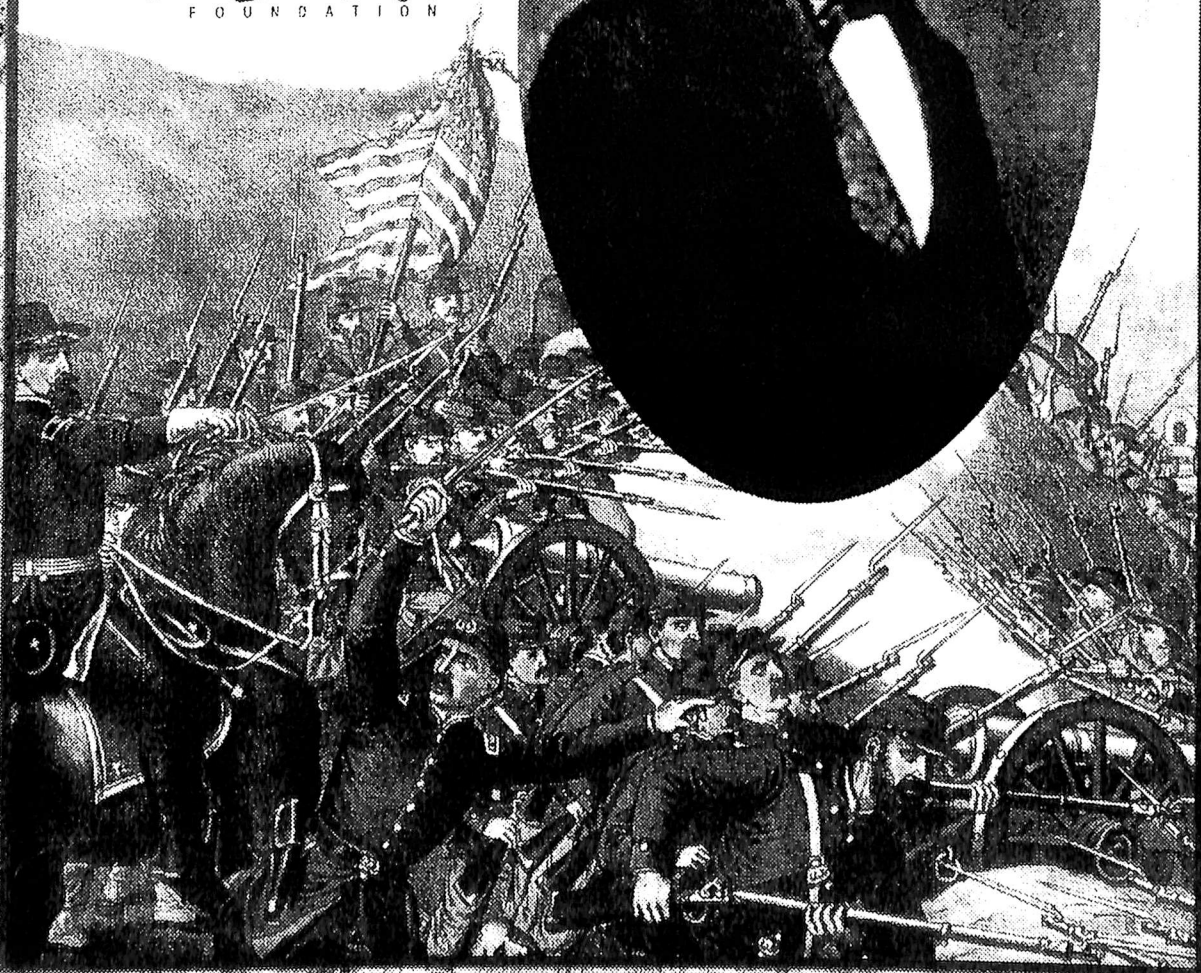
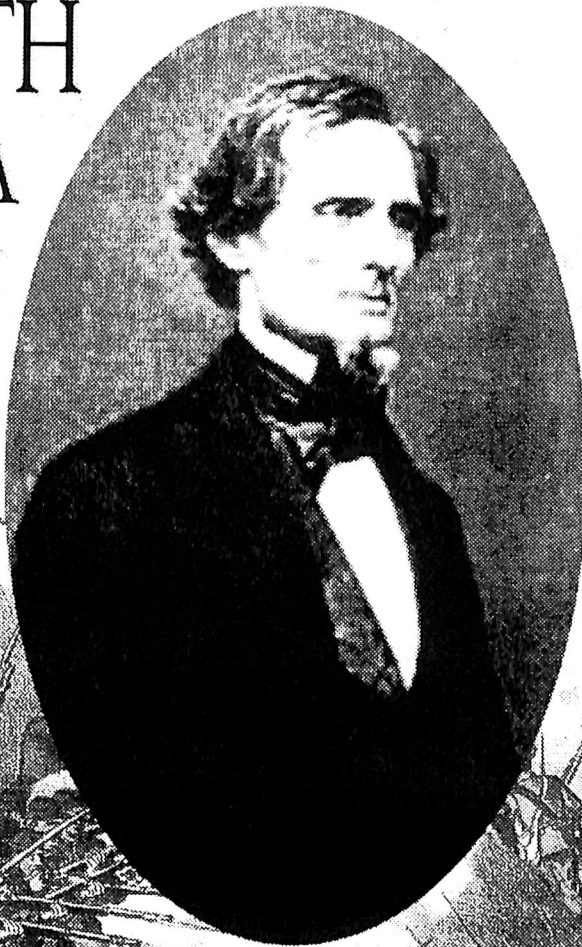


# JEFFERSON DAVIS

*in* SOUTH  
CAROLINA

 THE PALMETTO  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION



***JEFFERSON DAVIS IN SOUTH CAROLINA***

***BY SAM THOMAS***

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## ON THE TRAIL OF JEFFERSON DAVIS

- April 2** Lee notifies Davis that he will abandon his position around Petersburg in the evening; Davis, Cabinet members and staff evacuate Richmond aboard train bound for Danville, VA.
- April 3** Davis establishes Danville as temporary capital of the Confederacy.
- April 9** Robert E. Lee surrenders Army of Northern Virginia.
- April 10** Davis receives word of Lee's surrender; Davis and party leave Danville by rail for Greensboro, NC; Davis and Secretary of War Breckinridge confer with Generals Johnston and Beauregard over military situation.
- April 15** Abraham Lincoln assassinated; Davis and party continue flight from Greensboro toward Charlotte, NC by wagon and horse with cavalry escort; Davis sends his personal secretary, Burton Harrison, to escort Varina and the children deeper south.
- April 17** The fleeing Confederate government pass through Salisbury and Concord, NC.
- April 18** Davis and cabinet arrive in Charlotte; Davis learns of Lincoln's assassination.
- April 26** Davis leaves Charlotte accompanied by five "demi-brigades" of cavalry, numbering between 2,000 and 3,000 troops; Johnston surrenders the Army of Tennessee to Sherman; Davis and party border into South Carolina and arrive in Fort Mill.
- April 27** The last Cabinet meeting of the Confederate States of America is held on the lawn of the Colonel William Elliott White home in Fort Mill; The Confederate party crosses the Catawba River heading toward Yorkville where they will spend the night; Davis spends the night at the home of Dr. J. Rufus Bratton.
- April 28** Davis' private secretary, Burton Harrison, arrives in Abbeville to escort Varina and the Davis children deeper into the South; Davis and party spend the night at a house on the Pinckneyville Road in York County between Yorkville and Unionville.

- April 29** The fleeing Confederate government crosses the Broad River at Pinckneyville and heads toward Unionville; President Davis is entertained at the home of General William H. Wallace in Unionville before continuing their journey; Davis and party spent the night at the home of J. R. R. Giles between Unionville and Cross Keys.
- April 30** The fleeing Confederates are treated to a noon-day meal at the Cross Keys House; Davis and party cross the Enoree River moving toward Martin's Depot; The Confederates pass through Martin's Depot; Davis spends night at the home of Lafayette Fate Young.
- May 1** Davis and party arrive at the home of Griffin Williams; Confederate party moves through Coronaca to Cokesbury where they spend the night at the home of General M.W. Gary.
- May 2** The Confederate President and his party leave Cokesbury, pass through Hodges and arrive in Abbeville; President Davis meets with Breckinridge, Duke, Ferguson, Dibrell, Vaughn, Reagan, Mallory, and Benjamin to ask their advice. This was the last Council of War held by the Confederate Government; Davis spends the night at the home of Colonel Armistead Burt, while Secretary Breckinridge and other cabinet and staff members spend the night at the homes of James Perrin and Colonel Henry Leovy.
- May 3** The President passes through Mt. Carmel, Willington and Bordeaux as he flees southwest; Secretaries Mallory and Benjamin resign; Crossing the Savannah River, Davis arrives in Washington, Georgia about mid-morning.
- May 4** After being joined by his family, President Davis leaves for Washington, GA.
- May 10** Davis and party captured by Federal cavalry near Irwinville, Georgia.

## JEFFERSON DAVIS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

*By Sam Thomas*

On April 2, 1865, a very solemn courier approached President Jefferson Davis. In his hand was an urgent dispatch from General Robert E. Lee. Davis read, *I think it is absolutely necessary that we should abandon our position tonight...*<sup>1</sup> The President refolded the dispatch and calmly placed it in his pocket. The note from Lee notified Davis of the need for the Confederate Army's withdrawal from the defenses around Petersburg, and, as a consequence, the necessary evacuation of Richmond. Davis immediately set to work assembling all of the members of the Confederate Cabinet available.

The assembled group left Richmond by train about midnight that same day headed for Danville, Virginia, where they arrived around 5:00 P.M. on April 3. Although Richmond was lost, Davis was still optimistic that the war could continue to a successful conclusion. In Danville, Davis and the Cabinet set up temporary offices *to keep up the current business until more definite knowledge would enable us to form more permanent plans.*<sup>2</sup>

Seven days later, on April 10, Davis was officially notified of Lee's surrender the preceding day. President Davis and the Cabinet realized the necessity for moving further south. A Cabinet meeting was called and it was agreed that the group should continue southward to Greensboro, North Carolina. The government in flight loaded itself into ambulances and wagons, and left Danville about midnight on the 10th. The following afternoon they pulled into

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<sup>1</sup>As cited in E. B. Lone, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971) 663.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 666.

Greensboro, a town which at the time, was being overrun by straggling Confederate soldiers and deserters. Davis sent Mrs. Davis and the Davis children by a different route to Charlotte, North Carolina. The President later rendezvoused with his family in Abbeville, South Carolina just before crossing into Georgia.

Davis believed the Confederacy could yet come out of the conflict victorious. By recalling absentees and tracking down Confederate deserters the Confederate Army's ranks would swell, according to Davis, allowing it to remain in the field and continue the fight. He wrote North Carolina Governor Zebulon B. Vance from Greensboro on April 11 stating, *We must redouble our efforts to meet present disaster. An army holding its position with determination to fight on, and manifest ability to maintain the struggle, will attract all the scattered soldiers and daily rapidly gather strength.*<sup>3</sup>

General Johnston's army, however, had other problems. It was trying as best as it could to hang together as a cohesive unit. That was daily becoming more and more difficult to do as the numbers of desertions increased. Many of Johnston's units were so scattered they had trouble communicating or even discerning where they were; even the General's own staff was having difficulty locating where units were.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Headquarters Anderson's Brigade, Two Miles and a half west of Black Creek Station, April 12, 1865. Lieutenant Hudson, Aide-de-Camp and Actg. Asst. Adj. Gen., Wheeler's Corps:*

*Lieutenant: I have the honor, very respectfully, to apply to the major-general commanding for instructions, as from the present position of our army and that of the enemy I am at a loss to know what duty is expected of my command. My orders from General Allen direct me, in case of being pressed back, to retire to Battle's Bridge. From*

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<sup>3</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 787.

