

Restless After Appomattox: Confederates Who Did Not Surrender

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Most accounts given of the surrender at Appomattox, when General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General U.S. Grant, speak of it being a peaceful affair. The two sides shook hands respectfully and went on to rebuild. This is the narrative most often taught in public schools from grade school on through grad school. I believed it until I began to stumble upon other accounts, accounts from those who were there, that told me there were not a few Confederate soldiers for whom surrender came as a sigh of relief, but who instead took it upon themselves NOT to be surrendered.



The first was **Berry Benson**:

“I would not stay if a surrender was to be made. I had been in prison once, and was not going again. I would make my way out and join General Johnston in North Carolina. Gen. McGowan advised me not to act hastily; wait until surrender became certain, then if I would, to go. I talked with Blackwood [Berry’s brother]. He was ready to follow me anywhere. I did not want many companions and spoke to only one other. This was Bell—‘Old Gator.’ Yes, he would go with us anywhere—to Texas, if we said so... So Blackwood and I left the little tattered, weary, sad, and weeping army... carrying our rifles, skulking through thick bushes and behind trees, or now crawling along in a ditch to conceal ourselves, now hiding in a fence corner, we at last eluded the vigilance of the enemy’s pickets and made good our way out of his lines. Then we set off on our march to join Gen. Johnston in North Carolina.”¹

Another witness to Appomattox was a vivandiere—a female nurse who followed the army on campaign and in battle—in the 15th Louisiana named **Rose Rooney**:

“Sure, the Yankees took me prisoner along with the rest. [The 15th LA refused to surrender and was taken under guard.] The next day, when they were changing the camps to fix up for the wounded, I asked them what they would do with me. They told me to ‘go to the devil.’ I told them, ‘I’ve been long enough in his company; I’d rather choose something better’... They then brought us to Burkesville, where all the Yankees were gathered together. There was an old doctor there, and he began to curse me, and to talk about all we had done to their prisoners. I told him, ‘And what have you to say to what you done to our poor fellows?’ He told me to shut up, and sure I did. They asked me fifty questions after, and I never opened me mouth. The next day was the day when all the Confederate flags came to Petersburg. I had some papers in my pocket that would have done barrum to some people, so I chewed them all up and ate them, but I wouldn’t take the oath, and I never did take it. The flags were brought in on dirt-cars, and as they passed the Federal camps them Yankees would unfurl them and shake them about to show them.”²

Historians claim Lee’s army was whittled down by desertion after Saylor’s Creek on April 5th. How much of this could truly be said to be desertion, or how many of those “deserters” were similar to Berry and Blackwood Benson?

Of course, Lee's army was not the only Confederate force in existence, and beyond it are more accounts that do not portray a people ready nor willing to surrender. As a northern reporter wrote after travelling through the south in late 1865: *"The war feeling here is like a burning bush with a wet blanket wrapped around it. Looked at from the outside, the fire seems quenched. But just peep under the blanket and there it is, all alive and eating..."*³

Palmito Ranch

Palmito Ranch is known as the last action of the war on land. It was fought near Brownsville, Texas on May 12-13, 1865. It was a small battle and a Confederate victory. For many years, it has been taught that the Confederate forces knew nothing of the surrenders in the east. However, recent information, along with the fact that Palmito Ranch is very near Bagdad, Mexico, which was an extremely important port during the war and would have been current on news, it is believed the Confederate troops did in fact enter the battle knowing the war had been declared over. Why do you think they chose to fight?

Mexico

One of the greatest groups of Confederates who refused to surrender were those who managed to make their way to Mexico. Some estimated 3,000, the first of which followed General Joseph Shelby who, outside of Corsicana, Texas, called on his Iron Brigade to follow him to ride across the southern border. The list of high ranking Confederates who followed suit is long:⁴

Governor Henry Allen and Governor
Thomas Moore of Louisiana
Governor Thomas C. Reynolds and
Governor Trusten Polk of Missouri
Governor Pendleton Murrah and Governor
Edward Clark of Texas
Governor Charles Morehead of Kentucky
General John B. Clark of Missouri
General Danville Leadbetter of Alabama
General Thomas Hindman of Arkansas
General William Preston of Kentucky
General William Hardeman
General A.W. Terrell
General Kirby Smith
General Jubal Early
General John B. Magruder
General Sterling Price
General Simon Bolivar Buckner
General Cadmus Wilcox
Commodore Matthew Maury



Gen. Magruder in uniform of the Imperial Mexican Army

All of these men attempted to create colonies of Confederate Americans in Mexico, and were welcomed by the French General Bazaine and Emperor Maximilian. After listening, name two reasons why the colonies failed:

1.

