



Joshua Brown,
Confederate
Hero and True
Son of
Tennessee

An Object in Heroism

Jacob Talley Bailey and John D. Caulfield



JOSHUA BROWN CONFEDERATE HERO AND TRUE SON OF TENNESSEE



Joshua Brown
1843-1924

This is the story of Joshua Brown, a Confederate intelligence operative and southern civil war hero from Clarksville, Tennessee. Jacob Talley Bailey, a Kentucky native and Mr. Brown's cousin, provided all the research involved in this story. He is related to Mr. Brown on the maternal side of Mr. Brown's family.

Joshua Brown (1843–1924) lived a full life, despite having knocked on death's door more than once. Although his name is associated primarily with an even more well-known figure in Southern civil war history, he was a true hero in his own right, having risked his life as an undercover scout working behind enemy lines for the Confederacy during the Civil War. This is his story.

-John D. Caulfield, September 2012

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EARLY DAYS

Mr. Brown was born on Christmas Day, 1843 in Clarksville, Tennessee to Joshua and Evalina (Bailey) Brown. His paternal ancestors came from Northern Ireland, settling initially in Pennsylvania and Maryland. His father, also named Joshua Brown, coincidentally was also born on a Christmas Day, eventually settled in Clarksville, Tennessee, where he met and married Joshua's mother. He was a haberdashery merchant and farmer in the Clarksville area for more than 60 years. Joshua's maternal ancestors, the Baileys, had been engaged for many years in the tobacco and farming business around Clarksville, and owned several plantations.

The younger Joshua Brown initially attended a private school in Clarksville, subsequently becoming a student at what is now known as Rhodes College. He was a serious student; however, the Civil War was heating up all around him, and Joshua could not ignore it.

CIVIL WAR

Joshua was studying at the university in February of 1862, during the acceleration of the Civil War, when Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant and the Union's newly formed "Army of the Cumberland" overthrew both the Confederacy's Fort Donelson and Fort Henry, Tennessee, thereby taking control of the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers. These forts had been established to protect Nashville, one of the Confederacy's most active and prolific centers of commerce and industry. Up until its capitulation to the Union forces, Nashville's factories had been pumping out supplies and equipment for the Rebel army. Then they were either closed down or turned into Federal manufacturing operations.

In short, the Union army campaign in the Western Theater, culminating in the unconditional surrender of Fort Donelson on February 6, 1862, was a huge victory for the Union forces and a catastrophic loss for the Confederacy. It assured that the state of Kentucky would remain in the Union, made it clear that Nashville belonged to the Union, and opened up the state of Tennessee for an advance by the Federal army utilizing both the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. So significant was this victory that as a result, Grant gained considerable stature in the Union's Western Theater of the war. He was promoted to Major General and given the nickname, "Unconditional Surrender Grant" in recognition of the terms of surrender he gave the Confederate commander at Ft. Donelson.

After the falls simultaneously of Fort Donelson, and sister Confederate installation Ft. Henry 12 miles away, the first town captured in Tennessee by the Union army was Joshua's hometown of Clarksville. So unnerved was the town mayor that he ordered all the town's whiskey be poured into the gutters lest Grant's troops drink it all and caused even more mayhem.

Joshua, as many young Southern men did at the time, joined the Rebel forces in the fall of 1862. Specifically, he joined the 2nd Kentucky Cavalry, Confederate States of America, (CSA), as a private under a Colonel Woodward. A few months later, on December 31, 1862, he fought under Confederate General Braxton Bragg at the Battle of Stone's River, also known as the Battle of Murfreesboro (Tennessee), as Southerners called it. This was a three day, particularly bloody, pivotal battle in which there was more casualties per capita than in any other battle in the Civil War. General Bragg, who had a reputation of being a demanding and cantankerous commander, after several attempts to repel the Union forces, retreated first, thereby giving the victory to the Federals. He was harshly criticized for not putting up a more effective fight by Confederate president Jefferson Davis and many of his peers.

During the battle, Joshua was captured and sent to a penitentiary in Nashville where he was held with

another 2000 Confederate prisoners of war awaiting shipment to the North. While there, Joshua made his escape by scaling a wall and slipping out of the city. He subsequently returned to the Rebel ranks by joining CSA General Nathan Bedford Forrest's forces camped at Columbia, Tennessee.

