

## 9. Tennessee Cousins in the Union Army

While brothers, Elijah and Nathan Grisham, were fighting for the Confederate States of America in the Texas Frontier Cavalry, their cousin, George Edgar Grisham, son of George Hale Grisham, was committing himself to the Union cause in east Tennessee. George Edgar began his military career in September 1863, eventually commanding Company I in the Eighth Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. He resigned his commission in October 1864.

George Edgar Grisham was not a half-hearted supporter of the Union cause. He wrote the following in an album he kept with mementos of his army career:

*"I am for putting down this Rebellion, let it cost what it may, in Treasure and in Blood—the utter subjugation, and if need be, extermination of all Traitors! I am for the Union first—I am for the Union last—I am for the Union in life and in death—In Time and in Eternity—I am for the freedom of all human beings!"*

Tennessee was divided over the issue of succession, with east Tennessee having a majority in favor of the Union and west Tennessee – where the use of slaves was more common and more important to their economy – tending toward the Confederacy. The positions on this issue were not unanimous anywhere; pro-Union citizens marched in protest in Memphis in west Tennessee and Grisham was employed for a time by a pro-Confederate newspaper in Washington County in Eastern Tennessee. John Bell, from Tennessee, ran for president in 1860 as a Constitutional Unionist on a platform that supported leaving the question of slavery up to the states. He favored a peaceful solution to the conflict over the slavery question. Bell won the popular vote in Tennessee by a small margin.

While a majority of Tennesseans were in favor of maintaining the union the minority in favor of secession remained very vocal on the issue. State sovereignty and other concerns were part of the narrative but the central issue was slavery and secession was seen as the only way to ensure the continuation of the institution. Even



Captain George Edgar Grisham  
From "Tennessee's Union Cavalrymen"

among the pro-Unionists, there were strong feelings about the rights of states to govern themselves and growing concern over the new Republican Party and its policies. Tennessee Governor Isham Harris, although not initially a supporter of secession, was in favor of establishing a state militia and building forts as a precaution. He did not have enough support in the state legislature to carry this out.

In February 1861 there was an appeal to convene a state convention to decide the issue of secession. The Governor and the State Assembly did not believe they had the authority to call a state convention without the vote of the people so an election was held later that month. Fifty-four percent of the Tennessee electors voted against sending delegates to a secession convention so the issue of secession was forestalled for a time and Tennessee remained in the Union. The disquietude among the Tennessee citizens persisted and the issue continued to be debated as other southern states withdrew from the Union.

The situation changed on April 12, 1861 when Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter on Charleston Harbor in South Carolina. Three days later, on April 15, 1861, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers – the maximum number allowed by law. On the same day, Secretary of War, Simon Cameron issued a communique to the state governors with a quota for the expected number of troops to be supplied by each state. Tennessee's quota was 2 regiments and a total of 1560 soldiers. Governor Harris responded in a telegram to President Lincoln:

*"Tennessee will not furnish a single man for the purpose of coercion, but 50,000 if necessary for the defense of our rights and those of our Southern brothers."*

Governor Harris began military mobilization, submitted an Ordinance of Secession to the state General Assembly and made direct overtures to the Confederate government.

On June 8, 1861, the citizens of Tennessee returned to the polls to decide the issue of secession. East Tennessee held firm against separation, while West Tennessee returned an equally heavy majority in favor. The deciding vote came in Middle Tennessee, which went from 51 percent against secession in February to 88 percent in favor in June. Tennessee became the last state to formally declare its withdrawal from the Union.

The commitment to the confederacy was costly for Tennessee. The state was the site of numerous major battles in the conflict, including the battle of Shiloh which was the deadliest battle in US history up until that time (it was later surpassed by other battles in the Civil War.) Tennessee was second only to Virginia in terms of the number

of civil war battles. Tennessee provided nearly 187,000 men to the Confederate cause serving in 110 regiments and 33 battalions.

East Tennessee, however, remained a stronghold of Union support. Although slavery existed, most slaves were household servants, luxuries rather than the base of plantation operations. The majority of the citizens continued in strong opposition to secession. Tennesseans representing twenty-six East Tennessee counties met twice in 1861 in Greeneville and Knoxville and agreed to secede from Tennessee. They petitioned the state legislature in Nashville, which denied their request to secede and sent Confederate troops to occupy East Tennessee and prevent secession.

East Tennessee thus came under Confederate control from 1861 to 1863. Many East Tennesseans engaged in guerrilla warfare against state authorities by burning bridges, cutting telegraph wires, and spying for the North. East Tennessee became an early base for the Republican Party in the South. Strong support for the Union challenged the Confederate commanders who controlled East Tennessee. The commanders oscillated between harsh measures and conciliatory gestures to gain support, but had little success whether they arrested hundreds of Unionist leaders or allowed men to escape the Confederate draft. Union forces finally captured the region in 1863.

Tennessee provided the Union with nearly 32,000 troops during the Civil War. Representing a Southern opposition to secession and loyalty to the Union, many of these Tennesseans served as cavalry or as mounted infantry.

George Edgar Grisham was born November 4, 1833, the ninth child of George Hale Grisham and Mary Boone Hoss. (George may have been known more commonly by his middle name, Edgar, but George will be used in this narrative.) He was born on the Grisham homestead in the Buffalo Ridge area seven miles north of Jonesborough, Washington County, Tennessee. His father was a farmer and minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Grisham family had been in East Tennessee for three generations; other ancestors also had deep roots in the area. George had two great-grandfathers, Thomas Gresham and Jacob Hoss (or Hass), and two great-great-grandfathers, John Fuller Lane and George Hale, who were patriots in the Revolutionary War. His great-grandfather Thomas Gresham and great-grandfather, George Hale Jr., were both slave owners when they arrived in Tennessee. [I need the references for Thomas]

George Edgar Grisham married Margaret Jane "Maggie" Clemmitt who was born in Richmond, Virginia. George and Maggie were living in Virginia in 1860 but they had moved to Jonesborough by 1862. Tragically, they lost two infant children, Mary Frances in January 1862 and Edgar Sevier in December 1862.

In autumn 1862 George became co-publisher of the “Jonesborough Express,” a Confederate-sympathizing newspaper. Given his feelings about the Union, he must have had a rocky tenure with this publication. His employment ended in September 1863 when he joined the Union Army. Whether he was fired or he resigned is not known but both sides were probably happy to sever the relationship.

On September 5, 1863, George began recruiting a company of cavalry for the Tenth Tennessee Cavalry under the verbal orders of Colonel S. K. N. Patton, in the town of Jonesborough in Washington County. The Union forces were in control of this area at this time but were soon compelled by the Confederates to fall back to Greenville. Captain Grisham ordered his new recruits to rendezvous at Greenville. The regiment was formed at Greenville and arms were issued but the regiment was not mustered. From there, the regiment was ordered to fall back to Mossy Creek (now known as Jefferson City) where the regiment was mustered by Lieutenant Pettit of the United States Army.

