



**“Boy A
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Holt Collier, once a teenage camp slave (1907 photo, Fig. 12)



By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Andrew” - Slave or Black Moderate Soldier? or young freed slaves straband in the war?



The folded letter shown in

Figure 1 is franked with a 10¢ engraved issue, type II (Scott CSA 12), tied to a cover by an Army of Tennessee enclosed grid cancel, CSA catalog type ATN-03.

This is the latest recorded use of this type military grid, according to American Civil War military postal history student, Stefan T. Jaronski. The prior latest recorded use was in late August 1864; the subject letter dates it slightly later, to early September 1864.

This anonymous grid cancel is very similar to the type ANV-2 grid from the Army of Northern Virginia. Only a notation on the envelope, a letter, or knowledge of the sender and his unit can reveal the true origin of the marking. The unspecified nature of such grids was intentional, to disguise troop movements.



Figure 1. Folded letter franked with Scott CSA 12 tied to folded letter by latest recorded Army of Tennessee grid, CSA catalog type ATN-03.

The letter is addressed to Capt. J.A.R. Hanks, A.Q.M. (Assistant Quarter Master), Macon, Geo., with an acknowledgment at lower left "politeness of a soldier," indicating it was carried at least

part of the way by a soldier before being deposited in the mail stream.

The Hanks correspondence is well known to serious Confederate postal history students. Hanks was a lawyer by profession. He began service as Assistant Quarter Master for the 22nd Georgia Infantry but resigned due to disability. He later entered state service as Assistant Quarter Master for the State of Georgia.

The significance of the letter content and accompanying slave pass exceed the philatelic rarity, as is sometimes the case, although it's a nice military use. They are from an officer in the 37th Georgia Infantry Battalion.



Freed slaves in Texas 40 years after the Civil War ended.

The letter, shown in Figure 2, says, in part:

In the field

Near Jonesboro Sept 4th, 1864

Capt. Hanks

Dear Sir

My Boy Andrew is quite sick with measles and moving about a good deal. I have concluded that it is best to send him Home. I can get him in charge of a soldier as far as Fort Valley. He will get him on if possible, but

to provide for him in case he should become quite ill and is unable to travel, I write to ask you to see after him and have him cared for...Hood has united his forces with our Corps. Hardees. It is not known whether the Yankees will continue to flank or not. The situation is dark but not hopeless...We had 5 or 6 casualties in my old co[mpany] on the 31st August. Hoping that a better day will soon dawn.