2.

After the failure of the colonies, most of those who survived went back to the States while others went to Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, Egypt, British Honduras (today Belize), and a good number of Shelby's men joined a French Zouave unit and were still in its ranks during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71. The 3rd Zouaves became famous for their actions at Wörth, where they sustained 85% casualties, and at the surrender of Napoleon III at Sedan. At the surrender to Prussian forces, they refused to do so and escaped to Paris with their eagle. Were some of Shelby's men still with the unit? One can only guess...



Image: Mounted French Zouave troops fighting in Mexico.

Brazil

The second and most often thought of group of Confederates who refused to swear allegiance to their conquerors nor submit to reconstruction were those who went to Brazil. Unlike Mexico, the new colonies in Brazil were extremely successful and the towns founded by them continue to be inhabited by their descendants, known as *os Confederados*, to this day.

Only two generals went to Brazil, General W. W. Wood of Mississippi and General A. T. Hawthorne of Texas—two generals who are noted little in history books. Also unlike Mexico, the colonies created by the Confederate emigrants were not spread so thin. Approximately 20,000 southerners left the Confederacy and settled in Brazil. Some went into the Amazon rainforest and settled a town called Santarem. Many left due to the hardship of the land, but some did stay and there are reportedly locals with last names like Calhoun.

The most successful colonies were bunched together around Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo with places called New Texas and Americana. Americana still thrives with annual festivals to celebrate their heritage. In 1971, a descendant Eugene C. Harter, had been sent back to the States to attend college and became a U.S. Consul in Brazil. He accompanied President Carter on a visit to Americana and said the president had this to say:



Jimmy Carter, on a visit to Brazil in 1972, stands with fifth-generation Confederado children at the base of the Confederate monument in Americana.

“My primary feeling was one of appreciation for their preserving in an almost unblemished way in names, inflections and voices of their ancestors their obvious love for the United States. My most significant feeling was one of great sadness they had foregone for all those generations the enjoyment of being a part of this nation they still revere so deeply. The futility of it all was apparent. None of them looked upon their ancestors as mistaken. They didn’t seem to feel any self-pity.”³

It is clear President Carter did not have an understanding of the people living in Americana, nor even the people who had fought and sacrificed so much for his home state of Georgia. Consider a quote recorded around 1900 from a southerner who had made the journey to Brazil and was still happily living there, *“You folks made our lives so impossible in the United States that we had to leave. We were welcome here in Brazil.”³*

What is it that President Carter did not understand?

Outlaws

While there were estimated tens of thousands of Confederates who fled rather than submit, some stayed home and continued to fight. Two of the most famous of these who never surrendered to Federal forces were:

Manse Jolly

Mansen Sherrill Jolly fought for the state of South Carolina during the war, leaving for the front with six brothers. Only he and one brother would survive to come home. If the loss of his five brothers was not enough heartache, when Manse returned home, he discovered Federal forces had set up a garrison near his home to oversee reconstruction. Swearing to kill “five Yankees for each brother killed in the war,” Jolly rode through their garrison and killed twenty-eight Federal soldiers. Declared an outlaw, he fled to Milam County, Texas with what remained of his family.

Jesse James

Jesse James, one of the most famous American outlaws, rode as a teenager with Quantrill along with his brother, Frank. While Quantrill was captured, his men never surrendered and some joined Jesse after the war in famously robbing Federal trains. Painted as a violent criminal by the north, for many in the south, especially locally in Missouri, he was seen as a Robin Hood figure for the fact he attacked Federal government and northern businessmen (carpetbagger) targets in his raids.

An Artist and an Adventurer

In addition to all those listed above, there are two other Confederate soldiers who never surrendered whose stories have survived and are worth retelling.

