"EVERYTHING IS FAIR IN WAR": THE CIVIL WAR MEMOIR OF GEORGE A. "LIGHTNING" ELLSWORTH, TELEGRAPH OPERATOR FOR JOHN HUNT MORGAN

Edited by Stephen E. Towne and Jay G. Heiser

George A. "Lightning" Ellsworth's name has long been associated with the campaigns of Confederate Brigadier General John Hunt Morgan. Morgan, the daring cavalry commander whose raids during the Civil War into Kentucky and Tennessee helped to make those states contested battlegrounds, employed the skilled telegraph operator Ellsworth to tap Union telegraph wires, collect vital intelligence of Union movements, and then send deceptive and misleading messages. These messages often sent pursuing troops in the wrong direction or sent other troops and railroad trains into traps set by Morgan. Much of Morgan's success and fame as a cavalry commander derived from his use of Ellsworth's telegraphic skills in waging war using irregular methods.¹

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¹ General works on Morgan include Howard Swiggett, The Rebel Raider: A Life of John Hunt Morgan (Indianapolis, 1934); Cecil F. Holland, Morgan and His Raiders: A Biography of
As scholars increasingly view Morgan as a prototypical guerrilla commander of the Civil War, it is appropriate to examine the role of his subordinate Ellsworth as an implementer of his tactics. However, to date scholarly notice of Ellsworth’s activities has been limited to his famously cheeky report produced after Morgan’s first Kentucky raid in July 1862, a report that made both Morgan and Ellsworth famous worldwide. Ellsworth prepared his report for his commander providing details of his methods in tapping wires, intercepting enemy telegraphic communications, and sending spurious and misleading messages, all of which had the effect of confusing Federal commanders intent on closing with Morgan’s force. This report was widely published in the southern newspaper press and was reprinted in the North and across the ocean in Great Britain to great acclaim. This report also appeared in the War of the Rebellion series of official records published after the war, making it widely accessible.\(^2\) Scholars have generally ignored Ellsworth’s subsequent published reports during the rebellion, none of which was reprinted in the official records series for the convenience of historians. Most significantly, Ellsworth’s important 1882 memoir of his actions during the Civil War has gone almost completely unnoticed.\(^3\) To this end, an annotated edition of Ellsworth’s memoir will help to inform scholars

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\(^3\) One work to take note of Ellsworth’s memoir was John Bakeless, Spies of the Confederacy (Philadelphia, 1970), 260-85. Bakeless noted that the manuscript was in the possession of Prof. James A. Carpenter of Mississippi State University, who copied relevant portions of the text for Bakeless’s use. Ibid., 394.
of Ellsworth and Morgan’s guerrilla tactics. It will reveal Ellsworth’s activities subsequent to the July 1862 raid into Kentucky, showing continued telegraphic deception into 1863 during the Gallatin raid, the invasion of Kentucky, and the so-called “Christmas Raid” in the winter of 1862-63. Ellsworth’s significant role in Morgan’s raid into Indiana and Ohio in 1863 will also be shown. His memoir will go far to illustrate the connections that existed between Morgan’s Partisan Ranger and guerrilla warfare activities and Confederate secret operations during the war. Finally, it reveals new information and corroborates previously known accounts of Confederate secret operations in the North during 1864 and 1865, including efforts, in cooperation with northern conspirators, to subvert the 1864 United States presidential election and foment insurrection in the North.

Treatments of Ellsworth to date have often highlighted the humorous and entertaining aspects of his activities in deceiving Federal commanders. This theme derives in part from the mocking, impudent tone with which he wrote his reports, humiliating the enemy and making warfare appear to be playful fun. This light treatment may originate in Basil Duke’s important chronicle of service in Morgan’s command written immediately after the war. In one anecdote, Duke mocked Ellsworth’s incompetence as a soldier in losing an officer’s horse and baggage: “It was the peculiarity of this ‘great man’ to be successful only in his own department; if he attempted anything else he was almost sure to fail.” However, important themes are revealed in examining Ellsworth’s memoir, which may have served as the writer’s effort to correct the unflattering depiction established by Duke. First, the immediate effect of Ellsworth’s telegraphic activities while campaigning with Morgan was to allow Morgan and his forces to move through enemy-occupied territory with seeming impunity. Ellsworth would tap the wires, detect where Union troops were

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4 Basil W. Duke, _History of Morgan’s Cavalry_ (Cincinnati, 1867), 212. Another veteran who served with Morgan echoed Duke’s conclusion about Ellsworth, closely paraphrasing Duke’s words in his own memoir. Ellsworth was “out of his element when he tried soldiering, but when seated at the keys, he was always master of the situation.” Thomas F. Berry, _Four Years with Morgan and Forrest_ (Oklahoma City, 1914), 173-75.
or would be, and Morgan’s cavalry would ride around those places avoiding contact with often-superior forces. The information that Ellsworth gleaned from the wires also allowed Morgan to identify weak Union outposts which he would then attack. Most importantly, Ellsworth’s intelligence, gathered surreptitiously or from his deceptive transmissions, often acted as a force-multiplier, giving Morgan the tactical advantage of surprise that allowed him to defeat numerically superior forces when he chose to engage them. Numerous examples of this activity giving Morgan a tactical edge will be seen in the memoir. Moreover, Ellsworth suggests in his memoir that Morgan passed much intelligence he gathered on to his Confederate army superiors for consumption. Beyond immediate tactical applications, Ellsworth’s intercepts may have had strategic significance for the rebel high command.

An important element in guerrilla warfare in the Civil War was the relationship between guerrilla combatants and the civilian population in those areas where guerrillas operated. Morgan was received as a hero in Kentucky, and elicited significant support and assistance from many Kentuckians during his forays into the state. Though he underestimated Union sentiment in his home state, Morgan understood the importance of public sentiment and knew how to generate support for the rebel cause in Kentucky. His use of the newspaper press to rally recruits to the Confederate standard during Braxton Bragg’s invasion of Kentucky is evidence of his desire to cultivate public sentiment in favor of the Confederacy. In 1863, Ellsworth appears to have served as Morgan’s propagandist to a Kentucky audience, disseminating telegraph dispatches about Kentucky affairs from his headquarters in Tennessee. These dispatches sought to undermine pro-Union sentiment and to create favorable conditions for Morgan’s forces. In the process, the messages bolstered Morgan’s celebrity status in the South. Ellsworth’s efforts may have helped to inoculate his commander from a public backlash after his disastrous raid north of the Ohio River when four-fifths of his

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prized cavalry force was killed or captured. Ellsworth was one of the small remnant of Morgan's brigade to escape across the Ohio River and ride to safety into Confederate-controlled territory. One of his first acts on his return was to telegraph to the press that Morgan had remained on the Ohio side of the river to share the fate of the majority of his command and continue the fight. In the process of sustaining Morgan's popularity, Ellsworth boosted his own to the point that newspapers reported on his whereabouts and the rumor of his capture. His own newspaper-fueled celebrity made him the subject of star-struck hero worship.

Though his report of the first Kentucky raid has made him famous, little is actually known of Ellsworth's life both before and after the war. An Indiana businessman, Warren A. Reeder, at one time collected information on Ellsworth preparatory to writing his biography; however, the work was not completed and Reeder's notes are not extant. Ellsworth led an unsavory life, one filled with deceit, violence, lawlessness, and murder, and one that the telegrapher did not recount fully as he did the stories of his wartime derring-do. From the fragments of evidence available to us, he appears to have possessed a chameleon-like character that suited him for the telegraphic

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6 Atlanta Southern Confederacy, August 5, 1863. See also Ramage, Rebel Raider, 178.
7 An example of one of Ellsworth's acts in the role of propagandist is a dispatch he sent from Morgan's winter camp to a Mobile, Alabama, newspaper, reprinted in the Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 24, 1863:
   Mobile, Jan. 23. The Advertiser and Register have received the following dispatch: McMinnville, Jan. 21. A detachment of 100 of Gen. Morgan's men, under Col. Hutchinson, made a dash into Murfreesboro yesterday, in sight of the enemy's cavalry camps, and captured 200 prisoners and 20 wagons.
   Reliable information from Kentucky states that on the 13th instant Gen. Woolford [sic] made a speech to his men, in the presence of 3,000 citizens of Lebanon, telling them to go home for twenty days! If within that time Lincoln did not modify his emancipation proclamation, he would not call upon them to fight against the South, but he would himself take the field in behalf of the South against the North. [Signed.] G.A. Ellsworth, (Morgan's Operator.)
   Footnotes to the text of the memoir below will include references to Ellsworth's role as publicist and celebrity.
8 Correspondence between Reeder and librarians of the Kentucky Historical Society and other institutions survives in the George Ellsworth Biography Files, Special Collections, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.
deception and espionage he practiced during the war. This deceptive character and ability to blend into the crowd must make the reader of his memoir wary of crediting all of his statements. A careful reading suggests that some of his claims, especially those in which he acted independently or alone, without other observers, cannot be fully relied on. By littering his account with the names of people who were either witnesses or actors in the events he described, it would seem that he implicitly acknowledged his unsavory character and provided verification of his account. However, the editors of this memoir have taken care to test his account against other sources and believe that most of Ellsworth’s memoir of his activities during the war—including his activities in the Chicago conspiracies—can be corroborated by government records, contemporary personal papers, newspaper accounts, or other postwar accounts written independently and not known by him. Consequently, the editors believe this memoir is a valuable document for study and understanding of important events during the Civil War.

George A. Ellsworth was born in July 1843 in Prince Edward County, Canada, now part of the province of Ontario. The Ellsworths who settled the neighborhood appear to have been British loyalists who fled from revolutionary New England in the late eighteenth century. Little is known of his childhood and family life; brief mention in his memoir of two years of education suffices for a glimpse of his formative years. Little is known of his father, Caleb Ellsworth, and nothing is known of his mother. How and when he learned telegraphy is not known. Interestingly, one of his brothers and a brother-in-law were also telegraph operators, suggesting that it may have been a family occupation or business. Ellsworth wrote that while still a boy he “became enthusiastic” about traveling to the West, and he took a job in the United States as a telegraph operator at Chenoa, Illinois (formerly Peoria Station), on an Illinois railroad.

9 See Nick and Helma Mika, The Settlement of Prince Edward County (Belleville, Ontario, 1984), 126, 141-42; G. T. Walden to James A. Carpenter, January 21, 1957, in James D. Lynch Papers, accession no. 8, box 5, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, State University, Mississippi.
Though he was only fourteen years old, it must be noted that demand for telegraph operators was great owing to the growth of the railroad and telegraph networks throughout the United States. It is indicative of the demand for telegraph operators that women found employment as operators at a time when women’s occupational options were severely restricted. However, the railroad fired Ellsworth after he accidentally burned down the station. Ellsworth noted that he was severely burned on the face and left hand, but that tender care prevented him being disfigured. Interestingly, he was described during the war as being “good looking,” suggesting that the burns were not so severe as claimed.

From Ellsworth’s account it would appear that in the next few years he bounced around from place to place, working as a telegrapher in St. Louis, Missouri; Brownsville, Tennessee, and Galveston, Texas. However, the 1860 Federal population census locates Ellsworth in Evansville, Indiana, a busy river town on the Ohio River, working as a telegraph operator and living in a boardinghouse. Ellsworth’s omission of this episode in his life before the war is telling when we understand what he did in Evansville. In late August 1862, after the publication of Ellsworth’s report of his activities in Morgan’s first Kentucky raid made him famous, the *Evansville Daily Journal* reported that the Ellsworth who signed himself as “Superintendent, Military Telegraph, C.S.A.” had worked in Evansville in 1860 but had “skedaddled” from town in the night leaving “sundry little bills unpaid.” He had also shirked work responsibilities, and pretended that the telegraph line was down in order to go on a “bender” with another telegraph operator.

More significantly, the newspaper reported that during the 1860 presidential election campaign Ellsworth had been a member of Evansville’s “Wide Awakes,” the northern paramilitary organiza-


11 J. Benson Wier to Nelly, April 2, 1863, in T. C. Wier Family Letters, accession 546, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.
tion that rallied in the thousands in torch-lit processions to support the election of Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln. The Wide Awake movement attracted tens of thousands of young men, played a significant role in mobilizing Republican support for Lincoln throughout the North against his opponents in the election, and it represented an ideological militancy in support of Republican Party principles that greatly alarmed Southerners in that season and immediately afterwards during the secession crisis of 1860-61. The newspaper noted the incongruous fact of a Wide Awake member becoming a Confederate hero. Omission of this episode from the memoir is thus understandable. Ellsworth wrote his memoir for a partisan southern audience, loading it with references to the “Lost Cause” and “Yankee” perfidy, and mimicking southern white racial attitudes. Consequently, reference to his dalliance with an alarming group like the Wide Awakes would have been anathema. The Wide Awake episode, however, raises the issue of Ellsworth’s true ideological adherence or whether he adhered to any ideology or political principles at all. Still, the Evansville sojourn represents his dishonest and chameleon-like personality. The Evansville newspaper remarked that, “We rejoice that [Ellsworth] is connected with Morgan’s band, for his chances of swinging from a stout limb at an early day are decidedly improved thereby.”

Ellsworth’s postwar career presents large gaps in our knowledge of his whereabouts and actions; however, what is known of him is marked by crime and violence. Immediately after the war, it appears that he returned to telegraph-operator work, and worked in Cincinnati. There he met and worked with the teenaged telegraph operator and inventor Thomas Alva Edison, and suggested to him the invention of a device to render tapping telegraph lines impossible (see below). Early 1867 found him in Sharpsburg, Bath County, Kentucky, in a “gambling den” with some friends. “[Q]uite under the influence of liquor,” according to the Louisville Journal, Ellsworth

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“drew his pistol, took deliberate aim, and fired,” shooting dead the barkeeper who served him. Ellsworth and his companions mounted their horses and escaped the town in a blaze of gunfire. Captured and housed in jail in Lexington, he escaped. Recaptured, he escaped from the Fleming County jail in Flemingsburg. Governor Thomas E. Bramlette proclaimed a five-hundred-dollar reward for his capture, but Ellsworth fled the state. Arrested once again in Missouri in July, he once again broke jail and made good his escape. The proclamation described Ellsworth as “about 30 years old, 5 feet 9 inches high, large eyes, hooked nose, and a Canadian by birth; weighs 165 pounds, a telegraph operator.”

Ellsworth disappeared, only to resurface in June 1875, as one of a band of masked and armed train robbers who boarded a train near Houston, Texas, to break open the safe and seize cash being sent to cattlemen. The attempt failed, and railroad officials captured two of the robbers, one of whom was Ellsworth. Newspaper reports referred to him as a telegraph operator in Houston. No mention is made of trial or incarceration or of extradition to Kentucky for the murder charge.

Ellsworth next appears in records in the 1880 Federal population census, resident in New Orleans, Louisiana, married to Mary Ellsworth of Virginia. There he appears to have settled down to life as a telegraph operator in Louisiana. In the 1880s and 1890s, great interest in the Civil War prompted many participants to write and


14 *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, June 23, 1875. The article noted that “The Ellsworth referred to is supposed to be a well-known telegrapher who worked in this city just prior to the war. When the rebellion broke out, George Ellsworth joined John Morgan, the Kentucky guerrilla, and was his cipher operator during the existence of the band. In 1865 [sic], he shot and killed a saloon-keeper at Sharpsburg, Ky., for refusing him a drink of whisky, and escaped from three different jails . . ., the third time being released by the Jailer’s daughter, who fell in love with the prisoner. He was a noted desperado during the war, and has never been heard of, until the Texas robbery, since his last escape. Ellsworth is a member of an aristocratic Canadian family.”
reminisce about their experiences. Newspapers filled many sheets with war stories. Ellsworth wrote his memoir for the New Orleans Times-Democrat, a major daily newspaper of that city, the predecessor to the Times-Picayune. He wrote the account by hand using a letterpress book, in which a moistened sheet of paper is placed on the thin page of the book, and the writer makes an impression through the top sheet onto the bottom sheet. He probably gave the clearer top pages to the newspaper and retained the less-clear press pages; these pages have survived. The handwritten version of the memoir covers 155 pages. The newspaper published the memoir in six installments on Sundays in the spring and summer of 1882 (May 14, June 11, June 18, June 25, July 2, and July 9). At least one newspaper, the Little Rock Daily Arkansas Gazette, reprinted the memoir in its entirety.

Ellsworth's name appeared frequently in newspaper stories of the Civil War published all over the United States, and his activities as Morgan's clever telegraph operator were common fodder for stories. Once again a celebrity, Ellsworth retold some of his stories in pieces he wrote in 1897 and 1898 for the organ of the Sons of Confederate Veterans group, Confederate Veteran, published in Nashville, Tennessee.

Ellsworth died of a heart attack while at work at the telegraph machine at the railroad station in Antonia, Louisiana, north of Alexandria, on November 28, 1899. Newspapers noted the poetical nature of his death. A north-bound freight train stopped at the station for instructions, and the train's conductor alighted to inquire at the telegraph office. "Opening the door he was astonished to find the operator dead in his chair, with his hand upon the telegraph key. The conductor's train clearance card was duly prepared on the table, showing that the operator had been alive only a few minutes before the train pulled into Antonia. He had succumbed to heart disease." Ellsworth was lauded as "an excellent operator, and he wrote a clear, legible hand."15

15 New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 29, 1899; Little Rock Arkansas Democrat, November 30, 1899.
Ellsworth’s memoir merits careful and widespread attention on several fronts. First, as already noted, it presents new information on his use of telegraphy in Morgan’s campaigns. The memoir also points to other intelligence-gathering activities undertaken under Morgan’s orders that show that commander’s use of espionage for tactical and strategic purposes. Perhaps most importantly, Ellsworth was a participant in the notorious Confederate espionage efforts in the North in 1864 aimed at raising rebellion in northern states and undermining the Federal war effort to restore the Union. His account corroborates those of other rebel secret operatives who participated in the efforts, and contributes important information and details about the failed plots.

Ellsworth also enlisted with Morgan’s talented lieutenant, Captain Thomas Henry Hines, and assisted in the plans to attack the Federal prisoner-of-war camp in Chicago, Camp Douglas, on both attempts, in August and in November 1864. In the first, Hines collaborated with disaffected conspirators in the Democratic Party to use the Democratic National Convention, then meeting at Chicago, as a front for an organized uprising by Democrats sympathetic to the southern war effort and opposed to the war measures of the Lincoln administration. When the Democratic politicians got cold feet at the last minute, Hines, Ellsworth, and other Confederate soldiers traveled to downstate Illinois, recruited a force of deserters, draft-dodgers, and anti-Lincoln ideologues. This force filtered into Chicago where they collaborated with local conspirators to make another attempt to attack Camp Douglas, free the prisoners, and raise a general insurrection on election day. Ellsworth’s memoir was the first by a Confederate participant in the plots to be published, which alone makes it a notable account. That the subsequent writings of the other participants do not appear to note his account makes it useful in verifying and corroborating their versions of the events.16

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16 The two most important accounts of Confederate efforts to collaborate with northern conspirators written by participants with whom Ellsworth acted are Thomas Henry Hines, “The Northwestern Conspiracy,” *Southern Historian* 11 (1886-87), 437-45, 500-510, 567-74, 699-704, and John Breckinridge Castleman, *Active Service* (Louisville, Ky., 1917). For a secondary-
The handwritten, letterpress pages of the Ellsworth memoir are preserved as part of the James David Lynch Papers in the Special Collections Department of the Mitchell Memorial Library at Mississippi State University and is quoted with the permission of Mississippi State University. James A. Carpenter and Thomas L. Connelly, an English literature scholar and a noted Civil War historian respectively, both on the faculty of the university, began research work on Ellsworth and the background of the memoir in the 1950s and 1960s. Carpenter completed a typescript transcription of the memoir, which is now part of the Lynch Papers collection. However, neither scholar completed the project. It would appear as well that neither was aware that the memoir had been published in newspapers in 1882.

Ellsworth indeed possessed a “clear, legible hand,” and much of the memoir is easily readable. However, many parts are of the press pages are blurry and faded, and many pages have tears. Moreover, several pages have disappeared since Carpenter made his typescript. The newspaper version and Carpenter’s typescript serve as the replacement for those missing handwritten pages.

This edited version of the Ellsworth memoir blends the printed version as it appears in the newspaper pages with the handwritten text. The handwritten text and Carpenter’s typescript for the missing pages appear in this edition in italic type. Ellsworth’s grammar, spelling, and syntax were less than perfect, and the editors of the New Orleans Times-Democrat made numerous useful corrections. In addition, they clarified his account with judicious edits, replacing trite phrases with taut, robust language that materially aided readability. The editors also cut significant portions of Ellsworth’s narrative, removing anecdotes, side stories, or episodes having little to do with wartime telegraphy. The editors of the current edition have included the complete newspaper version of the memoir and restored those portions of the original that the newspaper editors edited out. In cases where the newspaper editors changed words that tend to change...
meaning, the original text is included in italic type. The idea is to make the memoir whole, as the newspaper-edited text is far from being Ellsworth's complete memoir.

This text includes the use of the ugly racial epithet, "nigger," which the newspaper editors in 1882 in most cases changed to " negro." The ellipses indicates missing or illegible words. Page one begins abruptly because text is missing from the manuscript.

The microfilm of the New Orleans Times-Democrat used in this project lacked several pages of the newspaper of Sunday, June 18, 1882, including that which contained the third installment of Ellsworth's memoir. In its place the editors have employed the version printed in the Little Rock Daily Arkansas Gazette of Sunday, June 25, 1882.

Twenty Years Ago.
Telegraphic Strategy in Warfare
How the Federal Telegraph Was Utilized
By Gen. John H. Morgan, of the Con-
Federate States Army, in Kentucky,
Tennessee, Indiana
And Ohio.

Written for the Times-Democrat by Capt. Geo. A. Ellsworth, Gen.
Morgan's Operator.

Part 1

[Published in the New Orleans Times-Democrat, June 4, 1882]

[p. 1] ... to put them in such a shape ... will be interesting to my readers and... all who like Can while away a... pleasant moment and learn how yankee telegraphic dispatches were frequently Called... requisition by my esteemed friend Gnl John H. Morgan of the Confederate States Army upon whose Staff I had the honor... to serve from the Commencement... was up to the time He lost his... at Greenville East Tennessee Sept... 1864. I shall write only fact... as Can be substantiated by names... I may have occasion to use them... hope those that may peruse this partial... story of telegraphic Strategy to throw the
federal forces off our track. Countermand their military orders etc. will bear in mind that at the time this was being performed I had not the slightest idea that I should ever put my adventures into print [p. 2] end [?]. I shall give as full particulars as it is possible at this time. I . . . have occasion to refer to names dates . . . localities that will be recognized by . . . who were eye witnesses, and also by th . . . who so Kindly assisted me on many d . . . occasions—I some times look back and wonder how it was I succeeded in keep . . . myself intact until the unsuccessful termination of the war having been wounded several times and Carefully p . . . for by the Yankees more than once and . . . Secret telegraphic Operator for the Confederates had the extreme pleasure at many dif . . . times (if they knew it) of eating and even sleeping with my would be destroyers. Perhaps it may be a somewhat pleasant interest to some before commencing the heavier portion of the autobiographical sketch . . . narrative to know a little of my youthfull career . . . and where I came from [p. 3] As I have but a few notes left of my . . . extreme earlier portion of my history therefore it will be sufficient to state that I was born on the North side of East Lake (a beautiful body of water about five miles long and one mile in width) situated in Prince Edward County Canada 17 on the 24th of July 1843 . . .

At the age of Eleven years my father 18 emigrated to Whitby Ontario County thirty miles east of Toronto Canada—After making myself Considerably useful (by going to school) for two years I suddenly became enthusiastic on the then [ms. illegible] . . . epidemic of “going west” and in [ms. illegible] . . . 1857 went to Illinois. My first situation was at Peoria Junction (or Chenoa as it is now known) as night telegraph operator for the Chicago Alt.[ms. illegible] . . . and St Louis RR 19—I remained here for the short space of two months, unfortunately an accident occurred in the meantime in which I was I am extremely sorry to narrate the unfortunate cause and principal sufferer costing the railroad company their building and me almost my life— It will not take long

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17 Prince Edward County, Ontario, is located approximately one hundred miles east of Toronto on the north shore of Lake Ontario, opposite Rochester, New York.

18 Caleb Ellsworth appears in the 1851 Census of Canada as a forty-four-year-old man, born in Upper Canada, and a resident of Whitby, Canada West, now the Province of Ontario. His occupation is unknown.