I am Yours Truly - R.E. Wilson

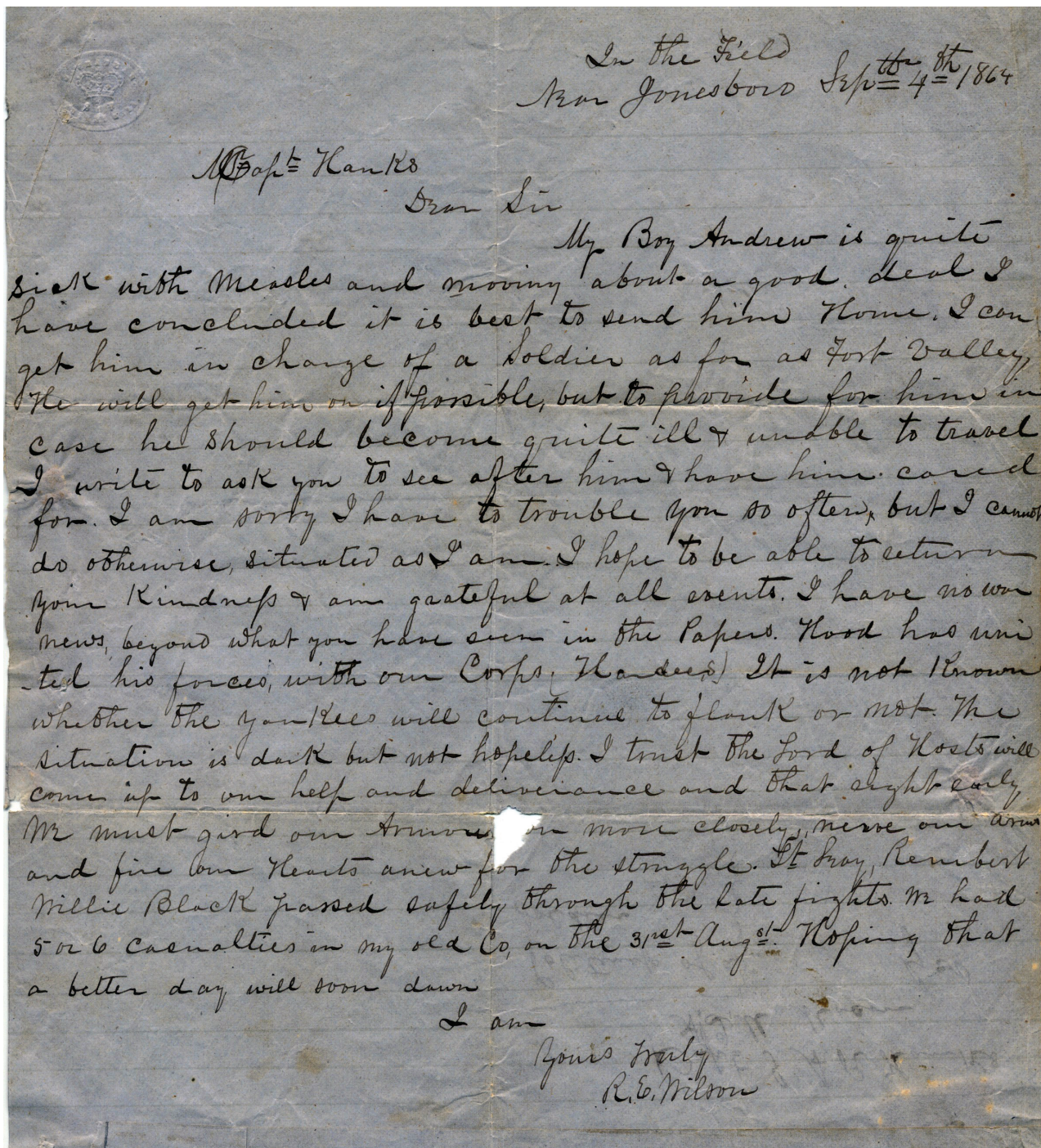


Figure 2. Letter from Major R.E. Wilson to Capt. J.A.R. Hanks, arranging for a soldier to care for his "Boy Andrew" while traveling home, sick with measles.

Figure 3. Rare slave pass instructing guards and others to let Wilson's camp slave pass to his home in Cuthbert, Ga.

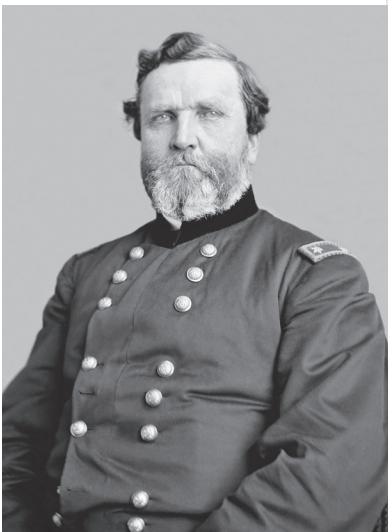
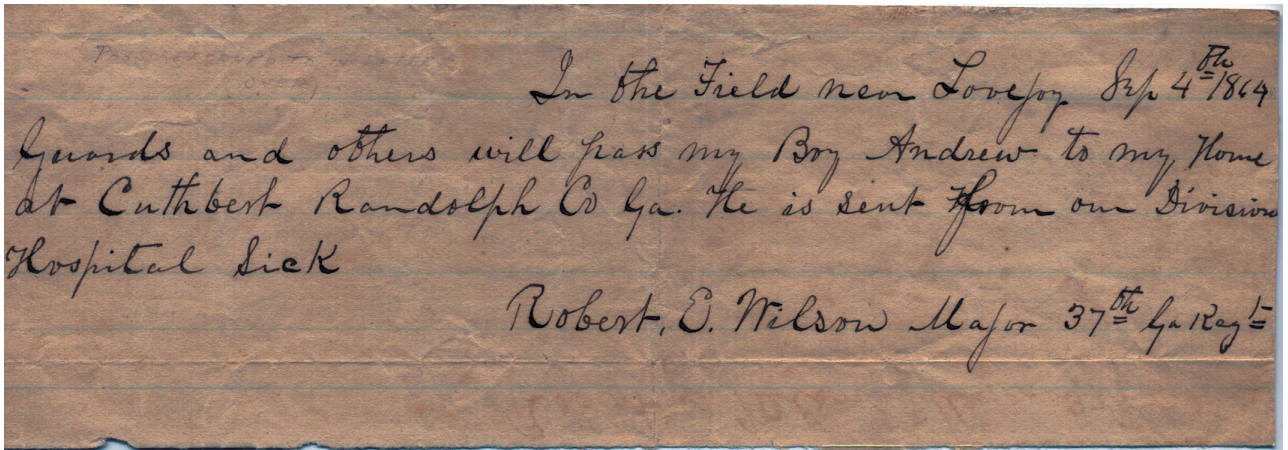