A few weeks later, after participating with General Forrest's forces in the Battle of Chickamauga, Joshua was assigned to detached service under the chief of the secret service in the Confederates' Army of Tennessee. This detachment, under General Bragg and known as "Coleman's Scouts," was led by Colonel Henry B. Shaw, who was sometimes known as Dr. Shaw. Masquerading as a crippled herb doctor, he also used the pseudonym of "Captain Coleman." His detachment of scouts operated behind enemy lines within a hundred-mile wide band running from the Gulf of Mexico to Louisville, Kentucky, but their primary area of scouting activity involved middle Tennessee, especially south of Nashville. They operated much like the present-day Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives, engaging in covert, undercover operations within hostile territory, often employing disguises and false identities. Because they were familiar with the area, Joshua and several other members of Coleman's Scouts, including 22-year old Samuel Davis, were sent by General Bragg into middle Tennessee to gather all the information possible concerning the movements of the Federal Army. The mission was deemed to be very dangerous, and the men were told that it would be "every man for himself" if they were captured. A number of the Scouts were captured and/or killed over the next few days.

CAPTURED

On the afternoon of November 19, 1863, while on their intelligence-gathering mission, Joshua and Davis were captured by Federal troops, specifically the Kansas Seventh Cavalry or "Kansas Jay Hawkers." Captured by Federal troops, they figured their time had come because spies were generally treated more harshly than regular soldiers when captured. This was one reason they referred to themselves as scouts, rather than spies, although technically their roles were basically the same.

Both men were searched thoroughly and no incriminating evidence was found on Joshua because he had memorized the considerable amount of information he had. Sam Davis, however, was not so fortunate. Their Federal captors found a number of documents in Davis's saddle seat and a letter to General Bragg in one of Davis's boots. These documents detailed troop movements, maps, fortifications at Nashville and other points, as well as an exact report of the Federal Army's strength in Tennessee. This was obviously incriminating information and basically spelled doom for Davis.

They were taken to Pulaski, Tennessee, about 15 miles away and put in the jail which was under Federal control. Their immediate commander, Colonel Shaw or "Captain Coleman" had also been captured earlier and was already confined at the same jail. Major General Grenville M. Dodge, the Federal Divisional Commander, was also headquartered in Pulaski. In light of the incriminating documents Davis had been discovered with, he was taken to General Dodge's headquarters for further questioning. Because the information Davis had was so accurate, General Dodge was convinced that he had a traitor within his own ranks. He wanted to know how Davis got the information and to whom he was supposed to give it to. He offered Davis his freedom, a horse, and safe passage back to Rebel lines if he revealed this information. When Davis refused to provide the information rather than betray his commander, General Dodge had him returned to the jail and ordered a court-martial so Davis could be tried for spying. Davis was subsequently found guilty of spying and sentenced to be hanged between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. the following Friday.

On Friday morning, November 27, 1863, Joshua watched from his jail cell door window as his cohort, Davis was on his way to the gallows sitting on his own coffin in the back of an open horse-drawn wagon. As the wagon passed the guardhouse where Joshua was being held, he witnessed Davis giving him and the other rebel prisoners of war, including Captain Coleman, a goodbye salute. Even after the noose had

already been placed around his neck, Davis was offered one last chance to be set free by divulging where and from whom he got his classified information. Davis refused to do so stating, "If I had a thousand lives, I would lose them all here before I would betray my friends or the confidence of my informer." With that, Davis stepped on the trap door and the sentence was carried out. Joshua was reportedly the last person to shake Davis' hand before he was executed.

Sam Davis is considered to be a martyr to this day, especially in and around Pulaski, Tennessee, the site of his execution. He is known as "Tennessee's Boy Hero," and it is reported that even many Union soldiers who admired his courage and resolve, wept when he died.

Amazingly, after the war was over, the man who sentenced him to death, General Dodge was one of the chief advocates and contributors for a monument to commemorate Davis' loyalty and sacrifice. The monument stands today on the courthouse lawn in Pulaski. Another monument to him stands on the Tennessee State Capitol grounds in Nashville.

PRISONER OF WAR

The next day after Sam Davis' execution, Joshua, along with Captain Coleman, and the other Confederate prisoners of war held in Pulaski were forced to march at bayonet point north to Nashville, where they were imprisoned for two weeks at the same old penitentiary Joshua had escaped from approximately a year earlier. Although he was intent on replicating his earlier feat, he was not so fortunate this time around. Their trip north would not be interrupted.



