

# MAJOR WALKER TAYLOR, C.S.A.

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Years ago, reading about the history of Daviess County in Kentucky, I came across a few stories about a Confederate major from Louisville who was active in western Kentucky during the Civil War. I was intrigued, and resolved to learn more and write it down. It took a while, but here is his story.

## 1. FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Joseph Walker Taylor was born February 17, 1826 near Louisville. His father was Hancock Taylor, a veteran of the Indian Wars and brother of General (later President) Zachary Taylor. Their father, Richard Taylor, had a 400-acre farm “Springfields”, then six miles east of Louisville. When Richard Taylor died in 1829, Hancock Taylor bought out the other heirs’ interest in the family estate and moved there. The house still stands, now in the city [9, 15].

In 1846, Walker Taylor married Lucy Moore Throckmorton Bate. They had five children; two sons and a daughter survived infancy.

Walker Taylor served in the Mexican War under his uncle, Gen. Zachary Taylor. He volunteered in May 1846, most likely with the Louisville Legion, and fought in the battles of Monterey (September 1846) and Buena Vista (February 1847). In an interesting prelude to the Civil War, the Kentuckians were introduced to guerrilla warfare by the Mexicans in Monterey in late 1846, when small bands of Mexicans preyed on the American army, and the Americans tried to hunt them down [16].

In 1856, Lucy Taylor died, and the following year Walker married her sister, Ellen M. Bate. They had four daughters, none of whom married. Ellen Taylor died at the age of 90 in 1916.

A picture of Walker Taylor [8] shows a small man with dark hair and moustache, and a small chin beard. Your attention is drawn to his bushy eyes, which appear perceptive but impassive.

## 2. THE CIVIL WAR TO FORT DONELSON

In 1861, Walker Taylor joined the Confederate army, as did his brother Captain Samuel Burk Taylor. Two other brothers served in the Union army. Capt. Sam Taylor rode with Adam R. Johnson’s 10th Kentucky Partisan Rangers, and later with John Hunt Morgan. He was one of the Confederate

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leaders in the skirmishes at Owensboro and Panther Creek in September 1862 [10].

During the first year of the Civil War, Major Taylor was on the staff of Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, also of Kentucky. Buckner occupied Bowling Green in September of 1861, and operated between the Green River and Clarksville during that fall and winter. Already Major Taylor was involved in the secret service, which involved both intelligence gathering and carrying messages between scattered Confederate units.

In February, 1862 Buckner joined other Confederate forces at Fort Donelson, on the Cumberland River in Tennessee. There they were attacked by the Union army under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Major Taylor was severely wounded in the cheek and throat during the storming of Fort Donelson. He apparently eluded capture when Buckner surrendered the fort on February 16.

After becoming well enough to travel, he donned a civilian suit and boarded a train bound for Louisville. He sat by a Federal officer, with two others facing him, wearing a muffler around his neck and a plaster over the hole in his cheek. One of the officers asked, "Friend, is that a cancer on your face?" Taylor carelessly replied, "The doctors disagree about that," and nothing more was said about the wound. He reached Louisville successfully, and even though the city was occupied by Union troops, spent several days at home with his family.

### 3. SECRET SERVICE

While recuperating, Taylor conceived the plan of abducting President Lincoln. He travelled from Louisville to Washington, where he stayed with his uncle, Union Brigadier General Joseph Pannell Taylor. The old general was of course uneasy at his Confederate nephew's visit, but he allowed him to stay. Walker Taylor had an extended conversation with one of Lincoln's secretaries, and a few days later went to a public reception at the White House. There he was introduced to the President as "Mr. Taylor, of Kentucky." Lincoln noticed his wound, and asked in what battle it had occurred. Taylor replied, "At Fort Donelson," and Lincoln complimented the work of the Federals there. Taylor stayed a few more days in Washington, shadowing Lincoln's daily movements, and then slipped quietly down into Virginia and on to Richmond to hold a conference with Jefferson Davis.

Davis knew Walker Taylor, as his first wife was Sarah Knox Taylor, a daughter of Zachary Taylor. Unfortunately, she died of malaria just three months after their marriage in 1835.

