in Meridian that day in the spring of 1862, was now running for his life. He and some pals had barely escaped capture in the Mobile area around Blakely when the Federals moved in. The fugitives fled through

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[54] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 270-271.
[55] *Ibid.*, 271-272.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Quoted by Carl Sandburg in *Abraham Lincoln, the War Years* 4 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 4:342.
[58] Gov. Clark, Meridian, to the several colonels of the militia, 18 April 1865, GP, RG 27, vol. 57, MDAH.
[59] In fact, Clark was imprisoned for a time in Ft. Pulaski, near Savannah, Ga.

South Alabama, across into Mississippi, past State Line and up to Shubuta where they boarded a train at midnight. Their trip to Meridian was free, the least the M & O could do for anyone still in uniform at this late date—the 19th of April, and what a date that was to anyone who knew his American history![60] The train pulled into Meridian around daylight. Chambers went to the office of the post commandant and on the way met a Dr. Catchings, of one of the local regiments, and also Capt. Jacob Ziegler, of Ector's Brigade. (Ziegler had apparently recovered from his broken leg that had put a quick end to that "Battle of 700 Pines" at Lauderdale Springs a year before.) Neither had any news that Chambers had not heard. Chambers found, when he reached camp, that all of his regiment's officers who had managed to escape were in Meridian. His brigade had about fifty-five men and perhaps a dozen officers, hardly enough to constitute even a company. There were but twenty-five from his regiment. Because of the situation, he and the others were attached to Ector's Brigade. When Chambers learned of Lincoln's assassination, his reaction was pessimistic: "I am fearful the war will be prosecuted more barbarously than ever, for I have a poor opinion of the moderation of such a man as Andrew Johnson…."[61]

On 20 April Meridian and the haggard remnants of a bewildered army were regaled with speeches from two members of the Confederate Congress. Chambers failed to report what they said, but one hopes it had nothing to do with recognition by European governments and the lifting of the blockade.[62]

Momentous events were now happening rapidly. Gen. Maury, acting under orders from Gen. Taylor, prepared to move his small force from Meridian up to Cuba Station, Ala., a few miles northeast of Meridian, there to await a movement to join Gen. Joe Johnston in North Carolina. Johnston's surrender to Gen. Sherman at Durham ended that plan.[63] Taylor then saw no course open but that of some kind of accommodation with the enemy. He contacted Federal Gen. Canby in Mobile and arranged for a conference a few miles north of Mobile. As Taylor later commented, the contrast between his situation and Canby's was dramatized by how each arrived at the appointed place. Canby, accompanied by a brigade and a band, had gone up in state by train; Taylor, by appalling contrast, went down accompanied only by Col. William Levy, later a cogressman from Louisiana. Their mode of transportation was a handcar operated by two slaves. Taylor's description of the meeting with Canby bears quoting:

> General Canby met me with much urbanity. We retired to a room, and in a few moments agreed upon a truce, terminable after forty-eight hours notice by either party. Then rejoining the throng of officers, introductions and many pleasant civilities passed. I was happy to recognize Commodore (afterward Admiral) James Palmer, an old friend…. A bountiful luncheon was spread, of which we partook with joyous poppings of champagne corks for accompaniment, the first agreeable explosive sounds I had heard for years. The air of "Hail Columbia," which the band in attendance struck up, was instantly changed by Canby's order to that of "Dixie"; but I insisted on the first

[60] The start of the American Revolution—for those who failed history.
[61] Chambers, *op. cit.*, 368-375.
[62] *Ibid.*, 375-376.
[63] Maury's memo to Jefferson Davis, 25 December 1867—in Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 7:430.

> [tune], and expressed a hope that Columbia would be again a happy land, a sentiment honored by many libations.[64]

One of the Federal officers was a recent immigrant from Germany, and much to General Canby's chagrin and annoyance began to lecture Taylor about how the South would quickly see the error of its ways. Both Canby and Commodore Palmer tried in vain to shut him up. Later, Taylor observed wryly, "A kindly, worthy people, the Germans, but wearing on occasions."[65]

On 30 April Taylor wired Governor Clark the details of the armistice, including the agreement to let the trains continue to run on the M & O.[66] They were generous terms, too generous in fact for the bellicose civil officers in Washington. Taylor and Canby had based their proposed terms on those that General Sherman had offered to General Johnston, in North Carolina. Thus, when the Federal authorities disallowed the terms offered by Sherman, Canby in Mobile notified Taylor in Meridian that to his regret he would have to give notice of the resumption of hostilities within twenty-four hours. Taylor thus realized that he had no recourse but surrender. He asked Canby to meet him to work out the details, and the two men met on 4 May at Citronelle, Ala.[67] Taylor afterward spoke of the honorable treatment and terms he had received that included the following:

- Officers could retain their side arms and mounted men their horses, which in the Confederate Army were personal property.
- Public stores, ordnance, commissary, and quartermaster supplies were to be turned over to proper Federal authorities.
- Paroles for the soldiers were to be signed by their officers on rolls made out for that purpose.
- Gen. Taylor would retain control of railways and river steamers to transport men to as near their homes as possible and to feed them along the way.
- Gen. Taylor would notify Gen. Canby when to arrive in Meridian to receive the paroles and equipment.[68]

When J. W. Clapp, an agent for the Confederate Treasury Department, heard in early May that the terms of surrender between Taylor and Canby included the surrender of Confederate cotton for which Clapp was responsible, he hurried to Meridian where he told Taylor that there was no authority for any such action, that Taylor's only duty with regard to that cotton was to protect it. Taylor, who probably wondered where Clapp had been for the past several months, readily granted the agent his case but admitted that the action of surrendering it was "nugatory in a legal point of view." Then, "as a friend," Taylor advised Clapp to forget the matter which could do nothing but involve the agent in a great deal of trouble. When Governor Clark in

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[64] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 274-275.
[65] *Ibid.*, 275.
[66] Telegram from Taylor, Meridian, to Gov. Clark, 30 April 1865, GP, RG 27, vol. 60, MDAF.
[67] Taylor later wrote (page 276) that he went to Citronelle on the 8th, but this is clearly incorrect. The Meridian *Clarion* of May 7, for instance, states that the meeting had been on the fourth.
[68] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 276-277.

Jackson later gave him the same advice, Clapp took the suggestion and, as he later put it, "packed up my books & vouchers" and returned to Grenada.[69]

General Maury marched his troops from Cuba, Ala., back to Meridian on May 8 and by the thirteenth had completed all the terms of the surrender.[70]

Taylor was ever afterward grateful to Union Gen. Canby for the calm, considerate manner in which he had handled his delicate duty. Taylor later described how, after he had informed them he was ready to receive them, the Federal officials "came quietly to our camp at Meridian and entered their appointed work." Canby asked his Confederate counterpart to *instruct* the Federal officers in Meridian, and Taylor was almost incredulous. "It was," marveled Taylor, "queer for one to be placed in *quasi* command of soldiers that he had been fighting for four years, to whom he had surrendered." So as not to presume too far with that course, Taylor said that he "delicately made some suggestions to these officers which they adopted." After the last man had been paroled, Taylor left Meridian for Mobile where General Canby very graciously took him and his belongings on his boat to New Orleans. It was a good thing, said Taylor, "else I must have begged my way."[71]

The general population of the county, amid the confusion and uncertainty of the moment, fell victim to their fear and frustration. Along with the inability to conceive of the former slaves' going about without hindrance or direction, there was also a widespread fear that the victorious Union would, for spite, place black garrisons in some sort of peace-keeping role. Perhaps General Canby saw in this fear the opportunity to control the local white population who surely must have seemed to him a potential source of headaches. Perhaps J. J. Shannon interviewed Canby especially on this matter. At any rate, Shannon's paper reported that the accommodating, but perhaps canny, general would not use black garrisons "through the country" unless there were attacks on public stores and government property." The *Clarion* added, probably paraphrasing Canby, "Every soldier, therefore, interested in the well-being of his people should resist all plunderers and thieves to the death."[72]

In the same issue in which the *Clarion* quoted Canby, Shannon reported "with regret" an incident—probably in the county but described merely as having happened "in a village not far away"—in which a Confederate conscript officer had been ridden on a rail.[73] There must have been a considerable number of similar events and reprisals against those associated with both conscription and impressment of private property.