George Grisham’s recruits included his cousin, Nathan Shipley. Pension records indicate Nathan enlisted on September 5, 1863. It appears that George signed him up the day Colonel Patton gave him the assignment. Nathan was 39 years old and was a farmer at Buffalo Ridge near Jonesborough, TN. He and his wife, Mary Jones Shipley, were the parents of a 13-year-old son, Elbert. Nathan and George were cousins on Nathan’s mother’s side of the family; they were the grandsons of Peter Hoss and Sarah Stedman. Nathan was a cousin to Elijah and Nathan Grisham on his father’s side of the family. Nathan’s father, Enoch was Mary Shipley Grisham’s brother, the children of Nathan and Elizabeth Brown Shipley. Mary was the mother of Elijah and Nathan Grisham. Thus, Amy Gresham has a family connection to both George and Nathan but they were cousins because of other family relationships.

Nathan Shipley, the grandfather of the Nathan in this account, had moved to Buffalo Ridge at about the same time as Thomas Gresham. They both had been residents of Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Nathan’s great-grandfather, Jacob Hoss (Haas), an immigrant from Holland, was a patriot in the Revolutionary War.

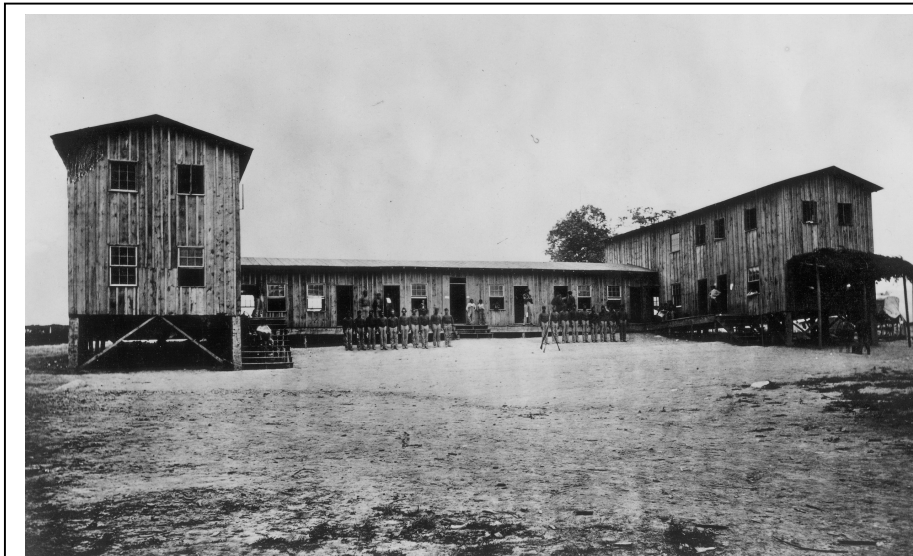
George Edgar’s father, George Hale Grisham, was also associated with the Company I of the 8<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. He isn’t listed on any of the muster rolls but there is a claim that he served in this unit on the widow’s pension application filed on behalf of his wife, Mary. The pension claim was based on his service in the War of 1812 but there is a note that he served in the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry from September 5, 1863 to January 6, 1864. There is no record that this service was proved or that it had any bearing on the pension award. More is told of his story in Chapter 10.

George had recruited one hundred twenty-six men, but so many of the new recruits were sick that there were not enough healthy soldiers to permit George to be mustered as the captain of the regiment. The regiment went to Knoxville and from there ordered to fall back to Camp Nelson in Kentucky. The march to Kentucky began December 4, 1863 and was conducted in the harsh winter conditions over rough and mountainous country. The soldiers endured great hardship and suffering in this 185 mile march. They arrived at Camp Nelson on December 28, 1863.

Camp Nelson was established by Major General Ambrose Burnside, who was at that time commander of the Army of the Ohio, as a supply depot and encampment. It was located in a naturally defensible location on the banks



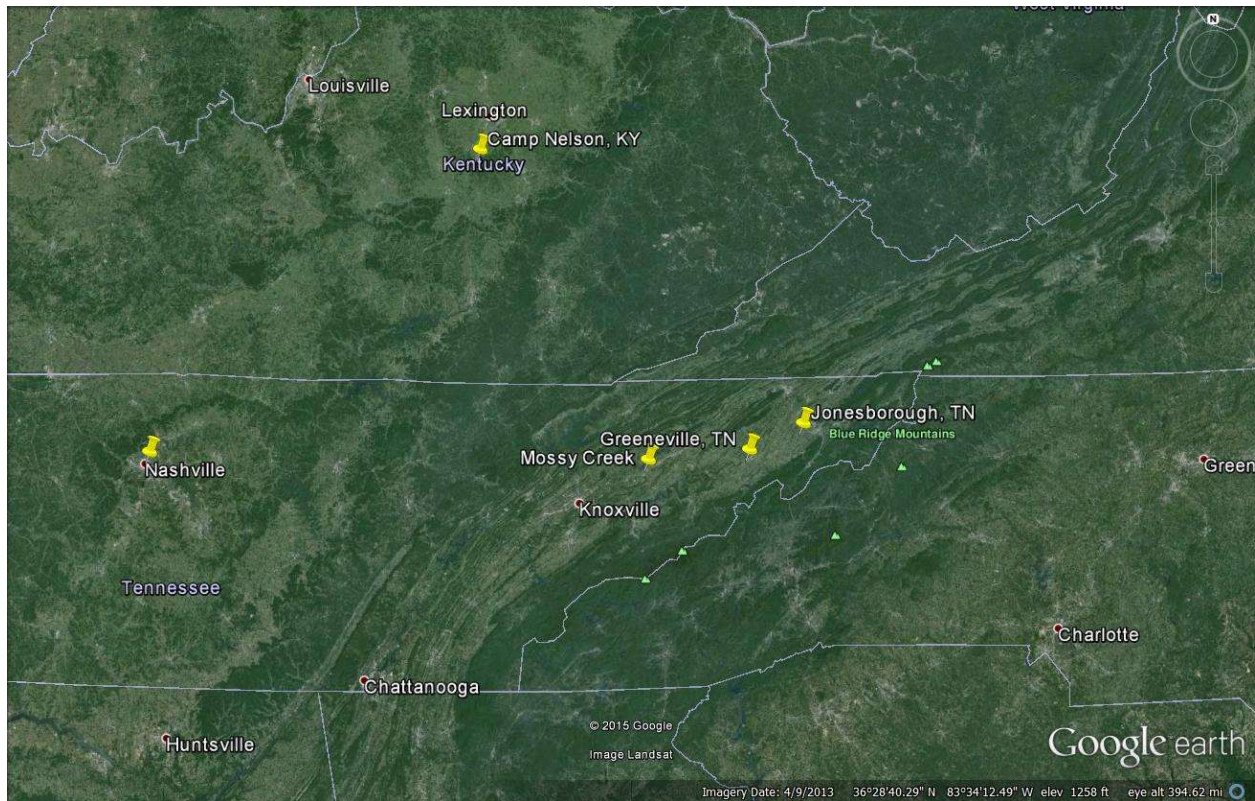
Ferrotypes of Grisham taken at Camp Nelson, Kentucky, in November 1863  
From *"Tennessee's Union Cavalrymen"*



U.S. Colored Troops in formation at their barracks in Camp Nelson, 1865;  
Image, Special Collections, University of Kentucky

of the Kentucky River. The river provided the only convenient transportation as there was no railroad and only one covered bridge that provided access by land. It became an important recruitment and training center for the Union troops, the largest in Kentucky and third largest in the United States.