Figure 4. Union Major General George Henry Thomas (1816-1870), Department of the Cumberland, called the "Sledge of Nashville,"



Figure 5. Federal outer line at the Battle of Nashville, December 16, 1864, during the Franklin-Nashville Campaign. (Library of Congress)



Figure 6. CSA Lt. General John Bell Hood, defeated at the Battle of Nashville by his former instructor at West Point (Gen. G.H. Thomas).

Robert E. Wilson

Robert E. Wilson served in Company A, 37th Regiment Georgia Infantry, Tyler's Brigade, Bate's Division, Cheatham's Corps, Army of Tennessee. This regiment was formed in May 1863, by the consolidation of the 9th Battalion Georgia Infantry (also known as the 17th Battalion Georgia Infantry) with companies B, C, E, F and H of the 3rd Battalion Georgia Infantry. Wilson initially enlisted as captain June 13, 1861, in Company B. He was promoted to major June 24, 1864.

The American Civil War Research Database by Historical Data Systems, Inc. shows Wilson as wounded December 31, 1862, where he was said to have lost an eye at the Battle of Stones River (aka Second Battle of Murfreesboro). I could not find evidence of this in records at the National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) but it is

certainly possible, as such records are notoriously scattered and in conflict with each other.

Captain Wilson was on a list of casualties of the 37th Georgia in the battles of Chickamauga, Ga. September 18-20, 1863, where he was noted as commanding Company A. Records show he sustained a severe leg wound.

Wilson was captured near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, December 16-17, 1864 (date varies in the records). He is shown on a roll of prisoners captured by forces under Union Major General George Henry Thomas (1816-1870), Department of the Cumberland, who earned the nickname "Rock of Chickamauga" and "Sledge of Nashville," among others. Thomas was photographed by Mathew Brady, as shown in Figure 4. He was one of the principal commanders in the Western Theater, although less well known. In part, this may

Figure 9. Posing with weapons are Sergeant Andrew Martin Chandler, Company F, 44th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, with his camp slave, Silas Chandler.



Confed.
W. 37 Ga.
Robert E. Wilson Adm.
 Rank *Major*; Co. *37* Reg't *Ga.*
 Admitted *March 11*, 1865,
 To No. *1*, U. S. A., Gen'l Hosp.
 Nashville, Tenn.
 From *Murfreesboro*
 Diagnosis, *Amputation Lt. Leg*
low third
 W'd at *Franklin, Tenn., Nov. 30, 1864.*
 Treatm't,
 Ret'd to duty 18 .
 Transf'd to I. C. 18 .
 Transf'd to *General Hospital March 11, 1865*.
 Furloughed 18 .
 Deserted 18 .
 Disch'd from service 18 .
 Died 18 .
 Re-adm'd from furlo' or des'n 18 .
 Remarks:
Age 33
 Tenn. Reg. No. *37*; Hos. No. *13908* Page *98*
Lindsay Copyist.
 (203-1.) (o 3-074)

Figure 7. Wilson's military record, showing he was admitted to No. 1 USA General Hospital in Nashville from Murfreesboro March 11, 1865.

be because he wrote no memoirs and refused to self-promote.