*the reports of the scouts, the enemy are now nearer Battle's Bridge than I am; in other words, I am in the rear of the enemy, who can very easily render it impossible for me to fall back on Battle's Bridge. From the tenor of my instructions, I am to remain here until ordered to leave or until actually pressed back by the enemy, and then to fall back on Battle's Bridge. There is no enemy in my front (my scouts have been down as far as Snow Hill) and none within ten miles of my right flank. Please let me know by bearer the nature of the duty expected of me and how long I am expected to remain in this position, and when I retire in what direction I am to retire.*

*I am, lieutenant, very respectfully, your obedient servant,*

*R. H. Anderson,  
Brigadier-General.<sup>4</sup>*

\* \* \* \* \*

The following day, Generals Joseph E. Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard met with President Davis and the Cabinet in Greensboro to discuss the situation and to determine *what was feasible and advisable to do as a military problem.*<sup>5</sup> The two generals, who began the war fighting side by side were now finishing the war side by side. They confessed to Davis that they believed the Confederacy was doomed and to prolong the conflict would be a continued useless loss of Southern manpower. On April 13, Davis held a Council of War at 10:00 A.M. with the Cabinet and Generals Beauregard and Johnston. Burke Davis reports in his classic work, *SHERMAN'S MARCH*, that, *the president, lost in a dream world, talked of conscripting old men and boys and forcing deserters back into ranks, as if he had taken no note of mounting Confederate catastrophes.*<sup>6</sup> The generals, no doubt, stood there in dumb-struck silence. When they finally regained their senses they reviewed for the President the state of affairs as they then existed. The two reported that the Confederacy lacked money, credit, troops or ammunition and

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 795.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 795.

<sup>6</sup>Burke Davis, *SHERMAN'S MARCH* (New York: Random House, 1980) 257.

concluded in the opinion that the war in the East was lost. They advised the President to sue for peace.

After the generals' report, only Davis and Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of State, were in favor of continuing the struggle. Davis, however, yielded to those around him and permitted Johnston to hold a conference with Union General William T. Sherman to discuss terms for the surrender of the last major Confederate army in the East. With that, the goal was now to get the President safely to the West where Confederate armies still remained in the field, and where the struggle might be continued successfully.

As the Confederate wagon train was readied to move out, the party learned that Union General George Stoneman's cavalry, raiding out of eastern Tennessee, had cut the railroad at High Point and Jamestown, just south of Greensboro. The fleeing Confederates deemed it prudent to continue a more southward trek, between the two constricting forces, to Charlotte. Riding along with the Presidential party, which included Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge, Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, Postmaster-General John H. Reagan, Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of the Treasury George A. Trenholm, Attorney-General George Davis, and the President himself, was a small cavalry escort consisting of units from Samuel W. Ferguson's and George G. Dibrell's brigades of "Fighting Joe" Wheeler's division of the Army of Tennessee. The entire party, referred to as a *funereal session* by Reagan, set out for Charlotte on the afternoon of April 15. From Greensboro the fleeing government passed through Jamestown, Lexington, Salisbury, and Concord, before finally arriving in Charlotte during the afternoon of April 19.



Accommodations were arranged for members of the party in private homes within the city. Secretary of the Treasury George A. Trenholm, who was very ill, and his wife were cared for at the home of William F. Pfifer on N. Tryon Street.<sup>7</sup> Here, Davis and the Confederate Cabinet met so that Trenholm could be attended by a doctor. Secretary of State Judiah Benjamin and Davis' private secretary, Burton Harrison, stayed at the home of A. Weill on South Tryon Street; Attorney General George Davis spent the night at the W. R. Myers home; while the President stayed at the home of Lewis Bates, the manager of the Southern Freight Company in town. The party had great difficulty in locating housing for the President due to General Stoneman's promises of destruction for anyone harboring Davis.

Stoneman was becoming a major concern to the residents of the region. With a command of 6,000 troopers, Stoneman raided across the Blue Ridge mountains into southwestern Virginia and western North Carolina. His objective as he moved to the Yadkin River in North Carolina was to obtain supplies for his men and horses, and to further isolate Johnston's Army of Tennessee which was, at that time, maneuvering through the Piedmont section of the state. Stoneman's forces went to work as they moved wrecking lines of supply and communication, destroying foodstuffs and tearing up all transportation facilities.<sup>8</sup>

From the Yadkin River, Stoneman moved to Christiansburg on April 5. The command then proceeded to Salisbury where they rested for two days. While in Salisbury the raiders destroyed fifteen miles of track. Arriving in Germantown on April 10, Stoneman detached

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<sup>7</sup>Ethel Trenholm Seabrook Nepveux, *George Alfred Trenholm: The Company That Went To War, 1861-1865* (Charleston, SC: Privately Published, 1973) 88.

<sup>8</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 323; Douglas Summers Brown, *A City Without Cobwebs: A History of Rock Hill, South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953) 117.

Colonel William J. Palmer and his First Brigade, composed of the 10th Michigan, 12th Ohio and 15th Pennsylvania, with orders to *proceed to Salem and destroy the large factories engaged in making clothing for the rebel army*. He was also ordered to tear up railroad tracks south of Salisbury in the direction of Charlotte.<sup>9</sup>

On April 17, Stoneman was summoned to Durham's Station, North Carolina to confer with General Henry W. Slocum on the negotiations which by this time had commenced between Johnston and Sherman. Upon Stoneman's departure, Palmer was ordered to establish his headquarters in Lincolnton to *watch the line of the Catawba*.<sup>10</sup> Stoneman's ultimate plan was to move his forces south and place them *on the south side of the Catawba River, and be in a position to operate toward Charlotte or upon the flank of any army moving south*.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time that Stoneman was in the Raleigh area conferring with Slocum, Palmer and his force were causing havoc in the rear of the Confederate army. Confederate General Samuel W. Ferguson, in command of the Rebel Troop and the Ashley Dragoons, a part of the 3rd South Carolina Cavalry, were dispatched from Johnston's Army of Tennessee to Charlotte to intercept and eliminate Palmer's raiders.<sup>12</sup> Arriving in Charlotte, the Confederates learned that the Union raiders were headed towards the Catawba Bridge at Old Nation's Ford in York District, South Carolina. Palmer and his force of 400 men arrived at the railroad bridge on April 19 and

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 324-334.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>12</sup>Brown, *City Without Cobwebs*, 117; Richard Harwell and Philip N. Racine, *The Fiery Trail: A Union Officer's Account of Sherman's Last Campaigns* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986) 211.

easily brushed aside the Confederate Home Guard stationed at the bridge. When the Confederate cavalry finally arrived at the bridge shortly thereafter, they found that the raiders had already set fire to the bridge and were dug in with an artillery piece on a hill overlooking the crossing.

<sup>13</sup> A short skirmish ensued between the Federals and the Confederate cavalry resulting in minor casualties. The Federal force retired in short order and returned to Lincolnton, their mission accomplished.<sup>14</sup>

On the day after the fight at Catawba Bridge, Jefferson Davis wrote from Charlotte to General P. G. T. Beauregard in Greensboro reporting, *This post is without artillery, as was the bridge over the Catawba. General Echols<sup>15</sup> brought no field artillery with him. Communication with the south side of the river being broken.*<sup>16</sup> Davis also wrote to General Samuel W. Ferguson stationed at Catawba Bridge:

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Charlotte, N. C., April 20, 1865

General S. W. Ferguson,  
Catawba Bridge:

*General Echols will send you the desired authority to concentrate your command. He will acquaint you of the position of the other cavalry brigades, and you will know how to secure co-intelligence and co-operation. The deficiency in forage will, I hope, be supplied by*

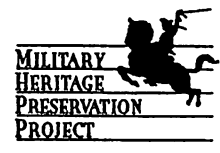
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<sup>13</sup>. This gun emplacement still remains on the south bank overlooking the Catawba River. It was recently donated for preservation by Warren Norman and the Catawba Land Company to Nation Ford Land Trust.

<sup>14</sup>*Yorkville Enquirer*, 26 April 1865.

<sup>15</sup>General John Echols (1823-1896).

<sup>16</sup>*OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 816.



rail-road. An engineer officer has been directed to locate and prepare the pontoon bridge -- or ferry, if the number of boats required for a bridge cannot be obtained.

Jeff'n Davis<sup>17</sup>

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With the crossing of the Catawba River, the chase of Confederate President Jefferson Davis was undertaken with more interest. Mrs. Davis, who was very concerned for her husband's safety and welfare, was kept informed of the President's progress by Burton Harrison, Davis' personal secretary:

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Charlotte, April 20, 1865

Mrs. Jefferson Davis:

*We arrived here yesterday evening and may remain a few days longer. Are all well. The President is very well and comfortably provided for. This place occupied by large force and is perfectly secure. A general suspension of hostilities has been agreed on. The negotiations were carried on by Breckinridge, Reagan, and General Johnston, at Hillsborough. We shall know the terms of the armistice to-morrow. On the night of the 11th [14th] President Lincoln was assassinated in the theater in Washington, and Mr. Seward stabbed in his own house. It is supposed he will die. We have had a very pleasant ride across the country. I have sent you frequent telegrams.*

Burton N. Harrison<sup>18</sup>

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John C. Breckinridge did not arrive in Charlotte until April 22, having left the party at Lexington to return to Greensboro at Joseph Johnston's request. When he rejoined the Davis party he presented the President with a copy of a surrender agreement made between Johnston and Sherman on April 18. Davis submitted the document to the Cabinet that same day. After

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 818-819.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 838-839.

their *virtually unanimous concurrence in opinion*,<sup>19</sup> Johnston was notified that his agreement with Sherman had the approval of the Confederate Cabinet. Johnston was also notified that *further instructions will be given as to the details of the negotiations and the methods of executing the terms of agreement when notified by you of the readiness on the part of the General commanding the U. S. forces to proceed with the arrangements.*<sup>20</sup> On April 22, General Wade Hampton wrote from Greensboro to President Davis in Charlotte:

\* \* \* \* \*

Greensborough, April 22, 1865

*His Excellency President Davis:*

*My Dear Sir: I came here intending to go to Salisbury to see you, but hearing that you are not there I am not able to reach you at present. My only object in seeing you was to assuer you that many of my officers and men agree with me in thinking that nothing can be as disastrous to us as a peace founded on a restoration of the Union. A return to the Union will bring all the horrors of war, coupled with all the degradation that can be inflicted on a conquered people. We shall be drawn into a war with Europe, and under a rigorous conscription we shall, alongside our own negroes, be forced to fight for the Yankees, under Yankee officers. If, under the first great reverse, we go back to the Union, Europe may well say that she cannot interfer. We give up our only hope of foreign intervention. But if we still keep some organization in the field we cannot only hope for intervention, but we may hope for some reaction in public sentiment. If you should propose to cross the Mississippi I can bring many good men to escort you over. My men are in hand and ready to follow me anywhere. I cannot agree to the terms which are proposed, and I shall seek a home in some other country. If Texas will hold out, or will seek the protectorate of Maximilian, we can still make head against the enemy. I write hurriedly, as the messenger is about to leave. If I can serve you or my country by any further fighting you have only to tell me so. My plan is to collect all the men who will stick to their colors, and to go to Texas. I can carry with me quite a number, and I can get there.*

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<sup>19</sup>Nora Marshall Davis, "Jefferson Davis's Route From Richmond, Virginia, To Irwinville, Georgia, April 2-May 10, 1865," *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (Columbia: South Carolina Historical Association, 1941) 13.

