

*I Fear  
We Shall Never  
See Home Again*



J. Michael Joslin, SUVCW

*Will Faurot, in the Union Army, survived a hard-fought battle, surrendered, imprisoned under the worst of conditions, yet survived. The war ended and Will, along with over 2000 others, joyous to be returning home, boarded the ill-fated Sultana.*

## **I Fear We Shall Never See Home Again**

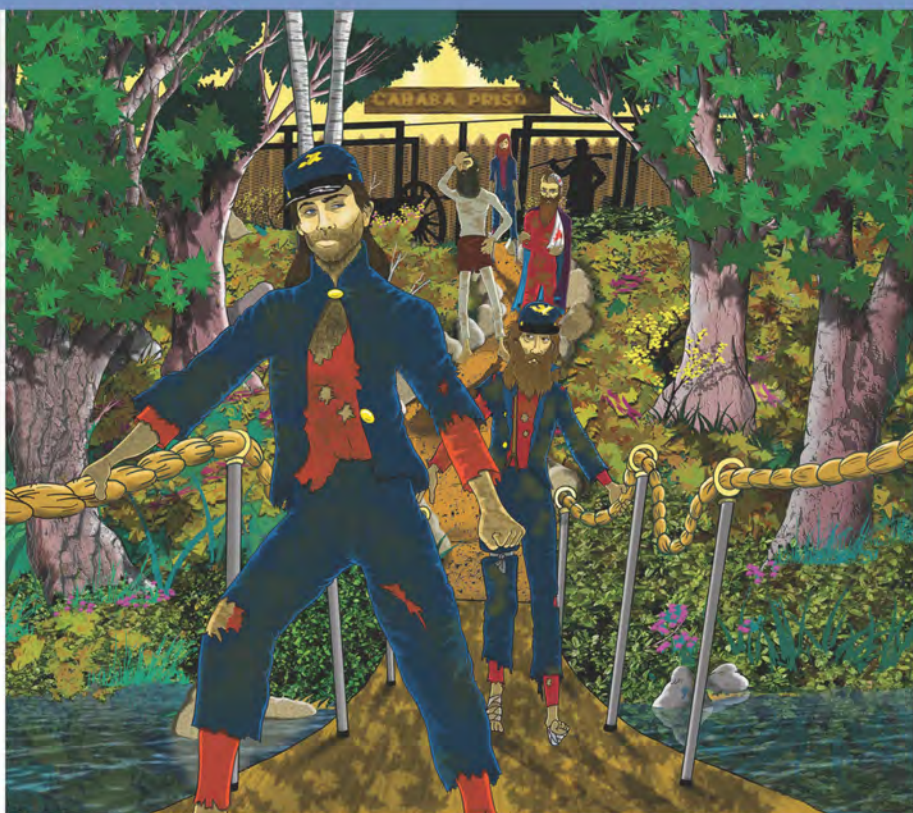
By J. Michael Joslin

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*I Fear  
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Author J. Michael Joslin has done a wonderful job of research in writing his latest book "I Fear We Shall Never See Home Again." He has a unique way of creating imagery and dialogue that puts the reader in the shoes of his characters. His descriptions of action sequences are vivid and robust. A stickler for authenticity and detail, Michael has recreated the life of a Civil War soldier in camp, battle, and prison, and the explosion and burning of the steamboat *Sultana* in a way that educates and entertains the reader and leaves one wanting more. An excellent work of historical fiction based on true events and true characters.

Gene Eric Salecker

Author, *Disaster on the Mississippi: The Sultana Disaster, April 27, 1865*, and historical consultant for the *Sultana* Disaster Museum, Marion, AR.

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ISBN 978-1-64718-369-1

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Some of the characters in this book are based on real people. The author intentionally omitted their last names. The conversations, thoughts, and actions of those characters are simply the creation of the author. Other characters are real. Although no longer living, their names and actions are known to history.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid free paper.

Booklocker.com, Inc.  
2020

First Edition

## About the Author

J. Michael Joslin was born and raised in the great state of Michigan. He is a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, and a member of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada. He is a self-taught historian with a preference for writing books of historical fiction. He spent over 40 years researching his ancestry, during which time he discovered that he came from a long line of men who fought in wars from the American Revolution to the Korean War. He too served and is a Vietnam Veteran. Two of his novels, *Thank God for Michigan*, and now *I Fear We Shall Never See Home Again*, are centered around ancestors who served in the American Civil War, and the regiments in which they served.

In the process of preparing to write this story, Mr. Joslin did several years of extensive research and reading non-fiction books on the subject, as he is a stickler for assuring that the actual events, he portrays are accurate and factual. There are, at present, at least nine non-fiction books in print about the *Sultana*, and Cahaba Prison. Mr. Joslin understood the importance of this story and came to the conclusion that the story should also be told in a more personal manner. *I Fear We Shall Never See Home Again*, is the product of his efforts to place the reader in the shoes, heart, and mind of William Lester Faurot.

**Other Books by J. Michael Joslin**

*Thank God for Michigan*

*Jacob's Ladder of Vengeance*

# **Chapter One**

## **A Most Difficult Decision**

July 2, 1862: The White House, Washington, D.C.

President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, issued a call for 300,000 more troops. Michigan's quota was 11,686 troops. As Michigan responded to Lincoln's first call for troops in 1861, causing Lincoln to proclaim, "Thank God for Michigan," the state of Michigan would respond once again.

July 15, 1862: Coldwater, Michigan.

The 18th Michigan began recruiting in various communities throughout southern Michigan. Jonesville was one of those communities. The recruiting officer was 2nd Lieutenant George W. Bullock, who would soon be promoted to Captain and placed in command of Company G. Those that I refer to throughout the story as the Coldwater boys, enlisted in Jonesville.

On the date of their enlistment, the recruits had to submit to a medical examination to determine their fitness to serve. After being ordered to remove their clothing, they were examined. The exam usually consisted of performing such things as jumping up and down, kicking, and bending over. They were also poked and prodded by the physicians in charge. Their hearing was checked, and then a dental exam was performed. What the doctors were looking for, was to see if the recruits had their front teeth, because they would need them to be able to tear the paper cartridges that contained the gunpowder and minie ball. If they were missing their front teeth, they were rejected. It was not unheard of that some were so desperate to stay home they knocked their own teeth out. Others cut off their trigger fingers. Of course, bodily mutilation was not always successful in preventing their enlistment, as they would be assigned to non-combat duties

such as teamsters or other duties with the quartermaster commissary stores.

Recruits were also required to be eighteen years of age to sign up. More than one underage boy wrote the number 18 on a piece of paper and inserted it inside one of their shoes.

When asked, "Are you over 18?"

They could honestly say, "Yep. I'm over 18."

Those who passed the physical were allowed to enlist, and then they were given their uniforms and sent home.

August 6, 1862: H.H. Flandermeyer's Boot and Shoe, at 24 Chicago Street, Coldwater, Michigan.

Clement Wilder Faurot was a boot and shoemaker, employed by Frederick and Herman Flandermeyer. The Flandermeyers had great respect for Clement's talents. Regardless, they did not pay very well at \$50.00 per month. As a result, Clement's eldest son, William Lester Faurot, became employed at Flandermeyer's to bring more income into the Faurot household. William (Will to his friends and siblings), quickly mastered the trade.

Father and son had worked all morning long. It was lunchtime so they both sat down outside to eat their lunches.

"Did you talk to Fred yet?" Clement asked his son.

Will assured his father, "No sir, not yet. I will though, after lunch. I hope he won't be angry."

"You need not worry about that, son. He knows there is a war on, and many young men are signing up and leaving."

"What about you, father? How do you feel about me enlisting?"

"William, you are my first and oldest son, and you've become a man that I am proud of. I won't lie to you though. I don't want you to go, but I understand why you feel you must. I am more worried about how your dear mother will take this news. Fathers care about their sons, but mothers...mothers care even more. Mothers are known to worry. Prepare yourself. When you tell her, she will be very upset, but I don't think she will stand in your way. After you leave, she will



worry about you each and every day that you are gone and will not stop worrying until the war is over when at last you once again set foot in our home.”

Will nodded his head, then leaned over and hugged his father.

Neither of them spoke another word while they continued to eat their lunch.

Having finished his lunch Will stood up.

“Okay father, I guess I will go talk to Fred.”

“Good luck, son.”

Fred Flandermeyer always kept his office door open. When Will approached, he could see inside the office. Sitting on the opposite side of Fred’s desk was Fred’s brother, Herman.

*Oh no, I wasn’t expecting to talk to both of them.*

Will stopped in his tracks.

*Maybe I should come back later.*

He almost turned around to walk away, but he considered himself to be a man of courage, which he knew he would soon be required to prove when he goes to war. He took a deep breath, turned around, and walked up to Fred’s office door. Although the door was open, Will knocked on the door jamb first.

Fred and Herman immediately recognized Will, and both men smiled.

“Come in, William, come in,” said Fred.

As Will entered the office, both brothers stood up and extended their hands in welcome and Will shook hands with them.

“William, what brings you to my office?”

“Well sir, I need to talk to you about something important.”

“Would you like Herman to leave or stay?”

“I think it will be okay if he stays, sir.”

“Of course, please sit down.”

Will took a seat next to Herman.

“So, what can we do for you, William?”

Will nervously cleared his throat and shifted in his chair.

“Sir, there is nothing that I need from you, either of you. There is something I need to tell you instead.”

At first, Fred said nothing, but just looked at Will and then looked at his brother. Herman grinned and then nodded his head, as if in agreement about something.

“I can see you are rather nervous about what you have to tell us. Let me make this easier for you. So...you have come to tell us that you will soon be leaving us, because you have enlisted to do the noble thing, to fight for the cause, for the Union.”

“Yes sir, but how did you know?”

It was Herman who answered Will’s question.

“William, we have been expecting this to happen. You are 20 years old. Most of the young men in this county have been signing up to fight, so we knew it was only a matter of time before you would do the same.”

“So, when will you be leaving us?” Fred asked.

“I enlisted in Jonesville on August 5th and will muster in and then begin training in Hillsdale on August 26th.”

Fred looked at his calendar.

“Okay, today is the 8th. How much time do you need to get your affairs in order?”

“Two or three days, maybe.”

“I tell you what, let’s make next week your last week with us. The following week spend it with your mother, sisters, and that little brother of yours. Go visit relatives and friends and get your affairs in order. We’ll even pay you for that week.”

Will was taken by surprise, not expecting such generosity. “Thank you, sir. You need not do that.”

“I know I don’t, but I insist. Your father is a valued employee, and the quality of his work is the best there is, and in the time you have been with us, you have shown signs of becoming as good of a boot and shoemaker as your father is.”

Herman was next to speak.

“William, we hope you will remain safe throughout this war, however long it will last, and then return to work for us. You will have your job waiting for you.” Fred added, “I just worry that when you return, you may decide to open a shop of your own, and then we will have some stiff competition, besides Vanderhoof’s, Luedders’, Faude’s, and Pratt’s, just to name a few.”

Fred and Herman laughed, but then Fred continued.

“Herman and I are getting up in years, and we may soon decide to retire. Perhaps when you return, provided you are still interested in the shoe and boot business, we might consider turning the business over to you. How’s that sound to you?”

“I...I...wow, sir, that is a wonderful offer. It will give me something to look forward to throughout the war. Thank you.”

“No William, thank you,” Herman said as he stood up and offered his hand.

Will stood up and shook Herman’s hand, then Herman gave him a big hug and a pat on the back. Fred stood up, came around from behind his desk, and did the same.

“Make sure that on your last day working here, before you walk out that door for the last time, that you come to see us first,” requested Fred.

“I will sir, I will.”

“Now...get your lazy ass back to work!”

Fred and Herman broke out in laughter as Will walked away.

“Well son, how did it go?”

“A lot better than I thought it would.”

“I knew it would. You needn’t have worried about the Flandermeyers. Your mother though...” Clement smiled. “Not to worry son, I will be behind you when you tell her. As far behind you as possible.”

“Thanks, Father.”

“Don’t mention it.”

That evening, Clement, and Will’s mother Hannah, sisters Polly

Jane, 19, usually referred to as Jane by the family, Wealthy Ann, 14, Mehitabel, 11, usually called Hittie; and brother John, 9; and Will, sat down at the table for their evening meal. Their heads bowed, Clement recited the family blessing: "Heavenly Father give us grateful hearts for these blessings, which we are about to receive, and help this food to the nourishment of our bodies and strengthen our spirit in thee. We ask this in Jesus's name. Amen."

Once the food was passed around the table, their plates full, they began to eat. As was the family tradition, they each took turns relating their day's experiences. As always, the youngest was the first to talk. Johnny and Hittie usually told silly stories. Wealthy Ann was a typical teenager, usually had an attitude about life. Jane had successfully completed grade school and was employed at Mrs. Berry's millinery store in Coldwater. She would talk about her job, or about some of the customers. Her thoughts were mostly about finding a man, but she found her choices were few, as most of the young men were off to war. There was one man, however, that she was interested in, Joseph Hartwell. The problem was that he had enlisted as a bugler in the 1st Michigan Light Artillery, Battery F, back on November 2, 1861, after Lincoln's first call for troops. They wrote letters to each other, so she had reason to hope. Her contribution to the supper discussion usually was about Joseph. Jane was thankful that she at least had one person close to her age, still at home...her brother Will.

At last, it was Will's turn. He had been rather quiet, apparently lost in thought, so he was not aware that it was his turn to talk. Everyone looked at him, but he did not notice.

"William! It's your turn."

There was no response from Will.

Jane was sitting next to him, so she jabbed his ribs with her elbow.

"What? What did you do that for?"

"To wake you up," Jane exclaimed.

"I wasn't sleeping."

Hannah sat directly across from Will, staring at him with a concerned look on her face.

“What’s wrong, William?” she asked.

“Nothing’s wrong.”

“William, I am your mother. Mothers can tell when things are bothering her children. Are you feeling ill?”

“No, I am not ill.”

“Then what is wrong? You have been sitting there, barely eating, looking like you were in another world. Something must be wrong.”

“There isn’t anything...”

“Hannah!” Clement interrupted the two of them. “Leave the boy alone. I’m sure if he needs to talk to us, he will when he is ready.”

“But Clem...”

“No, Hannah, leave him be.”

Hannah looked at Will, then looked at Clement. She stood up, pushed her chair in, but stood there, with her hands still on the back of the chair. She looked once again at the two men then turned on her heels.