19 The St. Louis, Alton and Chicago Railroad formerly was the Chicago and Alton Railroad, but it reorganized in 1857. See Gene V. Glendinning, The Chicago and Alton Railroad: The Only Way (DeKalb, Ind., 2002).
my dear readers to explain this matter [p. 4] in a few words as possible. The [ms. faded] . . . cause was a [ms. illegible] . . . lamp and my going to sleep over it and its subsequent blowing at a very unsuccessful attempt of mine (Newly awakening from a deep sleep at my post) to trim the stubborn and burnt up wick—When I came to my sense again I noticed the entire office wrapt in flames and being at this moment fortunately rescued seeing it was useless to attempt to save the building—I was carried away in a most deplorable Condition my face and left hand being severely [ms. torn] . . . but I am thankful to say [ms. torn] . . . and attention was tendered me [ms. torn] . . . and had it not been for the tender . . . [ms. torn] I received it would have left me disfig . . . [ms. torn] I called on Ex Gov Matteson20 the Prf . . . [ms. torn] of that road I am sorry to say my reception at Springfield was anything but Cordial instead of kindness and sympathy his manner was very uncouth and abusive wishing me most kindly the warmest place spoken of in the Bible.

From there I afterwards continued my journey further south arriving at St Louis Mo where I remained for about [p. 5] two years [ms. faded] . . . travels in a Southerly direction [ms. faded] . . . suddenly found myself in the beautiful state of Tennessee—It was not long before I found employment as Telegraph Operator at Brownsville in Haywood County21 [ms. faded] . . . While here I became acquainted [ms. faded] . . . C. Clute22 then Genl Superintendent [ms. faded] . . . Texas and New Orleans Telegraph23 [ms. faded] . . . with head quarters at Houston Texas. He prevailed upon me to go to Galveston and take charge of that Office I arrived at Galveston Sunday Sept 9, 1860.

At Houston I remained until the breaking out of the war— I soon found myself at that eventful period as a high private in the rear ranks of the Bayou.

20 Joel A. Matteson (1808-73) was the Democratic governor of Illinois from 1853 to 1857, and he served as president of the Chicago and Alton Railroad.

21 Brownsville, Haywood County, Tennessee, approximately sixty miles northeast of Memphis.


City guards drilling carefully and enthusiastically every night. We had not to remain long in this position as the “Guards” were suddenly ordered to Virginia where they composed one of the Companies of the 5th Texas Regiment\(^2\) Genl P.O. Hebert\(^2\) who was then in Command at Houston ordered that no [p. 6] telegraph operator should leave the state operators were not so plentiful there then as now—I stood it as long as I could but the daring deeds that I read of in the newspapers about Capt Jno H Morgan perfectly infatuated me\(^2\) and I resolved to disobey orders once and I accordingly left Houston between two days on a Hand Car on the pretext of going out to repair the Telegraph line in the direction of Sabine Pass—at the latter place I took passage on a Stage Coach and arrived in New Orleans in due time thence I went to Mobile Here I made the acquaintance of the Telegraph fraternity to ascertain if possible where John Morgan was operating I learned He had passed through Mobile on his way to Corinth to see Genl Beauregard\(^2\) and would return in a few days.

Sure enough I had to wait but three days when He arrived and took rooms, at the Battle House—I immediately Called on him and introduced myself and told him that I would like to join his Command which He informed me were at Chattanooga I gave him to understand that as He operated almost entirely

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\(^2\) The Bayou City Guards became Company A of the Fifth Texas Infantry Regiment, which arrived in Virginia in October 1861 and served in the Army of Northern Virginia for the duration of the war. See George Skoch and Mark A. Perkins, eds., *A Gallant and Good Soldier of the Fifth Texas Infantry* (College Station, Texas, 2003), xvi.

\(^2\) Paul Octave Hébert (1818-80), a West Point graduate in 1840 and Mexican War hero, served as governor of Louisiana from 1853 to 1856. Appointed to command in Texas, he arrived in Houston in September 1861, found the Texas coast nearly defenseless, and took steps to prepare for invasion. See Edward T. Cotham Jr., *Battle on the Bay: The Civil War Struggle for Galveston* (Austin, Texas, 1998), 37-41. A “high private” was typically an enlisted man who may have had a higher social status than the other men in the ranks but who did not have a commission. So sometimes politicians who joined the ranks are described, or described themselves, as high privates.

\(^2\) The guerrilla raids conducted by Captain John Hunt Morgan received extensive press attention throughout the South as well as the North in early 1862. Morgan’s great popularity assisted his promotion to colonel and later brigadier general. See Ramage, *Rebel Raider*, 64-67.

\(^2\) General Pierre G. T. Beauregard (1818-93) commanded Confederate forces in the west after the death of Albert Sidney Johnston at the battle of Shiloh in April 1862, making his headquarters in Corinth, Mississippi. For Morgan to travel from Chattanooga, Tennessee, to confer with Beauregard required a circuitous railroad and riverboat route through Atlanta, Montgomery, and Mobile. Morgan made his visit in late May—early June, 1862. Ramage, *Rebel Raider*, 87.
inside of the Enemy lines that I was satisfied I Could be of [p. 7] material assistance to him by the use of the Telegraph in throwing the enemy off. His track and off their guard give false reports of His whereabouts, Countermand orders that would be likely to impede his progress into Kentucky &c &c He listened to what I proposed and ordered me to get ready to accompany him to Chattanooga— was only too glad to do so and the next day we were on our way up the Alabama River. At Montgomery we took the Cars for Chattanooga where we found “Morgans men” in Camp some three or four hundred of the best mounted men in the Confederate Army. I enlisted again as a high private in Company A 2nd Kentucky Cavalry. It was but a few days when the enemy one evening appeared on the opposite bank of the Tennessee River and opened a fire of musketry and artillery on the City without one word of warning— fortunately “Morgans men” were there or Chattanooga would fell with the least resistance— at it was the Enemy with drew about Sun down this was in June 1862—At Chattanooga Morgan was joined by a Battalions of Georgia Cavalry under Command of Col Hunt also by a squadron of Cavalry Commanded by Col RM Gano of Texas Swelling Morgan’s force to Eight Hundred men—We took up a line of march for Knoxville where we remained in Camp until the morning July 4th 1862 When we started on the first “Kentucky raid” as it was familiarly termed—Before going further let me relate an incident that occurred at this place while we were encamped = Of Course among so many men there are naturally some wild ones there was one who had a propensity for taking things that did not rightly Come under the head of Contraband. Col

28 Ramage notes that Morgan’s efforts at tapping Federal telegraph communications predated the arrival of Ellsworth in his command; in May 1862, a trooper in Morgan’s command tapped Federal lines near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. See Ramage, Rebel Raider, 84. Morgan also captured the telegraph operator at Cave City, Kentucky, and one of his troopers sent messages in his place. See Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 24, 1862.

29 Morgan obtained authority to organize his guerrilla band as a regiment, and the resulting Second Kentucky Cavalry Regiment, CSA, expanded by recruits and additions.


31 Colonel Archibald Anderson Hunt. Richard M. Gano (1830-1913) was born in Kentucky and moved to Texas to practice medicine. At the outset of war, he raised a Texan cavalry force and led them to Kentucky and joined Morgan’s Second Kentucky Cavalry Regiment; later they formed part of the Seventh Kentucky Cavalry, CSA. Gano rose to the rank of brigadier general by the end of the war.
Morgan listened attentively to the tale of the injured Citizen who had been victimized out of a “bee gum”\footnote{A bee hive in a hollow tree trunk.} I believe it was—search was instituted and the guilty party was reprimanded and put on some extra duty not satisfied with His “Bee gum” transaction. He lifted a “thermometer” and in fact acknowledged it—Col Morgan wanted to know what ever possessed him to take such a thing as that—He replied that he took that Thermometer so he would know when it was Cold enough to Steal Blankets!

In June, 1862, while Col. Jno. H. Morgan was at Chattanooga, Tenn., I joined his command, and became a member of Company A, Second Kentucky Cavalry, Capt. Jacob Cassell, the regiment being commanded by Col. Basil W. Duke.\footnote{Captain Jacob T. Cassell often commanded Morgan’s advance guard or scouts during raids and marches. Basil W. Duke, Morgan’s brother-in-law, was Morgan’s chief organizer and assumed command of the Second Kentucky Cavalry when Morgan was promoted to brigadier general. He also wrote an excellent and detailed history of Morgan’s campaigns during the war on which many historians have relied. See Basil W. Duke, History of Morgan's Cavalry (Cincinnati, 1867). For a biography of Duke, see Gary R. Matthews, Basil Wilson Duke, CSA: The Right Man in the Right Place (Lexington, 2005).} I gave Col. Morgan to understand if he would furnish me with a pocket telegraph instrument I would probably be of some service in taking off Federal telegrams, and countermanding any orders that might be issued by the enemy detrimental to his (Morgan’s) progress while within the enemy’s line in Kentucky and Tennessee, and perhaps succeed in furnishing the Federal commanders with spurious telegrams as to our whereabouts, strength, etc., which said commanders would act upon as emanating from their own operators. As will be seen hereafter I succeeded beyond my expectations.

Col. Morgan, with over 800 men, left Knoxville, Tenn., July 4, 1862, for the interior of Kentucky.

\textit{At Early July 4th 62 We took up a line of March in the direction of Sparta Tenn over Waldrans Ridge — We had one man Killed by bushwhackers between Kingston Tenn [p. 9] and Sparta where we arrived on the Evening of July 6th here we recruited our stock until late the following evening and and [sic] then proceeded in the direction of the Cumberland River. The Stream was very low at that time and experienced no difficulty in fording it — here we understood that}
a force of four hundred Pennsylvania Cavalry occupied Tompkinsville Monroe County Ky—

Col Morgan Concluded to make a night march to this place and as we learned from Citizens and scouts that the enemy withdrew their pickets at early dawn each morning Col M Concluded to follow the pickets Closely into Camp unobserved and attack the federals and very probably surprise the whole force. Col Morgan divided his Command into three portions sending a mounted squadron under Gano to the right and Georgia Batallion under Col Hunt to the left to Cut off the enemy’s retreat and sent Col Basil W. Duke with the 2nd Ky Cavalry dismounted to attack the enemy in the Center—The Surprise was Complete. The Entire federal encampment (with 300 prisoners) were [p. 10] captured—We suffered a loss of but one officer wounded Col Hunt was so severely wounded that it was impossible for him to accompany us further He was left at a private House in Tompkinsville and we afterwards learned that He died a rumor prevailed throughout the Command that He had been poisoned—

The Union sentiment at Tompkinsville was very strong in the Center of the Square the “Stars and Stripes” were floating at the top of a very tall flag pole this was cut down and the flag Captured. One woman entered her protest and in fact abused the axman terribly while He was Chopping it down. The prisoners were here paroled and we left the Same evening for Glasgow Ky a distance of some twenty miles at this place we found a printing Office and Col Morgan issued a proclamation Calling upon the Young men of Kentucky to rally around His standard and assist in driving the invader from the State—Before we left Kentucky after penetrating the interior 150 miles further we recruited nearly two hundred men—

34 The Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment detachment was under the command of Major Thomas J. Jordan. Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 183-84. Duke identifies the officer wounded at Tompkinsville as Colonel Hunt, who was severely wounded in the leg and died a few days later. There were frequent accusations of prisoners being poisoned by their captors in contemporary partisan writings, both North and South, of the Civil War era.

35 Morgan’s biographer notes that the rebel guerrilla leader overestimated pro-Confederate sentiment in Kentucky, confusing admiration of his daring with southern sentiment. Morgan claimed that if the state could be controlled by rebel forces for sixty days, twenty-five thousand Kentuckians would join the rebel cause. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 102. Ellsworth’s mention of the flagpole incident reinforces the notion of pro-Union sentiment in the state. See James E. Copeland “Where were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?” Register 71 (1973): 344-63.
[p. 11] On the night of the 9th of July the Command went into Camp within a few miles of the Louisville & Nashville Rail Road. Col. Morgan ordered a detail of about 10 men to report at His Headquarters at dark, and although a Heavy thunder Storm was approaching, we started for the Telegraph line to see what the enemy had to say about Morgan's invasion of Kentucky—

The first telegraph line encountered was at Horse Cave, on the line of the Louisville and Nashville Railway, where Morgan himself, with 10 men, accompanied by myself, just at dark struck the wire and I attached my pocket telegraph instrument. Strange to say, the first word I heard in attaching my instrument was "Morgan." I took the precaution not to break the circuit or interrupt any passing telegrams. I soon found that the word "Morgan" occurred in any order from Gen. Boyle, in command at Louisville, Ky., to Col. Sanders B. Bruce, at Bowling Green. (Col. B. is now editor of the Turf, Field and Farm, New York.)36 I immediately put on my ground wire, cutting off all offices south, so that I would be in communication with Louisville when Louisville called any office south of me, and enable me to answer the call promptly and receipt for the message in the usual form, O.K. These messages, as Col. Morgan said at the time, "were of the utmost importance to him."37

The Federal commanders were fully aware of Morgan's presence within the State, and were more occupied in trying to defend their towns against Morgan's assaults than making any offensive move-

36 Brigadier General Jeremiah T. Boyle (1818-71), a Kentucky Whig businessman and attorney before the war, commanded much of Kentucky from his headquarters at Louisville. Sanders D. Bruce (1825-1902) of Lexington recruited and commanded the Twentieth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, which fought at the battle of Shiloh.

37 Ellsworth submitted a report of his activities on the first Kentucky Raid to Morgan on July 30, 1862, at Knoxville; the report was given to the Southern newspapers and widely published. His 1862 account varies from the 1862 report in a number of details. For example, he begins the 1862 report on July 10, whereas the 1862 account puts the date when Morgan and Ellsworth first tapped the telegraph wires on the night of July 9. He also notes in the 1862 report that fifteen men accompanied Morgan and himself, whereas the 1862 account put the bodyguard at ten men. The report also provides the entire text of the telegram from Boyle to Bruce. However, the substance of the two accounts is consistent, and the 1862 account provides many additional details. The variation between texts suggests that Ellsworth was working from memory, supplemented by Duke's History of Morgan's Cavalry. For the 1862 report, see OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. 1, 774-81.
ment against us. About this time a heavy rain storm, accompanied with thunder and lightning, rendering it very difficult to take the messages verbatim, but a word or two missed did not grieve us much. It was about 12 o’clock midnight when Louisville finished with (as he supposed) Bowling Green and Nashville. Now surely the time of war had come; it would be presumed of course, that Nashville would naturally have some business for Louisville, and as I had been personating that office I was compelled, necessarily, to manufacture a few messages. I gave Col. Morgan to understand the situation, and he instructed me to telegraph Gen. Boyle at Louisville that Gen. Forrest had attacked Murfreesboro, Tenn., and completely routed the Federal troops, capturing many prisoners and all stores and camp equipage, and to sign the name of Gen. Frye, who was then in command at Nashville. 38 To send this message during such a storm with no copy to guide me was no easy task, particularly as I had to keep the number of words in my mind, so as to be able to check the message correctly. 39 Col. Morgan also requested me to telegraph one J.D. Hunter, of Lexington, Ky., to send two barrels of whisky by express to Nashville and to sign the name of John H. Cogel to the message. Two months from this time, when we occupied Lexington, I found a copy of that identical message in the office, and Mr. Hunter’s testimony in that he forwarded the two barrels C.O.D., and that, as they had been returned to him, he had to pay the charges both ways, which was evidence conclusive to all that I had completely deceived the Federal operators. [p. 13] If Morgan ever entertained any doubts of

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38 Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821-77), Tennessee cavalry commander, raided Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on July 13, 1862, and compelled the surrender of a Federal force under Brigadier General T. T. Crittenden. OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. 1, 793-96. Colonel James B. Fry (1827-94), was Major General Don Carlos Buell’s chief of staff. He later became provost marshal general and superintended the northern draft.

39 The deceptive message appears ibid., 775:

Nashville, July 10, 1862.

To Henry Dent, Provost Marshal of Louisville.

Gen. Forrest, commanding a brigade, attacked Murfreesboro, routing our forces, and is now moving on Nashville. Morgan reported to be between Scottsville and Gallatin, and will act in concert with Forrest, it is believed. Inform the General Commanding Stanley Matthews, Provost Marshal.
my being capable of deceiving the Federal operators this surely set the matter at rest with Him—

Strange to say, three days after this memorable night, Gen. Forrest did attack Murfreesboro, and routed the Federals, capturing and killing many men.

I have repeatedly heard Morgan say that when he sent that message he had no idea whatever of Gen. Forrest's proposed attack, or even of his whereabouts. My excuse to Louisville for not having any messages for him, was that the wires were out of order south, and that it was probably the work of that Rebel Forrest. I bid Louisville good night, and with a good night from him, I detached my instrument, and after pulling down half a mile of wire we returned to where Morgan's men were encamped. I suppose it was because I handled the telegraph that night, during the heavy storm of lightning, that I became generally known throughout the command as "Capt. Lightning." [p. 14] "Capt. or Morgan's Lightning"

The next day Col. Morgan took me from the ranks and placed me on his staff with the rank of captain.¹⁰ We continued our march in the direction of Harrodsburg, Ky. Unable to reach this place in one day's march, Morgan ordered his foraging detail ahead to gather up corn for our horses and provisions for the men near the little town of Maxville [now Mackville in Washington County, Kentucky]. Near this town a body of home guards attacked the foraging party and made such a determined onslaught that Morgan ordered another company ahead to assist them in carrying out their orders. The home guards were routed and we occupied the town that night. Nearly everybody deserted their homes. They had heard the manufactured and exaggerated reports that "Morgan's men" would murder everybody and burn their towns[.] Before daylight, however, a [p. 15] quarter greater portion of the citizens returned and acknowledged that they had acted foolishly and entirely upon reports that Morgan would not leave one brick upon another.

Here we fared very well, and the next morning our company was

¹⁰ No record corroborates Ellsworth's claim of promotion from the ranks.
dispatched ahead of the main body of the command to Harrodsburg, where they arrived about 10 o’clock a.m., and notified the good people that the command of John Morgan would arrive about 2 o’clock that evening and would need provisions prepared for the men. The people set to work with a will and at the appointed time provisions for the entire 850 men were supplied. The provisions were spread out on table cloths all over the court house square. It was the first “square meal” (as the boys were wont to phrase it) that we had sat down to since leaving our encampment at Knoxville. The people of Harrodsburg were very kind to us indeed, and expressed themselves well satisfied with our occupation of the town, but dreaded to see us depart when we received marching orders.

We were the first Confederate soldiers that had occupied the town since the war had broken out. Of course, the simple act of Morgan’s occupation of the town would be sufficient evidence for the first Federals that came that way to compel the people to take the oath or go to prison for aiding and abetting the rebels. Two days’ march brought us within three or four miles of Lebanon, Ky., when just at dark we were fired on by “home guards,” and owing to their stubborn resistance we did not reach the town until 2:30 or 3 a.m. of July 12. I accompanied Col. Morgan to the telegraph office in the railroad depot. A light was burning and the office had the appearance of having been very lately deserted. All was quiet; the usual click was not to be heard. Although everything was in readiness to receive or send a message, I could find no clue as to what the signal of that office might be, having never been in that noble old State before.41

41 Ellsworth wrote in his 1862 report: “On arriving at Lebanon, July 12, I accompanied the advance guard into town, and took possession of the telegraph office immediately. This, as you know, was at 3:30 A.M. I adjusted the instrument and examined the circuit. No other operator on the line appeared to be on hand that early. I then examined all the dispatches of the day previous. Among them I found the following:

Lebanon, July 11, 1862.
Gen. J.T. Boyle, Louisville, Ky.:
I have positive information that there are 400 marauders within 20 miles of this
I had not long to wait before an operator signing “Z” was called “B.” The question uppermost in my mind was, “what had my predecessor said on deserting his office?” Had he said: “We met the enemy and are theirs,” or had he left too hastily for even that—and also who was “B” who was calling so lustily. At any rate I knew it would do no harm to answer the signal and see what “Z” had to communicate. I accordingly answered the call of “B.” [p. 18] I answered the usual I.I. B—The first question he asked was: “What of the marauders now?” I was satisfied “B” was Lebanon, and that Morgan’s men were the marauders. I informed “Z” we were still holding the marauders at bay and that there was no further news. “Z” then voluntarily informed me: “There are 800 troops here coming to Lebanon to your aid!” I thanked him for the information, and at once notified Col. Morgan. Morgan asked me who “Z” was. I told him I could not say. “Well ask him who he is?”

I explained to Col. M. that such a question would surely betray us. [p. 18] He would at least say twas “passing strange that as I had perhaps been working with him for weeks or perhaps months Should ask such a pertinent question as that—Morgan saw the fallacy of it but told me to find out—I was slow hitting [p. 19] upon a plan which I considered a very difficult. I immediately set to work to ascertain who “Z” was by strategy. I struck upon the following plan: I called “Z.” he responded promptly. I said: “There is a gentleman in the office that would wager a box of cigars he could not spell the name of his station correctly the first time. He accepted the wager, and continued by spelling L e b a n o n—junction. I replied, “You have won the bet; the gentleman gives it up.”

Then “Z” asked me, “How did the gentleman think I would spell it? I replied, “He thought you would put two “b’s” in Lebanon.” Col. Morgan knew that Lebanon junction was 30 miles distant, where the Lebanon branch road joined the Louisville and Nashville main stem. Morgan felt easy on the score of these 800 infantry attacking him place, on the old Lexington road, approaching Lebanon. Send reinforcements immediately.

A. Y. Johnson,
Lt. Col. Commanding.”
with the railroad destroyed between us.\textsuperscript{42} [p. 19] Strange it is but never the less true Dan Martyn a Bro-in-Law to my own Brother was the operator at Lebanon at the time we captured it—He never Come out in sight although I have understood since He saw me on the Street—I had no idea I was getting so Close to my Kin folks\textsuperscript{43} — We destroyed all the government stores in the place, we marched to Midway Ky—this place takes its name from the fact it is half way between Lexington and Frankfort Ky on the R-R [marked through by Ellsworth] which consisted of a large supply of commissary and quartermaster's stores and about 4,000 stand of arms. The latter were stored in a building that was not very near to any other and Col. Morgan concluded the most expeditious means of destroying them would be by fire. Accordingly the torch was applied, and, as a great portion of the muskets were loaded, such another popping of

\textsuperscript{42} The 1862 report gives an essentially similar account, and includes text of telegrams sent from Federal troop commanders to General Boyle in Louisville. The report also notes that the Sixtieth Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment had been on the train to Lebanon.

\textsuperscript{43} D. E. Martyn served at different telegraph stations at different times in the war. Martyn “successfully eluded capture by hiding in the willows of Aqua Closet Run, which . . . odoriferously effervesced noisome efflavia, but was an awful good place to hide in.” William R. Plum, \textit{Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States} (Chicago, 1882), 189-94.
firearms. has perhaps seldom been heard except on the battle field. As the bullets whistled around promiscuously, it was the means of very soon clearing the streets of lookers on. If any casualties arose from the fire I am not aware of it. The United States government surely sustained a very heavy loss here. The building also contained over a million rounds of fixed ammunition.

Everything in readiness, we mounted our horses about 10 o’clock a.m. and took up a line of march in the direction of Lawrenceburg, passing through there the same night and going into camp. The next morning we proceeded on our way to Versailles, in Woodford county. We were now eight days out from Knoxville, Tennessee, and the hard march was beginning to show itself on our horses. My [p. 21] spotted or calico horse was among the would-be disabled ones, and, upon inquiry, I ascertained the whereabouts of a very enthusiastic Union man., [sic] [p. 21] to give you an idea how strong an anti Southern man He was—I will tell you as it was told to me—

When I got to Versailles a crowd of young men congregated on one of the street corners remarked, “Look there! look there! that fellow is riding Dug Young’s fine saddle mare.” I found it convenient to make inquiry as to Mr. Young’s politics, when I was told that Dug Young’s prayer at the church had been that no Kentuckian who left the State to join the rebel army should be allowed, if killed, buried [sic] on Kentucky soil. [p. 21] I was Satisfied the mare was mine—

The mare was a fine one too. I named her “Maud” after a young lady of Lexington, Ky. At Versailles we encamped for the night. Col. Morgan notified me that after dark a squad would go over to the telegraph wire between Midway and Frankfort, and quite near the latter place, to hear what the enemy had to say and ascertain if possible what preparations if any were being made to attack us, and also to ascertain the enemy’s strength at Frankfort and Lexington, the latter city being Morgan’s home.

