

Sam Davis Reader

A Compilation

Sam Davis Youth Camps



"Sam Davis questioned by General Dodge," by Harold Van Schmidt.

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SAM DAVIS

By Dr. Michael Bradley

The sun was shining. No clouds marred the sky. The gallows was tall. Eternity was nigh. Sam Davis was 21 years old.

Sam did not want to die; but he was willing to do so. He had just uttered his last words, "If I had a thousand lives I would lose them all before I would betray a friend or a confidence." He had been offered his life and a clear path back to Confederate lines if he would give his captors the name of the commander of his unit of scouts, but Sam knew life would not be worth living if he proved himself unworthy of existence. Sam Davis died within a few minutes of uttering those words but one hundred fifty years later his name is still remembered as a synonym for bravery, fidelity, and honor.

Nothing in the early life of Davis marked him as being of heroic stuff. He was born near Smyrna, Tennessee, on October 6, 1842, the son of Charles Lewis Davis and Jane Simmons Davis.

Jane was the second wife of Charles Davis, his first wife having died, and Sam had three brothers and a sister from the first marriage as well as siblings younger than he. The Davis family owned a large farm and some twenty slaves which marked them as a comfortably well-off family, though not by any means were they among the plantation aristocracy.

Sam attended the local schools as a boy and, at age 19, went to Nashville to enroll at the Western Military Academy. This school had a good reputation and included on its faculty Edmund Kirby Smith and Bushrod Johnson, both future Confederate generals. In 1861, when Tennessee declared itself independent and then joined the Confederacy, Sam left school and joined the First Tennessee Infantry commanded by Colonel George Maney. The 1st did its training at Camp Harris at Allisonia before being sent to Virginia on July 10, 1861. In the Old Dominion the Tennessee boys served under Robert E. Lee in the Cheat Mountain Campaign and then under Stonewall Jackson in the Bath Campaign. In February 1862 the regiment returned to Tennessee where it was split into two wings. The wing in which Sam served was sent to Corinth and saw action at Shiloh and around Corinth. The 1st was heavily engaged at Perryville and at Murfreesboro. The winter of 1862-63 was spent near Shelbyville but the army fell back to Chattanooga following the Tullahoma Campaign.

Sometime in late 1862 General Braxton Bragg authorized the organization of a company of 100 men whose duty was to penetrate U.S. lines and collect information. These men would operate in uniform and would carry credentials from army headquarters identifying them as "scouts" but they would still run the danger of execution if caught. Captain B.H. Shaw was chosen to lead this unit but he would always use the name of E. Coleman and the unit would be known as Coleman's Scouts. The Scouts are mentioned in reports of the Battle of Stones River as having brought Bragg information of the U.S. advance. It is not known just when Sam Davis joined the Scouts but it is reasonable to assume that it was early in the history of that unit when the army was located in Middle Tennessee, an area Sam knew well and in which he had many friends and relations from whom he could collect information. We do know that John Davis, Sam's older brother, was an original member of the company and that he helped select the other members.



Sam Davis (left) and his half-brother John

Following the Battle of Chickamauga the Scouts were tasked with moving into Middle Tennessee to determine if reinforcements were moving from Corinth, Mississippi, to assist the Union forces trapped in Chattanooga. The men followed what was called "the Scout's line" which ran through the mountains of North Alabama south of the Tennessee River, a no-man's land controlled by neither army, and then crossed into Middle Tennessee. Once the vicinity of the Tennessee River was reached the men traveled alone or in groups of two or three.

Sam Davis moved into the area around Nashville, not far from his home at Smyrna, and visited his family and friends there for a few hours one night and then, after sleeping in the woods all day, made his way on towards Nashville. On the way he met two other Confederates, dressed in civilian clothes; Philip Matlock and James Castleman. The three caught a ride on a wagon going into town and were not questioned by the pickets. The three took a room at the Saint Cloud Hotel on Church Street. They spent two days visiting friends, gathering news, and purchasing pistols from U.S. soldiers who were willing to sell their side-arms for as little as \$3. On the night following their second day they stole horses hitched outside the courthouse, and rode into the country, using side streets and cutting across vacant lots. The next morning, Sam Davis moved back toward LaVergne, Tennessee.

The attraction in that vicinity was the house of Mary Kate Patterson and her cousin, Robbie Woodruff. The Patterson house was used as a contact point by the Coleman Scouts since E.V. Patterson was a member of the unit. During the night Sam threw a gravel against the window of Mary Kate, who would later marry Sam's brother, and told her he was going to hole up in Rain's Woods for a few days. Rain's Woods was a 300 acre patch of dense undergrowth and cedars not far from the Patterson house. The next morning the two young female cousins took Sam his breakfast, putting coffee in an earthen crock and wrapping it in a blanket to keep it warm. After a pleasant visit, during which all the military news the two had collected was passed on, Sam took his path further south.

About November 16 Sam was in the vicinity of Fayetteville where he contacted Joel and Peter Cunningham, two local businessmen who had become guerrilla leaders. From them Sam gained more information and helped them chase a U.S. patrol back into town after the Yankee soldiers had crossed the Elk River.

Moving carefully cross country during the hours of darkness Sam reached the vicinity of Pulaski where he knew the XVI Army Corps, commanded by General Grenville Dodge, had taken position. Robert English lived on Big Creek near Campbellsville in Giles County, not far from Pulaski, and he provided a "safe house" for couriers passing through the area. Robert's nephew, Polk English, was a member of the Coleman Scouts. Davis spent several days at the English home and in the vicinity of Pulaski, visiting contacts and collecting the information they had gathered. On November 19, 1863, he began his return trip to Confederate lines.

Not surprisingly, Sam was interested in finding company for the trip since a small party of two or three would be safer than a single person and since the work of guarding against surprise in all directions could be shared. Riding down the Lamb's Ferry Road, near the community of Minor Hill, Sam was approached by two men wearing Confederate uniforms. One introduced himself as a recruiting officer, operating behind U.S. lines for the purpose of rounding up men who had just become eligible for the draft as well as men who had recovered from wounds, those overstaying furloughs, and deserters. This was a plausible story and the man sounded right, that is, his accent did not identify him as a Yankee. After a few minutes conversation both the men drew their weapons and ordered Sam to unbuckle his pistol belt. A signal brought out of hiding a patrol from the 7th Kansas Cavalry, the infamous "Jayhawker" regiment.

The captor of Sam Davis was Levi H. Naron, a South Carolina native who had moved to Mississippi several years prior to the war. Naron prospered as a plantation owner but, in 1861, he was a staunch Union man in his political views. This made him very unpopular with his neighbors and he was threatened with lynching if he did not keep quiet about his opinions. Naron became a refugee, hiding in the woods and was making his way north when he was apprehended and placed in jail in Corinth, Mississippi. He was released and ordered to return to his home but instead made for Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, where the U.S. army under Ulysses Grant had established their camp. Naron met Sherman and was employed as a scout, using the cover name of Captain Chickasaw. Eventually, Naron became chief of scouts for Dodge's XVI Corps.

Davis was taken to Pulaski and imprisoned in the town jail. He had a good deal of company since other scouts, couriers, and suspicious individuals had been apprehended in the vicinity. Davis immediately recognized one of the prisoners, his commanding officer who was thought by the U.S. authorities to be an itinerant herb doctor. Davis felt it imperative to protect the identity of Shaw, or Coleman, as he was known.

A search of Davis' clothing, saddle bags, and saddle discovered papers of military importance, including eleven newspapers with articles about troop movements, a complete description of the units comprising Dodge's XVI corps, and a map of the fortifications of Nashville. In addition, Davis was carrying some personal items intended for General Bragg, including soap, blank notebooks, and a toothbrush and a number of letters for men in the Confederate army. According to the testimony of U.S. soldiers, given in evidence at the court martial which tried Davis, he was wearing a regular Confederate uniform and a U.S. army issue overcoat from which the military buttons had been removed and which had been dyed black. Davis was taken from jail for an interview with General Dodge and was confronted with the papers which had been found in his possession. General Dodge told Davis that he was convinced that Davis was a courier but that it was imperative that he give the source of the information he was carrying. Davis replied that he knew he was in a dangerous situation, that he understood his life was at risk, but that he could not give up the name of his colleagues.

Since Davis had made no effort to conceal his identity but was wearing a Confederate uniform there was an argument to be made that he could be treated as a prisoner of war but the rules of war in effect at the time also provided that any person found behind the lines of the U.S. army who was engaged in carrying information could be tried as a spy. Accordingly, on November 20, Dodge appointed a military commission to meet at Pulaski to try Davis. The members of the commission were Col. Madison Miller, 18th Missouri; Lt. Col. Thomas W. Gaines, 50th Missouri; Major Lathrop, 30th Ohio; Capt. George Elliott, 39th Iowa; Major N.B. Howard, 2nd Iowa acted as Judge Advocate. Since this was a military commission no officer was appointed to defend Davis.

When the commission met on November 24 two charges were brought against Davis. The first Charge was that he was a spy since he had come into the lines of the U.S. army for the purpose of gaining information and conveying it into Confederate lines. The second charge was that Davis was a carrier of mail and other information from within U.S. lines into Confederate territory. Davis pled "not guilty" to the first charge and "guilty" to the second.

The commission heard testimony from the men who had captured Davis, listened to a statement he made, and then adjourned until the following day. On November 25, 1863, the commission ruled by unanimous vote that Davis was guilty on both charges and sentenced him to be hanged. General Dodge received and approved the findings of the commission and set the execution for November 27th between the hours of 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M.

Chaplain James Young spent the intervening day with Davis and accompanied him to the scaffold. On November 26 Davis wrote a letter to his mother and entrusted it to Chaplain Young. The letter read:

"Dear Mother; O how painful it is to write to you! I have got to die to-morrow—to be hanged by the Federals . Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you good-bye for evermore. Mother I do not fear to die. Give my love to all.

Your dear son.

Mother: Tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see all of you once more, but I never will anymore.

Mother and Father: Do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me; it will not do any good.

Father: you can send after my remains if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tennessee. I will leave some things with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles County, Tennessee, south of Columbia."

On the morning of his execution Sam Davis ate his breakfast, sang his favorite hymn, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand", with Chaplain Young, and calmly mounted a wagon where he sat on his coffin as he was escorted to the gallows. As the grim party waited for the final details to be taken care of the man who had captured him rode up and offered Davis a final chance to save his life by revealing the name of his source of information. Davis replied, "If I had a thousand lives I would lose them all before I would betray the trust of a friend or the confidence of an informer." Just minutes later Sam Davis was dead.

The death of Davis made a lasting impression on those who witnessed it and many of them wrote accounts of the event following the war. The Nineteenth Century was a time when death was faced more openly than is the case today. If one was to have "a good death" as the culture of the day defined it, certain things had to be done. The fact of approaching death had to be accepted calmly, the person must act in a courageous manner, and appropriate final words were to be spoken. The final words were thought to reveal the true character of the dying person. That is the reason the dying words of so many Nineteenth Century characters were carefully recorded and have been preserved for history. There was no possibility that Davis could have prepared his final words in advance since he did not know he would be offered a last chance at a reprieve. Therefore, the brave and dignified statement that he would die a thousand times rather than save himself by betraying another struck a resounding chord in the minds of those who heard them.

A few days following the execution a relative came to Pulaski to retrieve the body of Sam Davis. His remains were taken in a wagon to the family home in Smyrna and buried in the family cemetery. Some twenty years after the war, at his mother's request, the body was moved to a plot in the back yard of the family home where it lies in honor today.

The story of Sam Davis did not become widely known until the mid-1880's when Sumner Cunningham, editor of *The Confederate Veteran* was told of the events surrounding Davis' death. An article in the magazine touched off a flood of responses from former comrades who had known Davis and a plan was set afoot to erect a monument to him. Economic conditions in the South made fulfillment of the plan a slow process. In 1906 a statue of Sam Davis was erected on the courthouse square in Pulaski. The Tennessee legislature authorized a monument on the grounds of the state capitol and this was completed and dedicated in 1909. In the process of preparing these memorials it was discovered that no picture of Sam Davis existed so his brother posed for the sculptors. The United Daughters of the Confederacy placed a memorial window of Davis in the Confederate Memorial Chapel in 1912 and the house where he grew up was acquired by the state in 1927 to become a living history memorial to the young man whose grave is in the rear of the house. History minded citizens of Pulaski erected a shrine to Sam Davis in 1950 on the spot where he gave up his life.

November 2013 marks the sesquicentennial of the death of Sam Davis. The Sons of Confederate Veterans, and all who love courage, patriotism, and devotion to duty, should pause to do him honor.

Today the Sam Davis House is open to the public on a daily basis. The house was built in 1810 and the site includes outbuildings, including cabins of the slaves who worked here. Activities on the property portray the lifestyle of an upper-middle class family at the time of the War. The house contains many items which belonged to the Davis family and a museum on the property houses the buttons from the uniform Sam was wearing at the time of his capture. The Sam Davis Memorial Association supports the house and its activities. Membership in the Association is open to all and there are various levels at which one may donate to become a member. For more information on the Sam Davis home and membership in the association, go to: samdavis150.org

Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp #33, Murfreesboro, is planning a three-day event, November 22, 23, 24, 2013 to commemorate the capture, trial, and execution of Sam Davis. This event will include seminars, lectures, and a memorial service. All those who love the South and who wish to honor Sam Davis are invited to attend this event. For more details on this historic event, go to: samdavis150.com



Sam Davis Home in Smyrna, TN



The poem which follows was published in April, 1869, and signed by Louise who, it is said, was the sweetheart of Sam Davis:

A Tribute

Highest on the head roll of fame.
The name of Davis shines as bright
As yon stars that luminous flame.
On the sable brow of night!
With the undimmed glory radiant,
'Twill forever brightly shine,
Won from life —to liberty lent
— A noble death for truth divine.

No hero of the ancient orient
Could such unyielding valor boast.
As that boy, whose deeds resplendent
Glory won for the cause now lost.
Ere life had reached youth's full tide,
He left his home and mother dear;
With Spartan valor and manly price
He grasped his shield—made foeman fear,

When on Pulaski's fatal field
He was seized and held a spy —
Told he must not the traitor shield,
Or most surely he must die!
He asked, "How many hours have I?"
"Ten minutes more to you remain!"
"Tell them no! I can dare to die!
I'll not my proud escutcheon stain!"

Homage to his country he did lend —
Ne'er cowered in the deadly fight.
And died rather than betray a friend,
For God, liberty and the right!
When life to him was offered as the price
Of honor, plighted faith and truth.
For another he paid the sacrifice —
How bravely died the Southern youth.

Memorial incense shall ever rise
From the dust of the martyr's tomb.
While honor gilds the deathless prize
For glory of his tragic doom!
No prouder name among the brave
Who died to save their truth —
A holocaust on liberty's grave.
Offered by that noble Southern youth.

Immortal truth can never die,
Although its light awhile may dim.
For vice and error it will outvie
If faith its vestal fires shall trim!
With silent harps along the strand,
Still girt with immortal truth,
Downtrodden Tennessee shall stand.
And with new reviving youth!

On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand: The Story of Sam Davis

[The following text is taken from [Valor in Gray -- The Recipients of The Confederate Medal of Honor](#) by Gregg S. Clemmer. This material is copyrighted, with all rights reserved, by Hearthside Publishing Company, P.O. Box 2773, Staunton, Virginia 24402, and is reproduced here with their kind permission.]

The heavy spring-wagon attracted little notice as it rumbled into Columbia, Tennessee, in early December of 1863. Pulled by two mules, the conveyance carried but two passengers, a man and boy. Their journey was a sad one and it was readily explained in a single glance. Behind them --on the bed of the wagon-- lay a coffin.

With the reins in his hands, John C. Kennedy guided the wagon through the busy streets. He wanted no trouble and when a picket ordered him to a halt on the southern outskirts of town, he swallowed hard, told little Oscar to say nothing, and then hoped for the best.

Identification? Kennedy nodded and dug nervously into his pocket, producing a pass. But for some reason, the sentry hardly glanced at the paper, his curiosity drawn first to the coffin and then to the young boy. With hardly a word, he waved them through.

The same thing happened a day later when the coffin-laden wagon approached the town of Pulaski. Puzzled by this lack of asserted Federal authority, Kennedy and Oscar entered the town and parked the wagon near the square. It was the next move that would be the hardest.

John Kennedy had come to Pulaski at the request of Oscar's family. No longer could they deny the rumors that it might be *their* 21-year-old son who had been hung as a spy in the last week of November. At first it seemed impossible and they had discounted the talk. But the report persisted. Unwilling to believe yet hopelessly drawn to free themselves of this torment, they had asked Kennedy to go and find out. And if it *was* true, they'd be forever obliged if he'd bring the body of their boy back home for burial.

The father had advised Kennedy that once he got to Pulaski, he should contact an old family acquaintance, a Mr. Richardson, who was clerk of the county court there. To identify the remains, the mother, her voice breaking, described her son's boots and gave Kennedy a piece of the plaid linsey that she had sewn as a lining for her son's jacket. And in case there was any question, well, their youngest son, Oscar, could ride along. Then with a meal sack containing a boiled ham and a half bushel of corn pones to see them through, the twosome departed.

They reached Nashville that evening. Unable to get an audience with the Federal authorities, Kennedy procured a coffin, a "metallic case and box" as he described it. The next morning, after first denying their request for a pass, Gen. Lovell Rousseau reluctantly issued Kennedy--a boyhood friend from old Kentucky--the necessary paper to clear the city. But he warned his old friend that his authority did not extend into Columbia.

Now, thinking back on the events of the last several days, Kennedy could only marvel at how easily they had gotten into Pulaski. Yet he did not relish meeting the executioners of his friend and as he got out of the wagon, he steeled himself for trouble. Instructing Oscar to hold the mules, he headed for the courthouse to see the provost marshal for a pass and, as he remembered years later, to "find out what he would do with us."

The Federal official eyed Kennedy then gruffly demanded to know how he got into Pulaski. Kennedy meekly handed him the pass.



"This is no account here," stated the officer bluntly, then as he narrowed his eyes on Kennedy, he demanded, "What do you want?"

John Kennedy replied forthrightly that he had come at the request of the family for the body of the young man who had been hanged. The parents simply wanted him brought home.

Instantly, the officer's whole attitude softened and he rose and offered his hand in welcome. With emotion in his voice, he put Kennedy at ease, assuring him he would do everything in his power to facilitate the request. For a moment there was an awkward silence as both men reassessed each other. Finally, not knowing what else to say, the officer spoke. "Tell them, for me, that he died the bravest of the brave, an honor to them and with the respect of every man in this command."

Kennedy was stunned as the officer handed him return passes and signed a permit for them to take up the body. This was far more cooperation than he had expected and, still unsure of his reception, he inquired if he would encounter any trouble or interference at the graveyard.

The officer was adamant. "No sir. If you do, I'll give you a company--yes, a regiment if necessary."

Bewildered by this unexpected cordiality, Kennedy returned to the wagon to find Oscar surrounded by soldiers inquiring if he was there to claim the body of the young man just hung. Oscar could only nod, no doubt frightened by all of this attention, whereupon several of the soldiers, moved by the scene of the somber lad and coffin, choked back that the dead man "ought not to have been hung," while others, fearful of retribution from the Confederates or perhaps even a Higher Power, felt they would certainly "suffer for it sooner or later."

Exhumation began the next morning and as the gravediggers labored, curious soldiers edged close. Speaking in hushed tones with kepis in hand, they asked if they might not be of some service. Kennedy acknowledged their respect, but politely declined their offer.

The grim work continued and once the box was lifted from the ground and the lid removed, Kennedy looked in to make the identification. "I took from my pocket the piece of his jacket lining and saw that they were alike." Removing the white hood still over the head of the corpse, Kennedy saw that the face was indeed "recognizable."

As they gently lifted the body to the "metallic case," more soldiers appeared, gathering quietly in lines with caps off. What was the meaning of this unexpected tribute from the men who had put his friend to death?

Back at the provost marshal's office, the chaplain who had attended the condemned soldier in the days before his execution, gave Kennedy a few personal effects--a little book and some brass vest and coat buttons. It was from this man that John Kennedy finally learned the extraordinary circumstances of the hanging.

Now, he no longer wondered at the reverential reception accorded them as they moved through Pulaski. Everyone wanted a last look at the casket of the unforgettable young soldier. And as if by magic, word of their coming spread ahead of them.

At the Duck River near Columbia, Kennedy found that the ferry had been halted by military decree. Approaching the officer in charge on the riverbank, Kennedy asked if there might not be some way to cross the river. The officer eyed him, then, in a moment of recognition, spotted the casket in the wagon. Briskly he turned to an orderly and said, "Go down and order the ferry boat to take that team and corpse over the river."

A steep defile to the water's edge lay before them, but as Kennedy returned to Oscar, he found the boy and wagon surrounded by dozens of soldiers in blue.

"Stranger, we know who this is," one of them said to him as he neared. "You get in the wagon; we'll see it goes down safe."

With infinite care, the Billy Yanks "practically carried the wagon aboard the boat." But once the ferry was across and tied to the opposite bank, another hill, steeper and longer, faced the travelers. Firmly--for they would not take no for an answer--the blue uniformed volunteer escorts told

Kennedy to sit in the wagon and drive while they safely muscled the conveyance--with hand and shoulder--to the crest of the hill. Once on top, they stood in the road, and as Kennedy and little Oscar nodded their appreciation, the boys in blue raised their caps in silent salute.

A hero was going home. [1]

Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge eyed the young man carefully. Just hours before, members of the 7th Kansas Cavalry had captured several suspicious individuals about 15 miles outside Pulaski, Tennessee. There was little doubt that they were all active rebel sympathizers and Dodge quickly ordered them locked in the Giles County jail. It seemed like just another routine arrest but the Jayhawkers had discovered maps of the Nashville defenses hidden under this fellow's saddle along with incriminating letters, newspapers, and dispatches in his boots and clothing. [2]

From this evidence, Dodge knew that one of "Coleman's Scouts" stood before him. For weeks, he had been "very anxious" to capture this "Coleman," and break up his band of spies that lurked east of Pulaski. Now it seemed, with at least one of "Coleman's" men in custody, he had his opportunity.

Dodge found his prisoner--a modest, unassuming fellow named Sam Davis--to be "a fine, soldierly looking young man, dressed in a faded Federal soldier's coat. He had a frank, open face, which was inclined to brightness." But as Dodge talked, conversing "pleasantly" with the captive in order to gain his confidence, he noted that Davis had little to say.

I tried to impress upon him the danger he was in and that I knew he was only a messenger, and held out to him the hope of lenient treatment if he would answer truthfully, as far as he could, my questions. [3]

Who had given him this critical information? And to whom was he to deliver it? Even more so, Dodge asked, who was "Coleman" and where could he be found?

Davis listened attentively as the general probed but "made no definite answer." Dodge then dropped all pretense of cordiality and bluntly explained to his prisoner the penalty for spying. Did he really prefer silence and a hangman's noose? [4]

Finding that his prisoner still would not cooperate, Dodge sent him back to the county jail to join the other prisoners. Surely once this Sam Davis considered his dark future from behind bars, he would be more forthcoming. Just to be sure, Dodge ordered his provost marshal, Capt. W. F. Armstrong, to place an informant in the cell near Davis. Perhaps that would work. [5]

But the scout kept his own counsel. Pvt. C. B. Van Pelt of the 81st Ohio Infantry, detailed as a clerk in Armstrong's office, took a liking to Sam Davis. Every morning he called the roll of prisoners and, as he reminisced years later, "mingled with them as man to man." With Sam Davis, he remembered, "we talked much of the similar circumstances under which we had left our homes." Van Pelt was struck by Davis' patriotism, but even more so by Sam's "even tenor of gentleness," concluding that "had I been placed in his position, he would doubtless have proffered me the same sympathy I endeavored to extend to him." [6]

But despite the best efforts of the provost marshal's spies, Sam Davis let nothing slip. Unable to get answers by subterfuge, Gen. Dodge again had the Confederate brought before him. This time he held nothing back. Davis would be tried as a spy and with the mountain of evidence against him, he would surely be convicted and sentenced to hang. But if he identified who had passed him the information and if he fingered "Coleman," he would be given a horse and safe passage through the lines and save himself a trip to the gallows.

Dodge expected Davis to grab the offer. But to his amazement, the 21-year old scout "very quietly and firmly refused to do it." [7]

Now the general had no choice but to convene a court martial, which after hearing the evidence, quickly found the Tennessean guilty and sentenced him to hang. It fell to Pvt. Van Pelt to inform Sam Davis of the sentence.

I read to him a copy of his death-sentence [yet] a reprieve was extended, which I read to him [also], if he would inform us where "Coleman" was. He stood before me, an uncrowned hero, his

eyes flashing, and said: "I will die a thousand deaths rather than betray my cause." We were both moved to tears and remained silent for a time. He then talked of his family. [8]

News of the verdict spread quickly through the streets of Pulaski. At least one delegation, headed by Mrs. John A. Jackson, personally appealed to Gen. Dodge for leniency. Others sought out provost marshal Armstrong and Chaplain James Young of the 81st Ohio. Certainly *something* could be done to save this young man!

But the most pathetic appeal came from Coleman Davis Smith, Sam Davis' personal servant. Two years younger than Sam, Coleman had been "given to Sam as a play fellow" while still a boy. When Sam joined the war effort, so did Coleman, and as he remembered years later, "We slept anywhere and ate anywhere." Captured beside his master, he was also locked away in the county jail when Van Pelt brought the bad news. [9]

Earnestly, Coleman begged Sam to "tell what the Yankees wanted him to tell," but Davis shook his head. He would not compromise the identity of his leader. The slave, desperate to save his lifelong friend, then asked if *he* might not tell, but again Sam Davis said no. *No one* must tell; never would he permit the sacrifice of a friend and both men knew why; unknown to Gen. Dodge, Capt. H. B. Shaw, alias "Coleman," the chief of the scouts, languished in an adjacent cell! [10]

On the day before the execution, Sam penned a last letter to his family in Rutherford County.

Pulaski, Giles County, Tenn., Nov. 26, 1863

Dear Mother: Oh, how painful it is to write you! I have got to die to-morrow morning--to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you good-by forevermore. Mother, I do not fear to die. Give my love to all.

Your son, Samuel Davis

Mother, tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see you all once more, but I never will any more.

Mother and Father, do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me. It will not do any good. Father, you can send after my remains if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tenn. I will leave some things, too, with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles county, Tenn., south of Columbia.

S.D. [11]

That evening, Sam received a visit from Chaplain Young. Time was short now, yet with some of the other prisoners, he joined Young in a short devotional that included the singing of "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." For the rest of his life, Rev. James Young never forgot the "animated voice" of the condemned man. [12]

At ten o'clock the next morning--one witness remembered the day as "fair and warm"--they came for him. To a local Methodist minister, the Rev. Mr. Lawrence, Davis left his overcoat and a few personal effects; would he see that they got to his family? [13]

Guards then tied his hands behind him and shackled his legs. Then they walked him outside. Slowly, awkwardly, he climbed aboard a wagon. He stood there for a moment, searching the crowd. Then shifting his direction, he faced the courthouse jail, looking for familiar faces that might be watching from the windows. There! Awkwardly, he bent forward against the bonds that held him. This was all he could do--a final, painful bow--to acknowledge the deep bonds of sacrifice and comradeship shared with the men who crowded the barred windows for a last glimpse of him. [14]

With a coffin his only seat, Sam Davis sat down in discomfort; the fetters around his feet pinched painfully tight. Chaplain Young took a knife and cut the boots at the ankle to relieve the pressure. Then, guarded by a sea of armed soldiers, the wagon rumbled toward the gallows erected on East Hill. At "precisely five minutes past ten o'clock," the wagon entered the hollow square of soldiers--

four deep--that surrounded the scaffold. [15]

Sam Davis stepped from the wagon and seated himself for a moment on a bench at the foot of the gallows. He seemed resolved to his fate, "glancing casually at his coffin as it was taken from the wagon." [16]

To provost marshal Armstrong he inquired how long he had to live. "Fifteen minutes," came the reply. Perhaps then, might Capt. Armstrong tell him the latest news from the battlefield?

Dispatches from Chattanooga were filled with reports of a Union victory at Missionary Ridge, Armstrong replied.

The prisoner quietly expressed "much regret," then, almost as an afterthought, remarked, "The boys will have to fight the rest of the battles without me."

It was now time. Slowly, so as not to stumble, Sam Davis climbed the steps. Armstrong approached. "I am sorry to be compelled to perform this painful duty."

"It does not hurt me, Captain. I am innocent and I am prepared to die; so do not think hard of it."

Then again, but now for the last time, came the question: Would he not save himself and identify "Coleman?" It was not yet too late!

But the answer came back still full of resolve. "Do you suppose that I would betray a friend? No, sir: I would die a thousand times first!" And then, after a prayer with Chaplain Young, he stepped upon the trap, turned to Armstrong and said, "I am ready." [17]

The sacrifice of Sam Davis quickly assumed the mystique of legend. The story of his heroic stand in the face of death was told and retold around countless Southern campfires and after the war was lost, around the impoverished dinner tables and blackened hearths of a war-ravaged region.

But the indelible picture of the young martyr also went north with the victors. Pvt. John S. Randal of the 61st Illinois Infantry asserted to his dying day that in his entire time in the war, he never "witnessed such a pathetic and heroic scene," noting unabashedly that he had sat at attention on his horse that day with "tears streaming down his face". [18]

Others were less eloquent but just as sincere. Pvt. A. W. Bill remembered hearing many soldiers in the 61st later swear softly to themselves: "I wish that man could have gotten away." [19]

After the execution, Pvt. Van Pelt found that "night and day came and went, but [writing in 1897] I could not forget, nor have I to this day forgotten, that boy hero. His image has been before me these thirty-four years. God bless his beloved memory, his friends, and comrades!" [20]

In 1909, the official monument to the memory of Sam Davis was dedicated on the grounds of the State Capitol in Nashville. A tablet placed there notes that the heroic bronze figure was funded by private contributions from every state in the American union.