Surely by this time Meridianites were accustomed to seeing plenty of uniforms about the town and in the hotels, though the presence of both blue and gray uniforms, in sizable numbers, must have seemed strange. No doubt it seemed odd also that the men in gray were often observed in an attitude of idleness, and probably often wearing a dazed, weary expression. And they kept pouring in from all about—to be paroled, or to get home, or even perhaps because they could think of nothing better to do. Perhaps some thought Meridian might offer more chances to build a future than where they had lived before the war.

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[69] J. W. Clapp, "Memoranda of Travels of J. W. Clapp, 1834-1892," 85-87; unpublished bound manuscript in Mississippi Collection, Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford.
[70] Memo from Maury to Jefferson Davis, 25 December 1867, in Jefferson Davis, *op. cit.*, 7:430.
[71] Taylor, *op. cit.*, 277-278.
[72] Meridian *Clarion*, 7 May 1865. This issue is a small, two-page edition, only nine by eleven and a half inches.
[73] *Ibid.*

Frank A. Montgomery, when he arrived in Montgomery, Ala., learned about Lincoln's assassination which, on top of the news from Appomattox, as he put it, "seemed to me to fill the cup of bitterness the south was now draining to overflowing." To this Southerner, at least, the Union President had seemed "a kind-hearted man" who could have been equally kind to the beaten South. (Montgomery was writing in 1901, and it is just possible that his opinion of Lincoln was tempered with hindsight.) When he reached Selma, Montgomery heard about Johnston's surrender to Sherman. So the war was over for him; nothing much remained to be done except get back to Mississippi. The railroad to Meridian was running only to within about twelve miles of Selma, so Montgomery and his fellows made their difficult way to the terminus and got a train for Meridian where he called on General Taylor and found him with Governor Clark. Both officials told him that there was nothing more for him to do but return home.[74]

Montgomery had reached Meridian with no money and no immediate prospects of getting any. Just by luck he met a man from his own regiment who when Montgomery asked for a loan, readily consented, explaining that one of his debtors had just paid him $17,000 in Confederate money. Montgomery could have as much of it as he wanted. He took $3,000 and advised the man to invest the rest in something—anything—because in a few days the paper would be completely worthless.[75]

The first use Montgomery made of his newly-acquired affluence was to check into the Ragsdale Hotel, its rebuilt, two-story structure more like a barn than a hostelry. In later years Montgomery could recall nothing about the meals there except that there was "genuine" coffee to be had at five dollars a cup "extra," and he had two cups of it with every meal.[76]

John S. Doughtie, of the Eufaula (Alabama) Light Artillery, also had just arrived in town. He was part of the remnant of Hood's army and had been sent from Rienzi, Miss., down the Tombigbee River to Mobile on a very small steamboat, so small in fact that there had been no room for the men to make pallets to sleep. When Mobile was evacuated, he and a number of others were sent by steamboat up to Demopolis, Ala., whence they marched to Meridian. By the time he reached that place, he was beginning to feel ill, but he made it through the parole process. What a shabby-looking town! he thought, though his own physical condition was perhaps a factor in his appraisal. With permission from his captain he checked into another of Meridian's hotels, "a two-story, rough wooden structure." Across the sidewalk in front of the inn was a board sign on which was painted "Jones House." His lodgings cost him $400 a day, but unlike Montgomery, forty-three years later he could still recall the menu: cornbread, fried bacon, and parched corn. And unlike the genuine coffee at Ragsdale's establishment, Jones was still making "coffee" from cornmeal. This was the fare for breakfast, dinner, and supper, an arrangement that simplified ordering *à la carte*. It is a grim reflection on conditions at the time to see the young soldier's comment that the food "was mighty good, and was the very best that could be obtained at that time."[77] Well, except perhaps for the "genuine" coffee at the Ragsdale House.

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[74] Montgomery, *op. cit.*, 256-258.
[75] *Ibid.*, 258. Montgomery recalled that when he repaid the loan, it cost him about ten dollars.
[76] *Ibid.*, 256-258.
[77] John S. Doughtie's letter to the editor, Meridian *Evening Star*, 11 May 1908.

R. J. Lightsey arrived from West Point, Ga., *via* Montgomery and Selma, Ala. He had been a member of the Jasper Grays, Co. F of the 16th Mississippi Regiment, the group with which J. J. Shannon of the Meridian *Clarion* had served as colonel early in the war. Like Doughtie, Lightsey found Meridian shabby looking—"The town was in ruins," he later reported. The Jones House was the only decent-looking structure he saw. As he got off the train, he encountered three old comrades from Jasper County: John McCormick, Billy Brame, and Henry Cook. They filled him in on many items of news, including that of the death of Lightsey's brother at Mobile. Cook took Lightsey to his camp and gave him a new pair of shoes; for, said Cook, "it would never do for his old neighbor's son to go home barefooted." Then Lightsey went over to the Jones House, whose proprietor, Josiah Jones, a man known for his courtesy and kindness, invited him and his friends to dine with him. They accepted and stayed until one A.M. Lightsey and two friends then took a train south to Shubuta, and the other friend took one to Vicksburg.[78]

Austin W. Smith, of the Fourth Louisiana Battalion, was in the dazed throng at Meridian. He had been in the evacuation of Mobile and, with what was left of his unit, had trekked to Meridian. They, too, were ordered to join General Johnston in North Carolina. However, Johnston's surrender halted them a few miles east of Meridian, so they stopped and retraced their steps. Smith later recalled those times: "On our arrival we were marched out on the commons, stacked our flags and arms and accoutrements, and marched back to camp. The next day we marched in a body to the office, where we were given paroles, received transportation to our homes, and, one by one, broke ranks." He had been in service four years and six days.[79]

Albert T. Goodloe came very near being surrendered with Johnston's army in North Carolina; but just before Johnston and his forces reached Greensboro, Goodloe received a transfer to the Trans-Mississippi Department. Thus, not until he reached Meridian on 9 May did he learn positively that it was all over. About all that he had to say about the situation in Meridian was, "Yankee officers were there giving paroles." Convinced that he had done nothing wrong, and apparently believing a parole suggested that he had, Goodloe disdained getting one and simply went home to North Alabama. From his memoirs one concludes that he was neither then nor afterward "reconstructed."[80]

I end this volume with the reaction to these memorable events by our old friend William Pitt Chambers, who must have been as remarkable a young man as his memoirs are interesting and informative.[81]

As Chambers waited uncertainly with his military remnant about five miles east of Meridian on Saturday, 22 April, he mused about their destination. Perhaps the only cheering aspect of his situation was his having been paid his wages for the last four months. When his unit set out marching at ten A.M., he heard that they were going just over into Alabama to the little town of Cuba, though he suspected they

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[78] Ada Christine Lightsey, *The Veteran's Story* (Meridian: Meridian News, 1899), 46-47.
[79] Austin W. Smith, "Service with the 4th Louisiana Battalion," *Confederate Veteran* (November 1911), 19:542-543.
[80] Goodloe, *op. cit.*, 124.
[81] Chambers, *op. cit.*; the following account comes from pages 376-379.

would go much farther, probably to join Johnston's army. "It seems," he wrote, "like following a 'forlorn hope' and it is with extreme reluctance that the men will go. I feel despondent, yet I will try to do my whole duty leaving the issue in the hands of Him, who 'doeth all things well.'"