Figure 5 shows the federal outer line at the Battle of Nashville, December 16, 1864. (Library of Congress, author unknown). The Franklin-Nashville Campaign, also known as Hood's Tennessee Campaign, was a series of battles September 18-December 27, 1864, in Alabama, Tennessee, and northwestern Georgia.

Confederate Lieutenant General John Bell Hood is shown in Figure 6. At the Battle of Nashville, Thomas achieved one of the most decisive victories of the war with this campaign, destroying Hood's army. Hood was Thomas' former student at West Point.

Wilson's military record, shown in Figure 7, indicates he was admitted to No. 1 USA General Hospital in Nashville from Murfreesboro March 11, 1865. The diagnosis upon admission was amputation of the lower third of his left leg due to the wound sustained at Franklin, Tennessee, November 30, 1864.

The Battle of Franklin is depicted in the Kurz and Allison print shown in Figure 8, courtesy of

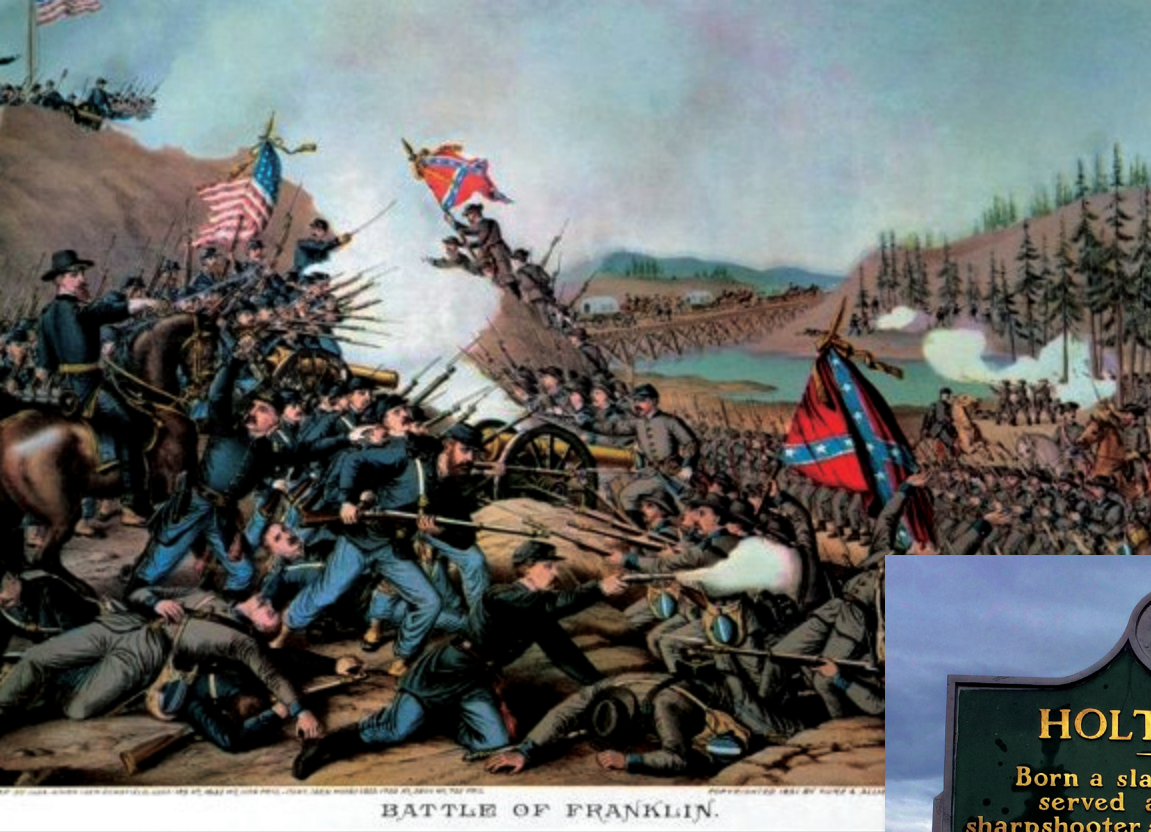
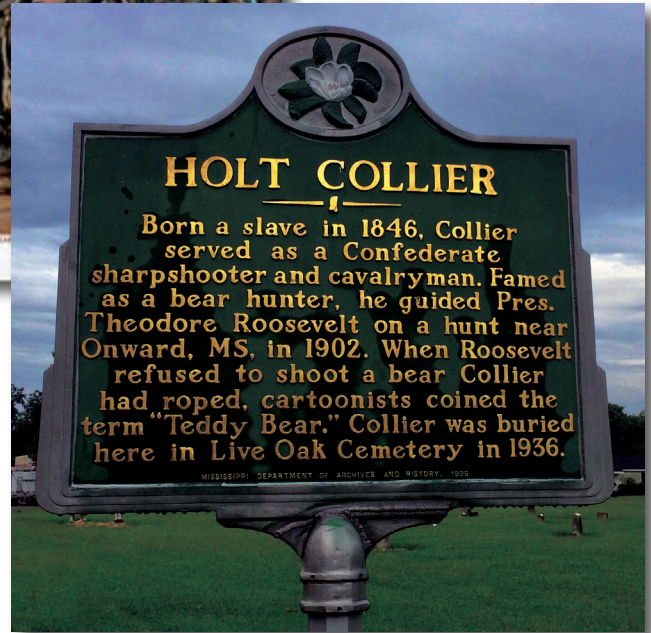


