

*In 1856, five years before the Civil War, Richard Bryan freed his slaves, educated them, deeded land, and shared profits. At war's end, Yankees wanted to use his success to promote their own agenda. He refused, and they turned on him.*

## **The Invaders: Book One of Conveyance**

By Jeff Babb Willis with C.K. Gurin

**Order the book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com)**

**<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13220.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

# THE INVADERS

*Book 1 of*

## *Conveyance*



**JEFF BABB WILLIS**

with C.K. Gurin

*Jeff Babb Willis*

Copyright © 2024 Jeff Babb Willis

Print ISBN: 978-1-958891-41-4

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-624-8

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by  
BookLocker.com, Inc. - Trenton, Georgia.

NOTE: This novel is fact-based fiction, passed down through the years to the author by elderly members of the author's own family. Stories were painstakingly verified with multiple family members privy to the same information, and further verified by local area genealogists.

BookLocker.com, Inc.  
2024

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Willis, Jeff Babb with Gurin, C.K.

The Invaders: Book One of Conveyance by Jeff Babb Willis with  
C.K.Gurin

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024900944

## CONTENTS

Conveyance – Prelude The Reconstruction Years – 1865 - 1877.....	7
Chapter One.....	13
Chapter Two.....	41
Chapter Three.....	64
Chapter Four.....	97
Chapter Five.....	148
Chapter Six.....	170
Chapter Seven.....	192
Chapter Eight.....	224
Chapter Nine.....	251
Chapter Ten.....	271
Chapter Eleven.....	302
Chapter Twelve.....	325
Chapter Thirteen.....	351
Chapter Fourteen.....	378
Chapter Fifteen.....	399
The Conveyance Saga.....	421
About The Author: Jeff Willis.....	423

## **CONVEYANCE – PRELUDE**

### **The Reconstruction Years – 1865 - 1877**

On April 9, 1865 the South surrendered, and Northern forces occupied the southern states, which were then reorganized into a part of the Union. Kentucky, New Jersey, and Delaware were states in which slavery remained legal.

On April 15<sup>th</sup> less than a week after the Confederate surrender, Lincoln was assassinated. Vice President Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency, bringing some of his personally owned slaves to the White House with him.

President Johnson quickly reneged on Lincoln's approval of 40 acres and the loan of an army mule to heads of household among the newly freed slaves in South Carolina. Johnson returned ownership of land upon which forty thousand freedmen had already settled, to wealthy plantation owners, former slaveholders, from whom the land had been captured and confiscated during the war.

It took eight more months before the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was legally ratified on December 6, 1865, and with it, slavery was legally abolished across the entire United States of America.

Close on the heels of the newly occupying Northern forces came strangers, some genuinely interested in helping recently freed slaves. Most of the ex-slaves could neither read nor write, and they struggled, as they tried to acclimate themselves to their new reality.

Others came South as well. A wave of profiteers, who cloaked themselves under the guise of helping former slaves, instead held personal financial gain and obtaining control of state and local governments, as their ultimate goal.

The profiteers came to be known as “Carpetbaggers” a disparaging reference to their vulture-like arrival during times of extreme stress and deprivation. Carpetbaggers, viewed as lowlifes who thrived on people’s misfortune, were frequently identifiable by their one-handed luggage, a compact, soft-sided bag typically constructed of cheap flowered carpet material.

Resentment ran high in the South. Citizens were being threatened, taken advantage of, and bullied by members of the occupying army, many of whom had previously been recruited from Northern jails. And nobody was doing anything about it.

Peace was a thing of the past. In this new reality, it no longer mattered if you had argued against secession. You were branded a traitor, based simply upon where you happened to live when the war began.

## *The Invaders*

Richard Bryan of Mt. Lebanon, Louisiana, whose story follows, was an influential citizen. Upon the passing of his well-off parents in Georgia, he and his siblings had each inherited a share of their parents' property and their forty one servants. Opposed to selling the slaves and breaking up families to convert his share of the inheritance to cash, Bryan had traded his siblings for four thousand in gold plus the married couples and their children, who then packed up and moved with him to Louisiana. Bryan spoke of them respectfully as "the people."

Bryan, a consummate idealist, had a forward-looking outlook. Slavery had been an anachronism. Years before the war, he had offered emancipation to everyone on his plantation, hired a teacher, deeded land, shared profits, and encouraged entrepreneurs.

The Civil War devastated the South but the war never reached his home. When Union occupiers finally arrived in Mt. Lebanon, they were astounded to find Bryan's experiment fully implemented. Former slaves could not only "read, write, and cipher," they were landowners, homes had been built, they were engaged in a trade, some were even bilingual.

Pressure was being brought to bear on the South's most influential citizens by those seeking to advance a specific political agenda. If residents who had been identified as "influencers" agreed to join the political party which aggressively sought control of the newly

conquered South, they would be offered favored treatment. Failure to acquiesce would not be viewed favorably.