“Well!” Hannah exclaimed with an indignant tone in her voice. As she stormed off, she ordered, “Girls, clear the table and wash the dishes. Johnny, you have chores that need doin’, as well as schoolwork.”

Will and his father remained sitting at the table. Clement told Will about the boots he was making, but as soon as the table was cleared, and they were alone, he looked Will in the eye.

“Well son, I think you better talk to her soon.”

“I guess you are right. I just wanted to talk to her without Johnny and my sisters listening in. I want to tell them later.

“You can’t put it off any longer. Shall I get her?”

Will looked at his father, took a deep breath, swallowed hard, and then nodded.

Clement got up and left the room.

Clement found Hannah in the parlor, sitting in her rocking chair, obviously lost in thought.

“Hannah, why are you sitting in the dark?”

“It is sometimes more peaceful in the dark. I can think about things better without distractions.

“I understand, Hannah. I think I know what your thoughts are about. You’re wondering why William acted as he did at supper. There is something that he wants to talk to you about.”

“Well, why didn’t he talk about it at supper?”

“Because he didn’t want to talk in front of his brother and sisters, at least not until he has talked to you. He is ready to talk, so let me light some of these lamps, then I will go get him.”

As Clement began to light the lamps, Hannah turned her head and began to stare out the window.

Clement soon returned to the parlor, with Will following behind him. They both sat down on the settee. Will cleared his throat and then began to speak. “Mother, I need to tell you about something important.”

“About what?”

“About an important decision, I made a few days ago.”

Hannah held her hand up, palm toward Will, to stop will from continuing. She looked her son in the eye and began to speak.

“William, I believe I already know what you have been so fearful to tell me.”

“You do? How can you possibly know?”

Will turned and looked at his father.

“Don’t look at me, son. I didn’t tell her anything.”

Hannah continued, “My son, don’t think me a fool. There are only three things a young man is afraid to tell his mother. The first is that he has committed a crime. Well, I know you too well to believe you could commit a crime. The second thing is he is afraid to tell his mother that he has met a girl, fell in love, and is planning to marry her. Far worse if she is pregnant. If I had my druthers, I would prefer the second reason. The third reason, which is so obvious considering what is going on in our great nation, is a young man telling his mother that he is going off to war. This is what you are fearful of telling me, isn’t it?”

Once again, Will looked at his father, but Clement only shrugged his shoulders.

“So, which is it William as if I don’t already know?”

“It’s the third one, Mother. I enlisted yesterday. I’ll be leaving home on the 25th to begin training in Hillsdale.”

Will barely got the last word out, when from the next room, they heard a mournful cry.

Clement got up to go look. He found that Jane had been eavesdropping. He took her by the hand and led her into the parlor. Will stood up as she entered the room. Jane stood before her brother, tears streaming down her face.

“No Will, tell me it isn’t so. Please, please, don’t go. I don’t want you to get killed! Daddy don’t let him do this.”

“Jane, sit down. Your brother wants to talk about this but has not yet had the chance,” said Clement.

“Mother, I have good reasons for enlisting. The first reason should be obvious. We all understand our nation will not do well being divided like it is. If for no other reason, our nation needs as many soldiers as are willing to join, to do whatever it takes to end this rebellion and reunite our country. As for slavery? I know little about it, as our farmers don’t have slaves to do all the hard work of farming. Here, in the north, when a farmer needs help, he either hires someone, or the other farmers lend a hand, and he does the same for them. I don’t understand why southern farmers can’t do the same. I have heard that they don’t pay the slaves, often beat, or whip them, and sometimes hang them. That ain’t good either. I know that I am only one person who will soon be a soldier, but I will be one soldier among many, all trying to do what is right. Deep in my heart, I know I need to do my part. Another reason is for the money. The Flandermeyers are good to us, but the pay is not enough to feed this family and do the other things that need doing. The Army pays more than the Flandermeyers pay. I can help all of you if I send most of my pay home. My needs, while in the army, will be small. They will clothe me and feed me. There is also the \$100 bounty money for enlisting for three years, and they talked about something called a pension. Mother, I just want to help our family. I can help more by

doing this than working at Flandermeyer's."

Hannah sat silently looking at Will as he spoke and continued to look at him when he was done talking. She spoke not a word, but turned her gaze to Clement, then looked down at the floor, and once again, stared out the window.

Will looked at his father, a look of uncertainty in his eyes but once again his father shrugged his shoulders, uncertain of what to say or do next.

A few moments of silence passed, but then Clement recalled something he thought it important to share.

"Our son will not be the first to go off and fight for our nation. My great grandfather, Henry Faurot, served in Washington's army, doing his part to assure our independence. Then there was Timothy Shay, father of Elizabeth Shay, who is married to my Uncle James Faurot. Uncle Timothy fought in the last war, the one that started in 1812. So, perhaps a sense of duty to our country is in Will's blood."

Will gave a nod of appreciation to his father, but then stood up and turned to leave the room, but Hannah stopped him.

"My son, as you said that you have already enlisted, it appears that you already made your decision. You are also twenty years old, so I, nor your father, can do little to stop you. I think I can speak for both your father and me, in saying that this is something we would never have wanted you to do. All that is left to do is to tell you we are proud of you for making such a grown-up decision, as it proves to us that you are very much a man now, and we are proud that you are willing to put your life into the hands of God, and are willing to fight for what is right. So, we will support your decision, and pray for your safe return. Please know that our love will go with you.

Will smiled, and then walked over to his mother, bent down, and hugged her. "Thank you, Mother. I love you and Father so very much. I will do my best to not dishonor our family."

Clement spoke, "The Flandermeyer's told Will to work nextweek, but after that, he can have off, with pay, until he leaves for training. He will be training in Hillsdale. Perhaps while he is there, or



just before they head south, we can see him again.”

Hannah only nodded her head, and once again stared out the window.

Will worked his final week at Flandermeyer's. On his last day, the company had a little going away party for him.

The following week Will visited with his relatives and a few close friends.

Will was one of several who had enlisted in the 18th Michigan.

The Coldwater boys, Will, Eddie, Jason, John, and Charlie, gathered together at a saloon in town to have a few drinks together, and to make sure none of them was backing out. The five men were determined to stay close to each other for the duration of the war, pledging to “have each other's backs.” As Charlie had a medical background, he was to be a hospital steward, and would often be called upon to tend to the wounded. He was also made corporal at his enlistment.

August 25, 1862: From Coldwater to Hillsdale.

It was early morning. Will was packing a few items when out of the corner of his eye he saw four men approaching, all in uniform.

“If you fellows are looking for a handout, or for work, just keep on walking.”

“Nah! We don't need no job. We already got a job, and we're goin' there now. Care to join us?” asked Eddie.

“I'm not too sure I want to work with the likes of you fellows, but I got nothing else to do. Set yourselves down and rest awhile. I got us a ride coming.”

They decided to go to Hillsdale a day early, spend the night in camp so they could be fresh in the morning to begin training.

No sooner had the boys sat down, Mr. Moulton arrived with his dray wagon. Storrs H. Moulton owned a furniture business in

Coldwater. He used the dray wagon to haul and deliver furniture to customers. Mr. Moulton was a good friend of the Faurots. He had enlisted in 1861, in the 9th Michigan Infantry. He was given the rank of Captain and became the leader of the regimental band. However, as he was 47 years old army life had been hard on him, so ten months later he was discharged and returned to Coldwater. He offered to take the boys to Hillsdale aboard his wagon.

“Are you about ready to go, Will?” asked Eddie.

“I guess so. I just need to say goodbye to everyone.”

Will entered the house and saw his father inside.

“Father, the boys are here, and so is Mr. Moulton, so it’s time for us to go.”

“Okay, William, let me get everyone together.”

Will went back outside as Clement searched for the children. Once he found them, he sent them outside to say goodbye to their brother. He then found Hannah sitting in their bedroom.

He told her that Will was leaving, but she refused to go outside with Clement, so he went outside where everyone had gathered.

Little Johnny was in his big brother’s arms, holding onto him for dear life. His sisters had tears in their eyes.

“Come on guys, no need for tears. I’m not leaving for the war yet, not for a couple of weeks. Besides, all of you will be coming down to see me off. Down you go, Johnny. I gotta go now.”

“Where’s Mother?” Will asked his father.

“She’s not coming out, William. She said she doesn’t want to say goodbye twice. She said to tell you that she will come to see you in Hillsdale on the day you head out.”

“Okay then...I think I understand.”

After one last round of hugs, the five men climbed aboard the dray wagon. Mr. Moulton snapped the reins and their journey to Hillsdale began. It was the first leg of a long journey, and an uncertain future.

Clement turned to go back to the house, but something drew his attention to the upstairs window where he and Hannah’s bedroom

was located. He could see Hannah holding back the curtain, a hanky in one hand, looking in the direction of the dray heading down the road. She looked down and saw Clement looking up at her, then quickly let go of the curtain as she returned to her chair in the dark room.



## Chapter Six

### Assault, Deception, and Surrender

September 24, 1864: In and around Athens and Fort Henderson.

3 a.m. Confederate soldiers discovered that their paper cartridges had gotten wet, rendering their ammo useless, so General Forrest had dry cartridges distributed.

September 24, 1864: Fort Henderson.

6:30 a.m. At the Maclin home, where General Forrest had his dinner the evening before, 32-year-old Mary Fielding, who was a companion to Anna Maclin, looked out a window and witnessed members of Forrest's brigades that "seemed to go in all directions, marching, counter-marching, going first one way, and then another."

What Mary was not aware of, nor was Colonel Campbell, is that General Forrest was pulling off another of his ruses, intending to deceive the Union forces within the fort, that he had a much more massive force than he actually had. Such trickery was common of General Forrest. It was done with the hope that Colonel Campbell would see further resistance was futile and would be convinced to surrender his entire command.

7:00 a.m. General Forrest ordered his Chief of Artillery, Captain John Morton, to have his artillery to open fire on Fort Henderson. Using shot and shell, the barrage began with Morton's battery on Buck Island Road. Next, the battery on Brown's Ferry Road opened fire. The two batteries fired from 55 to 60 shots at the fort, twenty-four shots struck within the interior of the fort, damaging some of the buildings killing one non-combatant, and wounding one soldier.

Forrest ordered his troops to begin movements. From the east, General Bell's brigade, in full view of the fort advanced across the railroad. From the west, Buford and Lyon's brigade moved forward.

Colonel Kelley's brigade was ordered to remain in position southeast of town. They were ordered to "throw out flanks" but also, if the reported reinforcements did arrive from Decatur, to hold them in check. Forrest kept everyone just out of range of the Union forces within the fort. It was just another show of strength, with a purpose.

8 a.m. Forrest ordered a cease-fire and for all troop movements to halt. During this lull, the Confederate 14th Tennessee Cavalry dismounted and was waiting in line east of Fort Henderson. A small group of soldiers was discussing what might come next.

"Y'all don't think we are gonna really attack that fort?"

"Hell, I surely wouldn't put it past the General."

"He's gonna git a lot of us killed if he decides to attack that thing."

"Look yonder, here comes Colonel Wilson. Maybe he knows."

Colonel A.N. Wilson approached on horseback, and as he began to ride past the men, they saluted him, and after he returned their salute, one of the men called out to him.

"Colonel Suh, could we ask y'all a question?"

"Certainly, Private. What is it?"

The Private pointed to the fort and asked, "Do y'all think we can take that thing?"

The Colonel looked at the fort in the distance, then turned back to look at the Private.

"Well, yes, I reckon so..."

"Thank you, Suh," replied the Private.

They again exchanged salutes with the Colonel, and he rode on down the line.

The men stood looking at each other for a few seconds, and then the Private remarked, "That sounds mighty weak boys."

With that, they all burst out in laughter.

10 a.m. Once again, the deceptive shrewdness of General Forrest came into play. Knowing that storming what he thought to be possibly an impregnable fort might come at too high of a cost, he called the

cease-fire, and then sent, under a flag of truce, his Chief of Staff, Major J.P. Strange, to Fort Henderson with the following message:

Headquarters Forrest's Cavalry In the field.

September 24, 1864.

Officer Commanding U.S. Forces, Athens, Alabama:

I demand an immediate and unconditional surrender of the entire force and all government stores and property at this post. I have sufficient force to storm and take your works, and if I am forced to do so, the responsibility of the consequences must rest with you. Should you, however, accept the terms, all-white soldiers shall be treated as prisoners of war, and the negroes returned to their masters. A reply is requested immediately.

Respectfully,

N.B. Forrest, Major-General C.S. Army

Colonel Campbell sent the following reply:

Headquarters U.S. Forces

Athens, Alabama, September 24, 1864.

Maj. General N.B. Forrest,

Commanding Besieging Forces, Athens, Alabama

General: I have the honor to decline your demand of this date.

Wallace Campbell Colonel

One hundred and tenth U.S. Colored Infantry, Commanding.

After General Forrest received Colonel Campbell's reply, he again sent Major Strange, along with his aide-de-camp, Colonel Galloway, under a flag of truce, to speak with Lt. Col. J.A. Dewey of the 111th U.S.C.T., and William T. Lewis, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General. Strange and Galloway attempted to convince them

that General Forrest was determined to take the fort, and if compelled to so, then no lives would be spared. Upon hearing this, Colonel Campbell again, refused to comply with Forrest's demands. Colonel Campbell then received the following from General Forrest:

Athens, September 24, 1864.

Colonel: I desire an interview with you outside of the fort, at any place you may designate, provided it meets with your views. My only object is to stop the effusion of blood that must follow the storming of the place.

N.B. Forrest Major-General

Colonel Campbell, accompanied by Lt. Colonel J.A. Dewey, approached General Forrest who was sitting astride his horse, King Philip. They saluted each other and then General Forrest got right to the point:

"Colonel Campbell, I assure you, sir, that I am determined to take Fort Henderson. I have at my command, sufficient forces to accomplish my goal. I must warn you that, should I be compelled to storm the works, it will result in the massacre of the entire garrison. If you doubt my word that I have sufficient forces, I invite you, and any officer of your choosing, to have the privilege of reviewing my command."

Colonel Campbell and Lt. Colonel Dewey returned to the fort and immediately consulted with the various commanders.

"Well gentlemen, General Forrest is very adamant in his desire to take this fort from us. He said that if he is compelled to take this fort by force, it will result in the absolute slaughter of everyone within this garrison. He assured us that he has sufficient forces to take this fort, and invited me, and another of you, to see for ourselves by reviewing his troops."