The Conscriptive Act of February 1864 provided specifically for the enrollment of African-American males. This led to a flood of slaves and free blacks into Camp Nelson; it became the most important recruitment center for African-Americans in Kentucky. By the end of 1865 about 10,000 men had passed through Camp Nelson.



General A. C. Gillem assumed command of the Tennessee troops at Camp Nelson. As several of the companies did not have enough men to muster in the officers, Gillem ordered Captain Grisham and several other officers to return to East Tennessee to recruit more men.

The regiment left Camp Nelson in January to march to Nashville, arriving some time in February. They set up camp at Fort Gillem which was about a mile from Nashville. The fort had been constructed in 1862 under the direction of General Gillem and was used throughout the war. It was built as a strong earthworks fortification with a strong central blockhouse. It was about 120 feet square, with narrow ditches, walled with dry stone, six feet high, having emplacements for eight guns in barbette, but without magazines or bombproof. It was later renamed Fort Sill in honor of another Union General. It was abandoned in at the end of the war and became the site of Fisk College. Fisk was established to educate the newly freed slaves after the war. Fisk University is still operating in Nashville.

On March 20, 1864, the order for recruiting having expired, Grisham rejoined his regiment in Nashville. During Captain Grisham's absence, the Tenth Regiment had been consolidated with an older regiment known as the Eighth Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry. The mustering officer refused to muster George Grisham as of the date he had enlisted in the company or even as of the date when they had received their arms. Rather, he was mustered as captain of Company I of the Eighth Tennessee Volunteer

Cavalry on April 21, 1864 and his commission bears the same date. After the war, this situation led to a dispute on George Grisham's pay which was ultimately decided by the US Senate based on the testimony of General Gillem and other soldiers. It was agreed that he should be paid for the six months prior to April 21, 1864, which still left about two and a half months for which he didn't get paid.

While the troops were in Nashville in March and April 1864, the health of the soldiers was a big concern. There was an outbreak of small pox and one soldier observed that the "Black Mariah," as the small pox ambulance was called, arrived almost daily to convey another patient to the hospital. Measles was just as prevalent and almost as fatal as smallpox. The troops were ordered to leave the city and move to Camp Catlett on General Harding's farm nine miles from Nashville. The troops were transported by the Northwestern Railroad on April 13, 1864. Their health and spirits improved in the fresh springtime air of Camp Catlett.

A brigade composed of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Volunteer Cavalries and Batteries E and G of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tennessee Light Artillery was formed at Camp Catlett. The brigade was known as the Third Brigade, Governor's Guard. Col. John K. Miller was assigned to its command. Among his staff officers was Captain George E. Grisham, Provost Marshal.

The regiment remained at Camp Catlett through the month of April, performing camp duty, drilling and engaging in sabre exercises. Most of the soldiers were farmers and it was reported they were better suited for swinging pitch forks than sabers. On the third day of May they struck tents and travelled by train to Gallatin, Tennessee.

They arrived at Gallatin on May 4 during unseasonably hot weather and camped for a short time west of the Louisville and Nashville railroad and from there moved to a sugar grove nearby. Apparently, they were sent to Gallatin to guard the Louisville and Nashville railroad. The soldiers interacted with the townspeople of the area and even some romances developed between the troops and the local young ladies.

The brigade remained at Gallatin throughout the summer of 1864. On August 1, Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of Tennessee<sup>1</sup> established the Governor's Guard under General Gillem to "drive out outlaws and outlaw bands. George Grisham was assigned the duty of Provost Marshal. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> regiments left the camp on August 4. The 8<sup>th</sup> cavalry regiment remained at Gallatin, perhaps without Grisham, until September 24 and left under orders to report to General Gillem in East Tennessee.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson had been nominated as Lincoln's running mate for the National Union Party on June 7, 1864 in Baltimore. The ticket was elected with 55% majority of the popular vote and 212 of 233 electoral votes.

## Camp Catlett

Camp Catlett was located on Belle Meade Plantation located eight miles northeast of Nashville. Belle Meade, which means “beautiful meadow,” was established in 1806 when John Harding purchased 200 acres and began raising thoroughbred race horses. His son William Giles Harding took over the operation and by 1860 it covered over 3500 acres with 136 slaves working for the Hardings.



Belle Mead Mansion Built in 1853 (Photo from Belle Meade Plantation)

Harding had attained the rank of Brigadier General in the Tennessee State Militia prior to the war. He was a staunch supporter of the confederacy and donated US\$500,000 to the Confederate Army. He headed the Military and Financial Board of Tennessee at the beginning of the Civil war until his arrest by Union authorities in 1862. His wife ran the plantation operations during his six-month imprisonment in Michigan.

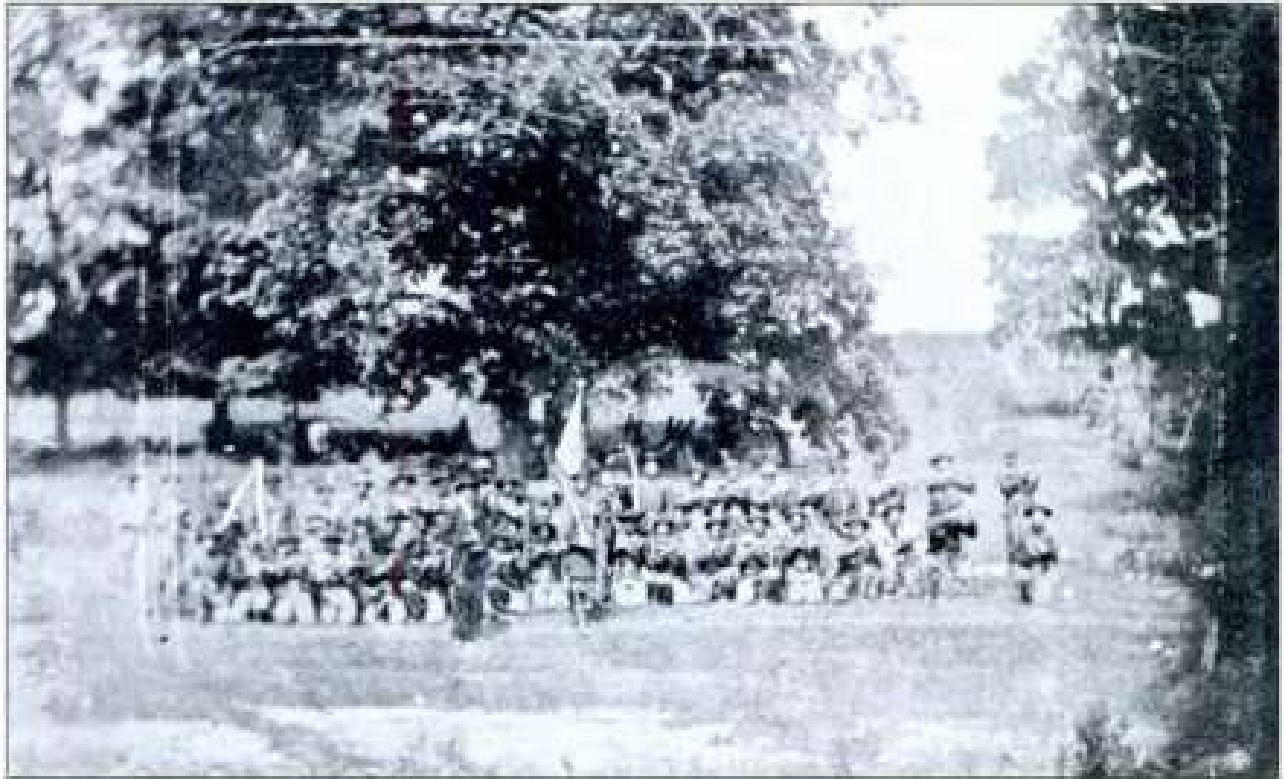
“Camp Catlett” was named for Major Albert C. Catlett, a Baptist minister turned soldier, from Sevier County. He contracted smallpox and died in March 1864. He was highly regarded and deeply mourned by his regiments.

