

Yankee Atrocities - An Eye Witness Account

By David Middleton Edelen II

My thanks to Black Southerners. I would not be here but for the protection of a Black woman who put herself between a Yankee sergeant and my great grandmother. Here is the story handed down in my family:

My 2nd great grandfather was Lieutenant Eben Stenhouse of the Columbia Greys, Company C, 2nd South Carolina Volunteers, CSA. Eben's daughter Carolina, my great grandmother, when an older lady, told her granddaughter, my mom, that she remembered when the Yankees came through Columbia in 1865. She told my mom that smoke billowed up in all directions of the horizon during the day and at night. The sky glowed red in all directions from where the Yankees were robbing, looting, pillaging, and burning every thing they could possibly get their hands on. She said her family and some friends, like all their neighbors who had not fled were doing, were hiding in their home when a squad of Yankee cavalrymen burst in the house.

The first thing they did was take their swords and slash, chop, and break or smash up every family portrait, picture, vase, china, crystal, dishware, etc., in the house. The Yankees laughed as they destroyed anything and everything of value in the house. What they did not stuff in pockets or in bags they toted. They deliberately destroyed. Throwing and breaking everything in the house against the walls and floor. They snatched jewelry from the persons of the women. The Stenhouses had a nice piano in the house, her mother, my great great grandmother, Janet Campbell (Barclay) Stenhouse, besides being a genteel Christian Southern Lady, was also a music teacher. The Yankees chopped their piano all to pieces too, just for pure wanton destruction and evil meanness.

The Yankees tried to make the family and black friends present (no, not all were slaves. Many free Blacks owned businesses too) tell where they had hidden all the rest of their money, silverware, jewelry and other valuables. Of course they did not. Then the Yankees got some infantry, and in the light of burning homes and buildings, lined them up with their bayonets fixed on their muskets and had them walk across the yard and garden in two lines, poking the ground trying to find buried valuables. They were unsuccessful, and the servants and slaves and free blacks alike they tried to make tell would not either, loyal to the last to their fellow Southerners.

The Yankees came back to the house angry. Carolina, "Caro" as she was called, my great grandmother, then only about 8 or 9 yrs old, started shouting at the Yankees to leave her mother and home alone, and began singing some little child's song, which I have heard was something about, "Yankee Doodle Go Home". The Yankee sergeant angrily snatched his saber from its scabbard and raised it to strike her. A Black lady and friend, jumped in between them and told the Yankee sergeant, "Please don't hurt this child! Go find some men to pick on, and make war on men and soldiers, and leave all these women and children alone!" The Sergeant stared for a moment, like she was crazy or he could not fathom what she was doing or talking about, then laughed and gave orders to burn the house, which they did of course, and then they left. I reckon he looked mighty tough and brave towering over a child with his drawn sword, ready to strike a child! Just typical Yankee scum to me! One of Sherman's war criminals. And you will never make me believe Sherman did not know and condone what was going on!

But about the Black woman, I have this to say: It was handed down in my family, and I have heard and read many stories and episodes where Blacks, both slave and free alike, stood beside their friends and neighbors, to the very last during those horrid times. In many cases they hid whites from the invaders, saved and protected whites, their property, etc., even to the harm of themselves. Among the statues and monuments out there in America, there should be at least one in every Southern State and town to that loyal, poor ol' soul, the stout-hearted loyal black Southerner!

Anyway, that story was related to my mother by Carolina when she was older, and had become my mom's grandmother. She said the Yankees had whole wagon trains headed north loaded with nothing but personal property, valuables, silverware, chandeliers, chest of family heirlooms, ancient portraits and other artwork, etc., etc., that the Yankees had stolen from various citizens and homes. She said it was an absolutely horrifying night and a terrifying ordeal, a night of absolute terror! She said many women, especially Black women more so than white, free and slave alike, suffered terribly, being publicly humiliated, whipped, stripped and raped at the hands of those Yankees, sherman and his war criminals. I did not capitalize sherman's name because he does not deserve for his name to be capitalized! His name should live in infamy till judgment day! Growing up on the lore of the Old South, and hearing such stories all one's life, one can only imagine how my blood is boiling as I type this!!

Sorry for the long rambling!

<http://www.confederateamericanpride.com/YankeeAtrocities.html>