Figure 8. Battle of Franklin as depicted in Kurz and Allison print. (Library of Congress)

Figure 11. Historical marker at Live Oak Cemetery in Greenville, Miss., where Holt Collier is buried.



When convalescent at the USA General Hospital at Murfreesboro, March 8, 1865, Major Wilson was described as 33 years old with a light complexion, light hair, blue eyes, standing 5' 9" tall.

Provocative Speculation

As noted before, the greater value in the subject postal artifacts is for the letter and slave pass. Major Wilson asserts his "Boy Andrew" is quite sick with measles and unable to travel. Wilson wanted to send him home to Cuthbert, Ga., with someone to see after him during the journey. He states he is sorry to trouble Capt. Hanks but, "I cannot do otherwise, situated as I am."

Andrew, a camp "servant," was one of the legions of enslaved people who worked doing everyday jobs as body servants, cooks, laborers, teamsters and more, thus enabling more white Southern soldiers to fight.

I had a conversation with a collector of slave-delivered mail, John W. Allen, who speculated that Wilson may have just wanted to save his slave from impending battles rather than the measles. If spreading measles was a serious concern, he reasoned, wouldn't the field medics have dismissed the slave before Wilson decided to send him home? Allen recognizes this is conjecture. My belief is that it was simply compassion on the part

of Major Wilson for his sick slave. Either way, it was concern for Andrew.

Major General William D. Pender expressed dismay at slaves who came down sick and were "allowed to die without any care on the part of those who are responsible for their well being."

Slaves fell ill in vast numbers due to unsanitary conditions and exposure to new diseases. So did white soldiers. It is estimated that of the 620,000 recorded military deaths in the War, about two-thirds died from disease. More recent studies show the number was probably closer to 750,000. Measles infected 76,318, killing 5,177.