Those who made what was viewed as a bargain with the devil were roundly cursed as “Scalawags” by their neighbors. Across the entire South, it could be said that scalawags were despised even more vehemently than the opportunistic carpetbaggers.

Richard Bryan, although he had chosen to emancipate and educate the people on his own many years before, and had deliberately kept quiet about it, was exactly what politicians were looking for to further their agenda. But Bryan wasn't interested in being used for propaganda. Nor was he of a mind to allow the stunningly beautiful orphaned mixed race teenage daughter of his son's late governess and a wealthy New Orleans businessman, to be taken advantage of by one of the most famous Reconstruction era scalawags of all.

After the Confederate surrender, Richard Bryan, his extended family, their hired hands, the people, and a wounded Yankee deserter his young sons had stumbled upon in the woods and brought home with them, found themselves at the mercy of a corrupt Governor, political hacks, petty tyrants, and remorseless convicts in military uniform.

Not just rustlers but occupying troops would frequently raid farms. Often they'd steal entire harvests. If you



*The Invaders*

resisted the men in uniform, they might hang you and burn your place down out of spite. There was no legal recourse against the government.

Food became scarce, hard money even more so. “Injun Grass” as it was known to those who smoked it, grew wild on their land. It was good quality, so they’d periodically harvest it and offer little poke bags of marijuana for sale to visitors who were passing through on the stagecoach. Occasionally they’d even sell some to soldiers. Every penny counted.

They tightened their belts, quietly bartered for weapons, secretly manufactured ammunition, and killed in self-defense when they were faced with no other choice.

Their joint goal was survival.

Some of them would make it.

What transpired across the South might today be equated to legal, as well as militarized police brutality by occupying forces.

The experience of all, regardless of color, who lived through this traumatic and tumultuous time in history, burned itself deeply into America’s collective psyche.

# **Conveyance – Book One**

## **The Invaders**

### **Chapter One**

It was May 10, 1865 in Shreveport, a rapidly growing town of around 2000 people, not counting the Confederate soldiers who were garrisoned there. Shreveport was headquarters for the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederate Army. It was also the most recent Louisiana state capital; the third, to be exact. Baton Rouge had been overtaken by Union troops in '62, and then Opelousas fell to the Yankees a mere nine months later.

My brother Will and I, along with our childhood friend George, had ridden our horses through the longleaf pine forests of northwest Louisiana for the better part of a day and a half, traveling to Shreveport from our home in Mt. Lebanon, located some 50 miles to the east. We'd camped overnight along the way, roasting a rabbit and a squirrel for dinner. Our parents would soon be expecting our return from what we'd told them was just an overnight camping trip in our neighboring woods. Instead, our real plan had been to run away to join up.

Our secret decision to volunteer for the Confederate army had been the object of private discussion for

weeks. We knew that our parents would be fiercely opposed, had they known what we were up to. Our decision to enlist simply stemmed from a conclusion that pride and valor would ultimately outweigh any perceived danger.

While there had been vague rumors of General Robert E. Lee's surrender, we'd had no confirmation. Besides, distant rumbling from pockets of fierce fighting could still be heard in the Trans-Mississippi. News traveled slowly in this part of the country.

The three of us were young, but we were tall. We figured that we could lie about our ages and bluff our way through the enlistment process, but still, we found ourselves growing apprehensive as we approached the town.

At 17, our friend George stood a full six feet tall. Like his father Amos, who'd had a Cherokee father and an African mother, George's hair was straight and his features were more Cherokee than African. Our father and George's father had been boyhood pals.

I was twelve years old and already stood a respectable 5'8" which was an inch taller than my thirteen year old brother, Will. And, all three of us were still growing.

Massive live oaks shaded much of the bustling town, and a profusion of crepe myrtle and magnolia were in full bloom, their delicate scents perfuming the air as we

## *The Invaders*

rode into Shreveport. Nights were still comfortably cool in this part of the state, but increasing daytime humidity signaled that summer's debilitating heat lurked just around the corner.

Shreveport was bustling with activity, from the muddy streets to the crowded wharf. Men clad in Confederate gray uniforms were everywhere. But there seemed to be an underlying uneasiness, both in their gaits and their voices.

As we approached a uniformed soldier whose sleeve stripes identified him as a lieutenant, Will asked cheerfully, "Where might we go to enlist, sir?"

The lieutenant, who appeared to be in his mid-twenties, briefly reined in his horse and gave Will a strange look. Then, he pointed to a two-story building no more than 100 yards down the street. "There."

"Much obliged," Will's nodding gesture of appreciation was sincere.

"I guess you heard the news?" the lieutenant inquired before he rode past us.

We had experienced only limited access to information since Vicksburg had fallen back on July 4<sup>th</sup> of '63. Yet the news of Abe Lincoln's assassination had spread like wildfire in our hometown, and had been with us for the past three weeks. Our father had never been overly

critical of the President. And when the news of his death reached Mt. Lebanon, he was quick to say that, “As Christians, we should be sorrowful for his family.”