Taylor's interview with Davis in the early summer of 1862 is reported by Col. William Preston Johnston, Davis's aid-de-camp.

"Well, Walker," said Mr. Davis affably, "what is it?"

"Mr. Davis, I want to bring Lincoln a prisoner to you in this city."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Davis, "how can such a thing as that be done?"

“Just as easily,” said Taylor, “as walking out of this town. I came across the Potomac at no great distance from Washington, and while I was there I watched Lincoln’s habits closely and know his outgoing and incoming. I tell you, sir, that I can bring him across that river just as easily as I can walk over your doorstep.”

“How could you do it?” said Mr. Davis.

“Lincoln,” replied Taylor, “does not leave the White House until evening, or near twilight, and then with only a driver, he takes a lonely ride two or three miles in the country to a place called the Soldiers’ Home, which is his summer residence. My point is to collect several of these Kentuckians whom I see about here doing nothing and who are brave enough for such a thing as that, and capture Lincoln, run him down across the Potomac, and cross him over just where I crossed, and the next day will have him here.”

Davis shook his head and said: “I cannot give my authority, Walker. In the first place, I suppose Lincoln is a man of courage. He has been in Indian wars, and is a Western man. He would undoubtedly resist being captured. In that case you would kill him. I could not stand the imputation of having consented to let Mr. Lincoln be assassinated. Our cause could not stand it. Besides, what value would he be to us as a prisoner? Lincoln is not the government of the Federal power. He is merely the political instrument there. If he were brought to Richmond, what could I do with him? He would have to be treated like the magistrate of the North, and we have neither the time nor the provision. No, sir, I will not give my authority to abduct Lincoln!” [13].

This story remained unknown except to the principals until around the turn of the century.

In the summer of 1862, Major Taylor returned to the staff of General Buckner, who had been exchanged after the fall of Fort Donelson. He was involved in the secret service, so little is known about his activities during this period, except for a couple of stories. General Adam R. Johnson said, “I ... considered him one of the best secret service men in the Confederacy.”

At one point, the Federal provost marshal at Louisville, Colonel Henry Dent, offered a large reward for Taylor. So the major dressed as a poor farmer and paid a visit to Dent. He introduced himself under a fictitious name, and talked a long time to the colonel, including a discussion of Walker Taylor himself. Had he been caught, the penalty would of course have been death by hanging, but Major Taylor pulled the ruse off [10].

Lottie Moon Clark and her husband, Judge Jim Clark, were a pro-Southern family in Oxford, Ohio, near Cincinnati. As a young woman she had been engaged to Union General Ambrose Burnside, but had deserted him at the altar. Jim Clark brought a pistol to their wedding so that the same thing didn’t happen to him. Both Lottie Clark and her sister Ginnie, in Memphis, had numerous adventures running messages for the Confederates.

One day in 1862 Walker Taylor showed up at their house. He was travelling under a false name, telling people he was in Ohio to “buy mules to

restock his farm.” He had a message from General Sterling Price for General Edmund Kirby Smith, then in Kentucky near Lexington. Taylor was too well-known to travel *incognito* in that part of the state. Lottie Clark disguised herself as an old Irish woman and crossed the Ohio River by ferry. There she found a transport boat bound for Lexington. She was refused permission, but the Irish crew smuggled her aboard. In Lexington, she delivered the message to a Confederate colonel. Clark was nearly caught on the return trip, but she conned Union General Leslie Coombs, a former Kentucky governor riding on the same train, into protecting her until she got to Covington [11].

#### 4. OPERATIONS IN WESTERN KENTUCKY

After Confederate losses at Mill Springs, Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, Shiloh and Island Number 10 in the spring of 1862, the Union army occupied most of western Kentucky and Tennessee. From that point on, with the exception of General Braxton Bragg’s invasion culminating in the battle of Perryville in October 1862, the war in western Kentucky and Tennessee took on the nature of partisan warfare. This period is detailed quite nicely in the books of Cooling [2] and Coulter [3], and the article of Martin [14]. Also good is Hodges’ book [8] on the Civil War in Hancock County, Kentucky.