But those who seek the essence of this American hero travel to nearby Smyrna. There in the backyard of the family home, Charles Louis and Jane Simmons Davis committed the body of their boy to the ground. And there, for more than a century now, visitors have continued to come. [21]

***O Southland! Bring your laurels,
And add your wreath, O North!
Let glory claim the Hero's name
And tell the world his worth. [22]***

Endnotes

1. Kennedy's account of his wagon trip to Pulaski is told in CV, Vol. 4, pp. 35-6.
2. Dodge recorded his recollections of Davis in a letter to the editor of CV, 15 June 1897, later published in Vol. 5, pp. 355-7. Sam Davis was captured late in the afternoon of Friday, 19 November 1863; SHSP, Vol. 25, p. 233. **continue**
3. CV, Vol. 5, p. 356. **continue**
4. *Ibid.* **continue**
5. *Ibid.* **continue**
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 554-6. **continue**
7. A number of chroniclers of the Sam Davis legend have confused or manufactured quotes in their retelling of the story. Gen. Dodge, the only witness to this interview, left only his impressions, quoted here from his letter of 1897. **continue**
8. CV, Vol. 5, p. 555. **continue**
9. Coleman Davis Smith's recollections were published in *The Tennessee Civil War Veterans' Questionnaire*, Gustavus W. Dyer and John T. Moore, compilers, (1985), Vol. 5, pp. 1973-5. **continue**
10. *Ibid.* **continue**
11. As published in CV, Vol. 3, p. 183. **continue**
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 358. **continue**
13. Although Kennedy took receipt of Davis' personal effects from Chaplain Young, Lindsley, p. 170, states that Sam Davis gave his keepsakes to Rev. Lawrence. **continue**
14. Pvt. A. W. Bill of the 61st Illinois Infantry watched the execution from the ranks and left his recollections in CV, Vol. 17, p. 285; Joshua Brown, a fellow prisoner, remembered that Sam Davis, "seeing us at the windows, bowed to us his last farewell." *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 183. **continue**
15. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 358. The most contemporary account extant is a clipping from the *Pulaski Chanticleer* of 2 December 1863, republished in CV, Vol. 17, p. 279. Cited herein as Chanticleer. **continue**
16. Chanticleer. **continue**
17. Sam Davis' last questioner is most often identified as one "Captain Chickasaw" of Gen. Dodge's staff. Davis' last words and indeed, the quotations attributed to all the participants near the gallows have been recorded many times with slight variations. Those given here are from *Ibid.*, the most immediate account after the execution. **continue**
18. CV, Vol. 17, p. 185. **continue**
19. *Ibid.*, p. 285. **continue**
20. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 555. **continue**
21. Both the Sam Davis and Dewitt Smith Jobe Confederate Medals of Honor are on public display at the Sam Davis Memorial Home, Smyrna, Tennessee. **continue**
22. From the poem, *Sam Davis*, by Ella Wheeler Wilcox.



A Tribute to Sam Davis

by John Trotwood Moore

"Tell me his name and you are free," The general said, while from the tree
The grim rope dangled threat'ningly

The birds ceased singing—happy birds. That sang of home and mother-words.

The sunshine kissed his cheek—dear sun, It loves a life that's just begun.

The very breezes held their breath To watch the fight 'twixt life and death.

And O, how calm and sweet and free Smiled back the hills of Tennessee!

Smiled back the hills as if to say: "O save your life for us to-day!"

"Tell me his name and you are free," The General said, "and I shall see
You safe within the Rebel line—
I'd love to save such life as thine." A tear gleamed down the ranks of blue.

(The bayonets were tipped with dew); Across the rugged cheek of war
God's angels rolled a teary star.

The boy looked up, and this they heard: "And would you have me break my word?"

A tear stood in the General's eye: "My boy, I hate to see thee die;

Give me the traitor's name and fly!" Young Davis smiled, as calm and free
As He who walked on Galilee:

"Had I a thousand lives to live, Had I a thousand lives to give,
I'd lose them—nay, I'd gladly die Before
I'd live one life a lie!"

He turned, for not a soldier stirred. "Your duty, men; I gave my word."

The hills smiled back a farewell smile, The breeze sobbed o'er his bier awhile,

The birds broke out in glad refrain, The sunbeams kissed his cheek again,

Then gathering up their blazing bars, They shook his name among the stars.

O stars, that now his brothers are, O sun, his sire in truth and light,
Go tell the listening worlds afar

Of him who died for truth and right. For martyr of all martyrs he

Who died to save an enemy!

About Samuel Davis

From: **Confederate Veteran** Vol. IV, No. 2, February, 1896

Testimony to His Noble Character -- Honors Paid to His Memory by Union Soldiers

At the January meeting of the Tennessee Historical Society, Mr. John C. Kennedy told the story of events in connection with Samuel Davis' death and burial at his home, which he states as follows:

By request, I write, after a lapse of thirty-three years, my recollection of the scenes and incidents attending the going for, the taking up, and conveying of the body of Samuel Davis to his parents near Smyrna, Tenn. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were not certain that it was their son who had been executed at Pulaski. They had made diligent efforts through various channels to trace the "Grape Vine" story that it was their Sam, but were not assured. At last the time was set to start on the search; Mrs. Davis gave me a piece of plaid linsey of that used for his jacket lining, and also described his boots, and told of other things that only a good and loving mother could have thought about. She was interrupted occasionally by suggestions from Mr. Davis.

The start was made with two mules hitched to a very heavy carryall. We had a meal sack containing a boiled ham and about a half bushel of corn pones, on which their son Oscar, a small boy who was to accompany me, and I were to live while gone.

We reached Nashville that evening too late to get a pass, but I procured a metallic case and box and had them put in the conveyance. The next morning I went to Gen. Rousseau, who declined to give me a pass and sent me to Gen. Grant's Adjutant General, who kindly and politely, but positively refused also, replying to all my pleadings for his mother's sake: "No Sir! No Sir! No Sir!"

I then returned to Gen. Rousseau, whom I had known in Kentucky in my boyhood days, and again asked for a pass, which, after some boyhood reminiscences not necessary to repeat, he supplied me for myself, the boy and team to Columbia, which was as far as his lines extended, telling me that was all he could do. I gladly accepted the pass, which was written on a piece of paper elegantly printed, and looked like a large bank note.

We entered the lines at Columbia, and drove straight through town, not stopping until we reached the picket on the other side, who, after looking over our pass, but could not read it, and seeing the coffin and small boy, permitted us to go on. The same thing occurred when we reached the picket at Pulaski, who permitted us to enter the town. When near the Square, I left Oscar to hold the mules while I went to the Provost Marshal to get a pass or find out what he would do with us. His office was in the court house. He asked how I got into Pulaski, and I handed him Gen. Rousseau's pass. He looked up and curtly remarked: "This is no account here. What do you want?" I told him I had come for the body of Sam Davis who had been hanged; that his parents wanted it at home.

His manner at once changed and, extending his hand, he said: "Tell them, for me, that he died the bravest of the brave, an honor to them and with the respect of every man in this command." He then asked what more he could do to help me. I requested return passes and a permit to take up the body, which he cheerfully gave. I also asked if he thought I would have any trouble or interference while I was at the graveyard; and he replied: "No sir. If you do, I'll give you a company -- yes, a regiment if necessary."

Taking advantage of his cordial words, I asked him how Sam was captured; as Mr. Davis had

requested me to spare no pains to find out how and when he was taken. He said he did not know any of the particulars, but showed me two books in which records were kept in his office, and the only entry, after giving his name and description, was, as I remember, "Captured on the Lambs Ferry road by Capt. McKenzie's scouts."

Before leaving home I was referred for assistance, if necessary while in Pulaski, to a Mr. Richardson, who had been (if not then) the County Court Clerk. We found him willing and ready to aid all in his power. The grave digger agreed to take the body up for \$20. The next morning he, together with his assistants, Mr. Richardson, Oscar, and I were busy at the grave when four or five Federal soldiers came up. One of them advanced to me, raising his cap politely, and, in a subdued tone of voice, proffered for himself and comrades to assist, if desired. I thanked him sincerely, for I did not know what their presence might mean, but declined their services. When the box was raised and the lid removed the cap of white was still over his head down to his neck, tied with long strings, which were wrapped around his neck two or three times. His boots were on, but the legs cut off at the ankles. I took from my pocket the piece of his jacket lining and saw that they were alike. When I removed the cap I found the face was black, but recognizable. We then transferred the body to the metallic case. During all the time the body was being examined and transferred the Federal soldiers stood in line with caps off, paying tribute in acts, if not in words. Upon our return from the cemetery, the Provost Marshal said the Chaplain, who was with Sam at the gallows, had some keepsakes for the mother and father. He gave me a little book, in which was a farewell message to his mother, and the buttons from his coat and vest.

The Chaplain told me that when at the scaffold, sitting on his coffin, he talked to him about meeting his God, that he showed no fear nor uneasiness. While in the conversation an officer came up and said: "Mr. Davis, I suppose you have not forgotten Gen. Dodge's offer." Sam, not raising his head, said: "What is that?" The officer replied: "Your horse and side arms, and an escort to the Confederate lines, if you will tell who gave you those papers." Sam then replied, still not raising his head: "I'll die a thousand deaths before I will tell."

The officer then said: "Mr. Davis, I have one more question to ask." Sam said: "What is it?" "I want to know if you are the man my scouts chased so close on Tuesday night that you crossed the road in front of them, beating their horses the face with your hat, but got away? Were you the man?"

The Chaplain says he threw his head back and looking at the officer said, in a quick, sharp tone of voice, "How do you know that?"

The Captain answered, "It is sufficient - I know it. Are you the man?"

Sam dropped his head in a moment and replied quietly, "I have nothing to tell you."

Sam's deliberation was clear even then, that if he confessed it was he, it would implicate some one who had been kind to him.

In a few more minutes, without sign of fear or weakness, was ended a life that was an honor to his family, country and to the human race.

After leaving Pulaski some miles, Oscar complained of being hungry, but the child was sickened by the odor from the unsealed casket, on which we were seated. He tried the bread and meat, but his stomach would not retain it. Before we reached home, however, he had lost his squeamishness -- hunger prevailed.

We stopped the first night near Lynnville. When we got to the river near Columbia, we found the

officer in charge of troops at this point had ordered ferry boats stopped, and there was no way to cross except by fording, as the pontoon they were constructing would not be ready that morning.

I left the conveyance and mules with Oscar, cautioning him not to talk to any body while I would go and see the officer. He was standing on the river bank when I approached him and explained my errand.

He immediately turned to an orderly and said, "Go down and order the ferry boat to take that team and corpse over the river."

I thanked him and started back, when I saw the conveyance completely surrounded by soldiers. It was a very steep descent to the ferry, and I went to the head of the mules, taking hold of the bridles to hold them back while going down the hill, when the soldiers said, "Stranger, we know who this is. You get in the wagon; we'll see it goes down safe," and so they did. They practically carried the wagon aboard the boat, and would not leave it when we landed on the north side. The hill was steeper to go up than the one we came down. They ordered me to sit there and drive, and again they all got a hand or a shoulder somewhere and pushed us to the top of the hill, and when I thanked them they quietly raised their caps. Without further incident we reached Nashville, and drove to where the Adams Express Company's office now is, which was then where our present townsman, Mr. Cornelius, had his undertaking establishment, and turned the body over to him, with specific instructions about the shrouding. Mr. Davis had said to me, "If you think it is best that Jane and I should not see him, do as you think best about the matter.

On the evening of the seventh day after leaving home we drove in the big gate, some distance from the house. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were watching, and when they saw the casket, Mrs. Davis threw her arms above her head and fell. All was sorrow in that home.

I had a boy catch my horse to go home to see my old mother and father, and change clothing, etc., but Mr. Davis prevailed upon me to stay and send for what I needed.

The next morning, while standing out in the yard, Mr. Davis came to me, hesitated, then catching his breath almost between each word, said, "John, don't you think it's hard a father can't see the face of his own child?" I replied that I thought it best that he and Mrs. Davis should remember him as they saw him last. He turned and left me. I drove the carryall that afternoon, with the body across the creek to the old family grave-yard where he was buried.

In a short time my mother died, and Mr. Davis sent over the same vehicle that had brought Sam's body home to take her body to the grave, and when the boy who drove it over started to get up to drive it to the grave, Mr. Davis stepped up and, shaking his head, said, "No -- no --nobody but I can drive that. Get down, and let me get up there," and he did. He was a worthy sire of a noble son.

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Supplemental to Mr. Kennedy's reminiscence, Oscar Davis has written to the VETERAN his recollections of that event. They concur closely with those of Mr. Kennedy. He states that while Mr. Kennedy was gone to the hotel to get some things, some of the Federal soldiers drove up and asked if that was the body of the young man who was hanged not long since, and being told that it was, some of them shed tears, and said: "He ought not to have been hung, and we will have to suffer for it sooner or later."

# ::: Boy Hero of the Confederacy :::

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The following text is taken from *Valor in Gray: The Recipients of The Confederate Medal of Honor* by Gregg S. Clemmer.  
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The heavy spring-wagon attracted little notice as it rumbled into Columbia, Tennessee, in early December of 1863. Pulled by two mules, the conveyance carried but two passengers, a man and boy. Their journey was a sad one and it was readily explained in a single glance. Behind them--on the bed of the wagon--lay a coffin.

With the reins in his hands, John C. Kennedy guided the wagon through the busy streets. He wanted no trouble and when a picket ordered him to a halt on the southern outskirts of town, he swallowed hard, told little Oscar to say nothing, and then hoped for the best.

Identification? Kennedy nodded and dug nervously into his pocket, producing a pass. But for some reason, the sentry hardly glanced at the paper, his curiosity drawn first to the coffin and then to the young boy. With hardly a word, he waved them through.

The same thing happened a day later when the coffin-laden wagon approached the town of Pulaski. Puzzled by this lack of asserted Federal authority, Kennedy and Oscar entered the town and parked the wagon near the square. It was the next move that would be the hardest.

John Kennedy had come to Pulaski at the request of Oscar's family. No longer could they deny the rumors that it might be their 21-year-old son who had been hung as a spy in the last week of November. At first it seemed impossible and they had discounted the talk. But the report persisted. Unwilling to believe yet hopelessly drawn to free themselves of this torment, they had asked Kennedy to go and find out. And if it was true, they'd be forever obliged if he'd bring the body of their boy back home for burial.

The father had advised Kennedy that once he got to Pulaski, he should contact an old family acquaintance, a Mr. Richardson, who was clerk of the county court there. To identify the remains, the mother, her voice breaking, described her son's boots and gave Kennedy a piece of the plaid linsey that she had sewn as a lining for her son's jacket. And in case there was any question, well, their youngest son, Oscar, could ride along. Then with a meal sack containing a boiled ham and a half bushel of corn pones to see them through, the twosome departed.

They reached Nashville that evening. Unable to get an audience with the Federal authorities, Kennedy procured a coffin, a "metallic case and box" as he described it. The next morning, after first denying their request for a pass, Gen. Lovell Rousseau reluctantly issued Kennedy--a boyhood friend from old Kentucky--the necessary paper to clear the city. But he warned his old friend that his authority did not extend into Columbia.

Now, thinking back on the events of the last several days, Kennedy could only marvel at how easily they had gotten into Pulaski. Yet he did not relish meeting the executioners of his friend and as he got out of the wagon, he steeled himself for trouble. Instructing Oscar to hold the mules, he headed for the courthouse to see the provost marshal for a pass and, as he remembered years later, to "find out what he would do with us."

The Federal official eyed Kennedy then gruffly demanded to know how he got into Pulaski. Kennedy meekly handed him the pass.

"This is no account here," stated the officer bluntly, then as he narrowed his eyes on Kennedy, he demanded, "What do you want?"

John Kennedy replied forthrightly that he had come at the request of the family for the body of the young man who had been hanged. The parents simply wanted him brought home.

Instantly, the officer's whole attitude softened and he rose and offered his hand in welcome. With emotion in his voice, he put Kennedy at ease, assuring him he would do everything in his power to facilitate the request. For a moment there was an awkward silence as both men reassessed each other. Finally, not knowing what else to say, the officer spoke. "Tell them, for me, that he died the bravest of the brave, an honor to them and with the respect of every man in this command."

Kennedy was stunned as the officer handed him return passes and signed a permit for them to take up the body. This was far more cooperation than he had expected and, still unsure of his reception, he inquired if he would encounter any trouble or interference at the graveyard.

The officer was adamant. "No sir. If you do, I'll give you a company--yes, a regiment if necessary."

Bewildered by this unexpected cordiality, Kennedy returned to the wagon to find Oscar surrounded by soldiers inquiring if he was there to claim the body of the young man just hung. Oscar could only nod, no doubt frightened by all of this attention, whereupon several of the soldiers, moved by the scene of the somber lad and coffin, choked back that the dead man "ought not to have been hung," while others, fearful of retribution from the Confederates or perhaps even a Higher Power, felt they would certainly "suffer for it sooner or later."

Exhumation began the next morning and as the gravediggers labored, curious soldiers edged close. Speaking in hushed tones with kepis in hand, they asked if they might not be of some service. Kennedy acknowledged their respect, but politely declined their offer.

The grim work continued and once the box was lifted from the ground and the lid removed, Kennedy looked in to make the identification. "I took from my pocket the piece of his jacket lining and saw that they were alike." Removing the white hood still over the head of the corpse, Kennedy saw that the face was indeed "recognizable."

As they gently lifted the body to the "metallic case," more soldiers appeared, gathering quietly in lines with caps off. What was the meaning of this unexpected tribute from the men who had put his friend to death?

Back at the provost marshal's office, the chaplain who had attended the condemned soldier in the days before his execution, gave Kennedy a few personal effects--a little book and some brass vest and coat buttons. It was from this man that John Kennedy finally learned the extraordinary circumstances of the hanging.

Now, he no longer wondered at the reverential reception accorded them as they moved through Pulaski. Everyone wanted a last look at the casket of the unforgettable young soldier. And as if by magic, word of their coming spread ahead of them.

At the Duck River near Columbia, Kennedy found that the ferry had been halted by military decree. Approaching the officer in charge on the riverbank, Kennedy asked if there might not be some way to cross the river. The officer eyed him, then, in a moment of recognition, spotted the casket in the wagon. Briskly he turned to an orderly and said, "Go down and order the ferry boat to take that team and corpse over the river."

A steep defile to the water's edge lay before them, but as Kennedy returned to Oscar, he found the boy and wagon surrounded by dozens of soldiers in blue.

"Stranger, we know who this is," one of them said to him as he neared. "You get in the wagon; we'll see it goes down safe."

With infinite care, the Billy Yanks "practically carried the wagon aboard the boat." But once the ferry was across and tied to the opposite bank, another hill, steeper and longer, faced the travelers. Firmly--for they would not take no for an answer--the blue uniformed volunteer escorts told Kennedy to sit in the wagon and drive while they safely muscled the conveyance--with hand and shoulder--to the crest of the hill. Once on top, they stood in the road, and as Kennedy and little Oscar nodded their appreciation, the boys in blue raised their caps in silent salute.

A hero was going home. [1]

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Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge eyed the young man carefully. Just hours before, members of the 7th Kansas Cavalry had captured several suspicious individuals about 15 miles outside Pulaski, Tennessee. There was little doubt that they were all active rebel sympathizers and Dodge quickly ordered them locked in the Giles County jail. It seemed like just another routine arrest but the Jayhawkers had discovered maps of the Nashville defenses hidden under this fellow's saddle along with incriminating letters, newspapers, and dispatches in his boots and clothing. [2]

From this evidence, Dodge knew that one of "Coleman's Scouts" stood before him. For weeks, he had been "very anxious" to capture this "Coleman," and break up his band of spies that lurked east of Pulaski. Now it seemed, with at least one of "Coleman's" men in custody, he had his opportunity.

Dodge found his prisoner--a modest, unassuming fellow named Sam Davis--to be "a fine, soldierly looking young man, dressed in a faded Federal soldier's coat. He had a frank, open face, which was inclined to brightness." But as Dodge talked, conversing "pleasantly" with the captive in order to gain his confidence, he noted that Davis had little to say.

I tried to impress upon him the danger he was in and that I knew he was only a messenger, and held out to him the hope of lenient treatment if he would answer truthfully, as far as he could, my questions. [3]

Who had given him this critical information? And to whom was he to deliver it? Even more so, Dodge asked, who was "Coleman" and where could he be found?

Davis listened attentively as the general probed but "made no definite answer." Dodge then dropped all pretense of cordiality and bluntly explained to his prisoner the penalty for spying. Did he really prefer silence and a hangman's noose? [4]

Finding that his prisoner still would not cooperate, Dodge sent him back to the county jail to join the other prisoners. Surely once this Sam Davis considered his dark future from behind bars, he would be more forthcoming. Just to be sure, Dodge ordered his provost marshal, Capt. W. F. Armstrong, to place an informant in the cell near Davis. Perhaps that would work. [5]

But the scout kept his own counsel. Pvt. C. B. Van Pelt of the 81st Ohio Infantry, detailed as a clerk in Armstrong's office, took a liking to Sam Davis. Every morning he called the roll of prisoners and, as he reminisced years later, "mingled with them as man to man." With Sam Davis, he remembered, "we talked much of the similar circumstances under which we had left our homes." Van Pelt was struck by Davis' patriotism, but even more so by Sam's "even tenor of gentleness," concluding that "had I been placed in his position, he would doubtless have proffered me the same sympathy I endeavored to extend to him." [6]

But despite the best efforts of the provost marshal's spies, Sam Davis let nothing slip. Unable to get answers by subterfuge, Gen. Dodge again had the Confederate brought before him. This time he held nothing back. Davis would be tried as a spy and with the mountain of evidence against him, he would surely be convicted and sentenced to hang. But if he identified who had passed him the information and if he fingered "Coleman," he would be given a horse and safe passage through the lines and save himself a trip to the gallows.

Dodge expected Davis to grab the offer. But to his amazement, the 21-year old scout "very quietly and firmly refused to do it." [7]

Now the general had no choice but to convene a court martial, which after hearing the evidence, quickly found the Tennessean guilty and sentenced him to hang. It fell to Pvt. Van Pelt to inform Sam Davis of the sentence.

I read to him a copy of his death-sentence [yet] a reprieve was extended, which I read to him [also], if he would inform us where "Coleman" was. He stood before me, an uncrowned hero, his eyes flashing, and said: "I will die a thousand deaths rather than betray my cause." We were both moved to tears and remained silent for a time. He then talked of his family. [8]

News of the verdict spread quickly through the streets of Pulaski. At least one delegation, headed by Mrs. John A. Jackson, personally appealed to Gen. Dodge for leniency. Others sought out provost marshal Armstrong and Chaplain James Young of the 81st Ohio. Certainly something could be done to save this young man!

But the most pathetic appeal came from Coleman Davis Smith, Sam Davis' personal servant. Two years younger than Sam, Coleman had been "given to Sam as a play fellow" while still a boy. When Sam joined the war effort, so did Coleman, and as he remembered years later, "We slept anywhere and ate anywhere." Captured beside his master, he was also locked away in the county jail when Van Pelt brought the bad news. [9]

Earnestly, Coleman begged Sam to "tell what the Yankees wanted him to tell," but Davis shook his head. He would not compromise the identity of his leader. The slave, desperate to save his lifelong friend, then asked if he might not tell, but again Sam Davis said no. No one must tell; never would he permit the sacrifice of a friend and both men knew why; unknown to Gen. Dodge, Capt. H. B. Shaw, alias "Coleman," the chief of the scouts, languished in an adjacent cell! [10]

On the day before the execution, Sam penned a last letter to his family in Rutherford County.

Pulaski, Giles County, Tenn., Nov. 26, 1863

Dear Mother: Oh, how painful it is to write you! I have got to die to-morrow morning--to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you good-by forevermore. Mother, I do not fear to die. Give my love to all.

Your son, Samuel Davis

Mother, tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see you all once more, but I never will any more.

Mother and Father, do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me. It will not do any good. Father, you can send after my remains if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tenn. I will leave some things, too, with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles county, Tenn., south of Columbia.

S.D. [11]

That evening, Sam received a visit from Chaplain Young. Time was short now, yet with some of the other prisoners, he joined Young in a short devotional that included the singing of "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." For the rest of his life, Rev. James Young never forgot the "animated voice" of the condemned man. [12]

At ten o'clock the next morning--one witness remembered the day as "fair and warm"--they came for him. To a local Methodist minister, the Rev. Mr. Lawrence, Davis left his overcoat and a few personal effects; would he see that they got to his family? [13]

Guards then tied his hands behind him and shackled his legs. Then they walked him outside. Slowly, awkwardly, he climbed aboard a wagon. He stood there for a moment, searching the crowd. Then shifting his direction, he faced the courthouse jail, looking for familiar faces that might be watching from the windows. There! Awkwardly, he bent forward against the bonds that held him. This was all he could do--a final, painful bow--to acknowledge the deep bonds of sacrifice and comradeship shared with the men who crowded the barred windows for a last glimpse of him. [14]

With a coffin his only seat, Sam Davis sat down in discomfort; the fetters around his feet pinched painfully tight. Chaplain Young took a knife and cut the boots at the ankle to relieve the pressure. Then, guarded by a sea of armed soldiers, the wagon rumbled toward the gallows erected on East Hill. At "precisely five minutes past ten o'clock," the wagon entered the hollow square of soldiers--four deep--that surrounded the scaffold. [15]

Sam Davis stepped from the wagon and seated himself for a moment on a bench at the foot of the gallows. He seemed resolved to his fate, "glancing casually at his coffin as it was taken from the wagon." [16]

To provost marshal Armstrong he inquired how long he had to live. "Fifteen minutes," came the reply. Perhaps then, might Capt. Armstrong tell him the latest news from the battlefield?

Dispatches from Chattanooga were filled with reports of a Union victory at Missionary Ridge, Armstrong replied.

The prisoner quietly expressed "much regret," then, almost as an afterthought, remarked, "The boys will have to fight the rest of the battles without me."

It was now time. Slowly, so as not to stumble, Sam Davis climbed the steps. Armstrong approached. "I am sorry to be compelled to perform this painful duty."

"It does not hurt me, Captain. I am innocent and I am prepared to die; so do not think hard of it."

Then again, but now for the last time, came the question: Would he not save himself and identify "Coleman?" It was not yet too late!

But the answer came back still full of resolve. "Do you suppose that I would betray a friend? No, sir: I would die a thousand times first!" And then, after a prayer with Chaplain Young, he stepped upon the trap, turned to Armstrong and said, "I am ready." [17]

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The sacrifice of Sam Davis quickly assumed the mystique of legend. The story of his heroic stand in the face of death was told and retold around countless Southern campfires and after the war was lost, around the impoverished dinner tables and blackened hearths of a war-ravaged region.

But the indelible picture of the young martyr also went north with the victors. Pvt. John S. Randal of the 61st Illinois Infantry asserted to his dying day that in his entire time in the war, he never "witnessed such a pathetic and heroic scene," noting unabashedly that he had sat at attention on his horse that day with "tears streaming down his face". [18]

Others were less eloquent but just as sincere. Pvt. A. W. Bill remembered hearing many soldiers in the 61st later swear softly to themselves: "I wish that man could have gotten away." [19]

After the execution, Pvt. Van Pelt found that "night and day came and went, but [writing in 1897] I could not forget, nor have I to this day forgotten, that boy hero. His image has been before me these thirty-four years. God bless his beloved memory, his friends, and comrades!" [20]

In 1909, the official monument to the memory of Sam Davis was dedicated on the grounds of the State Capitol in Nashville. A tablet placed there notes that the heroic bronze figure was funded by private contributions from every state in the American union.

But those who seek the essence of this American hero travel to nearby Smyrna. There in the backyard of the family home, Charles Louis and Jane Simmons Davis committed the body of their boy to the ground. And there, for more than a century now, visitors have continued to come. [21]

**O Southland! Bring your laurels,  
And add your wreath, O North!  
Let glory claim the Hero's name  
And tell the world his worth. [22]**

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#### Endnotes

1. Kennedy's account of his wagon trip to Pulaski is told in CV, Vol. 4, pp. 35-6. Click here to continue reading where you left off.
2. Dodge recorded his recollections of Davis in a letter to the editor of CV, 15 June 1897, later published in Vol. 5, pp. 355-7. Sam Davis was captured late in the afternoon of Friday, 19 November 1863; SHSP, Vol. 25, p. 233. continue
3. CV, Vol. 5, p. 356. continue
4. Ibid. continue
5. Ibid. continue
6. Ibid., pp. 554-6. continue
7. A number of chroniclers of the Sam Davis legend have confused or manufactured quotes in their retelling of the story. Gen. Dodge, the only witness to this interview, left only his impressions, quoted here from his letter of 1897. continue
8. CV, Vol. 5, p. 555. continue
9. Coleman Davis Smith's recollections were published in The Tennessee Civil War Veterans' Questionnaire, Gustavus W. Dyer and John T. Moore, compilers, (1985), Vol. 5, pp. 1973-5. continue
10. Ibid. continue
11. As published in CV, Vol. 3, p. 183. continue
12. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 358. continue
13. Although Kennedy took receipt of Davis' personal effects from Chaplain Young, Lindsley, p. 170, states that Sam Davis gave his keepsakes to Rev. Lawrence. continue
14. Pvt. A. W. Bill of the 61st Illinois Infantry watched the execution from the ranks and left his recollections in CV, Vol. 17, p. 285; Joshua Brown, a fellow prisoner, remembered that Sam Davis, "seeing us at the windows, bowed to us his last farewell." Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 183. continue
15. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 358. The most contemporary account extant is a clipping from the Pulaski Chanticleer of 2 December 1863, republished in CV, Vol. 17, p. 279. Cited herein as Chanticleer. continue
16. Chanticleer. continue
17. Sam Davis' last questioner is most often identified as one "Captain Chickasaw" of Gen. Dodge's staff. Davis' last words and indeed, the quotations attributed to all the participants near the gallows have been recorded many times with slight variations. Those given here are from Ibid., the most immediate account after the execution. continue
18. CV, Vol. 17, p. 185. continue
19. Ibid., p. 285. continue
20. Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 555. continue
21. Both the Sam Davis and Dewitt Smith Jobe Confederate Medals of Honor are on public display at the Sam Davis Memorial Home, Smyrna, Tennessee. continue
22. From the poem, Sam Davis, by Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

# Every Inch a Hero.

BY J. B. KILLEBREW

One of the saddest and most thrilling events of the Civil War was the hanging of Sam Davis, in Pulaski, Tenn., November 27, 1863. He was a young man of excellent habits, and possessed a



## SAM DAVIS.

(From a photograph, the property of S. A. Cunningham, Publisher and Editor "Confederate Veteran." Nashville, Tenn.)

courage that nothing could daunt. He was reared in the country, and up to the time of the breaking out of hostilities labored on the farm. He entered the army in 1861, in his seventeenth year, joining Colonel Ledbetter's company of the First Tennessee regiment, and in a short time his bravery, prudence, and zeal recommended him to his commanding officer as one fitted to perform the arduous and perilous duties of a scout. He was accordingly detached from his regiment, and made a member of Coleman's scouts.