Colonel Campbell continued, "I am not prepared to surrender



my command, on Forrest's word alone, that he has a large enough force to take this fort. I suggest accepting his invitation to review his troops should be accepted before making any decision involving surrender. If we see that he does indeed have 8,000 to 10,000 troops, any further resistance will be futile. In that case, gentlemen, it would be worse than murder to attempt to hold the works."

At this time, all in attendance agreed that this was the best course of action.

Colonel Campbell chose Captain B.M. Callender, of the 1st Missouri Light Artillery, to accompany him when he reviewed Forrest's command.

Colonel Campbell and Captain Callender, accompanied by General Forrest rode around Forrest's entire line. Confederate troops rode past the three men in a long, continuous column. What Colonel Campbell and Captain Callender did not know, is that the column that they witnessed, after they rode off into the woods, would quickly circle back around to the end of the column and pass by again. Campbell also saw a great many campfires throughout the countryside. As they rode on with General Forrest, Confederate Colonel James Wheeler rode up and greeted the three men. Forrest saluted and greeted Colonel Wheeler as General Wheeler and asked him how many men he had. Colonel Wheeler knew what General Forrest was doing, so he answered, "7,000." When Colonel Wheeler rode off, Colonel Campbell mistakenly thought that the man was General Wheeler. They continued to ride on and as they did so, Colonel Campbell was counting cannon. In reality, Forrest only had eight cannon, but as Colonel Campbell was counting cannon, Forrest's men moved the cannon to a new location. Campbell counted 24 cannon. General Forrest had only 4,500 men under his command, but when Colonel Campbell and Captain Callender headed back to Fort Henderson, they were convinced that Forrest did actually have 10,000 men.

As the Colonel and the Captain were reviewing the Rebel troops, back at the fort, those standing on the parapets watched Confederate cavalry riding a continuous circle around the fort. They rode around it several times.

11 a.m. After Colonel Campbell returned from reviewing Forrest's command, he decided to discuss what he had seen with some of the officers under his command. Inexplicably, out of forty-five officers, he only chose to meet with eight.

"Gentlemen, after reviewing Forrest's troops, I have no doubt he has what he says he has. I am convinced he has at least 12,000 men, and perhaps more may be on the way to join him. I also counted 24 cannon. We only have two, and they are ineffective at a long-range. So, I put it to you men to vote on whether we should fight, or surrender. All in favor of surrendering, raise your hands and say aye."

"Aye."

Only two officers voted for surrendering. It was not what the Colonel had expected.

He turned to the other six officers, "Why do all of you think we should stay and take our chances?"

"Sir," responded the first officer, "this fort is built plenty strong enough to take anything the Rebs can throw at us. There isn't any way their cannon can breach these walls."

A second officer spoke, "Sir, we brought in enough food, and other necessities from the Commissary store and we have a well full of clean water, so I believe we have enough to withstand a siege if such happens, to last at least 10 days, maybe more, or until reinforcements arrive."

A third officer added, "Our armory has more than adequate arms and ammunition to sustain a prolonged battle over the next few days."

A fourth officer brought up the obvious. "Sir, we could all hear gunfire to the south of here. That has to be the reinforcements from Decatur. I don't know how many of them there are, but most likely it will be enough to make a difference. If, somehow, they should make it through to us, the fact they were sent means that General Granger is aware of our situation, and most likely more troops will soon follow."

Another stated that "Hell, the boys, including the blacks, are itching for a fight, and are anxious to try conclusions. Sir, the blacks are worried about what will happen to them, as they heard about what

happened at Fort Pillow. I have no doubt that they will fight and fight hard. Forgive me Colonel but, damn it, give us all a chance. We know we can hold the fort for however long it will take until reinforcements arrive.”

The Colonel remained silent giving thought to what had been said, and of what he had observed while reviewing the enemy forces. He also considered the threats made by Forrest should they refuse to surrender.

As he exited the fort earlier, there is little doubt that the gunfire coming from the south was getting louder, indicating that the reinforcements were very near, yet he apparently chose to ignore it, and go through with the surrender.

He turned and looked at the officers standing before him. He had made a decision, but it brought him mixed emotions.

“I am sorry, gentlemen. The jig is up, pull down the flag.”

With that, he quickly left the building, mounted his horse, and rode out of the fort through the sally port, to accept Forrest’s surrender terms.

Immediately after the troops within the fort received word that their commander was surrendering the fort, there was a loud outcry from the men, both black and white.

“God, damn it! Let us have a chance to put up a fight.”

“Captain, we built this fort. We know it can withstand anything the Reb’s throw at it.”

“But Forrest has 10,000 men, maybe more, and we’ve only got a little over 500 or so. We don’t stand a chance,” exclaimed an officer.

“Fuck, Lieutenant, with this fort built like it is, we can hold off 10 times that many Rebs. Just give us a fair chance to prove it.”

The men began to gather together like an angry mob.

“We ain’t gonna surrender, Lieutenant, ain’t no way,” yelled one soldier.

The entire mob yelled in agreement.

“Open the fuckin’ armory so’s we can fight,” demanded a Corporal.

“I’m sorry men, we have no choice. The Colonel has ordered the

surrender, and we must all comply with his order.”

“An’ what if we refuse to surrender with him?” asked another.

“Then we may be forced to shoot any man who refuses the order to surrender.”

“Ain’t that the damndest thing you ever heard?” one soldier was heard to say. “If you run from battle instead of fighting, they shoot us. Now they want to shoot us if we refuse to surrender.”

Another officer spoke.

“I’m sorry, but the Colonel has already surrendered the fort. All of you are now prisoners. You are all ordered to exit the fort and stack your arms.”

Upon hearing that, much angry cursing was heard. Some men openly cried in despair.

Many of the colored troops had heard of the massacre of colored troops at Fort Pillow in April of 1864, by white troops under the command of General Forrest. The troops at Fort Pillow had surrendered and put down their arms but were massacred anyhow.

As a result, the men of the colored regiments were feeling the extreme terror that the same was about to happen to them.

The following are the Terms of Capitulation, signed by General Forrest and Colonel Campbell:

An agreement entered into at Athens, Ala., on the 24th day of September 1864, by Maj. Gen. N.B. Forrest, of the C.S. Army, and Col. Wallace Campbell, One hundred and tenth Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry.

We, on the part of our respective Governments, stipulate and agree that the following articles shall be faithfully executed and maintained:

On the part of the U.S. Government, by Col. Wallace Campbell, that the fort and the United States and public Government property at this point be, and the same hereby are, surrendered to Maj. Gen. N.B. Forrest, of the C.S. Army.

On the part of the C.S. Government, by Maj. Gen. N.B. Forrest, that all commissioned officers surrendered or surrendering as above be, and hereby are, permitted to go to Meridian or some other point in Mississippi, and the said officers shall, so soon as Major-General Forrest can communicate with Major-General Washburn, U.S. Volunteers, be sent to Major-General Washburn or other commanding officer at Memphis, Tenn., to be retained on their paroles of honor not to act in opposition to the forces of the Confederate States until they are duly exchanged by Generals Washburn and Forrest, which exchange shall occur as speedily as possible. The exchange is to be conducted by an exchange of officers for officers of the same rank, and man for man.

Again, said commissioned officers shall and hereby are permitted to retain and keep all their personal property, including horses, saddles, side-arms, and clothing, all this permanently. Again, the enlisted men (soldiers) of Colonel Campbell's command shall be kindly and humanely treated and turned over to the C.S. Government as prisoners of war, to be disposed of as the War Department of the Confederate States shall direct.

N.B. Forrest,  
Major-General, Commanding, C.S. Army  
Wallace Campbell  
Colonel 110th U.S. Colored Infantry, Commanding.

Note: In his book, *Loyal Mountain Troopers: The Second and Third Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry in the Civil War*, 2nd Lieutenant John W. Andes of Company K, 2nd Tennessee, recalled, "While the truce was in operation and during the time occupied by Colonel Campbell in viewing the enemy's forces, firing was heard on the Decatur Road. This came from a force of troops sent in our relief from Decatur, consisting of detachments from the 18th Michigan, and 102nd Ohio Infantry, numbering some 360 men, commanded by Lt. Col. Elliott of the 102nd Ohio, who was seriously wounded."

In a report dated October 17, 1864, Major General Forrest stated that, as Colonel Campbell was viewing the Confederate forces, "...heavy firing was heard down the road in the direction of Decatur." Forrest received dispatches informing him that the firing he heard was the Union detachment sent to reinforce Fort Henderson. Most likely, General Forrest hoped that Colonel Campbell, if he heard the heavy firing, would not associate it with the relief detachment.

Considering that 2nd Lieutenant Andes had stated that the firing could be heard while Colonel Campbell was viewing General Forrest's forces, one could conclude that the Colonel certainly had to have heard the firing too.

It was nearly noon when Mary Fielding heard loud cheering that lasted for several minutes. She looked out of her window, in the direction of the fort, in time to see the Union flag lowered. As she stood there, she heard more gunfire from the south. A Confederate soldier was standing outside near her window, so she asked him, "Soldier, what is that gunfire?"

"Ma'am, that's the Union reinforcements trying to cut their way through to the fort. They're too late to do any good now."



## **Chapter Eight**

### **A Long and Treacherous Road to Misery**

September 24, 1864: Fort Henderson, Athens, Alabama.

No sooner had the men of the detachment stacked their arms, a large group of Rebel soldiers confronted what was now their prisoners. These men in butternut and gray, were a ragged lot, with filthy and tattered clothing. Some had shoes that were falling apart, some had no shoes at all. Many looked as if they had not had a decent meal in months.

Immediately the Rebels began to rob their prisoners of everything of value, including clothing and shoes. Being robbed at gunpoint, there was little they could do to resist, although some did. There was a commotion near where Will and his friends stood. The commotion came from a soldier of the 102nd Ohio. One of the Rebels insisted that he give him his boots.

“I ain’t givin’ them to you. My mother sent them to me,” explained the Ohio soldier. The Reb still demanded the boots. He reached out and grabbed the Ohio man by the arm. The Ohio man grabbed the Rebel by the throat.

“Think again, Johnny Reb.”

This particular Rebel was of equal size to the Ohio soldier. As they struggled, a second Rebel, on horseback, rode up, dismounted, and then demanded the boots for himself. This led to an argument between the two Rebs.

“Gentlemen,” the Ohio soldier attempted to interrupt the quarreling Rebs. “No need for you both to quarrel over my boots, as they belong to me. The second Reb was much bigger. He shoved the smaller Reb aside, took hold of the Ohio soldier, and convinced him to give up his boots. He then smiled and patted the Ohio soldier on the back and said, “Just so’s there ain’t no hard feelings, y’all can have my boots.” The top of his boots were cut off across the toes.



The Ohio soldier thought perhaps the Reb had corns, but it was hard to tell as the man's toes were filthy.

Another Reb rode up and tried to grab the Ohio soldier's hat as he rode past, but he missed. The Ohio soldier then had his trousers exchanged for a pair of filthy overalls.

Having witnessed this, Will began to worry as he also had boots, handmade by his father. His fears were realized when a Reb came up and pointed a pistol at his head. With his free hand, the man searched Will's pockets and removed all that was contained within them.

Will still had the rations that had been issued back in Decatur. He and the rest of the detachment had not eaten since the early evening of September 23rd, nor had time to eat their rations once they began battling their way to Athens. Losing the rations was a painful loss, as Will was starving.

"Damn it, man! Don't take my rations. I haven't had a bite since Friday."

"Y'all thinks y'all is hungry? Look at me and the rest of my fellow soldiers. Ain't none of us has had much of any victuals in days."

The Reb started to turn away, but suddenly turned around and looked down at Will's boots.

"Them's some mighty fine lookin' boots, Billy Yank. I'm likin' them a lot. Take 'em off an' give em' to me."

"I'm not giving these to you. My father made them for me."

"You tellin' me yer pa is a bootmaker?"

"Yes, he is, and a mighty good one too."

"Well hell, Billy Yank, now I really want them. Nothin' like a pair of fine, outstandin', handmade boots."

"But they were made to fit my feet."

"I don't give a damn. Now give 'em to me or I'll put a hole through your head."

He cocked the hammer on his pistol and put the muzzle against Will's forehead, just between his eyes.

"All right, all right! You can have them." Will started to reach

down to remove his boots, but suddenly the Rebel soldier stopped him.

“Hold on their Yank. Y’all wouldn’t have a gun hidin’ in one of y’all’s boots, would ya?”

It was then that Will realized that he had a problem. He didn’t have a gun in his boot, but he did have that huge knife that he was nearly killed with earlier.

The Reb shoved Will, causing him to fall backward to the ground.

The Reb turned to another Reb, “Look here, keep your gun on this here Yank while I remove his boots.”

He knelt down and pulled off Will’s left boot, but then, when he pulled off the right one, the knife fell out.

“Well, well, well, will y’all lookie here? What was y’all plannin’ to do with this here? Was y’all gonna stick me with this first chance y’all could git?”

“No, I clean forgot I had it.”

“Like hell you...” The Reb stopped when he noticed initials engraved on the knife blade.

“Hey! This here knife belongs to a good friend of mine.” He placed the tip of the knife against Will’s throat.

Will thought *that’s twice this knife has been pointed at me. I’m getting mighty tired of...*

“How’d y’all git this, Yank? Did y’all kill the man this belonged to?”

Will knew his life depended on his answer. “No, we were in a big fight with you fellows about a mile from here. You were giving us such a hot time, I had to dive for cover. I found the knife on the ground next to me where I was taking cover.”

“My friend this belongs to were a big feller. Did y’all see him?”

“There were a lot of bodies on the ground, and a lot of fighting still going on, so I didn’t take time to look at anyone in particular.”

“Well, y’all are one lucky Yank this time. If’n y’all would have said y’all killed my friend...well, this here knife would be cuttin’ y’all’s throat.”

The Reb, with the knife in one hand and Will's boots in the other, turned and walked away.

Will called out to him, "Aren't you gonna at least give me your shoes?"

"Jist be thankful I let y'all live, Billy Yank."

It was not long until other Rebs robbed him of all his clothes, except for his undergarments.

One of the Rebs who took Will's clothing stripped off his own and put on Will's. He tossed his butternut trousers, blouse, and vest at Will's feet, then quickly departed.

As Will began to don the Reb's clothing, Confederate General Buford rode in on his horse and loudly proclaimed, "These prisoners must not be deprived of any of their personal property."