“Yessir, it’s too bad.” Will responded, assuming the lieutenant was referring to the assassination.

Shaking his head, the lieutenant moved past.

“Frank, you ask.” Will suggested, spying the building. “Your voice is deeper.”

He was right. Even though Will was ten months my senior, his voice had not yet begun to change. Mine had. I glanced at George who nodded his agreement with Will’s suggestion.

Dismounting in front of the structure we had been pointed to, each of us eased our Springfield rifles from the long gun scabbards on our saddles, secured the horses and entered the building. Probably ten uniformed soldiers were queued behind a single window. There were no chairs, and after waiting for some time, we dropped to the floor to sit and wait. An hour passed. Will finally asked the man at the end of the line, “Where do you go to sign up?”

The man, who looked to be about 35, showed some missing front teeth. “We’re tryin’ to collect back pay. You’re in the wrong part of the building.”

“Where’s the right part of the building?” I asked.

“These days, I dunno!” the man guffawed.

“Let’s walk.” Will suggested. We rose and sauntered though the room, taking a turn to the left, almost colliding with a uniformed man with a massive beard and a receding hairline. The man stood perfectly erect, projecting military authority. One eyebrow was raised slightly, as we all but ambushed him in our eagerness.

“Sir,” Will asked respectfully. “We want to enlist. Where might we be able to do such?”

With a somewhat weary smile, the man looked at us with stern, yet kindly eyes. Touching his gray-flecked brown beard, he nodded. “Y’all come into my office.” When he turned, I noticed the stripes on his gray sleeve. *General!*

Motioning us to sit in three separate wooden chairs, he took a seat behind a small desk. “Where’d you boys get those Springfields?”

“After the battle of Mansfield, our home was used as a hospital, sir.” I felt immediately comfortable with the man. His accent was decidedly Southern, but it sounded different from local voices. “We had several soldiers housed there and some of ‘em died. We figured it’d be right to use them in service of our country.” I finished my impromptu explanation.

“So, you boys decided to join the Army? Whereabouts y’all from?”

“Yessir! Mt. Lebanon, sir.” Will’s voice was filled with enthusiasm.

“How old are you, son?”

“Seventeen. Sir.” Will’s boyish voice betrayed him.

“I see.” The General’s voice was grave. “And, you must be his brother,” he guessed, eying me. “And how old are you, son?”

“Sixteen.”

“Well, I would have thought it might be the other way around. No offense,” the General apologized, nodding at Will. Looking at George, he continued. “Are you with them?”

“Yessuh.” George looked at the floor.

“And who might you be?”

“Jawge Bryan.”

“Are you also from Mt. Lebanon?”

“Yessuh.”

“And how old are you?”

“Seventeen.” George admitted truthfully.

The General smiled. “Well, George Bryan. I must say that I believe you when you say you’re seventeen.” Looking at me first, then Will, he asked softly. “Seventeen and Sixteen?”

“Well, maybe we’re a stretchin’ it a bit.” Will confessed. “But, we want to serve, sir.”

“What are your names?”

“I am William Bryan.”

“And, I am Franklin Bryan.” I echoed.

“And I am,” extending his hand to each of us in turn, “General Edmund Kirby-Smith, at your service.”

My eyes widened. Our father had continuously lauded General Kirby-Smith for his ingenious, patriotic management of the Trans Mississippi. Taking over the department, two years earlier, the General had reenergized the cotton planters with his consistent purchase of their yield. His guarantee of “four cents per pound in gold,” was minimal, But, it made possible the acquisition of valuable consumer goods at a time when most of the Confederacy was impoverished.



“Daddy says you’re a great man.” Will addressed the General with nothing short of reverence.

“Well son,” Kirby-Smith nodded, “In times of strife, we have to make do with what we have. When I can pay four cents a pound to patriots like your father and then sell the cotton to European buyers at Matamoras, who’ll pay fifty cents a pound for that same cotton, we’re able to buy medical supplies for our troops, beef to feed ‘em, and coffee to keep ‘em going. Not to mention buying things like ribbons and perfume and pretty dresses for our ladies here at home.”

I had heard our father talk about the “hole” in the Yankee blockade. Kirby-Smith had exploited it like no other. Compared to Richmond, Charlotte or Atlanta, Shreveport had been spared the shortages and the intense poverty that had become the norm in the Confederacy. Especially during the past two years!

“So, you came to fight, did you?” There was a slight twinkle in Kirby-Smith’s eyes. “And, you brought your Springfields with you? I assume you have your mounts tied up outside the building?”

“Yessir!” Will and I answered in unison.

“And you even brought your body servant?” Kirby-Smith added, nodding at George.

“No suh.” George corrected. “I’s free; have been since I’s seven.”

