

THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

APRIL 1975

VOLUME 76

NUMBER 2



COPYRIGHT © 1975 BY

THE SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CHARLESTON, S. C.

CONTENTS

Articles:	PAGE
Two Maps of Charleston in the Revolution, by George W. Williams	49
The Significance of Thomas Pinckney's Candidacy in the Election of 1796, by Arthur Scherr	51
The Charleston Fire of 1861 as Described in the Emma E. Holmes Diary, edited by John F. Marszalek, Jr.	60
The Republicanism of Henry Laurens, by Laura P. Frech	68
The Federal Pillage of Anderson, South Carolina: Brown's Raid, by Thomas Bland Keys	80
The Schirmer Diary	87
Review:	
Kousser, <i>The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910</i> , by Robert J. Moore	89
Book Notes	91
The Society	92
Annual Meeting	95
Archives News and Notes	97

THE FEDERAL PILLAGE OF ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA: BROWN'S RAID

THOMAS BLAND KEYS *

May Day 1865 in Anderson Court House, South Carolina, was balmy spring, and the Civil War, in the southeast, had terminated. Robert E. Lee had surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Grant on April 9, and Joseph E. Johnston had capitulated to Sherman April 26. Some of Anderson District's paroled veterans already had returned to their homes and taken up again their civil labors. It was a time of beginning anew. After the despair of the Confederacy's overthrow, affairs could not worsen. With peace there was hope, and all things seemed possible.

On this day Mr. LaFar chaperoned a picnic at Silver Brook for his students, accompanied by a large group of other juveniles of Anderson. There were festivities, and Lillie Hubbard was crowned queen. Miss Harbour's school also was having an outing near Bailey's Bridge on Rocky River, and Janie Pruitt was chosen queen during the revelry.¹ Citizens of the district felt thankful that combat had not reached their lands during the conflict, and the village of Anderson was intact, unlike cities and towns in Sherman's wake.

Unknown to Andersonians, baleful forces had been initiated four days earlier to converge on inoffensive Anderson. At conclusion of Union Major General George Stoneman's incursion from east Tennessee into southwest Virginia and western North Carolina in April 1865, he returned to Knoxville with artillery and prisoners, but left the cavalry division, commanded by Brevet Brigadier General William J. Palmer (colonel of the Fifteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry), in western North Carolina "to obtain forage and to intercept and disperse any bands going south, and to capture trains."²

Major General Henry W. Halleck, army chief of staff in Washington, on April 27 sent a telegram to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton stating,

* 1721 Flamingo Drive, Orlando, Fla. 32803.

¹ Louise Ayer Vandiver, *Traditions and History of Anderson County* (Atlanta: Ruralist Press, 1928), 114-115.

² *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 books and Atlas (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. I, XLIX, pt. II: 407 (hereafter cited as *OR*, with all references to ser. I); Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (1887-1888; reprint ed., New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), IV: 479, fn.

Although he was an Anglican, Laurens preferred the pietism of the German sects and the evangelism of the English preacher, George Whitefield, to the more rationalistic religion to be found among many Christians in the eighteenth century. He wrote to the Moravian Bishop John Ettwein:

I think that our religious sentiments are so little different and hope that our endeavours are so much the same that I am full of an humble confidence that after we have passed through this state of misery we shall attain to an everlasting communion in the presence of the one ever Blessed and adorable God, Father [,] Son and Spirit. Amen.³⁹

His own religious beliefs, Laurens summed up thus:

I am persuaded there is one omnipotent God, in whose hands the nations are as Dust—who holdeth the reigns [sic] of Government and ordereth the ways of Men. Therefore I shall not anticipate events but in the regular course of my Life sing the song of the Fervirous [sic] Habbakuk—Altho' the Fig Tree shall not blossom etc. yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.⁴⁰

The close relationship between Protestant Christianity and republicanism in America is well documented, but such religious enthusiasm as Henry Laurens expressed would have been considered extreme even by those latter-day Puritans, James Lovell, Roger Sherman, and John Adams, to say nothing of those revolutionary leaders who tended towards Unitarianism and Deism.

³⁹ Henry Laurens to John Edwin [Ettwein], Mar. 19, 1763, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Henry Laurens Letter Book, 1762-1766.

⁴⁰ Henry Laurens to James Habersham, May 24, 1769, SCHS, Laurens Papers, No. 4. Laurens referred often to Hab. 3: 17-18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will join in the God of my salvation."