The camp was described by Will Anderson McTeer:

“It was a beautiful site for a camping ground, being on a gentle decline from the railroad track to a rippling brook at the lower end of the company's tents, while the "stables" were situated on the rolling ground opposite the tents.”

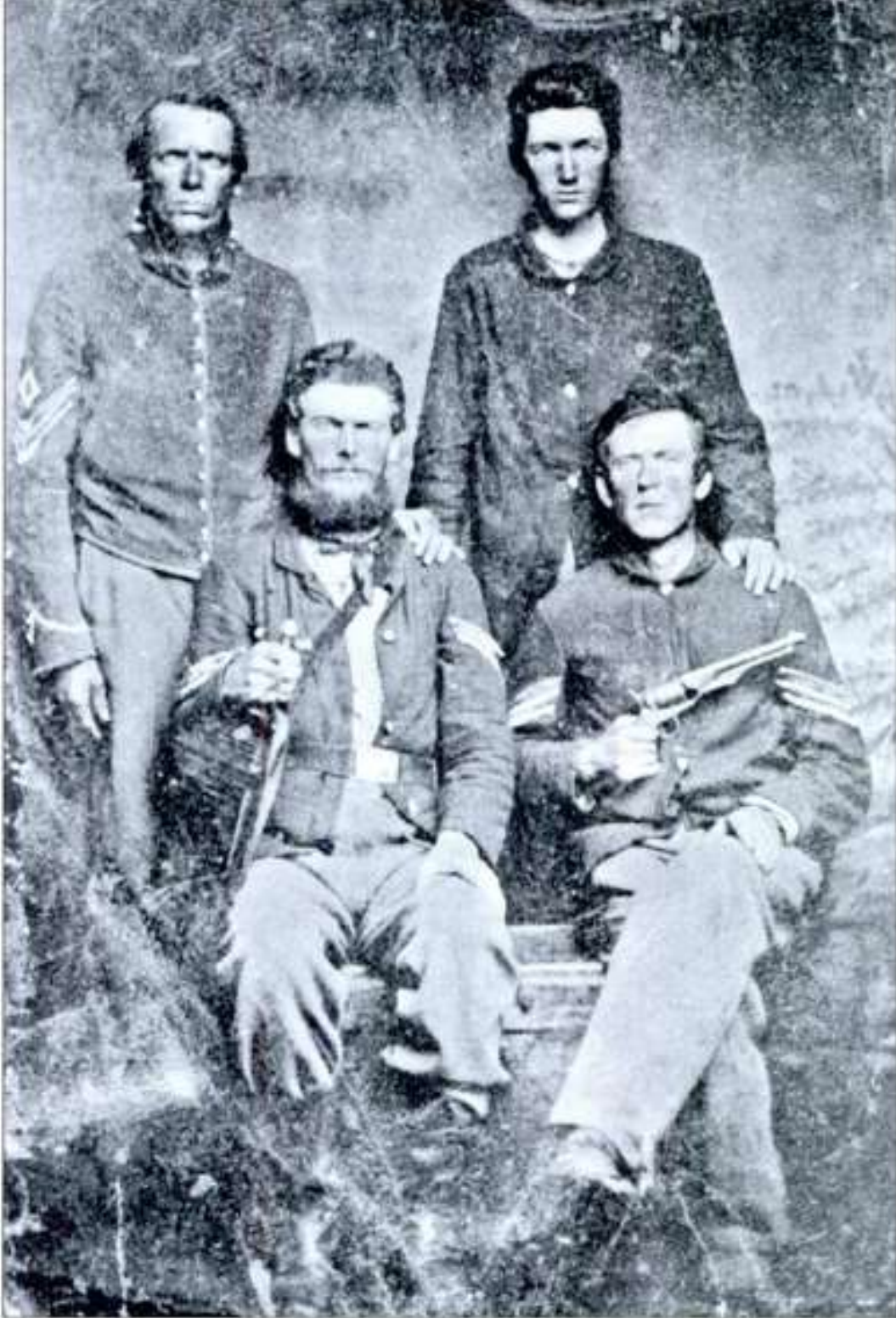
The columns of the mansion contain bullet holes as a result of a skirmish that occurred there during the battle of Nashville. It is rumored that General Harding's daughter, Selene, stood on the porch and waved her handkerchief in an attempt to persuade the soldiers to stop fighting. Reportedly, it worked.





Company I, 8th Tennessee Cavalry, posed for this photograph near Gallatin, Tennessee, on June 29, 1864. Captain Grisham stands in the middle of the photograph with the company guidon just behind him. The men appear in a mixture of sack coats and mounted service jackets, slouch hats and forage caps, with saber belts and Smith carbines. (TSM.)

From *“Tennessee’s Union Cavalrymen”*



Sergeants of Company I: Standing are Nathan Shipley on the left and Mathias K. Hale (possible relative) on the right. Seated are John C. Britt, with his saber and Nathan Simpson with his Colt "Army Revolver. From *"Tennessee's Union Cavalrymen"*



Photographs of men on horseback were especially rare because the long exposure time required a horse to stand still for at least 30 seconds. Captain Grisham, pointing his sword, described the image: "Capt. Geo. Edgar Grisham, Co. 'I,' 8th Tenn. Cav. Vols. As Field Officers of the Day, 3rd Brig., 4th Divis. Cav. Corps./ Camp near Gallatin, Tenn./ June 27th, 1864/ Instructing to the Officer of the Guard/ Lieut. Henry Jackson, Co. 'E,' 9th Tenn. Cav. Vols. Officer of the Guard." (TSM.)

From *"Tennessee's Union Cavalrymen"*

(The same photo of Grisham and Jackson is shown in "Middle Tennessee Horse Breeding with the following caption: )

This rare Civil War-era photograph shows Capt. George Grisham, Company I, 8th Tennessee U.S. Cavalry, giving instructions to Lt. Henry Jackson, Company E, 9th Tennessee U.S. Cavalry. The tintype was taken in Gallatin on June 27, 1864. Horses were very important to the functioning of the military well into the 20th century. During the Civil War, Confederate cavalry men often bragged that their Southern-bred horses performed better in battle than their Northern counterparts. But little of this mattered as the Union army increasingly occupied Southern states during the course of the war and confiscated or bought Southern horses. Injuries sustained in battle, fatigue, and malnutrition killed an estimated one million horses and mules between 1861 and 1865. It took over a decade for the South to replenish its stock of horses to prewar levels. (Courtesy of Tennessee State Museum.)