It was quite late when we got to the wire and but little communication was being carried on—enough, however, was gained to assure us that the policy of defense was being strictly adhered to. They
appeared content to let us alone if we would not molest them. We returned to camp, where we arrived a little before day. In making this trip my mare, from some cause or other, stumbled, and several times nearly fell down. I would have exchanged with any one that morning and would have asked no questions, but no offer was made, so I concluded to give her another trial, and from that time, as long as I rode her, she never stumbled with me again. She was a thoroughbred saddle animal and very swift. She proved this upon several occasions, as she carried me safely away from the enemy’s cavalry.

At Versailles the sentiment was almost entirely Southern. We were welcomed by all; they were truly glad to know that Confederate cavalry could come into Kentucky. It was the first regularly organized command of Confederates they had had the pleasure of seeing, and thought perhaps it was only a forerunner of the State’s occupation by a large Confederate force, when they would be relieved of the necessity of having to keep their mouths closed by the presence of Federal bayonets. From this place we marched to Midway, a station to the Louisville and Lexington Railroad and immediately on the pike leading to Georgetown. Before arrived at Midway we passed the well-known thoroughbred stock farm of Robt. A. Alexander. The British flag was flying from his house-top. Col Morgan issued very stringent orders in regard to [p. 24] the non-molestation of Mr. Alexander’s horses, and the men, although very anxious for fresh animals, never offered to molest the property of this British subject.44

The night previous to reaching Midway we had occupied at Versailles—On the morning of July 15, when within about three miles of Midway, Morgan ordered me to take a man or two and go into town and capture the operator before he could telegraph the news of our advance.

44 Robert A. Alexander, from Scotland, operated the Woodburn horse-breeding farm near Midway. Although Morgan apparently did not harm Woodburn Farm, other Confederates, including William Clarke Quantrill and Sue Mundy, later in the war raided the stables and stole several prized horses. See William Preston Mangum, “Disaster at Woodburn Farm: R. A. Alexander and the Confederate Guerrilla Raids of 1864-1865,” Filson History Quarterly 70 (1996): 143-85, and A Kingdom for a Horse: The Legacy of R. A. Alexander and Woodburn Farm (Louisville, 1999).
I took one man with me (Cable Maddox45) and rode leisurely up to the depot, where I found the operator, one Mr. Woolums. I asked his permission to come inside the enclosure where the instruments were, which was granted. I noticed there were two wires on one set of poles, but that only one of these entered the office. I ascertained from Mr. W. that the wire that did not so enter was the military wire. I then instructed Maddox to procure a ladder and ax and cut the top wire. At this juncture Mr. Woolums entered his protest against such a proceeding, not yet dreaming that we belonged to the army of Jeff. Davis, as there was not much uniformity in our uniform. We were in citizens’ dress. Our arms consisted of a pair of navy sixes, which were kept concealed under our coats. Just as I had introduced myself and made known my business, I pointed down the pike road and he could plainly see the head of a column of cavalry. I told him that was the famous John Morgan. He was somewhat discomfitted, but I assured him he would not be in the least disturbed.46 By this time the wire was cut and this forced the military messages to come over the wire that was usually termed the railroad wire. The first message I heard was from Gen. Finney47 at Frankfort to the commandant of the post at Lexington, saying:

“Morgan, with 850 men, left Versailles at 8 o’clock this morning, in the direction of Midway, on the Georgetown pike.”

Morgan soon came into the office, when I handed him the first

45 Cable Maddox, private, Company C, Second Kentucky Mounted Infantry Regiment. He appears in the 1860 Federal census as a fourteen-year-old resident of Anderson County, Kentucky.

46 The 1870 Federal census notes a J. W. Woolums, thirty-two-year-old railroad agent of Midway, Woodford County, Kentucky. Ellsworth wrote in 1862 that he had surprised Woolums, “who was quietly sitting on the platform at the depot, enjoying himself hugely.” Ellsworth also wrote: “I demanded of him to call at Lexington and inquire the time of day, which he did. This I did for the purpose of getting his style in handling the ‘key’ in writing dispatches. . . . he was, to use a telegraphic term, a ‘plug’ operator. I adopted his style of writing, and commenced operations.” OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. I, 776. A “plug operator” is an inexperienced or novice telegraph operator.

47 John W. Finnell, attorney, newspaper editor, former Kentucky legislator and secretary of state of Kentucky, was appointed adjutant general of Kentucky in October 1861, and worked to raise and organize Kentucky volunteer units for the Union cause. Thomas Speed, The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865 (New York, 1907), 82.
dispatch. When he read it he remarked, “Are they always talking about me!” Now, as the enemy had our direction precisely, Morgan asked me if I could place them on the wrong track. (All this time his men were destroying the railroad track, trestles, etc.) I told Col. M. I would try. I put on my ground wire, cutting Frankfort off and calling Lexington. I send the following message to the commander of the post, and signed Gen. Finney’s name:

“My last telegram was founded on unreliable information. Morgan, with his combined force, had driven in our pickets, and will make a desperate effort to take the capital. Come to my assistance at once; do not come by railroad, as Morgan has undoubtedly destroyed it by this time.”

Morgan’s ambition at this time was to capture Lexington. Could he have known that evening that my message had produced the desired effect, he would have marched on that city and taken it without firing a gun. We afterward learned that the full force of 3,000 men were double-quicked on foot for thirteen miles before they ascertained that they were marching on spurious orders.\footnote{In Ellsworth’s 1862 report, he wrote that he sent a spurious message to Union commanders to cut off Morgan en route for Frankfort. He also detailed some of the techniques he used to deceive Union operators. In departing Midway he ran a “secret ground connection and opened the circuit on the Lexington end. This was done to leave the impression that the Frankfort operator was skedaddling or that Morgan’s men had destroyed the telegraph.” See OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. 1, 777-78.} I have since understood that when these 3,000 men found out that message was from “Morgan’s Lightning,” their whereabouts would not have been a healthy locality for that individual. But everything is fair in war. We remained at Midway about an hour, and then started for Georgetown. We had not marched more than two or three miles when firing being heard in our rear, orders to form for defense could be heard from one end of the column to the other. The alarm was caused by a sprightly dispute between some of Morgan’s men and some citizens touching the rights of property. Horses, I believe, were alone involved. The skirmish was not of any moment. After a march of four hours we came in sight of the noted stock farm of Keene Richards, who prides
himself on rearing as fine stock as any one in Kentucky [p. 28] not excepting Robt Alexander.

Mr. Richards' place is but a mile or two from Georgetown. Here we met with no resistance. It was at this point that the bold and dashing Col. W.C. P. Breckinridge, with 100 men without arms, joined us, depending entirely upon Morgan's success at Cynthiana to secure arms for his company.

At Georgetown I did not try to surprise the operator. The command rode into town in a body. The telegraph office was locked. I inquired for the operator and one Mr. Smith, sporting a beaver, was pointed out to me as the individual sought. I introduced myself to him. It was a way we had during the war. Not much ceremony and no “red tape” words to be had for Confederate money. Mr. Smith was quite affable and very kindly showed me into the office, but his instruments were nowhere to be seen. I told him I had captured a set at Lebanon and one at Midway, and I wanted his to make out the third. He said he had sent his to Lexington for repairs, as they were broken. I remarked to him: “What! key, magnet and sounder, all broken?” He persisted in it, and I humored the story, although I knew it lacked the element of thickness.

I kept Mr. S. in my charge that evening and when supper was announced at the hotel I introduced my prisoner to Col. Morgan, and at the supper table. The colonel wanted to know what I was going to do with him. I replied that I proposed to furnish Mr. S.

49 Alexander Keene Richards, of Georgetown, Scott County, Kentucky, was a noted horse breeder.

50 William Campbell Preston Breckinridge (1837-1904) rose to command the Ninth Kentucky Cavalry Regiment, CSA. Part of the celebrated Breckinridge clan, he served in the United States House of Representatives from 1885 to 1895. See James C. Klotter, The Breckinridges of Kentucky (Lexington, 1986).

51 Plum does not identify the operator at Georgetown, Mr. Smith. Plum, Military Telegraph, 198.

52 Ellsworth wrote in 1862: “I asked [Smith] what time he had Lexington last. He said 9 o'clock, and since that time the line had been down. I remarked that it must be an extraordinary line to be in working condition when it was done, as I heard him sending messages to Lexington when I was at Midway at 1 o'clock. This was a stunner; he had nothing to say. I immediately tested the line by applying the ends of the wires to my tongue and found the line O.K.” Smith is not further identified. OR, ser. I, vol. 16, pt. 1, 778.
transportation on the “hurricane roof” of a mule to Dixie; that I was sorry to do so, but I had to make it a rule when I failed to get the instruments I must take the operator. [p. 30] by this means &
perhaps I would be able to get telegraph instruments which were so much needed by the Confederacy— After supper was over Mr. S. desired to see me privately. The interview was granted, the result of which was I left Georgetown the next morning with three sets of instruments instead of two, and less one operator. Mr. Smith, I presume, had only put them away for safe keeping.

About 9 or 10 o’clock that night Col. Morgan desired me to open communication with Lexington by telegraph, distant 12 miles, and ascertain, if possible, what was going on over the wires. Morgan’s command for the past 24 hours had been within 15 miles of Lexington, and as I had been using the wires at Lebanon and Midway, which was surely known by the enemy before this, I had grave doubts about being able to deceive them over their own wires, especially as they were well aware that we occupied Georgetown. I much preferred keeping entirely aloof from the telegraph, but Col. Morgan insisted, and of course I obeyed. I placed my pocket instrument in the circuit and listened for some one to say something, but not a word.55 There was a good current of electricity on the wires, and it was in perfect working order. Not being able to gain any information by remaining quiet, Col. Morgan requested me to call Lexington office and see what they had to say about the “marauders.” [p. 31] the name they had given to “Morgans men” I was satisfied it would be next to impossible to deceive the Lexington operator. [p. 31] as our where abouts were surely Known by the Enemy——

“Obey orders if I break owners,” is my motto, and so I went at it. I called Lexington, the signal for that office being the figure three, and signed the signal of the Georgetown office. An answer to my call was returned instanter. I suggested to Col. Morgan the propriety of telling Lexington the exact truth as to our whereabouts,

55 A pocket instrument or “pocket relay” or “sounder” was a small device typically used by an operator to communicate on a line while in the field. See J. B. Calvert, “The Electromagnetic Telegraph” at http://mysite.du.edu/~jcavert/tel/morse/morse.htm.
as I was satisfied he would question me so closely that I would be unable to give him satisfactory replies. Col. M. consented to this, and I told Lexington John Morgan, with a large force of men, was encamped on the place of Dr. Gano, and that I would keep him fully advised as to their movements, etc. Lexington then wanted to know, “How can you be in the office with Morgan in possession of the town?” I replied that I was in the office without any light, reading by the sounds of the magneto or relay. Lexington then wanted to know if I had seen Morgan’s operator, and asked me, “what did you tell him about your instruments?” [sic] I replied yes, I saw him, and he came in the office with me when Morgan first arrived. Lexington wanted to know what he had to say when he found the instruments were missing. I replied, nothing, much. I told him I had sent them to Lexington for repairs. He seemed to be satisfied, and went away. Lexington then wanted to know where my assistant was, just as I anticipated. Where was he?

I was revolving in my mind whether I had any or not, so as to be able to jump either way. I answered that I didn’t know. He then asked me, “Have you seen him today?” I replied in the negative. That settled it for a fact. The main batteries were quickly disconnected, and this ended my telegraphic communication from Georgetown for the time being. The questions I had answered truthfully. Of course he would not believe, and hence he didn’t think we were encamped at Dr. Gano’s place. If I should judge from the manner the Lexington operator threw off his main battery, I would be compelled to think he was expecting a big rebel soldier to step into his office over the wire at any moment.\textsuperscript{55} Morgan kept out scouts on every road, also a strong force of pickets. He expected to have been attacked at this

\textsuperscript{54} Andrew J. Gano, a Scott County physician, was born in Kentucky in 1828. A Republican newspaper in Indianapolis, Indiana, quoted from a private letter of an unnamed Georgetown woman that Morgan’s troopers “camped in Dr. Gano’s yard, because he was such a strong Union man.” The writer also noted that the soldiers stole horses from Gano and the other pro-Union civilians in the town and forced the locals to feed them and their horses. “All the Union people suffered very much from Morgan. The secesh not at all.” Indianapolis Indiana Daily Journal, July 26, 1862.

\textsuperscript{55} See OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. 1, 778-79.
place, but no, not a sign of a blue coat. Daylight came, and all was quiet. Morgan concluded a day of rest would not come amiss, and as we were getting recruits at this point, he remained over until July 16.

From this point we went to Cynthiana on the railroad that leads from Cincinnati to Lexington.\textsuperscript{56} Here a most determined resistance was made—Morgan’s little band contending against 1,600 men, including 200 policemen and two fine brass cannon from Cincinnati, all sent down there for the occasion.\textsuperscript{57} After a fight of three hours on July 17, 1862, Morgan succeeded in capturing the town and all the troops that did not fly for safety. My first inquiry here was for “my co-operator,” but he was among the missing. I ascertained from a party where he was last seen, and followed up to where some one had seen him get over a fence and go off in the direction of a house about a quarter of a mile away. I let the fence down to enable my horse to get into the field, and had not ridden more than 40 yards when passing a hollow stump I found concealed therein one full set of telegraph instruments. This was all I wanted. I carried them back to town, but Mr. Frisbee, the operator, and I did not meet until after the war.\textsuperscript{58}

[p. 35] This fight was the most severe Morgan had yet encountered. He was out numbered two to one and with his little Mountain Howitzers had to Contend against two large brass pieces—which were placed in close proximity to the bridge on the opposite side of the river

Morgans artillery men with their two little Howitzers Charged across the bridge and Captured the Enemys artillery—at this time Col Dukes men were wading the river which was nearly neck indeed—the enemy had a great advan-

\textsuperscript{56} Ramage notes that the rebel force approached Cynthiana on the Georgetown pike road, not by the Kentucky Central Railroad. See Ramage, Rebel Raider, 97.

\textsuperscript{57} Again, Ellsworth is in error. Ramage notes that there were only 350 Federal troops defending Cynthiana, with sixteen Cincinnati firemen manning one brass gun. Ibid. Duke also errs in doubling the number of Federal troops at the town. Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 199.

\textsuperscript{58} According to 1870, 1880, and 1900 Federal census records, Harry D. Frisbie was the longtime railroad agent at Cynthiana. At the time of the raid in 1862, he was nineteen years old.
tage over us having the protection of the Houses and the depot building—Col St. Leger Grenfel [p. 36] Morgans assistant adjutant Genl had the marks of eleven bullets on him His Horse saddle and Clothing the severest wound was on the Col’s neck—Morgan remarked to him after the fight “Col that’s a pretty severe wound is it painful” The Col threw up his band and rubbing it remarked—“Oh no its only a Scratch” Col G had been a british officer for 22 years when this war broke out He was in England and taking passage on a blockade runner Came into Charleston S.C. He had heard of John Morgan and having a desire to go into active service He joined the latter at Mobile Ala and this was His first attempt as a rebel Officer He was a gallant Officer—before I Complete this I shall have occasion to mention him again59.—We remained at Cynthiana over night—parolling prisoners burying the dead and Caring for the wounded— The Citizens here were very kind to us they took Charge of the wounded and as soon as they became Convalescent they were taken away by the federal prisoners of war.

The day following we started for Paris, Bourbon county, Ky., some 17 miles distant, and remained there over night. The next morning, at daylight, our pickets on the Lexington pike were attacked and driven in just as we were moving out in the direction of Richmond, Ky. We reached the latter place late at night, and rumors were rife that a large Federal cavalry force was in pursuit of us. If such were the case they took the necessary precaution not to travel fast enough to overtake us.60 Whenever we went into camp they would never fail to follow suit. Nothing impeded our progress until we arrived at the Kentucky river. Next day we were fired on by bushwhackers from a mill on the opposite bank of that stream, one horse was wounded. Col. Morgan ascertained from citizens who the parties were, some of whom were captured and released on parole, on condition that they would not fire on any Confederate command during the war. [p. 37] or their entire property would be made to pay [p. 38] the penalty

59 George St. Leger Grenfell served for many years in the British army in numerous campaigns. The account of eleven bullet holes in his clothing appears in Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 201-2. For a biography of this notable figure, see Stephen Z. Starr, Colonel Grenfell’s Wars: The Life of a Soldier of Fortune (Baton Rouge, 1971).

60 Cavalry and Kentucky Home Guard militia under General C. Clay Smith pursued Morgan but failed to close with him. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 104.
Early on the morning of July 21 we arrived at Crab Orchard. There we captured in the hotel some eight or ten Federal soldiers who belonged to the command of Gen. Geo. W. Morgan, at Cumberland Gap, Tenn., who were on leave of absence. We never enlightened them as to who we were until we had secured them all as prisoners. We gave them to understand at first that we were a detail from the Federal encampment, and were authorized to arrest them and return them to their command, as a fight with the rebels was imminent and we wanted every available man. They drew forth their furloughs to prove that their time had not expired, and felt as if we were overstepping our bounds of authority. They had not long to wait in this suspense when Morgan’s entire command marched into town, when they were paroled. We did not wish to let them know who we were until we had secured them all, as some might elude us, as we knew there were others in town and an alarm that the Confederates were there would surely put them to flight.

At this place there was no telegraph office, but there was a telegraph wire. I took the line down and attached my pocket instrument. It was not until about 8 a.m. that the operators commenced sending dispatches. I copied them all. From the tenor of their telegrams, it could plainly be seen that they were not aware of our whereabouts. They appeared to be at a loss to know where to strike and the chances were we would have no further trouble.\footnote{Ellsworth noted in 1862 that he intercepted messages informing him that General Boyle was aware of Morgan’s presence at Crab Orchard and that Federal telegraph operators suggested countermeasures against possible tapping of the lines, but “it was not carried into effect.” OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. 1, 779.} [p. 39] Nothing more of interest occurred in my department until we got to Somerset Ky on the 21st of July. . . .

About 9 Oclock that night—

About 10 o’clock that night we reached Somerset, Ky. When within six or eight miles of the place word was passed down the column, “Lightning, to the front.” At last I was found—asleep on my horse! [p. 39] after I got fairly awake and understanding who wanted me I hurried to the front. I reported to Col. Morgan, who ordered me to take two men and capture the operator at Somerset before he could notify
“The Rebel Morgan with His Guerrillas Bivouacking in Court House Square, Paris, Bourbon County, After Levying Contributions on the Inhabitants” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, August 16, 1862. *KHS Collections*

the enemy by telegraph of our approach, and off we went at double quick; and about 10 o’clock, as we rode up the main street, I could plainly follow the wires. I could seen but one light in the town, and that was on the left side of the street, but by its reflection I could see that this was where the wires entered, and I at once knew it was the telegraph office. I did not thing [sic] it prudent to ride directly up to the office, so I gave one of the men with me my horse to hold.

I dismounted and walked to the office. It was on the second floor, and before I could reach it Mr. Ellison, the operator, had reached the ground out of the back window.62 I found a gentleman

62 Ellsworth wrote in 1862: “At Somerset I ascertained from citizens that the office had been closed for three weeks up to the very hour our advance guard arrived in town, and then it was opened by the operator from London, who came to work the instrument for the purpose of catching Morgan, but unfortunately for Uncle Sam the operator had no time to
(an artist) in the office, who occupied the same room as Mr. Ellison. I questioned him as to the whereabouts of the operator, and it was he who told me of his precipitous flight. I also asked him if the operator had notified Louisville of our approach. He said the operator hardly had time to escape himself let alone notify any one. In this office I found signal and rule books, so I had trouble in obeying orders. About 10:30 p.m. Louisville wanted to know if there were signs of Morgan yet? I promptly replied there were none. I questioned him as to the last reports of Morgan. He said Morgan with 1000 men left Crab Orchard at 1 p.m. for Somerset, and for me to keep a sharp lookout and let them know of his approach, and to be sure and place my instruments in a place of safety. At 11 o'clock Morgan arrived in town and came into the office for a few minutes. I handed him a copy of a message from Col. Wolford, at Danville to Gen. Boyle, Louisville, saying: “My men are green and insufficient to attack Morgan.”

About 12 o’clock I called Louisville and asked him if I could close my office, that I was very sleepy. He wouldn’t begin to let me off; said they were fixing a plan to capture Morgan and that they might need me. Of course I could have gone to sleep, but it might look suspicious to be so independent and it was nearly 2 o’clock a.m. when I got permission to go with a full understanding that I would be on hand at 6 o’clock a.m. I promised all this but it was after 8 o’clock when I answered my call, and such a turning over I did get for sleeping so late. They threatened to send a man to relieve me (as they said), one that could be depended upon. But when I informed them that there were no signs of Morgan yet, it appeased their wrath. Everything passed off quietly until Morgan got ready to leave.

He came up into the office, it was about 11 a.m., and requested either send or receive a message, but I am glad to say he had [left the instrument] in fine working condition for me.” Ibid., 779-80. Plum wrote: “Ellsworth’s claims . . . to have once more deceived the Union operators on this line, especially at Somerset, which place was reached the same day [ ] . . . are doubtless entirely fictitious. The operators on this line had been notified to be on the look out for him.” The operator at Somerset was A. Ellison. Plum, *Military Telegraph*, 189, (quote)199.

Colonel Frank Wolford, First Kentucky Cavalry Regiment, USA.
me to pen the following message and send it:

Somerset, Ky., July 22, 1882 [sic].

I have passed through seventeen counties, captured 2,000 prisoners, 4,000 stand of arms. and destroyed $1,000,000 worth of United States government stores. I am now off for Dixie.

Colonel Commanding Brigade. 64

When I got to the words United States Government stores, the Louisville operator broke me and wanted to know what it meant. I told him if he would wait until I got to the signature the message would then be explained. He waited, and then wanted to know who I was. I replied Geo. Ellsworth. He wanted to know when Morgan got the town. I told him about 11 o’clock last night and that the next time we came I wanted him to let me off earlier and not keep me up until two o’clock looking for Morgan. I think he saw the joke, for his “ha ha” came over the line, and we soon left for the land of the “Lost Cause,” but not until all the government stores in Somerset were destroyed. This place was a depot for the supplies of the Federal force occupying Cumberland Gap, hospital, quartermaster and commissory [sic] stores in abundance, besides several thousand stand of arms, and a large quantity of fixed ammunition.

From that point we returned to Sparta, Tenn., without firing a gun. After crossing the Cumberland river, near Somerset, we marched leisurely until we arrived at the former place. The men and horses suffered considerably for the want of corn and provisions. From Sparta Col. Morgan and staff visited Knoxville, Tenn. At this place I turned over my telegraph instruments to the Confederate government, and made out a written report to Col. Morgan of our trip to

Kentucky. [p. 44] It was published in the Atlanta Ga paper and Copied in the “Cincinnati Enquirer” as the most extraordinary Chapter of the History of the war. It even got in the London times and Commented upon at Some length. Showing How the Federal Telegraph wires [ms. torn][p. 45] been utilized by the Confederates we turned against them in such a manner as to enable a handful of Confederate Cavalry to penetrate their lines destroying Government property to the amount of a Million dollars Capturing large numbers of prisoners and going from [ms. faded] to Tenn without meeting a defeat. After a few days rest at Knoxville Col Morgan and Staff returned to Sparta Tenn where the Command was in Camp in Charge of Col Basil A Duke brother in law to Col Morgan and as gallant officer as any in the army. Here the Command remained until the morning of the 11th of Aug 1862. . . .

George A. Ellsworth.