"Well, he's a little late, ya think?" Will said aloud with disgust in his voice.

The guards assembled the prisoners in the streets of Athens and counted them several times. After their last count, they seemed to be satisfied and then assembled the prisoners in platoons of four. Instead of beginning the march, the guards kept them standing in the street the remainder of the afternoon.

About 5 p.m., General Forrest's forces finished burning the blockhouses, bridges, and trestles.

As sundown approached, they assembled a wagon train, as well as all the captured artillery. Between two lines of the 22nd Confederate Tennessee Cavalry, commanded by Colonel George H. Nixon, they formed the prisoners in a column of fours and began a forced march southward for a short distance and then turned west in the direction of Florence, Alabama. For fear of their prisoners being recaptured by Union troops, officers would ride by, encouraging all to move quickly.

Like Will, many of the prisoners were marching in bare feet, some with Rebel shoes that had soles so worn and thin, they may as well have been barefoot. Even the smallest pebble, when stepped on, was very painful.

As most of the prisoners had not eaten since Decatur and the

pace was great, many began to straggle. A halt was soon called to allow the stragglers to catch up. It was during this break that captured Yankee hardtack was distributed among the prisoners. The hardtack was gratefully accepted and appreciated.

Due to the late start, followed by a ten-mile march, a halt was called for the night, and they camped in a field. It was a cold, uncomfortable night, and few had blankets for warmth. The Coldwater boys could not sleep due to the cold, so they quietly sat near one another, at first lost in their individual thoughts. Eddie was the first to break the silence.

“That was one helluva fight, weren’t it?”

“Yeah, it was,” agreed Jason.

“Damn,” said John.

“I’m surprised we are all still alive,” said Will. “There was a helluva lot more of them than there was of us.”

“Any of ya kill any of them Rebs? I know I killed at least one, ain’t that so Will?”

“Yeah, I know Eddie. If you hadn’t of, there would only be four of you sitting here right now. I owe you, my friend.”

Jason sat looking down at the ground, scratching at the dirt with a twig. “I am more than sure we all killed someone today. Probably more than one, considering how many of them were coming at us.”

“They was hard to miss,” added John.

Will looked at each of his friends, with a look of sadness in his eyes.

“Did any of you think, when we were back home in Coldwater, that one day you would kill a man, let alone several men. The first Reb I killed bothered me a bit, but with the battle still going on, I didn’t have time to dwell on it. How many others I might have killed after the first one, I didn’t think about. With all the confusion and smoke, I really can’t be sure if I killed very many more.”

There was no response to Will’s question, only silence.

Eddie stood up. “Scuse me, I don’t feel so good.” He quickly went behind a tree and began vomiting. When he was done, he

returned to his place on the ground next to Will. "Must have been somethin' I et."

"More like something you ain't et," suggested Will.

"Yeah, maybe so."

Will knew the real reason that Eddie got sick. Killing a man, especially point-blank, is unsettling. Will began to go over the day's events in his mind.

*I guess I have the answer to my doubts about how I would hold up in battle. I didn't run. I wanted to, but I didn't. I think maybe that I was scared shitless, but I don't recall having felt fear the whole time.*

As he sat thinking, a sudden vision came to his mind, of the one Rebel soldier that came at him out of the thick haze of smoke. The one he shot in the neck.

*I know it was me who shot him. It was almost as if I could see my bullet going through the air and entering his neck. I saw a mist of red come from the back of his neck and into the smoke. I saw him drop to the ground, dead. Dear God...what have I done? God, will you ever forgive me for taking his life? He probably has a family back home, as I do. Because of me, his family will never see him again. If he has children, how will they ever understand why their father is never coming home again? I probably killed more than just him but thank God I could not see them like I did this first one.*

Will recalled when the war began, how many young men in Coldwater, and in other communities, spoke with such bravado, and with such excitement about joining the army to "kill them damned Rebs!" They all talked and boasted like it would be an easy thing to do, with no consequences.

*Damn it! There is nothing glorious about this war. How can killing another human be glorious? Men are dying on both sides. All those families who have lost husbands, fathers, sons in this war, must surely be suffering indescribable grief. God, I don't want my family to go through such grief if I am killed. I don't want to go on fighting this war, but I have no choice. I cannot desert and bring dishonor to*

*my family. I can only fight on and pray that I survive it. Survive it? How can any man survive such a thing as this, even if they are not killed in battle?*

*What I have done, what all of us have done, if we live to go home again, we will take with us the knowledge of having killed other humans, other Americans. These Rebels may have seceded, but they were Americans before the war, and are still Americans even now. This war makes no sense to me. We are supposed to be a civilized nation. How can we do such an uncivilized thing as this?*

September 25, 1864: Enroute to Florence, Alabama.

In the morning, the march began anew. As they marched along, an occasional gunshot was heard from the rear of the column. Shortly after, a mounted guard rode up alongside the column. As he rode past, he shouted a warning, “You boys better move along. Don’t straggle none. We just shot another damn Yankee who couldn’t keep up.”

After 35 miles, they reached Florence and then turned towards the Tennessee River. They came to a halt near a shallow crossing, known as “the shoals.” Small flatboats, which are propelled by push poles, awaited them. The hour was late, so the crossing would have to wait until morning.

Once again, hunger was setting in, but no food was provided.

September 26, 1864: The Crossing.

The prisoners were awakened at first light. As there was no food available, the crossing began immediately. Also, their Confederate escort feared Union forces might catch up with them.

There were not enough flatboats to ferry all the prisoners across at one time, so it would require several trips. With each crossing, Rebel mounted cavalry escorted the flatboats.

The Coldwater boys managed to stay together on the march and boarded a boat together. John kept eyeing the nearest cavalry escort. When they were about halfway across the river, John said, “I been

thinkin'. There's enough distance between escorts. If I wait until this one gets past us. I ought to jump over the side of the boat, dive down under and swim like hell underwater for as long as I can hold my breath, an' maybe escape. If'n I can get beyond the shallows, it'll be too deep for the Rebs horses to follow me. What do ya think?"

Will was the first to respond.

"I think it's a damn fool idea, John. If the current was fast, you might stand a chance of getting away, but it isn't fast. More than likely, the second you stand up, that Reb would clobber you with his pole."

"We'd sure hate to have to tell your poor ol' mother what a stupid thing you did, an' that you drowned doing it," added Jason.

"Anyhow, John wherever they are taking us, whatever is going to happen to us when we get there, it'll be a heap easier if we do it together," advised Will.

"All right then," John decided. "I guess I best not try it then."

As the crossing progressed, some of those men who landed on the opposite shore earlier were taken under heavy guard to a nearby cornfield where they gathered corn to feed all the prisoners. They were allowed to build fires for cooking, but the best they could do is try to toast the corn, as the corn was not yet ripe enough to parch it. Nevertheless, they all feasted on what some considered as a "hearty breakfast." Although the corn was too hard to toast satisfactorily, the hungry men did not complain.

Once all the prisoners were across the river and fed, the march started again. Thankfully, the corn they had eaten seemed to give them renewed energy.

As they marched, they were occasionally allowed to gather more corn from the cornfields along their route. Some of it was eaten as they marched, some of it was saved for later consumption. None could possibly know that over the next six months, corn, mostly in the fashion of dry cornmeal, would become the one constant staple of their diet that they would need to survive on and that at times, it would be detrimental to their health, but for now, they regarded corn as a feast.

As darkness settled in, they arrived in Tuscumbia. As the marches usually continued late into the night, and they were forced to arise before sunrise to continue marching, it was, for all intents and purposes a non-stop march

September 27, 1864: Tuscumbia, Alabama.

The march continued this time westward. They finally arrived at Cherokee Station during a severe thunderstorm and remained there for the next three days as they waited for a train to transport them to Corinth, Mississippi.

September 28, 1864: Cherokee Station.

After they awakened on this morning, they were all overjoyed when they were issued small portions of meat.

Will watched Eddie quickly devour his ration of meat. Will elected to take small bites, and waited several seconds before taking another, thinking he might fool his mind, and his stomach, that it was a much larger meal. He did seem to feel a bit fuller, but it did not last very long. Of course, there was still corn.

After Will finished eating, he sat on a log and inspected the soles of his feet. They were caked with mud and dried blood.

Jason saw Will looking at his feet.

“Well, there is one good thing you can be thankful for.”

“Just what would that be?” inquired Will.

“The mud will prevent your feet from bleeding anymore. An ol’ Potawatomi injun once told me that.”

“Indian medicine, huh?”

“Yup! Honest to God.”

Will shook his head and laughed, but he thought about what Jason told him. *There might just be something to that. Perhaps I ought to leave the mud on just in case.*

During their stay at Cherokee Station, the Union officers were separated from the rest of the prisoners. They were sent further south



but were soon paroled and sent north, where they rejoined their regiments.

Note: The above statements regarding the parole of officers is according to Private James W. Wells, Company B, 102nd Ohio. In contrast, Private Emmett F. Taggart, Company I, 102nd Ohio, suggested that the officers, and colored troops, were left at Corinth, Mississippi, not at Cherokee Station

The enlisted prisoners had also been promised paroles. While at Cherokee Station, awaiting the train, they anxiously awaited the processing of their paroles, but their hopes were dashed as the paroles did not happen. They were not aware that General Grant had put an end to paroles being given to Confederate soldiers, as too often, they would return to their regiments and continue to fight. Consequently, this meant that none of the Union prisoners would be paroled.

October 1, 1864: Cherokee Station.

At last, the train arrived. The remaining 800 prisoners were loaded into cattle cars and boxcars. The cars were dilapidated and filthy, and the ride was rather uncomfortable, but the prisoners were thankful that they would no longer have to march.

The train headed westward, crossing into Mississippi, stopping in Corinth.

October 2, 1864: Corinth, Mississippi.

4 a.m. In the morning, they were boarded on a train headed south on the Mobile and Ohio railroad, towards Meridian. The train stopped for the night in Okolona. The prisoners spent the night confined in the train cars.

October 3, 1864: Okolona, Mississippi.

As the prisoners, and their captors, waited for the train to depart, they heard a loud, angry voice. The voice was that of the train's engineer, who apparently had spent the night in a saloon, drinking

heavily. He was still drunk when he arrived at the station.

“I’m gonna send some of you damned Yankees to hell before I’m through!”

He was so drunk he was barely able to climb the ladder to the locomotive’s cab. The fireman was already in the cab, stoking the fire. He too seemed to be a bit drunk. The engineer continued to curse loudly as he and the fireman got the locomotive up and running. As the train began to move, slowly at first, the engineer continued to rant.

“I swear, these damned, God-forsaken Yankees has taken away our niggers, an’ now they’s destroyin’ ever’ thing else. Y’all hear what they’s done to Atlanta? Burned it to the ground, they did.”

As the train continued to head south, the prisoners and guards could feel the speed increasing, and it was soon at a speed that they knew was unsafe.

Note: Due to the costs of the war, there had been little available funds to maintain southern railroads. The steel rails were unlevel in many places. The bolts and fishplates, which spliced the ends of the rails together were badly rusted and becoming loose, sometimes causing the end of one rail to be higher, or lower, than the next. Many of the spikes that secured the rails to the wooden ties, were loose or missing, so in places, the spaces between parallel rails were not safely spaced. Many of the wooden ties had rotted and were incapable of holding the spikes securely in place. Wooden trestle bridges had not been maintained as they should have been. Even the trains themselves had been poorly maintained. The condition of the railroads was so bad, engineers had been warned not to exceed 8 miles per hour.

This engineer was so drunk he had no idea how fast the train was traveling. If he was aware, he most certainly did not care. The train was soon barreling down the tracks at 25 miles per hour, which, in itself does not sound very fast, but with the tracks in such poor condition, it was a dangerous speed, and it was continuing to increase.

Every place the rails were out of alignment, the cars would be

jerked sideways, first one way, then another. Every section of rails, where bolts and fishplates were loose, causing the end of one rail to not be level with another, caused the cars to bounce. The prisoners and their guards had a look of fear on their faces. The state of the rails caused the men to violently lurch around inside the cars, colliding with each other. Some were slammed against the walls. The dust, dirt, and old dried out hay on the floor flew about, causing some of the prisoners to cough and hack as they struggled to stay on their feet. Bits of wood came loose from the cars and added to the chaos within. As the now out of control train careened down the tracks, at every curve, huge amounts of bright, fiery sparks burst forth as the steel wheels ground against the steel rails, which also caused a loud, shrill screeching sound. The prisoners and their guards tried to steady themselves, either by grasping the boards on the walls or grasping each other. In this battle, they were all equal, and on the same side. The entire train seemed to be rocking violently from side-to-side. From within the cars could be heard men praying, cursing, and men sobbing.

“We’re all gonna die. He’s gonna kill us all,” shouted one of the guards.

As the train got faster, smoke poured violently out of the locomotive’s smokestack.

Ahead was a long, steep grade. Immediately beyond it was a small trestle bridge that spanned a small stream.

The out of control train hit the grade and gained additional speed. When the locomotive came to the bottom of the grade it derailed and smashed through the trestle bridge. The impact broke the smokestack loose, and it tumbled end for end across the top of the locomotive’s boiler, then it fell to the side and crashed upon the ground.

The massively heavy locomotive seemed at first to go airborne as it came off the trestle and careened down the embankment towards the stream below, but it tilted downward, and then the cattle catcher on the front began plowing through the soil, causing the soil to fly through the air for some distance.

Attached to the locomotive was the tender, followed by several cattle and boxcars containing the guards and prisoners. Four of the cars were pulled off the track, still attached to the tender and locomotive.

The locomotive continued its forward momentum until it hit the stream. The front end plowed violently into the slope on the opposite bank of the stream and came to a sudden stop, but the force behind the forward motion of the tender, and the cars behind it, caused the locomotive to collapse in an accordion-like manner until it no longer resembled the machine it was moments before. It instantly became a tangled mass of twisted and torn steel. The firebox burst open, sending its burning contents throughout the twisted wreckage. Almost at the same moment, the boiler burst.

Boiling hot water and steam permeated the wreckage, and throughout the air around it. Had the drunken engineer and the fireman lived through the crash, the burning embers would have burned their flesh, and then the steam and boiling hot water would have scalded them to death.

When the train left Corinth, the tender was nearly full of wood. When the tender crashed into the locomotive, the wood flew in all directions like deadly missiles. Fortunately, none of it harmed anyone.