Conrad Wise Chapman

Chapman was from Virginia but was in Italy studying art when the war began. While he could have stayed in Italy—and was encouraged to do so by his father—Chapman wanted to heed his home state's call and he hurried back to her as quickly as he could. Once enlisted, the Confederate military recognized his value as an artist and he became the south's only official military artist. He is most famous for his works depicting camp life, picket duty, the east coast fortifications, and the CSS Hunley.



Toward the end of the war, Chapman was sent to Europe to plead for aid from foreign powers. Failing to rouse any support in Italy and Spain, he hurried back to Texas through Mexico with plans to attempt to make his way back to Virginia. However, he was still in Texas when word of Lee's surrender arrived and so he decided rather than returning to a defeated Virginia, chose instead to accompany General Magruder to Mexico.⁵

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham

Prentiss Ingraham was only 18 years old when he was made a colonel over a Mississippi artillery unit. He fought the entire war in the Western and Trans-Mississippi theaters. When surrender looked inevitable, he chose instead to flee to Mexico. However, he did not stay long and soon went on a globe-trotting journey as a mercenary soldier in Austria, Turkey, Egypt, and somehow ended up as a captain of a ship after leaving England, which he commanded as a cruiser during the Cuban revolution. Captured and sentenced to hang, he managed to escape and fled to New York City where he became a dime novelist. He was prolific in his writing, and good. He was hired by Buffalo Bill Cody as a publicist. One might have thought his love and devotion of his native south had dimmed, however, around 1895, he was diagnosed with kidney disease. Rather than stay with his family on the road or in the north, he wanted to die in the south, and made the trip to Beauvoir, which had become a soldier's home. He passed away and is buried there.⁶



In Closing

It is clear there are many examples of Confederates who refused to go quietly. Out of necessity, many stayed home and did their best to rebuild, heeding General Lee's advice, especially to those

who chose to flee overseas, *“The thought of abandoning the country and all that must be left in it is abhorrent to my feelings. I prefer to struggle for its restoration and share its fate rather than to give up all as lost... [Virginia] has now need for all her sons.”* This was the common feelings, though it is more than safe to say that a peaceful shaking of hands after the war with the enemy was not generally accepted. Those who did, such as General James Longstreet, who even chose to work for the newly imposed radical Republican government, were scorned for generations.



Confederates who chose never to surrender were numerous. The thousands who were mustered out at Marshall, Texas for example, were never officially paroled and shaped much of Texas’ reputation for being a haven for the unreconstructed. Look at the photo at left as an example of Confederate veterans in Mexia, Texas in 1900. At least one was known to have been a veteran who walked away at Marshall. What do you see in the photograph that displays these veterans’ opinion as to the outcome of the war?

Some of these veterans continued to speak out about their cause that they saw as defeated, but not surrendered. One of the most poignant quotes from an unsundered Confederate who refused to,



as President Carter said, admit he was “mistaken,” was **Major General Camille Prince de Polignac**, a French military officer who fought for the Confederacy under General Richard Taylor. Polignac was in France at the end of the war on a mission to plead for help from Napoleon III, and so never faced surrender either. He was a veteran of three wars in his life: Crimea, the War Between the States, and the Franco-Prussian War, (where incidentally he was commended for leading the 3rd Zouaves, the unit some of Shelby’s men had joined, in the battle of Beune de Roland on November 28, 1870). But it was his service to the Confederacy that he cherished above all others, and he wrote in 1913:

“As Time moves on, the origin and the purpose of the four-years conflict...ceases to be a mere episode in the private history of a particular people, on a particular spot...it expands far beyond the narrow limits of the land upon which so many lives were sacrificed. It is an Object-lesson to the World, and must appeal to all sincere lovers of liberty wherever they may be found. Subsequent events have kept the world alive to the nefarious influence of political and administrative centralization, unless confined within well-defined and narrow limits, and it is not unreasonable to

expect that the much maligned Southern Cause will be, in future, more justly appreciated from being better understood.”⁷

