

On February 18, 1865, after dark, Mother and seven of the children, standing on the long piazza of the Cunningham home at Liberty Hill, could see the reflection of red lights many miles away. Knowing that Sherman's Army had crossed the Savannah River, and was nearing Columbia, we realized what the red lights meant. The next night the reflection seemed nearer.

On February 23rd the army commenced crossing the river at Peay's Ferry and Rocky Mt. In the afternoon foragers and stragglers came to our home and soon after dark every space in our house was occupied by soldiers. Every bed in the house was occupied and many slept on the floors. Mother and the children spent a sleepless night in the reception room. A few blankets and quilts were given them if they cared to sleep on the floor. The night was cold and but for a large wood fire they would have suffered. None of them undressed for the night, and it was well as their clothes might have fared as did the rest of the household effects and disappeared. The next morning all were distressed at not having a change of clothes, especially were they all grieved as there was no clothing for the three months old baby, Jim.

Before the end of the 24th there was nothing to eat on the premises, not a living animal of any kind, nor a fowl. Some of the faithful servants provided as best they could to get us something to eat. Before the army disappeared it became necessary for us to eat parched corn left by the army's horses. The officers made no effort to prevent the foragers from destroying property and ravaging houses. A freshet in the river had much to do with their long stay at Liberty Hill.

Many of their horses and mules, somewhat hurt and disabled from bad treatment, were shot, rather than leave them to the people they had impoverished. The rest of the houses showed the same treatment the Cunninghams had had. The torch appealed to them and many homes and other buildings were burned.

General Sherman, after the war was over, was quoted as saying "War is Hell," and he demonstrated that fact when he marched through this section.

T.J.C.

Thomas J. Cunningham
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