Four cars followed the engine and tender, and then quickly crashed to a halt. Like dominoes, each car crashed into the one ahead of it. The cars collapsed upon impact. The fifth car derailed, its steel wheels skipped over the wooden ties and then plunged “into the abyss.” It landed at a 45-degree angle. The men in the car ended up in a tangled mass at the front end. The remaining cars also derailed but remained at the top of the embankment.

The entire crash only lasted perhaps less than two minutes, maybe not even that long. The sound of it was deafeningly loud, and the sound of steel being twisted and crushed was an agonizingly horrendous sound.

As soon as it ended, it seemed eerily quiet and still, but within seconds, screams and cries for help were heard throughout the wreckage.

The men in the fifth car had jumped out and rolled down the hill, landing in a cornfield. The men in the remaining cars, including the Coldwater boys, were unhurt, although stunned and shocked after what they had just experienced.

They, and all the other prisoners and guards, exited the cars and came running down the hill. They immediately began to rescue and attend to the wounded and to extricate the dead from the wreckage. It was impossible to remove the dead engineer and fireman. The locomotive was in such a state of twisted, torn, and crushed steel, the two men's bodies were partially dismembered, their flesh so burned and scalded, that the rescuers could not tell one from the other. They also lacked the tools that would be necessary to recover the remains. If the truth be told, not a man among them, prisoners or guards, really cared to make an effort at removing the bodies of the two drunks who caused this to happen.

Prisoners and guards performed the search, rescue, and recovery effort alike, side by side. They were all able to put aside their differences to do what was necessary, which was far more important than their political beliefs.

It was never determined what the casualty count actually had been. Private Emmett Taggart, of Company I of the 102nd Ohio, suggested that the casualties numbered, "25 Johnnies, and 7 Yankees killed, besides several very badly crippled." Always willing to take advantage of a bad situation, Private Taggart stated, "While there, we tore the tin off the top of the cars and made pans and parched enough corn for several days."

Once their efforts were completed, the guards gathered the prisoners together and marched them back to Okolona to wait for the rails to be repaired, and for another train to arrive so they could continue their trip. The prisoners were confined in a corral for the night.

#### October 4, 1864: Okolona.

The rails had been repaired during the night. In the morning, another train arrived, and they continued their trip south towards Meridian.

Will stood looking between the boards of the car's side, watching the countryside go by. He felt a lump in his throat. *We are getting deeper and deeper into the south, farther and farther from home.* With his sleeve, he wiped away a tear that was running down his cheek.

A few miles south of Okolona, the train stopped to take on water. As had happened at the depot in Okolona, the prisoners again heard a commotion outside of the train.

Hearing the commotion, one soldier in the same car as the Coldwater boys, said in a troubled voice, "Oh, no. Now what? I pray to God this ain't another drunk engineer."

The cattle car door was open, so the boys peered outside to see what the commotion was about.

A couple of the guards were escorting an extremely old man towards the train. Apparently, he was a wealthy plantation owner. The guards seemed to know the old man, as they addressed him as "Uncle Harn."

Uncle Harn approached one of the cars and then extended his hands upward towards one of the open doors. The guards reached down and pulled him up and into the car. "Ah jist want to get a good look at these Yankees," explained Uncle Harn. He looked over the prisoners and then commenced to sling insults at them.

"Jist look at you boys. What the hell is ever'body so afraid of? You boys ain't shit. I'm an ol' man, but I bet I could kick the shit outta ever' one of y'all."

"Uncle Harn, you are getting quite old. Just how old are you?" one of the guards asked.

"I am 95, but I want to live long enough to kill one Yankee, and then I am ready to die."

The guards helped him back down and he walked away.

"We better keep our eyes on that old man," warned Eddie.

Once the train finished taking on water it got underway again.

October 4, 1864: Meridian, Mississippi.

It was raining at 10 p.m. when the train arrived in Meridian. About a quarter mile north of the Meridian station, the train came to a halt. The prisoners were ordered off the train and marched through the mud, and into a stockade. This stockade was so small, there was little chance for anyone to lie down, for fear of being stepped on. To make matters worse, the ground was muddy from the constant rain. Nature was not yet done making the prisoners miserable. Before morning it turned cold.

October 5, 1864: Meridian.

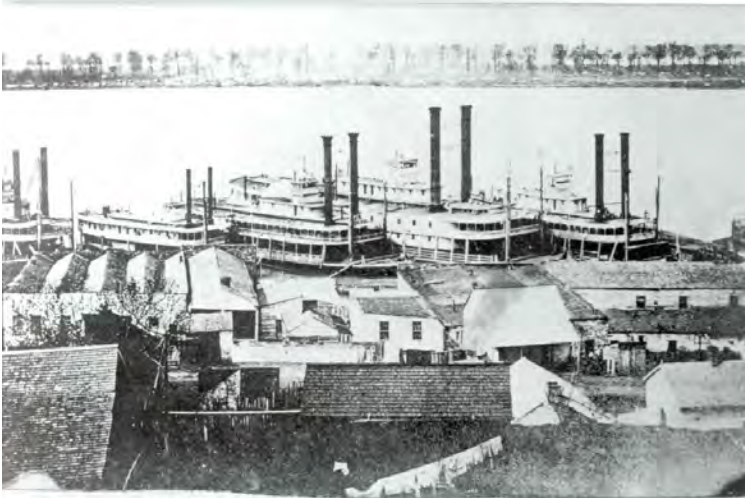
Early that morning, the prisoners boarded a train and traveled eastward on the Selma and Meridian railroad. The train came to a halt at the edge of the Tombigbee River, at Epp's Station, north of Demopolis, Alabama. They boarded a ferry that took them downriver to Demopolis. After landing at Demopolis, they again boarded a train that took them to Selma. At Selma, they boarded a steamboat on the Alabama River which took them 10 miles south of their final destination—Cahaba.





## Chapter Fourteen

### Greed and Corruption



Steamboats docked at Vicksburg, Mississippi.

April 18, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

A special order was issued to begin the process of sending home the men from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa.

The *Sultana* departed Vicksburg; its destination was New Orleans.

April 19, 1865: New Orleans, Louisiana.

The *Sultana* arrived in the early morning and began spreading the news of Lincoln's assassination.

April 19, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Another special order was issued, this one to send the men from Missouri and Louisiana to Benton Barracks, near St. Louis.

April 20, 1865: New Orleans, Louisiana.

Sixteen passengers boarded the *Sultana*, along with cargo consisting of the following:

200 Hogsheads (casks or barrels) of sugar, weighing approximately 1,200 pounds, to be delivered to the U.S. Quartermaster Department in Memphis, Tennessee.

97 boxes of wine.

60 “grunting” hogs.

As a precaution, Chief Engineer Nathan Wintringer, had the boilers drained, scraped, and cleaned. One of the crewmen told him that the boilers had been in need of repairs before this trip to New Orleans. Patches had been applied at Natchez and Vicksburg.

April 21, 1865: New Orleans, Louisiana.

After an overnight delay, the *Sultana* got underway. As it headed north, despite the flooded conditions of the Mississippi River, the *Sultana* was able to get to its normal speed of 10 miles per hour. Chief Engineer Wintringer and Second Engineer Sam Clemens began to relax as the boilers appeared to be fine.

Besides Captain Mason, Chief Engineer Wintringer, and Second Engineer Sam Clemens (not Mark Twain), were First Clerk William Jordan Gambrel, Second Clerk William Stratton, First Mate William Rowberry, Pilots George Cayton, and Henry Inghram, First Steward Henry Cross, and Second Steward George Slater.

April 21, 1865: Camp Fisk.

The men were assembled, and an officer made the following request. “I need two men, handy with a pen, to assist in making up the rolls. Unless the rolls are completed, no one will be leaving here.”

Private James W. Wells of Company B, 102nd Ohio Infantry, and Sergeant Major Hascal M. Cole of the 18th Michigan regimental staff, stepped forward to volunteer.

April 21, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

As the Confederate authorities finally agreed to parole prisoners, more urgency was placed on completing the rolls. General Dana wanted Captain Speed to supply 1,000 soldiers on each of the steamers at the Vicksburg wharf boat.

April 22, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

The steamboat *Henry Ames* received 1,315 soldiers from Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and soon got underway as General Dana watched them depart.

April 22, 1865: On the Mississippi River, one hundred miles, and ten hours south of Vicksburg, around 8:00 A.M.

Chief Engineer Wintringer informed Captain Mason that a small crack had developed in the far-left boiler. He felt the leak was serious enough, so he told Captain Mason, “Sir, I just discovered a leak on a side seam of the larboard boiler (#4). Water is leaking under the boiler. I think it would be wise to reduce our speed.”

Although Captain Mason had a reputation for recklessness, he agreed with Wintringer

April 23, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

1:00 A.M. The steamboat *Olive Branch* arrived and tied up to the wharf boat. The *Olive Branch* was not a member of the steamboat line that had a contract with the U.S. Government. At the time of her arrival, there were no other steamboats at the wharf. On the advice of William C. Jones, who was the agent for all non-contract boats, the *Olive Branch* remained through the night.

April 23, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

9:00 A.M. Having discovered that the *Olive Branch* had arrived in the night and had been detained without his knowledge, an angry Captain Speed went to see Chief Quartermaster Captain Hatch.

“Sir, why was I not told about the *Olive Branch*? I had given

strict instructions that all steamboats were to be reported to me as soon as they arrived.”

“I’m sorry Captain I knew nothing about the *Olive Branch*’s arrival. In fact, I just found out about it. I suspect that Captain Kerns may have taken a bribe from the Merchant’s and People’s Line, to detain the *Olive Branch* with the hopes that it would go unnoticed until a boat from their line showed up.”

Hearing this, Speed became even angrier.

“I am going to beat Kerns as his own game. I swear that I’m going to put every last man, those that are ready, on the *Olive Branch*!”

Speed was so angry he was unable to realize that he was being played by Captain Hatch. Captain Benjamin P. Tabor of the *Olive Branch* offered Hatch monetary incentive to provide as many prisoners as he could to be placed on the *Olive Branch* and Hatch was more than willing to accommodate Captain Tabor.

Throughout the day, the former prisoners from the New England states, plus those from Kansas, Alabama, and Mississippi, 619 in all, boarded the *Olive Branch*. Once they were all on board, the *Olive Branch* began its journey to deliver its passengers to Benton Barracks, Missouri.

Still angry, Captain Speed went to General Dana’s headquarters.

“General, sir. I demand that you arrest Captain Kerns!”

“On what grounds, Captain?” asked General Dana.

“Because I am certain that Captain Kerns accepted a bribe from the Merchant’s and People’s Line, to put the prisoners on only its boats.”

While Speed was demanding Kerns’ arrest, Kerns arrived at General Dana’s office. Speed immediately confronted Kerns.

“Why was the *Olive Branch* detained overnight, and why was her arrival not reported to me, as I had ordered?”

“Captain Speed, I assure you that I knew nothing of its detention, but as instructed, I reported her arrival to Captain Hatch.”

“All right, gentlemen, enough!” demanded General Dana. “Captain

Kerns, I suggest that you submit a written explanation of the event. Captain Speed, I want you to go see Captain Hatch. The two of you need to sort out the particulars for shipping the prisoners.”

When Speed met with Hatch, they agreed that the next group of former prisoners should go on the next available steamboat. The conversation turned to the *Sultana*, which they expected would arrive soon. They agreed that the *Sultana* should get an adequate load.

Speed did not fully trust Hatch, so he told Hatch there would only be 500 men ready by April 24th.

“I hope to have the rolls finished by Thursday, April 27th, so that we can get the men off as soon as possible. At the moment, I don’t think there will be enough men available when the *Sultana* arrives to make waiting worthwhile.”

Captain Williams returned from Cairo and immediately met with General Dana. He was informed that General Dana had, in William’s absence, placed Speed in charge of prisoner exchanges. Captain Williams next met with Captain Speed, who told him there only remained about 1,300 to 1,400 men in Camp Fisk. Williams decided to let Speed remain in charge until Camp Fisk was empty but said he would go to Camp Fisk with Captain Speed to help call the rolls.

April 23, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

8:45 P.M. As the *Sultana* began to approach Vicksburg, black smoke began to billow out of her chimneys, as a bit of pitch pine had been tossed into its furnaces. After the *Sultana* arrived at the Vicksburg wharf boat, Chief Engineer Wintringer immediately disembarked the *Sultana* and headed into town in search of an experienced boiler mechanic. His search led him to the home of R.G. Taylor. Despite the late hour, Wintringer convinced Taylor to go with him to the *Sultana*.

Once aboard the *Sultana*, Taylor inspected the damaged boiler closely.

“Take a closer look at this larboard boiler. You don’t just have a leak, there’s a bulge in it. Why did you not have this repaired at New

Orleans?” asked Taylor.

“At the time, the boiler showed no signs of leaking or bulging. It was not until we were about 100 miles south of here when we discovered the leak. Mr. Taylor, I need you to repair this boiler and have the *Sultana* ready to leave Vicksburg as quickly as possible.”

“I see. Well, for reasons of safety, two sheets on the boiler need to be replaced. If you do not let me do the repairs the way I see fit, I won’t have anything more to do with it.”

Taylor promptly turned around and left the *Sultana*, but Wintringer was right behind him.

“Sir, can’t you do the best you can, under the circumstances?” asked Wintringer. You must understand sir, that time is of the essence. Replacing both sheets will take time we do not have. Could you not limit the repairs to a smaller patch? I assure you, once we reach St. Louis, we will have your full recommendations carried out.”

Taylor finally agreed to do what Wintringer requested. Taylor went and retrieved his tools, and a steel sheet measuring 26” by 11”. As he began his repairs, he pointed to the damaged area and informed Wintringer, “The first thing I need to do is force back the bulge before I apply the patch.”

Wintringer objected and told Taylor to just apply the patch, so he applied the patch directly over the bulge. Twenty hours passed until the makeshift repair was completed.

Wintringer inspected the repair, then declared, “That’s adequate enough for us to continue upriver.”

Taylor looked Wintringer in the eye and said, “Sir, I have twenty- eight years of experience. With such limited repairs, I do not consider the boiler safe. I want it to go on record that I do not approve, and that, after inspecting the boilers, they all appear to have been burned due to an insufficient supply of water.”

The moment the *Sultana* arrived, Captain Kerns sent a message to Captain Hatch, informing him of the *Sultana*’s arrival. Cautious, he made sure that there were others who knew about the message.