Figure 1 – Penitentiary Guard Tower

Joshua and the other men with whom he had been captured with were transferred without incident to Louisville, Kentucky, Chicago, Illinois, and then to the infamous Federal prisoner of war camp at Rock Island, Illinois, near the Mississippi River, arriving on December 9, 1863. It would be his home for the next 4 months.

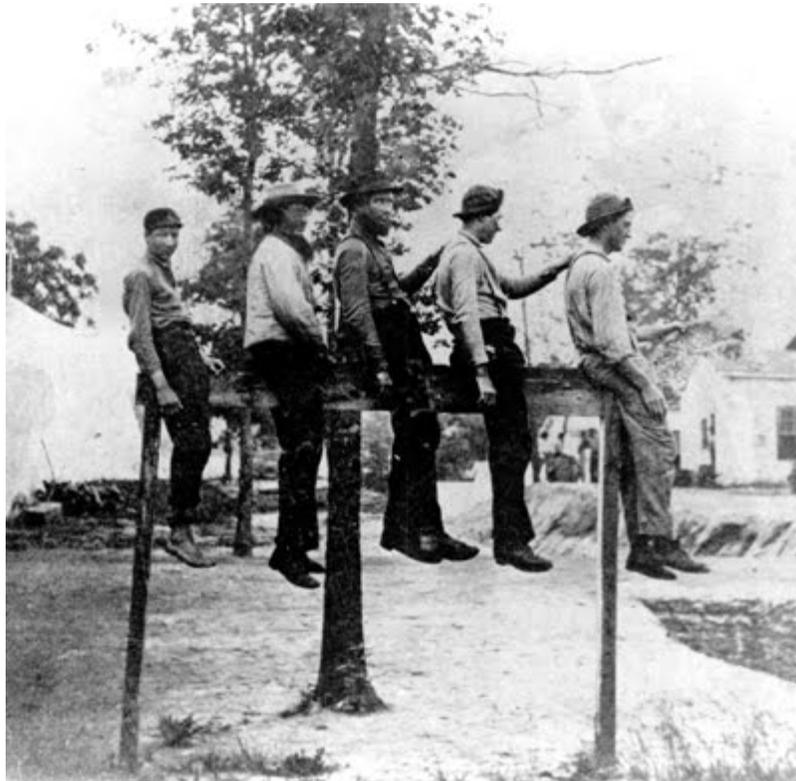


Figure 2 – “Riding the Mule” at Rock Island Prison



Figure 3 - A Prison Barracks at Rock Island



Figure 4 - Rock Island Prison Compound

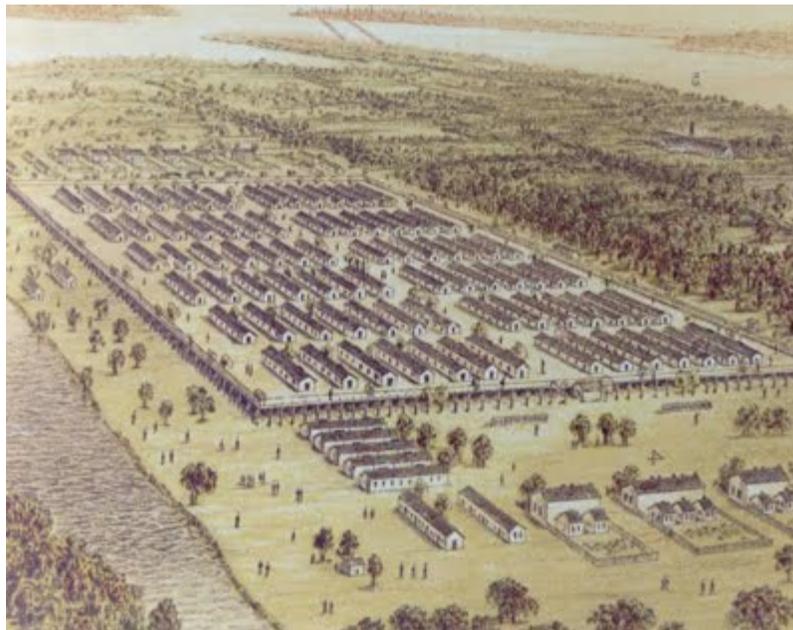


Figure 5 - Rock Island, Illinois, a Federal Prison where Joshua Brown was held from December 9, 1863 until April 6, 1864

The prison at Rock Island was new at the time and reportedly was constructed primarily of boards standing on end. It was very cold at that time of the year in Illinois, and the prisoners complained of the cold, the bad food, the lack of proper medical treatment and the brutal treatment at the hands of the guards. One common form of torture was to force the detainees to "ride the mule," which consisted of sitting uncomfortable for extended periods of time on a saw-horse like device so high off the ground that those being punished could not reach the ground with their feet.