Reading List

1. Benson, Berry and Susan Williams Benson, Ed. *Berry Benson's Civil War Book: Memoirs of a Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1962. (pg 200-202)
2. Beers, Fannie A. *Memories: A Record of Personal Experience and Adventure During Four Years of War*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1888. (pg 219-220) (I recommend finding a 1981 Time Life Books reprint, part of their “Collector’s Library of the Civil War,” which can be found for about \$10 used. It is an excellent memoir about a Connecticut woman with a Southern heart. Fannie Beers’ husband fought for the South and she left the safety of family in Connecticut to serve the Confederacy. She was one of the founding members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.)
3. Harter, Eugene C. *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2000. (pg xii, 9)
4. Nunn, W.C. *Escape from Reconstruction*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1956.
5. Bassham, Ben L. *Conrad Wise Chapman: Artist & Soldier of the Confederacy*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998.
6. Johannsen, Albert. “Prentiss Ingraham” from *The House of Beadle and Adams and its Dime and Nickle Novels: The Story of a Vanished Literature*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Public Libraries. An Online Project, accessed 2017 at http://www.ulib.niu.edu/badndp/ingraham_prentiss.html
7. Kinard, Jeff. *Lafayette of the South: Prince Camille de Polignac and the American Civil War*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2001. (pg 186-187)

Image of Confederate veterans in Mexia accessed through Texas Tech University Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library: <https://swco-ir.tdl.org/swco-ir/handle/10605/12455>
Original in the collection of the Gibbs Library: Mexia, Texas. Soldiers include: M.B. “Burl” Cog (right) and Sgt. S. M. “Shad” Cotton, 19th Arkansas, (second from left).

Other Suggested Titles:

- Baldwin, John. *Last Flag Down: The Epic Journey of the Last Confederate Warship*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007.
- Watson, William. *Life in the Confederate Army*. New York: Scribner and Welford, 1888. (Reprint edition, 1983 by Time Life Books, “Collector’s Library of the Civil War.” Also in this series is suggested the memoirs of John B. Gordon and Richard Taylor.)

Note on selecting books for research in our modern times:

1. Be sure to read “About the Author.” Look at other titles the author has written, organizations they belong to, where they are from, etc. For example, an author who is a Professor for Berkeley University is NOT going to be kind to the South. Understanding the author is EXTREMELY important. Example: James McPherson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *Battle Cry of Freedom*, originally wanted to do his doctoral thesis on the Civil Rights movement. When he was told “too many people are writing about that, but why don’t you try to write about it by comparing it to the Civil War?” that is exactly what he did. Knowing the political motivation behind his work should discredit him for most serious scholars interested in a truthful look at Confederate or Southern history.
2. Collect old books. Unless new information has been discovered—such as discovered lost papers or a major archeological find—reading books written in the 20th century (1900-1999) about the War Between the States is perfectly okay—No matter what a teacher or professor or blogger says. (Of course those on the left don’t want old books to be read and try to dismiss them—because they tell the truth!)
3. Be leery of any history books written since 2000. While there are good ones, most publishers, especially after around 2008, have ceased publishing works that place the south in a good light. In fact, in 2015, an article sent out to editors in the publishing industry written by Ruth Graham, a journalist for the *Daily Beast* and *Slate* magazine (very leftist), stated of publishing books that were pro-Confederate, “*their mere existence says something about the persistence of ugly myths long after the broader culture has moved on... This toxic version of the South may not rise again, but its stories linger on,*” and continued to say that publishing houses who did publish such books should be written off as “fringe publishers.” Additionally, the infamous petition to take down the battle flag from the South Carolina was started and promoted by Karen Hunter, a leading editor for Simon and Schuster. With this knowledge, it is safe to say that finding truth being published by the large publishing houses, (Random House, Simon and Schuster, Penguin, etc.) is going to be a rare thing. Sadly, also a lot of once great Southern university presses now have jumped on the bandwagon. Chapel Hill, North Carolina has been especially horrible as of late and anything they have published in the past few years should be avoided.
4. Follow online communities of historians who are of like mind or at least fair minded and honest. Abbeville Institute is an organization of professors and scholars from the South who love the South and you can ask them questions through Facebook or e-mail. There is also a book review section in *Confederate Veteran Magazine*. From these you should be able to compile a list of good publishers and authors from which to select books to read.
5. Fact check. This goes for all material. Not only is there a lot of lies or twisted information being disseminated today, but unfortunately some material that is pro Southern can be wrong as well, and we look bad when we quote that information. So always question and fact check what you learn.

Good Luck! Remember, the Lord despises lies and loves those who speak the truth. So search for it and speak it! Even if one day you are the only one brave enough to do so!

Feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions! shford1861@gmail.com