There were many dozens of Confederate guerrilla outfits, and the nature of these units varied considerably. Some were small independent commands of regular Confederate soldiers. Others were irregular or partisan units, sanctioned by the Confederate government and led by officers, that would gather for specific operations and then melt back into the countryside. And a good many were just bands of outlaws, for whom it was convenient to claim to be Confederate soldiers. Nor were the distinctions between these types of groups always so clear, particularly to the Union army.

Opposed to these guerrillas were an array of Union cavalry regiments, guards for trains, transports and railway bridges, and citizen militia groups called Home Guards. Indeed, part of the plan was to require the Union to use lots of manpower and resources to protect its lines of supply and communication, and in this respect it was quite successful. There were also pro-Union bushwhackers, especially in eastern Kentucky and Tennessee.

As the war progressed, the smaller legitimate Confederate partisan units tended to be pressed into service as cavalry for the larger armies, or merged into the cavalry of Nathan Bedford Forrest or John Hunt Morgan. Later, when these troops were defeated, the remnants tended to revert to independent operation, with varying degrees of legitimacy. Meanwhile, deserters from both armies formed more and more outlaw gangs, which were a scourge to citizens regardless of their loyalties.

On February 5, 1864 General Stephen G. Burbridge became the federal commander of the military district of Kentucky. The Logan County man instituted iron-fisted policies to deal with the guerrilla problem. On July

16, he ordered that four guerrillas were to be executed for each Union man killed. Union authorities were none too careful in selecting the victims of this retaliation policy, with the result that a number of legitimate prisoners of war who had no connection with the guerrillas were shot or hanged. The July 16 order also stipulated that any Confederate sympathizer within five miles of a guerrilla raid was subject to arrest and banishment from the country. On October 26, 1864 Burbridge ordered that no more guerrilla prisoners were to be taken. Kentucky Governor Bramlette protested to Washington, and Burbridge was eventually replaced by General John Palmer in February 1865 [5].

Another factor that contributed to the hardening of the war in the spring of 1864 was the Union recruitment of Negro troops. Many of the veteran units that had occupied Kentucky and Tennessee were sent to the Atlanta campaign, and replaced by Negro units. This caused much resentment in Kentucky and Tennessee. (The Emancipation Proclamation applied only to Confederate states. Slavery was still legal in Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri and Maryland until the 13th Amendment passed after the war in 1865.)

Walker Taylor left the obscurity of the secret service to become a major Confederate character in Western Kentucky from the summer of 1864 to the end of the war. He first shows up in Stephensport and Cloverport on June 20, 1864 with Captain Joseph Jones and about 150 cavalymen from John Hunt Morgan's command. Morgan's raiders had been routed and scattered near Cynthia, Kentucky on the morning of June 12.

Indeed, Morgan's so-called Last Kentucky Raid was a bit of a debacle. He left western Virginia on May 31 with about 2700 men, against the wishes of his superiors, who suffered some bad defeats because of his absence. About a third of his men were dismounted, which greatly slowed the raid. Furthermore, most of the officers who had provided discipline and control for his men were by now dead or in Union prisons, and the raid was marked by unprecedented pillaging and looting. Banks were robbed in every town they visited except Georgetown, where Colonel D. Howard Smith posted a guard on his hometown bank.

On the positive side, some railroad was destroyed and horses were obtained in Lexington. Several small Federal detachments were defeated. But Morgan's dismounted brigade was defeated at Mount Sterling on June 9. On June 12, General Stephen Burbridge's cavalry caught up with Morgan's main force at Cynthia and routed them. Those who were not captured and could get across the Licking River regrouped at Sardis and limped back to Virginia. Other small groups, such as Taylor's, went to Western Kentucky to join the partisan rangers there. And a large number just formed into outlaw guerrilla bands, which seemed to be a profitable undertaking, adding greatly to the distress of Kentucky citizens [19].