“And you’re wanting to fight for the Confederacy?”

“Yessuh.” George’s brown eyes met the Generals’. “I read dat de Confederacy passed a law dat all slaves would be given dey freedom if dey enlisted.”

“You read this?” Kirby-Smith’s eyebrows were arched in slight amazement. “That is true. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, a law was passed by the Confederate government giving any slave his freedom if he enlisted. And, his family would be likewise emancipated following his return. General Lee was one of the primary advocates of this act.”

“Yessuh.” George looked at the floor.

“But, you’ve already received your emancipation. Do you have contact with your parents?” Kirby-Smith’s penetrating questions seemed to be in search of understanding.

“Yessuh.” George’s deliberate answers were short and dignified. “My fathah is de overseer on de fahm. My mothah used to be de cook. Now, she hep de youngah girls leahn how to cook.”

“And, they’re free as well?” the general reached for his pipe and began to fill it with tobacco.

“Yessuh.”

“Any brothers or sisters?” Kirby-Smith reached for a kitchen match and proceeded to light his pipe.

“My baby sistah died of de cholerah three year-ago. Mama lost anothah baby when it wuz birthin’ ten year-ago. She cain’t have no moh chillun.” George sighed.

“I’m sorry to hear that, George? Is that what you said your name was?” Kirby-Smith exhaled a cloud of smoke. George nodded.

“Daddy never believed in slavery,” Will proffered. “He gave all of our people their choice.”

“Choice?” Kirby-Smith’s eyes widened. “What dya mean, choice?”

“Daddy gave the people their choice.” I jumped in. “Keep it as it was or...”

“Unconditional emancipation.” George completed my sentence.

“What?” Kirby-Smith shook his head with a grin. “You’re tellin me that your father gave his slaves a choice to be emancipated or continue as slaves?”

“Mistah Richard is a good man.” George sighed somberly.

“Wait a minute!” Kirby-Smith leaned forward. “You’re telling me that “Mister Richard” gave his slaves a choice of being free or remaining slaves? Don’t tell me that some chose to remain slaves?”

“Yessuh.” George admitted truthfully.

“Why?”

“Cause, dey ‘fraid dey’d be nobody to take keer ‘o dem when dey gets old.” George explained. “Dey asked Mistah Richard, ‘What is we gwyne do? Whehr is we gwyne go?’ I guess dey scahed.”

“And, what did “Mister Richard” tell them?” I could see that Kirby-Smith was finding the discussion a mild revelation.

“He say, “We hope y’all stay and work de crops as befoh.” George remembered. “De only difference is y’all gets a cut ‘o whatevah we gets when we sells it.”

“In other words, “Mister Richard” was making them into sharecroppers.” Kirby-Smith surmised.

“I spose so.”

“How many slaves took their emancipation?” Kirby-Smith continued to shake his head.

“Oh, ‘bout two-thirds.” George added.

“Daddy never used the word slave, General.” Will made it a point to emphasize the distinction. “They were ‘the people.’”

“Mistah Richard say if you stays three years, he give you twenty acahs ‘o land and build a cabin on it foh you.” George revealed.

“Interesting.” It was easy to see that Kirby-Smith was intrigued. “So, here’s your freedom but please stay and I will pay you a percentage of the crop yield. And, if you stay here three years, I will give you twenty acres of land and build you a cabin on the land?”

“You know, boys, General Longstreet had suggested that we first free the slaves, then secede. In retrospect, he proved correct. I’d wager that if the rest of the South had been as wise as the General, and ‘Mister Richard,’ the British and the French would have recognized the Confederacy in 1862 and ended the war right then and there!”

“Of course, if I had seen the same kind of spirit in Kentucky youth as I see in the three of you, we’d have ended the war favorably during our Kentucky campaign that same year!” Kirby-Smith grimaced.

“They said the Kentuckians didn’t support our troops.” Will had always enjoyed reading military lore. “How come?”

“Well, we didn’t help ourselves.” General Kirby-Smith recounted. “General Bragg was such a perfectionist. He always thought of the worst case. When we took Richmond, General Patrick Cleburne, a druggist from Arkansas and the best damned Division Commander in the entire Confederate Army, I might add, learned that there was a huge store of laudanum and chloroform in Louisville warehouses.”

“Pat took a minie-ball right through the mouth, I recall! I mean, it was vile! Took out two teeth! Went through one cheek and out the other! He was lucky that his mouth was open when he was shot!”

“The poor bastard couldn’t talk for a couple of days. And, he sure as hell couldn’t eat! But he could sure drink some whisky! And that’s what he did for three days! Just held it in his mouth and it was running out the holes in his cheeks and all over his blouse. And, he’d eaten some green corn a couple of days earlier and had the runnin’ shits! Man, he was a sight! Stank like nobody’s business!” the general laughed.

“There was laudanum and chloroform in Louisville warehouses?” I couldn’t help but wonder.