Toward the close of October, 1863, it was considered highly important to the success of Bragg's movements that the strength of the Federal fortifications of Middle Tennessee should be accurately known, and young Davis was selected to procure this information.

He set out on his dangerous mission, and, after securing all the information that was expected or desired, he was arrested on his return, on the 20th of November, within the Federal lines, with the plans of the fortifications of Nashville and all other places in Middle Tennessee on his person. The accuracy of these plans and the minuteness of details showed at once that his informant was a man holding a high position among the Federal engineers, and when questioned concerning his sources of information, young Davis candidly admitted that the plans had been furnished by an officer high in command in the [Federal army], but resolutely refused to disclose his name. A free pardon was offered him and a safe return within the Confederate lines, on the condition that he would impart the sources of his information, but nothing could shake his resolution.

General Dodge, finding it impossible to move him in his stubborn determination after repeated conferences, summoned a military commission, of which Colonel Madison Miller, of the Eighteenth Missouri Infantry, was president, for the trial of Davis on the following charges and specifications :

CHARGE I: Being a spy. *Specifications:* In this, that he, Samuel Davis, of Coleman's scouts. In the service of the so-called Confederate States, did come within the lines of the United States forces in Middle Tennessee for the purpose of secretly gaining information concerning these forces, and conveying the same to the enemy, and was arrested within the said lines on or about November 20, 1863. This in Giles County, Tennessee.

CHARGE II: Being a carrier of mails, communications, and information from within the lines of the United States Army to persons in arms against the government. *Specifications:* In this, that the said Samuel Davis, on or about November 20, 1863, was arrested in Giles County, Tennessee engaged in carrying mails and

Information from within the lines of United States Screes to persona In arms against the United States Government.

To which charges and specifications the accused pleaded as follows:

To the specification in first charge, " Not guilty "

To the second charge, " Guilty."

After a patient investigation of several days, the following were the findings and sentence:

The court finds the accused as follows :

Of the specifications to the first charge, " Guilty."

Of the first charge, "Guilty."

Of the specifications to the second charge, " Guilty."

Of the second charge, " Guilty."

And the Commission does therefore sentence him, the said Samuel Davis, of Coleman's scouts, in the service of the so-called Confederate States, to be hung by the neck until he is dead, at such time and place as the commanding general may direct; two thirds of the members of the Commission concurring in the sentence.

Brigadier-General G. M. Dodge approved of the findings and sentence. The sentence was ordered to be carried into effect Friday, November 27, 1863, between the hours of 10 o'clock A. M. and 6 o'clock P. M., and Brigadier-General T. W. Sweeney, commanding Second Division, was ordered to cause the necessary arrangements to be made for carrying out the order in the proper manner.

The prisoner was notified of the findings and the sentence of the military commission by Captain Armstrong, the local provost marshal, and though manifesting some surprise al the severity of the punishment to be inflicted, he bore himself bravely, and showed not the quiver of a muscle. Later in the day Chaplain Young visited him, and found him resigned to his fate. After prayer by the chaplain he inquired concerning the news of the day, and upon being told that Bragg was defeated he expressed the deepest regret.

The scaffold for the execution of the prisoner was built upon an elevation on the eastern side of the town of Pulaski, near the college, and commanded an extensive view. The position could be seen from almost every part of the town. At precisely 10 o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 27th of November, 1863, the prisoner, with pinioned arms, was placed in a wagon and seated upon his coffin. In this condition he was conveyed to the scaffold. Davis stepped from the wagon, and, without any nervousness, seated himself on a bench at the foot of the scaffold, glancing occasionally at the coffin while the assistants were taking it from the wagon. He displayed no trepidation, and seemed to be the least interested of all those present. Quietly turning to Captain Armstrong, he asked with an unshaken voice how long he had to live, and being told just fifteen minutes, he remarked in substance that the remainder of the battles for the freedom of his government and the liberties of his people would have to be fought without his assistance.



**Do you suppose, I would betray a friend? No; I would die a thousand times first!**

Captain Armstrong, turning to him, said, " I am sorry to be compelled to perform this painful duty." To which Davis replied, " Captain, I am innocent; I have only tried to serve my country and my people ; I die in the discharge of duty, and am prepared to die. ! do not think hard of you."

Captain Chickasaw, then approaching, asked the prisoner if it would not be better to save his life by disclosing the name of the officer who furnished the facts concerning the fortifications, etc., and then intimated that it was not yet too late. Upon hearing this the prisoner turned and, with a glowing indignation, said, "Do you suppose, sir, that I would betray a friend ? No; I would die a thousand times first. I will never betray the confidence reposed in me."

Committing then a few keepsakes to Mr. Lawrence, a Methodist minister, he mounted the scaffold with a serene countenance, in company with Chaplain Young, whom he requested to pray with him. After a prayer by the chaplain, the delicacy and appropriateness of which on this occasion may well be questioned, the prisoner stepped upon the trap, and paid the severe penalty of devotion to principle and duty. He died with the calmness of a philosopher, the sternness of a patriot, the serenity of a Christian, and the courage of a martyr.

Never did a deeper gloom spread over any community than did over that of Pulaski when Davis' tragic death was made known. The deed was openly and boldly stigmatized by the common soldiery as a needless assassination. No man ever awakened a deeper sympathy. His youth, his courage, his inflexible devotion to the principles of honor, his coolness under trying circumstances, all pleaded powerfully in his behalf. His sad fate is one of the touching themes of the county, and even now, after the lapse of thirty-four years, whenever his name is mentioned a tender sympathy causes the tear to rise unbidden to the eye. His memory is cherished by the people he loved so well; his name is embalmed in the hearts of his kindred and friends ; and they regard him as a martyr to what he conceived to be his duty—the preservation of the sacredness of confidence. His case furnishes a melancholy example of the atrocities still permitted under the usages of civilized warfare.

In reviewing, after the lapse of years, all the facts connected with this sad affair, it must be admitted that there were many mitigating circumstances in the case of this dauntless young soldier which pleaded powerfully for clemency on the part of the post commander. Davis was captured fifteen miles from Pulaski. He pretended no disguise, but wore at the time of his capture his arms and the Confederate uniform. It is true that the plans of the fortifications in Middle Tennessee were found on his person, but no proof further than his own admission was adduced to show that he was in possession of them in any other capacity than as a courier or letter-carrier, and might, in the discharge of his duty as such, have unconsciously come within the lines, in addition, his youth, his manliness, his high courage and sense of honor, his unflinching constancy under the severest trial and the greatest temptations, and his heroic conduct to the last, were qualities that should have induced a noble-hearted commander to give the prisoner the benefit of a doubt.

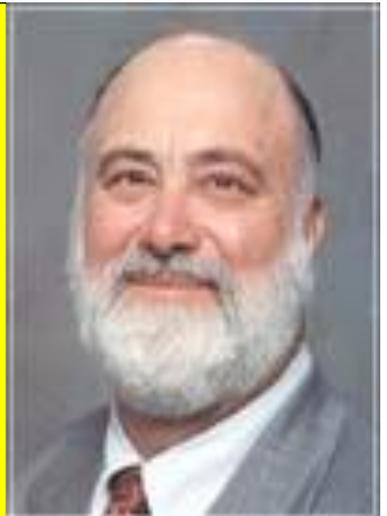
[http://sonsofthesouth.blogspot.com/2010/09/camp-fires-of-confederacy-volume-of\\_890.html](http://sonsofthesouth.blogspot.com/2010/09/camp-fires-of-confederacy-volume-of_890.html)

## **Hear Pastor Weaver's sermon on THE DEATH OF SAM DAVIS at this link:**

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=111502102516>

(Copy and Paste in your browser)

**This amazing story is recounted to us by Pastor every time we gather together as campers. Hear the story yourselves, told like no other can tell it, just as we hear it at camp!**



# CAREER OF "COLEMAN'S" SCOUTS

## From: Confederate Veteran, Vol. VI, February, 1898

Four of the few surviving members of the celebrated scouts organized by Capt. H. B. Shaw met in Nashville recently and made the following report:

We, the surviving fellow scouts, have met and from memory given to the Veteran a list of all who belonged to Shaw's Scouts:

H. B. Shaw, captain, known as "Capt. Coleman" was killed by a steamboat explosion on the Mississippi River after the war.

John Davis, once wounded, had a severe case of typhoid fever, and was honorably discharged. Was killed in the same explosion with Shaw.

Alf H. Douglas, captured twice; escaped once, and was recaptured by Gen. Forrest. Stayed to the end.

Thomas M. Joplin, wounded twice, captured once, and was stolen from Nashville by Miss Anne Patterson, now Mrs. Anne Hill, of Nashville.

Bill T. Robinson, captured twice, escaped once. Was in prison at the end.

Everard Patterson, wounded three times, captured, and escaped from the penitentiary after having been court-martialed and sentenced to be shot. Paroled at Kingston, Georgia.

Bill Roberts, captured once, escaped, and stayed to the end.

Billy Moore, captured twice, and escaped from the court martial while being tried at Pulaski. Came back and stayed to the end.

Joshua Brown, captured and sent to prison; never returned to us. Now lives in New York City.

Munford Street, captured once, wounded, and sent prison. Never returned.

"Gup" Kibble, captured and never returned.

Tom Brown, captured, exchanged, and surrendered with Dick Taylor.

Alex Gregg, captured twice, wounded twice, and killed, but not in battle.

Sam Roberts, captured three times, escaped twice, court-martialed and sentenced to be shot; escaped from Clifton with a Yankee who was also sentenced to be shot. Dead.

Tom Hughes, badly wounded and discharged.

Dee Jobe, captured near Triune and murdered.

Dan Sneed, captured four times; escaped three times, twice in Indiana and once in Kentucky, by cutting holes in box-cars; was sent to prison the last time, where he stayed to the end of the war.

Sam Davis, captured and hanged at Pulaski.

Jack Coffee, captured three times, escaped twice; finally captured and killed.

John McIver, wounded twice badly; returned to duty and stayed to the end. Dead.

Bob Owens, wounded once; stayed to the end. Dead.

John Drane, wounded once; stayed to the end. Dead.

Pillow Humphreys, captured, exchanged, and stayed to the end. Dead.

"Kage" Everett, wounded twice, captured twice, and died in prison.

Dick Dillard, captured, and killed because he would tell nothing.

James T. Patterson, captured, returned to duty, and was honorably discharged on account of bad health. Dead.

Newt Vaughn, wounded badly; stayed to the end. Dead.

E. Grant, killed on his first day's duty.

Hans Carter, captured twice, recaptured once, went to prison and stayed there all during the war.

Jim Carter, captured and sent to prison. Never knew what became of him.

Hick Kelley, killed third day after entering service.

Josh Luck, captured twice; tried for his life at Franklin, Tenn., was defended by Gen. W. G. Brien, who saved him before a court martial; went to prison, returned to duty, and was killed near Nolensville. After being shot off his horse he killed two men.

Tom Gwinn, captured twice, exchanged once, went to prison. Don't know what became of him.

Charley Lippingwell, captured, and never returned to us.

Oscar Davis, too young to be in regular service, but was of great service to the scouts. So was Billy Woodruff, a mere boy, who would go on any hazardous errand into the Yankee lines.

Houston English, the negro boy who stole the papers which hung Sam Davis, deserves our highest esteem for what he did for us in saving us from capture. He went back and forth from Pulaski to Mr. English's, where we were all known. He saved the boys time and again.

Mr. Cunningham, we, the undersigned, do highly appreciate your efforts to raise a monument to Sam Davis, and will do all we can to help it financially. We have tried to furnish you a complete list of Coleman's Scouts.

Signed: Alf H. Douglas, E. M. Patterson, William  
B. Robinson, Tom M. Joplin.

From: Confederate Veteran, Vol. VI, March, 1898

W. H. "Buck" Porch reports some unintentional omissions from the list of "Coleman" Scouts, commanded by Capt. H. B. Shaw, as published in the February Veteran. They are R. F. Cotton, George Hughes, and John Schute, besides his own name. He took an active part in nearly all the duties connected with that organization, and he was with Sam Davis the night before he was captured. <http://www.tennessee-scv.org/Camp1293/cv1.htm>

# Execution of Sam Davis, Nov. 1863.

Introduction

From: **The Daily Herald**, Columbia, Tenn. April 24, 1969

“Frank Harrison Smith (1848 – 1915) is perhaps the dean of Maury County writers and historians. He was active in the organization of the Maury County Historical Society, serving as its secretary until his death. He was known as a careful researcher and he filled many large notebooks with his research, interviews, and notes. As a youngster during the Civil War, he was present during the fight between Gen. Nathan B. Forrest and Lt. A. W. Gould in downtown Columbia. Smith's eyewitness account of this altercation remains the only one written and is greatly quoted by Forrest's biographers.”

From: **Frank H. Smith's History of Maury County**  
As compiled by the Maury County Historical Society, 1969

## Execution of Sam Davis, Nov. 1863.

Interview taken by Frank H. Smith, Secty, Maury County Historical Society by  
of Maury Co., Tenn., 21 Dec. 1911, as revised by Mr. Moore  
July 1912.



Mr. Moore was born in Maury County, 15 March 1840, and has resided here continuously all his life. Mr. Moore enlisted at the beginning of the Civil War in the 48th Tenn. Infantry (of Col. Wm. M. Voorhies). Sometime in 1862, he was detailed especially by Gen. Braxton Bragg of the Confederate Army to serve with Capt. E. Coleman's scouts (alias Capt. Shaw).

He was personally acquainted with Sam Davis, and very intimate with him. Mr. Moore speaks of young Davis as a soldier of the highest integrity of character, always prompt in the discharge of every duty. He was level headed and of fine judgement; a boy who did not shirk any danger where duty called, and did not hesitate to go where it was deemed important in securing information.

Sam Davis belonged, I think, to the 1st Tenn. Infantry and he also had been especially detailed, possibly by Gen. Bragg, anyway, by a superior officer to serve with Capt. Coleman's Scouts, and it was while they were thus serving together that Moore and Davis got so intimate and well acquainted.

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Bob Owen, Wm. Street, Newt Vaughn and myself, all of whom belonged to Coleman's Scouts, were in Middle Tennessee about Sept. 1863. The Yankees were cutting all the cedar timber around Blue Springs, five miles southeast of Columbia, near the present line of the N. C. and St. L. R.R. We were lying out up here on the river on Geo. Kennon's lot, and could hear these yankees cutting the cedar timber, which was abundant at that time, to make cross-ties for the Railroad. We concluded that as we were going out that night, we would ride over and see what they were doing. It was then about three o'clock in the afternoon. When we got there, we found about four or five hundred negroes and a squad of soldiers in the woods. We kept away from the soldiers and rode around among the darkies and stopped and questioned them occasionally. Finally we came across an old negro that used to drive Wm. S. Fleming's carriage, the negro was named York Booker, and he lived in Columbia, and died here recently.

This negro looked up and recognized me, threw up his axe as far as he could and then lit out, stampeding all the other negroes. Newt Vaughn shot at him twice, that brought a stampede on the whole crowd, yankees, negroes, and all. We got 14 mules, one Yankee soldier and three negroes and put them on these mules and started about three o'clock to carry them across the Tennessee River. When we got across the river, we turned the stuff over to Col. Carter, who sent the whole thing up to Gen. Bragg's headquarters.

We came back in here and stayed about a week and then went over on the other side of the river. When we got there, we had orders from Gen. Bragg to report at his headquarters immediately -- just we four scouts -- Bragg was then on Missionary Ridge. We got there in the evening and went in and spoke to him and he said, "You are the men that want to get into a fight, I believe?" We told him we didn't know so well about that. He said, "You have been fighting inside the line." We told him he was mistaken about that, and he said, "Well, show me your passes." We all had them, handed them to him. He took them and tore them all up, all four together, saying, "I want you to report to your command", and he talked to us a few minutes. We did not object, and he said, "You go back to the baggage-train and stay all night, and report to me in the morning." We went and when we got to the baggage-train there were negroes there to take our horses. However, we looked after our own stock as we knew our lives depended on our horses.

The next morning we went up to Gen. Bragg's headquarters at nine o'clock. When we got there, Bragg, having a double private tent, opened it, saying "Come back in here." He had our passes all written out for us to go to our command and handed them to us. We thanked him and started out but he said, "Hold on here, sit down here again." We sat down and he said, "Now you boys could do me a heap of good in Tennessee if you could go back there and do as a man wanted you to do. Well, we told him we did not care about going back, and he said, "Now I might detail one hundred men and send them in there and get every one of them killed before they could find out what you boys could find out in a week, and I want you to go back."

I believe Newt Vaughn was the man who spoke up and he said, "General, we will go if you detail us to go, but we are not going on our own hock. He scratched his head, then talked awhile, trying to persuade us to go, but we told him we would not. He then said "Well you boys have been in there and know the roads, etc., and I will just have to detail you to go.," and asked us to give our passes back. So we were detailed by Gen. Bragg himself. Capt. Coleman had about 12 or 14 men in his company of scouts at that time.

When Gen. Dodge was leaving near Florence for Pulaski, in Nov. 1863, we were encamped on Big Creek, Giles County, on Bob English's place. Shaw detailed Bob Owen and myself to take some messages across the Tenn. River that night, and says, "It has got to go tonight." That was about three o'clock in the evening. We told him there would be about 20,000 soldiers (yankees) encamped along that road, and we did not see how we were going to get through. But he said it had to be done, so we told him we would take the chances, so he gave us the papers to cross Tennessee River at Decatur, by the next morning at breakfast. We started and went right through these camps. Rode down the road for three or four miles and then camped on both sides before we could find a good place to go across. We went then to Decatur and got there that morning just at daylight, called across the river, and made them come for us in ferryboat. Amos Barfield was Provost Marshal at Decatur at that time.

We went down the river about 20 miles, re-crossed and went back to Giles County. When we got there, Capt. Shaw had some more papers that he wanted to cross the river, and wanted me (W. J. Moore) to carry them across. I told him I could not carry them across that my horse was tired, I had ridden him all night and would have to have a new horse. So I came down close to Columbia and got me a new horse) started back and got about 12 or 14 miles from Columbia on the Pulaski pike about 12 or 1 o'clock at night. I noticed a light in two or three houses along the road and stopped to find out what was the matter.

I hitched my horse at the gate of a house, went up to the window and knocked my fingernail against the window and then went to the door. A negro girl came to the door and I asked her was Mr. Foster at home. She said he was, and I told her I wanted to see him. We went back in the hall and then into the room, and when she got in the room -- where there were several people sitting -- the women commenced to scream and go on so, I stepped inside of the hall and closed the door behind me and went to the door that led into the room. It was open about 6 or 8 inches. I had my six-shooter in my hand, so I put it against the door and pushed it open. When I pushed the door open, there were three yankees in there, who

drew their guns all down on me. I had no way to get out for I had fastened the door behind me.

The papers that Sam Davis had on him when he was hanged had my name on them instead of his, and had written on them to Gen. Bragg that I was to carry them out to him. Davis got in the next day after I was captured, and Shaw sent him on with the papers,

The country was full of yankees, and he had never been through that country but a few times and did not know the roads very well, and they run him all day, and the next morning at daylight, he went to the ferryboat to get across, called the boat and after he got in the boat and pulled out in the river, the yankees came on him. He had no chance to get away, so he threw the papers that he had in the river and they followed them down the river and took them out.

They brought him to Pulaski where I was in prison, but never let me see him. In the meantime, they captured our captain (Shaw). Shaw and Davis were in one part of the prison and I was in another. When they tried Davis, Shaw did every way he could to make him tell that he (Shaw) was the man that gave him the papers, but he could not get him to do it. Davis said, "No, if I tell them that you are the man who gave me the papers, they will hang you, and they will never turn me loose anyway, and you will be worth more to the Confederacy than I will.

Dee Jobe was one of our scouts. The yankees caught him, swung him up by the thumbs, cut his tongue out, and left him to die.

Another thing you ought to have is about Old Man Shaw, the lame fellow who was a spy. He would come down here to town, go out in the woods there and cut a green hickory stick about half as big as his wrist and about five feet long, limping, and wearing an old white hat, his whiskers and hair worn very long, he would come into town and there was not but one man in town that he would talk to, except old man Jim Andrews. He could come to town, go to Nashville or Murfreesboro and go all among the yankees and find out in one day more than we could find out in a month. He is the man that got all this information down at Pulaski.

Patterson in his talk at Nashville on the Sam Davis monument accused Shaw of not being the right kind of a man by not telling the yankees himself that he was the man that gave Davis these papers. That made me as mad as the dickens, and I tackled him right there. I said, "You left the impression that our Captain did not do the right thing, and I know that he tried to get Sam Davis to tell it, and Alf Nicholson was in prison with Shaw and he told him about it."

I was captured at Foster's and sent to Pulaski. I was to start the next morning with papers that Sam Davis was captured with. My name was on these papers. Shaw had written it out, and said in the letter that I was to carry the papers out, and he did not re-write them, but sent the papers by Davis.

Well, I jumped out of the 2nd story window, after trying to bribe the Guard. He had agreed to let me out for \$5.00, and I went across the street to Mr. McCord's. He had some relations here in our country, and I knew I could make him know who I was, that's the reason I went to him. So I went in and talked to him and told him who I was. Well, he says Mr. Moore, I can give you all the money you want in the morning", but I had made up my mind to go that night, and I said, "Mr. McCord, I do not want the money in the morning, I want it tonight, and if I cannot get it tonight, I do not want it at all. He said he could get \$50.00 for me in the morning, and I said, "I do not want it, go back and see the women, they may have a little money. See if you cannot rake me up a little," but he came back saying they did not have it. I insisted so strong that he went back the second time, but came back without it again, and said again that he could get \$50.00 in the morning, and I told him again that if I could not get it then, I did not want it at all.

I could not tell him I had bribed the Guard, but came as near telling it as I could. So I went back and tried to get the Guard to let me go and take an order. He said, "No, if I were to let you loose and they were to find that order on me, they would hang me in a minute!" So I went back to the jail and jumped out of the 2nd story window, on a 12 foot pavement and into a two-foot ditch. There were eight guards standing there during the day, and I don't know how many was there at night, but one was standing at the corner of the jail when I jumped out of the window. He was looking the other way, and when I hit the ground I lay down in the ditch -- it seemed to me for about five or ten minutes, but I reckon it was just about that many seconds. Finally I raised up a little and looked at the guard, he was standing in the same position at the corner of the court house. He was either asleep or a little hard of hearing and did not look around.

I went across the street and got in McCord's garden. I then wanted to get out of the Chain Pickets, so I went out and found out where I wanted to go. I wanted to go between the Pulaski and Columbia Pike and the Railroad. The night was so dark I could hardly tell the location, and I finally had to lay down and crawl through the pickets and when I came across the line and got up to walk, I started out pretty lively and they hallowed and I walked slow to keep them from shooting at me, but when I got out a little further I lit out, and got up on top of the big hill between the railroad and Columbia pike and went into the big woods lot. I had a good knife, and found a log that had fallen down and took my knife and made space big enough to crawl under, then made a place big enough to lie down, then raked the leaves up and fixed them around, so any one going along would not notice where I went in. I had not been there 20 minutes until about four horses and wagons with about 10 or 15 negroes on them came along in about 30 yards of me, down under the hill, they never did see me.

I stayed there all day and was in sight of the Yankee Camp and it looked like about 1000 people camping there down towards Wales Station. I stayed there until it began to get dusk, finally concluded I would go down to a house to get me something to eat, but just then two Yankees rode up and hitched there and I was stopped, but made up my mind that I would ride one of those horses.

So I started out down the hill to a ravine that was running along down the side of the fence in the field. I went up that ravine until I was about even with the horses. It begun to get dusk and I got me two big rocks (my only weapons) and came down off the hill. I got out to the fence in about 40 feet of the horse just as the yankees opened the door and started to come out of the house, so I just lay down and let them come and get the horses and ride off. Then I went into the house and asked the man of the house could I get something to eat. He said, "My wife has been cooking for soldiers all day long. I told him I was aware of that and that I had been watching them, and said, "You tell your wife that if she has got anything cold it will satisfy me." He went in the house and came back and said, "My wife says come in, she will cook you something to eat." I had on my Confederate uniform.

I had been in the house but a few minutes when a bird dog that was on the porch barked. As soon as he barked, I went out the back door. I stayed out there until the gentleman came for me to come and get my rations. When I went in the kitchen to suppers the man's wife would not have been more surprised if I had shot her. She was just paralyzed, you never saw anything like it. She said, "I never expected to see you in this sort of a place, well, I never expected to see you in the yankee army." I said, "You are mistaken in the man." She said, "Mistaken, indeed! I know you as well as I know anybody, you used to clerk at Sam Mayes store and I have bought goods from you when I went to Columbia." I said, "You are mistaken in the man." but finally she did pour me out a cup of coffee, but it looked like I never would get it. I ate two biscuits and a big piece of ham and was drinking the coffee, it was good coffee too, something soldiers had not been used to. Before I got through drinking the coffee, the dog barked again, so I reached over and got another biscuit and some more ham and went out the back door of the kitchen. I stayed out in the yard awhile and finally the man came out there and I told him, "You tell your wife I don't suppose she ever did expect to see me in the same place she did tonight, but I am no yankee soldier. I got out of jail last night and have been lying upon the hill here. I want you to tell me if there is a yankee picket on this road." He said, "Yes, there is one at the mouth of this lane, I would advise you to go in the center of this field as near as you can and cross the pike in the center of the field. They may have a picket on each side of the mouth of the lane, so you had better look out up and down the road when you got out of the road in the field."

So I got across and walked about 5 or 6 miles, got tired and stopped at a fellow's house to sleep awhile, I was then seven miles from Pulaski. I told him I wanted to go to sleep and at daylight for him to be certain to wake me, and would like to have something to eat about that time. Next morning about one hour by sun, they called me to breakfast. I ate breakfast and started out up the road. I had not gone more than a mile until I came across a road that crossed Richland Creek that had a bridge over it -- going from Lynnville to Brick Church. I crossed the bridge and saw a man walking down the hill about three or four hundred yards. I went down there to see this fellow, and when I got up to the step and commenced talking to him, I asked him about the yankees. He said, "Look back up on the hill right where you were at." I looked back upon the hill and it looked like a Regiment of Yankees in the road. I turned and walked off from him and there was an old beech tree that had retained all the lower leaves that sometimes stay on all winter. I got that beech tree between me and the yankees, then I lit out.

I ran about 250 yards and jumped through a fence. They called "halt!" I could hear them but that did not make any

difference. I got through the fence into a weed field. There was a sort of a pond in the weed field. I ran right down into that little pond and just stretched out on the ground right there in the weeds. In a minute I guess there was 15 or 20 Yankees ran up and commenced looking for me. Some of them said, "He must have gone in a hole." One of them said, "He is in that thicket." but another said "He did not have time to get there." Then another said., "He flew". They threw down the fence about 30 yards apart. They deployed skirmishers through that field about 30 yards apart. They were not looking for me on the ground, they were looking way ahead. One of them rode so close that I could see him bat his eyes. The sun came up pretty warm on me there directly and I went to sleep, and the first thing that waked me was this same crowd of yankees down below that thicket. They had been up in that country and got drunk. Some were so drunk could hardly ride. I thought I would go down and catch me one that was too drunk to ride and get his horse, but they all got away, before I got there.

I then went down to the house and told the old fellow there., "I want you to send me to Sam Garrett's," who had been discharged from the army with his eyes shot out. He said, I haven't any way to send you. I told him he had some horses up there in the thicket. I said, "I do not want to steal your horse, I want you to send me there and then I will be all right". He sent and got the horse and sent me over to Garrett's, and when I got there, I made him carry me to Mooresville. Then went from there out in the woods between Scribner's Mill and Morgan's Mill out in the Wolf Harbor Hills. I took a nap out there that day between two rocks, and slept there until the sun got away from there and I got cold, and that waked me up. I went from there down to Morgan Fitzpatrick's mill and met two girls coming up the road, scared to death, saying there were 1000 yankees at the mill and they were coming. I went down to the mill pond and crossed in canoe, thought if I was on that side they could not get me. I walked on down to the mill and when I got within about 50 yards of the mill, it had begun to get a little dark. I looked down towards the barn and think I saw about 50 yankees down there at the barn. I turned and ran back up to the mill pond, got over in a cornfield with burrs about 4 feet high, ran about 30 yards, and lay down in the burrs. They came down to the fence and then said they reckoned they would go on to Culleoka, which they did.

I went from there to George Hight's where I had left my old horse when I got a new one. When I got there, he was scared to death, thought the yankees would get me in a minute. I got his wife to cook me some supper. He said my horse was down under the creek bluff. After I ate supper, I got me an old quilt and plow line, put the quilt on the horse and tied the plow line around to hold it on, had a rope bridle on the horse. I hitched him to the door facing and told George Hight I had been losing a good deal of sleep, and that he must stand picket for me that night while I slept. So I got in a good feather bed and slept all night and waked up the next morning about an hour by sun and ate breakfast, got on my horse and started to hunt my friend Mr. Newt Vaughn. I had left him sick and unable to go, out in the woods, I went to the place to find him and from the looks of the camp, there had been no one there for three or four days. So I went to the house where he had been in the habit of going for his rations, and they told me he had been gone three or four days, so I went up Duck River to hunt him, and found him about three o'clock that evening. He gave me one of his pistols. We were in a few miles of Capt. Ben Turner's.

Newt Vaughn said, "Now Ben Turner has come in here from the Army and taken the oath. He came in horseback. I know that he did not give his saddle and bridle up to the yankees, so we will go down there and get them."

We went down to Mr. Turner's and told him, he denied having them. Mr. Vaughn says "Now you just as well get them for me. I know this river, I expect, just as well as you or any other man. I know where the caves are and which one you have hid them in." He looked up at Captain Vaughn and said, "Newt, who told you I put them in that cave." He said, "Nobody, I just knew the country well enough to know where you would hide them." Well, he said, I will go and get them for you, so he went and brought us a pistol without any scabbard, saddle blanket and bridle. We wanted the other pistol that he had, but he did not want to give that up, so we let him keep it.

End of Interview

<http://www.tennessee-scv.org/Camp1293/fhsinterview.htm>

“Mother, I Do Not Hate To Die”

A choice between life and honor is a fearful one for any man. Here is the unforgettable story of how it was made by a twenty-one-year-old Confederate private.