Taylor and Jones' little band arrived in Hawesville on June 22, and proceeded to gather supplies by robbing both Union and Southern supporters. They took \$800 worth of goods from a German tailor, requisitioned a \$200

horse from a storekeeper (reportedly a strong States Rights man), took \$850 in gold and specie from a coal mine operator, got clothes, boots and shoes from several small establishments, and took all the firearms they could find. For good measure, they roped a Hawesville man accused of recruiting Negro troops for the Union army and dragged him through the streets behind a mule before releasing him. Taylor recruited nearly 60 men and boys in Hawesville, and then broke camp outside of town and headed for Owensboro [8].

Walker Taylor's sister Annah was the wife of Charles Hawes of Hawesville, and he would visit the town often in the coming months. He also had relatives at Yelvington in Daviess County.

On June 23, about forty of the Confederates under Captain Jones rode into Owensboro under a flag of truce and demanded the surrender of the State Guard troops there. Their commander, Colonel Woodward, declined. But nothing much happened: the rebels moved on to join Colonel Sybert near Morganfield in Union County, and after dinner Colonel Woodward disbanded his six-months troops, leaving Owensboro unoccupied by either side for the time being [7].

In the spring of 1864, Confederate Colonel Lee A. Sybert (from Hopkinsville) went to western Kentucky to raise a cavalry regiment. He recruited mainly in Union, Webster and Henderson counties, and was joined by Walker Taylor towards the end of June. Sybert's Cavalry was known as the 13th Kentucky Cavalry, though it was officially the 16th Kentucky Cavalry. They skirmished with Union troops at Bell's Mines in Crittenden County, taking a number of prisoners, and then lured them into a trap at Blue's Lake (or Blue's Pond) near Morganfield. Sybert then moved towards Henderson [17, 10].

Guerrillas had raided Henderson, generally plundering and mortally wounding one of its leading citizens. In retaliation, General Burbridge ordered that two Confederate prisoners, soldiers from Daviess County, be brought to Henderson and shot. Colonel Sybert rushed to Henderson ahead of the main body of the regiment, and tried to bluff the Union troops there into surrendering before the execution. The Federal officers stalled until Union gun-boats arrived, which made an attack impractical, and the Confederates withdrew. The next day, July 22, 1864 the two soldiers, Charles W. Thompson and Pierman Powell, were taken to the river bank and executed by firing squad. The entire Federal force then debarked on the gun-boats and left the city.

The Union citizens of Henderson, now fearing retaliation upon themselves, started to flee the city. Colonel Sybert's proclamation, even allowing for the flowery language of the times, gives an indication of the character of the men involved.

“To the Citizens of Henderson:

“On yesterday two Confederate soldiers were shot to death in the streets of your city. They condemned, their entire command condemned, as earnestly

as any citizen of Kentucky, the wounding of Mr. James E. Rankin and the plundering of your city. But they are gone, and their murder is another crime added to the damnable catalogue of the despotism that rules you. We are Confederate soldiers. We fight for the liberty our sires bequeathed us. We have not made, nor will we make war upon citizens and women. Let not your people be excited by any further apprehension that we will disturb the peace of your community by the arrest of Union men, or of any interference with them unless they place themselves in the attitude of combatants. Such conduct would be cowardly, and we scorn it. We are in arms to meet and battle with soldiers - not to tyrannize over citizens and frighten women and children. We move with our lives in our hands. We are fighting not for booty but for liberty; to disenthral our loved Southern land from the horrible despotism under which it has bled and suffered so much. We know our duty, and will do it as soldiers and men. Even if what are denominated as Southern sympathizers be arrested by the tyrants that lord it over you, we would scorn to retaliate by arresting Union men who had no complicity in the matter, but our retaliation will be upon soldiers. Let not the non-combatants of your community be further excited by any fear that we will disturb them; all Union men who may have left home on our account may safely return. In war soldiers should do the fighting.