"have information . . . that Jeff. Davis' specie is moving south from Goldsborough in wagons. . . . I suggest that commanders be telegraphed through General Thomas . . . to take measures to intercept the rebel chiefs and their plunder."³

Stanton at once relayed Halleck's counsel to Major General George H. Thomas in Nashville, commanding Department of the Cumberland, and Stanton ordered Thomas to "spare no exertion to stop Davis."⁴ Thomas thereupon advised Stoneman, in command of the District of East Tennessee, of the messages, and he directed Stoneman, "If you can . . . get three brigades of cavalry, . . . send them . . . into South Carolina . . . toward Anderson. They may . . . catch Jeff. Davis, or . . . his treasure."⁵

In turn Stoneman sent dispatches to General Palmer and his senior brigade commander, Brevet Brigadier General Simeon B. Brown (colonel of the Eleventh Michigan Cavalry), and ordered Brown to assume command of Colonel John K. Miller's Third Brigade as well as Brown's own Second Brigade, and to move "to Belton or Anderson. From that point scout in the direction of Augusta. . . . The object . . . is to intercept Jeff. Davis. . . . If you can hear of Davis, follow him to the ends of the earth . . . and never give him up."⁶ Palmer with the First Brigade was to endeavor to overtake the other two brigades, at which time he would resume command of the division.⁷

Stoneman's orders were received April 29 by Palmer in vicinity of Cowpens Battleground, South Carolina,⁸ and by Brown four miles east of Hendersonville, North Carolina, whereupon Brown replied, "the Second and Third Brigades . . . will march this morning for Anderson . . . via Jones' Gap and Pickensville."⁹

Brown's Second Brigade was comprised of three cavalry regiments, Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Smith's Eleventh Michigan, Major Frederick Slater's Eleventh Kentucky, and Major James B. Harrison's Twelfth Kentucky. Miller's Third Brigade also included three cavalry regiments, Colonel Samuel K. N. Patton's Eighth Tennessee, Colonel Joseph H. Parsons' Ninth Tennessee, and Lieutenant Colonel Brazilliah P. Stacy's Thirteenth Tennessee.¹⁰ Brown's two brigades numbered about 3,600 troopers.

³ OR, XLIX, pt. I: 546.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 547.

⁹ Ibid., pt. II: 555. Pickensville was near the site of the present city of Easley.

¹⁰ OR, XLIX, pt. II: 539.

As Brown's flank guards crossed into Anderson District on Monday, May 1, two skirmishes were fought by South Carolina home guards. Near the Thomas Moore home northwest of Piedmont, seventeen miles northeast of Anderson, Colonel Thomas' Greenville Arsenal Cadet Company, joined by Lieutenant W. P. Price and a small band of militia, engaged in a brief fight when attacked by a platoon of blue cavalry, which quickly withdrew, leaving behind one wounded man. Also Captain Jones' Pendleton Home Guard Company of young boys had a brush with the enemy near Pendleton Factory (now La France), ten miles northwest of Anderson.¹¹

In late afternoon news reached Anderson that Federals were close by, and parents rushed to the picnic sites and called out that Yankees were nearby and everyone must rush home. Refreshments were abandoned as Miss Harbour and Mr. LaFar hastened their charges homeward.¹²

Historians of the Thirteenth Tennessee Cavalry, a regiment in the Third Brigade, later wrote, "We were now in the Palmetto State, . . . and we did not at that time have many scruples about despoiling the country. We reached Anderson . . . May 1st."¹³

As Brown's vanguard struck the northern limits of the village, "the wild yell of infuriated men, maddened by liquor and ravenous for plunder, was heard."¹⁴ A rising cloud of dust portended their swift approach on Main Street toward the public square. The reckless soldiers fired repeating rifles in all directions. Within five minutes the whirlwind had swept every quarter of Anderson. Screams of women and children added to the din of the storm.¹⁵

When a squad of Union vedettes arrived, they were encountered by a patrol of Anderson's young men who audaciously attempted to resist the raiders. McKenzie Parker, who had served in the Marion Artillery, aimed his gun at one of the scouts and ordered him to surrender. The Yank told him to put down his weapon, but Parker attempted to fire twice, the gun misfiring each time. The cavalryman at once shot Parker

¹¹ Vandiver, *History of Anderson County*, 244-245.

¹² *Ibid.*, 115.