Part 2

[Published in the New Orleans Times-Democrat, Sunday, June 11, 1882]

At 3 o’clock in the morning of August 11, 1862, John H. Morgan’s little army of Confederates moved in the direction of Gallatin, Tenn., a small town 26 [p. 45] 28 miles north of Nashville, on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, and 75 miles from where we broke camp at Sparta, Tenn. About 3 p.m. we halted, fed our stock and, at 9 o’clock that night, we passed through Hartsville on our way to Gallatin, where there were 800 troops, a Kentucky Federal regiment,

Ellsworth’s report, dated July 30, 1862, appeared in the Atlanta Southern Confederacy on August 5, 1862, and was copied in newspapers all over the South and North, reinforcing Morgan’s reputation as a daring commander. The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, one of the leading voices of the southern-sympathizing, antiwar faction of the Democratic Party in the North, published the report on August 23, 1862. The paper editorialized that Ellsworth’s report “created unusual amusement in the city. It was a rich affair, and displayed Morgan’s abilities in a new field of operations.” Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, August 24, 1862. The Times of London of September 12, 1862, likened Morgan’s raid to a Scottish or Cumbrian “border foray” of previous centuries, but took special note of Ellsworth’s technological innovation in the use of telegraphy to steal information and deceive the enemy. The newspaper praised his “remarkably good intelligence” and his “impudence” in his clever deceptions. “It is an uncommonly pretty story, and goes far to redeem the character of the Americans for inventive genius and dexterity in the strategems of war.”
under command of Col. Boone.66

When within three miles of Gallatin we were commanded to halt. Capt. Joe De Shea67 with 10 picked men and myself were ordered to take a circuitous route avoiding pickets—enter the town, capture Col. Boone, who was rooming at the hotel, and secure the telegraph operator before he could give the alarm. We rode our horses until within about one mile of the place, then dismounted and made our way in through corn fields. Day was just breaking as Capt. De Shea knocked at Col. Boone’s room door. The summons was quickly answered by the colonel himself, who, about half attired, opened the door and was just in the act of buckling on his six shooter when Capt. De Shea demanded the surrender of himself and troops in the name of Col. Jno. H. Morgan of the Confederate States Army. At this juncture the colonel’s wife came to the door and throwing her arms about her husband’s neck implored us not to kill him. We very soon satisfied her that he would not be harmed. As I was the nearest to the colonel, I relieved him of his pistols. He soon completed his toilet and accompanied Capt. De Shea in the direction that Morgan’s men were advancing, but had not, as yet, made their appearance. It was getting quite light. Here I left the squad and went to the depot to look after “my operator.” The depot was open and I discovered a pair of stairs leading up to a room which I supposed was the operator’s. I was correct. I demanded admittance,

66 Five companies of the Twenty-eighth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA, garrisoned Gallatin under the command of Colonel William P. Boone. Plum notes that Morgan also had another telegraph operator named Dudley with him on the August raid. Plum, Military Telegraph, 275.

67 Jo Desha, grandson of a former governor of Kentucky of the same name, had formerly commanded a company in the First Kentucky Infantry, CSA. Shortly before the attack on Gallatin, Desha with a handful of men joined Morgan and were mustered in as Company L of Duke’s Second Kentucky Cavalry. After the raid and during Bragg’s invasion of Kentucky, Desha left Morgan to organize a Kentucky infantry regiment but failed to accomplish that task before the general rebel retreat in October. Preferring infantry to cavalry service, he joined the Fifth Kentucky Infantry, CSA, and was later wounded at Chickamauga, obliging him to resign his commission. After the war, Desha fought a duel in Kentucky and fled to Canada until he was pardoned by the governor. See Edwin P. Thompson, History of the First Kentucky Brigade (Cincinnati, 1868), 488-96; Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 211, 235; Matthews, Basil Wilson Duke, CSA, 80, 215.
and it was granted by one J.N. Brooks, who was the Federal operator at this place. I introduced myself, told him he was my prisoner and explained the situation in less time than it takes to write it. Mr. B. treated me very kindly. I gave him to understand that I regretted the necessity of being compelled to thrust myself upon him at that unseemly hour, but circumstances, over which I had no control, made it my duty. Here I was, alone with my prisoner, not over 400 yards from a Federal force of 800 men, and my friends at least one mile from town. After Mr. Brooks had arranged his toilet—we waited. What for? Why that well-known rebel yell.

About 20 minutes sufficed. I think I felt relieved. Yes, I know I did. Morgan and his men passed through to the Federal camp, when the Federals surrendered without firing a shot.

During this time Mr. Brooks and I descended to the operating room, where I made myself familiar with different signals, calls, etc. It was too early for the operators to be on duty, but not too soon for breakfast. The bell had just rung, and I accepted Mr. Brooks’ invitation to take breakfast with him just across the street from the depot. While at breakfast a Federal officer, a quartermaster, I after-

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68 Ellsworth wrote a report of his operations on the Gallatin raid dated August 15, 1862, which was promptly published in Morgan’s newspaper, The Vidette. It was reprinted in the Atlanta Southern Confederacy of August 26, 1862. Ellsworth’s 1882 account corresponds closely to the original report. In October 1897, Ellsworth, then living in Monroe, Louisiana, wrote an account of the capture of Gallatin entitled “Morgan’s Capture of Gallatin” that appeared in the monthly magazine Confederate Veteran, November 1897, 577-78, published in Nashville, Tennessee. This account corresponds closely to his 1882 account. Shortly thereafter, the Confederate Veteran received and published the account of J. N. Brooks, the railroad agent and telegrapher for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad at Gallatin, then living in Nashville. Brooks noted that Ellsworth’s statement “is in the main correct, but he fails to go into the particulars of my capture. I suppose he was in so many raids it is but natural that he would overlook some of the minor features of this one.” Brooks described the circus-like atmosphere in the town as people arrived from the countryside to loot the government stores seized on the train. He also discovered that Ellsworth “appropriated” his new twenty-five-dollar coat and shirts; “in fact I hardly recognized him.” Brooks interceded with Morgan to retrieve his clothes and money taken from the railroad office. “The General replied that [Ellsworth] had no right to take those things from me, and said he would see that I got them back again.” But Ellsworth kept the clothing. The next day, Brooks furtively carried the telegraph instruments under his arm out of town to safety in Louisville. See “Remembers Morgan’s Telegraph-Operator,” Confederate Veteran, January 1898, 12-13. See also Plum, Military Telegraph, 275-77.
ward learned, came down stairs with his wife. I questioned him as to his being in the service, and he got very wrathy, indeed, pointing to his insignia, said: “you ought to know it, sir!” Supposing I had been correctly informed, I moved back my chair and walked around the table to him and asked him if he was armed. [p. 48] I found He was not. He had hardly time to say he was not when I told him he was my prisoner, and ordered him to remain seated until I finished my breakfast. The meal that he and his wife ate was no lunch for me, after having been in the saddle for 30 hours. He seemed to lose his appetite altogether after I gave him to understand that John Morgan had the town and all the Federals prisoners. This was the first he had heard of it. This is one of the instances where the early bird got the worm.

Breakfast over, I returned to the telegraph office with my prisoners and took formal charge as train dispatcher on a Yankee telegraph line pro tem., and under adverse circumstances. Two trains were to leave Nashville at 5:30 and 6 a.m., one a passenger and the other a freight train. The passenger train was due at Gallatin about 6:45. It did not arrive at that hour. I asked Nashville where it was, and he replied that it left there on time. It was not long, however, before Nashville began asking me about the train. I reported its non-arrival promptly. All this time I feared that they might get wind of our occupation of the place and return to Nashville. During the time, Col. Morgan coming to the office to ascertain the whereabouts of the trains, told me he had sent a detail of men in the direction of Nashville, with orders to go on until they met the train, and after its passage to destroy the track so that it could not return to Nashville. While we were waiting—it was about 8 a.m.—one Conductor Murphy, of a freight train bound south, was then at Franklin, 10 [p. 50] 20 miles north of Gallatin, asked Nashville for orders to let him come on to Gallatin. This was denied him. I immediately put on my ground wire and called Franklin, and gave Mr. Murphy orders to run to Gallatin to meet all north-bound trains. He obeyed. In the meantime I notified Col. Morgan that I had ordered a South-bound
train to come to Gallatin, and he at once ordered Major Dick McCann with a squad of men to capture the train on its arrival. The Major did it handsomely and it paid us well. There were 20 cars, all laden with horses and supplies for the Army of the Cumberland. 50 head of fine, fresh horses (what a God send to Morgan’s men; Col. Morgan gave me first choice), four cars of oats, several cars of provisions, consisting of “hard tack,” etc. *69 Mr. Murphy took the joke very well, and said he would run again on the same orders. Still no trains yet from Nashville. Just as I expected, at 11 o’clock Nashville began calling Gallatin, when the following conversation ensued:

To G.: Who is at the key?—Nashville
To N.E.: B.—G.
To G.: Who is B.?—N.E.
To N.E.: Brooks.—G.
To G.: What Brooks? Give your full name.—N.E.
Brooks’ full name I gave him, when Nashville said:
To G.: Who was the young lady that went with you and me to Major Foster’s the other night?—N.E.
To N.E.: Don’t know you. Never went with any young lady. Don’t know Major Foster.—G.
To G: A negro met our train four miles this side of Gallatin

*69 Joseph Richard McCann was a major in the Ninth Tennessee Cavalry, CSA, and during the war received a reputation as a guerrilla fighter in Tennessee similar to that of Morgan in Kentucky. Brooks wrote: “After the war I became well acquainted with Maj. McCann, and we often talked over the capture of Gallatin. I laughed at him undertaking to break the spokes of the drivers of the engine with an ax.” Brooks, “Remembers Morgan’s Telegraph Operator,” 13. Duke recalled anecdotes of McCann while in Morgan’s command in his *Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C.S.A.* (Garden City, N.J., 1909), 266-71. Ellsworth in his 1897 account noted that the train was twenty cars in length with three cars of “fine horses.” Another account of the seizure of the train written by an anonymous member of Morgan’s command for the *Knoxville (Tenn.) Register* noted fifty cars and the locomotive destroyed, and “80 fine horses, 1,500 sacks of oats and corn, and 550 boxes of Crackers, all of which we appropriated—burning that which we were unable to use.” *Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer,* August 25, 1862. The Louisville and Nashville Railroad served as the main supply line of the Federal Army of the Ohio, commanded by Major General Don Carlos Buell. Buell was removed from command in October and replaced by Major General William S. Rosecrans, who renamed his command the Army of the Cumberland.
and turned them back, saying John Morgan had the the [sic] town.—N.E.

To N.E.: Arrest that negro [p. 51] nigger and put him in jail. Everything is quiet here.—G.

To G.: I am satisfied. but the superintendent in not. He wants to know what that was he sent you by express yesterday.—N.E.

To N.E.: a jug of nitric acid.—G.

To G.: correct. The train will start again. The negro has been arrested.—N.E.

Things had taken such a turn that it was ten to one the other train would never get through, for the news of our presence was bound to spread like wild-fire. Some of the prisoners who had been paroled had left as early as 10 o’clock for Nashville on foot. We entertained but little hope of capturing any more trains that day. We had, however, the satisfaction of knowing that we had captured the most valuable one already.

It was about 4 o’clock in the afternoon. Morgan was in the office. Nashville called G, and wanted to know who was at this key. I told the colonel the question was propounded, and asked him what I should say. “Tell him,” said he, “anything you please. We will leave here at 5 o’clock.” As we had abandoned all hope of getting the train, I replied to Nashville’s question:

To N.E.: I am Ellsworth.—G.

To G.: You d—m wild Canadian, what are you doing there?—N.E.

I told him I came over to dispatch trains for him. He accused me of not being very successful. I told him I had got one train “Mr. Murphy, from up the country, came down to see us.” He denied that, saying Murphy could not get to Gallatin without orders. I soon eased his mind on that score, and told him I used to run trains myself by telegraph. I bid him good-by, and told him not to forget to release the nigger. He told me there would be 3000 blue-coats out to see us to-night. I told him we didn’t care about making any new acquaintances, and that with his consent I’d go!
The reader will readily understand how I managed to answer such foreign questions so readily. I had notified Mr. Brooks that I should expect him to answer the questions readily and correctly, as our success depended upon it. Mr. B. saw at once it would be better to do so than to go south for his health.

The operator at Nashville questioned me as to what time we got the town; how many men we had, and which way we were going from Gallatin. I told him we captured the entire Federal force at daylight that morning, including Col. Boone. As to the number of men Morgan had, I would respectfully refer him to Morgan’s assistant adjutant general, and as to our movements he should address Col. John H. Morgan, headquarters in the saddle. During this time, the different operators on the wire found out that they had been talking and transacting business with “Morgan’s lightning” all day. They were all anxious to have something to say to me. During this time there were several young ladies in the office. I repeated to them most of the conversation that was going on over the wire. They appeared very enthusiastic over it, and joined heartily in the laughs we had. One of them penned a dispatch to George D. Prentice, editor Louisville Journal, notifying him that Major Wash Morgan accompanied his cousin John in command of 400 Indians and to keep close, as they were seeking his scalp.70 The good people of this town were very much elated to think that at last the Confederates were in possession, and only wished that we might remain with them. But is [sit] was ordained otherwise, and it was not long before Morgan’s command was compelled to leave them at the mercy of the enemy. These good people deserved a better fate. After appropriating all the supplies captured from the freight train and completing the destruction of the rolling stock, Morgan’s command fell back to Hartsville, 16 miles distant, and went into camp. Here they remained for about one week, when news reached Morgan that about 300 Federals occupied Gallatin, and were pressing every male inhabitant between

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70 George Washington “Wash” Morgan was a cousin of John Hunt Morgan. His mother being part Cherokee, he “dressed as an Indian and identified with his Indian heritage.” He commanded a company of his Cherokee family members. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 89.
the ages of 16 and 60 into the ranks, or, as we afterward found out, they were arresting them preparatory to taking them to Nashville. Capt. Hutchison, with his company, was at once ordered to strike the railroad between Gallatin and Nashville and destroy the trestles. I was ordered to accompany him. We left our camp at Hartsville at 8 p.m., August 19, and just at daybreak the next morning we attacked the guards at the Sandersville trestle, and captured them without the loss of a man. I at once attached my telegraph wire and remained there until 11 a.m. I received some very important military dispatches to and from the Army of the Cumberland, which I delivered to Col. Morgan, whom we found occupying Gallatin on our return. Morgan’s command entered Gallatin early that morning, expecting to find those 300 Federals, but were mistaken. The enemy had left town in the night on foot with their prisoners, in the direction of Nashville. As Morgan’s men entered the town, they were met by the mothers, wives and daughters of those who had so ruthlessly been torn from them. On all sides people were saying: “Oh, bring back my father! bring back my husband! bring back my brother!” In a double-quick, Morgan’s men overtook the Federals with their prisoners, some 17 miles from Gallatin, and [p. 57] as good as their word recaptured every prisoner. That was a glad night in Gallatin. The good people of that town threw open their doors and Morgan’s men fared sumptuously.\footnote{72}

About 12 o’clock at night I was occupying a room with Col.

\footnote{71} Captain John B. Hutcheson commanded Company E of the Second Kentucky Cavalry.

\footnote{72} Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 215-18. Ellsworth passes over the running battles in pursuit of the Federal troops and the civilian prisoners of Gallatin of August 20. A contemporary account, dated August 27, 1862, of a soldier of the Fiftieth Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the unit that captured the civilians, tells of ferocious fighting along the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, as Morgan’s troopers attacked isolated companies of the regiment in turn at Pistorkob, Saundersville, Drakes Creek, Mansker’s Creek, and Edgefield Junction. At Edgefield Junction, the writer, Assistant Surgeon J. W. Hervey, recounts that Morgan’s forces sustained heavy casualties before they withdrew, leaving their dead and wounded. Wrote Hervey: “Their Assistant Surgeon, who said behind to attend their wounded, informed me that Morgan cried” when two of his favorite officers, Captain Gordon E. Niles and Lieutenant James Smith, were killed. Indianapolis Indiana Daily Journal, September 9, 1862.
Morgan and staff. We had not yet closed our eyes [p. 57] but laid there and were still relating the incidents of the day, when a voice outside called loudly to know where Col. Morgan was. I answered the summons and out there, in the bright moon light, I say [sic] a boy, probably 10 or 11 years of age, sitting on a horse. He said he wanted to see Col. Morgan. I hurried down stairs, fastened the boy’s horse and escorted him up to Col. Morgan’s room. This was the boy’s message, in his own words:

“My mother told me to come here and tell you a Gen. Jackson, with so, so many men and horses are camped near our place and he is after you.” Col. Morgan questioned him closely as to where he lived. The boy said he lived between there and Hartsville, about 10 miles from Gallatin. The boy said that they were coming here in the morning. The boy’s horse was put up and he remained with us that night. Orders were sent to camp for every man to be in his saddle at daybreak.73

At the appointed time Morgan’s men moved out in the direction that the enemy were expected, and we were not disappointed. About 8 a.m. the head of the enemy’s column could be seen about two miles away. Morgan divided his command into three parts, sending one the right, one the left and one to the centre. The enemy, four abreast, rode steadily along until Morgan’s men opened fire on them. The fight continued with fury for about two hours, when the enemy commenced falling back. They divided their force into three parts, and their hasty retreat became a rout [p. 59] running mass. By sundown that evening Morgan’s men had 700 prisoners in the little town of Hartsville. The enemy’s killed and wounded amounted to 120. The Confederate loss was very light, owing to advantage of position and protection afforded in the high corn.

73 Duke wrote many years afterwards that the incident of the boy riding to inform Morgan of the enemy pertained to the arrest of the men of Gallatin and that the boy found Morgan’s troops bivouacked in the countryside. Duke, Reminiscences, 256-57. Historians have followed Duke’s account. See Ramage, Rebel Raider, 115, and Matthews, Basil Wilson Duke, 81. Ellsworth’s account is at variance with that of Duke by separating the two events: the rescue of the men of Gallatin and the subsequent battle with Federal troops under Richard W. Johnson.
Morgan's men fought dismounted, the enemy on horseback. The little boy's Gen. Jackson turned out to be one Gen. Johnson, of Ohio county, Kentucky, who had 1600 picked men, sent out with the avowed purpose of capturing John Morgan. Johnson was also a prisoner in our hands. He begged Morgan not to take him into Hartsville, which prayer Morgan granted. It was not long, however, before the reason for this request was ascertained. Gen. Johnson did not wish to face the citizens of that place. He was there the day before and had said openly that on the morrow he would return with John Morgan's head!

Gen. B.W. Duke, author of the History of Morgan's Cavalry, on page 212, speaking of Ellsworth, or "Morgan's Lightning," says of him: At Gallatin "he was immediately put in possession of the telegraph office, and went to work with even more than his ordinary ingenuity. It was the peculiarity of this great man to be successful only in his own department. If he attempted anything else he was almost sure to fail. At Crab Orchard, for instance, on the late raid, he had taken it into his head to go after a notorious and desperate bushwhacker, whom our best scouts had tried in vain to capture.

["Telling no one of his intentions, he took Col. Grenfell's horse, upon which was strapped a saddle, which the owner valued very highly, and behind the saddle was strapped a buff coat equally as much prized, and in the coat was all the gold the Colonel had brought from Richmond when he came to join us, and thus equipped, he sallied out with one companion to take the formidable "Captain King." He went boldly to that worthy's house, who, seeing only two men coming scorned to take the brush. To Ellsworth's demand to surrender he answered with shot gun and revolver, severely wounding the friend and putting Ellsworth himself to flight. King pressed the retreat, and Ellsworth, although he brought off his wounded companion, lost horse, saddle, coat and gold. St. Leger was like an excited volcano,

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and sought Ellsworth to slay him instantly.

[1] Three days were required to pacify him, during which time the great “operator” had to be carefully kept out of his sight. But when Ellsworth was seated in the telegraph office he was always “master of the situation.” No man could watch him at work, see him catch without a boggle “Signals,” “Tariff,” and all the rest, fool the regular operators, baffle with calm confidence their efforts to detect him and turn to his own advantage their very suspicions, and not unhesitatingly pronounce him a genius.

[2] As if to demonstrate incontestably his own superiority, he has (since the war closed) invented a plan to prevent just such tricks as he used to practice at way stations, from being played.75

[2] When he “took the chair” at Gallatin, he first in accordance with Col. Morgan’s instructions, telegraphed in Col. Boone’s name, to the commandant at Bowling Green to send him reinforcements, as he expected to be attacked. But this generous plan to capture and parole soldiers, who wished to go home and see their friends, miscarried. Then he turned his attention to Nashville. The operator was suspicious, and put a good many questions, all of which were successfully answered. Before giving up the wires, and after Col. Morgan permitted him to reveal himself, Ellworth [sic] told some first-class romances. He made Morgan’s force out about 4000, and did it with a skill that carried conviction. He would speak in dispatches to various well-known Federals of certain imaginary command under men whom they well knew.”

Morgan remained at this place until August 24 [p. 60] 28th, when an order from Gen. Kirby Smith, dated Knoxville came, requesting

75 Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931), the inventor, shortly after the war met Ellsworth in Cincinnati when both were working as telegraphers. In his memoirs, Edison wrote that Ellsworth “wanted me to invent a secret method of sending dispatches so an intermediate operator could not tap the wire, and understand it. He said that if it could be accomplished he could sell it to the government & get a large amount of money. This suited me & I started in & succeeded in making such an instrument, which had the germ of the Quadruplex in it, afterwards invented by myself & now generally used around the world. This Quadruplex permitted the sending of 4 messages over one wire simultaneously.” Theresa M. Collins and Lisa Gitelman, Thomas Edison and Modern America: A Brief History with Documents (Boston, 2002), 44.
him to meet him at Lexington, Ky., Thursday, September 4, 1862.76

Good as his word, Morgan entered the town on that day at 10
a.m. and Kirby Smith arrived at 10:30 a.m. That was one of the
closest calculations, I take it, ever made and effected during the war.
Kirby Smith marched his men over 150 [p. 60] 160 miles, fought the
battle of Big Hill77 and arrived at Lexington the very day appointed.
His troops were short of provisions coming through the mountains,
and lived on “roasting ears.”

During our march from Hartsville to Lexington we met with but
little resistance. Our command was in high spirits at the prospect
of again entering Kentucky, where we would have the assistance
of 15,000 or 20,000 Confederates outside of our little band which
now numbered 1000 men. We passed through Glasgow, Ky., and
marched in the direction of Columbia, Ky. At the latter place there
was a telegraph office. We approached this town early one Sunday
morning—about 9 o’clock a.m. When within about three miles, Tom
Franks, of West Point, Miss., a member of Capt. Weber’s company,
Second Kentucky cavalry, volunteered to accompany me and en-
deavor to capture the Federal operator before he could telegraph of
Morgan’s approach.78 Tom and I started and our double quick soon
became a run, and in a few minutes we were in sight of the place. I
watched closely to see where the wires entered the building. I soon
discovered that the office was in the second story of a house [p. 62]
building with a pair of stairs leading up from the outside. As we passed
the Court-house about a dozen men were seated on the fence. We
took but little notice of them. If we had looked more closely we
would probably have discovered a Federal officer who, we afterward
learned, was in the crowd, but made good his escape. The operator

76 Major General Edmund Kirby Smith (1824-93), a West Point graduate, as commander
of the Department of East Tennessee cooperated with General Braxton Bragg and his Army
of the Mississippi in an invasion of Kentucky in August 1862. See Kenneth W. Noe, Perryville:
This Grand Havoc of Battle (Lexington, 2001).
77 On August 30, 1862, Kirby Smith’s forces overwhelmed a Federal force at Richmond,
Kentucky, capturing over four thousand troops.
78 Thomas B. Franks, private and later captain of Company I, Second Kentucky Cavalry;
Captain Thomas B. Webber, Company F, Second Kentucky Cavalry.
noticed our hurried approach, and surmising whom [sic] we might be, quickly picked up his combination set of telegraph instruments, but fearing to come out by the front door, he raised a window opening on the roof of a long livery stable. He had not gone half the length of this building when I was through his office and out upon the roof on the stable also. Pulling out my "persuader" I induced him to halt and return without a murmur. He at once gave up his instruments and his six shooter. In the meantime I had sent Tom around to cut off his retreat before I entered the office. Mr. Ellison's movements at Somerset a month previous had suggested to me this precaution. This operator's name was Meagher.  

79 He seemed to take it quite easy, and began wanting to know what I would do for him, etc. Among other things, he had a fine horse in the stable, strictly personal property, and he wanted to retain possession of it, and wished me to use my influence with Morgan's men on their arrival, to keep them from taking the animal. I visited the stable with Mr. Meagher; he pointed his horse out to me. I examined him closely, and found branded in large letters on his left foreshoulder the letters U.S. This piece of strictly personal property, as Mr. M. termed it, transported about 150 pounds of Rebel soldier out of town the following day. About the time Morgan's men had entered the town, I had the telegraph instruments replaced, and was in telegraphic communication with Lebanon, Danville, Lexington and Louisville. Very important messages were passing to and fro in relation to the invasion of Kentucky, by Gen. E. Kirby Smith, Morgan and others. "Gen. Nelson, of the Federal army, had a sufficient force to cope with Kirby Smith," but as it afterward proved he got beautifully whipped at Big Hill by Gen. Smith.  