L. A. Sypert, Colonel Commanding C.S.A.

R. B. L. Seery, Lieut.-Colonel C.S.A.

J. Walker Taylor, Major C.S.A.”

Shortly after this, Sypert's Cavalry and Chenoweth's Cavalry were attached to Colonel Adam Rankin Johnson's command. In 1862, Johnson had organized the 10th Kentucky Partisan Rangers. This unit had served with Nathan Bedford Forrest, and had taken part in John Hunt Morgan's first Kentucky raids. When Morgan was captured after his Great Indiana and Ohio Raid in June and July of 1863, Johnson escaped with about 300 men. He reorganized the remnants of Morgan's command in time for service when Morgan escaped from the Federal prison. In June of 1864, Johnson was sent from Virginia to Kentucky to take charge of the Confederate effort there. He was met by Major Taylor and two other men, who guided him to Sypert's camp at White Sulfur Springs in Union County. Johnson officially established the Department of Southern Kentucky on July 21. With the efforts of Colonel Sypert, Colonel James Q. Chenoweth and others, somewhere between 1,870 and 2,700 men were gathered for Johnson's brigade. (As with most Civil War figures, the numbers are variously reported.) This included both remnants of Morgan's command and new recruits, many of whom were not yet armed [10, 8, 17, 19].

On August 13, Colonel Johnson returned with his men to the outskirts of Henderson, having captured two of the guerrillas in the party that killed Rankin. Colonel Johnson turned the men over to the sheriff of Henderson county, who in turn surrendered them to soldiers from a Federal gunboat. The two guerrillas, who called themselves Captain R. Yates and Captain

Jones, were taken to Louisville and eventually executed [10]. (This was probably not Captain Joseph Jones. Apparently every guerrilla leader of any sort assigned himself the rank of captain.)

Johnson then sent Colonel S. P. Cunningham back to Richmond with a report and dispatches for General Nathan B. Forrest, that it was time for them to join forces as previously planned. Walker Taylor was sent to accompany Cunningham because of his knowledge of the country and the disposition of the Federals. Johnson's brigade then started South towards Confederate lines, pursued by Union General Edward H. Hobson. But on August 21, Johnson's brigade ran into serious trouble in predawn attack on a Union force at Grubb's Crossroads in Caldwell County. Johnson was accidentally shot by his own men, permanently blinded and captured. The rest of the Confederates scattered in disarray. Colonels Sypert and Chenoweth gathered enough remnants to form a cavalry regiment under Chenoweth. They retreated to Paris, Tennessee and reported to General Hylan B. Lyon, who was appointed to replace Johnson (now a brigadier general retroactive to June 1, but in a Union prison). There was time for the partisan rangers to make one last Kentucky cavalry raid with Lyon in November and December of 1864, in support of Hood's disastrous Nashville campaign [10, 8].

One small group of Rebels from Adam Johnson's scattered command, now operating independently, was led by Captain Jacob "Jake" Bennett, from Livermore. He had been with Johnson's Partisan Rangers since 1862, and now returned to the Ohio River region with his men. On Saturday afternoon, August 27, Bennett with about twenty men rode into Owensboro. When they got to the courthouse, they started firing their revolvers into the air. Pandemonium reigned as people ran in every direction, but the guerrillas succeeded in gathering two or three hundred citizens into the courthouse yard. The rebels demanded their valuables and threatened to burn the courthouse. They settled for three gold watches taken from a local jeweler and several horses. They then proceeded to the riverfront where they found a wharfboat loaded with Union supplies and commercial property, guarded by a squad of nine Negro soldiers. The gunboat that was supposed to protect the city was in Evansville for boiler repairs. The rebels killed three of the Negro soldiers and a white former Union cavalry officer, Lieutenant Walters, who was there, and burned the wharfboat. The guerrillas then left on the Litchfield Road, having been in town about an hour [4, 7, 8, 10, 18].

Near nightfall, Bennett's band rode through the streets of Lewisport, yelling and shooting at people. A man named Teasley was shot to death while trying to escape across the river. The Rebels then headed south to Hartford, where they robbed the bank of \$1,500 [8].