¹³ Samuel W. Scott and Samuel P. Angel, *History of the Thirteenth Regiment, Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry, U. S. A., Including a Narrative of the Bridge Burning* . . . (Knoxville: P. W. Ziegler, 1903), 241.

¹⁴ James A. Hoyt, ed., "The First Day of May, 1865," *Anderson, South Carolina, Intelligencer*, May 3, 1866, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

in the chest, felling him. He was borne inside the hotel where he quickly died.¹⁶

In her home while instructing a pupil in music Caroline R. Ravenel heard shots, and then two children ran in and told her that they had been fired upon. Caroline, looking out a window, saw a bluecoat smite a Negro delivery man with a saber, and then discharge a pistol in a neighbor's yard. The rear of Brown's column closed into Anderson in an hour, and bivouac was made in the square and surrounding streets. The citizenry stayed in their homes, with doors locked and bolted, and blinds drawn.¹⁷

There was little rest and no security that night. The warriors soon unearthed in a room on the corner of the square a large supply of brandy and wine, which had been stored there by a Charlestonian.¹⁸ Doors were smashed, iron safes were forced open, and contents of houses and storerooms were stolen or destroyed. The night saw "hideous orgies and rapacious plunderings."¹⁹

Tuesday at dawn inebriated cavalymen were sleeping off hangovers, but not for long, as the exhilarating prospect of more loot alerted them to get along with their enterprise. Citizens remained indoors, hoping to protect the residue of their property, but to no avail.²⁰ At Miss Ravenel's house her uncle, Dr. Henry Winthrop, sixty-two years old, was hanged from the bedstead, with toes just touching floor, beaten on the face with fists and shovel, and his head was rammed against a wall, until, when he believed he was about to be killed, he told his tormentors where he had hidden some gold.²¹

Caroline Ravenel's grandmother and aunt also were menaced with hanging. Day and night successive parties entered and searched all rooms, and rifled trunks, drawers, and wardrobe, and stole money, firearms, corn, watches, jewelry, silver, wine, and a guitar. All in the household were abused by the brutal soldiers, who threatened to kill two or three of them. Even so, the members of this family fared better than some others, and after the nightmare ended, they considered themselves very fortunate.²²

¹⁶ Caroline R. Ravenel to Isabella Middleton Smith, May 18, 1865, Daniel E. Huger Smith, Alice R. Huger Smith, and Arney R. Childs, eds., *Mason Smith Family Letters, 1860-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950), 213.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 209; *Anderson Intelligencer*, May 3, 1866.

¹⁸ Mrs. James W. Wilkinson to Mrs. Daniel Elliott Huger, May 11, 1865, *Mason Smith Family Letters*, 208.

¹⁹ *Anderson Intelligencer*, May 3, 1866.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Ravenel to Smith, May 18, 1865, *Mason Smith Family Letters*, 210-212.

²² *Ibid.*, 209-213.

Blacks, as well as whites, were threatened and harassed, and most of them conducted themselves nobly.²³ Despoiled as Anderson was, the suffering and destruction caused by the Federals were even greater in the surrounding areas.²⁴

In February when Sherman had menaced Columbia, part of the Confederate States Treasury Note Bureau there was removed to Anderson and located in the university buildings, and Brown's command thoroughly looted those structures, scattering all the bills they did not keep. After departure of the horse soldiers, scarce sheets of paper, that were intended to have become Confederate currency, blowing along the streets, were salvaged by young ladies for letter writing.²⁵ Type was strewn upon the floor in the office of the *Intelligencer*, thus preventing publication of accounts of the atrocities at that time.²⁶

General Simeon B. Brown, who presided over the sack of Anderson, was 53 years old, a tall and picturesque personage with military manner and a chin beard. In the field he wore a brown hat with brim pinned up. Late in 1862 he had joined the army when the governor of Michigan appointed him major of the Sixth Michigan Cavalry, at which time he was proprietor of City Hotel in St. Clair, Michigan, and was serving as a St. Clair alderman. He was promoted colonel of the Eleventh Michigan Cavalry in December 1863.²⁷

On one of Stoneman's earlier forays into Virginia, Brown, commanding a brigade, when surrounded was ordered to cut his way out with two regiments, sacrificing his third regiment. Brown refused to obey, retorting, "Where the Eleventh Michigan and Twelfth Ohio and General Brown go, the rest of the Second Brigade will go; if it be to Kentucky, all right; if it be to Richmond, all right; or to hell, all right."²⁸ As we have seen, General Brown later kept his word when he visited torment upon the people of Anderson.