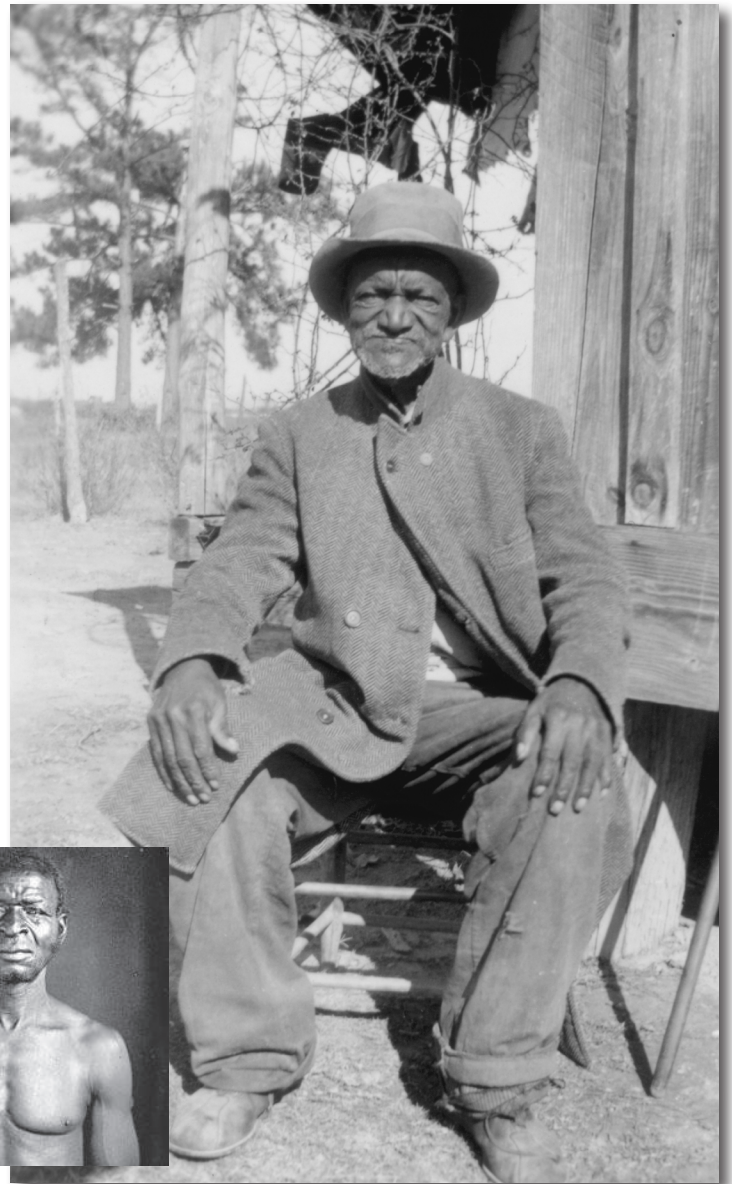
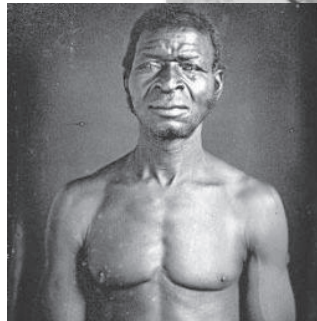
The second part of Allen's theory was that Andrew may have been an example of a slave serving in the Confederate Army. The pass states the slave is being sent home sick from the hospital, thus giving an official reason for a military escort home.



Figure 10. Marlboro Jones, manservant to Capt. Randal F. Jones of the 7th Georgia Cavalry Regiment, Company F, dressed in Confederate uniform.

Note: Figure 12 is on page 6.

Slave Wes Brady shown here while still enslaved in the early 1850s. The larger photo shows Brady as an 88-year old freedman in the 1890s.



Silas Chandler

A well-known photograph from the Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs in the Library of Congress is shown in Figure 9. It pictures Sergeant Andrew Martin Chandler (1844-1920) of Company F, 44th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, with Silas Chandler (1837-1919), one of 36 family slaves. They pose with Bowie knives, revolvers, pepper-box, shotgun, and canteen; they each even managed a hint of a smile in the photograph. Silas accompanied two Chandler brothers during their military service during the American Civil War.

Myra Chandler Sampson, a great granddaughter of Silas Chandler, wrote an article in the February 2012 edition of *Civil War Times* along with well-published author and educator, Kevin Levin.

Levin maintains an active blog, “Civil War Memory.”

In 1994, the Sons of Confederate Veterans placed a Southern Cross of Honor and CSA battle flag on the grave of Silas Chandler. Descendant Myra Chandler Sampson and other family members were greatly offended and dispute what they consider the out-of-control fiction that Silas willingly fought for the Confederate Army.

A look at surviving records undermines the theory put forward that Silas was eager to serve the Confederacy. At the outbreak of the war, the Confederacy barred all African Americans from combat posts. The pension that Silas received after the war was defined as an “Application of Indigent Servants of Soldier or Sailor of the Late Confederacy.” The paperwork Silas Chandler sub-



Photograph of an elderly Holt Collier taken in the 1930s not long before his death, wearing his medals, hat and uniform coat together with memorabilia.

mitted clearly indicates he was not recognized as a Confederate soldier, rather as a servant.