[James Cameron Phifer](#)

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The dawn seemed reluctant to break through the dismal skies over middle Tennessee on November 27, 1863, and by ten o'clock the gray clouds had given way to rain. The drops fell on soldiers of the 81st Ohio Infantry drawn up around a gallows on Seminary Ridge, just outside the town of Pulaski, and on a slender youngster in gray seated on a coffin in an army wagon that rumbled toward the hollow square of troops.

The dawn seemed reluctant to break through the dismal skies over middle Tennessee on November 27, 1863, and by ten o'clock the gray clouds had given way to rain. The drops fell on soldiers of the 81st Ohio Infantry drawn up around a gallows on Seminary Ridge, just outside the town of Pulaski, and on a slender youngster in gray seated on a coffin in an army wagon that rumbled toward the hollow square of troops.

One spoken name and Sam Davis, soldier of the Confederacy, just turned twenty-one, would be freed with his sidearms and a safe conduct to his own lines. But that name Sam Davis, in honor, could not speak.

It had been cold and clamp, too, on the night of November 19—not quite eight days before—when the exhausted boy had reined in his equally fagged horse in a thicket on the banks of the Tennessee River near Minor Hill Village and slid from the saddle to rest. Ahead of him lay the crossing of the icy Tennessee and two days' hard riding to Decatur, Alabama—the “scout line” to General Braxton Bragg's headquarters. Once he was across the Tennessee, though, he would be comparatively safe. In his boots and in the skirt of his saddle were papers that might mean victory or disaster for Bragg's army.

He drew his shabby overcoat tightly around him and curled up in the scanty protection of the underbrush. Perhaps he drowsed, but if he did, it was not for long; suddenly a circle of horsemen in dusty blue crashed out of the night, and the young soldier stared into the muzzles of a dozen Yankee carbines. The Kansas Jayhawkers had captured another—and probably the most valuable—of Coleman's Scouts.

There was no portent of war or tragedy, and certainly none of a hangman's noose, when Sam Davis was born on October 6, 1842. He was the oldest son of Charles Lewis Davis and his second wife, Jane Simmons Davis. The elder Davis had arrived in Tennessee from Virginia in the late 1820s, and had gradually become one of the wealthiest landholders in Rutherford County. The home at Smyrna in which Sam grew up still stands, an imposing dwelling of classically symmetrical lines, balanced by arrangements of outbuildings, gardens and grounds. (Owned now by the state, the house is maintained by the Sam Davis Memorial Association.) With twelve slaves working the land, Charles Davis was able to spend much time with his growing family. His second wife bore him nine children, while the first had left him with four.

Mr. Davis was a kind and indulgent father, but a stern one, too, when need be. He taught his sons to ride and shoot, to fish, and to tree a coon, but he also taught them to cobble a shoe, plow a straight furrow, plant a tree, and dig a grave. These things they learned quickly, but even more quickly they learned that disobedience or malingering brought a swift and heavy hand. Above all, Davis taught his boys the wisdom of holding one's tongue, keeping the peace, and never yielding an inch when honor was involved. Sam's mother was shy and self-effacing, but more than anything she ever said, the influence of her presence, her wordless wisdom, and her faith in God left their imprint on the boy.

When Sam was eighteen he was enrolled in the oldest and most distinctive institution of learning in middle Tennessee: the Western Military Institute of Nashville. It was then headed by Bushrod R. Johnson and Edmund Kirby Smith, both of whom the Yankees would come to know well later as Confederate generals. Sam's classmates were to say of him, “He was a friend and could be trusted implicitly.”

On April 12, 1861, the guns at Fort Sumter halted Sam's education abruptly. Three days later, President Lincoln's Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, called on Tennessee Governor Isham G. Harris to provide two regiments of militia. On April 17, he received Governor Harris' reply: “Tennessee will not furnish a single man for purpose of coercion but fifty thousand, if necessary, for defense of our rights and those of our Southern brothers.”

By that time Sam was on his way home, his decision made. Charles and Jane Davis agreed with him that he should follow his conscience. Tennessee, which was to become the bloodiest battleground of the war next to Virginia, did not commit herself with any blind, impetuous gesture. On February 9, 1861, a vote for secession had been defeated, but after Fort Sumter and President Lincoln's call for troops to invade the South, Governor Harris and his pro-secession element were able to swing the sentiment. In a second referendum on June 8, 1861, "articles of separation" from the Union (the technical difference between this and outright "secession" is dear to the hearts of Tennesseans even today) were approved by a two-thirds majority, the opposition centering largely in eastern Tennessee, where slavery was a negligible factor and where United States Senator Andrew Johnson had a strong influence.

But Sam was already answering roll call in the Confederate Army. He enlisted in Captain William Ledbetter's Rutherford Rifles on April 30, marching off to the war with the blessings of his parents and the great admiration of his younger brothers and sisters.

In the ensuing year he served under Robert E. Lee in western Virginia, under Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley, under Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard in Mississippi. In August of 1862, Sam, now battle-hardened and battle-scarred—he had been wounded at Shiloh—marched over the mountains into Kentucky, as General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee launched the invasion that was to end in disastrous defeat at Perryville on October 8. Sam was two days past twenty years old.

Just when Coleman's Scouts became active is uncertain, but there is little doubt that General Bragg, sitting out the summer of 1863 around Shelbyville, Wartrace, and Beech Grove, Tennessee, kept his intelligence corps busy, inasmuch as his Army of Tennessee was in Union-controlled territory and Confederate safety depended on knowing what the Yankees were up to. As Bragg retreated southward and eastward late in the summer, General B.F. Cheatham, Second Brigade commander, called for volunteers to serve as couriers and scouts under Captain H.B. Shaw, his chief of intelligence, to keep General Bragg alerted to Union movements.

Sam volunteered at once and despite his youth was accepted as a scout. Strictly speaking, these men were not spies. They did penetrate Union lines to gather and relay information, but they did so in uniform, with their safety depending on daring and the speed of their horses rather than upon disguise—except for Captain Shaw himself. In the guise of "Dr. E. Coleman," an itinerant herb peddler, he roamed behind the Federal lines at will, sometimes accepted as a nuisance but never subjected to other than casual questioning. He operated around Nashville, Franklin, Columbia, Smyrna, Pulaski, and other Union-held Tennessee towns with no difficulty at all, meeting his couriers when it was possible and passing along to them what information he had. Only a very few of his own men knew the real identity of "Dr. Coleman," but the passes they carried, signed "E. Coleman, commanding Scouts, by order of General Bragg," were never questioned inside Confederate lines. And if identities were vague, the operations of Coleman's Scouts were not. They became the eyes and ears of the Army of Tennessee.

This position was one of potential disaster. General U. S. Grant's army, freed by the fall of Vicksburg, was moving eastward toward Chattanooga; General W.T. Sherman was marching his troops toward a juncture with Grant; and a part of Sherman's command, the XVI Corps under General Grenville Dodge, was moving eastward from Corinth, under orders to repair and hold the railway line that ran north from Decatur, Alabama, to Nashville. Grant, now in command of all armies in the west, replaced Rosecrans with General George H. Thomas, who had saved the Union army from complete rout at Chickamauga, and ordered him to hold Chattanooga at all costs. This boded ill for General Bragg, and Coleman's Scouts redoubled their efforts to keep him informed of all Federal movements—especially those of General Dodge; Grant's plans for Chattanooga were obvious.

Sam Davis and five other scouts were detailed to the mission of noting General Dodge's progress across middle Tennessee and passing on their scraps of information to each other for relay. Dodge, however, knew from his own intelligence reports that the Confederates had an accurate knowledge of his movements, and the reputation of Coleman's Scouts had come to his attention. Indeed, some of the information the Confederates had was so accurate that it appeared to have come directly from General Dodge's staff. No one connected this with the continued presence of "Dr. E. Coleman." It seems inexplicable that the coincidence in names should not have been noted. But if it was, the possibility of the bumbling herb-quack's being a Confederate intelligence officer was discarded as absurd.

In any event, no one bothered "Dr. Coleman." But by the time General Dodge reached Pulaski and, for some reason of his own, paused to throw up fortifications around the town, the activities of Coleman's Scouts bothered him to the extent that he ordered the 7th Kansas Cavalry—the Jayhawkers—into the field to capture or break up the Scouts. Several were captured but none with any evidence that would substantiate any action more serious than detention as a prisoner of war.

Early in November, via the grapevine by which they kept in touch, Sam and the other scouts operating in middle Tennessee were summoned to a rendezvous with Captain Shaw somewhere near Pulaski on the night of the eighteenth. He had important information for General Bragg concerning the deployment of General Dodge's forces and the movement of troops and heavy armament around Nashville.

On his way to this rendezvous, Sam Davis took time—probably on the night of November 6—to pay what was to be his last visit home. After dark, when he knew the younger children would be safely in bed, he guided his horse cautiously along the banks of the creek to a certain boulder where he and his young brother Oscar had played Indians in their childhood. Hitching the mare to a tree, he crept across the lawn to a side window and peered in, to make sure his mother and father were alone. His mother recognized him through the pane when he tapped, and without a sound she opened the side door to allow her son to slip inside and into her embrace. Charles Davis shook his boy's hand.

The three of them talked softly of many things while Sam's mother moved about quietly, fixing something for him to eat. It was important not to wake the children, because they might later inadvertently let slip the fact that Sam had been there. His father noticed that Sam's boots were broken, and offered to mend them. If he noticed, as he cobbled the boots, the stiff papers hidden in the soles, he said nothing. Sam was carrying new maps of the fortifications around Nashville. If the father's hands trembled a little as he realized what mission his son must be on and the penalty that could be exacted if he were captured, he gave no indication that would alarm the boy's mother.

The little time that Sam could spare passed quickly. He peeked through the bedroom door at the younger children as they slept, and murmured a farewell. A last embrace from his mother, a final firm handshake from his father, and Sam eased the door open enough to slip through. His mother noticed the shiver that went through him at the bite of the November night and whispered him back inside; Sam had no coat over his thin, almost makeshift uniform. She had one for him—a heavy one, abandoned because of its weight by a wounded Union soldier along the Smyrna road. This she had carefully dyed to a brownish gray with butternut hulls, against just such a need. Gratefully the boy slipped into the coat, and vanished into the night.

Sam kept his rendezvous on the eighteenth. Known to have been present also were Captain Shaw and two other scouts, Joshua Brown and W.J. Moore. They exchanged their scraps of information, and the scouts memorized Captain Shaw's important news. It was agreed that everyone would attempt to get through by different routes, but that Sam was to carry the actual messages. The military notes and a letter addressed to the provost marshal of the Army of Tennessee he concealed in his saddle skirts. Into his saddle bags were thrust seven Nashville newspapers, three from Louisville, and one from Cincinnati, together with some personal items for General Bragg. If he were captured, these could hardly be called military contraband. It was hoped that any search would go no further.

Sometime on the nineteenth the scouts broke cover, each on his own. Sam's route carried him wide of the Federal pickets at Pulaski toward the Tennessee River. Once across, he would be comparatively safe. Then he was to go in a wide circle toward the "scout line" and General Bragg's army. But General Dodge's Jayhawkers were doubly alert. Joshua Brown and W.T. Moore were captured, and that night the blue-clad cavalymen closed in on Sam on the banks of the Tennessee.

The search was not as perfunctory as Sam had hoped. The military papers he carried were quickly discovered in his boots and saddle, and Sam was taken immediately to the provost marshal, Captain W.F. Armstrong, in Pulaski. He stoutly refused to give any information regarding the papers.

He was a fine, soldierly-looking young man, dressed in a faded Federal coat, an army soft hat, and top boots. He had a fresh, open face, which was inclined to brightness; in all things he showed himself a true soldier; it was known by all the command that I desired to save him. ... His captors knew that he was a member of Coleman's Scouts, and I knew what was found upon him, and desired to locate Coleman and ascertain, if possible, who was furnishing information so accurate to General Bragg. Davis met me modestly. I tried to impress on him the danger he was in, and as only a messenger, I held out to him the hope of lenient treatment if he would truthfully answer my questions. I informed him that he would be tried as a spy and the evidence would surely convict him, and I made a direct appeal to him to give me the information I knew he had. He very quietly but firmly refused to do it. I pleaded with him with all the power I possessed to give me some chance to save his life. I discovered that he was a most admirable young fellow, with highest character and strictest integrity. He replied, "I know, General, I will have to die; but I will not tell where I got the information and there is no power on earth that can make me tell. You are doing your duty as a soldier, and if I have to die, I shall be doing my duty to God and my country."

Had General Dodge but known it, he would have had to look no further than his own military jail in Pulaski to find the man he wanted so badly. For in the roundup "Dr. E. Coleman," the herb peddler, had at last been picked up and detained because of his skimpy identification papers.

Again, one wonders why no one connected "Dr. Coleman" with the man whose name was signed to the pass Sam carried. It read:

Headquarters General Bragg's Scouts, Middle Tennessee, September 25th, 1863. Samuel Davis has permission to pass on scouting duty anywhere in Middle Tennessee or south of the Tennessee River as he may think proper. By order of General Bragg. E. Coleman, Captain Commanding Company of Scouts.

And the letter Sam carried bore the same signature:

Giles County, Tenn., Thursday morning November 19, 1863

Colonel A. McKinstry, Provost Marshal-General, the Army of Tennessee, Chattanooga.

Dear Sir:—I send you seven Nashville and three Louisville papers and one Cincinnati, with dates to the 17th—in all eleven. I also send for General Bragg, three wash-balls of soap, three tooth brushes and two blank books. I could not get a large size diary for him. I will send a pair of shoes and slippers, some more soap, gloves and socks soon.

The Yankees are still camped on the line of the Tennessee and Alabama railroad [evidently Nashville and Decatur]. General Dodge's headquarters are at Pulaski; his main force is camped from that place to Lynville; some at Elk River and two regiments at Athens. General Dodge had issued an order to the people in those counties on the road to report all stock, grain and forage to him and he says he will pay or give vouchers for it. Upon refusal to report he will take it without pay. They are not taking all they can find. Dodge says he knows the people are all Southern and does not ask them to swear to a lie. All the spare forces around Nashville and vicinity are being sent to McMinnville. Six batteries and twelve parrott guns were sent forward on the 14th, 15th and 16th. It is understood that there is hot work in front somewhere. Telegrams suppressed.

Davis has returned; Gregg had gone below. Everything is beginning to work better. I send Roberts with things for you and General Bragg with dispatches. I do not think the Federals mean to stay; they are not repairing the main points on the road. I understand part of Sherman's forces have reached Shelbyville. I hope to be able to post you soon. I think part of some other than Dodge's division came to Lynville from the direction of Fayetteville. One of my men has just returned from there. The general impression of the citizens is that they will move forward some way. Their wagon trains have returned from Nashville. Davis tells me that the line is in order to Summerville. I send this by one of my men to that place. The dispatches sent you on the 9th with papers of the 7th, reached Decatur on the 10th at 9 p.m. ... I am with high regard, E. Coleman Captain, Commanding Scouts

Sam could have saved himself by revealing that "E. Coleman," "Dr. Coleman," and Captain Shaw were one and the same man, but Sam steadfastly refused to tell anybody anything. To a final plea by General Dodge he replied, "The man who gave me the information is more important to the Confederacy than I." That left the Federal commander no choice. A court-martial was convened on November 24.

Sitting in judgment were Colonel Madison Miller, 18th Missouri Infantry Volunteers; Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Gains, 56th Missouri Infantry Volunteers; Major Lathrop, 39th Ohio Infantry Volunteers; and Captain George Elliott, 39th Iowa, judge advocate. Charges and Specifications were:

Charge 1 : Being a spy.

Specification: In this, that he Samuel Davis of Coleman's Scouts, in the service of the so-called Confederate States, did come within the lines of the United States forces in Middle Tennessee, for the purpose of secretly gaining information concerning these forces and conveying the same to the enemy; and was arrested within said lines on or about November 20, 1863. This in Giles County, Tennessee.

Charge 2: Being a carrier of mails, communications and information from within the lines of the United States Army to persons in arms against the United States government.

Specification: In this, that the said Samuel Davis on or about November 20, 1863, was arrested in Giles County, Tennessee, engaged in carrying mails and information from within the lines of the United States forces to persons in arms against the United States government.

To the first charge and specification, Sam pleaded not guilty, relying on his uniform and the wording of the specification, which described the role of a scout, not that of a spy. To the second, he pleaded guilty.

The findings and sentence of the court were swift:

The court finds the accused as follows: Of the specifications, first charge, guilty; of the first charge, guilty. Of the specifications, second charge, guilty; of the second charge, guilty. The court does therefore sentence the said Samuel Davis of Coleman's Scouts, in the service of the so-called Confederate States, to be hanged by the neck until he is dead, at such time and place as the commanding general may direct. ...

Finding and sentence of the commission approved. The sentence will be carried into effect on Friday, November 27, 1863, between the hours of 10 o'clock a.m. and 6 o'clock p.m. Brig. Gen. F. W. Sweeney, commanding the Second Division, will cause the necessary arrangements to be made to carry out this order in the proper manner. ...

Sam had expected a verdict of guilty even on the first charge, but he had not been prepared for the severity of the sentence. In the few days left to him, however, he did not waver in his determination to shield Captain Shaw and the espionage organization. To couriers who came now and again from General Dodge repeating his offer of leniency in exchange for information, he gave the same answer: "I will not tell."

Chaplain James Young of the 81st Ohio Infantry, the unit detailed to carry out the execution, spent much time with the doomed youngster. During Sam's last night on earth, they talked about war experiences, about home, about anything except the next morning. Together they prayed and sang Sam's favorite hymn, "On Jordan's Stormy Banks." Chaplain Young provided Sam with the paper and pen he asked for and prayed alone while the boy wrote his last letter home:

Pulaski, Giles County, Tenn. Nov. 26, 1863.

Dear Mother

Oh how painful it is to write to you. I have got to die tomorrow morning—to be hung by the federals. Mother do not grieve for me. I must bid you good bye for ever more —Mother, I do not hate to die. Give my love to all. Your Dear Son

Sam

Mother tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see all of you once more, but I never never [will] no more.

Mother and Father,

Do not forget me, think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me, it will not do any good.

Father

You can send after my remains if you want to do so, they will be at Pulaski, Tennessee. I will leave some things too with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles County, Tennessee, south of Columbia.

Chaplain Young was with Sam when the gray dawn broke on November 27 and a wagon creaked up before the tent where they had spent the night. Over the Chaplain's arm was draped the dyed Federal army coat, all that Sam had to give him. Captain Armstrong and a guard troop watched silently as Sam climbed into the wagon and seated himself on the rough box which was to be his coffin. Muffled drums began to roll as the little procession, silent save for the clop of the mules and the tread of the soldiers, approached the place of execution on Seminary Ridge.

Sam was calm as he climbed down from the wagon and turned to the provost marshal.

"How long have I to live, Captain Armstrong?" he asked.

"About fifteen minutes, Sam," Armstrong replied. Sam was silent for a long moment. Then: "What news is there from the front?"

Captain Armstrong told him that the Confederates under General Bragg had been sharply defeated at Lookout Mountain on November 24.

"I am sorry," Sam said, and fell silent again. Then he murmured almost to himself, "The boys will have to fight the battles without me."

Captain Armstrong looked at the death warrant in his hand and then at the boy. Hardened to war though he was, he almost broke.

"Sam," he said huskily, "I would rather die myself than execute this sentence on you."

Sam was in better control than the provost marshal.

"That's all right," he replied. "You are only doing your duty."

His step was firm as he mounted the gallows and paused for a moment, gazing out over his beloved Tennessee hills. As the hangman stepped forward with a white hood, Colonel E. J. Chickasaw, chief of the scouts of the XVI Army Corps, pushed his horse to the foot of the gallows.

"I want to remind you again of General Dodge's offer," he called above the rolling drums.

"What was that?" Sam asked, without turning his head.

"Your life, your horse, your sidearms and safe conduct to the Confederate lines if you will tell who gave you those papers."

Then Sam turned and, looking down from the gallows, gazed straight into the eyes of the Yankee officer. "I will not tell," he said firmly. "I would die a thousand times before I would betray a friend."

Colonel Chickasaw turned away. The hangman adjusted the white hood and the noose. Captain Armstrong closed his eyes as his arm rose, then fell in finality. The gallows rope jerked taut and swung gently in the rain.

Sam Davis "came home" for the last time on December 24, 1863. A neighbor, John C. Kennedy, drove the wagon that rumbled up the long drive to the front veranda where Charles and Jane Simmons Davis waited for their son. Beside him sat Oscar, Sam's younger brother, who had also made the sorrowful trip to Pulaski. He brought a message from the Yankee provost marshal at Pulaski for the parents of Sam Davis:

"Tell them for me that he died the bravest of the brave, an honor to them, and with the respect of every man in this command."

<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/%E2%80%9Cmother-i-do-not-hate-die%E2%80%9D?page=show>

Sam Davis



Sam Davis (right) is often referred to as the "Boy Hero of the Confederacy," and has long been held by southerners, in similar standing to the great Revolutionary War spy Nathan Hale.

In 1861, at the age of 18, Sam Davis joined the 1st Tennessee Volunteer Infantry, and went to war for the Confederacy...

He and his unit took part in Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign and the [Battle of Shiloh](#). In October, he was wounded at the Battle of Perryville and had to take time to recover.

After recovering, Davis joined Coleman's Scouts, a band of Army scouts who spied and delivered information and messages for the Confederate Army of Tennessee. This unit was under the command of Captain Henry B. Shaw (a.k.a. E. C. Coleman).

In 1863, Union troops held Nashville, Tennessee, and the Confederate Army of Tennessee was desperate for information concerning the plans of the Union forces in the state. Captain "Coleman" and his scouts had a very well developed intelligence network in the area and were a great source of information for their Generals.

Sam Davis's position in Coleman's Scouts was that of a courier, and it was while performing those duties that he was captured during November 1863...

In Smyrna, Tennessee there is an interesting Museum at the boyhood home of Sam Davis. There you can learn more about his story, and about life during the Civil War.

Capture, Questioning, and Trial

By this time, "Coleman" and his scouts had become somewhat notorious, and Union authorities were very interested in putting a stop to their activities.

In late 1863, Captain "Coleman" and a number of his men were spying out the Union forces in the Nashville area. When they had gathered sufficient information, several men were dispatched to carry the reports to Confederate General Braxton Bragg.

One of these men was Sam Davis, but he never made it to General Bragg. He and several other couriers were captured by the 7th Kansas Cavalry, known in the area as the "Kansas Jayhawkers." These men were placed under arrest for being southern sympathizers.

When Davis was captured, the Union men found, hidden in his saddle, some very detailed maps of the fortifications and defenses of Nashville, and an in depth report concerning the Union Army in Tennessee. More troubling for Davis, however, was the sealed letter they found in his boot. It was a letter from the infamous Captain "Coleman" to General Bragg's command.

These items immediately identified Davis as a spy, and he was brought before the local Union commander, General Grenville M. Dodge. Thirty years later, General Dodge recalled the interviews that took place over the next couple days thus,

"When brought to my office I met him pleasantly. I knew what had been found upon him, and I desired to locate "Coleman" and ascertain, if possible, who was furnishing the information, which I saw was accurate and valuable, to Gen. Bragg. Davis met me modestly... ..I tried to impress upon him the danger he was in and that I knew he was only a messenger, and held out to him the hope of lenient treatment if he would answer truthfully, as far as he could, my questions. He listened attentively and respectfully to me, but, as I recollect, made no definite answer, and I had him returned to the prison."

At this point, a Union spy was placed in prison with the captured Confederates to try to make friends with them and gain some information,

"...they all kept their own counsel, and we obtained no information of value from them..."

...I had Davis brought before me again after my provost marshal had reported his inability to obtain anything of value from him. I then informed him that he would be tried as a spy, that the evidence against him would

surely convict him, and made a direct appeal to him to give me the information that I knew he had. He very quietly but firmly refused to do it. I therefore let him be tried and suffer the consequence...

...I am under the impression that some of them... ...endeavored to induce him to save himself, but they failed..."

After Sam Davis repeatedly refused to betray anyone connected to the information he was carrying, General Dodge was forced to appoint a Military Commission to try him. Not surprisingly, this was the Commission's verdict:

"The Commission does therefore sentence him, the said Samuel Davis, of Coleman's Scouts, in the service of the so-called Confederate States, to be hanged by the neck until he is dead, at such time and place as the commanding general shall direct, two-thirds of the Commission concurring in the sentence."

Though it was to be expected for an enemy spy, Davis had made an impression on General Dodge who was sorry to carry out the verdict.

"...I regretted to see the sentence executed; but it was one of the fates of war, which is cruelty itself, and there is no refining it."

Execution of a Spy



At the Monument After the Dedication

The night before he was to be executed, Sam Davis joined the other prisoners in a short devotional with Union Chaplain, Rev. James Young, and the Chaplain later remembered Davis's participation, "...Mr. Davis joined with us in singing the well-known hymn, 'On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand,' in animated voice."

That same night Davis penned a letter to be given to his parents when they came for his body:

"Dear Mother:

Oh, how painful it is to write you! I have got to die tomorrow morning--to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you good-by forevermore. Mother, I do not fear to die. Give my love to all.

Your son, Samuel Davis

Mother, tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see you all once more, but I never will any more.

Mother and Father, do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me. It will not do any good. Father, you can send after my remains if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tenn. I will leave some things, too, with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles county, Tenn., south of Columbia.

S.D."

November 27, 1863, dawned "*fair and warm*," and Davis was shackled and brought out of prison for his final ride. He was helped into the back of a wagon and took a seat on his coffin for the trip to the gallows...

It was his 21st birthday.

During the ride to the gallows, the fetters on his feet pinched his feet so severely, that he had Chaplain Young cut his boots to relieve the pressure. At "*five minutes past ten o'clock*," the wagon rolled up to the scaffold, Sam Davis's final moments were at hand...

"The prisoner then stepped from the wagon and seated himself upon a bench at the foot of the scaffold. He displayed great firmness, glancing casually at his coffin as it was taken from the wagon. Turning to Capt. Armstrong, he inquired how long he had to live, and was told that he had just fifteen minutes. He then remarked: 'The boys will have to fight the rest of the battles without me.'

Capt. Armstrong said: 'I am sorry to be compelled to perform this painful duty.'

The prisoner replied with a smile: 'It does not hurt me, Captain. I am innocent and I am prepared to die; so do not think hard of it.'"

Davis asked for news of the war and was told that the Confederates and General Bragg had just been defeated at Missionary Ridge. He is said to have expressed regret upon hearing that news. Davis then went up the steps to the gallows, where he was asked one more time to denounce his sources and give up Coleman so that he could live. According to tradition, he responded by saying, "*Do you suppose that I would betray a friend? No, sir; I would die a thousand times first!*"

Davis then asked Chaplain Young to pray with him, and took his place on the trapdoor...

Only later did General Dodge learn that Sam Davis's calm acceptance of his fate was even more impressive than it would first seem. One of the other men captured the same day as Davis and imprisoned in the same jail was none other than the much sought after Captain "Coleman."

The Captain was disguised as an unkempt and grizzled old man, and had given his real name, Shaw, when he was captured. Davis had known all along that if he had only alerted his captors to that fact, Shaw would have hung in his place; but Sam Davis was unmoved. When General Dodge learned of Captain "Coleman's" being captured at the same time as Davis, he had this to say,

"This is where Davis showed himself a true soldier: he had been intrusted with an important commission by an important officer, who was imprisoned with him, and died rather than betray him. He knew to a certainty that if he informed me of the facts Shaw would be executed, as he was a far more important person to us than was Davis."

...and that is why Sam Davis is still remembered as the, "Boy Hero of the Confederacy."

To see where he grew up, you can visit the [Sam Davis Home](#) in Smyrna, Tennessee. This is also where he was buried after his parents retrieved his body.

<http://www.americancivilwarstory.com/sam-davis.html>

Samuel Davis' Sister-in-Law

<http://www.tennessee-scv.org/Camp1293/marykatecv.htm>

From: **Confederate Veteran**, Vol. IV, February, 1896

Mrs. Kate Kyle of LaVergne, Tenn., who was a Miss Patterson and married John G. Davis, an older brother, writes:

Sam Davis came on his last trip from the South to my home [on] Nolensville Pike a little before daylight Sunday morning. He said he would then go to Rains' thicket and that I must take his breakfast and horse feed; also my cousin Miss Robbie Woodruff must go with me, and spend the day.

We found him up, looking as bright as if he had slept all night, and, oh, he did enjoy his good warm breakfast, for we rode fast and had his coffee in a jug to keep it warm.

Two of my little brothers brought our dinner and we spent a nice, pleasant Sunday together ~ the last he spent on earth but one.

On Monday, Oscar Davis, Sam's brother, carried him a lot of nice things to eat. He found Sam fast asleep with his head resting on a grape vine for a pillow, but he was up in a minute with his pistol in hand, ready to defend himself.

Sam gave me a list of articles to get for him in Nashville. I got in my buggy with [my] cousin, and started for Nashville, got everything he wished, also a lot of the latest newspapers. We lived nine miles from Nashville, got back about sundown, and that night Sam started for the South.

In the large seat of my buggy I would often bring out cavalry saddles, bridles, boots, spurs, gray cloth, and I smuggled medicines such as quinine, morphine, etc. I have brought \$500 and \$600 worth of medicine out at one time around my waist. Quinine and morphine were very high. I always kept on the good side of the Commanding General and could get passes when I desired to do so.

I went to Nashville very often, so I always kept posted; had many confidential friends there, always ready to help me when asked. After the war, Capt. H. B. Shaw, or "Coleman" made our house his home until the fall of '66, when he persuaded Sam's father and my husband, John G. Davis, to purchase a steamboat called the David White, a very large, fine steamer valued at \$150,000, and in 1867, February 17th, this boat was blown up on the Mississippi River below Helena, Ark., and many lives were lost, among the number my precious husband and Captain Shaw. Before the war Shaw was a steamboat captain.

He told us that from his cell window in the Pulaski jail he saw them start with Sam Davis to the gallows. He said the papers that Sam had were stolen from Gen. Dodge's table, while he was at a meal, by a negro boy that once belonged to Mr. Bob English, near Lynnville, [who] gave them to him.