<sup>20</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 834.

*With my best wishes for yourself, I am, very respectfully and truly, yours,*

Wade Hampton<sup>21</sup>

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With the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia already secure and the ever increasing possibility of the final eastern army following suit, Federal attentions began to bear more upon the capture of the fleeing Confederate President. United States Secretary of War Edwin Stanton wrote to Major-General John A. Dix on April 22:

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*The orders of General Sherman to General Stoneman to withdraw from Salisbury and join him will probably open the way for Davis to escape to Mexico or Europe with his plunder, which is reported to be very large, including not only the plunder of Richmond banks, but previous accumulations. A dispatch received by this Department from Richmond says:*

*It is stated here by respectable parties that the amount of specie taken south by Jeff. Davis and his partisans is very large, including not only the plunder of the Richmond banks, but previous accumulations. They hope, it is said, to make terms with General Sherman or some other Southern commander, by which they will be permitted, with their effects, including this gold plunder, to go to Mexico or Europe. Johnston's negotiations look to this end.*

*After the cabinet meeting last night General Grant started for North Carolina to direct operations against Johnston's army.*

Edwin M. Stanton,  
Secretary of War.<sup>22</sup>

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At the same time that Davis was notifying Johnston of the Confederate Cabinet's approval of surrender terms for his army, General Ulysses S. Grant arrived in Raleigh from Washington, DC with news that the Federal Government had turned down those same terms. Furthermore, Sherman was ordered to *give immediate notice of the termination of the truce and to resume*

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<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 829-830.

<sup>22</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 2, p. 285-286.

*hostilities at once.*<sup>23</sup> He was also ordered to turn over operations to Grant. Upon being notified by Sherman that the terms had been repudiated by the Federal Government, Johnston asked for and received a second truce so that the two might discuss *a modification of the terms offered.*<sup>24</sup> With this, even Sherman now turned his attentions to Davis and his party.

\* \* \* \* \*

*HDQRS. Military Division of the Mississippi  
In the Field, Raleigh, N. C., April 25, 1865*

*Admiral Dahlgren,  
Charleston:*

*I expect Johnston will surrender his army to-morrow. We have had much negotiation, and things are settling down to the terms of General Lee's army. Jeff. Davis and cabinet, with considerable specie, are making their way toward Cuba. He passed Charlotte going south on the 23d, and I think he will try to reach Florida coast, either Cedar Keys or lower down. It would be well to catch him. Can't you watch the east coast and send word round to the west coast?*

*W. T. Sherman,  
Major-General.*<sup>25</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Grant notified the War Department in Washington at 10:00 pm of April 26 that Joseph E. Johnston and the Army of Tennessee had surrendered to General William T. Sherman *on the basis agreed upon between Lee and myself for the Army of Northern Virginia.*<sup>26</sup> There was now increased urgency in getting President Davis to safety.

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<sup>23</sup>Davis, "Davis's Route," 13.

<sup>24</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 303.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 312.

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*Quartermaster's Office, Butler's Cavalry Division,  
April 27, 1865----9.45 p. m.*

*General J. E. Johnston:*

*General: ...By your advice I went to consult with the President, the armistice having been annulled. After full conference with him, a plan was agreed on to enable him to leave the country. He charged me with the execution of this plan, and he is now moving in accordance with it. On my return here I find myself not only powerless to assist him, but placed myself in a position of great delicacy. I must either leave him to his fate, without an effort to avert it, or subject myself to possible censure by not accepting the terms of the convention you have made. If I do not accompany him I shall never cease to reproach myself, and if I go with him I may go under the ban of outlawry. I choose the latter, because I believe it to be my duty to do so. But I leave my command to abide the terms, as I shall not ask a man to go with me. Should any join me, they will be stragglers like myself and, like myself, willing to sacrifice everything for the cause and for our Government....*

*Wade Hampton,  
Lieutenant-General.<sup>27</sup>*

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After receiving the news that Johnston had surrendered, Davis, his Cabinet and their party left Charlotte moving south through Pineville. As they crossed into South Carolina, the Davis Party consisted of the Confederate Cabinet, with the exception of Attorney General George Davis who remained in Charlotte to care for his motherless children, their personal staffs and a cavalry escort numbering about 2,000 men under the command of Secretary of War, now General, John C. Breckinridge.<sup>28</sup>

It became increasingly apparent as to the importance of capturing the fleeing Davis. Even General U. S. Grant got into the act.

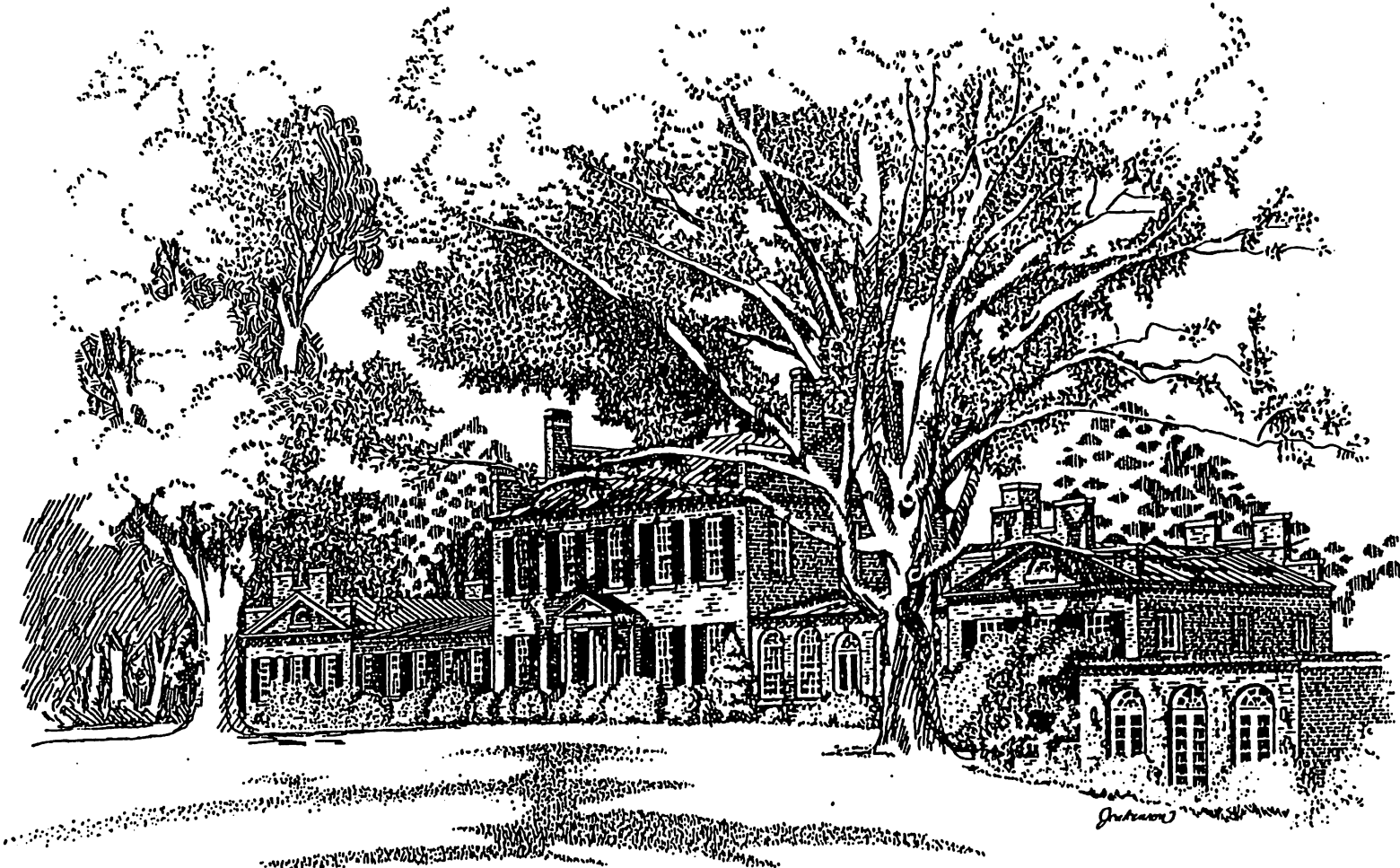
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<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 846.

<sup>28</sup>This command consisted of units representing the five commands of Generals Samuel W. Ferguson, George G. Didrell, Basil W. Duke, Alfred J. Vaughan, and W. C. P. Breckinridge.



THE WHITE HOMESTEAD  
FORT MILL, SOUTH CAROLINA



SPRINGFIELD  
FORT MILL, SOUTH CAROLINA



\*\*\*\*\*

Raleigh, N. C., April 26, 1865----10 p. m.

Hon. Edwin M. Stanton,

Secretary of War:

*Davis with his cabinet passed into South Carolina with the intention no doubt of getting out of the country either by way of Cuba or across the Mississippi. Sherman sent this information by way of Wilmington yesterday to Admiral Dahlgren and Gillmore for them to be on the watch. I think it would be advisable to give the same information to the naval commander on the Mississippi River and all post commanders.*

U. S. Grant,  
Lieutenant-General.<sup>29</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

The Confederate Government received a cool reception in North Carolina. The farther south the party traveled, however, the greater the welcome. Colonel Francis R. Lubbock, a South Carolina native from Texas and aide to President Davis, promised the party a warm reception in his native state. Lubbock's promises were fulfilled as they crossed over into the Palmetto State. *No sooner had the expedition crossed over into South Carolina than Colonel Lubbock's boast of his native state's hospitality was fully realized.*<sup>30</sup> The people lined the roads in the towns and villages through which the party passed. Students were allowed to leave school so as to get a glimpse of the President.

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<sup>29</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 311.

<sup>30</sup>A. J. Hanna, *Flight Into Oblivion* (Richmond, VA: Johnson Publishing Company, 1938) 57-58.

