

The Yankee's war against the South's civilians

In war there is unwritten rule that civilians are to be left alone, unless they are actively engaging in combat against the opposing army. This rule, was broken by the Union Army on several occasions. The Civilian population of the Southern Confederacy were targeted by the Union Army, as a way to demoralize the South. This history is not well known, because the Victor, (the North) rewrote the history of the war. But we in the Southern parties of the Southwest.

Nothing makes the heart of a Yankee liberal beat with more profound sorrow and grief than the thought of the misuse of a rope down South. Dime-store novels, cheap tabloids, television documentaries, and movies find a ready audience for such trash. Of course, the liberals are interested only if Southerners are portrayed as the villains. Perhaps that is why they refuse to publish anything that shows that no one during the War for Southern Independence committed more such crimes than the Yankee invaders.

In Marion County, Missouri, one of the most hideous of such crimes took place. After Missouri attempted to secede from the Union, the state was quickly overrun by Yankee troops. Anyone who expressed Southern sympathies was quickly persecuted by the "loyal" Missouri (Yankee-backed) government officials. In the little town of Palmyra, Missouri, the war was very personal and ugly. After a certain Union informer in town came up missing, it was presumed by the Federal authorities that he had been abducted. The general of the "loyal" Missouri troops at that time demanded the return of his informer; otherwise he would execute ten Southerners whom he held in jail."

The men Gen. John McNeil held in jail were not criminals; they had been thrown into jail for expressing a pro-Southern point of view. We would call that an expression of free speech, but Yankee invaders obviously didn't believe in constitutional freedoms or they would not have been invading the South. It should be noted that the Yankees claimed that the Union informer had been captured by Confederate military forces. The Southern hostages held by the Yankees had no connection with said military forces! Let us emphasize this fact: They were civilians.

When the Union informer did not return, Yankee general McNeil ordered ten men to be chosen for execution. The ten were not selected by a lottery. No, General McNeil had a more sinister design for the deaths of these men. He gave orders that only those of high social, military, educational, and professional background were to be chosen. Those selected ranged from nineteen to sixty years of age. With one exception, all were active in their churches and most were family men. The two who did not have a wife or children were Hiram Smith and Thomas A. Sidenor. Hiram Smith was twenty-two years of age and was chosen to die after the others had received their death sentence. He had spent much time in tears trying to assist those who had been given the death sentence, not knowing that his name was to be added to the list. When the jailer called him to the cell door and informed him that he too would die the next day, he ceased his crying and never shed another tear. Those in jail noted that this young hero could weep for others but remained strong and resolute in the face of his own fate. Thomas A. Sidenor was a former captain in the Confederate army. His unit had been destroyed in battle and thereafter disbanded. He had taken up the life of a civilian and was engaged to be married. The new suit of clothes he was wearing had been chosen carefully by himself to serve as his wedding garment. It would become his burial shroud.

Both pro-Southern and pro-Northern citizens made pleas on behalf of the innocent men. Those who thought they had some influence with the Yankee government and who had a sense of decency implored the military authorities not to commit this act. But the order had the highest backing from all levels of the Yankee government. At 1:00 P.M. on October 18, 1862, the ten men were loaded on wagons, seated on newly made coffins, and taken to the Palmyra fairgrounds where the hideous act was to be carried out. No one doubted

the resolve of the Yankee. For after all, this was not the first time such an act had taken place. In Kirksville, some seventy miles from Palmyra, Confederate colonel McCullough and fifteen of his men had been murdered by the invader.³ No help could be expected from the Yankee high command because Union general Merrill nearby had ordered the execution of ten Southerners himself.⁴ No, the time had come for this group of men to pay the supreme price for believing in State's Rights and their Southern homeland.

On reaching the fairgrounds, the men were placed in a row and seated on their coffins. A few feet away stood thirty United States soldiers. Behind the thirty soldiers were an equal number of reserve troops. At the command "ready, aim, fire," the order was carried out. The only problem was that only three of the men were killed instantly. One was not even hit. The others were lying in pools of their own blood. Not to be outdone, the reserve troops were called into action. Walking among the wounded men, they took their time, and with their pistols shot each hostage until he stopped moaning. Poor Mr. Baxler was the one who had not been hit by the first volley. Sitting on the ground, he had to watch as the reserve troops moved in and shot his friends at point blank range, with each shot moving him closer to eternity.⁵

This incident did not pass without some protest. Not only in the South, but also in London and even in the North, decent people made loud protests about such a barbaric act. Twice in Lincoln's Cabinet meetings the issue was brought up about how to put the best face on this atrocity. But finally the incident was just ignored, because the South had its hands full and could not pursue the matter. But what about General McNeil? Surely the noble men of Yankeedom would censure this man for such acts. Not really. Shortly after the Palmyra massacre, he was given a promotion to the rank of Brigadier General of United States Volunteers. The promotion was made, of course, by none other than the all-loving and tender-hearted Abe Lincoln.¹⁶ Who says that crime does not pay! (The reader is directed to Addendum XI, "I Am Condemned to Be Shot," a previously unpublished letter from a Confederate POW writing home on the eve of his execution. He had been chosen at random to die in retaliation for Confederate military activity in the area surrounding the POW camp in which he was being held.)

In Tennessee, the Yankee invaders laid their foul hands on a young Confederate soldier by the name of Sam Davis who had entered Confederate service at the age of nineteen. He had fought under some of the most noted Confederate generals. In 1863 he was selected as a member of "Coleman's Scouts," an elite group from Tennessee who entered Yankee-controlled territory to gather information. Sam was captured in his Confederate uniform when he visited his home during one of these raids. Regardless of this fact, he was condemned to be hanged as a spy. The commanding general of the Yankees kept young Sam in jail awaiting his execution, during which time Sam was offered his life, freedom, and many rewards if he would betray his commander and other friends in the Scouts. Over and over he was reminded of his impending death by the Yankees. Over and over he was reminded that he was young and had only begun to live his life. Over and over the Yankees tempted him to sell out his country and friends. Over and over he refused to break. Finally the Yankee commander told young Sam that all he had to do to gain his life and freedom was to give the Yankees the name of the man who was the leader of the Scouts. Young Sam's reply was, "You may hang me a thousand times but I would not betray my friends."⁷

To make matters worse for Sam, his commander (Capt. Henry B. Shaw) was already in the hands of the Yankees. Shaw was being held in the next jail cell but the Yankees did not know whom they had captured. All young Sam had to do to gain all that was promised him was to point a finger toward the next jail cell. He did not. He stood by his country and friends, and, as a result, the invader took a rope and placed it around the young man's neck. Courageous Sam Davis, Confederate hero, was hanged by the neck until dead.