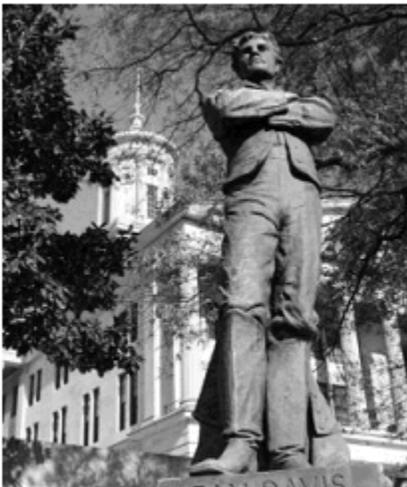
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Sam Davis

Hero of the Confederacy

"If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all here before I would betray a friend or the confidence of my informer." Sam Davis - Hero of the Confederacy. Sam Davis was born on 6 October 1842 and gave his life with honor, in the cause of independence and freedom. He attended the *Western Military Institute of Nashville Tennessee* and return to *Rutherford County* and joined the Tennessee Rifles. Among his school teachers prior to *The War*, were the soon to be *Generals Bushrod Johnson* and *E. Kirby Smith*. Young Sam Davis was captured behind enemy lines, accused of being a spy, and sentenced to be hanged on 27 November 1863.

But for the *sake of honor* and the love of his own country; the *Confederate States of America*. Sam could have spared his own life, by merely revealing the name of the vary man the Yankees truly wanted; Captain Henry Shaw, alias E. Coleman. Captain Shaw was himself a fellow prisoner, who later escaped to continue the struggle. Sam Davis in his steadfast adherence to the principles of *honor, duty* and *country*, gained the respect, *even of his enemies*, and thereby *redefined* the word *honor* forever.



Sam Davis



Born October 6, 1842, Near Murfreesboro, Tenn. – Educated at the Western Military Institute at Nashville. Early in the Civil War, he joined the Confederate Army Company I, First Tennessee Regiment. In 1863 he was assigned to Shaw's Scouts, Cheatham's Division. In November, 1863, when on duty, Uniformed in Confederate butternut and grey, Davis was captured in his native state, then within the Federal lines. Important papers, descriptive of the Federal fortifications and forces, were found upon his person.

Davis was tried by court-martial, condemned to death and executed at Pulaski, November 27. The Federal commander offered Davis his life if he would tell who gave him the papers. To this offer, under the very shadow of the gallows, Davis made his immortal reply: "I would die a thousand deaths before I would betray a friend" — "Greater love hath no man than this – that a man lay down his life for his friends."



Sam Davis

Hero of the Confederacy

Sam Davis, a young Confederate soldier from Smyrna, Tennessee, was a private in the First Tennessee Infantry. He was a scout under Capt. Coleman, alias Dr. H.B. Shaw. Coleman's Scouts were gathering information about the Union forces moving from Middle Tennessee toward Chattanooga.

On November 19, 1863, Davis is said to have spent the night at Campbellsville, at the home of Bob English. The next day Davis, carrying important documents to General Braxton Bragg at Chattanooga, was captured fifteen miles south of Pulaski, Tennessee, on Lamb's Ferry Road, below Minor Hill. Two Union soldiers dressed in Confederate uniforms approached young Davis and told him that they were conscripting.

Davis replied that he was already a Confederate soldier and showed them his pass. He was dressed in his own Confederate Uniform. The soldiers led him to their commanding officer, who took his gun. A search revealed papers in the soles of his boots and saddle.

He was taken to Pulaski and imprisoned in jail on the northwest corner of the square, at the location of today's Hunter-Smith Furniture Store, in a building that later burned. He was court marshalled,

then condemned to death by hanging. General Dodge offered young Davis his freedom if he would reveal the source of his information. Davis replied, If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all here before I would betray a friend or the confidence of my informer.

On November 27, 1863, Sam rode in a wagon, seated upon his own coffin, from the Giles County jail to a hill in east Pulaski, overlooking the town. There he died the death of a hero.

A statue of Sam Davis stands on the Tennessee Capitol grounds in Nashville. The Sam Davis Home in Smyrna, Tennessee, is another shrine open to the public daily.

* * * * *

Sam remained in school only a short time before the Civil War started in 1861. Like many other young men, Sam joined the army before Tennessee had officially seceded from the Union. He enlisted in Co. I of the 1st Tennessee Infantry Regiment in April 1861. The 1st Tennessee participated in the Cheat Mountain campaign in western Virginia under Robert E. Lee in 1861. In 1862, they moved west and took part in the battles of Shiloh, Perryville, and Stones River.

Early in 1863, Sam became a member of "Coleman's Scouts," a group founded by his older half-brother John. By 1863, the Union Army occupied much of Middle Tennessee. Sam and his fellow scouts worked behind enemy lines disrupting communications. Even though they wore Confederate uniforms and traveled with passes signed by Confederate General Braxton Bragg, the Union army considered them spies if captured.

Around November 20, 1863 as Sam traveled toward Chattanooga, he was captured by Federal troops near Minor Hill, Tennessee. Sam carried papers that contained critical information on troop movements near Nashville and Pulaski, as well as eleven newspapers and various personal items for General Bragg. Among the papers found concealed on Sam was information that could have only come from the desk of Union General Grenville Dodge. Convinced that one of his own officers was supplying information to the Confederates, Dodge decided to put pressure on Sam to identify his spy. He offered Sam his freedom in exchange for this information. Sam refused, so General Dodge ordered a court martial.

The court charged Sam with being a courier of mails and of being a spy. Sam admitted to being a courier, but pled not guilty to the charge of spying. The military court convicted Samuel Davis on both charges, and sentenced him to hang. On the gallows, General Dodge offered Sam one last chance to save his life by revealing the source of the papers he carried. Sam stated with his last words that "I would die a thousand deaths before I would betray a friend," and was hanged on November 27, 1863.

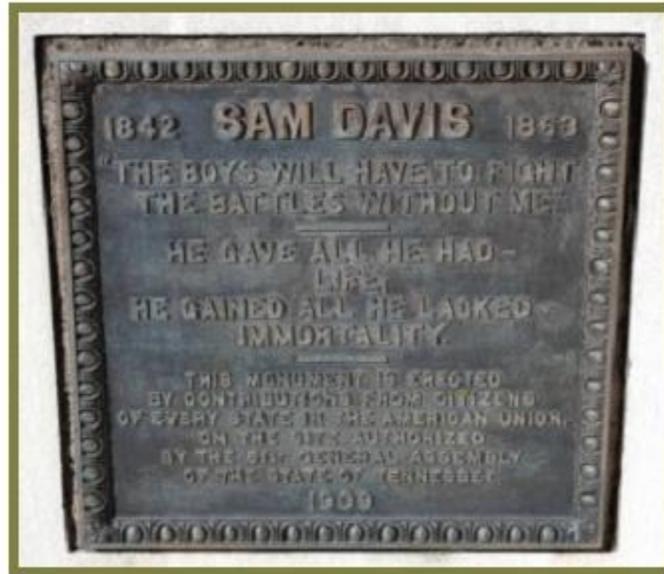
* * * * *

The *fire, spirit and commitment*, which drove those brave men in battle, is severely lacking among today's Southerners. Ragged, worn and half starved, our forefathers fought on, for the just and honorable cause of the Confederacy and of the South. Victory requires that we once more *pickup the mantle* which through inheritance was delivered to us. It is for us therefore, to stand in the hedge and take up the gap. Let us therefore relight the torch and reclaim our fallen honor, sense of duty and responsibility. Liberate our own nation, the *Confederate States of America*, for which those who have gone before us, have *struggled unto death*.

But for the *sake of honor* and the love of his own country; the *Confederate States of America*. Sam

could have spared his own life, by merely revealing the name of the vary man the Yankees truly wanted; Captain Henry Shaw, alias E. Coleman. Captain Shaw was himself a fellow prisoner, who later escaped to continue the struggle.

Those today who speak of standing upon honor, integrity, duty and faith, measure their commitment against Sam Davis. Sam Davis was steadfast in his adherence to the principles of *honor, duty* and *country*. *More then redifining honor, Sam Davis become honor personified.*



When the Lord calls up Earth's heroes to stand before his face, O, many a name, unknown to fame shall ring from that high place; then out of a grave of the southland at the just God's call and beck shall one man rise with fearless eyes with a rope about his neck; O southland: bring your laurels and add your wreath, O north: let glory claim the hero's name and tell the world his worth. - Ella Wheeler Knox



SAM DAVIS 1842 – 1863 “The Boys will have to fight the battles without me” — He gave all he had – life. He gained all he lacked – immortality — This monument is erected by contributions from citizens of every state in the American Union on the site authorized by the 51st General Assembly of the state of Tennessee. 1909.

Constructed by G.J. Zolnay, Sculptor, in 1908.

http://www.confederatelegion.com/Sam_Davis.ht

The Hanging Of Sam Davis By J. B. Killebrew, Nashville, Tenn.

This young man, of exemplary habits, and of a courage that nothing could daunt, was the son of C. L. and Jane Davis, born on Stewart's Creek, one and a half mile from Smyrna, and was at the time of his execution about nineteen years of age. He entered the army in 1861, joining Dr. Ledbetter's company of the First Tennessee Regiment; and it was but a short time before his bravery, prudence, zeal, and undoubted patriotism recommended him to his commanding officer as one eminently suited to perform the arduous and dangerous duties of a scout. He was accordingly detached from his regiment and made a member of Coleman's Scouts. Toward the close of October, 1863, it was considered highly important to the success of Bragg's movements that the strength of the Federal fortifications in Middle Tennessee should be accurately known, and to procure this information young Davis was selected. He set out on this dangerous mission, and after accomplishing all that was expected or desired, he was arrested on his return within the Federal lines, on the 20th of November, with a plan of the fortifications of Nashville, Pulaski, and of all places of importance in Middle Tennessee, on his person. The accuracy of these plans and the minuteness of detail showed at once that his informant was a man holding a high position among the Federal engineers; and when questioned about his sources of information, Davis candidly admitted that the plans had been furnished by an officer high in command, but resolutely refused to give his name, though a free pardon was offered, and a safe return within the Confederate lines.

Gen. Dodge, the post commander, immediately convened a Military Commission for the trial of Davis on the following charges and specifications:

"Charge first. Being a spy.

"Specification: In this, that he, Samuel Davis, of Coleman's Scouts, in the service of the so-called Confederate States, did come within the lines of the United States forces, in Middle Tennessee, for the purpose of secretly gaining information concerning these forces and conveying the same to the enemy; and was arrested within the said lines, on or about November 20, 1863. This in Giles County, Tennessee.

"Charge second. Being a carrier of mails, communications, and information from within the lines of the United States army to persons in arms against the United States Government.

"Specification: In this, that the said Samuel Davis, on or about November 20, 1863, was arrested in Giles county, Tennessee, engaged in carrying mails and information from within the lines of the United States forces to persons in arms against the United States Government." To which charges and specifications the accused pleaded as follows:

To the specification of first charge, "Not guilty;" to the first charge, "Not guilty." To the specification of second charge, "Guilty; to the second charge, "Guilty."

After a patient investigation of several days, the following were the finding and sentence:

"The Court finds the accused as follows: Of the specification to first charge, 'Guilty;' of the first charge, 'Guilty.' Of the specification of second charge, 'Guilty;' of the second charge, 'Guilty.' And the Commissioner does therefore sentence him, the said Samuel Davis, of Coleman's Scouts, in the service of the so-called Confederate States, to be hanged by the neck until he is dead, at such time and place as the commanding General may direct; two-thirds of the members of the Commission concurring in the sentence.

"Finding and sentence of the Commission approved. The sentence will be carried into effect on Friday, November 27th, 1863, between the hours of 10 o'clock A.M. and 6 o'clock P.M. Brig.-gen. T. W. Sweeney, commanding Second Division, will cause the necessary arrangements to be made to carry out this order in the proper manner.

"The Military Commission, of which Col. Madison Miller, Eighteenth Missouri Volunteer Infantry, is President, is hereby dissolved.

"By order of Brigadier-general G. M. Dodge: "J. W. Barnes, Lieut. and A. A. G."

The prisoner was informed of the finding and sentence of the Military Commission by Captain Armstrong, the local Provost Marshal, and, though manifesting some surprise at the severity of the punishment to be inflicted, he bore himself heroically, and showed not the quiver of a muscle. He wrote the following affecting letter to his mother and father:

"Pulaski, Giles County, Tenn., Nov. 26, 1863. "Dear Mother: O how painful it is to write to you! I have got to die tomorrow morning--to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you good-by for evermore. Mother, I do not hate to die. Give my love to all. Your Dear Son.

"Mother: Tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see all of you once more, but I never will any more.

"Mother and Father: Do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead; but do not grieve for me; it will not do any good.

"Father: You can send after my remains, if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tenn. I will leave some things, too, with the hotel-keeper for you. "Pulaski is in Giles county, Tennessee, south of Columbia."

Copied from his little book:

"Met Coleman in the road--one package tied up, letter sealed, twelve miles from Mount Pleasant--half an hour in the road; staid all night with him six months before.

"Had sick leave from the army three weeks; staid near Columbia awhile--at Gillespie's house, five miles out.

"Smyrna, twenty miles from Nashville and Stevenson railroad.

"Brother and sister members of the Methodist Church.

"Would not care about the mode of death being changed to shooting.

"Hope something may turn up some day to let the officers that convicted me know that I am innocent.

"Mrs. C. L. Davis, Smyrna Post-office, Rutherford County, Tenn."

Later in the day Chaplain Young visited him, and found him resigned to his fate. After prayer by the Chaplain, he inquired in relation to the news of the day, and being told that Bragg was defeated, he expressed the deepest regret. The scaffold for the execution of the prisoner was built upon an elevation on the east side of the town, near the college, and immediately in front of the house now occupied by James McCallum, Esq., a position that can be seen from almost every part of the town. At precisely ten o'clock on the morning of

Friday, the 27th of November, 1863, the arms of the prisoner being pinioned, he was placed on a wagon, seated on his coffin (a refinement of cruelty), and conveyed to the scaffold. Davis stepped from the wagon and seated himself on a bench at the foot of the scaffold, glancing occasionally at the coffin as it was being taken from the wagon. He displayed no trepidation, but calmly and quietly turning to Capt. Armstrong, asked how long he had to live, and on being told just fifteen minutes, said in substance that the rest of the battles would have to be fought without him. Capt. Armstrong, turning to him, said: "I am sorry to be compelled to perform this painful duty." To which Davis replied, with a smile: "It does not hurt me, Captain; I am innocent, though I am prepared to die, and do not think hard of you." Captain Chickasaw then approaching, asked the prisoner if it would not have been better to have saved his life by disclosing the name of the officer who furnished the facts in relation to the fortifications, etc., and intimated that it was not yet too late, when the prisoner answered with much indignation: "Do you suppose that I would betray a friend? No, sir; I would die a thousand times first. I will not betray the confidence of my informant." Then, committing a few keepsakes to Mr. Lawrence, a Methodist minister, he mounted the scaffold with a serene countenance, in company with Chaplain Young, whom he requested to pray with him. After a prayer, the delicacy and appropriateness of which may be well questioned under the circumstances, the prisoner stepped upon the trap and paid the severe penalty of devotion to right and principle. He died with the calmness of a philosopher, the sternness of a patriot, and the serene courage of a martyr. Never did a deeper gloom spread over any community than spread over that of Pulaski, when Davis's tragic fate was made known. The deed was openly and boldly stigmatized by the common soldiers as a needless assassination; men and women, in every part of the town, indulged in unavailing moans, and even the little children, with terror depicted on their countenances, ran about the streets weeping with uncontrollable grief. No man ever awakened a deeper sympathy. His sad fate is one of the touching themes of the county; and whenever his name is mentioned the tear rises unbidden to the eye of the oldest as well as the youngest. His memory is embalmed among the people as a self-immolated martyr to what he conceived a pure and holy duty--the preservation of the sacredness of confidence. This case furnishes a melancholy example of the atrocities still permitted under the usages of civilized warfare.

After the lapse of over twenty years, in reviewing, all the facts connected with this sad affair, it must be admitted that there were many mitigating circumstances in the case of this dauntless young soldier, which pleaded powerfully for clemency from the post commander. He was captured fifteen miles from Pulaski; he pretended to no disguise, but had on at the time of his capture his arms and the Confederate uniform. It is true that plans of the fortifications in Middle Tennessee were found upon his person; but no proof further than his own admission was adduced to show that he was in possession of them in any other capacity than as a courier or later-carrier, and might, in the discharge of his duty as such, have involuntarily got within the lines. In addition to all these, his youth, his intelligence, his unflinching constancy under the severest trials and the greatest temptations, and his heroic conduct to the last, certainly should have induced a noble-hearted commander to give the prisoner the benefit of any doubt.

Note.--The foregoing article has been revised for this volume. It originally appeared in "The Annals of the Army of Tennessee," etc., edited by Dr. Edwin L. Drake, Lieutenant-colonel, C. S. A., Vol. I., pages 294-298. 1878.

[Every effort was made to procure a likeness of this heroic youth, so as to give a full-plate steel-engraving, but in vain. To mark his transcendent merit the above detailed account is given, although the plan of this work leaves "Biographical Notes" for a final volume.--Editor.]

http://www.fantasy.com/civil_war/forum/2007/12/09/scoutshanging_sam_davis

Union 'trick' results in Sam Davis' capture

By: By Mike West, Managing Editor



© Tennessee State Museum • Sam Davis' boot was cut apart by federal troops looking for secrets.

Confederate courier Sam Davis had reason to be wary as he rested in a thicket on the Rain's farm outside of Nashville.

Union Brig. Gen. Grenville Dodge had the 7th Kansas cavalry looking for members of Coleman's Scouts, a Confederate spy/courier unit of some 40 to 45 operatives.

Davis, along with his older half-brother John G. Davis, were active members of the unit, which was led by former teacher Henry Shaw, who disguised himself as an unkempt, bearded herbal doctor who hobbled along with a limp.

Not all of Coleman's operatives were men. Confederate sympathizer Mary Kate Patterson, who married John Davis in 1864, played an active role in the spy ring. Her brother, Everard Patterson, was a member of Coleman's Scouts as well.

Mary Kate Patterson, who lived about nine miles from Nashville off Nolensville Pike, brought Davis his breakfast that Sunday morning in the thicket accompanied by her cousin Robbie Woodruff. He gave the two young women a list of items to purchase in Nashville. Most of the items were intended for Gen. Braxton Bragg, commander of the Confederate Army of Tennessee.

“We found him up, looking as bright as if he had slept all night, and, oh, he did enjoy his good warm breakfast, for we rode fast and had his coffee in a jug to keep it warm,” she wrote in the February 1896 edition of Confederate Veteran. “Two of my little brothers brought our dinner and we spent a nice, pleasant Sunday together – the last he spent on earth but one.”

The following day, a Monday, Davis’s younger brother, Oscar, kept him company while Patterson and Woodruff went to Nashville. After dark, he headed south toward Pulaski.

Davis next stayed at or near the home of Bob English near Lynnville in Giles County where he rendezvoused with Shaw and scouts W.J. Moore and Joshua Brown. Portions of Dodge’s troops were stationed nearby rebuilding the railroad line.

There, Davis on or about Nov. 18, was presented with the document that ultimately led to his death. It was apparently taken from Dodge’s desk by Houston English, who was a young slave of Bob English, while the general was at a meal. Davis hid that document in his boot, which was later cut apart by Union troops. That same boot is part of the collection at Tennessee State Museum in Nashville. A map showing the Union fortifications of Nashville was hidden in his saddle.

Shaw also gave him a letter for Col. A. McKinstry, provost marshal of the Army of Tennessee. A provost marshal was in command of the military police of a unit.

In his waterproof saddlebag were the personal items Mary Kate Patterson and Robbie Woodruff had collected for Gen. Bragg, including six or seven newspapers, toothbrushes, soap and blank writing journals.

It was hoped if Davis was stopped and searched only the items in the saddlebag would be discovered. He was dressed as a Confederate and wore a heavy Union overcoat that had been dyed butternut gray by his mother, Jane Simmons Davis. She had given him the coat when he surreptitiously visited the family home early in November. His father, Charles, cobbled his boots on the same visit.

With so many Union scouts and cavalry active in the area, Shaw instructed Davis to take a more circuitous route to Chattanooga by crossing the Tennessee River near Pulaski. Davis eluded capture once, but Brown and Moore were taken into custody.

Union scouts under the command of Capt. Levi H. Naron, nicknamed Chickasaw, were alert and devious.

Naron, who wrote a book about his own exploits in 1865, was an unlikely Union soldier.

“Chickasaw” was a Newton County, Ga., native who lived in Mississippi for 21 years and was a former slave owner. During the Mexican War, he was a member of the 1st Mississippi Rifles under the command of Col. Jefferson Davis, who later became president of the Confederacy.

Despite this background, Naron was a strong Unionist, who delivered stump speeches denouncing the Confederacy. Surrounded by bitter enemies, he relocated his wife and six children to Illinois and cast his lot with the Union army.

“Chickasaw,” under strict orders to apprehend members of Coleman’s Scouts, dressed his Union scouts as Confederate soldiers.

“While on their return to camp they met a young man dressed in rebel uniform, whom they conscripted for the rebel army. The young man was very indignant at first, and told them they were doing wrong, that he was on special business from General Bragg, all of which was of no avail, my scouts persisted in taking him before their Captain, who could act at his pleasure,” wrote Naron.

That young man was Sam Davis who was attempting to cross the Tennessee River near Minor Hill.

The ruse was over the minute they asked him for his weapons.

“He attempted to escape by putting spurs to his horse, but the scouts were on the watch, and the moment he made the effort one of the men caught his horse by the bridle rein,” Naron said.

Similarly, Shaw, Moore and Joshua Brown were captured and taken to Gen. Dodge for questioning.

“We did not know of the importance of the capture of Shaw, or that he was the Captain Coleman commanding Bragg’s secret service force. Nothing was found on any of the prisoners of importance, except upon Davis, who evidently had been selected to carry the information they had all obtained through to General Bragg,” Dodge said.

“Davis was brought immediately to me, as his captors knew his importance. They believed he was an officer and also knew he was a member of Coleman’s command.”

The general took the first crack at breaking Davis with the goal of locating Coleman and his command.

“Davis met me modestly. He was a fine, soldierly-looking young man, dressed in a faded Federal soldier’s coat, one of our army soft hats and top boots. He had a frank, open face, which was inclined to brightness,” Dodge said.

“I tried to impress upon him the danger he was in, and that I knew he was only a messenger, and held out to him the hope of lenient treatment if he would answer truthfully, as far as he could, my questions,” he said.

Davis, listening intently, gave Dodge no information. Capt. Armstrong, the 16th Division’s provost marshal, then placed Davis in the Pulaski jail with the other prisoners. An undercover Union informant was also added to the cell.

But the captured Confederates didn’t talk amongst themselves.

Dodge, in retrospect, said there were two reasons for the silence.

“They all knew Colonel Shaw was one of our captives, and that if his importance was made known to us he would certainly be hung, and they did not think that Davis would be executed,” he said.

The Confederates were wrong. The life of 21-year-old Sam Davis would soon be forfeit.

Why does the legend of Sam Davis endure?

By MIKE WEST Managing Editor - Dec. 16, 2007



A rare photo of the monument dedication from the Walter King Hoover Collection at MTSU's Gore Center.

“Google” the phrase “Confederate hero” on the Internet and you will get thousands of hits with many of them mentioning names like Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee.

So why does the memory of Confederate scout Sam Davis still endure?

Smyrna can thank Sumner Archibald Cunningham for that honor.

Cunningham, a Confederate veteran himself, was the founding editor of the monthly Confederate Veteran magazine. A Bedford County native, he served in the 41st Tennessee Infantry and fought with the Army of Tennessee at Franklin and Nashville.

After the war, Cunningham wrote a book about his experiences and launched a career in journalism. By 1885, he was a popular columnist at the Nashville American published by Edward Ward Carmack. While there, he got involved with a group of Southern newspaper men who were promoting plans to

construct a memorial for Jefferson Davis.

While Carmack went on to be a powerful voice for the temperance movement in Tennessee, Cunningham became one of the most important figures in the “Lost Cause” movement. Carmack’s push for a ban on alcoholic beverages led to a run for governor that divided the state’s Democratic party. He was “assassinated” in 1908 by Robin Cooper, the son of his rival and former boss, Duncan Brown Cooper.

Carmack had encountered the father and son on the streets of downtown Nashville. He fired the first shot, wounding Robin Cooper who returned fire, killing the newspaperman instantly.

He became a martyr for prohibition and a statue of Carmack, created by noted Nashville sculptor Nancy McCormack, was commissioned by the Tennessee General Assembly. The sculpture still stands on Capitol Hill in Nashville, ironically, over the entrance to State Capitol tunnel, which is named in honor of Sen. Reagor Motlow. The Motlow family once owned Jack Daniels Distillery in Lynchburg.

About that same time, a second statue was commissioned for Capitol Hill. This one, Cunningham, described as the highlight of his career.

This sculpture was to perpetuate the story of Sam Davis, “The Boy Hero of the Confederacy.”

Romanian born artist George Julian Zolnay, later called the Sculptor of the Confederacy, won the commission. He is best known for his bust of Edgar Allen Poe and for the Jefferson Davis Memorial in Richmond. He was a sculptor in New York when the Davis work was crafted.

The Sam Davis statue was more than a monument to a single soldier. It was a study in reconciliation for antebellum Southern culture. Standing relaxed with one leg slightly bent, Davis looks calm in the face of impending death. His chin is tilted up and his gaze looks firm and resolute. His arms are casually crossed with an air of defiance.

Zolnay and his Sam Davis statue became national news at the turn of the century.

Even the New York Times featured the sculptor’s effort to capture his spirit.

But Cunningham and the Confederate Veteran were chiefly responsible for the statute and for pulling the story of Sam Davis out of obscurity.

The monthly magazine was developed out of a newsletter Cunningham established as a way to keep donors to the Jefferson Davis Memorial fund informed about progress on the project, which still stands in Richmond.

Founded in 1893, the Nashville-based magazine was popular due to its low cost (\$1 a year) and its efforts to memorialize the story of rank-and-file Confederate soldiers. By 1904, it had the highest circulation of any Southern magazine.

John A. Simpson, Cunningham’s biographer, said the Confederate Veteran was “an outstanding example of personal journalism, closely reflecting the opinions and prejudices of its proprietor.”

With the Jefferson Davis Memorial complete, Sam Davis became Cunningham’s new project. He began

to piece together his story from a variety of sources. Much of his information came in the form of letters from people who actually knew Davis or participated in the events surrounding his death.

He depended greatly upon letters written to the magazine from people like Mary Kate Patterson, who married Davis' older brother, John G. Davis. In a February 1896 letter, she recounted the last time she saw him alive.

Like so many others of the era, the Civil War was her "glory days" and she spent the rest of her long life trying to recapture that feeling. Married three times, she was left alone and penniless after outlasting three husbands. Her first, John Davis, was killed during a steamboat explosion along with H.B. Shaw, the commander of Coleman's Scouts.

Other members of Coleman's Scouts also wrote Cunningham, as did Union veterans, the most notable one being Gen. Grenville Dodge, who sent Davis to his death on the gallows.

Dodge had received the brunt of the criticism regarding Davis' execution and was the focus of several letters written to Cunningham who weaved them into a commentary reflecting his own opinion.

For example, there was a letter from former Coleman scout R.B. Anderson of Denton, Texas, who protested Davis being considered a spy.

"If Sam Davis was a spy, every man in the Confederate army captured inside of the Federal lines was a spy. If Sam Davis had done as Dodge wanted him to do, he would not have been worthy of a place in the Capitol grounds of Nashville," Anderson wrote.

Dodge felt compelled to respond to allegations raised by Cunningham in his magazine and ended up giving his account of Davis' arrest and execution. The ex-Union general also gave a donation for the statue.

"I appreciate fully that the people of Tennessee and Davis' comrades understand his soldierly qualities and propose to honor his memory," Dodge wrote. "I take pleasure in aiding in raising the monument to his memory, although the services he performed were for the purpose of injuring my command, but given in faithfully performing the duties he was assigned to."

Thus fanning the flames, Cunningham organized fundraisers for the Davis statue, which he said would reflect "courage and firmness of the Confederate soldier element." The Tennessee General Assembly finally endorsed the concept in 1899 and passed a joint resolution creating a committee that was authorized to erect the statue when \$5,000 was raised. At that point, Cunningham's fundraisers had gathered \$2,100.

By 1902, sculptor Zolnay was already at work on the Davis project. He told a writer for the New York Times about his enthusiasm for the young soldier's story.

"Mr. Zolnay heard this story while visiting in Nashville, and became fired with the desire to immortalize this sublime heroism in bronze," a March 23, 1902 New York Times article said.

The reporter said Zolnay met with Davis' parents, his sister and veterans who knew the scout, but was unable to obtain a photograph or image of him. Other sources speculate that the artist used the face of Andromeda, his sister, for inspiration.

“Under the circumstances, he did not propose to make a physical likeness of Sam. He thought only to embody in his work the spirit of youth and heroism – to create the ideal Sam Davis. For weeks he dreamed of nothing else,” the reporter said.

Eventually, he completed a bust and invited John Kennedy, the man who brought Davis’ body back to Smyrna for burial, to view it in a Nashville studio.

“He expected Mr. Kennedy to say: ‘A pretty bust. Who is it?’ Instead the veteran gave a sudden start. ‘My God! Sam!’ he cried, and throwing his arms about the statue, he burst into tears,” the Times reported.

The completed bust and the publicity generated for it helped push Cunningham’s fundraising drive to completion, but Cunningham had been pitching the story of Sam Davis at Confederate veterans events for years.

One perfect example was the May 24, 1896 meeting of the Cheatham Bivouac of the United Confederate Veterans at Sam Davis’ gravesite. That event, organized by Cunningham, was covered by the Nashville American newspaper.

James Trotwood Moore was another writer who championed Sam Davis, collecting much valuable information after he was named state librarian and archivist in March 1919.

A poem, entitled “Davis was too brave to die” by Moore, accompanied the newspaper coverage.

Another early advocate of Davis was Bromfield L. Ridley of Smyrna, who featured him extensively in his “Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee,” written in 1906. Ridley was a classmate and playmate of Davis.

“There may have been soldiers who would have done as he did, yet we know that under the most trying circumstances he sealed his faith with his blood and offered up his life on the altar of duty rather than betray his friends and country. The respect that we pay his memory today is the outpouring of a sentiment that actuates every Southern heart. The coming ages will place his character forward as a typical Confederate soldier and as an American,” Ridley said.

The Sam Davis Statue was ultimately completed and unveiled to great acclaim in June 1909.

Meanwhile, his story continued to grow.

<http://www.murfreesboropost.com/why-does-the-legend-of-sam-davis-endure-cms-8152>

Field Review by
the Team at
RoadsideAmerica.com



Sam Davis Museum.