After attending preaching on Saturday night, Chambers went to bed but was unable to get warm enough to sleep soundly. Roll call the next morning revealed that many more of the men had left the little army during the night, perhaps as many as three hundred. The rest were supposed to resume marching at six A.M., but it was nine before they got started. During the march Chambers, always intelligently curious about his surroundings, was amused to see that one of the little villages through which they passed was named Why Not. But amusement was rare, for the land over which they were marching looked desolate; and all the while their group continued to shrink, like ice in warm water.

They reached Cuba where, with members of the meager force idling about glumly, Chambers resumed recording his musings:

> It seems to be a settled fact that the days of the Confederacy are numbered. Hard as it is to say it, *we have failed.* It is painful—it is humiliating to write the record—after all, we must give it up, and own that *we are whipped!* A thousand reflections are suggested by the facts.
>
> The people of the South are *unworthy* of freedom, as we sought it. Once, it seemed we had the men and means to achieve our independence, but a needless sacrifice of the one and a prodigal waste of the other, exhausted both in a short time. Two hundred thousand of our best men, it is said, have perished, and for *what?* To give the world another proof that man is incapable of self[-]government. Right here in America, we have made the most stupendous failure that has marked the history of our race.... In less than a century, we have miserably failed, in theory and in practice. But I have the blues tonight.

On Friday, May 5, Chambers and his fellows heard officially that they had been surrendered, though they had not heard the particulars of General Taylor's trip down to Citronelle, Ala. And Chambers wrote further about his situation:

> Thus ends the Confederacy! I have loved it well and given my best service to establish it among the nations of the earth. But it has all been in vain, so far as national independence is concerned. There are doubtless lessons in it for our good, as well as for the good of all the people in America, and I seem to realize more and more that God's hand is in it, and that He has ordered it well.

In Cuba, Ala., on Sunday, 7 May, the men were ordered quite suddenly at five A.M. to be on the road by seven for Meridian. Most of them had no intention of carrying their weapons any longer and began piling them on the ground or on ordnance wagons. Others leaned them against trees along the route of march. What a sight it must have been as these bedraggled, and doubtless unspeakably tired and spiritually-drained men made their way into Meridian, getting there at eleven A.M. on the 8th. Upon arrival Chambers was given the duty of collecting "all the guns" of his

brigade. They totaled three. He and two other men carried this arsenal to the command officer's tent, and Chambers "politely informed him" that these represented the weaponry of their brigade. Where would he have them stack arms? The officer smiled and pointed.

> And so [wrote Chambers in his journal] the war is over. When I consider all that I have seen and heard, all that I have learned of men and motives, I am constrained to ask myself 'What is it all for?' I have learned things of men that I wish I had never known, and I have learned things of God, that I trust will secure my entrance into the rest that remaineth for His people.

End of volume one

Appendix A

From New Orleans, La., *Times-Picayune*, 18 July 1937, page 18:

Copeland's Gold Stirs Interest of Meridian Citizens

Deeply hidden beneath a morass of shifting sands and an outer-covering of second growth timber, amply provided by nature at a point where Okatibbee and Sowashee creeks join together near Arundel Springs, lies what records and a map indicate as the $80,000 Spanish hoard of gold that once belonged to the famous outlaw leader Will Copeland. The site of the buried gold is six miles south of Meridian.

Placed in this spot which has been identified by Copeland himself as being the place where he hid his loot, every effort to recover the ill-gotten gold in the past 80 years has failed. Nature has apparently claimed it for her own, but its mysterious fascination still haunts treasure seekers today.

Copeland first came into prominence in early 1849, as the chief lieutenant of the infamous Merrill [*sic, i.e.,* John Murrell] gang, which operated from St. Louis throughout the Mississippi Valley. Copeland was in direct command of an area which began at Mobile, ran into the central sections of Mississippi and to the north of Meridian. He was finally arrested by law enforcement officers on charges of arson and murder, following years of banditry and holdup practices. Taken to New Augusta [i.e., Augusta], he remained in jail there for six months, but not before he had written a book called "The Confessions of Copeland," a volume which allegedly implicated a number of East Mississippi's best known citizens with his depredations. Several hundred copies of the book were printed, but in some mysterious manner they were immediately suppressed, and within a few short months almost every volume had been destroyed.

While it was believed Copeland had hidden large sums of money in some section of the state, it was not until 1891 the first clue was found. In that year two men who called themselves "Malard" appeared at a little sawmill near Arundel Springs, then operated by the late Judge G. Q. Hall. Both men, according to information handed down by Mr. Hall, "were good workers, and on being hired ran the mill to perfection."

For a period of some six months the two men lived in a small cabin near Arundel Springs, spending most of their spare time coon hunting and fishing, and frequently inquiring about the east-west line which had been run across the state by the federal government in 1843. More often the two men, in company with several youths and negroes, spent their time near where Hognose creek runs into Okatibbee creek south of the Arundel Springs railroad station. It was noticed at the time that the men never came to Meridian except at night and "then to throw a bender" on cheap whiskey, but none of the residents thought much of their actions because of their working ability.

It was in this same year of 1891 a New Orleans and Northeastern railroad train was robbed and held up by two bandits near Picayune. Efforts to trace the bandits led to nowhere and the railroad company finally called

Pinkerton's detectives into the case. In December of 1891 agents of the Pinkerton company came to Judge Hall's law office in Meridian and asked him if he had seen two men of a "certain description," whom they called "our friends." They subsequently showed Judge Hall photographs of the men in question and Mr. Hall immediately identified them as the Malards, "my millhands." In ignorance of the strangers' purpose, Judge Hall sent a negro to Arundel Springs to the Malards, advising them that "some friends are coming out to see you today."

The Pinkerton detectives arrived at Arundel Springs about two hours later only to find the Malards had disappeared. Less than three months later one of the two men was shot and killed at New Iberia [La.], and was positively identified as a man named "Bush," wanted in connection with the recent railroad train robbery. The second man's whereabouts remained a mystery.

In a subsequent search of the cabin in which the Malards had lived, Judge Hall uncovered a copy of "The Confessions of Copeland" and a map of a quarter section near Arundel Springs. Judge Hall instantly recognized a marked area as where Okatibbee and Sowashee creeks joined. On the map were these words, said to have been written in Will Copeland's own handwriting:

"The treasure contains $80,000 in Spanish gold and is buried where three beech trees and one magnolia make a diamond. Three feet from the ground a staple and ring is [sic] driven into one of the beech trees."