Also cautious was Captain Mason. Upon his arrival to Vicksburg, he learned that the steamboats *Henry Ames*, and the *Olive Branch*, had left loaded with former prisoners. So, he and Sells went to see Captain Hatch.

“Captain sir, I am here to make sure I receive the prisoners that I was promised, and I expect to get all that the *Sultana* can carry,” demanded Mason.

“Captain Mason, I just met with Captain Speed. He said he had the rolls made up for no more than 500 men. He does not expect to have the rolls completed until this Thursday. Perhaps it might be possible to have the prisoners ready by Tuesday.”

“Colonel, it will hardly pay me to wait until the next day for that number of men,” said a now angry Mason. “If the men are ready, I am entitled to them! We are a member of the Merchant’s and People’s Steamboat Line. We are a contract boat, and as such, the *Sultana* is entitled to government freight. If Captain Speed can get the men ready, I am anxious to ship them.”

“Then go to Speed and see what you can do,” instructed Hatch.

Captain Mason’s next stop was to see Captain Speed, inquiring as to what could be done to provide an adequate number of former prisoners for the *Sultana*.

“We have just been to see Captain Hatch, and have come to see you, to see how many men you can give the *Sultana*.”

“Captain Mason, the rolls have only been completed for 300 men. I don’t think it will be possible to get them to Vicksburg in time for you to leave. However, if you are prepared to wait, I will give you all the men that can be readied.”

“Might I remind you, Captain Speed, that the *Sultana* belongs to the Merchant’s and People’s Line. Their contract with the government allows me to claim as many prisoners that the *Sultana* can get.”

“Perhaps I might be able to come up with 700 prisoners if you will agree to wait until Tuesday morning. I want to ship the men, but I can’t get the trains.”

“Well, Captain Hatch said he would supply the trains if preparations

are made for the prisoners to depart.”

“The prisoners are in pretty bad condition out there,” said Captain Speed. “The weather has been very bad, and they are anxious to go forward. If you can wait, the *Sultana* can have all the men that can be gotten ready.”

An impatient man, Mason next considered going to see General Smith, who had previously promised him a full load but preferred not to bother him. Instead, he headed for the department headquarters, where he met with Captain Williams.

“Captain Williams, I wish to file a formal complaint against the exchange office. The contract boats are not getting full loads of prisoners, instead, the non-contract boats are transporting all of them.”

“Captain Mason, let me assure you that I am especially anxious to send the men north because they have been repeatedly promised that they would be sent home. I just returned from Cairo, so I don’t fully understand the grounds of your complaint. Stay put and let me send for Captain Speed.”

Captain Speed appeared shortly after he received word of Captain Williams’ request to see him.

“Captain Speed, Captain Mason has voiced a complaint that he is not getting cooperation from the exchange office in acquiring his share of prisoners, as was promised. I ask you, Captain, is it possible to get the men off on the *Sultana*?”

“Captain Williams, I don’t think any of the prisoners will be ready to leave tomorrow, because the rolls for only 300 to 400 men have been completed. I think that it is impossible to get even those men into Vicksburg before the *Sultana* is ready to leave, but the *Sultana* can have 300 or 400 men once we are able to get them there.”

As Williams was about to end the meeting, a thought occurred to him, which he promptly shared with Mason and Speed.

“Perhaps the names of the prisoners could be checked off on the books supplied by the Confederate commissioners, and the rolls completed afterward from the books. In that way, the men could be



placed aboard the *Sultana* and sent on their way, while the rolls are still being completed.”

Captain Speed agreed with Williams’ idea and then offered, “I would be glad to check off the names in the Confederate books, ship the men into Vicksburg, count them as they are placed on the *Sultana*, and then draw up the rolls later.”

Captain Speed then visited General Dana and informed him of the new plan.

“I’m satisfied with that arrangement,” said General Dana. “I have one question though. How many men are in Camp Fisk that are left to be shipped?”

“I don’t know exactly, General, perhaps only 1,300, but certainly not more than 1,400.”

Speed and Williams went together to see Captain Hatch to tell him of the new plan.

“Captain Hatch, can you arrange the necessary river and rail transportation?”

“Certainly, I can do that.”

“Captain Speed, I’ll meet you at the railroad depot in the morning, and then ride with you to Camp Fisk,” offered Captain Williams.

Everything seemed to be coming together, but not once was there any mention of the repairs that were underway to the *Sultana*’s boilers. Also, no one informed Captain Kerns of the new plan.

Selecting river transportation was his job.

April 24, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Early morning. Captain Hatch, unannounced, dropped in on Captain Speed, who was getting dressed.

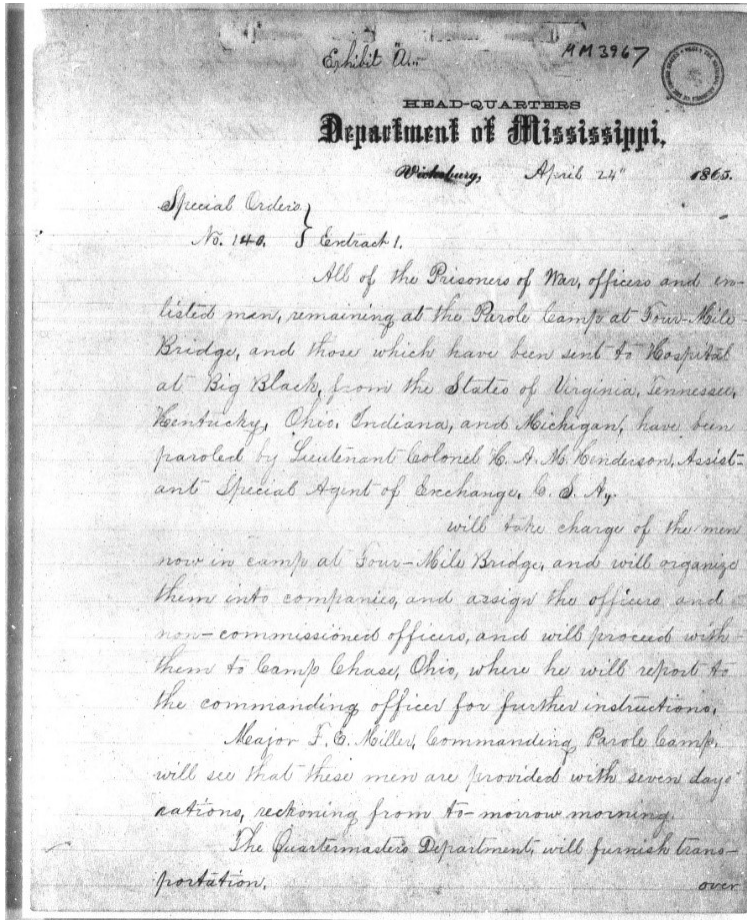
“I’m here in reference to the shipment of prisoners that is to take place today. I want to know whether all the prisoners at Camp Fisk will go on the *Sultana* in one large load?”

“As I said last night Captain, Captain Williams and I decided to send everyone on one boat, the *Sultana*.”

Hatch departed.

*I Fear We Shall Never See Home Again*

Captain Speed went to department headquarters and issued Special-Order No. 140:



Special-Order No. 140, page 2.

By order of Major General Dana  
(Signed) Sheridan S. Speed  
Asst Adj Gen

Official  
Asst Adj Gen

Capt W. F. Kerns  
A. G. H.

(Printed copy will be furnished soon)  
(Copy furnished Captain of the "Sultana")

Transcript of Special-Order No. 140.

MM 3967

*Exhibit B.*

SPECIAL ORDERS } HEADQUARTERS  
No. 140. } DEPARTMENT OF MISSISSIPPI,  
Vicksburg, Miss., April 24, 1865.

[Extract.]

1. All of the prisoners of war, officers and enlisted men, remaining at the Parole Camp, at Four-Mile Bridge, and those which have been sent to Hospital at Big Black, from the States of Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan, have been paroled by Lieutenant Colonel H. A. M. HENDERSON, Assistant Special Agent of Exchange, C. S. A.

Major W. H. FIDLER, 6th Kentucky Cavalry, will take charge of the men, now in camp at Four-Mile Bridge, and will organize them into companies and assign the officers and non-commissioned officers, and will proceed with them to Camp Chase, Ohio, where he will report to the commanding officer for further instructions.

Major F. E. MILLER, commanding Parole Camp, will see that these men are provided with seven days rations, reckoning from tomorrow morning.

The Quartermaster's Department will furnish transportation.

\* \* \* \* \*

BY ORDER OF MAJOR GENERAL N. J. T. DANA:  
FREDERIC SPEED,  
Assistant Adjutant General.

*Official*  
  
Assistant Adjutant General.

*Capt W. H. Fidler*  
*ag. u.*

Captain Speed sent a copy of the order to General Smith, Captain Hatch, and Captain Kerns.

8:30 A.M. Captains Speed and Williams, along with orderly Jameson Cox, began walking down Cherry Street.

"I'm inclined to see all of the remaining prisoners placed on boats of the Merchant's and People's Line," Captain Speed said to Williams. "Captain Hatch suggested that there was a possibility of bribes being offered by agents of the Atlantic and Mississippi Line, to obtain loads of prisoners. I think the detention of the Olive Branch confirms my suspicion."

"I fear that General Dana has many enemies intent on besmearing his reputation and good name. I caution you, Captain Speed, that we must be very careful not to give Dana's enemies any occasion to injure him. I too have heard stories of bribery. We will be better off delivering the prisoners to a contract boat or take responsibility for doing otherwise."

The three men arrived at the end of Cherry Street. A few minutes later, the train to Camp Fisk arrived. The train had only one passenger car and several flat cars. Captain Speed confronted the conductor.

"Captain Hatch promised the use of only the best cars on the road. If this promise is not kept, I will go to a higher authority."

"Nobody told me, Captain," said the conductor. "There are two more passenger cars near the engine house you can use."

The officers boarded the train and a short distance later, arrived at the engine house. The conductor told the officers, "The train needs to take on wood and water. The office of the superintendent of the military railroad is right over there. His name is Edward D. Butler. You can see him about getting two passenger cars."

Speed told Butler about what Hatch promised. At first hesitant, Butler finally agreed to let them take the two cars. Once the cars were coupled to the train, they continued on and soon arrived at Camp Fisk.

April 24, 1865: Camp Fisk.

It was early morning when the men were assembled, and Special-Order No. 140 was read aloud to them. It was immediately followed by the order to “Pull up camp!” The chill morning air was filled with the roar of the men’s cheers. Finally, their long nightmare was about to end.

As stated in Special Order No. 140, Major W.H. Fidler of the 6th Kentucky Cavalry, organized the men by their respective states and companies on the parade ground, in front of the train platform.

Fidler instructed one officer, “I want an officer in charge of each company.”

“But Major, many of the companies no longer have officers, some only have sergeants in command of them.”

“Then that will have to do.”

The train was late, but no one seemed to complain. They had waited to go home for six months or more, so they could easily wait a few more minutes for the train.

As they had since they first joined the 18th Michigan, the Coldwater boys, except for Charlie, were together as they waited for the train to arrive.

“Looks like this is finally it boys,” proclaimed Eddie. “We are finally headed home.” There was no disguising the excitement in his voice and the look on his face.

“I can hardly believe it,” said John. “It don’t hardly seem real.”

“Ah, but it is real, Jason,” John assured him.

“Perhaps we should say a little prayer of thanks or something,” suggested Will.

“Okay,” agreed Eddie. “But since it’s your idea, you say the prayer.”

“Well, I guess I could try.”

Will looked at each of the boys, and each lowered their heads.

“Lord, we wish to give thanks to you. You protected us in battle. You protected us during a train wreck. You saw us through those horrible months at Castle Morgan. Now, here we are, about to begin

our journey home, so that we will once again be with our loved ones. Once again, we will know peace, and each of us will begin life anew. As you did through all the difficult times since Athens, please watch over us on our journey and take us safely home. Amen.”

April 24, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Early morning. Captain Mason entered Captain Kerns’ office. When Kerns saw Mason enter, he asked, “Why are you still in port?”

“I’m just waiting for a load of prisoners,” answered Mason. “One of our boilers is being repaired. When the repairs are completed, we will be ready to get underway.”

Kerns had a look of surprise on his face. This was the first time that Mason made mention of repairs being done.

“The *Sultana* has been selected to take all of the men remaining in Camp Fisk,” Mason told Kerns.

9:00 A.M. Special-Order No. 140 was handed to Captain Kerns. He read it closely. Below the order, in red ink, Kerns read, “Copy furnished Captain of *Steamer Sultana*.”

He thought to himself, *that is highly unusual for an order to name a specific boat. Perhaps General Dana approved such a special arrangement. Once again, I have been bypassed in selecting transportation for the prisoners.*

He placed the order off to the side of his desk and returned to work.

10:00 A.M. Regimental staff officer of the 58th Ohio Infantry, Captain William S. Friesner, received an order from headquarters. It was an order from General Smith, informing him that he, and twenty-one of his men, were to report for duty on the *Sultana* to act as guards during the loading of prisoners.

Quite displeased, Captain Friesner assembled the detail, then on horseback, proceeded to headquarters. When he and his detail arrived at General Smith’s headquarters, he entered and was told that the General was not available, so he lodged his complaint with Smith’s aide.

“Captain, you will get to Ohio this time,” said the aide.

“As much as I would like to go home, my responsibility is with my regiment. I cannot go, I have ordnance forms to fill out and turn in. They are long overdue.”

“You need not report until seven this evening, and I will be at the boat with your instructions.”

All Friesner could do now is accept the assignment, return to the regiment, and do his best to complete the report.

April 24, 1865: Camp Fisk.

Near 10:00 A.M. The train carrying Speed and Williams arrived at Camp Fisk. When the prisoners saw the two captains get off the train, they all moved closer to the platform, full of anticipation.

The first to board the train were 637 men from Ohio, and 233 Indiana cavalrymen and artillerymen. Each man boarded as their names were called. Private James W. Wells and Sergeant Hascal M. Cole checked the names off the roll. Orderly Private Jameson Cox and Captain Williams directed the men to the cars. After two hours, Railroad Superintendent Butler became concerned about how overcrowded the passenger cars and flat cars had become.

“Captain Speed, this train has all the men it can carry!”

Captain Speed ignored him, and soon an additional 150-200 Indiana men were aboard.

With Captain Williams on board, the train got underway near noon. Captain Speed remained at Camp Fisk to supervise further work on the rolls.