The group stayed their first night, April 26, in South Carolina in Fort Mill. President Davis spent the night at Springfield, in the home of Colonel Andrew Baxter Springs, just north of the town. The Confederate Cabinet and their staff stayed at the home of Colonel William E. White in Fort Mill."<sup>31</sup>

That night, in an effort to relieve himself of some of the pressing political matters, President Davis was said to have indulged in a game of marbles with Postmaster-General Reagan, Secretary of War Breckinridge, Secretary of State Benjamin and the two young sons of Colonel Springs. According to tradition, Davis was teamed with Reagan and Eli Springs, while Benjamin, Breckinridge and Johnny Springs composed the opposing team. Secretary of the Navy Mallory later wrote, *the game lasted nearly an hour and notwithstanding the skills of his opponents, Breckenridge, who plays the best game of marbles of any public man since Judge Marshall, and who had his usual good luck, came off victorious. The youngsters, two bright, intelligent Southern boys, will never forget the ardently disputed game of marbles with Mr. Davis, who to their infinite delight seemed as much at home with the words of caution and command from "knuckle down at taw" to "roundings" as themselves.*<sup>32</sup>

The following morning, April 27, President Davis assembled his Cabinet of Benjamin, Mallory, Breckinridge, and Trenholm on the lawn of the Colonel White home. Among those items discussed was the acceptance of the resignation of Secretary Trenholm due to his

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<sup>31</sup>Captain Elliott White Springs of Fort Mill to the Historical Markers Survey of South Carolina, 8 May 1939, in Davis, "Davis's Route," 14.

<sup>32</sup>Samuel Mendenhall, *Tales of York County* (Privately Printed, Rock Hill, SC, 1989) 47-48.

continuing illness which prevented him from attending to the duties of his office.<sup>33</sup> Postmaster-General John H. Reagan was asked to succeed Trenholm and act as Secretary of the Treasury and Postmaster-General. Reagan later recorded, *Thereupon a meeting of the cabinet was held in my absence, and after consultation, the President sent for me and requested me to accept the appointment as Secretary of the Treasury, ad interim, adding that the members of the cabinet concurred with him in the opinion that I should assume the role.*<sup>34</sup> Also considered during this Cabinet meeting was the best route to proceed. This was the last official Cabinet meeting held by the government of the Confederate States of America.

Although Federal forces continued their search for Davis, at many points during the pursuit, the capture of the Confederate President lost out somewhat in importance to the “recapture” of the reported gold and bonds being transported in the fleeing party. In a message from US Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton in Washington to Major General George H. Thomas in Nashville dated April 27, 1865--9.20 a. m., Stanton wrote:

\* \* \* \* \*

*The following is an extract from a telegram received this morning from General Halleck, at Richmond:*

*The bankers here have information to-day that Jeff. Davis' specie is moving south from Goldsborough in wagons as fast as possible. I suggest that orders be telegraphed through General Thomas that Wilson obey no orders from Sherman, and notifying him and Canby and all commanders on the Mississippi to take measures to intercept the rebel chiefs and their plunder. The specie taken with them is estimated here at from \$6,000,000 to \$13,000,000.*

*You were some days ago notified that the President disapproved Sherman's proceedings, and were directed to disregard them. If you have not already done so you will issue immediate orders to all officers in your command directing them to pay no*

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<sup>33</sup>Trenholm and his wife then proceeded to Chester; Nepveux, *George Alfred Trenholm*, 88.

<sup>34</sup>Mendenhall, *Tales of York County*, 49.

*attention to any orders but your own or from General Grant, and spare no exertion to stop Davis and his plunder...*<sup>35</sup>

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Thomas replied to Stanton that same afternoon that, *my information led me to believe that Davis would attempt to get to Texas, and [ I ] requested him [General Edward Richard Sprigg Canby] to occupy Selma and Montgomery with infantry ... and to use all possible means to prevent the escape of Davis.*<sup>36</sup>

Preparations were made and the noose was tightening. All army and navy commanders east of the Mississippi River were placed on alert to keep a watchful eye for the fleeing Confederate President.

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*Headquarters Department of the Cumberland  
Nashville, April 27, 1865*

*Admiral S. P. Lee,  
Mound City:*

*I have just received information from Washington, confirmed by Brigadier-General Gillem now operating in Western North Carolina, that Davis, escorted by a picked body of 500 cavalry, will endeavor to make his escape across the Mississippi. The position of my advanced troops is very satisfactory. All Western North Carolina, Middle and North Georgia, and North Alabama are virtually under my control. Wilson was in front of Macon, Ga., when last heard from. If Davis escapes through my lines, Canby's, and yours he will prove himself a better general than any of his subordinates.*

*Geo. H. Thomas,  
Major-General, U. S. Army, Commanding.*<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 483-484.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 484.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 484-485.



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Headquarters Department of the Cumberland

Nashville, April 27, 1865.

Major-General Steedman,  
Chattanooga:

*It is reported that Jeff. Davis is endeavoring to escape across the Mississippi, escorted by a picked body of 500 cavalry. Keep scouts out in your front, and if he should attempt to pass near your command intercept and capture him if possible. General Washburn will send this information to all commands on the Mississippi.*

Geo. H. Thomas,  
Major-General, U. S. Army, Commanding.<sup>38</sup>

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All posts, both south and west, were alerted as to the probable trek of the Confederate party. The Confederate Treasury continued to generate a great deal of interest, and in some circles overshadowed efforts to capture the fleeing Presidential party.

To Major-General George Stoneman, then in Knoxville, Thomas advised, *If you can possibly get three brigades of cavalry together, send them across the mountains into South Carolina to the westward of Charlotte and toward Anderson. They may possibly catch Jeff. Davis, or some of his treasure. They say he is making off with from \$2,000,000 to \$5,000,000 in gold.*<sup>39</sup> In response to Thomas' messages, George Stoneman issued his own set of orders;

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HDQRS. Fourth Division, Dept. of the Cumberland,  
Greenville, Tenn., April 27, 1865.

COMDG. Officer First Cav. Div., Dept. of the Cumberland:  
Brigadier-General Tillson:

*I want the Eighth Tennessee and the Thirteenth Tennessee, Miller's brigade, and the Eleventh and Twelfth Kentucky, and Eleventh Michigan, Brown's brigade, all sent to Asheville, and, as soon as they are concentrated at that point, wish the following*

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 487.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 488-489.

*instructions carried out by General Brown, commanding the Second Brigade: Move, via Flat Rock or some other adjacent gap, to the headwaters of the Saluda River; follow down this river to Belton or Anderson. From that point scout in the direction of Augusta, Ga. The object of sending you to this point is to intercept Jeff. Davis and his party, who are on their way west with \$5,000,000 or \$6,000,000 of treasure, specie, loaded in wagons. The Secretary of War telegraphs that Davis left Goldsborough a few days ago with his treasure in wagons. If you can hear of Davis, follow him to the end of the earth, if possible, and never give him up. If Colonel Palmer is in Asheville, or can be got hold of, he will join his brigade to the other two, assume command of the whole, and carry out the foregoing instructions. But General Brown is not to wait for Colonel Palmer, but push on, as time is precious, and Palmer will follow and overtake the other two brigades....*

*George Stoneman,  
Major-General, Commanding.<sup>40</sup>*

\* \* \* \* \*

General Brown responded to Stoneman's orders by starting his Second and Third Brigades for Anderson, S.C. on the morning of April 29th, passing through Jones' Gap and Pickensville on the way. Brown added that, *General Palmer was at Rutherfordton last night, the 28th instant. I have sent a dispatch suggesting that he join me at Anderson.*<sup>41</sup>

After the Confederate Cabinet meeting in Fort Mill broke up, the Confederate party continued towards Yorkville. A problem was encountered, however, when the group came to the Catawba River as the bridge spanning the river had been burned just a little over a week earlier.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>42</sup> Davis' party crossed the Catawba River at Nation Ford, the traditional crossing of the River on an indian trading path. Nation Ford Road has recently been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, based partially on the significance of Davis's crossing.



Confederate cavalry set to work constructing a pontoon bridge across the River and awaited President Davis's arrival. *What a sight to see Jeff Davis and Breckinridge and the Cabinet standing on the pontoon. Dickinson and I thought of the Bruce<sup>43</sup> and his retreat to the mountains surrounded by a few of his faithful followers*, recorded Tench Tilghman, who was in charge of the Confederate baggage train.<sup>44</sup> After the bridge was finished the cavalry joined in with the fleeing party as they moved toward Yorkville.<sup>45</sup> Tilghman was said to have later exclaimed as he viewed the fleeing column; *The cause has gone up. God only knows what will be the end of all this.*<sup>46</sup>

Davis was amazed at the reception his party received in Yorkville. *As they neared a handsome mansion a bevy of ladies approached the gate, related Colonel Lubbock, " ... strewed beautiful flowers before Mr. Davis's feet, and insisted on the President and his party dismounting .... They would not listen to us going further that day, and we spent the night.*"<sup>47</sup> Adolphus E. Fant, writing in the *Yorkville Enquirer* years later recounted the reception which the President and other Cabinet members encountered as they approached Yorkville:

*We made our way to Charlotte, N. C. which at that time was Confederate headquarters. There we met the invincible General Gary. He refused to surrender, replying to a Federal officer who demanded it, "that he and his command were South Carolinians and don't*

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<sup>43</sup>A reference to Robert the Bruce and his struggle with Edward I for the independence of Scotland in the 14th century.

<sup>44</sup>Tilghman in; Brown, *A City Without Cobwebs*, 125.

<sup>45</sup>*OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 829-830.

<sup>46</sup>Tilghman in, Brown, *A City without Cobwebs*, 125.

<sup>47</sup>A. J. Hanna, *Flight Into Oblivion* (Richmond, VA: Johnson Publishing Company, 1938) 57-58.

*surrender." He and two or three of our command evaded the enemy and made their escape and reached Charlotte, N. C. At this place we were organized and had the honor, with others of escorting President Davis to Union, S. C. ... John R. Jeter, Joe Fant and the writer were in advance of the party as we approached Yorkville. The old and maimed men, women and children were congregated at their respective gates to see and do honor to the President and party which they learned were approaching. Their hands were burdened with rare and beautiful flowers for the "Grand Old Man" and his dejected and homeless protestors.<sup>48</sup>*

Fant also reported a rather humorous incident perpetrated at the expense of the ladies of the town. Hearing that the President was approaching their town, the women flocked to the roadside where; *Many and earnest inquiries were made by the ladies, their faces sad, tears trickling from their eyes, "do be so kind as to show me the President, do please point him out to us."* Fant, looking around at the group with him picked out the most ragged, dirty, sorriest looking soldier and, pointing to the fellow, said, *there is the President.* With that the ladies rushed the fellow, *at the same time throwing and handing him flowers until he was absolutely hid with them. There he stood with utter astonishment depicted upon his face. The way he stood his ground and looked was indicative of ever remaining in the same place. We moved on leaving him in the care of the ladies and children.<sup>49</sup>*

The President spent the night of April 27 in Yorkville at the home of Dr. Rufus Bratton. The residents of Yorkville gathered throughout the evening to pay their respects to the President, but Davis declined to make a speech. Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, however, addressed the

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<sup>48</sup>A. E. Fant in the *Yorkville Enquirer*, October 4, 1901 as reprinted in Robert Jerald L. West, *Found Among the Privates: Recollections of Holcombe's Legion, 1861-1864* (Privately Printed, 1997) 95-96.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

citizens of Yorkville from the balcony of the Rose Hotel.<sup>50</sup> Dr. Bratton later recounted his memories of the President; *He appeared to be somewhat fatigued in body and depressed in spirits though easily aroused with his native fire. He caressed and spoke kindly to my four boys, Louis, John, Andral, and Moultrie.*<sup>51</sup>

From Yorkville the party proceeded the following morning down the Pinckneyville road to Unionville. Rev. R. Y. Russell of Blairsville recorded in his diary, *President Davis, with an escort, passed my house on the preceding Friday*<sup>52</sup> [April 28]. The Confederate government crossed the Broad River at Pinckneyville Ferry while the cavalry escort crossed farther north at Smith's Ford. Here, the rear guard of the Confederate escort ran into the 12th Ohio under Palmer. A brief fight ensued in which the Federals captured ten prisoners.<sup>53</sup>

The Confederate Presidential party encamped that night somewhere between Yorkville and Unionville, probably at Pinckneyville. Arriving about 11:00 AM on April 29 in Unionville, Davis and his party partook of their noonday meal at the home of General William H. Wallace, whose father was a friend of Davis and had served in the United States Congress when Davis was Secretary of War. Here the President reportedly was served fresh strawberries, the first of the season. Following the meal, Davis departed in the afternoon and continued to the home of

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<sup>50</sup>A downtown York Landmark, the Rose Hotel was recently acquired by The Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation for restoration. It is slated to serve vital housing needs in York's central business district.