“We captured a Union Medical wagon in Richmond.” Kirby-Smith was warming up to the subject. “I mean, we kicked the Yankee’s asses that day! And when we captured the medical wagon, the doctor told Cleburne

about the supplies. He said there was a huge store of everything sitting in warehouses, virtually unguarded!”

“Wasn’t the army in bad need of supplies?” Will’s question was expected. “What all was there?”

“Why weren’t the Yankees guarding the warehouses?” I seconded.

“I never knew.” Kirby-Smith exhaled, the smell of the pipe tobacco filling the room. “In fall of sixty-two, they seem to have lost their way, momentarily. Lexington was ardently for secession. When we made our way into the city, the townspeople threw flowers on the ground ahead of our horses. We heard that in Louisville, the Yankees were preparing to evacuate.”

“We received a second report, from a captured Quartermaster, that those warehouses likewise held approximately ten-thousand tents, about thirty-thousand blankets, twenty thousand pair of shoes, along with socks and under-garments. He said that there were also boots in the lot, the ones normally issued to Artillery and Cavalry! As God is my witness, I didn’t believe this when I heard it!”

“I sent General Scott with five regiments of cavalry to confirm it. He did, additionally determining that food staples, namely salt pork, beans, hardtack, and coffee were present in abundance. It was all there for the taking!” Kirby-Smith paused, fingering his beard.

“We received this confirmation on the fourth day of September,” Kirby-Smith touched his forehead, suddenly lost in thought. “My first inclination was to send word to General Bragg, notifying him of the discovery. But, we didn’t know exactly where he was. I suspected somewhere between Glasgow and the Tennessee state line. It was, at best, a day’s hard ride from our position.”

“So, there it was: food, medical supplies, clothing essentials, and footwear! God in heaven, half of our men were barefoot! There was even rolling stock to transport it! General’s Scott, Cleburne and Marshall wanted to commence; initiate a raid.”

“Did you need General Bragg’s permission, sir?” Will asked politely.

“Very insightful question, son,” Kirby-Smith smiled. “Men three times your age have often rendered the same. Truthfully, no. Mine, and General Marshall’s armies answered directly to President Davis. General Bragg outranked us, and assumed command when the armies joined. But at that moment, I held rank.

“Why sir, did you not commence with the raid?” I asked hesitantly, knowing that Daddy would have asked the same question.

“General Scott, who had scouted the Yankee position, recommended that we approach Louisville from the



east with a full corps.” Kirby-Smith seemed to ramble as he explained. “The Yankees had erected breastworks on the south and the east sides of the city. Louisville has numerous ridges that are easily defensible, if you have men capable of manning the embankments.

“I had departed Knoxville with but 14,000 men. General Marshall brought 4100 veterans over from Virginia. We added close to a full brigade once we got to Kentucky. Our problem was that our men were spread out.” Kirby-Smith glanced at a large map behind his desk and placed his finger on Kentucky.

“We had two regiments in Mt. Sterling, three more in Cynthiana and two more approaching Fort Mitchell. We had a full division guarding our supply line at Cumberland Gap; had to because the Yankees still had two divisions or so there. We had another division in Frankfort. There were five regiments in Barbourville and at least that many in Madison County.”

“Why were y’all so spread out, General?” Will’s question was on the tip of my tongue.

“When we entered the state, we honestly didn’t know what we would find. We’d been told that Kentuckians would come out if we went to their locale and simply informed them that they had a choice. This we did, but with far less success than anticipated.” Kirby-Smith adjusted his chair slightly. “They were friendly, mind you! They were quick to offer food, water and forage

for our horses. But they were slow to accept our overture to join us in our fight to overthrow the despot.

“The morale of our troops was excellent. There was plenty of food. We figured the Kentuckians were with us, at least in spirit. I held to the belief that we should keep a supply line open through the Gap. This we did. We were sending livestock, most notably horses south, not to mention mail, which is always important for morale. But, it required men to maintain that supply line. We had the numbers. But it would have taken the better part of the week to bring them together.” Kirby-Smith’s lips were tight.

“Did you ever send word to General Bragg?” Will’s probing questions, based on his personal fascination, were prompting Kirby-Smith to relive the moment.

“I did. My riders found him at Horse Cave, in a rather foul mood.” General Kirby-Smith shook his head. “From what they told me, two-days later, General Bragg thought the whole affair was too dangerous.”

“If you licked ‘em, why’d you leave?” Will’s question had a tiny barb.

“Son, I ask myself that question with each passing day! Twas the end ‘o August, 1862 when we came up through the Gap, and accrost those accursed mountains. I remember coming to a place they called “Big Hill.” It was near that village with the little college.” Kirby-

Smith paused to relight his pipe. “Just south of the town of Richmond, the Yankees greeted us. I always figured they’d make their stand, north of the Kentucky River. But, they didn’t.