They moved by way of Lebanon, Trousdale Ferry, Sparta, Kingston, Knoxville and Morristown. They joined the command, reuniting with the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Regiments, at McFarlan Crossroads, near Russellville, Jefferson County (now Hamblen County) on October 9, 1864. Private Lane of Company I (Grisham's company) was drowned on the morning of September 24<sup>th</sup> in crossing the Cumberland River. (George Grisham's great-grandmother, Dorcas Lane was married to Thomas Gresham. It is possible that Private Lane was another Grisham cousin but that has not been proven.)

During this transition period, George Grisham again displayed his courage of convictions when he joined with others in condemning what they considered to be an unjust killing of confederate sympathizers. The following item appeared in the Nashville newspaper:

Nashville Dispatch, August 24, 1864

"To the Public;

" Officers of the 8th Tennessee Cavalry and 2nd Tennessee Mounted Infantry protest a killing in the Gallatin environs. CAMP 8TH TENN. CAVALRY, NEAR GALLATIN, TENN., August 13, 1864.

The undersigned, officers of the 8th Tennessee Cavalry, take this method of Disapproval against the killing of one Mason I. Gray and son, of Robertson County, on the 10<sup>th</sup> inst., near this place, by military authority emanating from Post Commandant at this post.

They believe the killing was not done under any law of the United States either Civil or Military, and ask for an investigation of the case.

A. J. Brown, Lt. Col.  
Wm. B. Davis, Major  
S. Mason, Lt. & Adjt.  
Lewis M. Jarvis, Capt.,  
G. (George) Edgar  
Grisham, Capt.  
Navin W. Brown, Capt.  
N. McLaughlin, Capt.

C. C. Kenner, Capt.  
Geo. McPherson, Capt.,  
F. M. McFall, Capt.  
Jas. D. Kendrick, Lieut.,  
Robert L. Tinker, Lieut.  
Jno. C. Moreland, Lieut.,  
John W. Cope, Lieut.

Colonel Samuel Patton, the commandant, wrote a letter to Andrew Johnson strongly condemning Capt. McFall and the 8<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry for making the

accusation and asserting he had given no orders to kill the Grays. (He did state that he believed they deserved to be killed.) It is not known whether any further investigation was performed and, if it was, what the outcome was. Also unknown, is the impact on the military careers of these officers. George resigned from the Union Army within two months of the publishing of this letter but there is no known connection.

On October 11, they left McFarlan Crossroads and traveled to Bull's Gap about six miles east. Over the next few weeks they moved within the upper east Tennessee area and engaged in several skirmishes with the enemy. Battles occurred at Clinch Valley, Bean Station, Morristown, Mossy Creek, Panther Springs and Morristown. The battles were small; they won some and lost some. There were a few casualties and the confederate forces took some prisoners.

On November 8, 1864, an election was held in the Regiment. The state governments had made it legal for the troops throughout the army to vote in the presidential election of 1864. No record of the vote tally was kept but the conventional wisdom was that all the votes were cast for Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson.

Major General John C. Breckinridge, regarded as one of the bravest and ablest generals in Confederate Army, was making preparations to drive the Union Army out of upper east Tennessee and regain control of Knoxville. Breckinridge anticipated that Confederate sympathizers in the region would join his force and help drive the Yankees from the region. Union General Ammen was in control of the troops in Knoxville and General Gillem was in command of the troops further east. Gillem was still acting under the orders of Andrew Johnson in the Governor's guard and did not consider himself answerable to Ammen. Ammen was under the orders of the regular army and likely resented the Johnson's special arrangement. The two brigadier generals distrusted each other and Ammen was concerned that if Gillem were successful, he might achieve a higher rank. This set the stage for the next battle.

Gillem learned of the approach of Breckinridge on November 9 and he distributed his troops at strategic locations. He also telegraphed General Ammen advising him of Breckinridge's approach and requested his assistance. It was later reported there were ample numbers of troops that could have been dispatched to Gillem's aid but none arrived until it was too late.

About 9:00 P.M., scouts reported that Breckenridge was advancing by Jonesborough toward Greeneville. The brigade was ordered to fall back to Bull's Gap which provided more favorable conditions for defense against a superior force. Scott, and Angel, in their "History of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry" provide the following description of Bull's Gap:

*“Bull's Gap is a depression in Bay's mountain, the railroad and State road running in a curved line through the lowest part of it. To the north two spurs rising rather abruptly extend back a distance of a mile or more to the main mountain. These spurs are separated from each other by a deep basin or hollow, making the sides of the hills quite steep, and the summits vary in width from 50 to 100 yards, and at that time they were partly covered with forest trees. On the south side of the railroad the elevation was hardly so great.”*

The Confederates attacked them on the morning of the 11th but were repulsed by 11:00 am. Artillery fire continued throughout the day. At daylight on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, the rebels opened a heavy fire of artillery. Throughout the day, the Confederates sought to hit the Union forces in a variety of locations but they gained little. The next day firing occurred throughout most of the day, but the Confederates did not assault the Union lines because they were marching to flank them on the right.

By this time they were nearly out of ammunition and had hardly eaten since the battle began as they had received no supplies. Gillem and his staff decided that the best course of action would be to retreat. They began to do this on the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> hoping that the darkness would conceal their movements. During these movements Gillem learned that reinforcements had arrived at Morristown and he ordered Colonel Patton to stand firm and fight. He did and the rebels were rebuffed for a time but then they renewed the charge. Being nearly out of ammunition and greatly outnumbered, the troops panicked and put up no further resistance. Many of them were captured and the confederates looted what few supplies were left. Those who could escape continued the retreat.

Breckinridge continued to pursue, but the Federals had finally connected with the reinforcements and foul weather played havoc with the roads and streams. Breckinridge, with most of his force, retired back to Virginia.<sup>2</sup>

General Gillem provided the following report to his superiors following the battle:

KNOXVILLE, TENN., November 15, 1864.

Regret to inform you my command has met a terrible reverse. On the night of the 9th moved from Greeneville to Bull's Gap; 11th, the enemy attacked me and was repulsed; 12th, at daylight assault was renewed, Breckinridge leading storming party. . . On the 13th the enemy renewed attack, but not with such vigor. From our position we could see their infantry arriving, and, as my command had been living four days without

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<sup>2</sup> A more detailed account of the battle, found in chapter 21 of the History of the 13<sup>th</sup>, is a fascinating narrative.

bread, horses starving, and ammunition exhausted, I determined to evacuate the gap on the night of the 13th, and was not interfered with until the greater part of my command, artillery, and trains had passed Russellville, when the rear was attacked and men became panic-stricken. All efforts of myself and their officers to rally them was fruitless. They ran over everything. The enemy, who had not attacked vigorously at first, then charged and broke through our lines, capturing artillery and trains. Do not think we had 20 killed. I passed over the grounds in the enemy's rear. Did not see a dead Federal soldier; but, in horses, arms, and equipments, have lost heavily. Two hundred men will cover our loss. This command has heretofore fought gallantly. Had it not become panic-stricken could have easily repulsed the enemy and kept them back. I remained in our rear. Did not reach here until last night. Will reorganize command and await your orders; and, if you are willing to trust me, try them again. Had assistance been extended when asked for from the commander at Knoxville this disaster would not have occurred. But my men were allowed to starve while storehouses were full and a railroad running to Russellville.