Sam Davis Museum, Hanging Site

Pulaski, [Tennessee](#)

"I would rather die a thousand deaths than betray a friend or be false to a duty." - Sam Davis

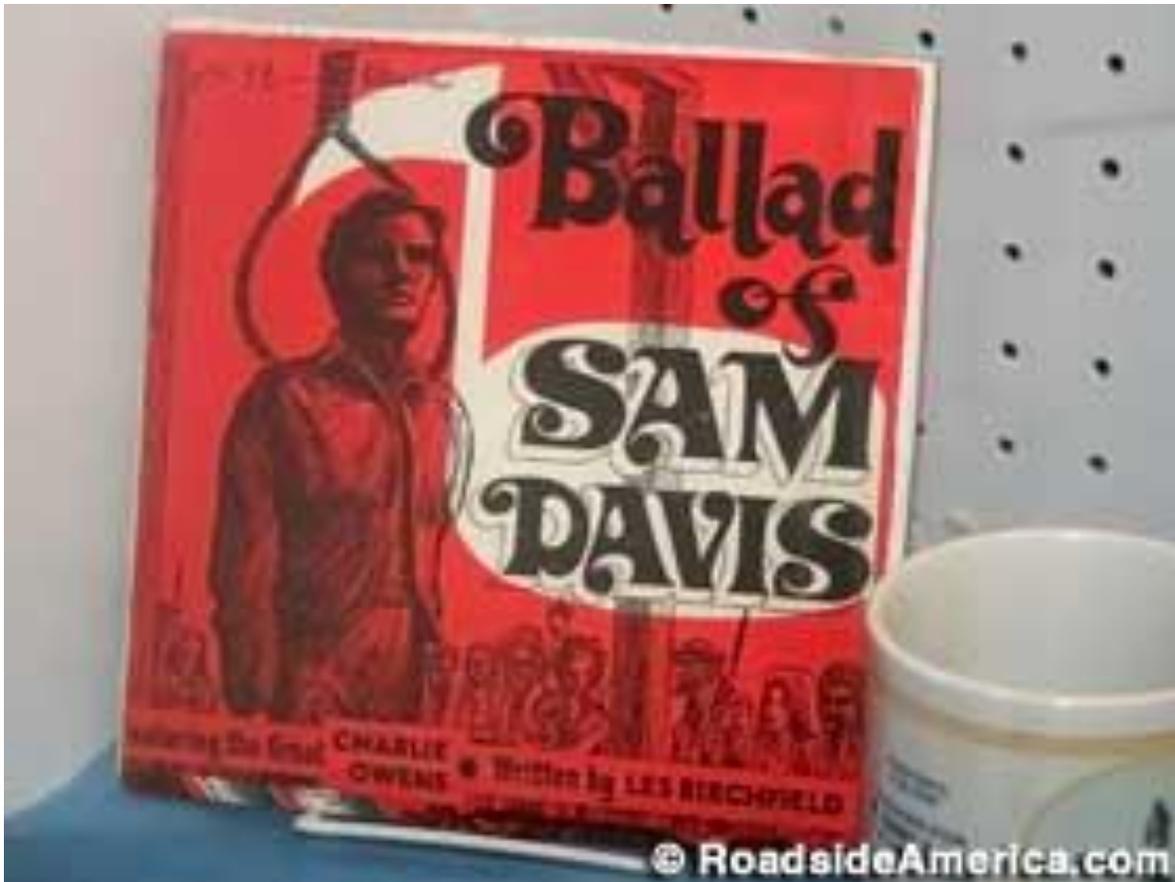
In the metaphorical pantheon of Dixie role models, Sam Davis is "The Boy Hero of the Confederacy." He wasn't a boy (he was 21 and battle-scarred) and although a combat veteran of several years of Civil War fighting, that's not where he became a hero. Injuries forced him into a less confrontational wartime role as a spy behind the Yankee lines -- and then he was caught, court-martialed, and hanged on a hill overlooking Pulaski on November 27, 1863.



Execution site marker.

Davis's heroics came during the brief seven days between his capture and execution. Although his captors offered him several opportunities to save his own skin in exchange for the names of his spy commander and the source of the top secret Union documents [hidden in his shoe](#), he steadfastly refused to do so.

Sam Davis probably didn't love Pulaski, but the town posthumously loved him as a symbol of Southern valor and loyalty. An engraved marble block was placed on his hanging spot, and eventually replaced by the mausoleum-like Sam Davis Memorial Museum, which opened 87 years to the minute after his execution. The block, still on the same spot, is now inside the museum, as are the leg shackles Davis wore to the gallows. On display are many examples of Sam Davis souvenirs, collectibles, and tributes: plates, coffee mugs, postcards, Christmas ornaments, dozens of books, and a 45 rpm record, "Ballad of Sam Davis." On the walls are hung a painting of the execution (by John White) and a framed portrait of the Boy Hero (by Miss Teresa Patterson).



"He was a nice guy," said George Newman of the Giles County Historical Society, who showed us around. " I don't think he deserved what happened to him."

Sam's early death may have inspired future generations, but it proved pretty fruitless at the time. The secrets in his shoe wouldn't have helped the Confederates in Tennessee -- they were defeated in far-away Chattanooga while he sat in prison. And although the spy commander for whom Davis gave his life did survive the war, he wound up **moving in with Davis's parents** -- where he talked Sam's older brother into buying a Mississippi riverboat. It blew up in 1867, killing them both.

(The Boy Hero of the Confederacy is not the same as [The Boy Martyr of the Confederacy](#), who was hanged in neighboring Arkansas.)

<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/35773>

Sam Davis Museum

"If I had a thousand lives to live, I would give them all rather than betray a friend"



Located in a National Historic District near the center of Pulaski, TN, the museum stands almost on the spot where the "Boy Hero of the Confederacy" was executed on November 27, 1863. Captured behind enemy lines with damaging information in his possession, Davis faced death by hanging rather than betray his source. The museum contains Civil War memorabilia as well as leg irons worn by young Sam Davis. The Museum is maintained by the Giles County Historical Society by Appointment Only. The actual spot of the execution is marked with a simple stone marker.



The Sam Davis Monument on the south side of the square, was erected in honor of the young "Boy Hero" confederate scout who was captured on the old Lamb's Ferry Road south of Minor Hill and executed in Pulaski on November 27, 1863. The monument was erected through the joint efforts of the John H. Woolridge Bivouac and the Giles County Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy and cost \$2,000.00. The same Italian sculptor who carved the figure marking the grave of Governor John C. Brown in Maplewood Cemetery carved the statue. The monument in front of the ornate courthouse cupola was dedicated October 11, 1906 as a part of the program of the Confederate reunion which met in Pulaski at that date. Speaking of the courthouse, a different courthouse would have made the backdrop when the statue was built, the same one seen in a famous civil war photograph. In that photo, many citizens are lined up along the street when Sam Davis was to be hanged. That courthouse burned down in 1907, and the current courthouse was completed in 1909.

There is another Sam Davis statue on the grounds of the Tennessee State Capitol and also, the Sam Davis Mansion in Smyrna, TN is available for tours.



This is a picture of the grounds of the State Capitol



L Home to the Boyhood Hero of the Civil War. built 1820 and expanded 1850. Smyrna, TN

R Sam Davis was born in the log home in 1842. This home was located off Almaville Pike but was moved to the "Sam Davis Home" historic site in Smyrna.

Survivors of Heroic Twentieth Tennessee Answer Roll Call



The annual reunion of the Twentieth Tennessee Infantry, one of the units of the Confederate army which distinguished itself for heroic activity during the war of the sixties, was held Friday in Centennial Park.

Where, when these reunions first began, there were from 100 to 150 of the veterans to answer roll call, there were but ten who heard the call on Friday. Probably as many others, too old and infirm to make the journey even to the park, were with these loved heroes of the gray in this 1925 get-together on the anniversary of the battle of Chickamauga, in which engagement they distinguished themselves.

Above are the men who answered "Here" when the roll was called Friday. Reading from left to right, they are: Thomas H. Sneed, John Bradford, S. A. Walden, J. K. Marshall, H. E. Graves, William Hartman, D. C. Scales, E. N. Patterson, D. P. Robinson and W. M. Wilson.

Another photo from the archives of the Nashville Banner, which pictures "Survivors of the Heroic 20th Tennessee" gathered on the anniversary of the Battle of Chickamauga, Sept. 19, 1925. Here's what the caption doesn't tell you: The smallman **third from the right**, identified as "E. N. Patterson", is really **Everard Meade Patterson of Company B of the 20th, and also a member of Coleman's Scouts, where he served with Sam Davis**, Dee Jobe, and many other heroes. Patterson was wounded in combat three times, and at one point after leaving the 20th for the scouts was captured by Federals while on a mission near Nashville. He was court martialed, sentenced to be shot, and imprisoned in the old Tennessee State Prison in Nashville to await execution. While there, his sister smuggled him in some civilian clothing and a small container of whiskey. He had made friends with the guard on duty, and offered to share a drink with him. Soon the guard was passed out drunk, and Patterson changed clothes, slipped between the bars of his cell window and went over the wall. Making his way to his family home (in a rural southeast area of Nashville) he came across a patrol of yankees at a neighbor's house. Bold as brass, he walked right up to them only to find them discussing the escape of the notorious Coleman Scout, Meade Patterson. After eating his fill of yankee food, Patterson told them that he knew the area well and generously offered to help search for that Rebel scoundrel if they would loan him a horse. Needing all the help they could get, the yankees provided him with a good horse to ride in search of -- himself. He soon managed to separate himself from the other searchers and ride away. He was never caught.

CHORUS:

Sam squared his shoulders, shook his head and looked him in the eye

I can't betray my countrymen, Sir, I'm prepared to die

(Next two lines Moore speaks)

Sam's words rang out for all to hear,

"If I had a thousand lives, I'd give them all rather than betray a friend,"

Although Sam died that fateful day, the legacy lives on,

In Southern hearts that are still attuned to the cause he called his own.

FINAL CHORUS:

Young rebel, you did not die in vain,

Coleman's men all lived to ride again.

NOTE: In the stanza following the chorus, license has been taken to change the ballad to make the story true to fact that Sam Davis was not afraid and not a spy. The version by Ross Moore will be different. Sam's faith gave him courage to do his duty. His emotion, rather than fear, was one of anger that they would hang him as a spy when he was in uniform.

<http://www.bardofthesouth.com/guitar-chords-and-lyrics-for-young-rebel-the-ballad-of-sam-davis/>

[http://www.rdio.com/artist/Ross_Moore/album/Southern_Son/track/Young_Rebel_\(The_Ballad_of_Sam_Davis\)/](http://www.rdio.com/artist/Ross_Moore/album/Southern_Son/track/Young_Rebel_(The_Ballad_of_Sam_Davis)/)

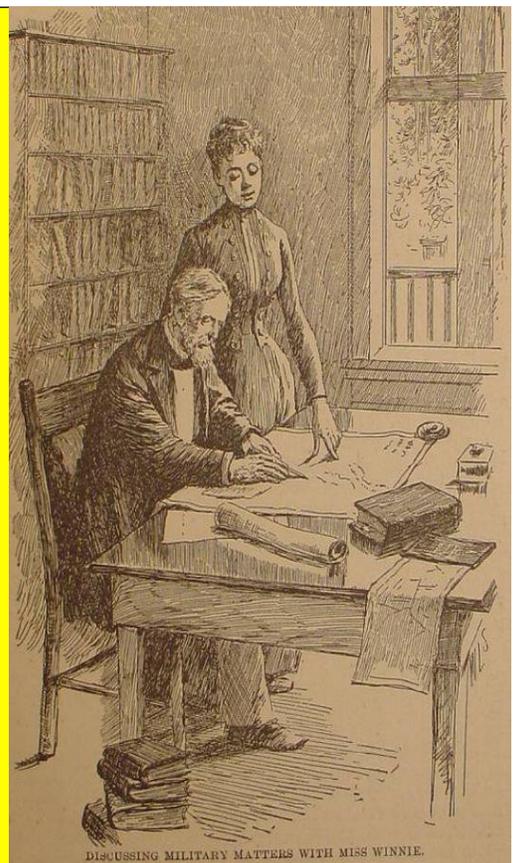
Confederate Library of History and Heritage

<http://belocamp.com/library>

Col. A. H. Belo was a newspaper man. On October 1, 1885, Belo established the Dallas Morning News. He was with the News for thirty-six years and directed the policy of its publication for more than a quarter of a century. In the tradition of Colonel Belo, we seek to educate our fellow Southrons in an effort to **VINDICATE the Cause** for which our fathers fought; namely, the defence of our homeland against an illegal war waged upon our people by the United States of America.

Our Library section contains a growing wealth of resources which are designed to bring truth to our fellow Confederates and others in an age of political correctness and unrepentant yankee lies about our people, our culture, our heritage and our history.

We invite you to take advantage of this collection of resources to become better equipped to stand up for Dixie.



DISCUSSING MILITARY MATTERS WITH MISS WINNIE.



SAM DAVIS

SOUTHERN PATRIOT

THE NATHAN HALE OF THE SOUTH

On a cold frosty morning, in the winter of 1863, a wagon moved silently down the dirt road, a short distance from Pulaski, Tennessee, with only an occasional squeak from the springs to be heard. Riding behind the wagon is a squad of Federals, their horses' feet crunching on the frozen bleak winter ground.

Sitting on a casket in the rear of the wagon is the lone passenger. A strikingly handsome young man of but 21 years. A few days before this morning Sam was a Confederate scout, in the service of his homeland.

Captured by the Federals and sentenced to die, he has been offered his life if he will but identify those who have given him information. Davis' answer was to look bravely into the face of the interrogating officer and reply, "Do you suppose were I your friend, that I would betray you?" The federal once again offered Davis his life and eventual freedom. Davis straightened his lean frame, and with total contempt in his voice for all the Federals represented said, "Sir, if you think that I am that kind of a man, you have missed your mark. *I would rather die a thousand deaths than betray a friend or be false to duty.*"

As Davis starts up the steps of the gallows, the boards beneath his feet gently creak from his weight. It is a bleak day; trees nearby are barren and stark. A single leaf finishes its life and flutters toward the ground.

Davis from the last step looks down upon the men, who in well-ordered columns intently watch him. The American flag snaps as a cold gust of wind rushes through his thin shirt. Davis sadly reflects that while



this is his homeland, his native soil, it is none the less his hanging, for his country is occupied by the men who fly the red, white, and blue; and they are the enemy of his people; they represent a government whose sole objective is to destroy the way of life of those Davis loves.

As the heavy, stiff rope is placed around his young neck, thoughts of how course and ruff the rope is rush through his mind...thoughts of his mother who was hoping that he would be home for Christmas...thoughts of his beautiful sweetheart, whom he dearly loves....

Suddenly, a galloping horse is heard in the distance. A courier dashes up with a final offer of life for Davis, if he will but reveal the names asked for. Emotion wells up in the heart of Davis, his throat swells as a lump appears--a short breath--a moment's pause, and Davis says, "I'm ready." Another winter's breeze rushes through the trees, the many-starred flag snaps, and with it the rope around Davis's neck goes taugt.

The Federals watch quietly as the golden leaf floats toward the ground--the last vestige of a summer past, and like the Federals themselves soon to be forgotten. Not so, Sam Davis.

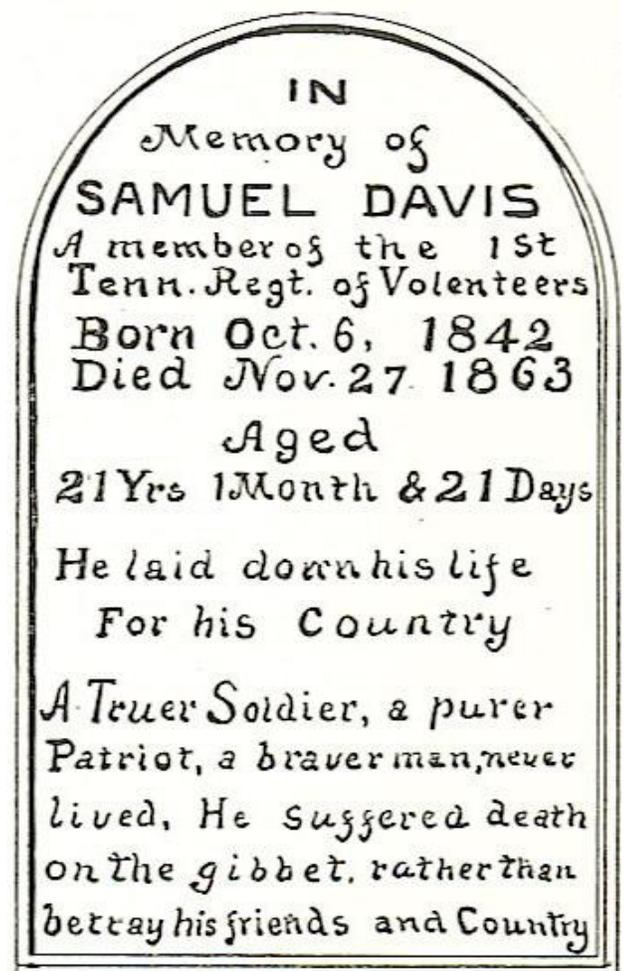


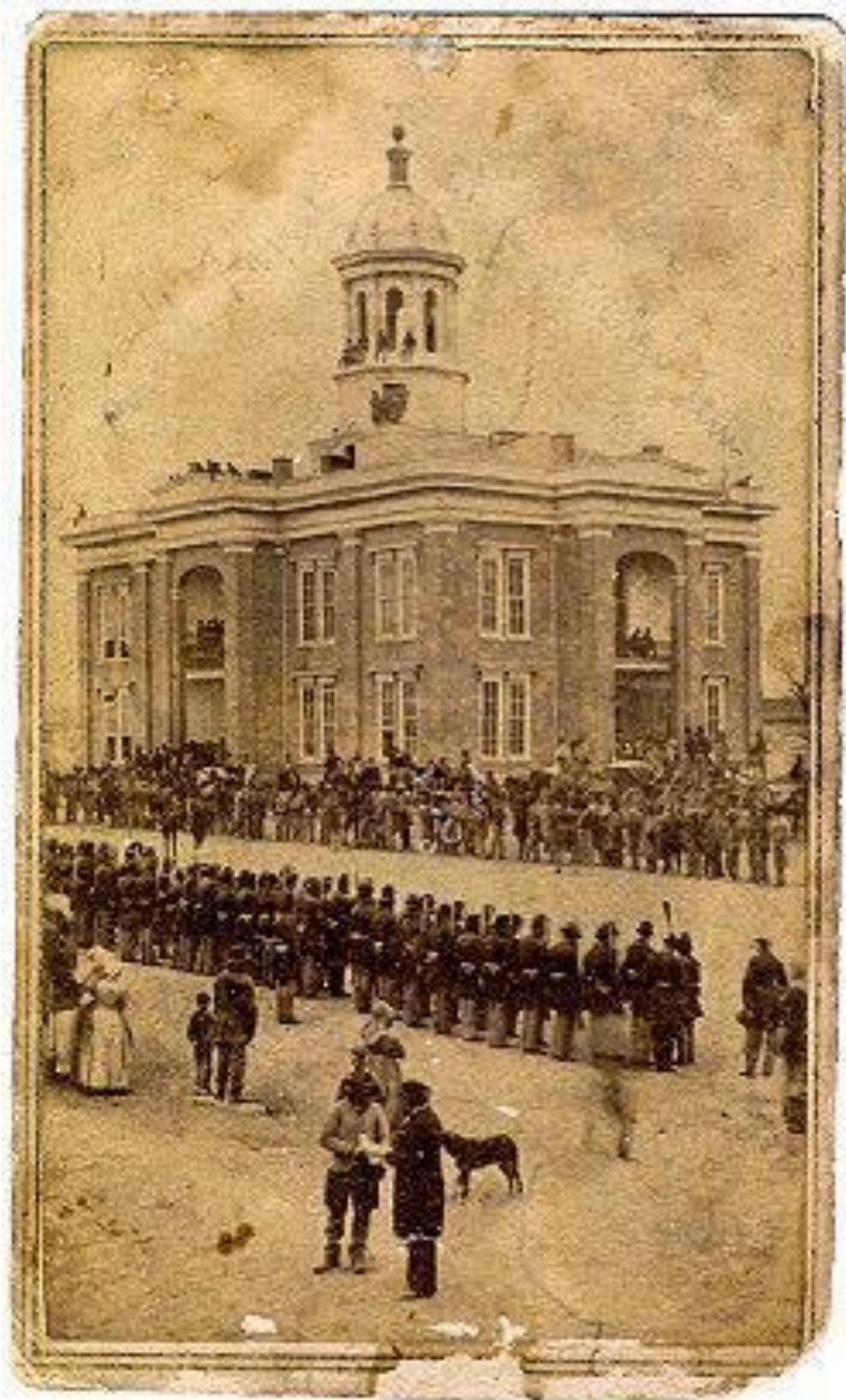
Essay by Louis Beam

Published in *The Seditonist* Issue Two, Spring 1989

<http://www.louisbeam.com/samdavis.htm>

Sam Davis' Gravestone





This picture was taken at the Pulaski courthouse on the day of the execution of Sam Davis

THE COLEMAN SCOUTS

A Study by Mabel Baxter Pittard

August, 1953

Note: Following document represents a distillation and compilation of many of the source documents found elsewhere on this site in their original form. These are complemented by correspondence with descendants of the scouts, and references to documents and publications not available here. Careful reading will detect a few minor variations in such things as the spelling of names, and at least one reference to an article found in "a scrapbook" which was in fact originally published in Confederate Veteran. This document is presented here in its original form, with the sole exception of the footnotes, which have been re-numbered to better fit this format.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments are made to relatives of the scouts for their kindness in responding to requests for pictures and information, and to members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy who have aided much in the collection of material for this study. Those members of this organization who have aided greatly are: Mrs. W. R. Morton, Franklin, Tennessee; Mrs. Frank Shelton, Columbia, Tennessee; Miss Annie Cody of Nashville, Tennessee; and Mrs. B. F. Alderson of Murfreesboro.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SCOUTS

THE ARMY OF TENNESSEE

In a study of the Coleman Scouts it is well to give a brief background of the activities of the army to which this group of men was attached. This military component was designated as the Army of Tennessee of the Confederate States of America. From Stanley Horn, in his account found in The Army of Tennessee, we may infer that it was first called by this name about the time it assumed its position at Murfreesboro late in the fall of 1862.

"Bragg, having established his headquarters at Murfreesboro, announced his determination to occupy Middle Tennessee in force. ...Johnston made his temporary headquarters at Chattanooga, but went to Murfreesboro on November 26, to spend several days inspecting the army of about forty thousand which Bragg had assembled and which Johnston now officially called the Army of Tennessee -- the name which it was to make lustrous." (1)

Ridley in his Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee states that this army was organized at Murfreesboro prior to the bloody battle that ensued there from December 31, 1862 to January 3, 1863, culminating with Bragg's withdrawal.

In Kentucky the successful battles of Richmond, Munfordsville, and Perryville were fought. After this the Confederate Army under General Bragg withdrew and settled at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and reorganized the army under the name of the Army of Tennessee. From this time, November, 1862, the Army of Tennessee was so called until the surrender of the Confederate forces at Greensboro, North Carolina, April 26, 1865. (2)

According to Ridley, (3) this embryonic Army of Tennessee was first listed in Confederate military annals as the Western Department of the Confederate Forces and was commanded by General Albert Sidney Johnston. From an account given by Stanley Horn, (4) it was evident that Johnston's first concern was the fortification of Nashville, the largest and most important city south of the Ohio River. This importance was due to the city's strategic position on the Cumberland River and the fact that it was a railroad center. It served as an arsenal and depot of supplies for the Confederacy. Horn elaborates further on Nashville's importance to the Confederacy:

“A quickly constructed plant was manufacturing 100,000 percussion caps a day.The Nashville Plow Works was manufacturing sabres; other plants were manufacturing muskets, saddles, harness, and knapsacks. Looms were turning out thousands of yards of gray jeans, and nimble hands were sewing them into uniforms for the soldiers. Two local foundries were casting cannon, and one of them was turning out rifled guns. (5)

In order to secure the Confederates' hold on this vital city, two forts were constructed near Nashville -- Fort Donelson and Fort Henry. These forts were so poorly equipped, the men so ill-trained, that both of them fell to the Union forces in February of 1862. After these defeats General Johnston retreated to Corinth, Mississippi. (6)

Johnston's plan then was to join Beauregard's troops at Corinth as quickly as possible, and strike at Grant before reinforcements could reach him at his position near Shiloh Church. Then a series of events brought General Braxton Bragg rapidly to the forefront and ultimately to the command of the Army of the Mississippi as this military group was now being called. First, the dapper Beauregard became ill and requested that General Bragg assume the command of his forces. Secondly, General Johnston was killed in the Battle of Shiloh on the first day of this bloody encounter, and Beauregard assumed the command of the Army of the Mississippi.

Following the battle the new commander, again being ill, decided to recuperate a few days in a hotel in Jackson, Tennessee. Without confirmation from the President of the Confederacy, General Beauregard placed General Bragg in temporary command of the army. President Jefferson Davis for personal or military reasons dismissed Beauregard and placed General Braxton Bragg in full command.

This new general, a friend of Jefferson Davis, was characterized by some as martinet, by others as uncompromising, cruel, and even incompetent. Stanley Horn gives a good, if not prejudiced, description of Bragg as commander:

“The troops he trained were celebrated for their efficiency. They regarded him, however, as a hard taskmaster and too much a stickler for formality, red tape, and precise conformity with all rules and regulations. He was possessed of an irascible temper and was naturally disputatious. ...His unpopularity with nearly everyone he encountered greatly diminished his effectiveness. In his defense it should be said that he was the victim of a painful and distressing chronic ailment--migraine or sick headache ... This infirmity caused him to be irritable, often harsh, and this alienated from him the affection and enthusiasm of his troops, and he was never without serious friction with some, and at times all of his corps commanders.”

Following his assumption of command, Bragg moved his troops to Tupelo, Mississippi, and from there to Chattanooga, Tennessee. From Chattanooga, he crossed the state of Tennessee and marched into Kentucky. Here he experienced a very satisfactory campaign; yet, despite his successes, he withdrew to Tennessee and settled at Murfreesboro. As has been established, it was here that this military group first became known as the Army of Tennessee.

Following the general practice of organizing scouting operations to keep the commanders informed of enemy operations, a group of young men under Captain Henry B. Shaw was brought together. These scouts, known interchangeably as Shaw's Scouts or Coleman's Scouts, were to play an important part in the operation of Bragg's Army - the army that had and was to fight some of the bloodiest battles of the war -- Shiloh, Stone's River, and Chickamauga.

This army was to campaign over more territory than any other single army on either side. It was to write some of the brightest pages in the Confederate history as its men displayed courage unequalled by that of any other army. It was to be subjected to the leadership of some of the most inept commanders. It was to suffer the most complete defeat of any Confederate army, but its men were stubbornly to refuse to admit defeat until only a few were left to fight. The effect upon the men of the frequent shifting of its command was exhibited in this song heard as the last remnant of this army retreated in defeat following the battles of Franklin and Nashville:

So now I'm marching southward
My heart is full of woe
I'm going back to Georgia
To see my Uncle Joe.
You may talk about your Beauregard
And sing of General Lee
But the gallant Hood of Texas
Played hell in Tennessee. (8)

ORGANIZING THE SCOUTS

The tactics and strategy of warfare depend on information as well as on soldiers and guns. Spies and scouts are sent into enemy territory to gather news concerning movements of troops, to secure newspapers, and to obtain any vital information about enemy resources. Both the Northern and Southern armies during the War Between the States availed themselves of this medium of securing information. It was for this purpose that the group of men known as the Coleman Scouts was organized. The Confederate Veteran of November, 1897, indirectly quoting from a letter written to that magazine by Alfred H. Douglas, one of the scouts, has this to say in regard to the beginning of the organization:

Alfred H. Douglas and John Davis, an older brother of Sam Davis, were called to a conference Generals Cheatham and Hardee. It resulted in their being directed to come as near Nashville as practicable and report what they could learn of the enemy. They succeeded beyond expectation.

After that General Cheatham appointed Captain Henry B. Shaw to take charge of an organization of scouts and to confer with them. General Bragg, in the meantime, had officially notified them to report to Shaw. Captain Shaw, John Davis, and Douglas selected such men as thought efficient for the perilous work. The men left off their uniforms, occasionally wearing citizen's suits or Federal uniforms, they were not required to do it. Many of them would wear Federal overcoats after changing blue by a walnut dye. Their scouting territory extended from the Gulf of Mexico to Louisville, east and west, but their main field of action was in Middle Tennessee. (9)

Since there was no access to Bragg's reports to his superiors in matters relating to scouting activities, the exact date of the organization of the Coleman Scouts could not be determined. Using references in B. L. Ridley's works and those of Stanley Horn, it may be fairly well established that this group of scouts became active sometime between Bragg's assumption of the command of the Army of Mississippi in June of 1862 and the fall of 1862, when Bragg came into Tennessee following the Kentucky campaigns. That the scouts were active at the Battle of Stones River is evident from this statement by Horn:

"Rosecrans' movement began early on the morning of December 26, word of it being brought to Bragg by his scouts."
(10)

Mrs. Thomas McFerrin, Senior, of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, stated in a conversation that her father, Will Roberts went on such expeditions in the vicinity of LaVergne a few days before the battle took place.

Shaw, the Captain of the group, assumed the name of Coleman to hide his real identity. He operated within the enemy lines under the guise of an itinerant herb doctor. Information secured by Shaw was passed from him to the scouts and then relayed to Confederate headquarters. R. B. Anderson of Denton, Texas, and a member of the group, in a letter to the Confederate Veteran alluded to the freedom and security promised the scouts as they moved through enemy lines:

“When General Bragg was at Murfreesboro, there was an agreement formed between him and the Commander of the Federal forces by which each one could send scouts into the other's lines, dressed in their own uniforms and armed, who in case of capture were to be treated as regular prisoners of war. This was made known to me when I was detailed to report to Captain Shaw in May, 1863, as one of his scouts. (11)

From the above we may infer that these men, whose purpose was to penetrate enemy lines in the uniform of the Confederate Army were scouts and not spies. Below is a copy of the credentials furnished one of the men, Sam Davis, by the Commanding Officer of the Army of Tennessee:

Headquarters General Bragg's Scouts
Middle Tennessee, September 25, 1863

Samuel Davis has permission to pass on scouting duty anywhere in Middle Tennessee or north of the Tennessee River he may think proper.