80 All day I sat there copying Federal telegrams, and by sundown Morgan was as well posted in regard to the movements of the

79 James Meagher. Plum, Military Telegraph, 199-200.  
80 Major General William "Bull" Nelson (1824-62), of Kentucky, prior to the war was a U.S. Navy officer. Nelson obtained a commission as general in the U.S. Army for helping to organize Unionist forces in Kentucky shortly after outbreak of the rebellion. While he escaped capture at the battle of Richmond, Nelson was shot dead in September 1862, by a fellow Federal officer, Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis, for insulting words. Noe, Perryville, 92-93.
Federals as if he had issued the orders himself. It was at this place I [p. 64] *first* met the famous Champ Ferguson, who at the breaking out of the war was driven into the Confederate cause by outrages committed by [p. 64] *Federal Soldiers or more properly speaking “Home Guards.”* I have understood he was (when the war first broke out) a strong Union man, but reports to the contrary soon reached the ears of the Home Guards and they visited Champ’s home. He was absent at mill. These would-be “braves,” some of whom were near neighbors of Ferguson, insulted his wife and daughters, by using the most obscene language in their hearing and by forcing them to almost disrobe themselves, and in this plight marching them back and forth in front of the whole company. Champ returned home, learned the full particulars of their outrageous conduct, obtained nearly all their names, mounted his horse and before daylight two of them had met their death at his hands [p. 65] *Knew why they died.*

At the time I saw “Champ,” August, 1862, he had some 8 or 10 men with him, and through them I learned that Champ had killed twenty eight men, most of them belonging to the crowd who so grossly insulted his wife and daughters. [p. 65] *While we are [sic] Columbia on this trip about 4 Oclock that Evening Champ with a squad of men left Columbia promising to return at day break—good as his word He had made the round trip in the Specified time and when interrogated as to his success the night previous—He drew forth a ten inch Knife which was Covered with blood and holding it up in plain view remarked “That tells the Tale” He appeared to be Satisfied—It seems. He had Housed two of the Women insulters and walked in on them—*

Monday morning early we were off for Danville. Morgan’s intention was to join Kirby Smith and help him whip the enemy. The telegrams I received at Columbia fully justified the belief that an engagement was imminent, and we moved in that direction. Two

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81 Champ Ferguson (1821-65) of Clinton County, Kentucky, carried on a bloody and personal war of revenge, often acting in concert with Confederate forces but often at the head of a small band acting independently. Confederates knew to keep their distance from him. See Duke, *History of Morgan’s Cavalry*, 182-83, and *Reminiscences*, 123-25. See also Thomas D. Mays, *Cumberland Blood: Champ Ferguson’s Civil War* (Carbondale, Ill., 2008).
days’ march brought us to Danville, where we were informed that the cannonading had been plainly heard there that day, and we felt sure that Nelson and Smith had measured their strength. The next day the news was confirmed. At Danville I captured the operator and got his instruments. Kentucky was fast being evacuated by the Federal forces, and telegraphic communication at the time was very uncertain. In their flight the Federals destroyed more or less of the wires, and panic-stricken “wire-pounders” deserted their offices and gave all up to us. We remained at Danville one night, and early the following day we were in our saddles marching in the direction of Lexington, and at the appointed time, Thursday, September 4th, as arranged, Morgan and Smith formed junction in Lexington. Two years from that very day Gen. John H. Morgan was murdered while a prisoner [p. 66] in the federals [hands] at Greenville, East Tennessee. When we marched into Lexington the city was crowded to excess, every building, every window, every roof overflowed with people, and cheer upon cheer went up for Jeff Davis and John Morgan. The waving of handkerchiefs, the hoisting of Confederate flags, the enthusiasm was beyond description. [p. 67] I’ll venture the assertion It was the proudest day John Morgan ever experienced. There in the crowd stood his noble mother, waiting to welcome her gallant son, whom she had not seen for nearly two years, and of whom she could hear only through Northern channels. She knew full well, however, that her son was doing his duty wherever he was. Mrs. Morgan had six sons and two sons in law, all of whom were in the Confederate army [p. 67] Cause. Her sons in law were Lieut. Gen. A.P. Hill, of Lee’s army, and Brig. Gen. Basil W. Duke. Of her sons, one was my commander, a major general of cavalry two were colonels, two were captains and one a lieutenant—eight commissioned officers! surely this noble woman had reason to be proud.\footnote{John Hunt Morgan’s force could have entered Lexington on September 3, but waited until word of their approach was circulated to allow a triumphant hero’s welcome in his hometown the next day. Henrietta Hunt Morgan, his mother, later lamented that she hardly had any time alone with her son while in Lexington. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 121. Ambrose Powell Hill (1825-65), a West Point graduate, married the widowed sister of John Hunt Morgan, Kitty Morgan McClung, in 1859. Hill commanded a corps in Robert E. Lee’s Army}
Morgan’s men resided in Kentucky, and on our arrival at Lexington, Col. Morgan gave them one week’s furlough to visit their homes and recruit their horses. The glorious reception we received in Lexington will always be fresh in the memory of all. By request of Gen. Kirby Smith, and with Col. Morgan’s sanction, I was placed in charge of all telegraphs in Kentucky, and in a few days we were working the lines to Frankfort in one direction and nearly to Covington, Ky., in another. We remained in Kentucky until after the battle of Perryville, October 8, 1862, when the Confederate forces evacuated the State. On leaving Lexington I had some five or six wagons under my charge, with supplies of wire, acids, telegraph instruments and material for the Southern Confederacy. On the morning of October 8, I started with my wagon train for Danville. All day we could plainly hear the cannonading at Perryville. On arriving at Danville I left my wagons and reported at Gen. Bragg’s headquarters at Harrisburg, when I received orders to bring my wagons to Camp Dick Robinson and place them in the regular wagon train of the army, and in a day or two we were off for Knoxville via Cumberland Gap. The retreat was conducted in a masterly manner without the loss of a man. In the meantime Col. Morgan had gone around the rear of Gen. Buell’s army and succeeded in destroying over a hundred wagons of Buell’s train. While in Kentucky Morgan recruited his command to the number of 3500 men. On arriving at Knoxville I received orders to join Morgan at Murfreesboro, Tenn. It was here that Col. Morgan was married to the beautiful Miss Mattie Ready, and where, at the


On October 8, 1862, part of Major General Don Carlos Buell’s Army of the Ohio encountered General Braxton Bragg’s army near the Kentucky town of Perryville, about forty miles to the southwest of Lexington. After a severe fight, Bragg withdrew and retreated southward, pursued slowly and cautiously by Buell, ending the invasion of Kentucky. Noe, Perryville, 333-39.

A Georgia newspaper reported that Ellsworth was in Atlanta on October 27, where he “exhibited to the editor of the [Southern] Confederacy the pocket instrument with which he operated the telegraph line in Kentucky. He has captured and brought South 16 sets of telegraph instruments since he joined Morgan’s command.” Savannah Daily Morning News, November 1, 1862.
same time, he received his commission as brigadier-general.\textsuperscript{85} George A. Ellsworth.

Part 3

[Eight pages of the Sunday, June 18, 1882, issue of the New Orleans Times-Democrat do not appear on the microfilm; The Little Rock Daily Arkansas Gazette version published on Sunday, June 25, 1882, has been substituted. The Gazette made slight changes to punctuation and capitalization (e.g., “federal” instead of “Federal”) but appears to have followed the New Orleans text scrupulously]

Wires in War.


How the Federal Lines Were Utilized at Liberty and McMinnville.

[George A. Ellsworth in the New Orleans Times-Democrat]

December 19, 1862, Morgan, with a force of 37,000 \textit{sic} \cite{p. 70} 3,700 men, all well mounted and armed, started upon what has always been known as our “Christmas Raid” to Kentucky. His purpose was to strike the Louisville and Nashville railroad near Green river bridge and destroy it as far as Louisville. \cite{p. 70} \textit{He accomplished his object} Before reaching the road—it was Christmas eve—the main body of his command camped near Glasgow, Ky., and the advance guard went on into town to picket it and enjoy their Christmas. It was about 9 o’clock at night and very dark. As a matter of course, after a hard day’s ride an egg-nogg \cite{p. 70} or \textit{“sich like”} would naturally be one of the first things on the docket. It so happened that about the same hour, but from at an \textit{sic} opposite direction, about the same number of federal came into town, neither force knowing of the other’s presence and meeting face to face in different places, an indiscriminate “shooting scrape” took place. The federals, however, were forced to retreat, closely pursued by Morgan’s men, who captured eight or ten prisoners and all their wagons. It was here that

\textsuperscript{85} Martha “Mattie” Ready, of a prominent Murfreesboro, Tennessee, family, married John Hunt Morgan at her family’s house on December 14, 1862. Confederate President Jefferson Davis conferred promotion on Morgan to brigadier general the previous day. Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, 134.
Capt. Wm. Jones, of Louisville, one of Morgan’s officers, lost his life.\textsuperscript{86} Early next morning, with five men, I struck the telegraph line and remained on it until late that night, when I joined Morgan, near Bacon creek bridge. I ascertained the force at Elizabethtown to be one Illinois regiment, some 800 men, all infantry.\textsuperscript{87} On the morning of December 27\textsuperscript{th} Morgan was met by a white flag from the last named place, demanding Morgan’s surrender. Gen. Morgan reversed the order of things and sent in a demand for their surrender, which was also refused. Morgan gave them time to remove the women and children and then surrounded the town and opened fire. The artillery was placed in position, and as soon as the enemy’s whereabouts was discovered, Capt. Palmer, of the artillery, threw a shell into the house, between the very two windows that the federals had been firing from. Such an unwelcome visitor at that early stage of proceedings was quite enough to dumbfound the enemy.\textsuperscript{88}

Within twenty minutes from the time the first gun was fired the 800 federals were made prisoners. When the fight was over and the women and children returned to town, one young lady [p. 72] girl remarked: “Oh, I am so glad our house has got the marks of the war.” It seemed a shell had passed through and landed under the piano in the parlor. The girls seemed to vie with each other as to whose house could show the most “marks of the war.”

The people at this place manifested the same spirit toward us

\textsuperscript{86} Captain William E. Jones, Company A, Ninth Kentucky Cavalry, CSA. Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 329.

\textsuperscript{87} The Ninety-first Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment garrisoned Elizabethtown, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harry S. Smith. In Morgan’s January 8, 1863, report of the raid, he wrote: “On arriving at Upton, I cut the telegraph wire, and my operator was soon in communication with Louisville, Cincinnati, and other points. No important messages were received, however, except one informing me of the arrival of a train loaded with ammunition, small-arms., and two pieces of rifled cannon, which I immediately took measures to intercept, but unfortunately missed.” OR, ser. 1, vol. 16, pt. 1, 155. See also India W. P. Logan, Kelton Franklin Peddieord of Quirk’s Scouts Morgan’s Kentucky Cavalry, C.S.A. . . . (New York, 1908), 69.

\textsuperscript{88} Captain Baylor Palmer, Palmer’s Tennessee Light Artillery Battery. Describing the Elizabethtown battle, Duke wrote: “Palmer, who was a capital officer—cool and clearheaded—concentrated his fire upon the building where the flag floated.” Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 333.
that they did in the majority of the towns throughout Kentucky and Tennessee. They were truly glad to have us come, and sorry to see us go. After paroling the prisoners and destroying all the government property Morgan proceeded to two very long and high trestles a few miles north of Elizabethtown, and burned them to the ground. This crippled the enemy's transportation to Nashville, where a battle was imminent, Gens. Bragg and Rosecrans confronting each other [p. 73] with their combined forces.\footnote{General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee met Major General William S. Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and fought the battle of Stones River over three days, December 31, 1862—January 2, 1863. Morgan's raids on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad supply line of the Federal army handicapped Rosecrans's efforts to supply the southward advance of his army. Peter Cozzens, \textit{No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River} (Champaign, 1991), 19, 44-45.}

On our return south we were notified of a large federal force in the vicinity of Lebanon, Marion county, Kentucky. We arrived at that place about dark on the 28\textsuperscript{th} of December, 1862. Every preparation to go into camp was made, but instead of this Morgan ordered a forward movement, and in the dead hour of the night—dark, rainy, cold and windy—with the assistance of Mr. Dan. Ray, the guide, who knew every inch of the ground, we succeeding \textit[sic] in flanking the large infantry force of the enemy, and by daylight we were ten miles south of them, and continued our journey without molestation to McMinnville, Tenn., and went into winter quarters.\footnote{Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, 141-45. For an anecdote about the “gallant soldier” Dan Ray, see Duke, \textit{Reminiscences}, 129-31. Kelion Franklin Peddicord, who served in Morgan’s scouts, often accompanied Ellsworth in advance of Morgan’s main force. Writing in 1865, Peddicord described how during the Christmas Raid, “Lightning” tapped Federal wires and learned how confused Federal forces were: “It was truly amazing to hear the ‘operator’ repeating the dispatches as they were flying through his office [i.e., Ellsworth’s pocket device]. The operator at Danville, for instance, informs Campbellsville that the picket has just been run in by ‘Morgan,’ and that he has his traps fixed to leave at a minute’s warning. Stanford says, ‘Morgan is approaching with three thousand cavalry and several pieces of artillery. Send reinforcements.’ Campbellsville wires to Danville, ‘Morgan is now before Lebanon, engaged in a hot skirmish’; and tells Stanford, at the same time, ‘All the troops able for duty have gone from Columbia stockade at Green River Bridge.’ To Lebanon, Campbellsville says, ‘Save a few companies to protect the hospital and the army stores.’” Logan, \textit{Kelion Franklin Peddicord}, 76-77.} While we were here I concluded to have a little fun at the expense of
our regular telegraph operator at that post, Mr. Albert Hatch, who
had charge of the telegraph office for the confederates.91 I notified
some of my friends to happen around at the telegraph at a certain
hour that night as I intended to tap the line outside of the office,
and play Yankee operator on my unsuspecting friend inside. I got
everything in readiness, my friends had congregated, and I opened
on McMinnville by calling his signal without signing any particular
office. He quickly answered my call. When I asked him how many
men Morgan had there, Hatch wanted to know who I was. I told him
to answer the question and I would tell him, and not before. Hatch
remarked to the crowd sitting in his office that there was a Yankee
operator on the wire trying to find out Morgan’s force. The boys
would not credit his story and endeavored to laugh him out of it, but
it was no use. Hatch insisted on it, and expressed a wish that some
one would go for Ellsworth and test this matter. One of my friends
volunteered to go after me, and came and told me what Hatch had
said. Knowing there were but two offices on this wire, and knowing
both their signals, I notified my friend to return and tell Hatch I was
busy and could not come just then, but to watch everything closely
that passed over the wire, and to answer no questions—that I would
be over soon. After my friend had had time to deliver my message,
I called “Q” and signed “G.” I personated both signals, neither of
which were on the wire. “Q” answered, or at least I did myself. I
asked “Q” and signed “G,” “if they had completed their work?”
“Q” answered in the affirmative, saying: “We are going further
north and destroy another, and join you at the place named today.”
I remarked to “Q:” “All right; we shall need all the assistance we
can get. Col. W. is here, and will attack the town at daybreak; don’t
destroy the T.L, as we may need it.” G. I bade myself good-night
and signed “Q” respectively, and disconnecting my pocket instru-
ment, I returned to Hatch’s office to see what he wanted with me.
All I had dispatched he had copied down and was so excited he could

91 Lieutenant Albert Hatch was a Confederate staff officer and telegraph operator at
McMinnville, Tennessee; see the Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System website of the National
Park Service at www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/.
hardly read his own writing. He was very near-sighted, and because of his excitement and comical appearance, I thought the boys in the office would suffocate themselves to keep from laughing out. Hatch was endeavoring to decipher who Col. W. might be, and what was the meaning of T.L. He handed it to me, and after he assured me that he was not joking, that he had certainly heard the Yankees talking over the wire, I agreed to assist him in translating it. After I had conned it once oo [sic or] twice I remarked that the whole thing combined meant: “We have destroyed one trestle or bridge and we are going further north to destroy another.” Colonel W. is Colonel Welder [p. 76] Wilder, in command of the federals, and will attack McMinnville at daylight.²⁹ “Don’t destroy the T.L.”, that means the telegraph line, “as we may need it.” All agreed that I had translated it correctly. It was all we could do to keep Hatch in the office. He wanted to go and notify General Morgan right away. I insisted upon his remaining, and we would all argue the point and see if it would do to go to General Morgan with such a meagre report; that it might be a ruse to get us to evacuate the town. We all argued against Hatch, but, no, sir, he would not be convinced. I remarked, further, that it might have been the operator at Tullahoma. “No, sir,” Hatch said; he knew the manipulation was not him. I asked him if it might not have been me—that he did not know my style of writing on the wire. He insisted that he did, and that the writing that he copied was different from anything he had ever heard before. This settled it—the sale was complete. We let Albert off with one bottle of Gilbert’s best. While in this place the inactivity began to grow monotonous to Morgan, and he conceived the idea of trying to enter Nashville with a force of eighty men, with the avowed purpose, as he afterward said, of burning steamboats and capturing General Mitchell and the military governor.³⁰

²⁹ Probably a reference to Colonel John T. Wilder, Seventeenth Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment, who later commanded a brigade of mounted infantry, armed with repeating rifles, in Rosecrans’s Army of the Cumberland and who did much to neutralize Confederate cavalry superiority in 1863. See Peter Cozzens, This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga (Champaign, 1992), 14-15.

³⁰ Brigadier General Robert B. Mitchell was military commandant of Nashville, Tennessee;
Every man composing the eighty was dressed in federal uniform. Unfortunately, as we thought, but luckily perhaps, we met a federal scouts [sic] of twenty men on the opposite bank of the Stone river, and we only succeeded in capturing six of them—the balance escaped to Nashville. This broke into our arrangements, and returned to McMinnville.\textsuperscript{94} Morgan gave me a permission to go into the federal lines and tap their wires. I struck the telegraph in the neighborhood of Cave City, and without disturbing their communication I remained there two weeks without molestation, taking off all important military messages, and returning with them to Morgan’s headquarters. These dispatches were forwarded to Gen. Bragg’s headquarters.

[p. 79] The weather was quite severe and not being acquainted in the neighborhood of my temporary office—I done my foraging at Night for myself and “Maud”—I would go to a different House every night within two or three miles of my Camp I would generally form a pretty Correct idea of the peoples politics with whom I traded. Of course I was Compelled to answer many questions—one night I would represent myself as an escaped prisoner—and another I would be a new recruit going South to join Morgan and at another time would be one of Morgans men going North—My Office was over two hundred yards from the track in a thicket where I could not possibly be discovered unless some one chanced right in the Thicket—Often I would go down and Sit on the side of the track and see the trains as they would pass

I do not think I was ever Suspectioned as being a spy—and I know I was not discovered while taking messages off the wire by any one—during my journey south I encountered a Squad of blue Coats it was late in the afternoon—I had met up with a [p. 80] man whom I suspected as being a rebel mail Carrier\textsuperscript{95}—He

Andrew Johnson, a future president of the United States, had been appointed the military governor of Tennessee by President Abraham Lincoln in March 1862. Johnson’s vigorous measures greatly embittered rebels in Tennessee. See Hans L. Trefousse, \textit{Andrew Johnson: A Biography} (New York, 1989), 152-75. Morgan’s biographer argues that the winter of 1862-63 saw Morgan become so enraptured with his young wife that he ignored his command responsibilities, resulting in his brigade losing their effectiveness as guerrilla fighters and raiders. See Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, 146-51.

\textsuperscript{94} Duke makes no mention of the plan to capture Mitchell and Johnson in his account. See Duke, \textit{History of Morgan’s Cavalry}, 354-55.

\textsuperscript{95} Confederate secret agents and southern citizens undertook extensive efforts to smuggle communications in areas occupied by Federal troops and also into the northern states. Federal
was going to the river also — We had traveled together probably 5 or 6 miles—I had hinted to him that I was friendly to the South and that I objected to being interviewed by any federal should we Chance on them—He was quite mute on the subject and did not expose himself very freely—I have often heard that “actions speak louder than words” Here I had it demonstrated. I was the first to see the enemy their numbers I could not distinguish as they were crossing the road we were on at right angles and we never discovered them until we were near the Summit of a little rise in the road directly in front of us and timber on both sides of the road obstructed our view—I should say they were 60 or 75 yards ahead of us—we discovered each other about the same time I wheeled my horse around and struck out keeping the main road that I had just passed over—My Strange friend’s actions convinced me that He was not partial to that side of the House. He followed me closely. My mare was too swift for the large Indiana Horses [p. 81] that proved to be in pursuit of us. It was a race for life with me my pocket Telegraph with three or four hundred telegrams. would have convicted me beyond per adventure I had to run but one mile when I come to a Cross Roads my mind was already made up which way I should turn — I invited my Strange friend who was some thirty yards in my rear to follow me and I would take him through. He made no reply the Yankees some three or four of them were about 150 yards in our rear—The balance of them in the rear of them the Cross roads reached I turned to the right my partner kept straight ahead by this time a dozen of the federals were within 200 yards of me. The three foremost ones kept on after the stranger—I suppose their reason for this was from the fact that their Chances of getting him were the most encouraging—My pursuers reined up and stopped—as I had a hill to ascend I slackened speed and took it more leisurely once over the hill I never saw my pursuers any more [p. 82] nor my Strange friend either—This little race had changed my course and plans considerably. I was but a few miles from Tompkinsville Monroe County and there was a Federal Cavalry Company there. What was I to do? I was dresses

[sic] as a Citizen except my Overcoat that was strictly blue—I concluded to face the music and do a little more talking and less running! I rode leisurely into town dismounted and went into a grocery. Called for a drink and invited a Couple of Federal soldiers who were in there to take a drink with me. I enquired of them the distance to what is termed the Quaker Settlement and also the direction they gave me the desired information and I went on my way rejoicing—if they had any Curiosity in regard to me I am sure I dont know it I asked my questions in an off hand manner—in a Kind of a I dont care style and everything was lovely—I will here remark that I didnt go to the Quaker Settlement—I went about 4 miles [p. 83] into the Country and remained over night with a man that gave me a full history of John Morgan and how the latter took his Horses. The year previous—at this place I personated a federal Cavalryman on a little special duty the Host and myself agreed exactly as to what disposition should be made of Morgans men when Captured that is to say. I agreed with him until I got out of Sight and hearing.