Aided by the late Morris Brandon, then surveyor for the city of Meridian, Judge Hall soon found the spot. Ten inches underneath the bark of one of the beech trees was found the staple and ring. A stump of the fourth tree in the "diamond" was uncovered. Excavation operations were immediately gotten under way, but at 10 feet down quicksands were discovered.

"A long rod stuck in the sand struck something solid," says the report of that time.

According to the map left by the Malards in their desperate attempt to escape the strong arm of the law, the money was left in four iron pots. During the time of operations two written notes were found attached to nearby trees, reading as follows:

"If you get this you will be instantly killed as we are watching you."

"Old man you look in vain."

In full possession of the Copeland map, the Malards had failed to discover the loot because of their inability to find the old federal survey line, which ran across the Sowashee-Okatibbee junction and not across Hognose creek.

While the operations were being carried on another incident rose to cause deep concern to Judge Hall and his friends. "The Confessions of Copeland" and the treasure key had been placed in Judge Hall's office safe in Meridian. He came to his office one morning shortly after the work had begun to find his safe blown open, the book and map stolen.

Judge Hall, undeterred by these threats, kept up his efforts to go below the quicksand beds, but failed even with the use of a small steam pressure pump. Further efforts to find the gold ended until 1902, when the late Tom

Newell, Meridianite, offered to do the job for $3500. Judge Hall decided against putting up this sum of money at the time. So far as is known, no other attempts have been made to find the fabulous sum. It is still at the junction of Sowashee and Okatibbee creeks, waiting for treasure hunters.

Note: The book referred to in this article was written by James Robert Soda Pitts, who had access to Copeland in jail, and discussed the latter's criminal career, during the months when the outlaw was held prisoner. Pitts later wrote his book based on these "confessions" and published the first version about a year after Copeland's execution. Almost at once, and during many coming years, Pitts found himself in legal trouble with various individuals over the book's publication. The first edition, published about 1858, has almost completely disappeared. (Years ago I saw a record of one copy that had been long before sold at auction.) Other editions, with some variation in title, have appeared over the years until at least as recently as 1980. (The author)

Appendix B: List of Saloons in Lauderdale County, 1847-1865. (Listed in *Minutes, Board of Police*, Lauderdale County.)

Ashburn, J. C.—1859, Marion Station, in house formerly occupied by John R. Johnson and subsequently in house formerly occupied by James M. Piggott.

Bains, L. B.—1854-1858, Marion, ran tavern in the Bains Hotel that was formerly owned by W. W. Welch; hotel sold to William S. Patton in January 1858.

Bartle, J. G.—1852, Daleville, in house formerly occupied by William S. Ragland.

Bishop, W. L.—1860, Meridian, in house formerly occupied by F. (T.?) H. Thompson "as a store house."

Brooke, James R.—1849-1850, Daleville, "house of private entertainment."

Brower, Franklin P.—1848-1849, town given as "Franklinville."

Bruner, (Oliver T.?) and Till (David?)—1849, Marion, in house formerly occupied by Samuel W. Chapman.

Bruner, Oliver T.—1857, Marion, license renewal for business already established "in the house now occupied by himself" as liquor store.

Calhoun, R. N.—1851-1852, Daleville, first in "shed room adjoining Geo. Rawson's house," and then (1852) in his "house of private entertainment."

Calhoun, W. G.—1856, Marion Station.

Canter, Levi—1850, Lauderdale Springs.

Canterbury, Isaac—1852, Lauderdale Springs, agent for Mathew D. Canterbury, allowed "to remove his retail grocery…to the house now occupied by H. W. Roberts on lot no. three."

Chapman, Samuel W.—1848, Marion.

Chester, John F.—1848, Marion, inn and tavern.

China, A.—1860, Meridian, inn and tavern (Meridian House).

Daniels, J. (?) W. (?)—1856, Lauderdale Springs.

Davis, William A.—1852, Marion, "[liquor] in any quantity…in the house formerly occupied by R. N. Calhoun."

Dennis, William R.—1853-1854, 1858-1859, Lauderdale Springs, tavern and inn and "house of private entertainment."

Dobbs, William C.—1847-1849, Daleville, "[liquor] in any quantity."

Eason, Isaac (?) N.—1858, Lauderdale Springs, in house formerly occupied by Hudson and Lewis.

Evans, Sylvanus—1851, Lauderdale Springs, in house formerly kept by H. W. Roberts.

Farmer, Calvin—1848, Sageville.

Fisher, Southy—1849, Marion, inn and tavern.

Gaddis, Benjamin F.—1852, Sageville.

Gaddis, C. M.—1854, Paulding Road near Sageville.

Gaddis, Thomas F.—1853, Sageville, sold liquor "in less quantity than one gallon."

Gaines and Mahan—1847, Lauderdale Springs, a renewal of license.

Gaines, William M.—1848-1849, Lauderdale Springs; 1848 was license to sell "in less quantity than one gallon," in 1849 to sell "in any quantity."

Gallaspy, Garland M. (?)—1847-1849, 1856-1857, Chunkyville; in 1857 the license specified for selling liquor "in less quantity than one gallon."

Gray, A. E.—1853-1854, Chunkyville, "in house formerly occupied by John G. Gardner.

Gill and Bailey—1859, Marion, had been operating earlier.

Hall, William G.—1850, Marion, in house formerly occupied by Stokes & Raney as a tavern.

Hamrick, H. G.—1856, Chunkyville.

Hill, James P.—1853-1854, Daleville, "house of private entertainment' in house formerly occupied by R. N. Calhoun.

Hobbs and McGrew—1852, 1854, Lauderdale Springs, allowed liquor to be sold "in any quantity" in the house formerly occupied as saloon by D. K. Jenks.

Hudson, D. M.—1856, Lauderdale Springs; in 1857 was partner with R. J. Allison.

Jackson, C. S.—1856, 1858-1860, Marion Station, inn and tavern.

Jenks, D. K.—1852, Lauderdale Springs, licensed to sell liquor "in any tuantity" in house formerly occupied by T. H. Jenks.

Jenks, T. H.—1851, Lauderdale Springs, retailed liquor and ran inn and tavern.

Jenks and McGrew—1852, Lauderdale Springs, inn and tavern.

Johnson, John R.—1857 in Marion Station but in September he was in Meridian, where his license was revoked in November but restored in May 1858; he was back in Marion Station 1858-1859, first in house owned by R. Maxey and then in his own house known as the Railroad Exchange.

Johnson, John R., and J. H. Willis—1857, Marion Station, "[house of] public entertainment or tavern."

Johnson, W. C.—1864, Meridian, inn or tavern "in the house now occupied by him for that purpose."

Jones, H., and S. Lloyd—1859-1860, Marion Station, "eating house," moved in 1860 to corner opposite C. S. Jackson's.

Jones, Josiah—1864, Meridian, inn and tavern "in the House now occupied by him for that purpose."

Jones, William—1849, Marion, in house formerly occupied by John R. McCann.

Jones, William H.—1858, Marion Station, inn and tavern in house formerly occupied by man named Walton.

Jones, W. H., and A. M. Greer—1858-1859, Marion Station, first in house formerly occupied by Wilie (?) Johnson.

Lewis, Thomas—1852, at Crossroads on Daleville and Murphy's Bluff Rd., and the Painville (?) or Sulphur Springs Rd. "near James Agnew."

Lukes, George R.—1858, Lauderdale Springs, inn and tavern.

McCann, John R.—1848, Marion.

