

Rape of New Manchester, Georgia, And Deportation of Roswell Mill Women



Most people would not look to the American Civil War “sic” if they are looking for stories of genocide and of the destruction and death of a town. Most people would look to the invading armies of Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union for such accounts. If they would take the time to look beyond the accepted version of the history of the war, they would find many Nazi-like accounts of brutality in the Yankees' actions during the war. Such is the case of the Union invasion of Georgia. Here we find accounts of wholesale genocide and of kidnapping of women and children.

Early in July of 1864, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's army was pressing toward Atlanta. Although greatly outnumbered, the Southern army was making the invader pay dearly for his conquest. As usual, when an invader has difficulty with the standing army of the invaded, he will start to attack those whom he knows he can defeat with little trouble. True to form, General Sherman sent his army into the heartland of the South with the orders to “make Georgia howl.” The food supply and factories of the South were the object of Sherman's wrath. Sherman declared that there could be no peace in the country until large parts of the Southern population had been exterminated.⁵ He put his words into action. First, all the food that could be found was taken for the Yankee army. Then all means of food production were either taken or destroyed. Then he turned his attention to the destruction of factories that aided in the Southern war effort.

It may be a little difficult for us to understand today what it means to have all the food in one's home taken away and also have the means to replace the food stolen or destroyed. When they needed food, Southerners one hundred and thirty years ago did not run down to the supermarket or corner convenience store. They grew and preserved their food, or they bought from others who grew their own food. Some food could be bought, but in times of war when invading armies made normal commerce impossible, the

family unit had to depend on its own resources. Therefore, by depriving people of the means of food production, the Yankee invader was condemning them to death by starvation.

Who were these people upon whom Sherman had pronounced the death sentence? For the most part they were women, children, old men, and the sick and wounded who were unfit for military service. These innocent and defenseless victims were the ones upon whom the full measure of anger was to be poured. It seems strange that while the Yankees wrapped the cloak of self-righteousness around themselves and proclaimed themselves as the beacon of all that was right and good, they would stoop so low as to starve and destroy defenseless women, children, the sick, wounded, and dying!

After the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, in which the invader was thoroughly punished for being in the

wrong place, Sherman sent elements of his army around Atlanta and into the towns of Marietta, Roswell, and New Manchester. Several factories that were important to the war effort of the Confederacy were located in these towns. When the Southern soldiers were forced to evacuate these areas, the Yankees moved in and began their work. Food and the means of food production were taken away, and homes were pulled down or burned. All personal property that could be consigned to the flames was destroyed. The only items that could be taken by the hapless Southerners were the clothes on their backs. Even jewelry, such as wedding bands, was pulled from ladies' hands by the noble defenders of the Union.⁶

If the saga of these poor people were to stop here, it would still rate as one of the low points in American history. But for these Southerners, their odyssey of horror had only begun. Sherman then ordered all those who worked in the factories to be gathered up and shipped out of their country.⁷ The invader evidently feared that by some miracle these people might not die of starvation, and by some enormous stroke of luck might rebuild their factories from the ashes. With little or no concern for homes, women and children were torn from their families and shipped north.

The vast majority of these people were never to see their loved ones again. In all, more than two thousand women, children, and a few old men were collected. Families were divided. Children were separated from their mothers.⁸ Tearful mothers were forced to watch as children, who had worked in the factories, were dragged away from home—almost none of them would ever be heard from again. With no more remorse than that shown by the Yankee slave trader, the invaders went about their dirty work of kidnapping defenseless women and children. Even after the end of the war, the United States government never made any attempt to reunite these families!

In the town of Roswell, over four hundred young women and children were kept in the open town square for nearly a week. Imagine the suffering of those who were cramped in that hot (remember this was July in Georgia), dirty place. As if that were not bad enough, the whiskey stores found their way into the hands of the guards. From that time on, the young girls of Roswell lived a continual nightmare.⁹

All the factory workers of New Manchester were taken off in the same manner as the other towns. So complete was the destruction that the town never recovered from the raid and soon passed from existence. New Manchester became a martyr for the cause of Southern independence.

The following comment appeared in a Louisville, Kentucky, newspaper concerning the women and children whom Sherman had shipped north: "The train which arrived from Nashville last evening brought up from the South 249 women and children, who are sent here by orders of General Sherman to be transferred north of the Ohio River.

These people are mostly in a destitute condition, having no means to provide for themselves a support."¹⁰ These people were hired out to perform work at a price that was at no more than a subsistence level, making them virtual white slaves for the Yankees. More than two thousand women and children were sent into the North in this manner. The papers in the area advertised them as if they were any other commodity for sale. And so the Yankees maintained their illicit trade in human flesh even as they were singing glory, glory, hallelujah!

From 'The South Was Right' from the authors, Donald and Ronald Kennedy.