I think if I had remained there a day or two longer I Could have borrowed a dollar or two—just on my political principles—Breakfast over and I was off for the Cumberland river—I was slowly wending my way through that broken Country and when about to descend a hill down to a stream of water upon which there was a mill when what should Call my attention but Some ten or twelve Cavalry men dressed in blue Coming down the Hill from the opposite Side—the Mill was a large brick one I Kept on steadily down the Hill until I got the mill between them [p. 84] and I—when I turned my mare and ascended the Hill Cautiously Keeping the mill between us until I gained the Summit—I presume they must have stopped on the opposite side of the building waiting for me to Come around from the fact that they had not put in an appearance when I started off in a lively gait—I had probably gone about one mile when I saw a Sign boards at a Cross roads and in passing it rather fast I endeavored to read it and thought I had accomplished it but after having met a man with a yoke of Oxen to his wagon—I was fully satisfied before I left him that I had read the Sign too hastily—I enquired of my Ox friend How far it was to Genter Ponini—He said He had never heard of such a place these twenty years—He scratched his head and endeavored to recall the place but it was no use—He named over several landings on the Cumberland among them Centre Point—I saw the point at once and thanking my [p. 85] friend we divided—Not Knowing
how soon my pursuers would be along on my trail—I didn’t allow any grass to
grow under “Mauds” feet and struck out for “Centre Point”—On my journey
I met a Mr Wilson who lived at the river a few miles below Centre Point and it
being a more direct route for me to go—I Chose to go to his place—I told him I
understood the rebels were building boats to cross the river on and that my busi-
ness down there was to ascertain if such was not true—I asked him How He
managed to Cross the river when He had occasion to do so—he said He had
a Canoe that answered his purpose—thinking this would answer mine I bid
him good day and proceeded with a lighter heart at the idea of having so much
as a Canoe to Cross in—When I reached Mr Wilsons place I saw a Colored
man working near the House—I informed the shade that I had met his Master
back on the road a mile or so and He told me to Come to you that you knew
where the Canoe was and that you would set me over the river—without the
least hesitancy [sic] the man obeyed and I followed him down the bank. He had
the boat partially Concealed up in the back water but soon brought it out—I
threw my saddle into the boat and jumped in myself leading “Maud” into the
river—the Negro pushed off the boat and as my mare was a fine swimmer we
had no trouble in crossing. we had just landed on the opposite Side when ten or
fifteen Yankees made their appearance on the bank we had just left—to make
things doubly safe I took the precaution of take my Colored friend with me to
his masters place—that was the last I ever saw of Him—or my blue Coated
pursuers I think they had visited the Quaker Settlement for me and not finding
me there were returning to Tompkinsville when I met them at the Mill South of
the Cumberland I Considered [p. 87] myself safe—Although I was a hundred
miles from Home and still inside the Federal lines—No further trouble I reached
Headquarters delivered my telegrams and notified Genl Morgan of my narrow
escape at the hands of the federals—while I was out on another secret service
duty a few weeks later in a little fight of my own I had my left leg broken near
the ankle and was forced to ride on Horse back 20 miles with but one foot in the
Stirrup before I Could get a Conveyance to take me to McMinnville this was on
the 16th of March 1863—I had been over to the Military Telegraph line near
Gallatin Tenn near the tunnel on the Louisville and Nashville RR during my
first Twenty four Hours I had been there I Copied a message from the Enemy’s
wire of the utmost Importance in relation to a movement that must be check-
mated—I Concluded one important message was worth a hundred unimport-
ant ones so I [p. 88] replaced the wires just as I had found them and at dark
left for McMinnville I Crossed the Cumberland that night and just before day
break I put up at a House for the day Claiming to be out on business for Genl
Rosecrans—about 5 Oclock that evening I saddled up and left for Morgans
Headquarters I traveled all night and just at day the next morning—I met a lone
yankee Cavalryman on a by road—I halted him and drawing my navy demanded
his Surrender He replied to my demand by pulling His six shooter—I fired on
him when He returned the salute in the same Coin at the Same time retreating
and firing as He withdrew Whether I struck Him or even His Horse I Know
not. one thing I am sure of one of his shots struck my left leg 4 inches above the
ankle shattering the larger bone96—I took the precaution not to let him Know I
was wounded or He might Have Come off victorious yet [p. 89] [ms. torn] it
stood now I had the field—to ride with but one leg in the Stirrup twenty miles
was very painful to me—I got through safe a little disfigured but not disheartened
I felt that I have been wounded while in the performance of my duty and in the
Course of a few weeks would be ready for duty—but in this I was ready for duty
[sic?] — but in this I was mistaken—I was laid up with it nearly three months
at McMinnville—I had the best of Care I was very kindly treated at the House
of Major Rowan a very estimable family indeed Dr Allen Chief Surgeon of
Morgan's Command set my limb and in three weeks time [p. 90] I was able to
make my way down [ms. illegible] the Genl and Mrs Morgan visited me on
several occasions and I wanted for nothing that Could be had—97

While at McMinnville, during the winter of '62 and '63, I met
with an accident that laid me up for a month or two. I was bed-fast
for a month, and when I was able to get out on my crutches I would
go down to Gen. Morgan's headquarters and ascertain the news.

96 In a private letter written at Morgan's brigade hospital in McMinnville, Assistant Surgeon
J. Benson Wier contradicted Ellsworth's account of being shot: “You have heard of Ellsworth,
[Morgan's] telegraph operator. He was sent with an escort, a short time since, the other side
of Nashville & Louisville line, for the news. In returning his horse ran against a tree & broke
his leg. I have been attending to him, and will have him well in a few days. He is a good
looking, clever fellow, but like most Kentuckians, has the Yankee brogue & manner.” See
J. Benson Wier to Nelly, April 2, 1863, in T. C. Wier Family Letters, Accession 546, Special
Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University.
97 Captain Thomas Allen, formerly of Company B of the Second Kentucky Cavalry,
resigned because of “extreme ill-health” and was appointed regimental surgeon. His brother
One morning early I got a note from Gen. Morgan that the Yankees were coming\(^\text{98}\) and his force was out at Liberty, some twenty-five miles away; he would be compelled to evacuate the town, and that I could either go to Sparta, Tenn., in a carriage, or by railroad to Tullahoma. I chose the latter route, and at 8 a.m. forty or fifty passengers left McMinnville by rail. I was still compelled to use my crutches. On our arrival at Morrison, some eight or ten miles from where we started, the excited populace notified us that the enemy were burning the trestle and destroying the track about 400 or 500 yards below us. Everybody but poor me left the train and took to the woods for safety. I made my way out the best way I could. A colored man was standing near. I took him to the baggage-car, pointed out to him my trunk and told him to take it to a house, pointing to one, and to take good care of it until the Yankees left, and I would give him $5. He started one way and I the other. It was but 100 yards to the timber, where I secreted myself and awaited further developments. I had just got settled when here came the Yankees. They at once set to work destroying the locomotive and cars. They were, I suppose, about two hours at work. It seemed to me a week. Then they started off in the direction of McMinnville. About sundown I entered the town and found my trunk safe, the only one saved out of twenty pieces of baggage. I understood that the enemy captured over half of those who took refuge in the woods that left the train before I did.\(^\text{99}\) I remained here over night, and the next morning a


\(^{99}\) The Federal raid on McMinnville occurred on April 20, 1863, and was commanded by Major General Joseph J. Reynolds. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 155-56; Duke, History of Morgan's Cavalry, 389-90; Duke, Reminiscences, 269-70. Reynolds's report of his raid appears in OR, ser. I, vol. 23, pt. 1, 267-70. Reynolds noted that his force destroyed the railroad between McMinnville and Manchester, Tennessee. Morrison, about ten miles southwest of McMinnville, where Ellsworth's train was halted, was on that railroad line. Given his celebrity in the South, southern newspapers reported Ellsworth's capture during the raid. See Richmond Daily Dispatch, April 30, 1863. But he corrected the report: "George A. Ellsworth, Morgan's telegraph operator, was not captured at McMinnville, as reported. He writes as follows to the Chattanooga Rebel: 'I was not captured, although I was on the train that was taken by the
gentleman volunteered to take me and my baggage to Tullahoma in a buggy. Then I took the Chattanooga train for Stevenson, Ala., thence to Memphis, and Charleston railroad to Huntsville, where I remained until June, when I received a letter from Gen. Morgan ordering me to report at his headquarters at Sparta, Tenn., as soon as I was able, as he was going to make an extensive trip to Kentucky.\(^{100}\) I remained in Huntsville in the house of Mrs. Bradford. Here I chanced to meet a very intimate friend of mine, Albert L. [p. 92] I. Street, who had been acting as telegraph operator for Gen. Van Dorn, and as an occasional correspondent of the Mobile Register over the non-de-plume \([sic]\) of “N’importe.” He and his wife were boarding there at the time I was. Street was from Toronto, C.W. It was there I first met him. In St. Louis he and I roomed together while we were engaged in the telegraphic business. I was employed by the Western Union telegraph company, and he was operator in the president’s office of the Ohio and Mississippi railroad. Since the war I have learned that Street died in Mobile, Ala., before the close of the war.\(^{101}\) During the latter part of June I joined Morgan at the appointed place. My mare “Maud,” was among the missing. I had left her in charge of Henry Beach, of Lexington, Ky., one of Morgan’s scouts, and he informed me that he was with the command at Liberty, Tenn., when they were attacked by the federals and forced to fall back. “Maud” was very lame, so much so that she was unable to travel, and he was compelled to leave her at Liberty. The federals captured the town.

Yankees at Morrison. I made my escape to the woods, about 250 yards, on my crutches. I lay there until dark; I witnessed the destruction of the train cars, and depot, by the Yankees, about 700 in number. There were some twenty passengers on the train. Above half the number were captured.” \(\text{Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 8, 1863.}\)

\(^{100}\) Morgan’s biographer states that he designed a bold foray north in order to restore his luster in the Confederate army after a winter and spring of decadence and failure. Morgan planned from the beginning a deep raid through Kentucky, across the Ohio River and into Indiana. Duke wrote that Morgan defied explicit orders from General Bragg not to cross the Ohio River and had made preparations in advance by ordering scouts to investigate fords across the great river regardless of Bragg’s decision. Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, 156-160; Duke, \textit{History of Morgan’s Cavalry}, 409-11.

\(^{101}\) Albert L. Street served on the staff of General Earl Van Dorn, and wrote for the \textit{Mobile Register and Advertiser}. See \textit{The Encyclopedia of the Confederacy}, ed. Richard N. Current et al. (New York, 1993), s. v. “Street, Albert L.”
and when they evacuated it they took my mare with them. Henry felt very sorry, indeed, that he allowed her to fall into the hands of the enemy. No one mourned her loss more than I did. She had been a faithful animal to me, and on more than one occasion had carried me safely away from my pursuers. Gen. Morgan furnished me with another animal, and in a few days we were off for Kentucky.

We crossed the Cumberland river near Burkeville, Ky., on July 2, 1863, under great difficulties and disadvantages. It had been raining for a week, the river was very high and swelling fast. Morgan waited two days for it to recede, but instead of this it kept steadily rising, when he concluded to cross it at all hazards. The men set to work building rafts, and in the course of twenty-four hours four or five had been completed. [p. 94] these were Constructed for the purpose the men and their Saddles arms. Etc—Early on July 2d the rafts were loaded and crossed over. Then a drove of horses were driven into the stream and swam out to the opposite side, where the men were in readiness to catch them. It took nearly all day to complete the transfer of 2500 men and horses. Late that evening we marched out a few miles and went into camp. Some of our men in the advance had a skirmish with a federal scout, but the latter soon retreated with little or no loss to either party. The town of Columbia was directly in our front, about one day’s march from our encampment. This town was occupied by about 300 federal cavalry, and immediately on our line of march to Lebanon, between Columbia and Lebanon, there was a force of 600 men strongly entrenched at Green river bridge. Lebanon was occupied by one regiment of infantry and one company of cavalry, some 700 or 800 men, under command of Col. Charles Hanson.102 Before reaching Columbia, Captain Shelton,103 with thirty men and myself were ordered to flank Columbia and Green river bridge, and strike the Lebanon branch railroad, destroy the track, burn trestles and

102 Colonel Charles S. Hanson commanded the Twentieth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA. He later commanded the Thirty-seventh Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA.

103 Captain Ralph Sheldon, Company C, Second Kentucky Cavalry, CSA, was “one of the best of our best officers.” Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 456.
pull down the telegraph. We left the command some ten or twelve miles south of Columbia, and going in a northwesterly direction, flanked the town of Columbia and Green river bridge. We marched all day and all night.

Part 4
[Published in the New Orleans Times-Democrat of Sunday, June 25, 1882]

On the morning of July 4, 1863, at 4 a.m., we reached the railroad about three miles from Lebanon, when the work of destruction commenced. After accomplishing this we started up the road in the direction of Lebanon Junction and went down five miles, when we halted, tore up the track and awaited the arrival of the expected train from the North. Growing uneasy at its non arrival, I attached my pocket instrument to the wire to ascertain, if possible, its whereabouts. Having been on this identical wire one year previous, I recollected the different calls. I called Z and signed B. Z answered, when I asked him where the train was and signed B, which was the signal for the Lebanon office. As quick as thought he asked: “How is this? You sent a message around via Danville, Lexington and Louisville that the Rebels at daybreak this morning came within three miles of your town and destroyed the track.”

I acknowledged having done this, my excuse being that at that time I was unable to raise him on this wire. I also told him the report was brought in by section men and that they were on a Fourth of July spree, but since, that, we had sent out and ascertained there was no truth in the report and to let the train come ahead. Now to keep this young man from asking me questions I might not be able to answer to his satisfaction, I extended a very polite invitation to him to come down to Lebanon; that we were going to have a dance, and it should not cost him anything! He remarked: “If you will get a message from Mr. Knox, your agent, that all is right the train will proceed.”

Well, as I could sign Mr. Knox’s name as well as I could of that of any other, I sent the following:
“Lebanon, Ky., July 4, 1863.

“To the Agent, Lebanon Junction:

“My telegram of this morning was based on reports brought in by some drunken men, and is without foundation. Let the train proceed.

“Knox. Agent.”

At the same time I still insisted on his coming down. He said, “I did intend going down to New Haven, a town between me and Lebanon Junction, to a picnic; if there is not much of a crowd there I’ll come on to Lebanon. The train is off; I must go.”

I detached my instrument, and notified Capt. Shelton of my success in getting the train to come ahead.

He immediately deployed his men, and awaited the issue.

We only had to wait about an hour, when she hove in sight. We flagged the train to, as we did not wish to hurt any one on it. They had nearly come to a stop when the engine and tender encountered the break, and ran off. Nobody hurt.

Capt. S. and I stood immediately in front of the engine; an iron-clad car in the train, containing 40 or 50 Federal soldiers, opened fire on our men, who were inside the fence, and a hot fight was kept up for at least 20 minutes. Owing to the advantage of the enemy’s position, we were forced to withdraw without accomplishing our object. Among the parties that left the train was one young man dressed in Federal blue. I captured him with three or four others. I questioned the young man in blue rather closely. I thought he might be an officer. He said his name was Atwater; that he was telegraph operator at Lebanon Junction and was going down to Lebanon upon an invitation extended to him by the operator at the latter place.¹⁰⁴ I introduced myself to him and told him that I had invited him down. He turned several different shades rapidly and delivered up his arms, which consisted of one of Sharp’s 4-shooters, which would

¹⁰⁴ Ellsworth retold this story in a piece entitled “Gen. Morgan’s Telegraph-Operator” for Confederate Veteran, April 1898, 174. William Atwater served with the Federal armies during the war. Plum, Military Telegraph, 289.
about answer the purpose of keeping flies off of a dinner table.\textsuperscript{105} I handed it back to him, advising him never to draw it on anybody or he might be killed. My trouble was only just commencing. My horse was in a lane, about 75 yards from the train, and immediately opposite the iron-clad car. Our men were falling back. Something must be done or I would be afoot. An idea struck me. Knowing the enemy would not fire on their own men, and as I had now five prisoners, I took them with me to where my horse was, and letting the fence down I led the animal into the field, keeping my prisoners with me until I was out of range of the enemy’s guns. The firing had ceased, and our men had evidently gone. I was alone (as far as friends were concerned), talking to Mr. Atwater, when I discovered about 50 or 60 Federal cavalry filing around the train and coming in my direction. I waited until they got within about 200 yards to me, when I bid my prisoners good-by and started off at a rather lively gait. The enemy pursued me for four miles, but it was no use. Fleet-foot, my horse, was the swifter; and I left them far in the rear and joined Morgan at Muldrough’s Hill. [p. 100] \textit{We Continued in the direction of Lebanon and went into Camp.}\textsuperscript{106}

The following day, July 5, Morgan attacked Lebanon, and after a well contested fight of four hours succeeded in dislodging the enemy, capturing 700 prisoners, under command of Col. Chas. Hanson. Gen. Basil W. Duke, author of the “History of Morgan’s

\textsuperscript{105} While many revolvers, including the Colt’s Navy revolver that Ellsworth appears to have favored, were large and heavy, the Sharp’s four-barreled “pepperbox” pistol was small and light and fired a bullet of small caliber.

\textsuperscript{106} Ellsworth wrote at least two accounts of the Indiana and Ohio raid for different southern newspapers, one “Written Expressly for the [Atlanta] Southern Confederacy” published August 1 and August 6, 1863, with captured telegrams printed on August 17, 1863, and another for an unidentified newspaper and reprinted in the \textit{Richmond Daily Dispatch} on August 25, 1863. The 1863 accounts provide many details not found in the ‘882 account, but Ellsworth in 1863 omitted mention of the iron-clad car full of Federal soldiers and the firefight that ensued, requiring a human shield to escape. Captain Eli Marks of the Second Kentucky Cavalry gave an account of the raid into Indiana and Ohio for the \textit{Lynchburg Republican} that was reprinted in other southern newspapers. He stated that “Ellsworth, Morgan’s telegraph operator, was with the expedition, and that whenever they wished to destroy a train all they had to do was to tap the wires, and the train was soon sent to them.” \textit{Savannah Daily Morning News}, August 5, 1863.
Cavalry,” on page 426, says: “At the last moment of the fight a sad loss befell us. Thomas Morgan, younger brother of the General, was killed just before the enemy surrendered. He was first lieutenant of Company I of the Second Kentucky, but was serving at the time of his death upon my staff. He habitually sought and exposed himself to danger, seeming to delight in the excitement it afforded him. He had repeatedly been remonstrated with on that day regarding the reckless exposure of his person, and Gen. Morgan had once ordered him to leave the front.

“He was stricken by the fate which his friends feared for him. When the Second Kentucky advanced he rushed in front of it, and while firing his pistol at the windows of the depot was shot through the heart. He exclaimed to his brother, Calvin, “I am killed,” and fell (a corpse) into the latter’s arms. He was but 19, but was a veteran in service and experience.” Further on page 427, Gen. Duke says: “A gallant deed was performed on that day by Private Walker G. Ferguson, one of the bravest men I ever knew. Poor fellow! he was hung by Burbidge afterward. His friend and messmate, Logwood, lay helpless not far from the depot, and Ferguson approached him under the galling fire from the windows, lifted and bore him off.”

It was this young man Ferguson that accompanied me from Crab Orchard, Ky., when we endeavored to capture the notorious desperado and bushwhacker, Capt. King. Ferguson was wounded, and I took him from the field and rejoined our command, sustaining the loss of our horses. Leaving Lebanon Morgan was closely pressed

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107 The fiercely fought action with the Twentieth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA, under Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hanson and the death of Thomas Morgan, General Morgan’s youngest brother on the raid, nearly unhinged the commander. Morgan’s biographer notes that he and his raiders took revenge on the surrendered Federal troops in an aberration from his usual policy towards prisoners of war. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 164-65. Walter Ferguson was a private in Company A, and Thomas Logwood served in Company B, of the Second Kentucky Cavalry. For an account of Ferguson’s execution, see the Cincinnati Daily Commercial, November 18, 1864. Major General Stephen G. Burbidge (1831-94) commanded the District of Kentucky, 1864-1865, and instituted a severe policy of retaliation against rebel guerrillas in the state, calling for execution of four captured guerrillas for each pro-Union civilian killed. See Louis De Falaise, “General Stephen Gano Burbidge’s Command in Kentucky,” Register 69 (1971): 101-27.
by Federal cavalry in his rear, so much so that he was compelled to take his prisoners on to Springfield, Ky., and parole them there. The march was continued to Bardstown that night. The following day, July 6, we struck the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, in the vicinity of Bardstown Junction. Here I surprised and captured three operators in one office. The north-bound train had been stopped some 25 miles south of this place. After getting hold of the wires I ordered the train ahead, and notified Morgan of its probable approach. It came, and he captured it some two miles south of Bardstown Junction.

Here Gen. Duke says: "A little of Ellsworth's art applied here discovered for us the fact that Morgan was expected at Louisville confidently and anxiously, but that an impression prevailed that he would meet with a warm reception. He had no plan of going to receive it."

That evening we took up a line of march for Brandenburg, Ky., a small town on the Ohio river, 40 miles south of Louisville. At this place two steamboats were secured, and under fire of two gunboats Morgan crossed his whole force into Indiana.

This was accomplished on July 9, 1863. [p. 101] We were fired on to at intervals for the next ten days[.]

From the time we entered Indiana and Ohio it was fight, fight, fight all the time. There were plenty of people at home there to have made an army larger than Lee's, but our unexpected appearance discomfited them and they were unprepared for our sudden approach. Nevertheless, the whole country seemed aroused, but the utter lack of organization made their resistance amount to but little. We pushed forward, destroying the railroads as we came to them. Gen. Duke says: "Leaving Salem, Ind., as 1 or 2 o'clock, we marched rapidly and steadily. At nightfall we reached Vienna on the Indianapolis and Jeffersonville railroad. Gen. Morgan placed Ellsworth in the telegraph office here, the operator having been captured before he could give the alarm. Ellsworth soon learned all the news to be had from Louisville and Indianapolis some of it valuable to us. Gen. Morgan ascertained also that orders had been issued to the militia
to fell timber and blockade the roads we would be likely to travel.\textsuperscript{108} Our rapid marching had hitherto saved us this annoyance.\textsuperscript{109} After we had been in the State of Indiana 48 hours the enemy were afraid to use the telegraph even for their own benefit. They ordered offices closed, instruments removed, and took off their main batteries, fearing we might yet utilize the lines to our advantage.\textsuperscript{109} We were within the State of Indiana and Ohio 19 days, and made average of 20 hours out of 24 in the saddle—completely worn out—men and horses suffering. We made a desperate attempt to recross the Ohio into Virginia July 19 at noon, about 14 miles below Wheeling, near Belleville. Gen. Morgan himself was one third of the way across the river, but the gunboats prevented his crossing.\textsuperscript{110} He then turned

\textsuperscript{108} Ellsworth intercepted telegraphed orders from Indiana governor Oliver P. Morton to Indiana militia units to fell trees to block roads. Logan, Kelion Franklin Paddock, 135.

\textsuperscript{109} Duke, History of Morgan's Cavalry, 437. Ellsworth omitted mention of his work at Salem, Indiana, in his 1863 accounts. In that printed in the Richmond Daily Dispatch, he provided details of subsequent telegraph deception when he arrived at Osgood, Indiana, a town on the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad:

As usual, I left the main body of our forces when within about six miles of the place, and went ahead—taking with me 15 men. I found the operator, one Frank Crawford, at his boarding house... I soon brought him out to the office, and after being at the instrument a few minutes I found that [a] special train with two companies of soldiers would arrive there soon. I packed up the instruments, and putting the operator on a horse, was ready for a retreat, if necessary. The whistling of the iron horse soon gave me warning, and I took my departure. The very foolish ‘web-footed’ double-quicked after us three or four miles, and if I mistake not were handsomely ambushed and sent back minus 63 men.

On arriving at Versailles, Ind., I found the column moving, in the direction of Pierceville, a station on the same road, seven miles nearer Cincinnati. Here I took down the telegraph lines, and with the assistance of Crawford I soon gave Gen. Burnside an idea where Morgan was—not. He swallowed the bait without hesitation, never suspecting the messages were not genuine. I gave [Cincinnati Crawford's] experience as a prisoner in the hands of the rebels for four hours. This was necessary, as there was an operator on the train that arrived at Osgood, who had telegraphed back to Cincinnati that Crawford had been carried off by the rebels. I played the part of Crawford, representing him as being at his own office. He sat and listened at me, occasionally breaking out in a hearty laugh, when I would tell Cincinnati something directly the reverse of the facts, and make them believe it. Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 25, 1863.