McMillan, James A.—1850-1851, Lauderdale Springs; in 1850 ran an inn and tavern in house formerly occupied by W. P. Hobbs, and in 1851 a "house of private entertainment."

Maxey, Robert W.—1857, Marion Station.

Mayfield, Brice M.—1848-1849, 1856, Marion, inn and tavern.

Mayfield, William, and George W. Westbrooke—1853, Marion, in house formerly occupied by Till and Klutts.

Merrell and Son—1858, Lockhart, inn and tavern.

Patton, William S., Sr.—1849, 1853, 1857, 1860, Lauderdale Springs, inn and tavern; 1860, Marion, inn and tavern.

Petty, George B.—1855, 1859, Marion, "house of private entertainment."

Philyaw, Joshua D.—1857, 1859, Marion; 1859, in house formerly occupied by A. G. Lamb; license revoked in August.

Pringle, Abraham K.—1851-1853, Whynot, to sell "in any quantity less than one gallon."

Rawson, Charles—1851, no town mentioned, license revoked and money "refunded to his representative, he having become (insane) [*sic*, parentheses in original] since the issuance of said license."

Raney, Herbert H.—1848, 1851, 1855, Marion; record specifies inn and tavern in 1851 and 1855.

Roberts, Hiram W.—1847-1850, Lauderdale Springs.

Roberts, Thomas L.—1856-1857, Lauderdale Springs.

Runnels, D. M.—1852, Marion.

Sellers, G. W.—1857, Lockhart.

Shelton, John A.—1849, 1851, Sageville.

Shedd, Jeptha—1864, Marion Station, to sell "in a house now putting up [*sic*] for that purpose"; in August was licensed to remove to Meridian to retail "in a house to be built on the Burton [Hotel] lot"; the Burton Hotel had been destroyed by Sherman's raid earlier that year.

Smith, B. B.—1854, 1858-1860, Lauderdale Springs, first (1854) as inn and tavern "in house belonging to McGrew & Co.," and then to retail liquor.

Smotherman, Fell (?), and John Baldwin—1860, Lauderdale Springs Station, in house built by him for that purpose.

Stiles and Mimdell (?)—1852, Chunkyville, to retail in any quantity less than one gallon."

Thompson, Joseph A.—1858-1860, Marion Station, "house of private entertainment or tavern."

Till, David—1860, Marion.

Till, David, and J. W. Bailey—1857-1858, Marion.

Till, David, and David Klutts—1851-1852, Marion.

Tucker, William—1864, Meridian, "in a house to be built…on a lot now owned by Joseph Eakens."

Vick, J. A.—1860, Lockhart, in house formerly occupied by George A. Sellers.

Walker, J. P., and E. M. Dozier—1858, Lauderdale Springs.

Walker, John R.—1857, Lauderdale Station, tavern.

Walker, L. J.—1858, Lauderdale Station.

Walker, Samuel J.—1859-1860, Lauderdale Station.

Warren, Green—1857, Chunkyville, to sell liquor "in a less quantity than one gallon."

Welch, Walter—1853, Marion, inn and tavern.

Wilkinson, John L.—1848-1849, 1851, Daleville.
Williamson, H. l.—1853, Chunkyville.
Winningham, V. V.—1854, Daleville, in house formerly occupied by John G. Bartle.

Appendix C: Lauderdale County Soldiers in the Mexican War.
"Lauderdale Volunteers," Company F, 2nd Mississippi Regiment.
Data extracted from National Archives records on microfilm.

Adams, Jackson. Joined as private at age 19, in Scott Co., Miss. Died at Camp Walnut Springs, near Monterey, Mexico, 25 Apr 47.

Adams, John. Enrolled as private, age 22, on 27 Sep 47 at Holly Springs, Miss. He was perhaps transferred to this company, because a note on one return seems to say "Feb. 1848 Gain recr't from Regt. Depot 25th Feb." Mustered out 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Anderson, Hartley. Enrolled as private, age 23, 25 Jan 47 at New Orleans, La. Mustered out at Vicksburg, Miss., 11 July 48.

Banks, Paul C. Enrolled as private, age 19, on 25 Jan 47 at New Orleans, La. Died 25 Feb 47 on way to Mexico aboard the ship *Prentiss*.

Bankston, Thomas J. Joined as private, age 23, on 2 Jan 47 in Jasper County, Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 has note "Sick." MR for Jan/Feb 48 has note "Sick." Report dated 2 Mar 48 shows him "Absent sick [at] Saltillo." Mustered out 11 July 48, Vicksburg, Miss.

Barefield, Elias. Joined as private, age 27, in Lauderdale Co., 10 Dec 46. Mustered out 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Barnes, Jasper N. Joined as private, age 22, on 24 Dec 46 in Kemper Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Sick." Discharged 25 May 47 at Camp Walnut Springs, Monterey, Mexico, on physician's certificate of physical disability.

Bartle, John G. Enrolled as private, age 18, on 2 Apr 48 at Marion, Miss. But this was too late to be of service, and a note says, "Not taken upon rolls of Regt." He was mustered out of service on 25 July 48 at New Orleans, La.

Bennett, Thomas. Joined as private, age 42, on 2 Jan 47 in Rankin Co., Miss. Muster roll for Sep/Oct 47 says, "On furlough as smith in the artillery camp at Buena Vista." In Sep 47 he was on duty in quartermaster department of the Dragoons. In Nov and Dec 47 he was on duty in the quartermaster dept. by order of Col. Charles Clark. In Mar and Apr 48 he was "on extra duty from March 1, 48 order Col. Clark." Mustered out of service on 11 July 48, at Vicksburg, Miss.

Blum, George. Joined as private, age 34, on 3 Jan 47 in Scott Co., Miss. Reported AWOL on 25 May 48. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Boutwell, Chapel S. Joined as private, age 20, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Sick." Mustered out at Vicksburg, Miss., 11 July 48.

Bradley, Joseph. Joined as private, age 27, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Deserted at New Orleans, La., on 25 Jan 47.

Brooks, William. Joined as private, age 22, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Sick." Detached as hospital attendant in June and July 47. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Busby, George W. Joined as private, age 19, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Absent sick in Matamoras from March 14, 1847." Died in Matamoras on 12 Apr 47.

Busby, James. Enrolled as private, age 23, on 5 Apr 48 at Marion, Miss., but this was too late to join the regiment. Mustered out on 25 July 48 at New Orleans, La.

Buson, Samuel. Enrolled as private, age 21, on 5 Apr 48 at Marion, Miss., but this was too late to join the regiment. Mustered out on 25 July 48 at New Orleans, La.

Calhoun, Lochlin. Joined as private, age 18, on 10 Dec 47 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Died in camp at New Orleans, La., 21 Jan 47.