More than a decade ago, in Levin's blog, Myra Chandler Sampson left a long comment regarding the "LIES (her emphasis)" being told about Silas fighting in the Confederate Army. She and other Chandler descendants (a few did disagree) signed a letter demanding the Southern Cross and Confederate flag be removed from Silas' grave. She stressed those symbols are symbols of oppression that represent the worst in this county.

Marlboro Jones (1817-?)

Some slaves dressed in Confederate uniforms

to have their photographs taken but were pictured without weapons, theoretically an indicator of their servant vs. soldier status. Such an example is Marlboro Jones (also seen spelled Marlborough), shown in Figure 10.

Marlboro Jones was servant to Capt. Randal F. Jones of the 7th Georgia Cavalry Regiment, Company F. During the Battle of Trevilian Station, Va., in June 1864, the captain was mortally wounded, and Marlboro took the body home to Savannah. He was the basis for a character in an 1898 novel, *Lyddy: A Tale of the Old South*, by Eugenia Jones Bacon, which was essentially written in rebuttal to

the content of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which portrayed slavery as cruel and oppressive, disclosing the unsavory truth that slaves were considered property rather than people.

"The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth"

In the 2019 book, *Searching for Black Confederates: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth*, by award-winning historian Kevin M. Levin, he argues that:

"The black Confederate narrative emerged to perform a specific function, but many people today who accept the existence of black men in Confederate ranks are unaware that this mythical narrative does not date to the war years or even to the postwar period extending well into the twentieth century."

Levin asserts that the Sons of Confederate Veterans was the first organization to promote stories of black Confederate soldiers, beginning in the late 1970s. The SCV website continues to espouse these views and is reinforced by any number of books, such as *Forgotten Confederates: An Anthology About Black Southerners*, Editors Charles Kelly Barroe; J.H. Segars; R.B. Rosenburg; as part of the *Journal of Confederate History* Series published by Southern Heritage Press.

This disputed position, according to Levin, was meant to counter the growing acceptance that slavery was the cause of the war. He emphasizes that the SCV hoped to demonstrate:

"If free and enslaved black men fought in Confederate ranks, the war could not have been fought to abolish slavery. Stories of armed black men marching and fighting would make it easier for the descendants of Confederate soldiers and those who celebrate Confederate heritage to embrace their Lost Cause unapologetically without running the risk of being viewed as racially insensitive or worse."

This misrepresentation, as Levin points out, was at first confined to the SCV membership base, but:

"The internet has transformed the myth of the black Confederate soldier into a viral sensation."

These distortions have gained momentum in the wake of hideous tragedies such as the Charleston church shootings at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 2015 and sub-

sequent atrocities.

Kevin Levin is far from the only author to espouse these opposing views. There were no black Confederate combat units during the war and no documentation exists that any black man was paid or pensioned as a Confederate soldier, although some did receive pensions for their work as laborers. This is not to say that some were not armed and that some did not fire a gun for the CSA.

Mike Musick, a former subject area expert for the Civil War at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), strongly denounced the notion of black troops fighting to defend a nation founded primarily to preserve slavery in an article in the February 2012 edition of *Civil War Times*.

Musick declared that no NARA records have come to light that document the service of African-American soldiers fighting for the South to any significant degree. He acknowledges there were a few – a very few.

Musick authoritatively states:

"A formidable mountain of documentation exists to indicate that most Southern blacks preferred the Union cause. Record Group 393, 'Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands,' bulges with documentation on thousands of slaves who deserted their masters when Federals approached. As Southern historian C. Vann Woodward wrote in his 1964 foreword to a new edition of Bell Wiley's 1938 study: 'The evidence destroys the legend of the Negro's indifference to freedom.'"

Holt Collier (1846-1936)

Another touted, but flawed, example of a black Confederate soldier is Holt Collier, born a slave in Mississippi. He is celebrated today as a Confederate sharpshooter, cavalryman and spy. He was but a young teenager when the war began.

Collier is so revered in Mississippi that Holt Collier National Wildlife Refuge was established and named for him in 2004. Shown in Figure 11 is a historical marker at Live Oak Cemetery in Greenville, Miss., where he was buried.