ALVAN C. GILLEM, Brig.-Gen.

He followed this with a report to Governor Johnson the next day. It was a more detailed report and included a more forceful complaint against Ammen and his lack of support. He attributed the loss to the lack of action by General Ammen. Following are the closing paragraphs of that report:

My loss in this retreat was 6 pieces of artillery with caissons complete, 61 wagons, 71 ambulances, about 300 horses, and probably about 150 men. Over 200 are now absent, but are daily coming in.

With the knowledge which I now have, I see no other means by which I could possibly have saved my command than by retreating at the time and in the manner I did. Had my troops behaved with calmness and deliberation I might have been able to have withdrawn with less loss in property, but more in men; but having been forced back from their first position many officers and soldiers, who would have spurned to have been seen there, took advantage of the darkness to find their way to the rear. All troops are subject to panic, and this command has behaved too well on many occasions to forfeit Your Excellency's confidence by one single mishap.

I beg leave to call Your Excellency's attention to the distinguished gallantry displayed in repulsing the enemy's assault at Bull's Gap on the 12th by Col. John K. Miller, Lieut. Col. William H. Ingerton, Maj. Wagner, Capt. Wilcox, Thirteenth Tennessee Cavalry, Lieut. Col. A. J. Brown, Maj. Deakins, Sergeant Pritchett, Company D, Eighth Tennessee Cavalry, and Capt. William J. Patterson, Battery E, First Tennessee Light Artillery.

I also beg leave to call your attention to the uniform gallantry and good conduct of Capt. Grisham, Lieut. Carpenter, Douglas, French, Miller, and Nelson, of my staff.

I am, Governor, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ALVAN C. GILLEM, Brig.-Gen., Cmdg.

Brig. Gen. ANDREW JOHNSON, Military Governor of Tennessee.

In one report Ammen insisted that reinforcements were provided and in another he reported that he was unable to respond. It's possible that he was late in responding because he didn't think Breckinridge's force was as large as it was. Ammen reported on November 14 that "General Gillem was routed last night near Morristown, his cavalry running over the infantry I sent to support him, which, I fear, is captured." This allegation likely had no basis. Two days later Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas said, "I attribute disaster to want of cooperation, and in Gillem not considering himself subject to General Ammen's orders, Gillem's command being the Governor's Guard."

Apparently, no further action was taken concerning these allegations. Johnson, having been recently elected Vice President, likely didn't have the time or the interest to pursue it further. Ammen resigned his commission less than two months later on January 14, 1865 and returned to civilian life in Ohio working as a civil engineer and surveyor. He was a venerated citizen honored for the heroic acts in the Battle of Shiloh which had earned him the promotion to the rank of Brigadier General. Gillem continued in his command in the Union Army throughout the war and after.

It is surprising to see the commendation for George Grisham in this report as the records indicate he resigned his commission in October, the month before the battle. It is possible that the records are wrong and Grisham actually resigned following this battle in early November. It is also possible that Gillem was merely praising the men under his command and included Grisham because he had served with the General for many months and forgot he was no longer in the unit or deliberately included him in his praises as a final honor. Nevertheless, Grisham did leave his command and returned to Jonesborough to support the cause as a private citizen.



Nathan Shipley was among those that Gillem reported as missing but he was not among those who returned over the next few days. It was assumed that he had deserted. This is surprising as it was known that the Confederates had taken a number of prisoners during and following the battle. Breckinridge reported capturing 300 prisoners at Bull's Gap.

On the other hand, there were reasons to suspect desertion. Desertion was a serious problem during the civil war in both armies. Northern generals estimated that as many as one in five soldiers was missing from his unit at some time and on the southern side it was as high as one in three. The desertion rate in the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was perhaps as high as or higher than the average. Company E, for instance, lost more men to desertion than to being killed in battle and to disease combined. The problem was especially acute when the soldiers were close to home as the temptation to leave the army -- which was far different than what they thought they had signed up for -- and return to the comforts of home was acute. Bull's Gap was only about 40 miles from Nathan's home in Jonesborough.

Nathan did not desert, however; he was taken prisoner by the Confederate forces. There is no record of the location of Nathan's imprisonment but officers in the third brigade (for whom there are records) that were captured at Bull's Gap were taken to the POW prison at Danville, Virginia. It's almost certain that Nathan was taken to the same place. Danville is about 250 miles from Bull's Gap.

The prison at Danville was opened in November 1863 at the suggestion of General Robert E. Lee as a solution to the overcrowding in the prisoner of war prisons in Richmond. It was actually a series of six tobacco warehouses that had cleared out the year before to serve as make-shift hospitals to care for wounded soldiers. The hospital was moved to a nearby camp and the prisoners were moved in. The brick or wooden structures were stripped of all furnishings, including chairs and lamps. Hundreds and even thousands of prisoners were held in the dark, grimy warehouses from which they were forbidden even to look out the windows.

The inspecting officer Lieutenant Colonel A. S. Cunningham, C. S. A., wrote the following description of the conditions at Danville Prison:

*"The prisons at this post are in a very bad condition, dirty, filled with vermin, little or no ventilation and there is an insufficiency of fireplaces .... It is a matter of surprise that the prisoners can exist in the close and crowded rooms, the gas from the coal rendering the air fetid and impure. [A single pot-bellied stove was installed on each floor of the building.] The prisoners have almost no clothing, no blankets, and a very small supply of fuel .... The mortality...about five per day, is caused, no doubt, by the insufficiency*

*of food...and for the reasons...stated above. This state of things is truly horrible....”*

Patricia Mitchel adds the following description:

*“During the fifteen months, between December 1863 and February 1865, that Danville housed Federal prisoners, brutally cold weather and sweltering heat exacerbated the suffering of the men. “Like starving dogs” the Northern men fought for pitiful food dumped on the dirt- and excrement-encrusted floors. They whittled down wooden warehouse rafters to the breaking point to obtain slivers of wood which they boiled to make “coffee.” They attempted to stomach “rat dung in the rice, pea bugs in the peas and worms in the cabbage soup.” They fought a smallpox epidemic, the scourge of scurvy, and the disgusting battle of diarrhea, worsened by the humiliation of restricted latrine privileges.”*