Shortly after the first train departed, Dr. H.C. Huntsman, the medical officer at Camp Fisk, along with a hospital steward, walked among the men who were sitting and awaiting the arrival of the next train. From time-to-time, he would halt in front of a man, ask him to stand up, and then appeared to examine him. After his examination was complete, the doctor spoke to the man, as if giving some sort of order to him. The doctor moved on, stopping occasionally to examine different men.



After examination, some looked rather dejected after the doctor had spoken to them.

As the doctor and the steward began to look over the men in the row that the Coldwater boys were in, Jason suddenly recognized the steward.

“Hey, look! That’s Charlie.”

“Yes, it is,” said Will. “But don’t mess with him right now as he is working.”

The doctor soon approached the Coldwater boys. They each quietly greeted Charlie but said little else to him as the doctor slowly walked by the boys. When the doctor came to Will, he stopped.

“Stand up, soldier.”

Will, still rather weak, struggled a bit to stand up, but slowly got to his feet.

“What’s your name, soldier?”

“Corporal William Lester Faurot, sir.”

“What regiment are you with?”

“The 18th Michigan, Company G. What’s this about, sir?” Will asked.

“How much did you weigh when you first enlisted?”

“About 160 pounds.”

Dr. Huntsman turned to Charlie.

“Make note of that and make note that I estimate this soldier as being approximately 97 pounds.”

He turned back to Will and examined him further. “Tell me how you feel, soldier.”

“Well, I had the shits pretty bad before I got here at Camp Fisk, but that isn’t so bad now. I reckon it must be because we are getting real food now.”

“Any aches or pains?”

“Well, yes, I’ve been told I got rheumatism in my knees, so they hurt some.”

“Well, Corporal, I don’t think you are well enough to travel yet. I want you to remain behind and report to me this evening.”

Will quickly looked at Charlie and then looked at the doctor.

“But sir, these here boys and I, including Charlie there, have been together since we joined up. I know Charlie wants to stay and help the sick soldiers, but the rest of us want to go home together. I don’t feel that sick. Please let me go with my friends.”

“I’m sorry, soldier, but you need to stay here until I decide you are well enough to travel.”

“But sir...”

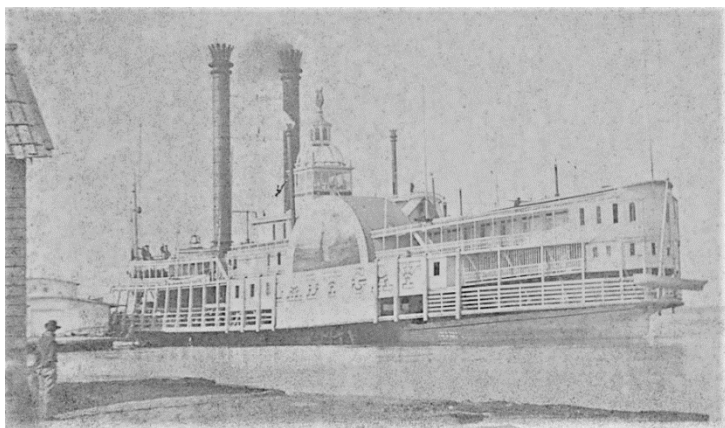
“No arguments, Corporal.”

Will looked at Charlie, but it was clear that Charlie had no say in the matter.

The two continued on. Once they were out of earshot, Will turned to the boys.

“Well...fuck him! I’m not staying here. Fuck him, I’m getting on the next train with you boys. When they find out tonight that I’m not here, they can write me up if they want, but they’ll have to go clear up to Coldwater to get me.”

“That’s the spirit, Will,” said Eddie.



The Lady Gay.

11:00 A.M. The steamer *Lady Gay* arrived at the wharf and pulled alongside the *Sultana*. The *Lady Gay* was a member of the Merchant's and People's Line.

As soon as the *Lady Gay* arrived Captain Kerns went to Captain Hatch's office.

"Sir, I wish to inform you of the arrival of the *Lady Gay*. She's a contract boat."

"Very well, Captain. Thank you for your report," said Captain Hatch.

"There's one other thing, sir."

"What would that be?"

"Well sir, I believe the *Sultana* is about to get more prisoners than it can handle. Can you contact Captain Speed about detaining the *Lady Gay*, to take the overflow?"

"I'll get back to you, Captain. You're dismissed."

Captain Kerns waited for Hatch's reply, but in the early afternoon, he got a reply directly from Captain Speed.

"No, they can all go on one boat."

Upon receipt of Captain Speed's telegram, Kerns immediately went to inform the captain of the *Lady Gay*, John A. Williamson, that the *Lady Gay* was free to go.

"Captain Kerns, don't worry," said Williamson. "The *Pauline Carroll* was not far behind us. She should be up sometime this afternoon."

April 24, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

1:00 P.M. The first train arrived with its cargo of 870 former prisoners. The moment they began to step off the train, orders were shouted.

"All right, soldiers, fall into a column of fours!"

Once all were in formation, they were marched through the streets of Vicksburg, and soon arrived at the wharf boat. As the men crossed the gangplank onto the wharf boat, Captain Williams began counting

the men. Each man had a sack containing extra clothing they had been issued at Camp Fisk. The former prisoners didn't need an invitation, so they immediately went on board the *Sultana*.

Shortly after the first group of men had boarded the *Sultana*, Dr. George S. Kemble, who was the chief medical director for Vicksburg, arrived with 23 patients who were confined to cots and had them placed at the forward end of the cabin deck. As the boilers were just below, Dr. Kemble realized that the heat radiating from below would help keep his patients warm. At the time, the *Sultana*, in Dr. Kemble's eyes, did not appear to be too crowded. Besides the 23 patients who were just placed aboard, an additional 277 ambulatory patients from the Vicksburg hospitals were on their way to the *Sultana*.

The first train departed and headed back to Camp Fisk.

April 24, 1865: Camp Fisk.

It had been only twenty minutes since the first train departed from Camp Fisk, when a second train, which had three passenger cars and a baggage car, arrived at the loading platform.

The Coldwater boys realized that their position in line meant that this train would be theirs.

"Here we go, boys! It's our turn," said Will.

"I sure wish we could have seen Charlie again before we leave," Eddie lamented.

"I know we all hoped to stay together until we get home," said Will. "but Charlie is doing the right thing. Hell, I envy him, because he already knows what he wants to do with his life. Anyhow, we will see him again, once the army doesn't need him anymore."

Discovering that there were regular passengers scattered throughout the three passenger cars, one of the officers boarded and asked them to move to the last car. Once they moved, the officer stepped back off the car.

"All right, gentlemen, prepare to board. Those of you boarding first, please enter the first car and move all the way to the front. Everyone

else, fill in the rest of the car. Do not board the second or third car until we direct you to do so.”

The men all stood up, making sure to grab their sacks of clothing and rations.

Just before the order was given to begin boarding, Will heard his name being called.

“Will! Over here, Will! It’s me, Charlie. Wait up a second.”

“Well, hello Charlie. What happened? Have you changed your mind and decided to go with us after all?”

“No, Will, I have not changed my mind. I am needed here. I just wanted to let you know that I did not write your name on the list of men the doctor wanted to stay behind. You are free to go.”

“Thanks, Charlie, but I already decided I was going, the doctor be damned,”

“I figured that would happen, knowing you as I do.” Charlie shook hands with his friends, and each hugged him.

“Well, I need to run, boys. Enjoy your cruise, and I will see you back in Coldwater whenever the army decides it doesn’t need me anymore. I love you guys.”

Each of the Coldwater boys responded in kind, then Charlie turned and walked away.

The order was given to start boarding. The Coldwater boys were among the first to board.

“Hot damn!” exclaimed Eddie. “Can you believe it? We’re getting to ride on an honest to God passenger car, instead of a stinking, filthy cattle car. Look at these seats. Really fancy. This is like first class. Things are beginning to look up.

“Hey, I wonder what that lever is for there on the wall?” asked Jason.

“Well, try it. See what it does,” Will suggested.

Jason cranked the handle to the left, which made the seat back flip over so that passengers could face the other direction, depending on what direction the train was moving.

Eddie had a surprised look on his face. “Would ya lookit that?

Now the four of us can face each other.”

One of the soldiers immediately behind them, still waiting to take a seat, demanded, “Will you four sit down already so the rest of us can?”

The Coldwater boys quickly sat down.

They were fortunate, as more and more men entered the car, they were packed like sardines in the aisle. Once the first car was tightly loaded, they began to load the second one, and eventually the third one. The remainder were allowed to board the baggage car. How the regular passengers felt about the soldiers was not immediately evident.

Once all were loaded, there were approximately 176 from Indiana and nearly 260 from Michigan.

As the train got underway and was traveling at a rapid rate, one passenger in the last passenger car, an old white-haired man, decided to voice his opinion.

“Gawd damned blue bellies. They should have killed them all in them prisons. I can hardly stand the stink of them.”

Several of the men heard him. Those nearest to him turned to look at who spoke those words. One rather large soldier responded to him.

“Well sir, if you can’t stand being near us, we can certainly help you off the train. If not, then keep your damned mouth shut. What will it be?”

The man only glared at the soldier but never spoke another word the rest of the trip to Vicksburg.

April 24, 1865: Vicksburg train depot.

2:15 P.M. The second train arrived. The 436 men from Indiana and Michigan disembarked the train, formed into column, and marched to the wharf boat. As they made ready to board the *Sultana*, 163 men from the 18th Michigan were assembled together. Each of these men was from the Athens detachment. Of the 637 men from Ohio, who arrived in the morning, 130 had been members of the Athens detachment.

Finally, they were allowed to board the *Sultana*. As they walked

up the gangplank, they were counted by orderlies and junior officers assigned to that task.

As the Coldwater boys threaded their way through the crowded boat, they overheard someone ask a crewman, "When will the boat be ready to leave?"

"As soon as the boilers are repaired," answered the crewman.

The Coldwater boys, upon hearing the crewman's answer, looked at each other.

"Did he say the boilers are being repaired?" asked Eddie with concern in his voice.

"That's what the man said," confirmed John.

"I sure don't know much about such things, but if the boilers ain't exactly right, that can't be a good thing. Since Athens, it felt like everythin' was against us," said Eddie, always the worrier.

"Come on, Eddie, relax!" ordered Will. "We're finally going home. Ain't nothing gonna stop us. Just relax and try to enjoy the cruise."

"I reckon you're right, Will."

A crewman yelled, "All right, all of you. Stay on the cabin deck."

However, the cabin deck was already becoming overcrowded, which included the 23 patients lying on cots just outside of the main passenger cabin.

As the Coldwater boys stood there, John pointed to where the patients were.

"Were they not there, it would have been the perfect place for us to spread our blankets. The boilers are just below, and the heat from them woulda kept us warm at night."

When Eddie heard that, he thought to himself, *Uh-uh. I sure don't want to be above them boilers.* Eddie kept his thoughts to himself.

The boys decided to go to the next level, the hurricane deck.

"Now, this is more like it," exclaimed Will. "Quick, let's see if we can grab a spot for us at the forward end."

The Coldwater boys laid claim to an area near the front, on the larboard side, along the railing.

Jason looked down at the railing.

“Are ya sure this is a good idea? This railing ain’t even a foot high. I’m afraid we might roll over during the night and end up in the river.”

“Well, you could use another bath, Jason,” Will said in fun.

“Don’t ya think it might get a bit cold at night, up front like this?” John asked.

“I doubt it will get near as cold up here as it did back in Castle Morgan during the winter,” responded Will. These are mighty fine blankets they gave us. Anyhow, after the foul stench of Castle Morgan, I just want to get all the fresh air I can get.”

3:00 P.M. Captain H.L. White of the *Pauline Carroll*, a non-contract boat of the Atlantic and Mississippi Line, maneuvered his boat alongside the *Sultana*. The *Pauline Carroll* was larger than the *Sultana*, in need of passengers, and hoped to receive a share of the former prisoners. Looking at the *Sultana* as the former prisoners were boarding, Captain White could clearly see that the *Sultana* had already surpassed her certified capacity of 376 passengers.

Captain Kerns reported the arrival of the *Pauline Carroll*, to Captain Hatch, and General Smith. Kerns asked them to detain the *Pauline Carroll*, as he believed there were far more men at Camp Fisk than the *Sultana* could handle. Hatch would not commit to any decision, but General Smith told Kerns that he would approve of whatever Kerns wished to do.

Kerns then met with Captain White.

“Captain look over there at the *Sultana*. She already appears grossly overloaded, and there are still more men at Camp Fisk. Sir, would you be willing to wait, even without a direct order, until the rest of the men arrive from Camp Fisk?”

“Only if I can be guaranteed a load of soldiers, Captain Kerns.”

“I can’t give you that guarantee, sir, but I feel certain your boat will get some of those men. Please understand, Captain, I don’t want to order the *Pauline Carroll* to remain here, but I will if you try to leave.”



“There will be no need for such an order, Captain Kerns. We will wait.”

“Thank you, Captain.”

April 24, 1865: Camp Fisk.

As Captain Speed was trying to get the third trainload of former prisoners ready for the train, he received a telegram from General Dana, informing Speed that the *Sultana* would be ready to get underway in two hours. The General inquired if the remainder of the men at Camp Fisk would arrive in Vicksburg in time. Speed wired back that they would not be ready.

A few minutes later, another telegram arrived, this one from Captain Williams, insisting that Captain Speed should “hurry up the men.” This only served to annoy Speed even more. His response? “Tell Captain Williams when Captain Speed gets ready.”

It was nearly 4:00 P.M. when the train arrived at Camp Fisk.

Boarding this train was 800 men from Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and the few remaining men from Michigan.

Captain James McGowan of the 6th Kentucky Cavalry was placed in command of the men aboard the train.

As the last men in Camp Fisk were boarding the train, Captain Speed received a telegram from Captain Hatch, inquiring if there were more men than the *Sultana* can handle. Hatch also made Captain Speed aware that the *Pauline Carroll* was available. Just before Captain Speed and the remaining officers and men from Camp Fisk boarded the train, he sent a response to Hatch’s inquiry. “No, the *Sultana* can take them all.”

April 24, 1865: Vicksburg, Mississippi.

The Coldwater boys stood looking at the *Pauline Carroll*, tied up next to the *Sultana*.

“That boat’s pert-near empty. I wonder if they’ll put the rest of the men on board it?” asked Jason.

“Lord knows this boat we are on is already overcrowded,” observed John.