The situation in western Kentucky was exacerbated by the brutal and extremely corrupt tenure of General E. A. Paine as Union commandant in Paducah from July to September. Besides murdering prisoners and Southern sympathizers, Paine found ways to extort money from both business and

soldiers. He fled to Illinois when General Burbridge sent a commission to investigate [3, 10]

## 5. AUTUMN AND WINTER 1864–65

Major Taylor was then assigned with to command operations in the Ohio River district between Brandenburg and Henderson. By December he had about 900 Confederates stationed at various points along the river. The situation in western Kentucky might best be thought of as a simmering four-way war between Union troops, regular Confederate forces, Union Home Guards, and guerrillas. The Louisville Daily Journal estimated that there were nearly a thousand “desperadoes” between Louisville and Owensboro [8].

On October 10, the Union 118th Colored Infantry regiment left Owensboro, with Federal troops not returning until three companies of Negro troops arrived on November 1. In the interim, about 200 Confederate cavalry under a Major Anderson from Forrest’s command occupied the city for about two weeks. After some initial excitement when they tried unsuccessfully to lure a steamer with Federal troops on board into landing, not much happened. The Confederates were well-behaved, mail and passenger boats came and went without incident, civilian and government officials went about their daily business. The only injury was an 8-year-old boy who was struck by a shot fired randomly by Union soldiers on the island in the Ohio River across from the city.

Another group of 60 or 70 of Forrest’s men were in Lewisport. There were problems with drunkenness and frequent robberies by this group, but still nothing major compared to the undercurrent of violence committed by guerrillas [4, 7, 8, 18].

In early December Major Taylor established his headquarters in Meade County. Some of his men went into Brandenburg nearly every day, but they were well-behaved. Taylor immediately impressed the citizenry by dealing firmly with outlaws. He captured and swiftly executed a guerrilla named Smith who had broken into the home of Colonel Richardson in Brandenburg, terrorized Mrs. Richardson and raped a Negro woman servant. Another outlaw named Hedge and an accomplice were also captured and executed by Taylor’s men [8].

Taylor’s arch-nemesis amongst the guerrillas was Captain William H. (Bill) Davison, a former Federal soldier from Hawesville. In 1861 Davison enlisted in the 17th Kentucky Infantry, a Union regiment recruited in Ohio, Daviess, Hancock and McLean counties. He fought in the battles of Fort Donelson and Shiloh in 1862. But after the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted in January 1863, Davison resigned his officer’s commission in the Union Army, protesting that he had not been fighting for the freedom of slaves. For over a year he lived quietly in Hartford. Then in the summer

of 1864, he raised a company of rebels and joined Colonel Sypert's regiment. He was captured in August, but escaped from the Louisville prison on October 5. Back in Hancock and Daviess counties, he reassembled his band of guerrillas, known as "Davison's Hyenas," and waged a private war against the Union Home Guard and Negroes in general. The story of Davison and his Hyenas is chronicled in Glenn Hodges history of the Civil War in Hancock County [8].

Bill Davison was described as 5 feet, 8 inches tall and 135 pounds, with very dark skin. He had a mustache, dark brown eyes and black hair to his shoulders. This matches the faded picture of him in Hodges [8].

On December 22, Major Taylor with a large body of Confederates arrived at Owensboro. There was some firing southeast of the city, and about sunset Taylor sent a demand for surrender under a flag of truce. When the Union officers politely refused, the major rode into town and met them at the courthouse. The evening was spent sociably, drinking and playing cards. The next morning Taylor announced that he had no intention of injuring the town, and rode on with his men [4, 7, 18].

The next day, December 23, proved much more violent in Lewisport. With Taylor away, Bill Davison rode into Lewisport with about fifty men. With him was Captain Isaac Coulter, six feet six inches tall, handsome and graceful - and even more malicious than Davison. He was said to have "very keen eyes" and wore four revolvers [7]. Colter's father and brother had been killed by Union soldiers in Washington County, and he was out to take revenge.

The two guerrilla leaders rode up to a saloon in Lewisport, left their horses in the care of a Negro man in the street, and strolled inside. They downed several shots of Kentucky bourbon, and left as "payment" the ears Colter had cut off a black youth he had murdered a few weeks before. In the street, they shot and killed the man who had been holding their horses, and went with their band down to the river.