Calhoun, Richmond N. Joined as private, age 21, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Sick." MR for May/June 47 says he was promoted to sergeant on 16 June 47, to fill vacancy left by promotion of William D. Eastland. Described on roll of 17 Mar 48 as "Absent sick [at] Mazapil," and on roll of 10 Apr 48 as "Absent on furlough." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Carlile [*sic*], Ellet (or Elliot). Joined as private, age 22, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. A "detachment" muster roll for 31 Jan 47 describes him as "Sick in hospital at N[ew] O[rleans] Barracks, La." MR for Mar/Apr 48 says, "Hospital attendant since April 13, 48." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Chambers, James P. Joined as corporal, age 19, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Discharged at New Orleans, La., on 29 Jan 47 on surgeon's certificate of disability. Rejoined company on 29 Feb 48. Muster roll for Jan/Feb 48 says, "Heretofore reported, by mistake, as discharged on Jan. 29, 1847 at New Orleans. He had received twenty-one dollars, on being mustered in, for six months clothing." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Chaney, Archibald. Joined as 2nd lieutenant, no age stated, on 3 Jan 47 in Newton Co., Miss. Absent sick in Matamoras, Mexico, as of 14 Mar 47; resigned at Matamoras on 1 June 47. Record dated 15 (?) Apr 47 declared Chaney "incapable of performing his duty on account of feebleness of constitution, still further impaired by a recent attack of small pox [*sic*]." He tendered his resignation in letter dated 15 Apr 47, Matamoras, Mexico. Letter from Col. Cushing, commanding the 2nd Regiment, dated Matamoras, Mexico, 15 Apr 47, gave permission to Chaney to return home "to await the decision of the Commanding General." On 26 May 47 Chaney, at Decatur, Miss., wrote to Col. Cushing to say that he had heard nothing from Gen. Zachary Taylor and thus had "taken the liberty of addressing you on the subject [of my resignation] as I wish no reflection to be cast on my character hereafter either as a citizen or a soldier. I shall therefore feel obliged if you will have instructions forwarded to me here as to the issue of my application. I am slowly recovering my health allthough [*sic*] the enclosed certificate [from a physician named Evans] will show [that I am] unasble to perform military duty." He added that if his resignation was not accepted, he would return to his company. [No further records suggest his resignation was accepted.]

Cheesman, Joseph H. Joined as private (and musician), age 35, on 10 Dec 46 in Clarke Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "On detached service as stewart [*sic*] in regiment hospital," i.e., the service as hospital steward was from 7 Apr to 24 May 47. Served as company cook in Oct 47. MR for July/Aug 47 says, "Changed from musician Aug 31." MR for Sep/Oct 47 says, "Detailed baking bread for the company." Discharged at Buena Vista, Mexico, on 6 Dec 47 because of physical disability.

Coe, Ezra. Joined as private, age 18, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Absent sick in Matamoras from Mar. 14, 1847." Shown also as absent sick in May and June 47, in Matamoras, Mexico. Mustered out on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

Connell, John. Joined as private, age 40, on 2 Jan 47 in Hinds Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 describes him as "Sick." From Aug-Nov 47 he served as company's officers' cook. Absent sick in Saltillo, Mexico, in Feb and Mar 48. Mustered out on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

Cook, James J. (I.?). Joined as private, age 36, on 20 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster rolls for July-Dec 47 show him in confinement by the provost guard. Mustered out on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

Cross, Franklin A. Joined as private, age 24, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Sick." Promoted to 2nd corporal on 14 June 47. MR for July/Aug 47 says, "Sick in hospital." Discharged for physical disability on 1 Oct 47 at Buena Vista, Mexico "by order of General Wool."

Cross, William J. (I.?). Joined as private, age 20, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Sick," and MR for July/Aug 47 says, "Sick in hospital." Shown as regimental hospital attendant in Sep 47. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Daniel, William J. Joined as captain, age 29, on 12 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Present, but sick, in quarters in Aug 47; absent sick at Saltillo in Sep 47; present but sick in Nov-Dec 47. Absent at Saltillo on 25 Mar 48 in order to give testimony at court martial. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Davis, Anderson. Joined Company B as private, age 20, on 10 Dec 46 in Marshall Co., Miss.; transferred to Company F, Lauderdale Volunteers, on either 29 Feb or 1 Mar 48. He was sick in Canargo (?) on 26 Mar 47. He was absent sick in Apr 47, and absent on 28 Apr 47 to serve as "escort to [wagon] train" in Saltillo. Mustered out on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

Davis, Benjamin E. Joined as private, age 28, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Sick." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Davis, John H. Joined as private on 8 Jan 48 at New Orleans, La.; but another record seems to say that he joined on 31 Dec 47 "[a]board transport"—i.e., on a steamboat. Mustered out at Vicksburg, Miss., on 11 July 48 when his age was given as 22.

Dozier, Edwin M. Joined as private, age 37, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Easterling, Simeon. Joined as private, age 20, on 2 Jan 47 in Jasper Co., Miss. During period between 2 Jan 47 and for a while after arrival in New Orleans, La., he was sick in a

hospital in New Orleans. During July 47 he did duty in quartermaster dept. Muster roll for Nov/Dec 47 shows him sick. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Eastland, James. Joined as private, age 19, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 shows him sick. Appointed 1st sergeant on 2 Sep 47, replacing Edward B. Shelton, who was promoted. Shown as sick also on MR for Sep/Oct 47. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Eastland, William D. Joined as 3rd sergeant, age 20, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Promoted to 2nd lieutenant on 16 June 47, in place of Archibald Chaney, who resigned. Eastland resigned also, effective 31 Aug 47. (Some records say he was honorably discharged on 8 Aug, though that is perhaps the date when the process began.) A letter (dated Buena Vista, 2 Aug 47) requested that he be discharged: "Excellent Sir, Owing to ill health and the seeming improbability of a recovery in this climate, I hereby through you tender to the Executive of the State of Mississippi my *resignation* as Additional Second Lieutenant in Volunteer Company F, Second regiment Mississippi Rifles. In doing this, sir, I act contrary to my feelings, but learning that a furlough could not be granted me from Head Quarters, I am necessarily compelled to take this step." By Special Orders 613, Headquarters, Buena Vista, 3 Aug 47, his resignation was accepted and he was granted leave of absence "to report to Major General [Zachary] Taylor for his discharge from the service of the United States." Surgeon Thomas N. Love, in an affidavit dated Buena Vista, 2 Aug 47, said: "I hereby certify that I have carefully examined this officer whom I have [had] under treatment since the 24th of June last, for intermittent fever, and diarrhoea, which has [*sic*] reduced him very much. He is therefore unable to perform the duties of his office. And it is further my opinion that from the present state of his health he will not be able to resume the duties of his office in less than a month, and perhaps his health may still decline, and by change of air, climate, [and] water he will recover more promptly." No information about his mustering out of service.

Evans, William. Apparently never a member of Daniel's company, but record shows that he enrolled , as private, age 20, at Marion, Miss., on 2 Apr 48. It was too late for him to join the company.

Folly (Foley?), Asa. Joined as private, age 40, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. He died in a hospital in New Orleans, La., on 24 Jan 47.

Ford, William T. Joined as corporal, age 20, on 24 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. He died in camp at New Orleans, La., on 22 Jan 47.

Fowler, Adrian. Joined as private, age 18, on 28 Dec 46, in Newton Co., Miss. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Francis, James A. Joined as private, age 25, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Died in hospital at New Orleans, La., 23 Jan 47.

Futch, Isam (Isom?). Joined as 4th corporal, age 20, on 30 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Reported on muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 as "Sick." Discharged at Camp Walnut Springs, Monterey, Mexico, on 7 May 47, on surgeon's certificate of disability.

Gardner, John. Joined as private, age 23, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Died in hospital in New Orleans, La., on 27 Jan 47.