<sup>51</sup>As recorded in Mendenhall, *Tales of York County*, 48.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>53</sup>*OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 1, p. 547-548.

Captain J. R. R. Giles, a few miles southwest of Unionville, where he spent the night of April 29.

Here too, a portion of his escort parted with plans to rejoin him later.

*Here we were disbanded with eight days written permit, at the expiration of which we were to meet him at Cokesbury, S. C., and proceed to the trans Mississippi department. When the time expired things had so changed we did not deem it necessary or prudent to obey, and so far have not been court martialed as yet. Under no other consideration would we have failed the gallant and beloved General. I will here state that the permits were executed in the palatial residence of the honorable and greatly beloved T. B. Jeter of Union.<sup>54</sup>*

The President was pressed to keep on the move, he continued to stay in touch with his wife's party, primarily through correspondence with Burton Harrison who was entrusted with their care.

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Abbeville, S. C., April 29, 1865----7.30 a. m.

*Mr. President: We had intended starting yesterday afternoon, but were detained by the rain. Are just about getting off now. The ladies and children are very well, and in good spirits. They move in a good ambulance and carriage, and will reach Washington in a two days' drive from this place. From Washington we shall go toward Atlanta; there to halt, until we see or hear from you. This movement was determined by your telegrams, and by the belief that you would move westward, along a line running north of this place. Colonel Leovy has been kind enough to set out from here to meet you, to explain our plans, &c. He will tell you everything.*

*With sincere prayers and hopes for your health and safety, very respectfully, your obedient servant,*

Burton N. Harrison<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>A. E. Fant in the *Yorkville Enquirer*, October 4, 1901 as reprinted in Robert Jerald L. West, *Found Among the Privates: Recollections of Holcombe's Legion, 1861-1864* (Privately Printed, 1997) 95-96.

<sup>55</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 1269.

The following day the fleeing Confederate Government left the Giles home and moved through Cross Keys where the party obtained their noonday meal, reported to be lamb,<sup>56</sup> before continuing on to Martin's Depot<sup>57</sup> in Laurens County, reaching there during the late afternoon of April 30. From Martin's Depot they continued in a southwestwardly direction to the home of Lafayette "Fate" Young where Davis spent the night of April 30. It was here that Colonel Leovy, acting as a courier sent to overtake the President by Mrs. Davis, finally caught up with the party. Colonel Leovy gave Davis a letter from Mrs. Davis informing him of her plans.<sup>58</sup>

Davis and his party got an early start at about 9:00 AM the following morning and arrived at the home of Captain Griffin Williams where Davis' Cabinet had passed the previous night. The entire party then proceeded on to Cross Hill where they stopped to water their horses at the home of John Carter.<sup>59</sup> General Martin W. Gary, who was traveling with the party, urged the President to spend the night at the home of Mrs. Thomas Gary, General Gary's mother, in Cokesbury since the distance was so great to Abbeville.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Kenneth F. and Blanche Marsh, *Plantation Heritage in Upcountry, South Carolina* (Asheville, NC: Biltmore Press, 1962) 89.

<sup>57</sup>Martin's Depot later became Goldville. It is the present day town of Joanna.

<sup>58</sup>*OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 1269.

<sup>59</sup>Interviews by the Historical Markers Survey of South Carolina with Mrs. Arrow Sullivan of Laurens, 6 February 1941; Jack H. Davis, Sr. of Clinton, 8 March 1941, as cited in Davis, "Davis's Route," 14-15.

<sup>60</sup>Interview by the Historical Markers Survey of South Carolina with W. A. Watts of Laurens, July 1941, as cited in Davis, "Davis's Route," 15.

There was a growing flurry of activity from different points throughout the South; ... *there is cause to believe that Jeff. Davis and the rebel cabinet will avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the armistice recently concluded between Sherman and Johnston, and endeavor to escape into Texas and Mexico.*<sup>61</sup>

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Washington, D. C., May 1, 1865.

General Dana,  
Commanding at Vicksburg:

*Station troops at Rodney or in that vicinity at once, with cavalry to patrol the river and prevent all rebels from crossing it. It is probable Jeff. Davis and his cabinet will try to cross; if they do, it will be between the mouths of Black River and Natchez. Call upon the navy to co-operate, and make every preparation to intercept him if he should. Notify the commander at Baton Rouge to the same effect, and communicate here to me.*

U. S. Grant,  
Lieutenant-General.<sup>62</sup>

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Headquarters Department of the Cumberland  
Nashville, May 1, 1865----4 p. m.

Lieutenant-General Grant:

*In accordance with your instructions of 1 p. m. yesterday I have directed all my local commanders to send, under flag of truce, a summons to all bands of armed men operating near their commands, or who may be nearer to them than to any other Federal command, to come in and surrender on the same terms made by Lee and Johnston. On the 27th of April I directed Generals Stoneman, Wilson, and Steedman to send out scouts and ascertain, if possible, the route Jeff. Davis had taken, and be prepared to pursue him on the first information of his whereabouts, and use every exertion to capture him. I also gave the same instructions to Generals Granger, Hatch, and Washburn on the 28th, and informed Major-General Canby and Admiral Lee that it was reported that Davis was endeavoring to escape across the Mississippi, that they might make arrangements for his capture. General Stoneman had started his cavalry for South Carolina to scout down the*

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<sup>61</sup>Major-General Joseph Osterhaus in Mobile, Alabama to Brigadier-General J. F. Knipe at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, May 1, 1865; *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 563.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 557.

*east side of the Savannah River as far, if possible, as Augusta, and had given Colonel Palmer instructions to forward a copy of the orders he received to General Wilson for his guidance. These instructions were also forwarded to Major-General Wilson by Colonel Woodall via Chattanooga. I think it will be impossible for Davis to escape across the country between this and Macon, Montgomery, or Vicksburg.*

*Geo. H. Thomas,  
Major-General, U. S. Army, Commanding.*<sup>63</sup>

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As the Confederate party was moving through Laurens District, the Federal noose was tightening. The countryside was quickly filling with Union troops scouring the region for any signs of the fleeing President.

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*HDGRS. Fourth Division, Dept. of the Cumberland,  
In the Field, Asheville, N. C., May 1, 1865.*

*Maj. G. M. Bascom,  
Assistant Adjutant-General, Knoxville, Tenn.:*

*I have just received a dispatch from Colonel Palmer, dated Mooresville, thirty-seven miles from Yorkville, on the road from Rutherfordton to Yorkville, April 29, 1865, acknowledging the receipt of General Stoneman's dispatch of April 27. He had heard of the surrender of Johnston's army on the 26th, but says it was reported that Hampton's cavalry was not included in the surrender, and that they will try to make their way out of the country. He states that a chaplain just from Yorkville, in whose statements he places entire reliance, says that Jef. Davis with escort, Dibrell's division, two brigades of cavalry, left Yorkville the morning of the 28th, taking the Unionville road. They had a number of wagons reported to be loaded with specie. Other accounts say that the specie left Charlotte on the 15th ultimo in eleven wagons for Black Stocks with a guard of 200 infantry. Colonel Palmer's informant saw Secretaries Breckinridge and Benjamin, and thinks Jeff. Davis and party will go either through Lawrenceville or Abbeville, probably the former, to Belton, Anderson [Court-House], and across the river to Carnesville, Ga., and then across through or north of Atlanta to avoid Wilson's cavalry. Colonel Palmer states that Dibrell's command numbers from 1,500 to 2,500, and that it is possible they may be joined by Duke's and Ferguson's commands. Colonel Palmer has moved his brigade by way of Island Ford, Broad River, and Greenville to Pendleton, S. C., and has*

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<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 549.

*given the necessary directions to Colonel Brown to enable him to join his command....*

*Davis Tillson,  
Brigadier-General of Volunteers, Commanding Division.*<sup>64</sup>

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Davis and the party crossed the Saluda River at Puckett's Ferry about noon on May 1 and continued on to the Gary home where they spent the night of May 1. *After crossing Puckett's Ferry, Davis passed by Simm's Cross Roads (now Coronaca), then took the road on the right, going toward Greenville for about six miles, and then took the direct left to Cokesbury.*<sup>65</sup>

President Davis, his Cabinet members and the military officers accompanying the group planned to convene a council meeting while at Cokesbury, but after receiving reports of enemy cavalry so near, the President decided to leave Cokesbury early on the morning of May 2 and arrived at the home of Colonel Armistead Burt in Abbeville that afternoon. While President Davis met with brigade commanders at 4:30 PM, his aides set to work destroying a vast number of Confederate official documents. At this meeting it was agreed that the President should separate himself from the rest of the group. With only his personal staff and a small escort Davis continued on. The generals, it was agreed, would set out at 11:00 PM and move as rapidly as possible across the Savannah River into Georgia while the cavalry troops who wished to stay would fall under the command of Secretary Breckinridge, and after crossing the Savannah River would act as seemed best. Those who wished not to proceed could be discharged. It was also agreed that the silver with the group would be paid out to those soldiers present. Secretary, now

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<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 555-556.

<sup>65</sup>Interview by the Historical Markers Survey of South Carolina with Colonel J. C. Moore of Florence, 25 October 1938, as cited in Davis, "Davis's Route," 15.



General, Breckinridge assumed command of those troops who remained and proceeded in a different direction so as to divert attention away from the main party. Davis set out with the escort of hand-picked volunteers under the command of Captain Given Campbell. *At Abbeville was reached the conclusion to abandon "all hope of effecting any other purpose than Mr. Davis's escape to the West."*<sup>66</sup>

The troops set out as planned at 11:00 the evening of May 2 crossing the Savannah River on a pontoon bridge, near the ruins of old Fort Charlotte.<sup>67</sup> Breckinridge and Dibrell, who brought up the rear did not leave Abbeville until 2:00 AM the next morning and did not cross the Savannah River until after daylight.

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May 3, 1865----9.45 a. m.

To the President:

*Dear Sir: The troops are on the west side of the Savannah, and a guard at the bridge. A picket which left Cokesbury after dark last evening reports no enemy at that point. I have directed scouts on the various roads this side the river. The condition of the troops is represented as a little better, but by no means satisfactory. They cannot be relied on as a permanent military force. I beg leave to repeat the opinions expressed in your room last evening. Please let me know where you are. I will try to see you sometime to-day. I would go forward now, but am quite unwell.*

*Yours, truly,*

*John C. Breckinridge*<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Davis, "Davis's Route," 16.