There they captured and boarded the Federal steamer *Morning Star* as it landed. The guerrillas drowned the boat's Negro chief steward, while the rest of the steamer's black servants fled to the shore. Then the gang set about robbing the ship's safe and the crew and passengers. The guerrillas found three Union soldiers on board, returning home after being discharged, and murdered them.

A fourth soldier, Lt. B. C. Woodburn, jumped into the freezing waters when the Union private sitting next to him was shot. He drifted several hundred yards downstream, then swam to shore, exhausted, only to find some of the guerrillas waiting for him on the bank. They were preparing to shoot him when two of Taylor's Confederate officers, Captains Bradley and Cox, rode up with several men. They threatened to kill the guerrillas unless they released their prisoner. The guerrillas went back to the boat, which headed upriver. Bradley and Cox took Woodburn to a Lewisport residence, replaced his soaked Union uniform with a Confederate one, and took him to

their camp outside of town. The next day they escorted him to Rockport, Indiana.

Davison and Colter, meanwhile, took the *Morning Star* up to Hawesville. They disembarked the next morning, December 24. The Union forces in Cannelton started shelling the town, and a Union gunboat added to the barrage. Hawesville was considered a rebel stronghold, and it had been shelled several times since July 25, whenever it was thought that rebels might be there. No one was seriously injured, as most of the townspeople hid in the coal mines during the shellings, and only a few buildings were damaged [8].

On December 28, about twenty guerrillas under Captains Basham and Carroll dashed into Hardinsburg in Breckenridge County. They set fire to the courthouse and robbed the safe that served as the town's bank - but not before the store owner managed to hide most of the money in an old Blue Back Spelling Book. Then the Home Guard rallied, killing Captain Carroll and another guerrilla, and wounding two more. The guerrillas fled, and the citizens managed to extinguish the court house flames before much damage was done.

In the afternoon, 80 regular Confederate cavalry under Captains Simeon Hanley, H. Clay Hodges and Moses Webster rode into Hardinsburg. They demanded the surrender of the town, saying they would respect private property. The Home Guard refused to surrender unless allowed to keep their arms for protection against guerrillas, which was promptly conceded by the Confederates, who repudiated all connection with the guerrillas. The Confederates were well-behaved, and left town the next day [1, 6].

In January, the Davison and Colter gang continued their activities in Daviess, Breckenridge and Meade counties. On January 4, they led a large body of men into Owensboro. The black Union soldiers who had been stationed in Owensboro fled across the river, and the guerrilla leaders told local authorities that they would have to burn the courthouse where they had been quartered. The circuit clerk, Joseph Thomas, was allowed to remove the county records before the building was fired. It was in fact Confederate policy to burn the courthouses where Union troops were quartered, and General Lyon burned twelve Kentucky courthouses on his raid in December, while various guerrilla groups burned eight more. Strangely out of character for him, Colter sent men to protect the Planter's Hotel, which had also been used as a barracks [4, 7, 8, 18].

On January 5, Walker Taylor moved his headquarters to Hawesville. One of his first actions was to arrange a meeting with Colonel Charles Fournier, who commanded the Indiana State Legion in Cannelton, on a ferryboat in midriver. Taylor agreed to make no moves against Cannelton as long as he was allowed to occupy Hawesville unmolested. In particular, Fournier agreed to stop shelling the town [8].

On January 7, Davison and Colter returned to Owensboro with about eighty men. They demanded a contribution of \$400, and when it was not

forthcoming, helped themselves to \$2,500 worth of goods from the local merchants. In the next two weeks they made similar visits to Cloverport, Hardinsburg and Brandenburg, with similar results [8].

On the morning of January 11, the steamer *Grey Eagle* arrived at Owensboro with a detachment of Federal troops from the 27th Kentucky Infantry, sent there for the purpose of driving out guerrillas. The troops were kept hidden in the engine room as the boat approached. As the *Grey Eagle* landed, a party of guerrillas stormed down the bank to capture it, only to be met by the emerging Union soldiers. The guerrillas immediately skedaddled in all directions, hotly pursued by the Federals. Four guerrillas were captured, and several wounded. The Federals claimed to have wounded a son of Walker Taylor. This is unlikely as his older son, James Bate Taylor, was only 13 at the time. It could well have been one of his many other relatives in the area. A few days later the rebels returned and drove in the Union pickets [7]. (In cases like this, it is not clear whether guerrillas or regular Confederate troops were involved, as the Union reports did not always make the distinction.)