“It was beautiful rolling ground; excellent for laying low and staying out of sight. We took our position, slept on our guns and whipped their asses the next morning. By afternoon, we had two divisions behind them. They had close to nine-thousand men. We had about the same number. They incurred a thousand or so casualties. The rest surrendered.”

“You killed, wounded or captured their entire army, General?” I was speechless.

“God’s truth. Cleburne’s men were all veterans of Shiloh. They were tough as whitleather and they could shoot. The Yankee soldiers were mostly new recruits. About a thousand of them slipped away in the night. But, yes. Historians will say that the Battle of Richmond was the most decisive in the war.” Kirby-Smith frowned, apparently lost in thought. “To answer your question son, I didn’t want to leave. My men didn’t want to leave.

“We had that fight at Perryville and took out the best Yankee corps, Major General Alexander McCook’s. General Bragg admitted that McCook’s boys were too cut up for further engagement. We had numerical equality at that point. Maybe a light advantage,

considering my men and his men were finally within a couple of miles of each other!

“We had a three-to-one advantage in cavalry. Furthermore, we had veterans. Most all the Yankees available for action had never been in an engagement. Half of our men had seen action at Shiloh or in Virginia. We would have prevailed if we had tried. Believe me! I think about this every day!” Kirby-Smith’s brown eyes were sad and wistful.

“But, there’d been no Perryville if we’d moved on Louisville. I remember having dinner with General Humphrey Marshall, who was a lawyer from Frankfort. I’d say General Marshall liked to eat as much as General Bragg liked to worry!” he laughed. Kirby-Smith became slightly animated in using his outstretched arms to illustrate Marshall’s rotund physique.

“Couldn’t the army have taken Louisville; sein’ as how what was in those warehouses was so badly needed?” Will asked.

“I certainly thought so.” Kirby-Smith concurred. “Moreover, General Marshall said Kentuckians wouldn’t rally to our standard whilst Yankees occupied Louisville. When General Scott returned, he confirmed there to be only about 5,000 raw levies guarding the city.

“Yes boys, we could have taken it!” Kirby-Smith acknowledged ruefully. “But General Bragg had this idea that it was a ‘campaign about marching.’ I guess he suspected that when Kentuckians didn’t rush out to greet us, they were, in his words, ‘fearful of pecuniary loss.’

“That’s why he made such a fuss about setting up a secessionist government in Frankfort and formally taking the state out of the Union. Y’all know, General Bragg entered the state with wagons carrying 15,000 Springfield, just like the ones you have. But, there weren’t many who took ‘em. He concluded that we would need to instigate a draft; volunteers weren’t coming out in sufficient numbers. But by then, it was too late.”

“Why?” Will’s question was to the point. “Because nobody was volunteering to join the Confederate army?”

Kirby-Smith paused, staring sightlessly out the window. “No. Bragg had allowed Buell to slip by him and make his way into Louisville. The supplies in those warehouses were Buell’s; or they were meant for him! With them, he could refit his army. Why Bragg let him pass unmolested, will be asked for decades to come!

“General Bragg had taken that stronghold at Munfordville. He had effectively placed his army between General Buell and Louisville. General Simon

Boliver Buckner, who hails from Munfordville, told me that Bragg had his artillery perfectly situated. But rather than fight on excellent ground, he withdrew!”

“How many men did General Bragg have in his army?” Will’s keen interest in details was clearly impressing Kirby-Smith.

“He had transferred 3100 veteran infantry and officers to me when we met at Chattanooga earlier that summer.” Kirby-Smith’s eyes held a distant look, as if recounting an action that had taken place in a nearly forgotten time. “He was quick to remind me that it left him with but 28,000 men; and slightly more than 2000 cavalry.

“Yes boys, had we commandeered everything that was in those warehouses, our army could have held that position for months! General Bragg was an excellent strategist, mind you. Every military axiom dictated that we fight General Buell south of Green River. His men were at Bowling Green, twenty miles or so south.”

“Souns’ like yo General Bragg done did evahthing right; up ta den.” George, who had been listening intently, quietly interjected. “Den he somehow jes’ froze up!”

“Well put, George!” Kirby-Smith smiled ruefully. “Bragg had placed his army squarely on Buell’s supply line. Withdrawal was not an option for the Union.

Neither the Green nor the Cumberland Rivers were navigable to the Ohio, due to the drought that the countryside was experiencing. Therefore, no supplies could have come from that quarter. To have retreated to Nashville, would have been politically disastrous for the Union.

“Buell would have been forced to attack extremely well-fortified positions. It’d been like Marye’s Heights.” Kirby-Smith referenced the epic battle of Fredericksburg. “I later learned that Bragg’s men had only three or four days worth of cooked rations on hand. This made the Louisville procurement imperative! Honest to God, I still cannot believe that we were that close. But General Bragg saw things differently.”

“But why, General?” I was finding the descriptive analysis stimulating, not to mention intriguing.