You can buy a limited edition 25.5" tall bronze casting of Holt Collier for \$4,200 from Mississippi artist Thomas Jay Warren of Warren Sculpture



Cudjo Lewis

During 1850s, Last Slave to Come to America on a Slave Ship
1931 Color Photograph

Studios, Inc. Or can buy coffee mugs with his likeness on them; they are a lot cheaper.

In doing research on Collier, I entertained buying a book on him, as I often do with topics of interest. His biography sounded like great reading. I found prices for the book, *HOLT COLLIER: His Life, His Roosevelt Hunts, and The Origin of the Teddy Bear* by Minor Ferris Buchanan, originally published in 2002, at more than \$400 and as “cheap” as \$150. I’m interested but not that interested.

In Figure 12, Holt Collier was photographed in 1907 on horseback during a bear hunt surrounded by hounds (Figure 12, page 6). His everlasting fame is chiefly as a bear hunter. It is said he shot his first black bear at age ten. He is credited with killing more than 3,000 bears—more than the number taken by Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett combined. He hunted with a 12-gauge shotgun, was an excellent marksman, and could shoot equally well from either shoulder.

Collier was the chief guide and huntsman for Theodore Roosevelt’s 1902 bear-hunting trip to the Mississippi Delta region. He is best remembered for the part he played in a celebrated event that resulted from that outing, the naming of the Teddy Bear. There was a second Roosevelt hunt with Collier in 1907 in Louisiana.

A Holt Collier pension application, dated July 29, 1916, is clearly identified as an “Application of Indigent Servants of Soldier or Sailor of the Late Confederacy.” It was not the application of a fighting black soldier.

This is further confirmed by the wording in a letter from the Third Brigade, Mississippi Division U.C.V. (United Confederate Veterans) dated April 5, 1906, in support of Collier’s pension. In the letter, Brig. Gen. G.M. Helm states: “He (Collier) went out with Colonel (Thomas) Hinds, and at Bowling Green, Ky., joined Captain Evans’ Texas Scouts, and remained with him until the end of the struggle.”

It is clear from this description from official records that a teenage Collier remained with the colonel as his body servant/camp slave. Mississippi was one of the states that gave pensions to deserting servants. He appears on no military roster. Nonetheless, his cemetery marker proclaims him a private in Co. I, 9th Texas Cavalry, for which there is no corroborating military record. In his pen-

sion application, he states he was wounded in the ankle at Shiloh.

Too Late to Make a Difference

During the War, male slaves were often hired out or impressed to work in various departments of the Confederate Army, as were free black men. Only a very few were officially accepted into Confederate service as soldiers. The government position was that they were laborers, not soldiers.

After a lengthy and contentious public debate, the Confederate Congress passed legislation that changed that policy, allowing African Americans to serve as combatants. But that did not occur until March 13, 1865, way too late to make any difference to the war effort. A few short weeks later, Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

So, which is it?

Were there tens of thousands of armed black Confederate soldiers willingly fighting for the Confederacy or were they simply body servants and laborers?

Regardless of all speculation, whether a sick cared-for servant or a fighting black man, “Boy Andrew” was still a slave.

Endnotes:

¹Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.civilwarphilatelicsociety.org.

²Cooper H. Wingert, “Slaves Forced to Serve Confederate Army Had to Choose Freedom or Family,” *HistoryNet*, <https://www.historynet.com/family-or-freedom-confederate-camp-slaves-cruel-dilemma.htm> / Accessed March 11, 2021.

³*Behind the Lens: A History in Pictures*, Mercy Street, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/mercy-street/uncover-history/behind-lens/disease/> Accessed March 11, 2021.

⁴Black Confederates, *Encyclopedia Virginia*, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/black-confederates/> Accessed March 12, 2021.

⁵Marlboro Jones, Find A Grave memorial 198801296, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/198801296/marlboro-jones/> Accessed March 12, 2021.

⁶Sam Smith, “Black Confederates: Truth and Legend,” American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/black-confederates-truth-and-legend/> Accessed March 12, 2021.

⁷Holt Collier, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, <https://www.fws.gov/southeast/pubs//HoltCollier-TheMan.pdf/> Accessed March 13, 2021.