

War is Marching Our Way: 'No place was sacred"-March 13, 1865

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In his memoirs, Sherman writes briefly about the destruction of the Fayetteville Arsenal. But his next sentence caught my eye:

"Little other damage was done in Fayetteville."

The residents of the community described a different kind of occupation. A Cumberland County resident described those days like this:

" Every yard and every house was teeming with the bummers, who went into our homes--no place was sacred; they even went into our trunks and bureau drawers, stealing everything they could find...they pulled elegant pianos into the yard along with valuable furniture, china, cut glass, and everything that was dear to our heart, even old family portraits, and chopped them with axes--rolled barrels of flour and molasses into the parlors, and poured their contents on beautiful velvet carpets..."

Several cotton factories were burned. For the women who worked at those factories, possibly numbering in the hundreds, those flames ended their employment. All but one of the city's grist mills were destroyed.

The list of destruction continues: Shops, factories, railroad properties, the State Bank building and 11 warehouses. All burned down.

And the bummers were harsh when looking for valuables. An account describes how some of Sherman's men went to the home of Duncan Murchison. A daughter of Mr. Murchison was dying from typhoid fever and resting in a bed. It's said the bummers removed the young lady from the bed to search for valuables. When some of her relatives begged the soldiers to be respectful, a Federal officer is alleged to have said to his men, "Go ahead boys. Do all the mischief you can." Not long after this, the young lady died.

Another story says that at least 4 prominent men in the community--J.P. McLean, W.T. Horne, Jesse Hawley, Alexander McArthur---were hung by the neck til close to death, then let down. This process was repeated several times. All in an attempt to get these men to reveal the location of their valuables.

Fayetteville also became a huge graveyard for many of the horses and mules of the Federal army. Horses killed in the initial skirmish of March 11 were still on the streets of the city. Now, after months of campaigning, hundreds of other animals were deemed no longer fit for service. These horses and mules were gathered together (quite a few near Cool Spring Street). Then they were lead down near the river...and shot. The carcasses were left there. Alice Campbell, president of the town's knitting society, wrote, "**You may try to imagine the odor, if you can.**"

Another local resident summed up the state of the community after Sherman's occupation of Fayetteville:

"There will not be left more than fifty head of four-footed beasts in the country and not enough provisions to last ten days. Many, very many families have not a mouthful to eat. We have meal and meat to last two weeks, by eating two meals a day."

http://www.fayobserver.com/blogs/civil_war/war-is-marching-our-way-no-place-was-sacred-/article_b2ecf296-c8fa-11e4-8afd-df5e647d1681.html