\textsuperscript{110} Heavy rains in West Virginia raised the Ohio River to allow armed steamboats to shadow Morgan's force, meet him at the river's fords, and contest his recrossing. Ramage quotes an undated letter from Ellsworth to Charlton Morgan, the general's younger brother who accompanied the raid, that the general turned back mid-river, and that Ellsworth offered to go with him. But Morgan told him to save himself and cross to safety if he could. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 177-79, 283n28.
his command back, but told all those, however, who had started to
continue on across. Two hundred and seventy-one succeeded in
reaching the opposite bank. Several were drowned. The snorting
of the horses, the cries of the drowning men and the shells from 20
pieces of artillery ricocheting along the surface of the water made
it very exciting. My horse plunged and pawed, and would certainly
have been drowned had I not abandoned him near the middle of the
Ohio. I was floating around promiscuously among men and horses,
when Capt. Lee Steadman, of Nashville, Tenn., riding a fine black
horse and a splendid swimmer, called out to me to take hold of his
horse’s tail. I did so and was saved. Otherwise I believe I should
have been drowned. I shall always believe I owe my life to my friend
Lee and his noble horse[.] “Fleetfoot” was safely on Virginia soil
before I was. He seemed perfectly willing to go out of the Union, but
not willing to take me with him. He was a Yankee horse—perhaps
that accounts for it. We went into camp only that night, and next
morning started for Abingdon, Va., where we arrived in due time,
but nearly starved! From here I went to Knoxville, Tenn., and
volunteered on the staff of Gen. S.B. Buckner. I did not remain
inactive very long. We soon got marching orders for Dalton, Ga. I
remained with Gen. Buckner until the battle of Chickamauga. We
had several days’ fighting. On the last day, Sunday, September 20, I
was wounded slightly in the foot and was sent to Montgomery, Ala.,
where I remained until the escape of Gen. Morgan from the Ohio
Penitentiary. He reported at the Confederate capital and I wrote to

111 L. Steedman later was quartermaster of Dortch’s Second Kentucky Cavalry Battalion, assembled from the remnants of Morgan’s force after the raid. This battalion later operated with General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Duke, History of Morgan’s Cavalry, 510.
112 Ellsworth telegraphed news of the arrival of the remnants of Morgan’s command at Dublin Depot, Virginia, on July 28, to the Chattanooga Rebel. Atlanta Southern Confederacy, August 5, 1863.
113 Simon Bolivar Buckner Sr. (1823-1914), a West Point graduate, a native Kentuckian, and former commander of the Kentucky State Guard who held various commands in the Army of Tennessee, at that time commanded the Confederate Department of East Tennessee at Knoxville. His command later merged with Bragg’s Department of Tennessee and he fought under Bragg at Chickamauga in command of an army corps. Steven E. Woodworth, Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West (Lawrence, 1990), 228.
114 After their capture, Federal authorities imprisoned Morgan and several of his officers
him. He ordered me to meet him at Atlanta, Ga. I went there, but he did not come at the appointed time. In a few days I got a long letter of instructions from him, and I started for Kentucky alone, in the dead of winter, in the capacity of secret operator. I penetrated the interior of the State, and established myself at a gentleman’s house in close proximity to the military telegraph line. I connected my fine wires to the main line and ran them to my room on the second floor, where for over one month I remained under the pretext of being a friend from Indiana. This was the most pleasant soldiering I had done during the war. I was not discovered, nor do I think even suspected. No one knew who I was except the gentleman and lady of the house. On leaving I went to Louisville and fitted myself out with a good, comfortable suit of clothes, and started for Lexington. On my journey to that city I met with a member of Morgan’s command, Jacob Hull, and we traveled together.\footnote{115} On the night of the 12\textsuperscript{th} of April, 1864, we rode into Lexington, Ky. At this time there were 13,000 Federals occupying the city. Hull went one way and I went to Graves’ livery stable to put up my horse. Hull and I had arranged that we would communicate with each other through a Mrs. Robert Shelton, where I proposed stopping. Mr. Shelton was proprietor of what is known as the “Curd House.”\footnote{116} Mr. and Mrs. S. were known to be staunch Southern sympathizers, and I had been slightly acquainted with them since our occupation of that city in 1862. I went directly to the parlor and rang the bell; a servant responded, and I called for Mrs. Shelton, giving my name as Thompson. She soon came, but it was some minutes before she recognized me and then said, “I know you by your eyes.” I inquired for Mr. S. and she informed me he was at a concert and would not be in until 11 o’clock. We sat there talking about one thing and another, when we heard the tramp of a file of soldiers. They halted immediately in front of

in the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus. There a number of them planned and executed a daring escape in late November 1863 and made their way south into Confederate lines safely late in the following month. Ramage, \textit{Rebel Raider}, 184-97.

\footnote{115} Jacob Hull, private, Company A, Second Kentucky Cavalry; see the Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System website of the National Park Service at www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/.

\footnote{116} The \textit{Curd House} was located on West Vine Street in Lexington, Ky.
the gentleman's reception room, or office. Mrs. S. became a little alarmed on my account, and for my safety put me out of the back door, telling me I could get over the fence and keep out of sight. In the meantime, the soldiers filed into the house. I made my way around to the front of the hotel and sat on the opposite side of the street to await further developments. I could see a light going from window to window. This satisfied me that they were searching for some one. I sat quietly. They came down and went away. I again entered the hotel. Mrs. S. was considerable agitated, and told me that the soldiers said "they were hunting for two of Morgan's spies that came into town this evening." I had not long to wait until Mr. S. came home. We informed him of what had occurred, and spent nearly an hour in general conversation. It was nearly 12 o'clock, and I remarked that I believed I would retire. Mr. S. appeared very much astonished, and said: "Why, you wouldn't sleep in this house tonight, would you, and the Federals just searching it for you?"

I told him that I certainly would, with his permission, and that the house just having been searched made it all the more safe; that they would not probably search it twice the same night. He remarked: "If they catch you they will hang you and burn me up." He suggested that I should go up to Mr. McGowan's Hotel, saying it was much more retired. I agreed with him, and bidding him good night, started. The clock of the court-house was just striking 12 o'clock as I passed it. I knocked and rapped around McGowan's Hotel for 10 or 15 minutes, but failed to elicit any response. I came to the conclusion Mr. S. was correct. It was assuredly one of the most retired places in the city. I'll admit I was more or less irritated at being refused shelter at one house and then failing to get into the other. There was one more chance left me—the "Phoenix Hotel"—but that was the most public place in town, and a great resort for Federal officers. At any rate, it was getting late, and something must be done. I put on a bold front, and made a break for the "Phoenix."\(^\text{117}\) After stepping over 15 or 20

\(^{117}\) The Phoenix Hotel was located on East Main Street in Lexington, Ky., and was the oldest and most fashionable hotel in Lexington.
Yankees asleep in the reception-room of the hotel I managed to get up to the register and scratch down the name of “Charley Brown, Mercer county.” The clerk remarked rather carelessly, “Lancaster is your county seat, I believe.” I said, quickly, “No, sir; Harrodsburg.” “Oh, yes,” he said. “Do you know old man Petty?” and continued, “I understand he is going out of business.” I replied that I knew him very well, and there was some talk of it. By this time the servant had procured a candle and was ready to show me up to room No. 67. I wondered then and do yet who old man Petty might be. A few more such questions as that and I would have been looking for another lodging-house. All questions propounded under such circumstances are not very agreeable, to say the least of it. In room No. 67 I found three beds. One was occupied by—I judged by the clothing on the chairs—two Federal officers. I took possession of an unoccupied bed and was soon sound asleep. At 8 o’clock next morning I was still in bed. Soon after I got up, dressed myself, but did not go into breakfast, although I had paid for the meal the night before. Some waiter, I fancied, might recognize me, as I had boarded there in 1862. I went up-town to a restaurant [p. 108] an oyster saloon and got my breakfast. Here I also met more of the enemy. They had “a drink or two ahead” and were discussing politics, and, in fact, wanted to know who I was for. I told them, laughingly, that I was “for Jeff Davis.” We all laughed it off and sat down to breakfast. That is what I should call a joke in earnest. After breakfast I made my way up to that “retired place,” Mcgowan’s Hotel. The old gentleman had forgotten me. I soon reminded him who I was. He grasped me by the hand, and took me into the parlor and hurried off after his old lady to tell her who was there. From the fuss they made over me one would have thought I was a long lost son. It was only a few moments until a Mr. Jones, a clerk in Bradley’s hardware store, came in, when Mr. McGowan introduced me to him. Mr. Jones had come there especially to see me, and to have me keep off the street, saying that he had recognized me as I passed their store. He also said he had some very important information for Gens. Breckinridge and
Morgan, who were now in Western Virginia, and wanted to know if I would take the information, saying that he had been trying for several days to get some one to go. I told him that was my business there, to get the information I could prior to starting South, and that I would certainly take it. He gave it to me. Verbally, he said Gen. Stoneman with 13,000 men would leave in a day or two to attack the salt works in Virginia, and that Breckinridge and Morgan must be notified.\(^{118}\) I agreed to go, and would start that very night. About 10 a.m. Mrs. Shelton came up to see me, saying Mr. Hull wanted to know what I proposed to do. I sent word to him to meet me at “Ashland,”\(^{119}\) one mile from the city, at the ringing of the 9 o’clock bell—that I had very important intelligence to convey South. Mrs. S. promised me she would deliver the message. She was greatly surprised to find out that I had stopped at the “Phoenix” the night previous “among all those Yankees.” Mr. Jones secured for me the three Cincinnati daily papers of date April 13, 1864.\(^{120}\) At 8:30 o’clock that night I went to Graves’ stable after my horse. The proprietor, or clerk, ordered him saddled. I stepped in to pay my bill; when I asked how much it was he replied, “Nothing.” Nor did he once look at me. I thanked him and walked out into the stable. Here a gentleman approached me from the street—a stranger—and placed something in my hand that at the time I did not examine closely, but placed it in my pocket. His remark to me was, “A safe journey to you—good night.” By this time my horse was saddled; I mounted him and rode away. At the ringing of the 9 o’clock bell I was at Ashland. I was also there

\(^{118}\) John C. Breckinridge (1821-75) Lexington resident, United States senator, vice president under James Buchanan, candidate for president of the southern wing of the Democratic Party in 1860, renounced the United States in 1861 and became a major general in the Confederate army. In the spring of 1864, he commanded troops in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Morgan spent the winter and early spring in Richmond, Virginia, in an attempt to reorganize the dispersed remnants of his command, and lobbied to resume raids into Kentucky from southwestern Virginia. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 200-207. George Stoneman (1822-94) commanded a cavalry division in the Army of the Ohio and was active in eastern Tennessee.

\(^{119}\) Ashland was the renowned home and estate of Henry Clay (1777-1852).

\(^{120}\) Several daily newspapers appeared in Cincinnati during the Civil War. The three main ones were the Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, a Democratic paper, and the Cincinnati Daily Gazette and Cincinnati Daily Commercial, both Republican papers. Other newspapers included the Press and the Times.
when the clock struck 10. Mr. Hull was not! I waited a little longer and then left without him. I have since the war learned that he never left the city, but remained there and took the oath of allegiance to the United States.
George A. Ellsworth.

Part 5

[Published in the Sunday, July 2, 1882, edition of the New Orleans Times-Democrat]

After waiting in vain for my friend Hull on the outskirts of Lexington, Ky., I started for Abingdon, Va., 300 miles through one of the roughest and worst portions of Kentucky. When I got to the Kentucky river, it must have been after midnight. I saw a fire down by the ferry landing and heard the boat coming over. Two negroes were handling it. When they came ashore and discovered me one of them remarked: "Hello! another one to go over?" I replied: "yes. How many have you crossed?" "Oh, massa, we have done crossed a whole regiment! Do you belong to them?" I answered in the affirmative and asked them where they had gone into camp and if there was any chance of my missing them? "Oh no! sir, massa, you can't miss them; they are camped out about a mile on the Richmond Pike—no other road to put you out." That settled it in my mind. I was hoping there was a road to put me out. We were soon across, and I rode off—no ferriage to pay, Uncle Sam footing the bill.

Sure enough, there was no road to put me out, and I rode right through a Federal regiment of cavalry camped on either side of the road. Not one word was said to me until I got to the outside pickets, and then only a remark in a joking way. Two or three men were lying in a corner of the fence. One of them remarked, "Hello! which way—going to Dixie?" I replied, "Not exactly!" and kept on my journey; and when within one mile of another Federal post east of Richmond, I stopped for breakfast. While there, two Yankees came out and got a load of hay. I rested an hour or two and then rode on. Nothing of any note occurred on the 14th, and on the evening of
the 15th I reached Hazel Green. I had been recommended to go to a man by the name of Green Trimble, who would furnish me a guide [p. 112] pilot to Salyersville. I took supper with him, and for $10 in greenbacks I employed a German storekeeper to guide through that night. Mr. Trimble posted me as to my guide’s politics, so I checkmated him when he got to asking too many questions. Before getting to Salyersville we stopped for breakfast, and I then turned my guide back. At 11 a.m. I arrived in town. My pretext for being so far out in the mountains was that I was looking for a very valuable horse that had been stolen by guerrillas from Bourbon county, Ky. I had a very minute description of the animal written down. At this place I found a rough crowd. They looked as if there were about 20 [p. 113] thirsty, and I treated the whole of them two or three times. I knew my men. One of the party felt very much interested in my finding the horse; in fact, he went so far as to tell me he saw a stranger riding a horse answering the description, about three days before. I think if I’d given him another drink he would have found my imaginary Rosinante [p. 113] Horse for me. I feel perfectly satisfied that two more drinks would have made him steal a horse for me. With so much encouragement I jogged along without apprehension. I had gone some seven or eight miles when ahead of me, some 200 or 300 yards, I saw a cross-roads, and not knowing which one to take before getting to them I stopped to get a drink of water and inquired the way to Prestonsburg. A lady brought me a drink, and very pertly inquired, “Who are you?” I told her my name was Thompson, that I was looking for a very valuable horse that had been stolen from Bourbon county. She remarked: “I have seen a good many of these fine looking fellows riding through the country,” and continued, “I believe you are a rebel spy.” I thanked her for the first portion of her remarks, (I think she must have been alluding to my store clothes) but as to the last part, why, I laughed that off. Just at this juncture, a couple of Federal soldiers came out of the house. I called them up

121 Perhaps Ellsworth is referring to William P. Trimble, a farmer of Hazel Green, Wolfe County, Kentucky, who, according to census records, was born in 1819.
to me and told them what the lady had said. One of them remarked
that there was a company of soldiers “right down there,” and if they
let me pass it would be all right.

I thanked them for the information, and invited them to go
down with me to the cross roads. They declined, and I proceeded.
I revolved the question over in my mind whether I should stop and
talk my way through or run the gauntlet. A survey of thing in front
couraged me to choose the latter. Their horses were not saddled!
They might not halt me! I kept a-going, but when immediately op-
posite the group one of them halted me. I didn't hear him. He called
out the second time to halt. I gave my horse the lash and left them.
Three or four shots failed to stop me, and now the saddling of
horses was begun, and a nice race of about four miles (as afterwards
proved) was the order of the day. I took what was called the Paint
Creek road, and if the creek crossed it once it must have crossed
it a thousand times. The race was spirited. My horse had traveled
150 miles in less than three days time, and was in no condition for
racing, although it was no trouble for him to lead that scrub stock
of the mountains. He was a thoroughbred.

In my flight I met two or three Federals on foot, who had been
out squirrel hunting. They had heard the firing and inquired the cause
of it. I told them (without halting) “We are after a fellow.” They
made no attempt whatever to stop me. In a few moments on came
my pursuers. They fired at me continually, sometimes getting withing
[nd] 30 or 40 yards of me, calling me such pet names as “Halt, you
d—— rebel, or I’ll kill you.” I couldn’t see it in that reflection. One
of them coming up rather too close to suit me, I turned on him,
and emptying my last “navy,” struck his horse in the nose. I was not
molested any more by him. Very soon here came another mounted
on a better horse, and he and I had it for a fact. He discharged two
army pistols at me; the last bullet in the last pistol struck me in the
hip. The wound did not pain me a great deal, but I bled very freely.
I rode swiftly forward for perhaps one mile, when from the loss of
blood I fell from my horse and fainted dead away. When I came to
I was in a house on a bed. Two or three Federals were in the room, among them Capt. Reuben Patrick, who was the one that had shot me, an own son to the lady who had passed such a compliment about me, accusing me of being a rebel spy.\textsuperscript{122} Patrick began to search me, and inquired who I was. I gave the same name—Thompson—and as to my business, I was still hunting for “that valuable horse.” This story he wouldn’t begin to credit. He remarked: “You are a soldier. No man that hadn’t seen service would take such desperate chances as you did.” I still persisted in my horse story all the while the search was going on. I was fearfully afraid they would knock the soles of my boots off in their search. In my inside vest pocket they found my three Cincinnati daily papers of the 13\textsuperscript{th}. Patrick remarked that I would make a good mail-carrier. In searching me they found that another bullet had passed through my two coats, vest and all three of the newspapers, as they were folded together, of course. One bullet made nearly a hundred perforations. I’ll never forget how the women of the house screamed when they saw the holes through the papers. They afterward told me they thought I was shot all to pieces. The search through, and not a scratch of a pencil to be found. Patrick remarked, “If you had dispatches about you from Gen. Bragg to Jeff Davis, you should have a fair trial.”\textsuperscript{123} Tapping me on my forehead with his finger, he said: “There is where it lies.”

He asked me if I’d have a Rebel or a Federal surgeon to dress my wound. Here I showed no preference, but I said I would like the most experienced man. He said the rebel surgeon was the oldest and best, and explained to me how one of our surgeons came to be in that vicinity. The Federals and Confederates a few days previous had

\textsuperscript{122} Reuben Patrick (1830-1902) of Magoffin County served with the Fourteenth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA, typically as a civilian scout, on many counterguerrilla expeditions in eastern Kentucky. He often acted with Company I of the regiment in which eight men with the Patrick surname served. See OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. 1, 51, 641. See also William Ely, \textit{The Big Sandy Valley: A History of the People and Country from the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time} (Calden desk, Ky., 1887), 145.

\textsuperscript{123} In April 1864, Bragg was serving on the staff of Confederate president Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Virginia. General Joseph E. Johnston replaced Bragg in command of the Army of Tennessee, then in northern Georgia. Woodworth, \textit{Jefferson Davis and His Generals}, 256.
had a fight some three or four miles from there, and this “rebel” surgeon had remained with his wounded. Col. Ezekiel Clay, who was in command of the Confederates, was wounded in the head near the eye. A strong guard was left with me that night, and the next morning (Sunday), April 17, Dr. Lightfoot, of Flemingsburg, Ky., the Confederate surgeon, called to see me.\textsuperscript{124} He wished me good morning and remarked that my face looked familiar, that he must have seen me somewhere. Not being personally acquainted with him and not remembering ever having seen him, I was fearful lest he might, possibly be a wolf in sheep’s clothing, endeavoring to get me to acknowledge something. He remarked that I was in dangerous hands unless I was a soldier, and if so I would be treated as a prisoner of war and have the best of care. By this time he had examined my wound and offered to bet me a hundred dollars to a cent that I wouldn’t die from it. Somewhat elated at this I told the Doctor that I was a regular Confederate soldier. I didn’t trust him with the full particulars of my business. I told him I was an escaped prisoner; that I belonged to Company A of the Eighth Texas Cavalry.\textsuperscript{125} This story he and Capt. Patrick both believed, Patrick remarking, “I knew he was a soldier.” While I was in Patrick’s hands I was well treated. I had nearly $200 in greenbacks and they never took a cent of it. One hundred of it was what the strange friend put in my hand at the livery stable in Lexington. I rested very quietly, and Dr. Lightfoot went away, promising to call again on Tuesday, but it was ordained differently. On Monday, about noon, half a dozen Federals came riding up, inquiring for the prisoner, and were ushered into my room, and demanded to know if I was a rebel mail-carrier, saying they had found some letters on the road that they suspected I had thrown away the day I was wounded by Patrick. I stoutly denied this, and

\textsuperscript{124} The battle at Salyersville, Kentucky, was fought April 13-14, 1864. See OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. III, 393. Colonel Ezekiel F. Clay commanded the First Battalion of the Kentucky Mounted Rifles regiment, CSA. Dr. Robert A. Lightfoot served as surgeon of Clay’s command.

\textsuperscript{125} The Eighth Texas Cavalry, CSA, “Terry’s Texas Rangers,” was organized in Houston in September 1861 and campaigned in Tennessee and Georgia in 1864, making Ellsworth’s statement plausible.
proved by Capt. P. that I was not on the same road where the letters were found. These men asked me if I was able to ride, saying that Col. [p. 120] J.B. True with a regiment of cavalry was now at Salyersville and wanted me to report to him.\textsuperscript{126} I was not sorry of the proposed change of quarters. My horse was saddled and I returned with them to Salyersville, when we ascertained that Col. True had gone into camp about eight miles from there, down on Sandy river. We continued our journey. The detail who had me in charge was commanded by one Lieut. Maquiere.\textsuperscript{127} At Salyersville they supplied themselves with two or three canteens of whisky and before reaching camp were feeling the effects of it. Not only once but a dozen times Maquiere stopped and pulling his pistol on me said he had a d—n good notion to kill. I took it quite coolly and told him I didn't think he would murder a prisoner; That I was satisfied he didn't intend carrying out his threat, etc. About 10 o'clock at night we arrived safely at Col. True's headquarters. He ordered us to a house near by, saying he would see the prisoner in the morning. It was a fearful night—cold, drizzling rain. The quarters we found were very comfortable, indeed; the people were Southern sympathizers, and soon got us up a good supper. After supper my guards sat around the fire, talking about one thing and another. The whisky commenced to do its work, and one by one they dropped off until they were all asleep. The old folks had retired. Their daughter, who had finished washing the dishes and clearing away the supper table, and noticed that my guards were all asleep. She whispered to me to know if I wanted to make my escape. I told her I would like to, but as it was such a terrible night—so dark and rainy and a strange country to me—that I preferred waiting until I got nearer the "blue grass region;" that if this was the way they were going to guard me I'd have no trouble in

\textsuperscript{126} Probably Colonel Clinton B. True of the Forty-ninth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment, USA, which operated in eastern Kentucky in the spring of 1864. James B. True served as adjutant of the Fortieth Kentucky Infantry, USA.

\textsuperscript{127} Four men named McGuire served in the Fortieth Kentucky, one of whom may have been the commander of the detail: Captain John McGuire, Lieutenant Middleton McGuire, and Sergeant William B. McGuire, all of Company D, and Lieutenant James McGuire of Company K.
effecting my escape in another night or two. I was confident it would not do to let them take me into Lexington, for there I would be recognized as John Morgan’s operator, and I would surely suffer death. They didn’t have much use for me any way. I had cost them a good found sum already. I thanked the lady for her proffered kindness, and as it was getting late, I concluded to retire. I slept soundly, and I presume my guards did also. The next morning the regiment moved out and I was taken to the Colonel, who questioned me closely about being a rebel mail carrier. To prove my assertions I called for Lieut. Maquire, who testified in my behalf, repeating what Capt. Patrick had said. The Colonel appeared perfectly satisfied and gave me permission to ride along near him. We had not gone far before bang! bang! bang! went some guns and the command halted. The bullets whistled around us thick and fast. Who was it? "Twas rebel bushwhackers two or three hundred yards above us on either side of the road in the rocks. I thought it was hard luck—only three days before I had been wounded by Federals and now to be fired on by my own friends—one horse was killed and one man wounded. The Federals seemed quite disconcerted at the boldness of the bush-whackers, and were about to form for defense when the firing ceased. I was hoping the fight would continue. I had already made up my mind to try and escape. We traveled about 25 miles that day and went into camp. I accompanied the Colonel and his staff to a private house. Here the surgeon dressed my wound. At the supper table the Colonel requires the lady of the house to fix the prisoner down a pallet in the room that he and his staff were to occupy. The lady with great astonishment inquired: "Which one is the prisoner?" I answered that question myself. "Well, well," she exclaimed, "I didn’t know you were a prisoner; you seem to be enjoying yourself as much as any of them." I told her there was no use of crying about it—that I might as well take it easy. All this time I was revolving in my mind a plan of escape that night. I retired early but not to go to sleep. There was a guard placed at the outside door. The door leading into the dining-room was locked and the key taken out. This did not
interfere with my plans any, as I did not intend to try to pass out that way. The headquarters guard was nothing unusual. I was satisfied he was not placed there for my especial benefit. My plan was to get up after all were fast asleep, don the Colonel’s uniform and pass the guard without a word; go to the stable and take the Colonel’s horse, saddle and bridle and leave him my outfit. The Colonel and his staff did not retire very early and when they did they seemed to go to bed to talk, instead of to sleep. At any rate I stood it as long as I could, and I suppose from the excitement caused by my wound and the day’s march I dropped off to sleep, and the first thing I knew the sun was shining in my face. On we went in the direction of Mount Sterling. When within four or five miles of this town, Col. True got orders to countermarch, and I was placed in an ambulance among some sick and wounded Federals and my horse taken from me. Two men accompanied us on horseback as guards. We arrived at Mount Sterling early in the afternoon, and at my request one of the guards went around town with me. I soon discovered he liked his toddy, and as I was pretty well fixed with the needed I was quite willing my guard should have all the “corn juice” he desired, and if possible a little more than was actually necessary for his own good. After we had visited all the saloons once or twice over my man had imbibed enough for two men. He had so much aboard that we locked arms, and made our way to the hotel, where I had secured a room. We went to it, and I complained of being tired, and laid down (as he thought) to sleep. I had not long to wait before he came in and joined me. My guard was soon asleep. I got up and had a strong notion of taking his gun, which he had placed up in one corner of the room, with me. Thinking it would not look well for a prisoner to be seen with a gun, I concluded to leave it. I went down stairs and out through the kitchen. The servants were getting supper and did not seem to take any notice of me. I walked leisurely out of town in the direction of the Paris pike. When about four miles from town on the latter pike I saw coming toward me what I took to be a Federal cavalryman. He had on a blue overcoat, but as we came nearer together I saw he
was a colored man. I stopped and spoke to him. I asked him to whom he belonged. He replied he belonged to Judge Apperson, of Mount Sterling. I asked him if he was not afraid to ride around alone; that the country was full with guerrillas. He said no, that he always went armed, and suiting the action to the word, pulled out one of Allen's pepper-box pistols. I requested him to let me look at it. He complied. I then told him I was wounded and had a long way to go and as he only had a short distance, I would necessarily be compelled to relieve him of his horse, promising to return him the day following. I had the pistol. He saw the point and crawled down. I rode that about 17 miles, and then turned him loose. I rode him a little lively at times. Whether he ever returned home I have never learned, but I had no further use for him. Having passed through North Middleton I took it on foot. On this pike there were Federal courier stands, with two men at each. They were about six miles apart. I had ridden through two or three of them, and not one word had been said to me. I was walking leisurely along when I happen on one of these stations. The moon was shining brightly; it was between 10 and 11 o'clock when a tall Federal, with the longest gun I ever saw, rose up and accosted me with: “Hello, which way?” This unexpected salutation came nearer taking my breath away than anything that had occurred since I had left Lexington. I walked over to him and sat down, saying I was going out to Mr. Scott's. This name I got from a negro that I met about a mile back. The picket took a look at me and said: “You stay in that store down town, don’t you?” I concluded I was staying most anywhere just then, so I answered in the affirmative. Resting myself a minute, I bade him good night, and walked on. I walked some four or five miles, when I concluded I’d stop for the night. I happened upon a house belonging to Buck Woodford. I knocked at his door, and after arousing him he got

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129 A revolving pistol produced by the Ethan Allen, Allen & Thurber, or Allen & Wheelock gunmaking firm of Massachusetts.