Many prisoners died of smallpox and pneumonia. In addition, because the standard food ration consisted of eight ounces of bread and four ounces of salt beef daily, plus a pint of beans every ten days, almost half of the 8,000 prisoners eventually held at Rock Island became victims of scurvy. Rock Island was a miserable place indeed and there were many unsuccessful attempted escapes. Later compared with the equally infamous Confederate prisoner of war camp, Andersonville, Georgia (also known as Camp Sumter), where over 13,000 Union POW's out of the 45,000 held there died of disease, abuse, starvation or execution.

FREEDOM

On April 6, 1864, due to overcrowding, the commandant at Rock Island was ordered to transfer 1,000 prisoners to another prison in Elmira, New York. Joshua was on the list to go. He had made a vow to himself to never go into another prison, and somehow had obtained five dollars and a civilian suit of clothes from a friend. As the transport train he was on neared a station along the way, Joshua made his escape by leaping out of the window. After the prisoner transport train pulled out of the station, Joshua bought a ticket



Figure 6 - Joshua Brown, Major in Confederate Veterans Organization

to Chicago on a passenger train. Arriving in Chicago and checked into the leading hotel in the city at the time, the Sherman House, under an assumed name (John Tyson from Louisville, Kentucky). He then entered the dining room for breakfast, desperately wanting a good meal at last! While he was eating, a Federal general in charge of the division stationed in Chicago came in and sat at the other end of Joshua's table. The general engaged Joshua in conversation and even shared a special fish dish with him, never suspecting Joshua to be an escaped Rebel prisoner of war. It was a very close call that he never forgot.

A week later Joshua traveled to Detroit, Michigan, making his way first to Windsor, Canada and later to London, Canada. He remained safely in Canada, where he had a good number of friends, until the American Civil War was over. In July 1865, a few months after General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia, he returned home to Clarksville to visit his mother.

THE POST-WAR YEARS

After a few months in Clarksville, Joshua moved to Nashville, where he was engaged as a businessman for approximately five years. In 1870, as many of his peers did at the time, he moved to New York City, living in lower Manhattan on the corner of West 7th Street and 6th Avenue.



Figure 7 - Joshua Brown, U.S. Passport

He became the manager of the cotton exchange division for a Wall Street banking and brokerage firm, Macy and Pendleton. He remained in New York working on Wall Street for over 40 years as a commodities broker. During his time in New York, Joshua became deeply involved with the United Confederate Veterans' Association and attended many of their social events, known as the "Annual Dixie Dinner Dances." He also contributed articles frequently to a monthly publication named, "The Confederate Veteran". Joshua's February 1909 article in that publication was an eloquent description of the execution of Sam Davis and further solidified Davis' stature as a true hero. In 1901 Joshua was awarded the prestigious Southern Cross Medal. He was also conferred the rank of Major in the United Confederate Veterans' Association.

In 1911, at the age of 68, Joshua returned to the South and once again made his residence in Nashville. In June of 1912, he traveled back to Pulaski for the first time in almost 50 years to visit

the scene where he was held in jail and his cohort, Sam Davis, was hanged. He also posed for a photograph in front of a statue of Davis on the courthouse lawn. In 1913 Joshua co-authored a book with a W.T. Richardson entitled *Historic Pulaski*, in which he recounted his involvement with Sam Davis and Davis' execution in 1863. Also, in 1915 he appeared in a silent era movie entitled, "Sam Davis, the Hero of Tennessee" which depicted the Coleman Scouts. He was rightly considered to be a celebrity around Nashville.

When the Lord calls up Earth's heroes
To stand before His face;
O many a name unknown to fame,
Shall ring from that high place;
Then out of a grave in the Southland,
At the just God's call and bark,
Shall one man rise with fearless eyes,
With a rope about his neck,
O Southland! bring your hero,
And add your wreath, O South!
Let Clary claim the hero's name,
And tell the world his worth.
—Ella Wheeler Wilton.