By order of General Bragg
E. Coleman, Commanding Scouts (12)

These passes served a two-fold purpose. Not only were they supposed to assure the scout of better treatment in the event of capture, but the credentials issued the scouts by Bragg made it easier for men to secure food, lodging, and aid from Southerners who might otherwise suspect them of being Northern spies.

Despite credentials and the uniforms of their own army, these men were subject to great peril and danger if captured. It will be established later that some of them actually were put to death without benefit of a trial. Doctor H. M. Hammill of Nashville in writing to the Confederate Veteran in June, 1909, emphasized the danger attached to scouting:

“Scout or spy, whatever the term applied, one who enters the lines of the enemy to secretly gather information for use of the opposing army under the rules of warfare becomes a spy, and if caught is executed as a spy. There is no mawkish sentiment in war, and small mercy is shown one who seeks to discover the secrets of the army.

But, as with Major Andre of the Revolution, and with many others, the occupation of scout and spy is a necessity of warfare to which any soldier is liable. One who is commissioned a military spy is usually chosen because of superior intelligence, courage, and devotion to his army and colors. His vocation is full of deadly peril by day and by night. If caught, he usually dies by the most ignominious death under conditions that inspire contempt in the spectators, to the end that swift judgment and odious death may deter men from seeking the office of spy. Over his supreme self-sacrifice the epitaph is commonly written, "Died on the gallows as a spy," without these added words which justice demands: "Under military appointment and for his country's cause." (13)

Mrs. John Nelson of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, has in her possession a newspaper clipping of uncertain date that contains an article about the Coleman Scouts. In this article is found a description of the type of men selected to be members of this organization:

“The scouts of an army are its big eyes. The result of a battle, the fate of a nation, has often hung upon the report of a trusted scout. A soldier is selected from any part of the army for known bravery, intelligence, coolness, and activity for that kind of work. Henry B. Shaw, who commanded Bragg's scouts, attached to the Army of Tennessee, known as Coleman Scouts, was a born scout, and his men were especially selected for this peculiar work.” (14)

Other descriptions of the type of men selected for scouting duty with Shaw included horsemanship and familiarity with the terrain in which their assignments might carry them. Since these scouts operated mainly in Middle Tennessee one can understand from this last prerequisite why many of the men detailed for this particular duty were from Middle Tennessee counties.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORGANIZATION

One may infer that the membership of this group of scouts was a fluctuating one -- some, members for a short period of time until capture or death -- others, for a longer period. So far as could be determined there is no complete published list of the roll that made up the membership of the Coleman Scouts. James D. Porter in his Confederate Military History gives this information concerning the membership of the group:

“Coleman Scouts was a group of about one hundred men of marked ability and daring, under the command of Captain Henry B. Shaw, known in both armies by the name of Coleman.” (15)

This investigator has been able to compile a list of forty-five members including Captain Shaw. From an article entitled "Careers of Coleman Scouts" found in a scrapbook belonging to Mrs. W. R. Morton of Franklin, Tennessee, it was possible to obtain a list of thirty nine members. The list follows:

“We, the surviving fellow scouts, have met and from memory given to the Veteran a list of all who belonged to Shaw's Scouts.

H. B. Shaw, Captain

John Davis

Alf H. Douglas

Thomas M. Joplin

Bill T. Robinson

Everard Patterson

Bill Roberts

Billy Moore

Joshua Brown

Munford Street

Gup Kibble

Tom Brown

Dick Taylor

Alex Gregg

Sam Roberts

Tom Hughes

Dee Jobe

Dan Sneed

Sam Davis

Tom Gwinn

Charley Lippingwell

Jack Coffee

John McIver

Bob Owens

John Drane

Pillow Humphreys

"Kage" Everett

Dick Dillard

James T. Patterson

Newt Vaughan

E. Grant

Hans Carter

Jim Carter

Hick Kelley

Josh Luck

W. H. Portch



Dewitt Smith Jobe an almost forgotten Civil War hero from Smyrna. He was tortured and killed for not giving up his information just as his cousin Sam Davis was known for. Dewitt was actually tortured in the most brutal way as compared to Davis.

R. F. Cotton
George Hughes
John Schute

Signed: Alf. Douglas, E. M. Patterson, W. B. Robinson, Tom Joplin. (16)

Six additional names found by this writer in various references were: J. Tom Brown, L. K. Owen, Richard B. Anderson, Lillard, Will Hughes, and Ben Douglas.

CHAPTER THREE

PERSONAL SKETCHES OF COLEMAN'S SCOUTS

The chain of scouts, commanded by Henry B. Shaw, as far as this writer has been able to determine numbered forty-four. Rather full information was available about perhaps a dozen of these men. About the remaining thirty two only brief sketches or incidents surrounding their lives and careers were available. Much of the material concerning the lives of these men was taken from an article entitled "Careers of Coleman Scouts" which was found in a scrapbook belonging to Mrs. W. R. Morton, Franklin, Tennessee.

Shaw's position as leader of this group terminated with his capture at Pulaski, November 22, 1863. The man selected to replace Shaw as the leader of the group was Alex Greig (sometimes spelled Gregg). Since Gregg occupied this position of leadership for a time, a brief sketch of his life will precede similar sketches of the other members of the group.

ALEX GREGG

According to the article found in Mrs. Morton's scrapbook Alex Gregg, the person selected as leader of Coleman's Scouts following Shaw's capture, was wounded twice and captured twice during his military career. The article stated further that, "He was killed but not in battle." (17) S. A. Cunningham, editor of the Confederate Veteran in speaking of Gregg said:

"He was a Scotchman by birth, but lived in Nashville when the war commenced. He enlisted with the Company B, Rock City Guards. Later he became adjutant in the 25th Tennessee Regiment under E. B. Snowden." (18)

A fellow scout, R. B. Anderson, had this to say concerning Alex Gregg:

"He was a relation of old Gregg, the baker and confectioner. He was the most remarkable scout I ever knew, and was constantly doing something startling. He was with Davis, Joplin, McReeves, Roberts, Brown, and others around Nashville." (19)

JOHN DAVIS

John Davis, born in 1839, was the son of Charles Lewis Davis and Margaret Saunders Davis of near Smyrna in Rutherford County, Tennessee. His mother died the latter part of 1840, and sometime later his father married Jane Simmons, the mother of Sam Davis, half-brother to John.

According to the Confederate Veteran of November, 1897, Davis was one of the men who, along with Shaw and Alf Douglas, helped select members for the Coleman Scouts. (20) The article further stated that Davis and Douglas were the first two scouts sent out on a mission. John Davis was wounded once during his military career. Sometime during the war he contacted a severe case of typhoid fever and was granted an honorable discharge.

After the war he married Kate Patterson of LaVergne, who had been of invaluable aid to the scouts all during the war. In 1867 John was killed in the explosion of the steamship "David White", of which he was a part-owner along with Henry B. Shaw.

ALFRED H. DOUGLAS

As had been pointed out, Alfred H. Douglas of Nashville, Tennessee, shared with John Davis in the first scouting expedition that culminated in the organization of Coleman's Scouts. With Davis and Shaw he helped select men suitable to serve in Bragg's secret service. According to an article found in an old scrapbook he was captured twice during his military career. After one of these seizures he escaped, and on the other occasion he was recaptured by General Forrest. The article also states that, "Douglas was one of the scouts who remained in the secret service to the end of the war".

SAMUEL DAVIS

Various articles and a few books have been written concerning Sam Davis, who was perhaps the best known member of the Coleman Scouts. Edythe Whitley's book entitled Sam Davis, along with articles found in the Confederate Veteran, have furnished much material concerning this scout. (21)

Sam Davis was born October 6, 1842, at his parent's home near Stewart's Creek in Rutherford County, Tennessee. As a young man he attended Western Military Institute at Nashville which trained him for the responsibilities of a soldier's life. Before the end of the school term in 1861, Sam Davis volunteered for the Confederate Army. He was attached to the Rutherford Rifles, recruited in Rutherford County, which became Company I of the First Tennessee Infantry. Davis fought with General Lee in Virginia throughout the rest of the year, 1861. In 1862 he fought under General Albert Sidney Johnston at Shiloh. He went with Bragg through the Kentucky campaigns. Late in 1862 he was detailed from his regiment and assigned to the Coleman's Scouts.

In the fall of 1863, Davis was one of the scouts assigned to secure information regarding Federal movements in Tennessee. Having obtained vital papers which described Federal fortifications and gave numbers and disposition of Federal troops in Tennessee, Davis and some fellow scouts set out to follow the scout line to Decatur, Alabama. Only a few miles from Pulaski, Sam Davis was captured by the Seventh Kansas Cavalry called the "Jay Hawkers."

Davis was placed in jail in Pulaski, Tennessee. After being questioned by General Dodge and refusing to divulge the source of the papers he carried, Davis was tried and sentenced to be hanged on November 27 1863. A full pardon, a horse and side arms, with conveyance to Confederate lines, were offered Davis if he would tell from whom he had secured this information. Rather than betray his informant, Davis accepted the sentence imposed by the Federal Military Commission.

After word came to the Davis family informing them of the death of their son, Mr. John C. Kennedy, a neighbor, went to Pulaski for the body. The Federal authorities permitted him to take up the remains, which were placed in a metallic box for the trip home. On the return trip home, Kennedy stopped the first night at an inn between Spring Hill and Columbia. According to Mrs. Frank A. Shelton (22) of Columbia, Tennessee, and a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, this inn was known at that time as McAfee Tavern. It had two rooms, a wide hall, and kitchen. At the rear of the building, were stables where stage coach horses were exchanged. According to residents of that area, Davis' body rested there overnight. A portion of the inn remained from that period until 1952 when it burned.

Mr. Kennedy gives the following account of assistance rendered by Federal soldiers to him when he came with Davis' body to the river at Columbia:

"When we got to the river near Columbia, we found the officer in charge of troops at this point had ordered ferry boats stopped, and there was no way to cross except by fording. I left the conveyance and mules with Oscar (Sam's younger brother) cautioning him not to talk to anybody, while I would go out and see the officer. He was standing on the river bank when I approached him and explained my errand. He immediately turned to an orderly and said "Go down and order the ferry boat to take that team and corpse over the river."

I thanked him and started back when I saw the conveyance completely surrounded by soldiers. It was a very steep descent to the ferry, and I went to the head of the mules, taking hold of the bridles to hold them back while going down hill, when a soldier said, "Stranger we know who this is you got in the wagon; we'll see it goes down safe," and so they did. They practically carried the wagon aboard the boat and would not leave it when we landed on the north side. The hill was steeper to go up than the one we came down. They ordered me to sit there and drive, and again they all got a hand or shoulder somewhere and pushed us to the top of the hill, and when I thanked them, they quietly raised their caps." (23)

After the body reached home, it was buried in the family cemetery about fifty yards to the rear of the home. A marble shaft, made possible through contributions from veterans and friends, marks the place where the body is buried. The inscription on the marker reads:

In
Memory of Samuel Davis
A member of the 1st
Tennessee Regiment of Volunteers
Born October 6, 1842
Died November 27, 1863
Age
21 years 1 month and 21 days
He laid down his life for his country
A truer soldier, a purer patriot,
A braver man never lived who
suffered death on the gibbet
rather than betray his friends
and country.

There are other monuments that have been erected to Davis' memory. One of these, made by the famous sculptor, Zolnay, was placed on Capitol Hill, Nashville, Tennessee. No picture of Davis could be secured for the sculptor to use as a copy for his work, and it is said that he used a picture of a sister, Miss Andromedia Davis, who bore a close resemblance to her brother.

The episodes connected with Davis' life have been the inspiration for many poems. The following written by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, was found on the bronze tablet on the Sam Davis Monument located on the Capitol grounds at Nashville, Tennessee.

SAM DAVIS

When the Lord calls up earth's heroes,
to stand before his face:
O, many a name, unknown to fame
Shall ring from that high place:
Then out of a grave in the Southland
At the just God's call and beck,
Shall one man rise with fearless eyes
With rope about his neck:
O Southland: Bring your laurels!
and add your wreath, O North!
Let glory claim the hero's name
and tell the world his worth.

DEE JOBE

A letter from Horace Jobe (24) of Paris, Tennessee furnished much information about this scout.

Dewitt Smith Jobe was born June 4, 1840 at Mechanicsville, in Rutherford County, Tennessee. His father, Elihu C. Jobe was a farmer and cabinet maker, of that community. Dee Jobe enlisted in 1861 at College Grove, Tennessee, in Williamson County, ten miles from his house. The company that Jobe joined later became the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment. He was wounded and captured at the Battle of Fishing Creek and after his exchange took part in the Battle of Murfreesboro.

He became a member of the Coleman's Scouts about the time Bragg began his retreat into Georgia. All spring and summer of 1864, Jobe, Tom Joplin, and others were scouting behind the Federal lines in Tennessee. On August 30, 1864 Jobe was in the vicinity of his home, sleeping in a thicket when a party of Yankees surrounded and captured him. When Jobe saw that he would be captured, he destroyed some papers which he was carrying on his person. The Yankees, in an effort to make Jobe divulge the information which he had destroyed, tortured him.

According to B. L. Ridley they put out his eyes, cut off his tongue and finally dragged him to his death. (25)

Horace Jobe said that when word was brought to Dee's parents of the death of their son, an old negro servant went for the body. D. S. Jobe was buried on a hillside in the family burial grounds near the old home place. (26)

JOSHUA BROWN

One of the most informative sources concerning the lives of veterans of the War Between the States is "The Last Roll," an article that was published monthly in the Confederate Veteran. From this source a great deal was learned about the life of Joshua Brown. (27)

According to this article Joshua Brown, the son of Joshua and Evalina Bailey Brown, was born at Clarksville, Tennessee, on December 25, 1843. His paternal ancestors had come to America from Northern Ireland settling first in Maryland, then in Pennsylvania, and later moving to Kentucky. Joshua Brown's father came to Clarksville, Tennessee, in 1825, and became a farmer and merchant of that community. The article stated further that Joshua Brown went to school at the Southwestern University of Clarksville and in the fall of 1862, he joined the Second Kentucky Cavalry.

At the Battle of Stones River he was captured and taken prisoner to Nashville where he was confined in the old penitentiary. He escaped by climbing the wall, got a pass out of the city and joined Forrest's command at Columbia.

After the Battle of Chickamauga he was ordered to report to Captain Shaw at Pulaski for scouting duty. He was captured at the same time as Sam Davis, but no papers were found on him. He was in jail at Pulaski when Davis was executed.

The same article in the Confederate Veteran revealed that Joshua Brown was sent to Rock Island, a prison in Illinois and that later while being transferred to Elmira, New York, he escaped by jumping from the train. He went to Canada and remained there until July, 1865. (28)

After he returned to Tennessee he was in business in Nashville for some years. Then he went to New York City in 1870 and became connected with a brokerage firm.

Below is a copy of an advertisement found in the Confederate Veteran of October, 1895, which shows Brown's business connections with the brokerage firm of Macy and Pendleton of New York City:

[Text reads:] MACY & PENDLETON, BANKERS & BROKERS
Members of the New York Stock Exchange
Wall Street, New York

Buy and Sell Stocks, Bonds, Cotton, and Wheat for Cash or on Margin allow interest on balance subject to sight draft. Correspondence invited.

JOSHUA BROWN, MANAGER, COTTON DEPT. (29)

During the years that Brown was a resident of New York City, he evidenced a great interest in the Confederate Veteran. He wrote often to that periodical and much information concerning the Coleman Scouts can be found in the letters which this former scout wrote to that magazine.

The article, "The Last Roll," published monthly by the Confederate Veteran listed Joshua Brown's death in Florida in February, 1924. (30)

BILLY MOORE

The Nashville Banner of May 30, 1937 carried an article written by Mrs. Frances M. Stephenson in regard to Billy Moore, her grandfather. (31) This article revealed that Billy Moore was born March 15, 1840 at Locust Hill, Tennessee. Moore's family had come from Ireland to North Carolina and then to Tennessee. At the age of twenty, Billy Moore joined Forrest's Regiment. Soon afterwards, he was captured and sent to prison in Indianapolis where he became ill with a fever. After he was exchanged he did not rejoin his old regiment, but became a member of Coleman's Scouts.

According to his daughter, "Billy Moore was six feet, two inches tall and weighed less than one hundred pounds. He was a man of some daring and attractive to ladies." (32)

It was during the war, and while scouting in Alabama that Billy Moore met Miss Virginia Scruggs at a camp meeting and fell in love with her. In 1865, after the war, they were married.

In November of 1863 while Moore was scouting in Middle Tennessee he was captured near Pulaski, and was in jail at the same time as Sam Davis. However, he made his escape by jumping from a second-story window and reported back to his captain. He was one of the few scouts that remained to the end, and came from the war unscathed.

J. THOMAS BROWN

A letter from Mrs. Margaurite Cunningham (33) of Nashville, Tennessee was the source of information concerning her father, J. Tom Brown, who was a Coleman Scout. Mrs. Cunningham said that her father was born March 18, 1839 on a farm near Hillsboro, Tennessee. His father, Thomas Brown, was from Virginia, and his mother, Margarette Bennett, was a great-niece of Dolly Madison.

J. Tom Brown was educated at Campbell's School, Franklin, Tennessee, and then at Bethany College in West Virginia. In April of 1861 he enlisted in a company called the "Williamson Grays" which later became known as the Company D, of the First Tennessee Infantry. Mrs. Cunningham also stated:

"He was severely wounded at Perryville, Kentucky in the afternoon of October 8, 1862 when the 1st Tennessee made one of the most desperate charges during the war, and captured a section of Loomis' Battery of four Napoleon guns and brought them off the field. This battery was supported successively by five different Federal regiments.

The superb courage and heroism of the "Kid Glove Regiment" as the 1st Tennessee had been styled, was commented upon by Harper's Weekly and George D. Prentice, editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal stated that, "It was such a pity the magnificence was not displayed in a better cause." (34)

According to his family J. Tom Brown joined the Coleman Scouts following the Battle of Chickamauga. He was captured while scouting near Nashville and was sent to prison at Camp Morton. In March of 1864 he was transferred to Fort Delaware where he remained until February 27, 1865. A few months later he was paroled by the Federals at Greenville, Mississippi.

In December of 1865 Tom Brown married Miss Josephine French, a daughter of H. S. French, a wealthy and prominent antebellum merchant. They made their home on Demonbruen Street, Nashville, Tennessee. For many years Mr. Brown was connected with the firm of Reid, Chadbourne, and Brown of Nashville. He died at his home in Nashville, March 1, 1907.

NEWTON JASPER VAUGHAN

A letter written by Isabelle Vaughan Walker (35) of Columbia, Tennessee, granddaughter of Newton Vaughan, tells how domestic tragedy may have been one of the motives that led Vaughan to undertake the hazardous duty of scouting.

Vaughan, the son of Littleton and Martha Garrett Vaughan was born November 27, 1836. In 1858 he married Fannie E. Warren. By 1860 two daughters had been born to this union. Just before the war started in 1861, Vaughan's wife died. A few weeks later the infant daughter died, and three months later the other child died. Vaughan's granddaughter said concerning these tragedies:

"I do not know at what time he joined the scouts, but I have heard that after losing his loved ones he did not seem to fear death and that he was unusually daring and brave. At one time when he attempted to visit his home ten Yankees followed him into a cedar grove. None of the Yankees came out alive. I have heard that he successfully eluded a group of Yankees by jumping his horse from a high bluff into a river. The home of his parents was burned by the Yankees. His mother protested when the Yankees tried to rob her smoke house and one of the men shot off her toe. This Yankee soldier stayed in this locality after the war. When Newton Vaughan returned and found that the carpetbagger was the one who had shot his mother's foot, he horsewhipped him on the square, and told him to be out of town by sundown. He was never seen here again."

Mrs. Isabelle Walker stated in her letter that in 1869, after the war, Newt Vaughan married Mary Belle Johnston. To them were born three children -- Margaret Belle, William Francis, and Robert Lee. Robert Lee Vaughan now lives on the farm once owned by his father and where Newton Jasper Vaughan was buried when he died December 17, 1891.

THOMAS JOPLIN

An article found in the Confederate Veteran of 1896 revealed that James W. Joplin, father of Tom, was a staunch supporter of the Confederacy. (36) Although too old to fight, his home in Franklin County, Virginia, was known as a Confederate headquarters. The same article related the story of how James Joplin concealed General J. A. Early in his home following Lee's surrender. According to the article the Yankees were scouring the country in an effort to find General Early. Later Early made his escape by riding "Gray Bill," the horse that Tom Joplin had ridden on scouting expeditions.

Additional information found in the same article revealed that Thomas Joplin was one of James Joplin's six sons that fought for the Confederacy. Tom Joplin enlisted in the First Tennessee Cavalry. He was considered mortally wounded while with Forrest at Lebanon, Tennessee, in 1862. Following his recovery he joined Coleman's Scouts and was wounded on November 19, 1863. Despite his injuries, Joplin pushed on to Decatur, Alabama with the information which he had been ordered to deliver.

Once when Joplin was captured and confined in the prison at Nashville, he was aided in making his escape from the Federal authorities by a Nashville woman, Mrs. Annie Hill. Thomas Joplin was one of the Confederate veterans who spent his last days at the Confederate Home for Veterans at Hermitage, Tennessee.

R. M. DILLARD

According to a circular entitled A Tribute of Respect to the Dead (37) printed in 1867 in honor of those scouts who suffered death rather than be disloyal to their Southland, Richard M. Dillard was captured while on a scouting expedition and was sent to Camp Morton, a

Federal prison. At this prison he was offered his freedom if he would take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States Government. This he repeatedly refused to do and at the close of the war, still refusing to take the oath, he was left in Camp Morton to die.

WILLIAM ROBERTS

From a conversation with Mrs. Thomas S. McFerrin, Senior, of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the investigator secured information concerning her father, Will Roberts, who was one of the Coleman Scouts.

Mrs. McFerrin said that the Roberts family came to the United States from England about 1650 and settled near Hartford, Connecticut. William Roberts, father of the scout mentioned, was born in Connecticut about 1800, and came as a young man to Robertson County, Tennessee. William Roberts, Junior, who was to be one of the scouts, was born in Robertson County in 1838. When he was about fifteen years of age he began work with a wholesale grocery concern.

In 1861 William Roberts enlisted in the Second Tennessee Cavalry and by the time Bragg was encamped at Murfreesboro he was scouting under the command of Captain Henry B. Shaw. Mrs. McFerrin recalls having heard her father tell of his scouting in the vicinity of LaVergne a few days before the Battle of Stones River took place. Mrs. McFerrin stated that her father scouted during the remainder of the war and was never captured or injured.

According to his daughter, Will Roberts had quite a flair for the making of rhymes and story-telling. In 1869 he married Mary Watkins, daughter of a cotton planter, and the following rhyme was Moore's explanation to Mary as to why they were attracted to each other:

"You married me for the tales I told, I married you for the cotton your daddy sold." (38)

About 1880 Will Roberts and his family moved to a farm near Christiana, Tennessee, and he lived there for the remainder of his life. He died in April of 1927 at the age of eighty-eight.

WILLIAM MONTFORT STREET

In 1890 A History of the Street Family was published in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. This little book was written by William Montfort Street, (39) and a copy of it is now in the possession of Mrs. John Nelson. According to the author of this history William Montfort's great-grandfather, John Street, came to America from Bristol, England, and settled in Virginia. William Montfort's grandfather, Anthony Street, fought in the Revolutionary War and took part in the Battle of Kings Mountain. William Montfort's father, Park Street, came to Bedford County, Tennessee about 1829, going from there to Maury County where he lived and engaged in farming until his death.

William Montfort Street was born in Maury County in September, 1830. After a two year's course of study at Emory and Henry College, in Virginia, he went into a dry goods store in Columbia, Tennessee as a clerk. Sometime later he was offered a partnership in the firm. In 1861, when the war broke out, he joined the cavalry. Before the close of the war he became a member of the Coleman Scouts. Following the close of the war, he was again engaged in the mercantile business, but in 1869 he moved to Murfreesboro where he was connected with the Street and Spain Hardware Company.

Major and Mrs. William Montfort Street lived on Maple Street in a house that has recently been torn down to provide expansion of the business district. The Rutherford Courier of August 7, 1951 carried an article written by Mrs. James Patterson which had this to say in regard to the Street home:

"The house was handsomely furnished, as recalled by those who remember. It was the period of gleaming damask table cloths, of homemade jellies and pickle, breakfast served with fried chicken and beaten biscuits, and coffee that smelled like coffee. Major and Mrs. Street were known for their hospitality. They had no children, and when Major Street died suddenly, Mrs. Street moved to the Spain home." (40)

OTHER SCOUTS

About the remaining scouts only brief sketches of their careers were located. The following accounts are taken from an article entitled "Careers of Coleman Scouts" found in an old scrapbook belonging to Mrs. W. R. Morton of Franklin, Tennessee:

Bill F. Robinson -- captured twice -- escaped once. Was in prison to the end.

Everard Patterson -- wounded three times -- captured and escaped from prison after having been court martialed and sentenced to be shot. Paroled at Kingston, Georgia.

Gup Kibbleb -- captured and never returned.

Dick Taylor -- surrendered with Tom Brown.

Sam Roberts -- captured three times -- escaped twice. Court martialed and sentenced to be shot. Escaped from Clifton with a Yankee, who was also sentenced to be shot. Was killed in Mississippi after the war.

Tom Hughes -- badly wounded and discharged.

Dan Sneed -- captured four times -- escaped three times -- twice in Indiana and once in Kentucky by cutting holes in boxcar. Was sent to prison the last time where he stayed to the end of the war.

Jack Coffee -- captured three times. Finally captured and killed.

John McIver -- wounded twice badly -- returned to duty and stayed to the end.

Bob Owens -- wounded once -- stayed to the end.

John Drane -- wounded once -- stayed to the end.

Pillow Humphreys -- captured, exchanged, stayed to the end.

"Kage" Everett -- wounded twice -- captured twice and died in prison.

E. Grant -- killed on his first day's duty.

Hans Carter -- captured twice -- recaptured once. Went to prison and stayed there all during the war.

Jim Carter -- captured and sent to prison. Never knew what became of him.

Kirk Kelley -- killed third day after entering the service.

Josh Luck -- captured twice -- tried for his life at Franklin, Tennessee. Was defended by General W. C. Brien, who saved him before a court martial. Went to prison, returned to duty, and was killed near Nolensville. After being shot off his horse he killed two men.

Tom Twinn -- captured twice -- exchanged once -- went to prison. Don't know what became of him.

Charley Lippingwell--captured--never returned to us. (41)

There are several other members of the Coleman Scouts about whom the only information found was a postwar address. Efforts to locate families of these scouts by use of these addresses proved futile. Their names and addresses follow:

L. K. Owen -- Columbia, Tennessee

J. M. Shute -- Saundersville, Tennessee

Richard Anderson -- Denton, Texas

W. H. Portch -- Nashville, Tennessee

R. F. Cotton -- Franklin, Tennessee

George Hughes -- Nashville, Tennessee

Ben Douglas -- (No address found)

McReeves -- (No address found)

Lillard -- (No address found)

James T. Patterson -- Nashville, Tennessee

Will Hughes -- (No address found)

[End]

FOOTNOTES

1. Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1942, - 192.
2. Bromfield L. Ridley, *Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee* (Mexico: Missouri Printing and Publishing Company, 1906) p. xv.
3. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
4. Horn, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
6. Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.
7. Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1942) - p. 113-114.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 418.
9. *Confederate Veteran*, 5:556, November, 1897.
10. Stanley Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1942), p. 196.
11. *Confederate Veteran*, 5:556, November, 1897.
12. E. R. Whitley, *Sam Davis* (Published under Special Act of Tennessee Legislature, 1947), p. 23.
13. *Confederate Veteran*, 17-276, June, 1909.
14. Newspaper clipping belonging to Mrs. John Nelson of Murfreesboro, Tennessee.
15. J. D. Porter, *Confederate Military History-- Tennessee*, (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 8:440.
16. Article found in a scrapbook belonging to Mrs. W. R. Morton, Franklin, Tennessee.
17. *Confederate Veteran*, 21:344-345, July, 1913.
18. *Confederate Veteran*, 3:203, July, 1895.
19. *Confederate Veteran*, 5:556, November, 1897.
20. Article found in scrapbook belonging to Mrs. W. R. Morton, Franklin, Tennessee.
21. Edythe Whitley, *Sam Davis*, (Published under special act of Tennessee Legislature, 1947), pp. 13-114.
22. Letter from Mrs. Frank A. Shelton, Columbia, Tennessee. January 30, 1952.
23. *Confederate Veteran*, 4:35-37, February, 1896
24. Letter from Horace Jobe, Paris, Tennessee, January.12, 1951.
25. Bromfield L. Ridley, *Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee* (Mexico: Missouri Printing and Publishing Company, 1906), p. 503.
26. Letter from Horace Jobe, Paris, Tennessee, January.12, 1952.
27. *Confederate Veteran*, 32:436, November, 1924.
28. *Ibid.*, 32:436, November, 1924.
29. *Confederate Veteran*, 3, Advertising Section, October 8, 1895.
30. *Confederate Veteran*, 32:436, November, 1924.
31. Mrs. Frances M. Stephenson, "Recollection of Rebel Days," *Nashville Banner*, May 30, 1937.
32. *Nashville Banner*, May 30, 1937.
33. Letter from Mrs. Margaurite Cunningham, Nashville, Tennessee, July 27, 1953
34. *Ibid.*
35. Letter from Mrs. Isabelle Walker, Columbia, Tennessee, January 30, 1952.
36. *Confederate Veteran*, 4:399, November, 1896
37. *A Tribute of Respect to the Dead*, (Publisher and date unknown).
38. Incident related by Mrs. Thomas McFerrin, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.
39. William Montfort Street, *A History of the Street Family* (Murfreesboro: Free Press Print, 1890), pages unnumbered.
40. *Rutherford Courier*, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, August 7, 1951.
41. Article found in a scrapbook belonging to Mrs. W. R. Morton of Franklin, Tennessee.
<http://www.tennessee-scv.org/Camp1293/mp.htm>

CSA scout Dewitt Jobe died horrible death

MIKE WEST, Managing Editor

Posted: Sunday, October 7, 2007



Gen. Thomas Benton Smith

Most Rutherford County school children have at least been exposed to the story of Sam Davis, “the boy hero of the Confederacy.”

Davis was a member of Coleman’s Scouts, a unit that worked behind Union lines collecting and delivering information and disrupting Union operations in Middle Tennessee.