²³ Ibid., 209, 213.

²⁴ Wilkinson to Huger, May 11, 1865, *Mason Smith Family Letters*, 208.

²⁵ Vandiver, *History of Anderson County*, 235-236.

²⁶ *Anderson Intelligencer*, May 3, 1866.

²⁷ *History of St. Clair County, Michigan* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas & Co., 1883), 670 (photocopy provided by Michigan State Library, Lansing); "A Brave Man—Some Anecdotes of the Late Gen. S. B. Brown," *Detroit Evening News*, March 18, 1893, p. 3, col. 4 (photocopy provided by Michigan State Library, Lansing); "Inns and Inn-Keepers," and "List of Old Time Officials," *St. Clair County, Michigan, Press*, c. 1901-1903 (photocopies of clippings from scrapbook provided by St. Clair, Michigan, Public Library); Simeon B. Brown's military service record (Washington: National Archives and Records Service).

²⁸ *Detroit Evening News*, March 18, 1893.

Late Tuesday afternoon, May 2, 1865, Brown ordered the march to recommence southwestward from Anderson, leaving behind his rear guard, "and shortly after dusk the troopers, loaded with ill-gotten gain and stupefied with wine, mounted their fresh steeds obtained in the neighborhood, and followed their doughty leader to other fields of plunder and rapine."²⁹ By breakfast time on Wednesday, May 3, Brown's rear had departed.³⁰

The inhabitants surveyed their community as soon as the foe was out of sight. A year later the editor of the *Intelligencer* wrote, "desolated, . . . Anderson wore a sombre, sad appearance. . . . Her people gathered in knots over the ruins and wreck, and each . . . in saddened tones related an experience of the dread occasion, . . . which will always be denominated 'Brown's Raid.' . . . In the simple annals of our village life . . . [May 1, 1865,] will occupy the most prominent niche of all other days. . . . Its anniversary will ever be recognized."³¹

In Georgia Generals Palmer and Brown rendezvoused and extended the dragnet for Jefferson Davis. On May 6 in Athens, Palmer informed Stoneman,

I shall send General Bown's and Colonel Miller's Brigades after this duty is over to Greenville, South Carolina, from which place I recommend that they be recalled to Knoxville. . . . The reason that I recommend that [they] . . . be immediately recalled . . . is because their officers for the most part have lost all control over their men. A large number of the men and some of the officers devote themselves exclusively to pillaging and destroying property. General Brown appears to have given them carte blanche in South Carolina, and they are now so entirely destitute of discipline that it cannot be restored in the field and while the command is living on the country.³²

Near Irwinville, Georgia, Jefferson Davis and party were captured May 10 by Brevet Major General James H. Wilson's cavalry. On May 20 Wilson, in Macon, notified General Thomas that "There is some complaint of Palmer's command by the people, and . . . I would suggest that they be ordered back to East Tennessee, or at least out of the State."³³ The history of the Thirteenth Tennessee Cavalry later divulged, "Some of our men had done some looting at Athens."³⁴

²⁹ Anderson *Intelligencer*, May 3, 1866.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² OR, XLIX, pt. I: 549-550.

³³ Ibid., pt. II: 850.

³⁴ Scott and Angel, *History of the Thirteenth Tennessee Cavalry*, 242.

Back in camp near Lenoir, Tennessee, Brown was allowed to resign from the army on June 11, and he went back to his hotel business in St. Clair, and was re-elected alderman.⁸⁵

Later South Carolina Governor James L. Orr, a resident of Anderson District, strove to identify Brown and his command through the War Department, but was apprized that the army register listed no such command.⁸⁶

Brown's City Hotel was destroyed by fire in January 1873; it was valued at \$15,000, but was insured for only \$10,000. On March 16, 1893, in St. Clair, at the age of 81 years, General Brown "died at home of exhaustion consequent on bleeding piles, obstinate constipation, weak back, and chronic bronchitis."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Brown's military service record; "List of Old Time Officials."

⁸⁶ Vandiver, *History of Anderson County*, 241.

⁸⁷ Brown's pension application file (Washington: National Archives and Records Service); "This Week Thirty Years Ago," *St. Clair County, Michigan, Press*, January 8, 1903 (photocopy of clipping from scrapbook provided by St. Clair, Michigan, Public Library).