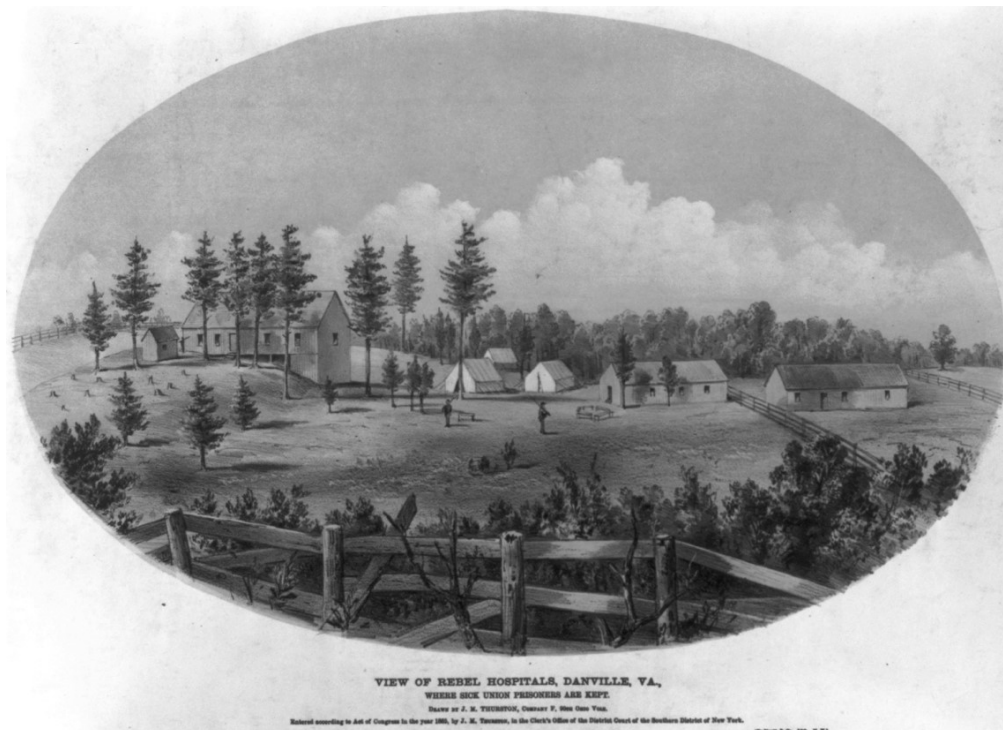


The above image is annotated at the lower margin with numbers distinguishing the prison buildings. From left to right, they are Prison No. 2, Prison No. 1, Prison No. 3, and Prison No. 4.  
Drawing by J. M. Thurston, Company F, 90th Ohio Volunteers (Library of Congress)



Inmate Maj. Abner Small of the 16th Maine Volunteer Regiment reported that crowded conditions and boredom were the worst problems at Danville Prison No.3:

*"Our quarters were so crowded that none of us had more space to himself than he actually occupied, usually a strip of the bare hard floor, about six feet by two. We lay in long rows, two rows of men with their heads to the side walls and two with their heads together along the center of the room, leaving narrow aisles between the rows of feet...I remember three officers, one a Yankee from Vermont, one an Irishman from New York, and a Dutchman from Ohio, who messed together by the wall opposite me. When they came to Danville they were distinct in feature and personality. They became homesick and disheartened. They lost all interest in everything, and would sit in the same attitude hour after hour and day after day....It grew upon me that they were gradually being merged into one man with three bodies. They looked just alike; truly I couldn't tell them apart. And they were dying of nostalgia."*



View of the Danville Hospital  
Drawing by J. M. Thurston, Company F, 90th Ohio Volunteers (Library of Congress)

. The townspeople took pity on the prisoners and at times provided food to the prisoners. On the other hand, the citizens of Danville were also wary of the prison. In February 1864, the residents of Danville wrote to Secretary of War James A. Seddon to "petition for the removal of the Yankee prisoners located among us to some other place...because the hospitals of the prisoners and sick are located in the very heart of the town...so as to infect the whole atmosphere of the town with smallpox and fever now raging within the limits of the corporation."



There were some other moments of relief. The prisoners were allowed to use the unused portion of the Green Hill Cemetery for a garden. Some of the prisoners provided care at the hospital and some participated in work details.

The Danville Prison had a maximum capacity of 3,700 and experienced a peak of 4,000 POWs; as many as 7000 Union soldiers were imprisoned. Almost 1,300 Union soldiers died in the prison; the overall death rate was 17 percent. There were about 70 known escapes from the prison. "*An account of the escape of six federal soldiers from prison at Danville, Va. : their travels by night through the enemy's country to the Union pickets at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, in the winter of 1863-64*" by W.H. Newlin tells of such an escape. The six were serving outside the prison and took an opportunity when out of the guards' view to escape. Four of them made it back to Union territory. One was injured during the journey and one was captured but their ultimate fate these two remains unknown.



Nathan Shipley is among those who successfully escaped from Danville Prison. He is reported to have escaped and returned to his unit on April 1, 1865. No details of his escape are known; whether he acted alone or with others, the manner in which he was able to flee and the story of his return all remain a mystery. If the reported date is accurate and he was gone from Danville on April 1, he barely missed some pivotal and exciting events in Danville. Danville was about to become the third and last capital of the Confederate States of America. (The prisoners probably wouldn't have witnessed these events anyway.)

“When Richmond fell on April 2, 1865, the Confederate government determined Danville to be the logical place to relocate. It had abundant supplies and intact railroad networks; it also served the psychological need of remaining within Virginia's borders. After a long train ride, Confederate president Jefferson Davis and his cabinet arrived in Danville on the evening of April 3. Every available room in town was filled with clerks, government workers, and eventually Richmond refugees. With no reliable word from Generals Lee and Joseph E. Johnston, the government was essentially paralyzed. On April 5, President Davis released his last official proclamation, which expressed relief that Richmond no longer needed defending: ‘Relieved from the necessity of guarding particular points, our army will be free to move from point to point, to strike the enemy in detail far from his base.’ This was too optimistic, however, and Lee surrendered four days later, with word reaching Davis in Danville on April 10. The president was stunned but refused to accept the reality of the Confederacy's collapse. After hurried preparations, he and the cabinet departed that night, hoping to maintain resistance farther south.”<sup>3</sup>

Davis travelled to Salisbury, and then to Charlotte, where he learned of Lincoln's assassination. One by one, now, as the flight continued, his Cabinet dropped away: in North Carolina, Attorney General Davis; in South Carolina, Treasury Secretary Trenholm; in Georgia, Navy Secretary Mallory. Secretary of State Benjamin separated at the Savannah River, and War Secretary Breckinridge shortly after. Only Postmaster General Reagan remained.

Following Nathan's capture in November 1864, the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry continued to fight in upper east Tennessee and south-western Virginia and then returned to Knoxville on December 29. It remained at Knoxville until March 21, 1865, when such portions of the regiment as were mounted joined Major General George Stoneman on his raid into Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. It was engaged in the battle at Salisbury, North Carolina, on April 12, 1865 and was at Hendersonville, North Carolina on April 23, when it received word of the truce, and returned to Greeneville, Tennessee.

On April 27, 1865, the regiment was one of those ordered out on an expedition to intercept President Jefferson Davis, with the wagon-load of gold he was reported to have with him.