<sup>67</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 1269.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 1277.

The strain on Breckinridge's health was amplified by an absence of any information from his chief. Of further aggravation and growing danger, he was now faced an increasing possibility of mutiny among the troops under his command.

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*Half Mile West of the Savannah Bridge,  
May 3, 1865---8 p. m.*

*President Davis:*

*Dear Sir: I have not heard from you in answer to my note of this day and the condition of things here, together with great fatigue, have prevented my going forward. Nothing can be done with the bulk of this command. It has been with difficulty that anything has been kept in shape. I am having the silver paid to the troops and will, in any event, save the gold and have it brought forward in the morning, when I hope Judge Reagan will take it. Many of the men have thrown away their arms. Most of them have resolved to remain here under Vaughn and Dibrell and will make terms. A few hundred men will move on and may be depended on for the object we spoke of yesterday. I would respectfully and earnestly repeat the suggestions I then made. Let me know if you desire me to adopt any other course than that proposed. If you are at Washington, or this side, I can ride forward in the morning to see you.*

*John C. Breckinridge,  
Secretary of War.<sup>69</sup>*

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Meanwhile, in Washington, DC and the rest of the North, reactions to Lincoln's assassination were gathering momentum. This activity was heightened when President Andrew Johnson issued a reward for the apprehension of those involved. As the perpetrators of the crime were identified and hunted down, increased attention was directed at Davis and his possible connection to the assassination.

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<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1278.

*By the President of the United States of America*

***A Proclamation***

*Whereas, it appears from evidence in the Bureau of Military Justice that the atrocious murder of the late President Abraham Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of the Hon. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, were incited, concerted, and procured by and between Jefferson Davis, late of Richmond, Va., and Jacob Thompson, Clement C. Clay, Beverly Tucker, George N. Sanders, William C. Cleary, and other rebels and traitors against the Government of the United States harbored in Canada:*

*Now, therefore, to the end that justice may be done, I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do offer and promise for the arrest of said persons, or either of them, within the limits of the United States, so that they can be brought to trial, the following rewards: \$100,000 for the arrest of Jefferson Davis; \$25,000 for the arrest of Clement C. Clay; \$25,000 for the arrest of Jacob Thompson, late of Mississippi; \$25,000 for the arrest of George N. Sanders; \$25,000 for the arrest of Beverly Tucker; \$10,000 for the arrest of William C. Cleary, late clerk of Clement C. Clay. The Provost-Marshal-General of the United States is directed to cause a description of said persons, with notice of the above rewards, to be published.*

*In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.*

*Done at the city of Washington this 2d day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-ninth.*

*Andrew Johnson<sup>70</sup>*

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With this proclamation Jefferson Davis now became a wanted fugitive. Once again the U.S. government was increasing the pressure on the fleeing President. Federal troops were rapidly closing in on Davis as his followers continued to search for an avenue of escape.

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<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 567.

Washington, Ga., May 2, 1865----10.15 a. m.

My Dear Sir:

*We had intended to move this morning and had prepared our wagons and ambulances, which are now standing ready to start. We have excellent drivers, teams, and conveyances, a supply of forage and provisions, and are prepared for a long and continuous march. The ladies and children are well and have been kindly entertained at Doctor Ficklen's, where they still are. Our route has changed by the tidings of General Johnston's surrender of the department east of the Chattahoochee. Wilson was ordered by Sherman to execute the terms of capitulation at Macon and in Western Georgia. Gillmore was ordered to take charge in the Department of the South, which seems to include this place and Abbeville. Wilson has a mobilized cavalry column, which could readily blockade the roads through Western Georgia, and thus make the route through Atlanta dangerous. Gillmore is expected to send up troops from Savannah to-day to occupy Augusta, and may send a small body of men to this place at once to take possession of the Government property which is known to be here. It becomes desirable for us to move at once, therefore, and the safest route seems to lie between Macon and Augusta, running through Sandersville and thence south and southwest into Central Florida, whence we can strike for the coast, as we may find it practicable, with a view to procuring shipping. We are ready to move as I have said, and should have done so this morning, but Major Moses has just returned from Abbeville, which place he left at 2 p. m. yesterday, and tells me that he saw a quartermaster who left the President at Unionville night before last, and that forage was sent yesterday from Abbeville to Stokesville for the horses of part of the President's cavalry escort, which was to halt there last night. We have thence supposed that the President is in Abbeville to-day and that this town may be on his line of march. If so, he will probably be here to-morrow. If not so, we should be glad to be informed at once in order to determine our own movements. Mrs. Davis is very anxious to see him if she can do so without embarrassing his movements, and I wish to receive his instructions. She is willing to start without seeing him, however, if necessary, and I feel quite confident of my ability to carry her to a place of safety in or beyond Florida. It is not necessary, therefore, for him to change his plans or to allow them to be influenced on our account. I have made arrangements for sufficient specie funds. Please give me by return courier the information you may have which may be useful to me, and please give me your counsel.*

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Burton N. Harrison<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1274-1275.

Abbeville, S. C., May 3, 1865----9 p. m.

*Burton N. Harrison:*

*My Dear Sir: The courier has just delivered yours, and I hasten to reply. I will leave here in an hour, and if my horse can stand it will go on rapidly to Washington. The change of route was, I think, judicious, under the probabilities of the enemy's movements. I can, however, learn nothing reliable, and have to speculate. I think all their efforts are directed for my capture and that my family is safest when farthest from me. I have the bitterest disappointment in regard to the feeling of our troops, and would not have any one I love dependent upon their resistance against an equal force.*

*Many thanks for your kind attentions, and hoping, as time and circumstances will serve, to see you, I am, as ever, your friend,*

*Jeff'n Davis*

*P.S.----Be governed by the movements of the enemy, and take no risk for the purpose of gratifying my desire to see all.<sup>72</sup>*

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As the two different Confederate parties continued their pace in a somewhat westwardly direction, the Federal leadership was receiving more frequent, and more reliable information as to the whereabouts of the fleeing president. The struggle for southern independence which had been going on for four and a half years was quickly coming to an end.

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*Knoxville, Tenn., May 2, 1865----10.45 p. m.*

*Maj. Gen. G. H. Thomas,  
Nashville, Tenn.:*

*Dispatch just received from Colonel Palmer, dated half way from Rutherfordton to Yorkville, April 28. He reports that he is reliably informed that Davis, Breckinridge, Benjamin, and others, escorted by Dibrell's division, about 2,000 strong, and having a number of wagons, said to be loaded with specie, passed through Yorkville, S. C., on*

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<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1277.

*morning of 28th. Colonel Palmer thinks Davis will pass through Laurens and Abbeville, as they left Yorkville on the Union Court-House road, and he should move direct to Laurens, from which he was the same distance as from Laurens to there. Davis would be but one day the start of him.*

*Geo. Stoneman,  
Major-General.<sup>73</sup>*

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Palmer was active in his pursuit of Davis. Stoneman notified General Thomas that; *Two brigades passed through Anderson, S. C., on the 2d instant, with the intention of crossing the Savannah River and getting in front of Davis; the other brigade when last heard from was in hot pursuit.<sup>74</sup> Federal activity was reaching a fever pitch.*

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*HDQRS. Cavalry Corps, Mil. Div. of the Mississippi,  
May 3, 1865.*

*Major-General Thomas:*

*Your dispatch of April 27 was received yesterday. All the forces east of the Chattahoochee have capitulated under the terms of the agreement between Sherman and Johnston. I have sent General Upton to receive the surrender of Augusta and Atlanta and shall send McCook to Tallahassee, Fla., keeping the troops here on lookout for Jeff. Davis. I shall spare no effort to apprehend him. I don't think it practicable for him to get through in any other way than as a fugitive. It is reported that he has already slipped through, though I cannot trace the report to any reliable source. He had time, traveling rapidly and in disguise, to have done so since he was at Charlotte. Grierson had reached Eufaula, Ala., day before yesterday. I have sent him instructions to look out for rebel chief and to go at once, via Montgomery, to Selma and beyond....*

*J. H. Wilson,  
Brevet Major-General.<sup>75</sup>*

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*Nashville, May 3, 1865----3.40 p.m.*

*Maj. Gen. E. R. S. Canby:*

*Your dispatch of the 23d of April was received yesterday. I congratulate you most cordially upon your complete success. I have just heard to-day that Jeff. Davis with his treasure, supposed to be about \$6,000,000 or \$8,000,000, was at Yorkville, S. C., on the 28th of April, and would, it was supposed, pass through Abbeville, S. C., on his way to Georgia, with the view of eventually crossing into Cuba, or attempt to run the gauntlet of*

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<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 570.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 637.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 582-583.

*your and my troops and get across the Mississippi. I do not believe he can cross below. I, therefore, believe he will attempt to escape into Florida, and from thence by the coast to Cuba. If you can communicate with Wilson I will be under obligations if you will send him this information. I have forwarded it to him by two other routes overland. Davis was escorted by 2,000 picked cavalry under Dibrell, and accompanied by Breckinridge, Trenholm, and Wade Hampton.*

*Geo. H. Thomas,  
Major-General.<sup>76</sup>*

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On the late afternoon of May 2, Davis received word that Federal cavalry was approaching. Thinking a smaller group could travel faster, President Davis split from his cavalry escort as he and his party moved out from Abbeville at 10:00 PM in a cold rain.<sup>77</sup> With Davis were Breckinridge, Mallory, Benjamin, Reagan and Bragg, escorted by a small contingent of Confederate cavalry. The group moved through the communities of Mt. Carmel, Willington and Bordeaux before reaching the Savannah River at daybreak. Crossing on the Vienna ponton bridge, the presidential party entered Washington, Georgia on May 4 at 10:00 or 11:00 AM. The cavalry crossed on a pontoon bridge at Petersburg and then found themselves intercepted by Federal cavalry under Palmer; *On reaching there [Petersburg], finding that my command had intercepted them on their way to the Trans-Mississippi Department, Dibrell concluded to surrender.*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 593.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1277.

<sup>78</sup>Dispatch from Colonel William J. Palmer to Major-General Emory Upton in Augusta, Georgia, May 6, 1865; *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 634-635.

As Davis left Washington, his purpose was to go to the south far enough to pass below the points reported to be occupied by Federal troops, and to turn to the west, cross the Chattahooche, and then go on to meet the forces still supposed to be in the fields in Alabama. If, as now seemed possible, there should be no prospect of a successful resistance east of the Mississippi, I intended then to cross to the Trans-Mississippi Department, where I believed Generals E. K. Smith and Magruder would continue to uphold our cause.<sup>79</sup>

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Knoxville, May 4, 1865----12.30 p. m.

Major-General Thomas:

The following dispatch, May 2, just received from General Tillson. From other sources I learn that Davis passed through Concord, north of Charlotte, on the 24th; through Yorkville, south of Charlotte, on the 28th. At his rate of travel he ought to-day to be on or near the Savannah River, and if he has not yet crossed, my cavalry now under Colonel Palmer, a very energetic and capable officer, ought to be up with him. Davis has promised to every man on their arrival in Mexico \$400 in gold. Davis himself is riding in an ambulance. Every man splendidly mounted, but Dibrell's whole command is very much scattered and discouraged.