Gibson, Amos. Joined as private, age 18, on 30 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Muster roll for July/Aug 47 reports him "Sick." One return shows Gibson on 25 Mar 48 as escorting a wagon train to Saltillo. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Gossett, Barnett. Joined as private on 27 Sep 47 in Holly Springs, Miss. No age stated at this time, but age given as 23 when he was mustered out of service. Apparently joined Daniel's Company F in Feb 48, from what was called the "Regimental Depot." He was mustered out of service on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Gray, James W. Joined as private, age 26, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Promoted to 2nd sergeant on 10 Apr 47, in place of William D. Joyner, who had died. Mustered out of service on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

Guest, Isaac N. Joined as private on 19 Oct 47 in Aberdeen, Miss. Apparently entered the Lauderdale Volunteers from the "Regimental Depot" on 25 Feb 48. Mustered out at age 18 on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss. These records also include a letter, dated 18 Jan 1917, from the Adjutant General, to Mr. J. Leonard Murdoch, First National Bank, Chino, Calif. Murdoch had apparently made a claim and was also asking to receive pertinent records himself. He was told that "records cannot be furnished to a claimant or an attorney to aid in the prosecution of a pension claim…for all the evidence the records afford bearing on any such claim is promptly communicated to the Commissioner of Pensions upon his call therefore."

Gynn, Chisley R. Joined as private, age 18, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 shows him "Sick." Discharged at Camp Walnut Springs, Monterey, Mexico, on 7 May 47, on surgeon's certificate of disability.

Hall, James. Joined as private, age 20, on 30 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 shows him "Sick." Mustered out of service on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Harper, William E. Joined as corporal on 25 Jan 47 at New Orleans, La. Promoted to 3rd corporal on 11 Mar 47, for place vacated by Robert T. Parrish, who had resigned. Shown on muster roll for May/June 47 as "Sick. Harper died on 20 July 47 at Camp Buena Vista, Mexico.

Hill, John H. Never assigned to any company, but he enrolled and was mustered into service, at age 19, on 2 Apr 48 in Marion, Miss.

Hutchins, Nathan. Joined as private on 25 Jan 47 at New Orleans, La. Reported AWOL on 25 May 48. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss., at age 40.

Johnson, James T. Joined as private, age 25, on 5 Jan 47 at Vicksburg, Miss. Deserted in New Orleans, La., on 25 Jan 47.

Johnson, Wiley B. Joined as private, age 19, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Promoted to 1st corporal on 7 May 47. Mustered out of service on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Joiner, William D. Joined as 2nd sergeant, age 21, on 28 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Died on 8 Apr 47 in Camp Walnut Springs, near Monterey, Mexico.

Jones, James. Joined as private, age 20, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Laird, Eli. Joined as private, age 19, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Having reported sick on 14 Mar 47 at Matamoras, Mexico, he was later erroneously thought to have died there on 10 Apr 47. Apparently, he was left sick in Matamoras but caught up with the company on 10 Feb 48. He was mustered out on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

Laird, Hiram. Joined as private, age 23, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Died at camp in New Orleans, La., on 27 Jan 47.

Laird, William D. Joined as 1st lieutenant on 12 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Discharged at Camargo, Mexico, 26 Mar 47 on surgeon's certificate of disability—Laird had resigned the previous day. No record of his death appears in these records, but the Natchez, Miss. *Weekly Courier and Journal*, of 9 June 47, reported that he had died. The paper, probably in error, gave his name as *M*. D. Laird. These records do not state Laird's age.

Lamb, Samuel. Joined as private, age 20, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. He died aboard the ship *Prentiss* on 7 Feb 47, though a record made when the company were mustered out gives the date as Feb *9*.

Leach, John R. Joined as private, age 37, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Reported sick at Matamoras, Mexico, on 8 Apr 47. He apparently was left there and, though still sick, rejoined the company on 7 June 47. Muster roll for July-Oct 47 shows him as still sick, and he was discharged at Buena Vista, Mexico, on 6 Dec 47, for physical disability. A record made when the company were mustered out gives Leach's discharge date as Dec *3*.

Lucky, William R. Joined as private, age 19, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. He died at sea aboard the ship *Prentiss* on 9 Feb 47 *en route* to Mexico.

McDonald, James M. Joined as private, age 32, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Mustered out on 11 July 48 in Vicksburg, Miss.

McDonald, Pendleton. Joined as private, age 33, on 1 June 48 at Marion, Miss., but too late to serve with the Lauderdale Volunteers.

McKinney, William. Joined as private, age 32, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Reported on 8 Apr 47 as sick in Matamoras, Mexico, where he died on 1 June 47.

Melvin, John J. (I.?) Joined as 4th sergeant, age 23, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 shows him as "Sick." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Merritt, John. Joined as private, age 42, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Newsom, John. Joined as private, age 43, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 shows him as "Sick." Died on 29 Sep 47 at Buena Vista, Mexico. Widow's name was Tabitha Newsom. She appeared before the Lauderdale County authorities with a true copy of a document from the Dept. of the Interior, declaring her right to receive "five years half pay at the rate of of [*sic*] three dollars and fifty cents per month commencing on the 29th day of September 1847 and terminating on the 29th day of September 1852, and in case of the death or marriage of the said

widow before the expiration of said five years, the half pay for the remainder of the time shall go to the children of the said decedent." Tabitha Newsom signed with her mark.

Osborn, Ludy (or Lewdy) B. Joined as private, age 27, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Died at Matamoras, Mexico, on 13 Mar 47.

Overstreet, John. Joined as private, age 19, on 30 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Reported sick in Matamoras, Mexico, on 14 Mar 47. Was reported absent in Apr 47 and apparently had returned to the U. S. At any rate, he died in Jackson, Miss., on 3 May 47.

Owens, Ethedreal. Joined as private, age 23, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 reported him "Sick." MR for July/Aug 47 says, "Sick in hospital." MR for Sep/Oct 47 reports him "Sick." Discharged for physical disability on 6 Dec 47 at Buena Vista, Mexico.

Owens, William. Joined as private and "fifer," age 26, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. On muster roll for period between mustering and 31 Jan 47 he was reported as sick in a hospital at his barracks, New Orleans, La. MR for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Absent sick in New Orleans from Jan. 27, 1847." Apparently never went to Mexico, and he was discharged at New Orleans on 30 Apr 47, on a surgeon's certificate of disability.

Pamplin, Robert H. Joined as private, age 42, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Reported sick in Matamoras, Mexico, on 14 Mar 47, and died there on May 7.

Parrish (or Parish), Robert T. Joined as private, age 25, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Promoted to corporal on 22 Feb 47, in place of William T. Ford, deceased. Reduced to private rank on 11 Mar 47. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Phillips, Lorenzo D. Joined as private, age 32, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Died in hospital at New Orleans, La., on 20 Jan 47.

Price, Thomas W. Joined as private, age 33, on 1 Apr 48 at Marion, Miss. He joined too late to be taken into the regiment, and was mustered out on 25 July 48 at New Orleans, La.

Pritchet, Bryant S. Joined as private, age 19, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Reported on muster roll for July/Aug 47 as "Sick." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Pritchet, William. Joined as private, age 25, on 27 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 31 Jan 47 says, "Sick in hospital in N[ew] O[rleans] barracks, La." He died in that hospital on 26 Feb 47.

Pugh, David R. Joined as private, age 21, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Discharged in Camargo, Mexico, on 26 Mar 47 on basis of surgeon's certificate of disability.

Pugh, Edworth. Joined as private, age 42, on 1 Apr 48 at Marion, Miss. Joined too late to be taken into regiment, and was mustered out on 25 July 48 at New Orleans.