“I sure hope so,” Eddie agreed. “I know they’re waiting for another trainload. I can’t imagine puttin’ all of ‘em on here.”

“You know, I think I’d like to wander around a bit before it gets a whole lot more crowded,” said Will. “Will you boys make sure I’ll still have my spot when I get back?”

“Sure, we’ll save it for you,” Jason assured Will. “Just get back before they decide to cram more men on here.”

“All right, I’ll make it quick.”

Will managed to weave his way through the mass of soldiers. Every now and then he encountered someone from the 18th Michigan and stopped to chat for a while. He decided to stay put on the hurricane deck, as he did not feel up to climbing stairs. He made his way to the stern and then headed back to the bow via the starboard side. As he neared the bow, he was able to see the wharf boat. The column of 277 ambulatory men had arrived and was waiting to board the *Sultana*. One of the hospital stewards escorting the patients was Charlie. Will spotted him instantly. Will cupped his mouth with his hands and yelled, “Hey Charlie! Up here, Charlie! It’s me, Will.”

“I hear you, but I can’t see which one is you.”

“Right up here on the hurricane deck. I’m waving both of my arms.”

“Oh, there you are.”

“What are you doing with those men, Charlie?”

“They are all patients from the hospitals. We’re all supposed to get on this boat. I can’t see how though. It already looks like this boat has about a thousand or more too many men on board.”

“Well, when you get aboard, come join us. We’ll save a spot for you,” said Will.

“Thanks, but I have to stay with these boys. It’s my job, you know?”

“Okay then. We’ll try to come to see you instead. It’ll be good to know that all of us will be on the same boat. I’m going to tell the boys. See you later, Charlie.”

“See ya.”

4:00 P.M. After receiving permission from General Dana to use his own discretion in regard to removing the 23 patients who had earlier been placed aboard the *Sultana*, Dr. Kemble immediately headed back to the *Sultana*.

Dr. Kemble met with Captain Williams.

“Captain, I’m here to remove my patients from the boat. It’s just far too crowded for the comfort and safety of those patients.”

“By whose authority, Doctor?” asked Williams.

“I spoke with General Dana, and he had no objection to their removal.”

“But if you remove them, it will cause a discrepancy in my rolls.”

“Captain, their names are not on your rolls.”

Dr. Kemble produced his own rolls, containing the names of his patients, and showed it to Captain Williams.

“All right then, Doctor. You may remove your men.”

As Dr. Kemble headed back to the hospital, he encountered 277 patients who were on their way to the *Sultana*. He convinced them to turn around and return to the hospital. Dr. Kemble unwittingly saved over 300 lives that day.

6:00 P.M. After meeting with General Smith and Captain Hatch, during which he expressed his concerns that the *Sultana* was already grossly overcrowded and another 800 were due to arrive soon. Having convinced General Smith to come to the wharf and see for himself, Captain Kerns returned to the wharf. He had hopes that when General Smith saw for himself the conditions aboard the *Sultana*, he would order men to be put aboard the *Pauline Carroll*, rather than the *Sultana*.

It was near sunset when the last trainload of men arrived at the depot. Waiting at the depot was Major Fidler. Once the men exited the train they were ordered into a column of fours. Fidler, along with the two men who had been responsible for the rolls, Sergeant Major Cole, and Private Wells, led the column to the wharf boat.

Sure, that his work at Camp Fisk was done, Captain Speed, along with Lieutenant Davenport, boarded the last train. Speed wanted to get off the train at Cherry Street and then walk back to headquarters, but as the grade was too steep, the conductor did not want to stop the train and did not do so until it arrived at the depot. Once the train arrived, Speed got off the train and intended to go to headquarters from there, but Lieutenant Davenport convinced Speed to go to the boat and see the men off.

As Cole and Wells began to go aboard the *Sultana*, Captain Speed called them back onto the wharf boat.

“Gentlemen, I need copies of your lists. I don’t wish to order you both to remain behind, but if you volunteer to remain until you are able to provide a copy of the lists, I will make sure you will be on the next boat. You can see for yourselves how crowded the men on the *Sultana* are, so you might be more comfortable on another boat.”

The two men looked at each other, and then Cole told Captain Speed, “We’ll be more than happy to stay behind to complete the list.”

“Very well then, gentlemen. I knew you would be agreeable to that.”

“Captain Speed, might I have a word with you?” Captain Kerns called out as Captain Speed headed toward the *Sultana*, hoping to see with his own eyes how crowded the *Sultana* was.

“Certainly, but let’s not stand here in the way of these men being counted and trying to get on board.

“Captain, would it not be best to put these men on the *Pauline Carroll*?”

“I don’t know,” answered Captain Speed. “The rolls have been made up to send these men on the *Sultana*. I think it’s too late to try to divide them.”

“Do I understand correctly that there are two majors with these men?”

“Yes, there are.”

“Well then, cannot these men be divided up into two sections, with

one major taking charge of each section?"

"As I said a few moments ago, the rolls have already been made out for the men to go on one boat, and they cannot be divided."

"Captain Williams, Captain Hatch, and General Smith want it done," Kerns lied.

Skeptical, Speed responded, "Let us see about this." Speed immediately approached Captain Williams.

"Please cease counting the men for a moment. Captain Kerns said that General Smith, Captain Hatch, and you, want the men divided with part to go on the *Pauline Carroll*. How about it?"

"No, I have been on board. There is plenty of room. They can all go comfortably."

"Thank you, Captain Williams. Continue with the count."

Once again, Captain Speed headed towards the *Sultana*, and once again he was stopped, but this time by Lieutenant Tillinghast, who also asked about putting some of the men on the *Pauline Carroll*.

"Captain Speed, there are more men here than should go on one boat. The *Pauline Carroll* is standing by to take the overflow."

Speed was becoming angry at this point, with the constant interruptions, and the suggestions of sending men to the *Pauline Carroll*. Speed just wanted to get the job he was assigned to do, done. Although Speed had yet to see the *Sultana*, he said to Tillinghast, "Lieutenant, there is sufficient room on the *Sultana*!" With that, Speed again proceeded towards the *Sultana*.

As Captain Kerns was counting the last trainload of men boarding the *Sultana*, Captain Williams confronted him.

"Can't some of these men be put on board the *Pauline Carroll*?" Kerns asked.

Williams was also becoming agitated.

"No! They can all go very well on the *Sultana*. The *Pauline Carroll* has offered twenty cents per man to get these men, and for that reason, she cannot have a man...and you will hear more about it by and by."

Realizing that there was little else he could do to convince anyone to give some of the men to the *Pauline Carroll*, Kerns went to the *Pauline Carroll* and spoke with its agent, William C. Jones.

"It's a shame for so many men to be crowded onto one boat," said Jones. "I would like to get some of them for the *Carroll*."

"I agree with you, but it is beyond my control, and I can do nothing about it."

There were three men who had the authority to divide the men. General Dana, General Smith, and Captain Hatch. Each said they would go to the wharf to look the situation over, but all three failed to do so.

As the final trainload of men was boarding the *Sultana*, Captain James M. McCown, Major Fidler's acting aide-de-camp, met with Captain Mason.

"Captain, you are going to have a pretty good load."

"Yes, responded Mason. "A pretty good load."

As the column of men was boarding the *Sultana*, it suddenly came to a halt. They could see how crowded the *Sultana* already was, and they could see the empty decks of the *Pauline Carroll*, tied up next to the *Sultana*.

One man yelled, "We ain't gonna be packed on the *Sultana* like damned hogs, with no room to lie down, no room to attend to the calls of nature."

An unknown officer responded, "The *Pauline Carroll* is infected with smallpox."

Discouraged, the column continued on until all were on board the *Sultana*.

Captain Kerns stepped on board the *Pauline Carroll* and met with Captain White. Kerns could see that the *Carroll* was beginning to get up steam in preparation for its departure.

"Can I not convince you to wait until all the prisoners are on board the *Sultana*? Perhaps once everybody sees how crowded she will be, there is an outside possibility that some of the men will be transferring to the *Carroll*."

Captain White agreed to wait, although he had little confidence that anything would change.

Looking down upon the *Sultana*, from the *Carroll*'s pilothouse, Captain Kerns had a perfect view of the *Sultana*, and could clearly see how crowded she was. Every deck, from the main deck to the texas deck was tightly packed with a mass of humanity, with the exception of behind the paddlewheel boxes, which space contained mules, horses, and hogs.

There were two passengers aboard the *Pauline Carroll*, William Butler, and Judge Burwell. As they looked upon the *Sultana*, one of the men remarked that it was "packed thick." Judge Burwell was heard to say, "It is a damned shame to crowd men on a boat in that way. I do not believe those men will have as much room to lie down as was allowed for slaves on slave ships."

Major Fidler came aboard the *Sultana* and approached Captain Mason.

"Captain Mason, your boat has become much too crowded."

"I cannot help it, Major. The loading is being done by the government. I can do little about it."

Shortly after, two men, Corporal George M. Clinger of Company E, 16th Kentucky Infantry, and Private Levi G. Morgan of Company B, 21st Ohio Infantry, overheard a conversation between Captain Mason and an unknown officer, whom they assumed was a quartermaster.

"I wish to make a formal protest about the overcrowding of my boat. We have a large enough load already."

The unknown officer responded, "I am loading this boat and will put as many on as I please."

"I'm getting' kind of hungry," said Eddie.

"Me too," Jason agreed. "I just don't see how we can possibly get to where the rations are on the main deck, what with so many men to get through to get there."

“How about we see what’s in the sacks the Sanitary Commission gave us?” suggested Will.

The Jonesville boys opened their sacks and searched through them.

The only rations they found were pickles and crackers.

“Well, this ain’t exactly a first-class meal,” observed Eddie.

“Better than nothing at all, and certainly better than most meals we had in Castle Morgan,” Will pointed out.

“True,” agreed John. “But I ain’t sayin’ grace over it.”

“Don’t forget, we have seven days rations in the other sack they gave us,” Will reminded them.

“I know,” said John. “How about we save all of that, and just finish off the pickles and crackers first? I know we are heading home, but I’m thinkin’ we ought to save our rations in case of emergency, and then try to get what we can from the rations they brought on board.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” agreed Eddie. “So, pickles and crackers it is.”

“John. You said you don’t want to say grace over the pickles and crackers?” asked Jason.

“That’s what I said.”

“Well, I’m gonna say it.”

“Whatever lights your candle, Jason.”

“Okay boys, put your heads down.”

They all complied, except John, who had an annoyed look on his face.

“Grace. Amen.”

“What the hell?” asked John.

“Just shut up and eat, John.”

As the boys ate their meals, they began to hear hammering down below them and could feel the deck vibrate with each hammer blow.

“Now, what the hell is that all about?” inquired Jason.

“I don’t know,” said Will.

Will stuck his over the railing and saw a man directly below him on the cabin deck, who happened to be looking out at the river.

“Hey! What’s going on down there? What’s all the hammering about?”



The man on the cabin deck looked up at Will and informed him, “They’re hammering in wood stanchions, tryin’ to buttress up the deck you are standin’ on. It’s saggin’ because there’s too many of you up there. They are worried the deck will collapse if they don’t shore it up.”

“Well, that’s not very encouraging,” said Will. “First, it’s the boilers, and now the deck is sagging. This damned boat seems to be falling apart.”

As more men came on board, many of which were Kentucky troops, Captain McCown directed them to the main deck, and then he went to the main cabin.

Chief Clerk William J. Gambrel, appearing rather apprehensive, confronted Captain McCown in the *Sultana*’s main saloon.

“Are you in command of these troops?”

“I am not, Major Fidler is.”

“If they place many more on top of the cabin roof, it will give way and fall through!” exclaimed Gambrel.

McCown then went up to the hurricane deck and repeated Gambrel’s fears to Major Fidler.

“All right then, Captain. Let’s try to redistribute the weight by moving many men from the center of the roof. We can place them around the gangway, running between the outside wall of the cabin and the paddlewheel boxes.”

Captain Williams boarded the *Sultana* after the last man boarded. He immediately began to add together his figures and came to a total of 1,300 men. He had believed that there had been only two trains and was unaware that the first train was also the third train, as it returned to Camp Fisk for another load after delivering the first load of former prisoners. Williams had only totaled the first and third trainloads. He sensed his total was too low, when in fact the first and third trains had a total of about 1,600 men. Someone suggested another 650 men had been put on the boat. He then came up with a figure of 1,966 men.

Note: Author Gene Salecker, after further extensive research, determined the actual total to be 1,960 men.

Williams completed his calculation and then went to see Captain Speed in the main saloon.

“Captain Speed, I have an apology to make to you. I have done you a great injury. I thought you were bribed, and I told General Dana, but he told me that you had reported someone in the Quartermaster’s Department. My authority was an officer that I did not know, but I will hunt him up.”

As Speed was concerned about his reputation, he told Williams, “That must be done. All I have gained for four years of service is my good name.”

In another part of the saloon, Captain Kerns spoke with Mason and Gambrel.

Kerns asked the two men, “Do you have a pretty good load?”

“Yes, we have taken on as many on previous trips.”

8:00 P.M. Kerns left the *Sultana* and headed for the *Pauline Carroll*.

Captain Speed asked Captain Mason, “Now, Captain, you will take care of the men because they are deserving of it, and you know the trouble we had to get them to you?”

“The *Sultana* is a good boat. I assure you the men are in capable hands.”

His job done Captain Speed departed the *Sultana*.

Captain Kerns boarded the *Pauline Carroll* and met with agent Jones. Looking very much exhausted and dejected, Kerns told Jones, “I’ve done all I could do. I’m afraid it is a no go. You will not be getting any of the prisoners from the *Sultana*. You may as well leave.”

Kerns departed from the *Pauline Carroll*, and as he headed uptown, he stopped, turned around, and watched the *Pauline Carroll*, with only 17 passengers, back away from the wharf, turn and begin its trip north.

For 1,960 soldiers, 22 guards, 70 civilians, and 85 crew, the fate of 2,138 souls, aboard the *Sultana*, was now sealed.

*I Fear  
We Shall Never  
See Home Again*



J. Michael Joslin, SUVCW

*Will Faurot, in the Union Army, survived a hard-fought battle, surrendered, imprisoned under the worst of conditions, yet survived. The war ended and Will, along with over 2000 others, joyous to be returning home, boarded the ill-fated Sultana.*

## **I Fear We Shall Never See Home Again**

By J. Michael Joslin

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