Geo. Stoneman,  
Major-General.<sup>80</sup>

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The President and his party began to split up as they left Washington. Secretary Mallory remained behind while Secretary Benjamin took an altogether different course. Davis kept as secluded as possible. The night of May 4 was spent encamped between Washington and Warrenton, Georgia. The following night, Davis' party established a camp between Warrenton and Sandersville. As the small party prepared to move out the next morning, they received word

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<sup>79</sup>Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, vol. 2 (New York, 1881) 693.

<sup>80</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 608.



that Federal troops were in the vicinity, and that marauders were pursuing the Davis family. The President and Secretary Reagan left the wagons with a skeleton crew and continued on with their small escort. Federal forces were quickly closing in on Davis. The noose was growing ever so tight as more and more accurate information fell into Federal hands. A number of units were closely on the heels of the Confederate President like a pack of hounds following the scent of a wounded deer.

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*HDQRS. Cavalry Div., District of East Tennessee,  
Athens, Ga., May 5, 1865----4 p. m.*

*General Wilson,  
Commanding Cavalry Corps, Macon:*

*My division (Stoneman's cavalry) has marched here from North Carolina under orders from Secretary of War to intercept Jefferson Davis and cabinet, who, with six million of Confederate specie, are endeavoring to get to the Trans-Mississippi Department. My orders are if I can hear of Davis to follow him up to the ends of the earth if possible and never give him up. General Stoneman states in his order that the cavalry under him, as well as the other forces in the Department of the Cumberland, will, by direction of the Secretary of War, obey no orders unless emanating from General Grant or General Thomas. Also that hostilities will not cease until the President of the United States so proclaims to the world. I was informed of your whereabouts in order that I might communicate if possible. I have had track of Davis and his party all the way from Yorkville, S. C., where I was two days in his rear. By reaching Athens I have thrown my division in front of his cavalry escort, which consisted of Dibrell's two brigades, Ferguson's brigade, Duke's brigade, and a portion of Butler's division of Hampton's cavalry; in all, from 2,000 to 3,000 men. These forces are all evading the terms of Johnston's surrender, and endeavoring as armed organizations to reach the Trans-Mississippi Department, but their men are dropping off every day, and at Abbeville, S. C., on ---- last Davis decided to drop his cavalry escort and push on to Washington, Ga., there to take train by railroad to Atlanta or La Grange. I have positive information to-day from one of his escort that he was at Washington on Wednesday at 9 a. m., and was about to take train for Atlanta with his cabinet and some generals. The specie was coming on to Washington to go by the same route. I have sent a battalion of Tenth Michigan to Madison, with directions to cut the railroad without destroying any bridge, so as to intercept*

*the specie and Davis, if possible, and to communicate by courier with you at Macon. I would suggest that your forces in Alabama endeavor to intercept or pursue. I am sending by courier a cipher dispatch to you from General Thomas. Please let me hear from you.*

*Wm. J. Palmer,  
Colonel and Brevet Brigadier-General, Commanding Division.<sup>81</sup>*

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As they were closing in on their quarry, stories began to spread once more of the mysterious Confederate Treasury. Again, in much of the Federal correspondence, Davis tends to take a backseat to the capture of the "Confederate Gold."

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*Headquarters U. S. Forces,  
Atlanta, Ga., May 5, 1865.*

*General Judah,*

*Commanding U. S. Forces, Kingston, Ga.:*

*General: I have the honor to submit the following item of news which I have just received from an intelligent U. S. soldier, who has been for some time a prisoner. His name is Michael Lightner, Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania Infantry. This soldier left Washington, Ga., day before yesterday at 4 p. m., and arrived here at 12 m. to-day. He states that Jefferson Davis was at Washington, Ga., on the 3d, and that he (Davis) left that point at 12 m. of the same day. Said soldier fell in with Davis and his cavalry at the Catawba River, N. C., at the railroad crossing, where Davis remained two days. He then marched in company with them for three days, passing through Chesterville, Abbeville, and thence to Washington. He represents Generals Bragg and Breckinridge in company; also Wheeler's cavalry, 1,500 strong. The cavalry refused to go farther unless paid, whereupon they were paid \$30 each in gold, with the promise of \$100 each when they should cross the Mississippi River. He is suppose to have \$15,000,000 in coin, and wagons, perhaps fifty. I have no mounted men here as yet, but will have my regiment to-morrow evening.*

*I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,*

*B. B. Eggleston,  
Colonel First Ohio Cavalry, Commanding Post.<sup>82</sup>*

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<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 615.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 622.

Knoxville, May 11, 1865.

Brig. Gen. W. D. Whipple:

*Dispatch from General Palmer, Athens, Ga., dated May 6, 1865: The substance of the dispatch is that General Palmer, with the cavalry division, succeeded in crossing the Savannah River at Hatton's Ford, north of pontoon bridge at Petersburg, mouth of Broad River, Ga., where Davis, Breckinridge, most of the cabinet, Governor Harris, and a large number of gents crossed the same river. The party with Davis finding that Palmer had got in advance of them, cutting them off from the Mississippi, broke up into small detachments, and are scattered over the country. It is supposed the specie or portion of it was distributed among the officers and men secreted. Breckinridge, with about 500 men, had gone toward Macon, it is said, to surrender at that point. Dibrell, with a large portion of the cavalry, is still back on the Savannah River waiting to surrender. Davis, when last heard from, had left Washington by railroad with a small party for Atlanta, but finding Palmer had cut the road at Union Point he went southwest on horseback. He has a small party of about thirty-five men with him, and is traveling incognito. The men he started south with are scattered over the country, and a large number of them have been captured and informally paroled. Prisoners state that the treasure, before it crossed the Savannah River, was contained in 100 boxes filled with gold and 60 kegs filled with silver. Palmer has communicated with Wilson's cavalry, giving him all the information he has, and hopes to prevent Davis from getting west of the Mississippi, as his forces are well distributed, guarding all fords and main roads.*

Geo. Stoneman,  
Major-General.<sup>83</sup>

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In a report to Edwin M. Stanton in Washington, D. C. by J. H. Wilson, written from Macon, Georgia on the afternoon of May 6, Wilson stated;

*Davis was at Washington, Ga., with Bragg and Breckinridge on the night of the 3d and morning of the 4th. He is reported to have been escorted by seven small brigades of cavalry, commanded by Duke, Ferguson, Vaughn, Lewis, Dibrell, and Williams, supposed to be between 2,000 and 3,000 men, many of the men deserting and but few willing to go. I have authorized General Upton to offer \$100,000 reward, to be paid out of the booty to be captured, for to apprehension of Davis. One of our scouts says Davis left Washington with only six men. This I regard as probable. He can't possibly get through the country with an escort. Upton's division will be at Atlanta to-morrow night; a part of it this afternoon. Our scouts are already on every road in North Georgia; by to-night I will have a complete watch in every part of the State as far down as Hawkinsville, on the Ocmulgee. Once on the trail my orders are to follow to the Mississippi River.*

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<sup>83</sup>Stoneman's dispatch included in General George Thomas' report to General U. S. Grant, May 11, 1865; *Ibid.*, p. 717.

*Grierson left Eufaula day before yesterday, traveling over a wide stretch of country via Montgomery toward Mississippi. He is on the lookout also. Palmer's cavalry is at Athens, Ga., and troops from the Carolinas following close upon Davis, so close as to break up a council of his officers at Cokesbury, S. C., on the 2d.<sup>84</sup>*

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That same evening Wilson sent a dispatch to Major-General J. M. Schofield:

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*HDQRS. Cavalry Corps, Mil. Div. of the Mississippi*

*Macon, Ga., May 6, 1865---12 m.*

*Maj. Gen. J. M. Schofield,*

*Raleigh, N. C.:*

*Your telegram of 3 p. m. yesterday received. One boot load of supplies have reached Augusta. I am parolling all troops in State, including the Governor and militia, and gathering arms and stores here. I am making every possible disposition to apprehend Jeff. Davis and his cabinet. General Upton telegraphs that Davis left Washington, Ga., yesterday or day before yesterday morning, with six men. Had 150 when he arrived. My scouts from Greensborough send in a similar report, and the country is full of rumors in regard to it. My own impression is that we have yet no definite clue to his movements, and therefore I am filling the country full of scouts and watching every crossing and road from the mountains of Georgia to Hawkinsville, on the Ocmulgee. If Mr. Davis is a fugitive and well mounted, it will be exceedingly difficult to stop him, but I will spare no effort. I have authorized General Upton, whose division is marching to Atlanta, to offer a reward of \$100,000, to be paid out of the booty if captured. I have just learned from a very bright lad of Duke's brigade that at noon of the 2d Mr. Davis, with Bragg and Breckinridge, escorted by seven small brigades of cavalry, Duke's, Ferguson's, Vaughn's, Lewis', Dibrell's, and Williams', were at Cokesbury, S. C., twenty miles north of the Savannah River. They had about 300 wagons. Mr. Davis was guarded by about seventy-five officers who had volunteered for that purpose. The troops were supposed to number*

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<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 628.

*about 3,000, but were deserting very rapidly. The leading officers were to have held a council at Cokesbury, but the approach of our troops from the north broke it up. I have put Grierson on his guard; he is moving to Montgomery and Mississippi over a wide extent of country....*

*J. H. Wilson,*

*Brevet Major-General.*<sup>85</sup>

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On May 7, J. H. Wilson reported from Macon, Georgia, to General Schofield; *Davis' escort has been crowded so closely on all sides that it has been disbanded. Three regiments have given themselves up to us here, and many others are surrendering in Northern Georgia. Davis himself and a small party, variously reported from six to forty men, are supposed to have turned south from Washington.*<sup>86</sup>

Because of the difficulties Federal forces were having in locating a party of men and wagons in such a small populated region, questions and speculation began to arise as to whether the President had not already slipped through their fingers. Florida seemed to be the obvious assumption.

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*Headquarters District of Florida,  
Fourth Separate Brigade, Dept. of the South,  
Jacksonville, Fla., May 8, 1865*

*Maj. Gen. Q. A. Gillmore,*

*Commanding Department of the South:*

*General: From information that I have gathered I am inclined to think Davis is or has made his way to South Florida, as far as Tampa, or still farther south.*

*Some suspicious characters passed on the railroad to Gainesville about ten days since. They had a life-boat and some boxes, supposed to be specie, and offered \$1,000 in gold to be conveyed to Tampa or Sarasota Bay. Senator Harris, of Missouri, was of the*

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<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 629.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 648.