Reyes (Rages?), Magdalena. There is only one record for this "matron," or female nurse, on National Archives microfilm. Perhaps she was a local Mexican hired to treat the sick.

Robertson, William J. Joined as private, age 20, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Promoted to corporal on 7 May 47. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Robbins, George W. Joined as private, age 27, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Sick." Discharged on 10 Jan 48 at Buena Vista, Mexico, on basis of surgeon's certificate of disability.

Scott, William. Joined as private, no age stated, on 25 Jan 47 at New Orleans, La. Died at sea on 20 Feb 47 aboard ship *Prentiss*.

Shelton, Edward B. Joined as 1st (or orderly) sergeant, age 26, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says "Sick." Promoted to 2nd lieutenant on 2 Sep 47 in place of William D. Eastland, who had resigned. In Mar 48 was acting adjutant for regiment. Was on furlough in Apr 48 and resigned on 15 May 48.

Shope, Thomas J. Joined as private, age not stated (but see following), on 13 Sep 47 at Farmington (no state given). Mustered out at age 23 on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Simms, William. Joined as private, age 19, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Reported sick in Matamoras, Mexico, on 14 Mar 47, and so reported through MR of Nov/Dec 47. MRs for Jan-Apr 48 say, "Arrived [in Buena Vista?] from Matamoras, Feb. 10, 1848." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Smith, William A. Joined as private, age 18, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Sick." Was absent on 25 Mar 48 to escort a wagon train at Saltillo, Mexico, and on 26 May 48 as escort at Cedras, Mexico. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Smithwick, Edmund W. Joined as private, age 22, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 46 says, "Sick." Was discharged at Camp Walnut Springs, Monterey, Mexico, on 25 May 47, on basis of surrgeon's certificate of disability.

Sones, Thomas S. Joined as private, age 19, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 reports him "Sick." Discharged on 25 May 47 at Camp Walnut Springs, Monterey, Mexico, on basis of surgeon's certificate of disability.

Steele, Jesse G. Joined as 2nd lieutenant , age 29, on 12 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. On 8 Apr 47 promoted to 1st lieutenant to fill vacancy left by resignation of William D. Laird. In July 48 was reported as having been absent since 28 Feb 48 on recruiting service. He was mustered out on 25 July 48, place not stated. Following note on his mustering-out form: "Retained in service till the date hereon as in command of this detachment."

Stephens, Joseph H. Joined as 2nd corporal, age 32, on 24 Dec 46 in Kemper Co., Miss. Reported sick in Matamoras, Mexico, on 14 Mar 47, and reported absent the following month. Resigned as corporal on 14 June 47. Muster roll for Sep/Oct 47 says "Sick." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Stroud, Thomas J. (I.?) Joined as private, age 22, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "On detached service as an attendant in Regimental Hospital." Listed as "Sick" on muster rolls for May-Aug 47. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Trussell, Andrew J. Joined as private, age 24, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Promoted to 2nd lieutenant on 10 Apr 47 in place of Jesse G. Steele, who was promoted. Muster rolls for May-Dec 47 show him sick for at least part of that time at Saltillo, Mexico. A letter in this file, dated Headquarters Buena Vista, 26 Jan 48, allowed Trussell "leave of absence for two weeks to visit Saltillo for the benefit of his health."

Tyson, James C. Joined as private, age 24, on 4 Jan 47 in Jackson (Miss.?). Muster roll for Mar/Apr 48 says, "Absent sick at Parrai [*sic*—elsewhere has *Paras*] since April 12." Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Underwood, Ripley. Joined as private, age 24, on 2 Jan 47 in Jasper Co., Miss. Muster rolls from 5 Jan through June 47 show him sick in Saltillo, Mexico. On 28 Apr 48 was reported as absent serving as escort to wagon train to Saltillo. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Ward, Werter. Joined as private, age 24, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Sick." Mustered out 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Webster, Martin. Joined as private, age 32, on 31 Dec 46 in Scott Co., Miss. Promoted to 1st corporal on 22 Feb 47. Muster roll for May/June 47 shows him sick and again with rank of private. On duty in quartermaster dept. in Mar 47. Died 2 July 47 in Camp near Buena Vista, Mexico.

Weems, Daniel. Joined as private, age 23, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Note on muster roll for Sep/Oct 47 says he was on duty in regimental quartermaster dept. He resigned on 3 July 48, just short of regular mustering-out date—11 July.

Weston, Robert B. Joined as private, age 31, on 25 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for 5 Jan-30 Apr 47 says, "Absent sick in New Orleans from Jan. 28, 1847." The same message is on several later MRs, because the regiment was in Mexico and did not know Weston had died in New Orleans on 5 Feb 47.

White, Thomas C. Joined as private, age 19, on 27 Oct 47 at Holly Springs, Miss. Joined regiment from "Regimental Depot." Was mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Whitehead, Calvin. Joined as private, age 22, on 1 June 48 at Marion, Miss. This was too late to serve with the regiment, and he was mustered out on 25 July 48 at New Orleans, La.

Wigginton, Henry J. Joined as private, age 22, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Died in hospital at New Orleans, La., 23 Jan 47.

Wilkins, James L. Joined as private, age 32, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Discharged on 25 May 47 at Camp Walnut Springs, Monterey, Mexico, on surgeon's certificate of disability.

Williams, Eli. Joined as private, age 22, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. He was detailed for duty in hospital from 23 Dec 47 to 29 Feb 48 and from 13 Mar to 30 Apr 48. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Williamson, Isam (Isom?). Joined as private, age 19, on 10 Dec 46 in Lauderdale Co., Miss. Muster roll for May/June 46 shows him "under arrest." Appointed 3rd corporal on 3 Aug 47 in vacancy left by William E. Harper, deceased. Mustered out on 11 July 48 at Vicksburg, Miss.

Williamson, Joseph A. Joined as private, age 20, on 28 Dec 46 in Newton Co., Miss. Discharged on 6 Mar 47 in New Orleans, La., on surgeon's certificate of disability.

Bibliography

Abbreviations Used in Citations for Collections and Locations

CR Confederate Records, Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson.
GP Governors' Papers, Record Group 27, Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson.
LCCH Lauderdale County Courthouse, Meridian, Miss.
LCDAH Lauderdale County Dept. of Archives and History, Meridian, Miss.
MDAH Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson.
MLCPL Merdian-Lauderdale County Public Library, Meridian, Miss.
NA National Archives, Washington, D. C.
RG Record Group (an archival method of filing related materials).

Libraries and Archival Sources Consulted Extensively

Alabama Department of Archives and History, Maps and Manuscripts Division, Montgomery.
Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Bruswick, N.J.
Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala.
Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.
Lauderdale County Courthouse, Chancery Clerk's Office, Meridian, Miss.
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Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, Jackson.
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Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
University of South Alabama, Illinois Central and Gulf Railroad Collection, University of South Alabama Archives, Mobile.
Jacob Perry Welch family papers, Toomsuba, Miss.

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Analetic Magazine, Philadelphia, Penn.
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Daily Register, Mobile, Ala.
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Iowa Journal of History (previously *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*).
Journal of Mississippi History.
Kansas City (Mo.) *Star.*
Kemper Democrat, DeKalb, Miss.
Lauderdale Republican, Marion, Miss.
Macon Beacon, Macon, Miss.
Meridian, Meridian, Miss.
Meridian Journal, Meridian, Miss.
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