The Girl and the Boy in
green and blue, Sam Davis in
brown, white, and blue, are
from the movie.

Monument at Stone Bridge,
Nashville, Tennessee, the
place where Sam Davis was
buried. The stone is
white in the center.

— Snodgrass Theatre —
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16th
MATINEE 2:00 and 3:15 NIGHT 7:00 and 8:15
FIVE BIG REELS
Admission 5c and 10c

SAM DAVIS

The Hero of Tennessee

A THRILLING STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR
IN FIVE REELS



SAM DAVIS, THE SCOUT

CONNER PRODUCING CO.
INCORPORATED
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The Scenario by LILLIAN NICHOLSON SHEARON
Photography by OTTO C. GILMORE
Director, S. I. CONNER

Figure 8 – Poster for the 1915 Silent Movie in which Joshua Brown appeared



Singing Good-bye to the Folk at Stone
Bridge Leaving for the Front



Reminders of Coleman's Story



The Captives of Sam Davis

SAM DAVIS—The Hero of Tennessee.

"SAM DAVIS" is the most remarkable war drama ever filmed. In these stirring times of war and rumors of war the story of Sam Davis furnishes a lesson in patriotism and lofty integrity of the highest value to the youth of America. While it is the story of a Southern hero, the war atmosphere is merely incidental; it is the depicting of a noble youth who did RIGHT under the most trying circumstances which grips the heart and soul of all beholders and sends them back to the theatre again and again to be thrilled, entertained and uplifted by this beautiful photography.

¶ Sam Davis left school in order when there was a call to arms in the South. He fought two years as a member of the First Tennessee Regiment, Infantry, and was still a boy in his teens when made a scout under the leadership of the famous "Coleman." It has made his way to General Bragg with important papers and documents. Sam was captured by the Federals and taken to Gen. Dodge's headquarters near Paducah, Tennessee. On his person were found not only papers describing minutely the Federal operations, but also complete plans of the Federal fortifications in Nashville. This pointed to a traitor in Dodge's own command, America to find this traitor and to locate the renegade Coleman, Sam was repeatedly offered life and freedom if he would only give the desired information. From the moment his capture, until he stood on the scaffold, there was never the hint of a struggle in the boy's mind; in spite of blows, threats and pleadings, he would not waver. With the rope about his neck he was offered pardon if he would only give the traitor's name, and he answered the words which are destined to ring down the ages: "I would rather die a thousand deaths than to betray a friend or give the name of my informant."

¶ Under the same rules of war there was nothing left for the Federals but to execute the boy; they had all learned to love and respect, and the soldiers in blue went like children as the fearless boy in gray signed the protest intended to do his duty.

¶ The tender love story, the thrilling scout work, the dramatic cleverness of a beautiful and fascinating woman spy, combined with the noblest sacrifice in the annals of war, make of "Sam Davis" the most gripping spectacle ever filmed on the screen. It is a serious, a lesson, and entertainment all in one and certainly a play for the family.



Sam's Sister and Parents



Heroic English Gentlewoman Spy



Trial by Court-martial



Sam's Sweetheart and Her Mother Asking
Permission to Visit Him in Prison



The Sweetheart's Last Good-bye—
but the Hero will live forever in Polly's loving heart

He continued living in Nashville during most of the year, travelling to Palm Beach, Florida, annually to spend the winter at a residential hotel. On February 21, 1924, at the age of 80, Joshua died while asleep in bed at a hotel in Palm Beach. His body was transported back to Clarksville, Tennessee, where he was buried in his uniform on February 25, 1924 in the Riverview Cemetery, along with approximately 180 other Confederate veterans.



Figure 9 – Joshua Brown’s Final Resting Place in Riverview Cemetery, Clarksville, Tennessee.

EPILOGUE

Joshua Brown’s Mothers homeplace in Clarksville now forms part of the golf course at the Clarksville Country Club. Although Joshua was never married nor had any offspring, his brother, Jessie Bailey Brown, was the grandfather of Judge Bailey Brown, a Federal judge in Memphis, Tennessee. Judge Brown died in October 2004.

As a side note, it is ironic that after the war, Colonel Shaw (or “Captain Coleman”), went into partnership with John Davis, the hero Sam Davis’ father, to start a steamboat company to ply for business on the Mississippi River. Shortly after they opened for business, the boat they co-owned exploded, killing both of them immediately. Their bodies were never recovered.

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