*party. Some said also that Davis was, but I think not. There were sailors in the party, two pilots, one of whom was named Johnston. It is probable that the information is exaggerated. There is a Captain Johnston, a follower of Senator Mallory, formerly of Key West, who is well acquainted with the west coast of Florida, and all of the Keys. He is the man that Mallory would select for such business. I have suspected that Davis would take this route, and have been on the lookout for some information. I presume that this is the party gone forward to make arrangements. My reasons for thinking Davis would take this route are as follows: First. That of the Mississippi is essentially closed to him, or exceedingly dangerous. Second. Mallory and his followers have perfect knowledge of this route. There are passes through the Keys that are only known to a few. Third. They can hide in safety in South Florida for years. Fourth. By going in the life-boat from Tampa to Sarasota they can, by a short "Haul-over," enter Charlotte Harbor, and lie concealed, or find their way down the coast to the Keys. I have written to Captain Stillwell, U. S. Navy, giving him the information, such as it is, and authorizing him to give it to the officer of the navy commanding at Key West.*

*Very respectfully, your obedient servant,*

*I. Vogdes,*

*Brigadier-General, Commanding.<sup>87</sup>*

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*Macon, Ga., May 10, 1865----3 p. m.*

*Major-General Sherman:*

*Captain Abraham, of General Upton's division, yesterday received the surrender of two brigades of rebel cavalry 2,000 strong, at Washington, Ga., including Generals Vaughn, Dibrell, Elzey, Williams, Lewis, Gilmer, and Lawton. General Croxton is now engaged in paroling Ferguson's brigade at Forsyth. The balance of the rebel cavalry which started as Davis' escort has either been paroled or gone home. General Vaughn told Upton that he had received positive orders to escort Davis to the Mississippi, but on his arrival at Washington determined to go no farther. The money that Davis had with him -- doubtless overestimated -- has been paid to his troops and scattered through the country about Washington. Lieutenant Yoeman, a very energetic and capable officer, reports that Davis, on night of the 7th, tried to cross the Chattahoochee at Warsaw, but lost his trail....*

*J. H. Wilson,*

*Brevet Major-General.<sup>88</sup>*

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<sup>87</sup>OR, Ser. I, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 444-445.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 702-703.

Davis intended to see his family before continuing the journey to the west, overtaking them about midnight on May 6 about six miles north of Dublin, Georgia. The President remained with his family the next day as they continued their flight. As a heavy rain was falling, the group took refuge in a deserted house on the outskirts of Abbeville, Georgia on the evening of May 8, but receiving word of the close proximity of Federal troops just twenty-five miles away in Hawkinsville they determined to break camp and proceed to Irwinville. The party next halted at about 5:00 PM on May 9 about one and a half miles north of the town, feeling secure that they had placed enough distance between themselves and any Federal pursuit.

As the party slept that night unbeknownst to them, two Federal forces were moving toward them from two different directions. Early the next morning the group was awakened by the firing between Colonel Benjamin D. Pritchard's 4th Michigan Cavalry and Colonel Henry Harnden's 1st Wisconsin Cavalry. The two Federal forces, moving from opposite directions toward Davis's party ran into each other. Neither force expected the other and when they stumbled through the darkness into each other they both began firing thinking they were confronted by the President's escort. The sharp encounter left several casualties on both sides, but the 4th Michigan captured President Davis, his escort and those with him in the early morning hours of May 10, 1865 near Irwinville, Georgia.

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*Headquarters Fourth Michigan Cavalry,  
Abbeville, Ga., May 11, 1865.*

*Capt. T. W. Scott,*

*Actg. Asst. Adjt. Gen., 2d Div., Cav. Corps, Mil. Div. of the Miss.:*

*SIR: I have the honor to report that at daylight yesterday at Irwinville I surprised and captured Jeff. Davis and family, together with his wife's sister and brother, his postmaster-general (Reagan), his private secretary (Colonel Harrison), Colonel Johnston, aide de-camp on Jeff.'s staff, Colonel Morris, Colonel Lubbock, Lieutenant Hathaway, also several unimportant names and a train of 5 wagons and 3 ambulances,*

*making a most perfect success had not a most painful mistake occurred by which the Fourth Michigan and First Wisconsin collided, which cost us 2 men killed and Lieutenant Boutelle wounded through the arm, in the Fourth Michigan, and 3 men wounded in the First Wisconsin. This occurred just at daylight, after we had captured the camp, by the advance of the First Wisconsin not properly answering our challenge, by which they were mistaken for the enemy. I returned to this point last night. Shall move on to Macon without awaiting orders from you as directed, feeling that the whole object of the expedition is accomplished. It will take me at least three days to reach Macon. We are seventy-five miles out, and our stock much wearied. I hope to reach Hawkinsville to-night.*

*I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,*

*B. D. Pritchard,*

*Lieutenant-Colonel Fourth Michigan Cavalry.<sup>89</sup>*

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*Macon, Ga., May 13, 1865----9.30 a. m.*

*Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War:*

*Lieutenant-Colonel Harden, commanding the First Wisconsin Cavalry, has just arrived from Irwinville. He struck Davis' trail at Dublin, Laurens County, on the evening of the 7th, and followed him closely day and night through the pine wilderness of Alligator Creek and Gum Swamp by Abbeville to Irwinville. At Abbeville Colonel Harden met Colonel Pritchard with 150 picked men and horse of the Fourth Michigan. Colonel Harden followed the trail directly south, while Colonel Pritchard, having fresher horses, pushed down the Ocmulgee toward Hopewell, and thence by House Creek to Irwinville, arriving there midnight of the 9th. Davis had not arrived, but from the people Colonel Pritchard learned that his party had camped two miles north of the town. The colonel made his dispositions and surrounded the camp before daylight. Harden had camped at 9 o'clock within two miles, as he afterward learned, from the camp, the trail being too indistinct to follow. He pushed on at 3 a. m., and had gone but little more than a mile when his advance were fired upon by the men of the Fourth Michigan. A sharp fight ensued, both parties exhibiting the greatest determination. Fifteen minutes elapsed before the mistake was discovered. The firing of this skirmish was the first warning that Davis received. The captors report that he hastily put on one of Mrs. Davis' dresses and started for the woods, closely pursued by our men, who at first thought him a woman, but seeing his boots while running suspected his sex at once. The race was a short one, and the rebel President was soon brought to bay. He brandished a bowie-knife of elegant pattern, and showed signs of battle, but yielded promptly to the persuasion of the Colt revolvers without compelling our men to fire. He expressed great indignation at the energy with which he was pursued, saying that he had believed our Government more magnanimous than to hunt down women and children. Mrs. Davis remarked to Colonel Harden, after the excitement was all over, that "the men had better not provoke the President or he*

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<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 721-722.



*might hurt some of them." Mr. Reagan behaves himself with becoming dignity and resignation. The party were evidently making for the coast. I look for them here by 3 p. m., and shall send Davis, A. H. Stephens, and Clay toward Savannah. A boat is now waiting at Augusta. What must I do with the women and children?*

*J. H. Wilson,  
Brevet Major-General.<sup>90</sup>*

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Thomas offered more details in his official report of June 1, 1865:

*Mr. Secretary Stanton telegraphed to me from Washington on the 27th of April, and through me to my sub-commanders, to disregard all orders except those coming from General Grant or myself, and to resume hostilities at once, sparing no pains to press the enemy firmly, at the same time notifying me that General Sherman's negotiations with Johnston had been disapproved. Based on that notification the following dispositions were made with a view of capturing President Davis and party, who, on the cessation of the armistice, had started south from Charlotte, N.C., with an escort variously estimated at from 500 to 2,000 picked cavalry, to endeavor to make his way to the Trans-Mississippi. General Stoneman was directed to send the brigades of Miller, Brown, and Palmer, then in Western North Carolina, to concentrate at Anderson, S. C., and to scout down the Savannah River to Augusta, Ga., if possible, in search of the fugitives. General Gillem being absent, Colonel Palmer, Fifteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, took command of the expedition. By rapid marching they succeeded in reaching and crossing the Savannah River in advance of Davis, and so disposed the command as to effectually cut his retreat toward Mississippi, and forced him to alter his route toward the Atlantic coast. General Wilson, at Macon, Ga., was also notified of the action taken at Washington on General Sherman's negotiations with Johnston, and he was directed to resume hostilities at once -- especially to endeavor to intercept Davis....*

*With characteristic energy, Generals Wilson and Palmer had handbills printed and profusely circulated in all directions throughout the country, offering the President's reward for the apprehension of Davis, and nothing could exceed the watchfulness exhibited by their commands.*

*On the 3d of May, Davis dismissed his escort at Washington, Ga., and accompanied by about half a dozen followers, set out to endeavor to pass our lines. Nothing definite was learned of the whereabouts of the fugitives until on the evening of the 7th of May, the First Wisconsin Cavalry, Lieut. Col. Henry Harnden commanding, with 150 men, ascertained at Dublin, on the Oconee River, fifty-five miles southeast of Macon, that Davis and party had crossed the river at that point during the day, and had moved out on the Jacksonville road. At daylight on the 8th Colonel Harnden continued the pursuit, finding the camp occupied by Davis on the evening previous, between the forks of Alligator Creek, which was reached just four hours after it had been vacated. The trail was pursued as far as the ford over Gum Swamp Creek, Pulaski County,*

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<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 743.

Lieutenant Hathaway, 14th Kentucky  
Cavalry  
Midshipman Howell, Confederate States  
Navy  
Private W. W. Monroe, 14th Kentucky  
Cavalry  
Private J. Messick, 14th Kentucky Cavalry  
Private Sanders, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private Walbert, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private Baker, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private Smith, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private Heath, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private Elston, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private J. W. Farley, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry  
Private J. G. Tyler, Co. E, 15th Mississippi  
Infantry

Only two individuals escaped; Captain Stephen Elliott Barnwell of South Carolina eluded his captors by climbing a tree and hiding among the branches. Colonel John Taylor Wood engineered his escape by bribing a guard with a gold piece.

General Braxton Bragg surrendered on May 10 and was paroled. He later died in 1876. Basil Duke died in 1904 after a distinguished career in the law. General Ferguson practiced law in Mississippi and died in 1917. John C. Breckinridge, Secretary of War, was able to make his escape to Canada by way of Cuba and Europe. He returned to Kentucky in 1869 and died there in 1875. Stephen Mallory, Secretary of the Navy, was arrested in La Grange, Georgia and imprisoned in Fort LaFayette, New York until 1886. After his release he went to Florida where he died in 1873. Judah Benjamin made his way to Florida and the Keys. By way of Cuba, he managed to escape to Great Britain. He died in Paris in 1884.

Jefferson Davis spent two years imprisoned at Fortress Monroe in Virginia on charges of treason for which he was never tried. Following his release on May 13, 1867, Davis lived out his remaining years in Mississippi, never seeking to regain his United States citizenship. Davis died in 1889. Immediately after the war and in the years and decades following he has become the preeminent symbol of the *Lost Cause*.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Thomas, son of a Presbyterian minister, was born of German, Welsh, Scottish, and Scots-Irish ancestry. Raised in the Carolinas, he earned his BA degree in history from Mars Hill College and his MA in history from Winthrop University. His specialty is military history with emphasis on the early wars in the South: the American Revolution and the Civil War. For the past several years he has been involved in researching the early settlement of the Carolina Backcountry by the Scots-Irish and their involvement in the American Revolution.

Sam is employed as the Curator of Manuscripts for the Historical Center of York County in York, South Carolina and is also involved as an Adjunct professor of history at York Technical College in Rock Hill. He is President of the Greater Clover Historical Society in Clover, South Carolina and serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the York County Historical and Genealogical Society. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Confederation of South Carolina Local Historical Societies where he serves as the Representative of District 3 encompassing Chester, Lancaster, Union, and York counties. He is co-chairman of FEIS CHLOBHAIR: A Clover Kintra Gatherin, a Scottish and Scots-Irish Festival in Clover, South Carolina, and is co-author of the forthcoming book *A Rising Star of Promise: The Civil War Correspondence of David Jackson Logan, 1861-1864*. He is married and he and his wife, Lynn, live in Clover.

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