On January 13, Major Taylor offered for his Confederate troops to cooperate with the Union Home Guard in protecting Hardinsburg from guerrillas. The offer was accepted, surely marking a unique arrangement in the Civil War [1].

But even as things started getting tough for the local bushwhackers, other guerrilla bands were passing through the area. William Quantrill and his gang had left Kansas, and passed through Tennessee into Kentucky. They were dressed in Union uniforms and posing as the 4th Missouri Cavalry. The guerrillas stopped at the Hartford campsite of the 17th Kentucky Infantry and asked for directions to Owensboro. They shot or hanged the three Union soldiers who were sent along to guide them, with the future outlaw Frank James killing one of them. They had killed a Union man earlier in Muhlenburg County. Quantrill was mortally wounded and his men scattered or captured in May near Taylorsville [8].

Davison and Colter were apparently involved in the massacre of 35 Negro Union soldiers at Simpsonville, east of Louisville, on January 25. (They also claimed to have killed 17 black soldiers in a skirmish at Yelvington earlier, but there is no extant Union report of this.) But then Isaac Colter was killed in a day-long gun battle on February 4 in Nelson County with Ed Terrell's independent scouts. Terrell's men were little more than pro-Union bandits themselves, but they were hired by General John Palmer to track down the guerrillas. This was the same unit that eventually got Quantrill.

Bill Davison then joined Jerome (*alias* Sue Mundy) Clarke, Henry (Billy) Magruder, and about a dozen other guerrillas. They hid out in Hancock County until February 24, when they got into a gun battle with Home Guardsman near Patesville. Davison and Magruder were seriously wounded, but the three leaders managed to escape. Davison died of his wounds on March 7, 1865. Clarke and Magruder were captured in Breckenridge County

on March 12, and eventually hung in Louisville. Again, the story is told in more detail by Hodges [8].

## 6. THE END OF THE WAR

The Confederate capitol of Richmond was evacuated on April 2, 1865, and Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomatox Court House on Palm Sunday, April 9. The end was generally welcomed in a Kentucky that had grown thoroughly tired of war. Then on Easter, April 16, a steamboat brought news to Hawesville of President Lincoln's assassination two days before. Three memorial services were held in Hawesville on Monday, strangely uniting those who had so recently been bitter enemies.

Major Taylor was in Hawesville at that time. He accepted defeat philosophically, and issued his final order: "I consider it the duty of everyone regardless of what may have happened in the last four years to do all that is possible to restore peace, quiet and confidence in the country."

Taylor and his detachment of Confederates surrendered in Louisville on May 5, 1865. They were released after taking the allegiance oath and posting a \$1,000 bond [8].

Colonel Lee Sybert fought the last significant skirmish of the Civil War east of the Mississippi River on April 29 near Eddyville. His 140 Confederates drove back an attack by Federal forces under Captain S. M. Overby, with casualties on both sides, but then surrendered on May 6 [12].

Captain Jacob Bennett avoided capture and repeatedly attacked western Kentucky towns until all other Confederate forces in the region had surrendered. He then surrendered and was paroled. He was wounded 26 times in the war. Afterward, Bennett married and was elected sheriff of Obion County, Tennessee. Later, he worked as a prison official in Nashville [8].

After the war, Walker Taylor led a quiet life farming the family estate on Brownsboro Road in Jefferson County. He always carried the musket ball that had wounded him at Fort Donelson. It would be interesting to know what went through his mind as he reflected on the war years. He was no doubt a product of his time and situation, but his actions during the war show a man of integrity, managing a hard and brutal situation with principle and dignity.

Walker Taylor died on October 14, 1889. He is buried in the Taylor family cemetery on the old estate, which is now a quiet corner in the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery. It is a fittingly peaceful setting for a soldier's rest.

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