“Some say that folks around Munfordville weren’t as welcoming as they were in Lexington, Glasgow or Richmond.” Kirby-Smith briefly glanced out the window. “Maybe that was true. I know those folks in the mountains didn’t take it kindly when we went through. But, Lexington people couldn’t do enough for us. Our men seemed to be always hungry and those folks showered us with all kinds of good food: beefsteaks, pork roast, fried chicken. And, of course, spirits! If anything, it was a mild distraction; we briefly lost track of our original objective!

“I met Sam Milford and Hiram Shaw, two prominent Lexingtonians. Shaw owned a hat factory. I might add that Mrs. Shaw was quite comely,” Kirby-Smith paused, his face reflected pain. “We dined at General John Hunt Morgan’s house the second night we were in the city. Now I’m telling you boys! That Morgan was one crazy son-of-a-bitch! Got kicked out of Transylvania University there in Lexington for dueling with a fraternity brother! That was in forty-four. Later, he got into the hemp business.”

“Two days after we arrived in Lexington, they held what amounted to a ball there, inviting all of the local dignitaries to Morgan’s house. In fact, every Congressman and Senator in Central Kentucky was there. Y’all know, I recall General Morgan coming to Knoxville and telling me that thirty-five thousand Kentuckians would join us if we made it to Lexington.” Kirby-Smith grinned ruefully.

“Thirty-five thousand!” Will’s eyes popped in amazement.

“During the ball, General Morgan, General Marshall and I slipped down to Henry Clay’s old law office; it wasn’t fifty yards from the house. There, I was introduced to Beriah Magoffin.” Kirby-Smith placed his right index finger across his lips.

“Who was he?” I asked.



“The Governor of Kentucky; or had been! He had resigned two weeks earlier.” Kirby-Smith explained. “You see, Kentucky just couldn’t seem to go whole hog into it! Magoffin’s heart was with the South. He believed in the rights of the individual state. But, he insisted that the state remain neutral. General Marshall told him in no uncertain terms, ‘With all due respect, Governor. You can’t be half pregnant!’”

“From a military perspective, for Kentucky to have stayed neutral was to our advantage, because it served as a cover for Tennessee. Where we erred was General Polk’s moving on Columbus in the west. Had he refrained from doing such, the Yankees would have not taken Paducah. Secretary of War, Leroy Walker of Alabama, had a conniption fit when he learned of Polk’s movement! He resigned shortly thereafter. General Albert Sidney Johnson, God rest his soul, was damned near as incensed.”

“Before the war, Daddy used to go to Kentucky every year to trade for horses.” I remembered. “He said there are a lot of people who live there.”

“There are, indeed!” Kirby-Smith extracted what looked like a tiny grain of tobacco from his yellow teeth, “Yet when we got to Lexington, we learned that Morgan’s alleged thirty-five thousand was actually more like thirty-five-hundred! I recall asking him, ‘Where are all the men, General?’ And I recall, Morgan told Governor Magoffin, ‘Had you gotten off your ass

and taken a stand, they'd be here!' It's fair to say that General Morgan didn't cotton to Governor Magoffin!"

"Daddy said he always wondered what happened in Kentucky." I quietly interjected.

"Most all of the Bluegrass region was with us." Kirby-Smith assured. "Or, at least they were with us when we were occupying. But you must understand! There are some well-to-do people there. They had heard about Virginia and how the Yankees were burning and looting farms there. When we evacuated, well...as General Marshall put it, 'The Kentuckians hearts are with us, but their blue grass and fat cattle are agin' us.' We shall never know."

"One thing I do know, boys." Kirby-Smith concluded. "If we had found the kind of spirit in the civilian population in Kentucky that I see in you here today, Kentucky would have rallied to our cause, whether we took Louisville or not! Now, William and Franklin! Tell me how old you really are!"

When I admitted that I was twelve and Will was thirteen, Kirby-Smith smiled. "I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that all three of you have youth, vigor and courage. Even more significantly, you have the belief in a cause and the commitment to carry it to fruition. These attributes will serve you well, taking you a long way in this life. Of this I am certain.

“The bad news is that General Lee formally surrendered the army of northern Virginia to General Grant a month ago, at the Appomattox Courthouse. General Johnson surrendered to General Sherman two weeks later. Richmond has fallen. At last word, President Davis was attempting to make it here, but we lost track of him. I would say the end is upon us.”

I thought for a moment. We had indeed heard vague rumors of Richmond’s fall and Lee’s surrender. But nothing had been definite. General Kirby-Smith was now confirming it. “Can we keep on from here, under your command, General?” Will pleaded, his voice shaking.

Kirby-Smith smiled knowingly. “Your faith is most gracious and heartfelt. I am asked that same question a score or more times a day. Some of those asking include Governor Allen. But here is reality. At best, I have thirty-six thousand men who could be available for one last engagement. That’s counting everyone. The Yankees could bring four times those numbers!