Davis was apprehended and executed after refusing to divulge the source of the information he was carrying. His last words still resonate:

“If I had a thousand lives to live, I would give them all, rather than betray a friend or my country.”

Less glamorous is the story of another Coleman Scout, Dewitt Smith Jobe and his two cousins, Dee Smith and Thomas Benton Smith.

These cousins were natives of the Mechanicsville community located between the now thriving Sam Ridley Parkway retail area and Almadale. Each joined the Army of Tennessee. Dewitt S. Jobe was a scout.

His father, Elihu C. Jobe, was a cabinetmaker and farmer in Mechanicsville. He was also known for his coffins. Dee Smith was with the 45th Tennessee. Thomas Benton Smith was a “boy” general with the 20th Tennessee.

Each met a tragic – horrible – end at the hands of Federal troops.

Dewitt Smith Jobe enlisted in 1861 and became part of Company B of the 20th Tennessee Regiment commanded by Col. Joel Battle and his cousin Thomas B. Smith.

He was wounded and captured at the Battle of Fishing Creek and fought at Stones River. Jobe was hand-picked as a scout about the time Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg began his retreat out of Middle Tennessee and into Georgia.

As a scout, Jobe did escape the doldrums of routine military life, but his new role with the Army of Tennessee was far more dangerous. Many of the members of Coleman’s Scouts were shot, killed or imprisoned.

And each of the Scouts knew about Sam Davis’ end on the Union gallows near Pulaski, Tenn.

In August 1864, Jobe and fellow scout Tom Joplin were far behind Union lines and reconnoitering near College Grove, Triune and Nolensville.

On Monday, Aug. 29, Jobe was hiding in a cornfield after eating breakfast at the home of a family between Triune and Nolensville. He had an important message hidden on his person. With Yankee patrols in the area, the Confederate was hiding during the day and traveling at night.

Unfortunately, he was spotted by a patrol of 15 men from the 115th Ohio Regiment of the Union Army of the Cumberland.

Seeing that he was about to be captured, Jobe tore up the note and began to chew and swallow it.

Angered by the near miss, the Union patrol first threatened Jobe and then began to torture him in an effort to get the scout to divulge the content of the dispatch.

The Ohio troops first hanged Jobe from a bridle rein and then pistol-whipped him, knocking out some of his teeth.



CSA scout Dewitt Jobe

“Bound and disarmed, helpless and bleeding, Jobe revealed nothing. They were dealing with a man in gray who held the welfare of the Confederacy above his life,” wrote Ed Huddleston in “The Civil War in Middle Tennessee.”

“The torture went on. The Yanks were whooping now, yelling so loudly that they could be heard at a distant farmhouse.

“They put out Jobe's eyes. Perhaps then it was that Jobe heaped epithets upon them. How much courage did it take to do what they did then? They cut out Jobe's tongue,” Huddleston wrote.

The Union patrol finished off Jobe by dragging him to death behind his own galloping horse.

The event is not mentioned in Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, but was preserved in Jobe family oral history and letters and books like Bromfield Ridley's “Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee.”

Former Rutherford County Historian Mabel Pittard has done the most exhaustive work on Coleman's Scouts.

A Tennessee Historical Marker between Nolensville and Triune commemorates Jobe's death:

“DeWitt Smith Jobe, a member of Coleman's Scouts, CSA, was captured in a cornfield about 1 1/2 miles west, Aug. 29, 1864, by a patrol from the 115th Ohio Cavalry. Swallowing his dispatches, he was mutilated and tortured to make him reveal the contents. Refusing, he was dragged to death behind a galloping horse. He is buried in the family cemetery six miles northeast.”

At the time, news of his torture spread quickly.

It pushed his cousin, Dee Smith, to exact his own bloody revenge.

Smith was with the 45th Tennessee, commanded by Col. Anderson Searcy of Murfreesboro, when he heard of his cousin's murder.

In the words of the day, Smith left his regiment near Chattanooga and rode back to Middle Tennessee and raised the “black flag.” He would give no quarter and swore to kill any Yankee who crossed his path.

Smith was a quiet killer who did his work with a butcher knife.

It was said, he used that knife to slit the throats of 14 Union soldiers while they slept in their tents near Tullahoma.

Dee Smith's personal war continued for nearly two months during which he killed as many as 50 Yankees before he was captured.

"At last they surrounded him near Nolensville, Tennessee, and shot him. Afterwards they brought him twenty miles from Nolensville to Murfreesboro," wrote Ridley in his "Battles and Sketches."

"Although in excruciating pain when the doctors probed his wounds, he said that he would die before his enemies should see him flinch. Fortunately, he died before noon of the next day, at which time he was to be hanged."

There's no indication that the soldiers from the 115th Ohio were punished for the atrocity. Legend says the sergeant in charge of the Union patrol "became a raving maniac."

And for those who believe in such things, there was a bit of karmic justice meted out to the soldiers of the 115th Ohio. A number of them were captured and sent to the horrific Rebel prison at Andersonville, Ga.

Other soldiers from the unit died in the Sultana Disaster on April 27, 1865. The Sultana, a side-wheeler, steam river boat, was loaded with Union soldiers headed from Memphis to Cairo, Ill. Just north of Memphis, the river boat exploded in the worst maritime tragedy in U.S. history. An estimated 1,700 died, including a number of soldiers from the 115th Ohio.

As for Dee Jobe's other cousin, Thomas Benton Smith, he took part in some of the bloodiest fighting of the Civil War as an officer with the 20th Tennessee Infantry during Shiloh, Stones River, Chickamauga, Atlanta, Franklin and Nashville.

At Shiloh, the regiment sustained 50 percent casualties and Col. Joel Battle was taken prisoner. Smith was elected to replace him. He was shot through the chest and left arm at Stones River where his brother, John, was killed carrying the regimental colors.

He was wounded again at Chickamauga, and at Missionary Ridge he was named brigade commander after Col. Tyler was wounded. During the Atlanta campaign, he was promoted to brigadier general in time for the Battle of Franklin, which he escaped unscathed.

Then came Nashville.

On Dec. 16, 1864, the Army of Tennessee formed a new line with Smith's brigade and the remnant of the 20th Tennessee stretching from a peach orchard to a prominence later called Shy's Hill. Following a heavy artillery bombardment, the Union army attacked and swept the field.

Col. William Shy was killed and Smith was captured. As he was being led to the rear by Federal troops, Smith was accosted by Col. William Linn McMillan of the 95th Ohio.

McMillan, who had been a Columbus, Ohio, newspaperman before the war, was said to be intoxicated either from spirits or the intensity of the battle. He began to curse Smith, who responded, "I am a disarmed prisoner."

That enraged McMillan who drew his saber and struck Smith three times in the head. The sword cut through his hat and battered his skull open so that the Confederate officer's brain was exposed.

Federal troops restrained McMillan and rushed Smith to a Union surgeon, who remarked:

"Well, you are near the end of your battles, for I can see the brain oozing through the gap in your skull."

Smith did survive the attack and was transferred to a Federal prisoner of war camp at Fort Warren, Mass.

He was only 27 when paroled at the end of the war.

He returned to his job with the railroad and even unsuccessfully ran for U.S. Congress.

Then waves of depression began to sweep over Smith. Physicians attributed the bouts to his head injury.

In 1886, he was admitted to the Tennessee State Asylum in Nashville. The facility, later known as Central State Psychiatric Hospital, was located on the site of the current Dell Computer's campus.

Smith did make several attempts to resume life outside the asylum, but it was to be his home for most of the rest of his long life.

He did get to participate in reunions and other events sponsored by the 20th Tennessee.

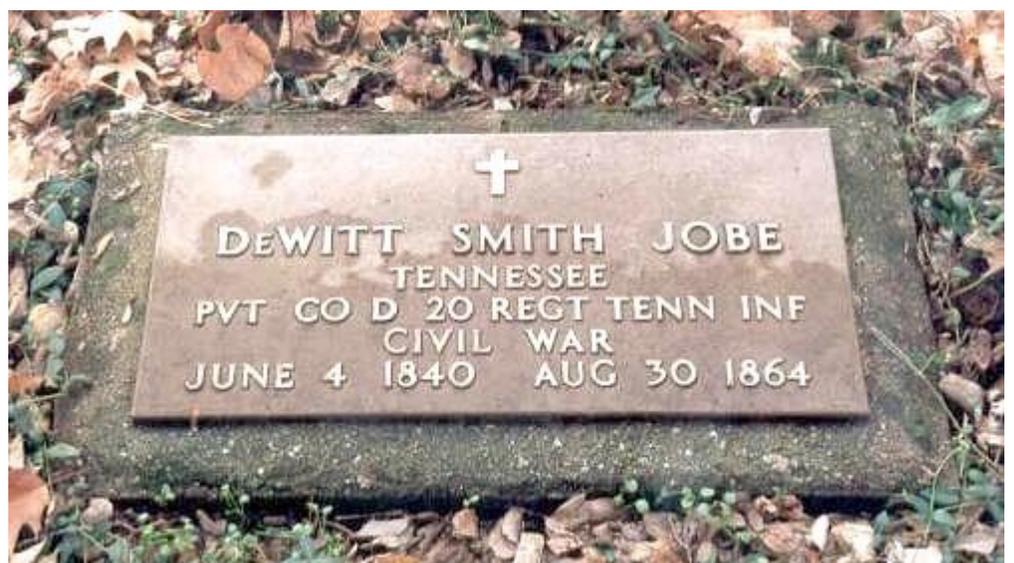
"Confederate Veteran" magazine recorded one of those outings in 1910:

"At a recent reunion of the 20th Tennessee Regiment at Nashville, Tenn., in the beautiful Centennial Park where was held the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in 1897, Gen. Thomas Benton Smith, an early commander of the regiment, who has been in the Tennessee Insane Asylum nearly ever since the war from a saber cut on the head after he surrendered in the battle of Nashville, was in command for a drill and short parade. The regiment was formed as a company, and the drill master, though now somewhat venerable, although he is said to have been the youngest brigadier general in the Confederacy, carried the men through the manual of Hardee's tactics as if half a century were half a year.

"General Smith was self-poised, as full of the animation of the old days as could be imagined. When they stood at "Right dress! Eyes right!" he said: "Throw them sticks down; you don't need them!" A picture of that scene and a repetition of all he said would be most pleasing. General Smith has times of deep depression, and is sad over his long "imprisonment", but he is always happy at Confederate gatherings, and is still a magnificent specimen of Confederate manhood."

Smith died May 21, 1923. At age 85, he was one of the last surviving Confederate generals despite the mental wounds that plagued him for nearly 60 years.

<http://www.murfreesboropost.com/csa-scout-dewitt-jobe-died-horrible-death>



"For Now He Lives in Fame, Though Not in Life"

Pvt. Dee Jobe, who had just turned 24 in June, was near Nashville, probing for information, speeding it southward. With him had come Tom Joplin and other Coleman Scouts. They were operating around College Grove, Triune and Nolensville. Danger didn't matter. They knew what had happened to their fellow scout, Sam Davis.

Monday comes, Aug. 29. West of Atlanta, Sherman is tearing up 13 miles of the Montgomery line. In Chicago, the Democrats are nominating McClellan, with bright prospects of victory. A former Tennessee governor, William B. Campbell, addressed the Democrats assembled in that city, urging peace, amnesty for Southerners, restoration of rights and property. He blasted Gov. (Andrew) Johnson as a despot. Near Nolensville, the luck of Jobe is running out.

Between Nolensville and Triune, Jobe was in grave danger. He had an important message on his person and Yankees from Murfreesboro were scouting nearby.

The father of two Rebel soldiers had given Jobe breakfast. The house might be searched. Jobe hurried away on his horse. It is said that, as he rode on, a telescope lifted on a farm not far away. It searched the hills to the west. Did a Yankee see a horseman going along a fencerow, uphill, in a cornfield? Jobe had been spotted. Soon the horse was being tracked, perhaps as Jobe lay sleeping.

Did Jobe hear corn leaves rattling? Was that when he yanked out his message and tore it up? He started chewing and swallowing. Too late! The Yankees grabbed him - a patrol of 15 men, under the command of a sergeant of the 115th Ohio Regiment. They grabbed the scraps of paper. What remained could not be made out. The nearness of their miss must have been maddening.

They tied Jobe up. Now talk! What did the message say? Where'd you get it? What's your meeting place with other scouts, and when?

Jobe didn't talk. They put a bridle rein around his throat and hung him up a few times, then let him down. They knocked out some of his teeth with a pistol butt.

Bound and disarmed, helpless and bleeding, Jobe revealed nothing. They were dealing with a man in gray who held the welfare of the Confederacy above his life.

The torture went on. The Yanks were whooping now, yelling so loudly that they could be heard at a distant farmhouse.

They put out Jobe's eyes. Perhaps then it was that Jobe heaped epithets upon them. How much courage did it take to do what they did then? They cut out Jobe's tongue.

Enough? They're at him again. Tell, and we'll let you live. Did they want him to write out a few words? This, Jobe, is your last chance.

They're tying something to a horse's tail. The reins, or a leather strap? The other end - Jobe, it's about your throat. (Did you think for a moment of your friend Sam Davis, who was hanged . . . ? Ah, but they let him die in dignity, compared to this.) The horse is struck. It gallops away. Jobe's agony is ending.

Some of the Yanks, when they reached the Nolensville Road, had the grace to say that Jobe was the bravest man they'd ever seen.



A woman friend rode by, dismounted, and placed a handkerchief over Jobe's face, to keep off the hot August sun. Word of the crime was spreading.

For years afterwards, an aura of evil would seem to linger there, and passersby would shudder.

***Many good men who passed the spot
Would think of Jobe and the deal he got,
Or cross themselves like nuns.***

***And say, on nights when the dark clouds toss,
Can you hear the clatter of a runnin' hoss?***

***Oh, Lawdy! What's the matter? But nobody talks.
The clatter stops and the ghost hoss walks.***

***It's the Yankees teachin' Dee Jobe who's boss.
... At the point of 15 guns.***

Days hence, the news would reach DeWitt Smith, Jobe's cousin and friend, of the 45th Tennessee Regiment. They had been close companions and may have been namesakes. Smith's mind would become "unhinged" when he heard it. He would break away from Hood's army and "run up the black flag." That is, he would vow to take no prisoners; to kill every Yankee he met. Smith would come riding back into Middle Tennessee as the avenger. Many a Yankee, as many as 50 of them some said, would die in the night, his throat quietly slit with a butcher knife.

The August sun is sinking. A spring wagon is creaking through the shadows. Old Frank, the Negro slave who had tended Jobe as a child, is driving. His cheeks are wet as he lifts his young master's body, places it in the wagon, and heads back to the big log house where Jobe was born, June 4, 1840.

Today a roadside marker speaks of Jobe, on U. S. Highway 31A in Williamson County between Triune and Nolensville:

"DeWitt Smith Jobe, a member of Coleman's Scouts, CSA, was captured in a cornfield about 1 1/2 miles west, Aug. 29, 1864, by a patrol from the 115th Ohio Cavalry. Swallowing his dispatches, he was mutilated and tortured to make him reveal the contents. Refusing, he was dragged to death behind a galloping horse. He is buried in the family cemetery six miles northeast."

No granite shaft stands tall today to mark the spot of the Middle Tennessean who wouldn't be brain-washed. On a lonely little knoll he sleeps, where visitors seldom go, near the site where he was born. There is no inscription on the stone. The night of oblivion has almost closed in. Ask anyone, who was Dee Jobe? And the answer may be, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Epilogue

The preceding narrative was adapted from "*The Civil War in Middle Tennessee*" by Ed Huddleston. Originally published as a series of supplements to the "Nashville Banner" in 1965, the series was later assembled and published in book form. In the years that have passed since this was written, the resting place of Dee Jobe has come under the care of the William B. Bate Chapter of the MOS & B, and now receives perpetual care. The grave is located on private property - a farm a few miles off the Smyrna / Almaville Road exit of I-24, about 20 miles southeast of downtown Nashville. Some years ago, a Sam Davis Camp member and Real Son, Robert Herbert, whose father also rode with Coleman's Scouts, installed an appropriate marker at the grave.

117th National Reunion and Pvt. Dee Jobe

July 30, 2012

A few weeks ago the SCV celebrated its 117th National Reunion in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. There were many meetings, presentations, music, and stimulating activities. Unfortunately I was not able to attend or participate in everything available, but I did get to hear some programs, listen to some period music, and enjoy two tours. Camp #33 in Murfreesboro and all those assisting are to be commended for a job well done!

Close by, within a few hours drive, there are so many historical sites in Middle Tenn. to visit. One great excursion was the Sam Davis tour. The many fifty-five passenger busses took us to our destination just up the road from Murfreesboro to Smyrna, Tennessee. Just a few miles from the massive Nissan factory and the old Stewart Air Force Base is the home and museum of the Sam Davis family in Smyrna. This is a must see destination for WBTS (Civil War) buffs. The story of Sam Davis is sad and legendary, but there is another story, a horrendous one, of another native Tennessean whose gave his life for the Confederacy.

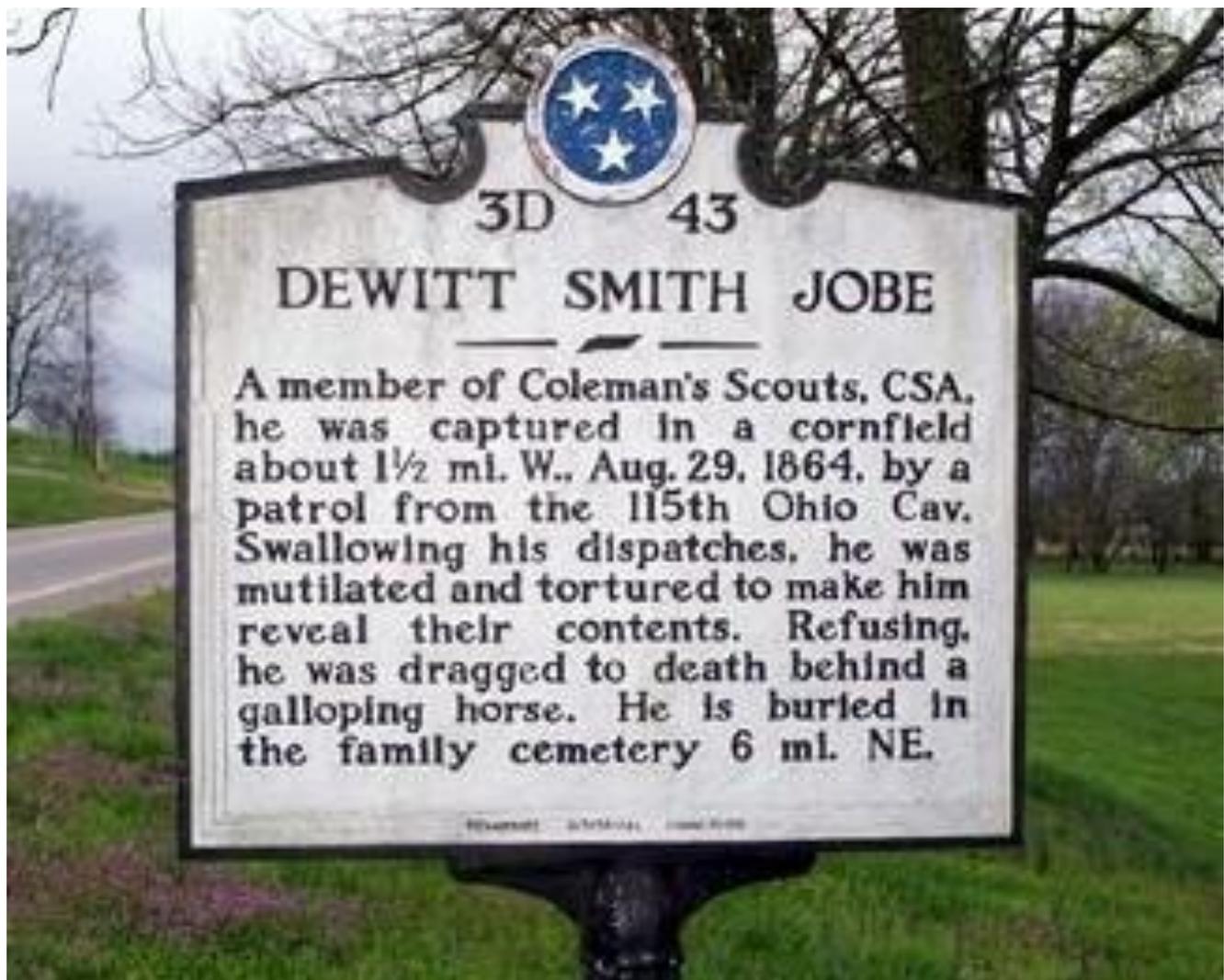
The brutality of the treatment to Dewitt Smith Jobe was unconscionable. Pvt. Dee Jobe was a member of the Coleman Scouts. This unit was to patrol and find information about the Union Army and deliver it to the Confederate Army in their homeland of occupied Tennessee. It was August of 1864, as Jobe and fellow scout Tom Joplin were behind the occupying Union lines and reconnoitering south of Nashville near the small villages of Nolensville and Triune. On Aug. 29, Jobe was hiding in a cornfield after eating breakfast at the home of William Moss, the father of two Confederate soldiers who lived between Triune and Nolensville. He had an important message hidden on his person. With Union patrols in the area, the Confederate was required to hide during the day and travel at night. On this day he took a chance to move about during daylight. Unfortunately, he was spotted by a patrol of approximately 15 men from the 115th Ohio Cavalry Regiment of the Union Army. Pvt. Jobe realized his capture was imminent, and he ripped up the notes and attempted to chew and swallow them. The 115th Ohio Cavalry intercepted Pvt. Jobe, confiscated a portion of his tattered notes, but they could not discern the meaning of the remaining pieces of the dispatches. The Union horsemen were infuriated by the nearness of their miss and now was time for some interrogating. Did they threatened him bodily harm? Then did he talk? Evidently he did not talk because around his throat they put a bridle rein and proceeded to hang him up a number of times, then let him down. Later they knocked out some of his teeth with a butt of a weapon. Still hung up, bound, bleeding, with no help of escape nor relief, Pvt. Jobe revealed nothing. As the torture escalated against this defenseless trooper, the Yankee cavalry were hollering and yelling so loudly they were heard by a nearby farmhouse. Next they secured his head, and one by one, poked out each of Pvt Jobe's eyes! Screaming and yowling in excruciating pain he would not tell his secrets! If he would not tell them, these Invaders from Ohio were willing to raise the level of torture even higher! During repetitious beatings, they jabbed a knife into his mouth and cut out part of his tongue! Now was this the end of their sadistic pleasure? Read on...This shameless lot of tormentors finally were compelled to finish their acts of medieval inspired terror to punish Pvt. Jobe as they dragged him by his neck, behind a horse as it galloped away with his now, lifeless body! Finally Private Dewitt Smith Jobe's agony was over. A woman friend rode by, dismounted, and placed a handkerchief over Pvt. Jobe's bloodied and scarred face.

No charges were ever placed against any members of the 115th Ohio Cavalry Regiment. Eventually some of the 115th were captured and reportedly sent to Andersonville Prison. Some of these same prisoners were possibly of the 1,500 who died on the SS *Sultana*, a Mississippi River steamboat that exploded and sank near Memphis on April 27, 1865. Some believe Robert Loudon, a Confederate from Missouri, used a coal torpedo to help sabotage the *Sultana*, resulting in her demise.

The event surrounding the capture and torture of Private Jobe is not mentioned in the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, unfortunately. If you were in the 115th Ohio Cavalry Regiment, would you document these vile acts? However horrific, what happened to Pvt. Jobe was preserved in Jobe family oral history and letters and books like Bromfield Ridley's "Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee." Part of this narrative was compiled from Ed Huddleston's "The Civil War in Middle Tennessee" and from a series of supplements from the "Nashville Banner" published in 1965.

Rest In Peace, Private Dewitt Smith Jobe!

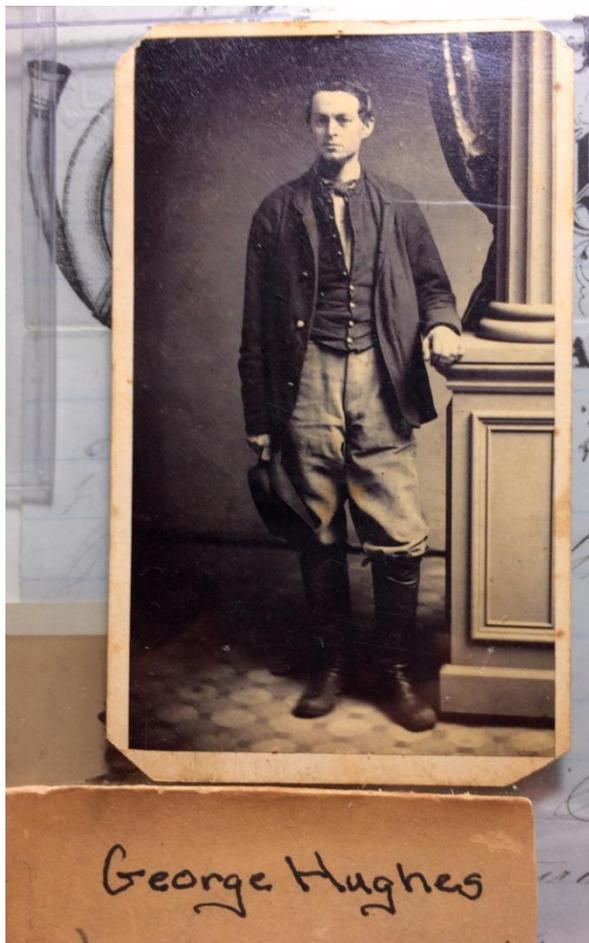
This marker is located on U.S. Highway 31A in Williamson County between Triune and Nolensville, Tennessee.



Pvt Dewitt Jobe, CSA



Coleman Scouts Reunion*



George D. Hughes, Coleman Scout*

* credit-Kirk D. Lyons



SAM DAVIS

I WOULD SOONER DIE A THOUSAND DEATHS
THAN BETRAY A FRIEND
OR BE FALSE TO DUTY.



ERECTED IN MEMORY OF TENNESSEE'S BOY HERO
SAM DAVIS TENNESSEE DIVISION U.S.A.

Tribute poem to Sam Davis

From the original Confederate Veterans magazine, the year 1896, Volume IV comes another priceless poem, this one memorialising the great Southern martyr, Sam Davis, written by John Moore, who, according to the article, was captured the same time with Davis but escaped from Pulaski.

"Tell me his name and you are free,"
The general said, while from the tree
The grim rope dangled threat'ningly

The birds ceased singing--happy birds,
That sang of home and mother-words.
The sunshine kissed his cheek--dear sun,
It loves a life that's just begun.
The very breezes held their breath
To watch the fight 'twixt life and death,
And O, how calm and and sweet and free
Smiled back the hills of Tennessee!
Smiled back the hills as if to say:
"O save your life for us to-day!"

"Tell me his name, and you are free,"
The General said, "and I shall see
You safe within the rebel line--
I'd love to save such life as thine."

A tear gleamed down the ranks of blue--
(The bayonets were tipped in dew)
Across the rugged cheek of war
God's angels rolled a teary star.
The boy looked up and this they heard:
"And would you have me break my word?"

A tear stood in the General's eye:
"My boy I hate to see thee die--
Give me the traitor's name and fly!"

Young Davis smiled, as calm and free
As he who walked on Galilee:
"Had I a thousand lives to live--
Had I a thousand lives to give--
I'd lose them--nay I'd gladly die
Before I'd live on life, a lie!"
He turned--for not a soldier stirred:
"Your duty, men--I gave my word."

The hills smiled back a farewell smile--
The breeze sobbed o'er his bier awhile--
The birds broke out in glad refrain--
The sunbeams kissed his cheek again,
Then, gathering up their blazing bars,
They shook his name among the stars.

O stars, that now his brothers are,
O sun, his sire in truth and light,
Go tell the listening worlds afar
Of him who died for truth and right.
For martyr of all martyrs he
Who died to save an enemy!



"Sam Davis questioned by General Dodge," by Harold Van Schmidt.



ON JORDAN'S STORMY BANKS I STAND

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.

Refrain

*I am bound for the promised land,
I am bound for the promised land;
Oh who will come and go with me?
I am bound for the promised land.*

O the transporting, rapturous scene,
That rises to my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight!

Refrain

There generous fruits that never fail,
On trees immortal grow;
There rocks and hills, and brooks and vales,
With milk and honey flow.

Refrain

O'er all those wide extended plains
Shines one eternal day;
There God the Son forever reigns,
And scatters night away.

Refrain

No chilling winds or poisonous breath
Can reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more.

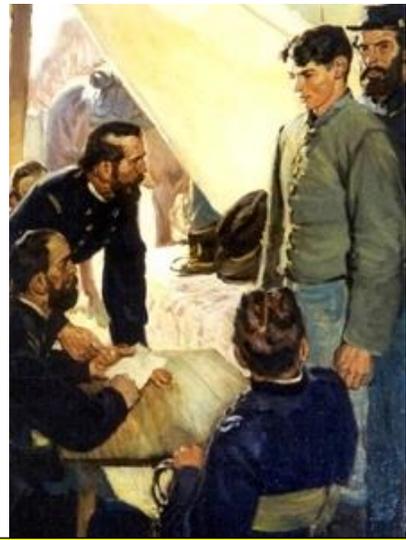
Refrain

When I shall reach that happy place,
I'll be forever blest,
For I shall see my Father's face,
And in His bosom rest.

Refrain

Filled with delight my raptured soul
Would here no longer stay;
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,
Fearless I'd launch away.

Refrain



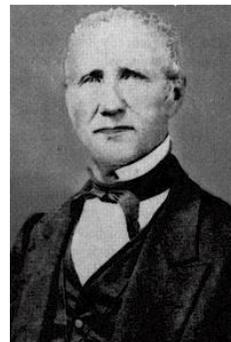
The night before he was to be executed, Sam Davis joined the other prisoners in a short devotional with Union Chaplain, Rev. James Young, and the Chaplain later remembered Davis's participation, "...Mr. Davis joined with us in singing the well-known hymn, 'On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand,' in animated voice."



Samuel Stennett (1727-1795)

Words: Samuel Stennett, in *Selection of Hymns*, by John Rippon, 1787.

Music: Miss M. Durham, in *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion*, by William Walker (New York: Hastings House, 1835); arranged by Rigdon M. McIntosh, 1895



William Walker (1809-1875)