With a \$100,000 reward on his head, Davis, reunited with his wife, camped in a pine woods near Irwinsville, Georgia. Federal cavalry pounced on them and ransacked the camp for the Confederate gold. But most of it was gone, largely in paying off

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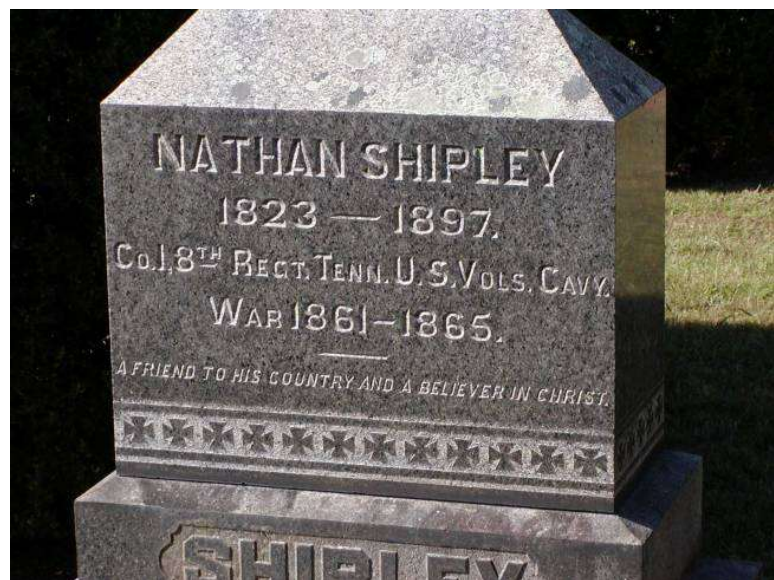
<sup>3</sup> Copied from: Wright, C. M. Danville During the Civil War. (2011, April 15)

soldiers met along the route of flight. Davis, his wife and the postmaster general, the last member of his cabinet, were captured on May 10, 1865 by another union cavalry unit – not the 8<sup>th</sup> Tennessee. Davis was imprisoned at Fort Monroe on the Virginia seacoast where he spent the next two years.

The regiment was united at Lenoir Station, Tennessee, in June 1865, where it went into camp. On July 20, 1865 it was placed in the Cavalry Brigade, District of East Tennessee, under Brevet Major General Emory Upton, and was mustered out of service at Knoxville on September 11, 1865.

At some time in 1865, Nathan's son, Elbert, enlisted in Company I of the 8<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry. The date of his enlistment is not known. It is likely that it occurred while his father was imprisoned in Danville prison. If the army didn't know where Nathan was, his family probably didn't either. Elbert may have enlisted out of the frustration and helplessness he felt not knowing where his father was, or even if he was still alive. It is reported that Elbert was never mustered into service because of poor health. There was no mention that he was only sixteen years old and too young to volunteer for the union army. Many young men under the age of eighteen fought in the war and the question of age was probably never asked. The answer probably wouldn't have truthful anyway.

Nathan was mustered out of service with his comrades on September 11, 1865 and returned to his farm in Washington County, having served from *Sept. 5, 1863 to Sept. 11 1865*. In the 1890 veterans census he reports a disability of chronic rheumatism and bronchitis. Nathan died in 1897. His wife, Mary, died in 1909 in Jonesborough.



George Grisham returned to Jonesborough and began publishing a newspaper, *The Union Flag*. He also became the postmaster in Jonesborough. In October 1865, he ran unsuccessfully for an open seat in the Tennessee General Assembly. His simple platform called for public education, compensation for Unionists, and tax reforms. Throughout his campaign, Grisham denounced the ex-Confederates. To him, Reconstruction meant "Union construction and Rebel destruction."

He remained active in the local politics, however.

“The following year, Grisham coauthored a petition to Radical leader L. C. Houk that urged an uncompromising stance toward the growing anti-Radical forces in the state: “We must fight the enemies of our country, and fight them everywhere and in every way. We are on the tower watching and must do all we can to save ourselves.” County conservatives, dismayed by such hard-line sentiments, persuaded President Johnson to remove Grisham from his postmaster position. Local ex-Confederates employed more violent measures. In October 1866, two attempts were made to burn the office of the Union Flag to the ground, both while the printing staff was on duty.”<sup>4</sup>

He volunteered to serve in command of a company of the State Guard, which struggled to control the chaos and the Ku Klux Klan in Tennessee during Reconstruction, receiving his commission in April 1866. His unit was the first to recruit non-whites into the militia; more than half of his men were black.

He served as the clerk for the Tennessee state legislature in 1867-1868.

George and Maggie had a son, Horace, in 1868 but he died at an age of three months. They adopted a daughter, Lulu Belle, born on Christmas day, 1864 who survived to adulthood.

On August 3, 1873 , George E. Grisham willed "to the Christian Church of Jonesboro , Washington County, Tennessee, lately organized without any creed but the Bible " a lot and building to be used " in educating young men of said church for the ministry • • • " He served as an elder of that congregation, believed to have been formed in early 1873, and was described as “one of its most generous donors.”

On August 4, 1873, George Grisham died of cholera. The following was reported in the Jonesboro Herald-Tribune, a rival newspaper:

“He devoted himself, since the plague came upon Jonesboro, to the watchful care of the sick. He visited alike the homes of the poor and opulent, and wherever deeds of mercy were demanded by human anguish, Grisham went. By day and night he was at the bedside of the sick, discharging from every menial task. When he himself was sick, he forgot his own danger and sufferings, and died at last from sheer devotion to the well-being of his fellow man.”

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1. <sup>4</sup> “Tennessee's Radical Army: The State Guard and Its Role in Reconstruction, 1867 – 1869” By Ben H. Severance





The *Union Flag* was published in Jonesborough, Tennessee, by George Edgar Grisham between 1865 and 1871. In autumn 1862, Grisham was co-publisher of the *Jonesborough Express*. His tenure at the Confederate-sympathizing newspaper lasted approximately one year until he joined the Union Army's 8th Regiment of the Cavalry in September 1863. During his two-year stint in the Union Army, Grisham reached the rank of captain. Upon his return to Jonesborough in 1865, Grisham began publishing the *Union Flag*. The *Union Flag* was a weekly newspaper with subscription prices at \$3.00 for one year or \$2.00 for six months. Single issues were available for 10 cents per copy. The *Union Flag* was published on the corner of Cherokee and Water Street, above the Jonesborough depot. The paper's masthead bore an eagle in front of the American flag with the paper's motto--"We join no Party which does not carry the Union Flag, and keep step to the music of the Union!"--printed on page two. In December 1869, Grisham introduced a patriotic tagline to the front page: "The star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave/O're the land of the free and the home of the brave."

The newspaper carried news articles on general topics such as agriculture and taxes, but also included political items about Reconstruction such as disputes over the nomination of two Republican candidates for state governor in 1869. Like other newspapers in the era of yellow journalism, the *Union Flag* printed sensational stories of scorned lovers and other miscellaneous items. The front page usually featured a poem. Advertisements ranged in price based on size and frequency with a single square advertisement beginning at \$1.50. The newspaper often featured two to three full columns of advertising, ranging in content from cure-all medicines to industrial equipment, household products, and other services from Jonesborough and farther afield.

When first published, the *Union Flag* was balanced in tone. It supported federal policies, but contended that Southern secession was a brave fight against a centralized government. In time, however, the paper took a more partisan tone, supporting the Republican Party and endorsing radical Republican William Brickle Stokes in the May 1869 governor's election. Despite the newspaper's support, Stokes, who favored a more aggressive approach to protecting freed slaves, lost the election. In 1871, when John G. Hayes became a partner, the *Union Flag* assumed a more moderate political stance.

The *Union Flag* continued for two more years, at which time it was renamed the *Union Flag and Commercial Advertiser*. The paper ceased publication in summer 1873 after Grisham died during a cholera epidemic.

*Provided by: University of Tennessee based on information provided by the Library of Congress.*

After the war, Tennessee adopted a constitutional amendment forbidding human property on February 22, 1865; ratified the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution on July 18, 1866; and was readmitted to the Union on July 24, 1866.

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