“We are losing men from our armies hourly. They’re tired, missing their families and quite truthfully, fearing for their loved ones. Yankee stragglers and deserters have decided that it is open season on our civilian population.” Kirby-Smith wiped his brow.

“At this very moment, the quartermaster is attempting to make good all of the unpaid back wages. You may

have noted the men waiting in line for their meager pay. It isn't much, but it is least enough to purchase a few days rations. God knows what these men will find when they make it to their homes and loved ones!"

"There is pillaging at every turn. In many cases, it is much worse than that. Sadly, the war's end has left in its wake anarchy not felt since the day the territory was settled. Even during the days when we were confronting hostile Indians, we had a government that was unified in our effort. Today, we are still divided as a people. Normalcy may be years away."

"There is a rage that was ignited some years ago that might have been gradually quelled had it not been for Mr. Lincoln's assassination. And, while I admittedly loathed the man at times, I can honestly say I regret his passing immensely. I think we will all come to regret it."

"But Shreveport can't fall," I countered. "When they tried to come up the Red River, we smashed 'em!"

"I am ashamed to say that we're now arresting looters who are trying to break into military warehouses. We even had to shoot one, last night." The general admitted. "I fear that Shreveport itself is on the brink of experiencing major riots, so I would suggest that the three of you not tarry here. The end is upon us."

“By the way, boys,” Kirby-Smith changed the subject abruptly. “I heard there are some Baptists from South Carolina, who started a little college over Mt. Lebanon way. That true?”

“Oh, yes sir.” Will brightened. “We’re all attending. Mama is real big on education. So is Daddy. In fact, Daddy told all the people who didn’t want emancipation that they would be required to learn how to read, write and cipher.”

“I guess, to hell with the law.” Kirby-Smith laughed. “Well, we’re moving into a different world, like it or not. It sounds like Mr. Richard Bryan is going to be ready for it, regrettably, a good bit more so than a lot of us will.”

Rising from his chair slowly, General Kirby-Smith ushered us to the door of his office.

“I would suggest you get home as quickly as you can. Talk to as few people as possible. Hope for the best and plan for the worst. God help us all. We’re in for some uncertain times in a mixed-up world,” the general warned, as we left his office.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:  
JEFF BABB WILLIS**



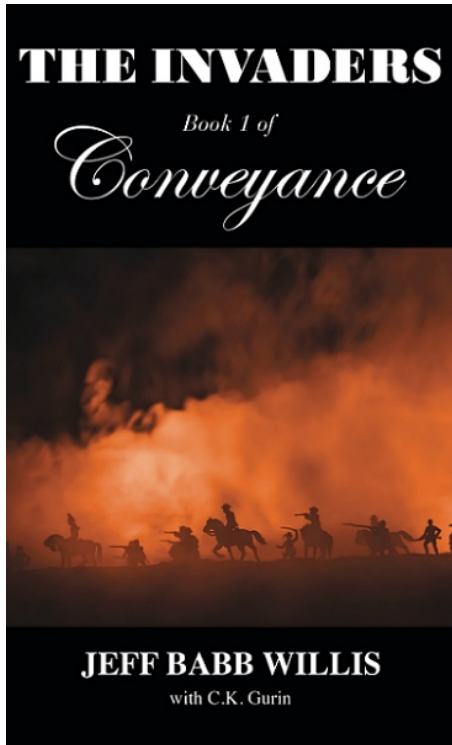
Jeff Willis was born in El Dorado, Arkansas and attended Louisiana State University. He graduated in 1979 with a double major in Journalism and History. He worked in Broadcast Television for 20 years before switching to Banking/Financial Services in 1999. Willis published topical, "E" is for English in 2010.

In 2022 he completed the multi-part, thousand-plus page historical novel "Conveyance", a riveting five book series following the true adventures of a

Louisiana family which emancipated, educated, and deeded land to their slaves, a full five years before the Civil War. The family interacted, and had personal dealings with a number of historically notable people. They also found themselves forced, for the sake of personal survival, to kill or be killed, and to keep secrets. The first four books transpire during the Reconstruction era while the fifth book, "Aftermath" provides the results, along with a truly stunning conclusion, some twenty years later.

Jeff Willis has lived in eight different southern states and enjoyed some of the south's finest cities, including, but not limited to, Asheville, North Carolina, Atlanta, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Lexington, Kentucky, Miami and Nashville. He has traveled extensively in Europe, Russia, including Siberia, and Alaska, and is conversant in Spanish and Russian.

JeffBabbWillis.com



*In 1856, five years before the Civil War, Richard Bryan freed his slaves, educated them, deeded land, and shared profits. At war's end, Yankees wanted to use his success to promote their own agenda. He refused, and they turned on him.*

## **The Invaders: Book One of Conveyance**

By Jeff Babb Willis with C.K. Gurin

**Order the book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com)**

**<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13220.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**