130 Perhaps James M. Woodford of North Middleton, Bourbon County, Ky.
up and opened the door. The first thing I saw was the muzzle of a six shooter. Not knowing his political sympathies, I told him I was from Cincinnati, that I had been out to Mount Sterling to collect some bills, that I was returning to Paris, and when at North Middleton I stopped, and as I had not secured my horse very well he had gotten loose and gone back to Paris. That I had come this far on foot. He invited me in and showed me to a room. I was very much fatigued and slept soundly. At breakfast the next morning in talking over the latest news, I remarked that I understood that there had been a fight near Salyersville between a federal force and some Confederates under Col. Zeker [p. 129] Zeke Clay, and that the latter was wounded in the eye! At this last remark Mrs. Woodford was very much affected indeed; she left the table not waiting to finish her breakfast. Mr. N. [sic] explained me the cause. His wife was a relative of Col. Clay. Breakfast finished, I was satisfied my secret would be safe with Mr. W. nor was I mistaken. Mr. W. told me I certainly had deceived him as to my real character, and that I could remain there as long as I wished. My intention at this time was to go to Canada, where I would remain unmolested until my wound had fully healed. I remained two or three days with Mr. W., when one evening he took me down to Mr. Allen Kizer's, near Kizer Station, on the Cincinnati and Lexington railroad, four miles north of Paris. Mr. K. had a son belong to Morgan's command who had been a prisoner at Camp Douglas and had made his escape to Canada.\(^{131}\) I remained at Mr. K.'s over night and took the early train the next morning for Cincinnati. Without any trouble whatever I arrived in Canada on the evening of the 25\(^{th}\) of April. Here I met many friends. I went direct to Toronto—this city was full of Federal and Confederate soldiers.\(^{132}\)

\(^{131}\) Perhaps Allen Kizer of Ruddells Mills, Bourbon County. Robert Kizer was a private in Company F of the Second Kentucky Cavalry, and later served in Dorrch's Kentucky Cavalry battalion.

\(^{132}\) Thousands of northern deserters and draft dodgers flocked to Canada to avoid service during the Civil War. Many more refugees from the war-torn regions of the upper South also fled to Canada for safety. Cities and towns in present-day Ontario and Quebec swelled with the presence of unemployed Americans. See Ella Lonn, Desertion during the Civil War (Gloucester, Mass., 1928; repr., Lincoln, 1998), 202. In addition, hundreds of
There were also a great many refugees from the Southern States, especially from Kentucky. Mrs. James B. Clay, of Lexington, Ky., was there with her family. She very soon heard of my arrival in the city and she very kindly invited me to make her house my home, which invitation I accepted, and was treated very kindly by her entire family. They were the most interesting family of children I ever met.\textsuperscript{133} At this time my father was residing at Sun Prairie, Wis. He and my eldest brother (who lived in Missouri) came to see me and endeavored in every way possible to get me to remain away from the South, either to stay in Canada or go with them to the States; that they would fix it so I need not take the oath.\textsuperscript{134} I felt sorry indeed to see them go away disappointed after having come so far and pleaded so hard, but desert the South! No, never! I took up arms in good faith, believing the South to be right. My whole heart and soul was in the cause. The part I played was not solely to satisfy an appetite for that kind of a life. I considered it a duty, and if I pos-

Confederate prisoners of war escaped northern camps and fled to Canada, congregating in Windsor, Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, and many other cities and towns. For a study of the difficulties and tensions between the United States and British governments caused by the war, see Robin Winks, \textit{Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years} (Baltimore, 1960; repr., Montreal, 1998). Ellsworth was spotted in Toronto by a Union informant: “The notorious rebel Capt. G.A. Ellsworth who has been doing your cause so much injury by tapping telegraph lines in Kentucky under Genl Jno H. Morgan for the last 2 or 3 years, is now in ‘Canada’ He is in this City & I think by a little shrewd management he could be enticed into the States & picked up. He is a very valuable officer to the Confederate States & his capture would be a glorious affair.” John M. Fields to Edwin M. Stanton, May 14, 1864, in Record Group 107, Records of the Secretary of War, Entry 17, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Main Series, microfilm series M221, Roll 252, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as National Archives).


\textsuperscript{134} Caleb Ellsworth’s movements are not understood. The 1880 Federal census finds him in Trenton, Grundy County, Missouri, living with his son, John W. Ellsworth, also a telegraph operator. Federal authorities often requested or required persons who wished to avoid arrest or imprisonment to renounce rebellion and swear allegiance to the United States. See Harold M. Hyman, \textit{To Try Men’s Souls: Loyalty Tests in American History} (Berkeley, Calif., 1959).
sessed the tact to deceive the enemy even by means of their own telegraph wires, I felt I was perfectly justified in doing so.

George A. Ellsworth.

Part 6
[Published in the New Orleans Times-Democrat on Sunday, July 9, 1882]

“The Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas and the Bold Plot to Liberate Them”

I had hardly recovered from my wound when Capt. Thos. Henry Hines, of Morgan’s command, came to Canada for the purpose of organizing a body of men to go to Chicago and release the suffering Confederate prisoners (some 10,000) [sic] in that prison. Hines was in constant communication with parties in different Northern States who were to cooperate with him and his Confederates, and in fact promised him that if he would meet them in Chicago they would insure he would not go away without a fight. Capt. Hines recruited about 75 old Confederate soldiers that were in Canada. The men were armed each with a pair of navy pistols, which they carried in their baggage while en route to Chicago. We left Canada

135 Captain Thomas Henry Hines (1838-98) commanded Company E of the Ninth Kentucky Cavalry Regiment, CSA, and served in Morgan’s command. Morgan employed Hines on numerous scouting and secret missions behind Federal lines, including a trip often called “Hines Raid” into Indiana in June 1863 prior to the “Great Raid” the following month, to contact persons sympathetic to the rebel government with whom Morgan might cooperate. Captured with Morgan in Ohio and imprisoned in the State Penitentiary, Hines escaped and accompanied Morgan to the southern lines. Impressed by Hines’s resourcefulness, Confederate leaders at Richmond ordered Hines to Canada to free Confederate prisoners-of-war and cooperate with rebel sympathizers in the northern states. Hines targeted Camp Douglas, near Chicago, Illinois, for an attack to release the prisoners, raid arsenals, and arm the freed prisoners. For an unreliable biography of Hines, see James D. Horan, Confederate Agent: A Discovery in History (New York, 1952). After the war, Hines (with John B. Castleman and W. W. Cleary) authored an account of their efforts to free prisoners and cooperate with northern conspirators. See Hines, “The Northwestern Conspiracy,” Southern Hist. Rev. 2 (1886-1887): 437-45, 500-510, 567-74, 699-704. The Southern Bivouac espoused the “Lost Cause” worldview of Confederate history and was edited by Basil Duke. See Matthews, Basil Wilson Duke, 248-55.
by different routes, traveling as a rule by twos. My partner was that whole-souled fellow, Jack Trigg, of Glasgow, Ky., now of Louisville, Ky.\textsuperscript{136} Every man had orders to go to the same hotel, and by a certain pass-word the landlord would recognize us and assign us to rooms. Jack and I arrived via the Michigan Southern road,\textsuperscript{137} and I assure the reader I was not a little surprised when I was ushered into a room with six beds, and found eight or ten Confederate soldiers already there. We arrived on the 27\textsuperscript{th} of August, 1864. Before 8 o’clock that night there were 75 genuine Confederate soldiers in that hotel. It was soon rumored about that the Camp Douglas Guard had been reinforced by 5000 men.\textsuperscript{138}

The Democratic National Convention was to meet in Chicago, on Monday, the 28\textsuperscript{th} of August, to nominate a candidate for President. This time was chosen by Hines so that the influx of our men into the city would not be too apparent. We were waiting in breathless suspense day after day until the nomination was made, hoping to get some definite information to act upon. At last McClellan was nominated, and it was rumored that nothing could be accomplished for the present.\textsuperscript{139} [p. 133]—it was true—Capt. Hines had an interview with the parties who had promised so much and done so little,

\textsuperscript{136} John M. Trigg served in Company C of the Second Kentucky Cavalry. For an anecdote about Trigg, see Duke, \textit{Reminiscences}, 281-82.

\textsuperscript{137} The Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad connected Detroit with Chicago.

\textsuperscript{138} The rumor of large army reinforcements in the Chicago area played a significant role in the collapse of the planned uprising during the convention. In actuality, military commanders in the region had few troops available. By sending a regiment of about one thousand to Chicago to help guard Camp Douglas, which was guarded by a garrison of only eight hundred troops, commanders managed to intimidate the conspirators. John Breckinridge Castleman, one of the Confederate officers leading the Chicago plot, severely criticized the timidity of the Northern Democrats involved in the conspiracy for repeatedly backing down before planned dates of insurrection. See his memoir, \textit{Active Service} (Louisville, Ky., 1917), 147-48, 154-55.

the result of which was that “if we would remain in the State we might do something, as a fight was almost inevitable at the coming Presidential election, it being reported that the Democrats would not be allowed to vote.” Capt. Hines was not the kind of man to wait over two months on such an uncertainty. He therefore broke the news to his men at once, and gave them their choice to stay or go. All those that wished to return to Canada could do so, and all those that wished to remain with him in Illinois and recruit men to attack Camp Douglas at some future day could do so. Fifty of them took Canada “in theirs,” and but 25 remained with him. My friend Jack and myself were among the latter. We wanted to see the thing through. If by our aid those poor suffering [p. 134] *emaciated* human beings lying in Camp Douglas could be released, we were willing to take the desperate chance to help them.\(^{140}\) In the course of the next 24 hours we were all on our different routes into different Southern counties of the State. Four of us went to Christian county and made our headquarters at a hotel kept by Mr. Long, a very fine old Southern gentleman. No one in the place—Taylorsville—ever dreamed of our plot or our business there.\(^{141}\) We represented ourselves as refugees from the draft, and we very soon found company. These men were the very ones we were looking for. We were to recruit them into our ranks, but to let no one (except the officer they might elect) into the secret, plans, etc. Many a caucus we held in the dead hour of night, out in the “timber,” putting down the names of new recruits by the light of our camp-fire. We were in direct communication with the different squads in the different counties, and every week we knew exactly how we were progressing. We met with splendid success. With Capt. Hines I visited different headquarters. By the middle of October we had on our rolls 1200 men—these were all we cared to

\(^{140}\) Ellsworth here and elsewhere in his memoir espouses the “Lost Cause” view of northern prison camps as places governed by sadistic and vengeful officials bent on killing the inmates. Recent scholarship challenges this view. See James M. Gillispie, *Andersonville of the North: The Myths and Realities of Northern Treatment of Civil War Confederate Prisoners* (Denton, 2008), 27-70, 118-29.

\(^{141}\) Federal census records show an M. C. Long, hotelkeeper, born in Kentucky, residing in Taylorville, the county seat of Christian County, Illinois.
have—but after getting that many it was no trouble to get 300 more, and by Nov. 1, 1864, we had 1500. The transportation of these men secretly (in the enemy’s country) to Chicago was no small matter. They had to go into the city by different routes and at different times. They must all be there by November 8. The attack was to be made on the night of the Presidential election, at 1 o’clock a.m. During all this time Hines had been busy importing guns and ammunition from Canada, and Colt’s pistols from Connecticut. These were all shipped to Chicago, and in the dead of night our little squad of Confederates would carry them up to a room we had secured to store them in. The work of loading 2000 stand of arms, and 500 pistols was no little job. This was completed about the time our recruits began to arrive, and we then prepared to meet them as the different trains came in. I was detailed to meet those coming in on the Illinois Central and escort them out to what is known as “Irish Town,” in the suburbs of the city.\textsuperscript{142} Whenever I saw a man get off the train with a blue ribbon in the button-hole of his coat, I at once asked him “if he knew Dr. Hunter?” he would reply, “of Bowling Green.” I would then answer, “Warren county,” and he would finish by saying “Kentucky.”\textsuperscript{143} That settled it. He was “one of us.” sometimes there would be 10, 20, 30, and often 40 of them on the same train. I would lead the way and they would follow. I was often questioned by the police and others as to where I was taking these men. I always answered by saying I was taking them West to work on the railroad. Many of them were poorly clad. Some were barefooted, some traveled with a “bandana trunk” locked with a pin. My orders were to give each of them a $5 note to pay expenses. Sometimes we would walk out. At other times I would crowd them all into one street car, to the great discomfiture of the driver, who had all he could do to count them. It was impossible for him often to tell whether all had paid their fare. The Chicago \textit{Journals} papers came out and wanted to know the meaning of this importation of “Copperheads”

\textsuperscript{142} The Illinois Central Railroad connected Chicago to downstate Illinois.
\textsuperscript{143} Thomas Henry Hines operated in Canada and the North under the alias “Doctor Hunter.” Hines was from Bowling Green, Warren County, Kentucky.
or “Butter-nuts?” was it to carry Cook county for the Democrats?\textsuperscript{144} They were greatly agitated over the subject. The men thus imported were led to believe this was their object and sole purpose. [p. 138] \textit{but if they had been let alone until Tuesday night Everybody throughout the universe would have Known}—This remarkable [p. 138] \textit{gigantic} plot was carried on by this handful of Confederates without the least consideration as to the danger involved. [p. 138] \textit{They never spoke of it hardly to each other}—They seemed to go at it as a simple matter of duty [p. 138] \textit{to their Suffering Comrades who were in a starving Condition not over two miles from us}—in which all else must be merged. I hardly think, however, that they fully realized the desperate chances they were taking. I am sure I did not. Everything passed off quietly until Sunday, the 6\textsuperscript{th} of November, when one of our Confederates, Joseph Bettersworth,\textsuperscript{145} came to my room, where three or four of us were and asked me “If I thought I would recognize one Capt. Shanks that used to belong to Morgan’s command.” I replied “I most assuredly would.”

“Well then,” he exclaimed, “he is down at the Richmond House.”\textsuperscript{146} Let me here give a short history of this man. He volunteered in some Texas regiment, but being a native of Kentucky (I am sorry to say) got a transfer to Morgan’s command, and served as high private in one of the companies on the “Ohio raid.” He was taken prisoner and sent to Camp Douglas with other of Morgan’s men, and while there took the oath and secured a position in the Federal sutler store in the camp, where he made himself obnoxious by reporting every little misdemeanor of the prisoners. Of course punishment, such as hanging [\textit{sui}] up by the thumbs or bucking and gagging, always followed. Not a prisoner among the 10,000 there, I take it, have for-

\textsuperscript{144} Chicago had four major English-language daily newspapers: the \textit{Chicago Times} and \textit{Chicago Post} were Democratic papers, and the \textit{Chicago Tribune} and \textit{Chicago Journal} were Republican papers.

\textsuperscript{145} Joseph F. Bettersworth served in Company C of the Second Kentucky Mounted Infantry, CSA. He had participated in the Confederate raid from Canada on St. Alban’s, Vermont, on October 19, 1864. Arrested in December in Montreal by Canadian authorities for his part in the raid, he sued for malicious arrest. See case report of \textit{Bettersworth v. Hough} in \textit{Lower Canada Reports}, 17 vols. (Quebec, 1848-67), 16:419-41.

\textsuperscript{146} The Richmond House was located at South Water Street and Michigan Avenue in Chicago, Illinois.
gotten Mr. Shanks.\textsuperscript{147} We were all aware of his character, and knew he could not be at the Richmond House for any good. I took a stroll down that way, and sure enough there was Mr. Shanks taking a drink at the bar, as large as life and altogether as natural. We were satisfied he had come from camp to find out what was in the wind. After having seen him I returned and notified Bettersworth and others that it was surely Shanks, and to keep away from him; that his intentions could not possibly be for our good. I immediately went and notified Capt. Hines of my discovery. Here I found that Englishman, Col. St. Leger Grenfel, who had for a long time been Assistant Adjutant General in Gen. Morgan’s command. He was in favor of meting out summary punishment to Shanks and of putting him out of the way. This course Capt. Hines did not approve of, as he thought it would certainly create a sensation at Camp Douglas if Detective Shanks was missing. I soon left them arguing the point and returned to my room. Col. Grenfel was stopping at the Richmond House, and that evening returned there. Mr. Bettersworth was also putting up at the same house, and I cautioned him about returning there, advising him to stay with us that night. What occurred at the Richmond House that night I learned the next day from an eye witness. The Colonel and Mr. B. both returned there, and recognizing Shanks entered into a spirited conversation and took a drink with him. It was not long before they took several more, after which they repaired together to the Colonel’s room. They had not been up there long before a bottle of brandy was ordered. By this time they were all naturally very talkative, and I suppose Shanks was told everything. I was also informed, by one who knew, that about 11 o’clock Shanks came down stairs.

\textsuperscript{147} John T. Shanks enlisted first in the Thirty-second Texas Cavalry Regiment, CSA. He later joined Morgan’s command until captured during the raid into Indiana and Ohio. In his testimony before the military commission in Cincinnati trying the Chicago conspirators, Shanks provided particulars about his service and how he came to act as a spy to infiltrate the conspirators in Chicago in November 1864. See *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives during the Second Session of the Thirty-ninth Congress, 1866-67* (Washington, D.C., 1867), 38ff. He subsequently took the oath of allegiance and was commissioned captain in the Sixth U.S. Volunteer Infantry Regiment, a unit composed of former Confederate soldiers who took the oath.
and, registering his name and ordering a fire to be built in his room, stepped out of the hotel. He did not return until about 10 [p. 141] 1 o’clock a.m., or a little later, when he retired to his own room. It was just 10 [p. 141] 3 o’clock that day when a squad of soldiers filed into the house, and, without looking over the register, went straightway to Col. Grenfel’s room, and also to the room occupied by Shanks. Both were arrested and marched out as prisoners. They did not find Bettersworth. Whether he was in the building at the time or not I do not know. My impression is that he was. It was hardly 6 o’clock when Bettersworth came to our room and related what had occurred at the Richmond House. We very soon reached the conclusion that Shanks had been arrested as a blind. The best evidence we have that we were correct is, that he was not long afterward commissioned as a Federal officer in what was then termed a galvanized regiment—one made up of men who had been in the Confederate army, but to keep from starving to death in Federal prisons had taken the oath. They were sent out West to fight the Indians. As soon as Mr. B. had finished his story I posted off to notify Hines, but upon arriving at the house where he was stopping I saw a Federal guard at the door. Of course I had no business there and did not loiter. Was Hines also a prisoner? Who could tell? I knew the place of business of the gentleman with whom Capt. Hines was boarding and I at once went there. I had been there several times before and knew the gentleman personally. Well, I arrived there, but if ever a man got the cold shoulder, I got it, for a certainty, then and there. He would hardly look at me. I insisted upon knowing whether Hines was a prisoner or not. He replied: “My God, keep away from me; they are watching me; Hines is safe.” I was satisfied and left. Passing down toward the Tremont House, I saw the flaming poster in the window of the Chicago Evening Journal. “A plot to release the Camp Douglas prisoners is frustrated! Arrest of Col. St. Leger Grenfel and the probable arrest of Capt. Hines. Arrest of 400 recruits at Irish town. Seizure of 2000 stand of arms. and 500 pistols all loaded,” etc.148

148 The Tremont House was located at Lake and Dearborn streets in Chicago. The
There were thousands of people in the street endeavoring to get up to the window to read the poster. Here I gained my information and acted upon it. Accordingly I recommended to my comrades to take up our quarters in the suburbs with a well-known friend from Scott county, Ky. This was agreed to and one by one we all got out there—some 10 or 12 of us, all Confederate soldiers. The whole city was patrolled that night by men on horseback. We also stood picket at “our house” and saw their patrolmen pass and repass. The excitement was at blood heat.¹⁴⁹

Those arrested the night previous were all taken to Camp Douglas. About 11 o’clock Monday, November 7, we got a message [p. 144] Courier from Hines that he was safe and off for Cincinnati and ordering us to report to him there.¹⁵⁰ The next night in squads of two, we started by different routes. All the depots in Chicago were closely watched. Three or four detectives were at the train when we got aboard. They eyed us closely, but never spoke to us. I shall always think our dress deceived them. I imagine they were looking for us to be poorly clad, with “Butter-nut” clothes, and barefooted with “bandana trunks,” [p. 144] with a pin lock etc. in this, they were mistaken; we made as respectable an appearance as any passengers on

¹⁴⁹ Ellsworth’s recollection of the intense excitement in the streets is echoed by a memoir written in 1911. See “Camp Douglas Conspiracy” by Albert F. Scharf in the Albert F. Scharf Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁵⁰ Among those arrested in Chicago were Grenfell, Ben M. Anderson, a Confederate soldier from Kentucky; Charles Walsh, a Chicago leader of the conspiracy; Judge Buckner S. Morris, another local leader, and others. They later stood trial for treason before a military commission convened in Cincinnati. The trial lasted from January to April 1865, during which charges were dropped against some of the defendants. One defendant escaped from a military prison. One, Anderson, committed suicide, and some of the defendants were found not guilty. Walsh was found guilty and was sentenced to five years of hard labor. Grenfell was found guilty and was sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted to imprisonment in the army prison on Dry Tortugas, a small group of islands at the end of the Florida Keys. He escaped prison but presumably died on the high seas in the attempt. See Exec. Docs., 247-49, 600; OR, ser. 1, vol. 13, 866-7.
the train. We were soon off for Cincinnati. All of “our air castles” had vanished and we were compelled to abandon an undertaking, that if it had been successful, would have carried a little of the war into Illinois. Tuesday night every railroad leading into the city was to have been destroyed, with one exception. That was the road leading to Rock Island, where there were 8000 or 10,000 more prisoners also to be released. A detail of 2500 men were to start for the latter place as soon as the camp Douglas prisoners were released. The Rock Island prisoners were to have been brought to Chicago to form a junction with the Douglas prisoners at that point. Twenty thousand rebels in the heart of the enemy’s country would certainly have changed the aspect of things somewhat! Every man was to have been mounted before leaving Chicago for the South. We arrived in Cincinnati the following day and took quarters at different hotels. Our squad had decreased to about 18 or 20 men. Before leaving Chicago I had been furnished with the address of a gentleman to call upon in order to find out the whereabouts of Capt. Hines. I called, but it was with no little difficulty that I could convince my friend that I was “all right.” At least, however, I succeeded and he escorted me to Hines’ room. Here Capt. Hines related to me how the house he occupied in Chicago had been surrounded by soldiers and how he had managed to elude their vigilance. He said that about 3 o’clock in the morning he was awakened by the gentleman of the house and notified that the place was surrounded by Federal soldiers.

Col. Marmaduke, of Missouri, was occupying the same room with Hines. The latter, quiet as thought, jumped up, and collecting all his clothes, ran down stairs and notified the gentleman of the house that, with his and his wife’s consent, he would occupy a portion of their bed. This was agreed to. He got into the back part of the bed, and the bed clothes were arranged in such a shape that he managed to elude the vigilant search of the soldiers. The

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151 Vincent Marmaduke (1831-1902) of Missouri, brother of Confederate general John S. Marmaduke. He served in the Missouri State Convention until expelled from the state by military command in 1862. He did not have a commission in Confederate service. See Ext. Doss., 247-49, 600; OR, ser. 1, vol. 13, 806-7.
lady complained of being quite sick and kept her bed all day. The Federals did not leave the house until after dark that night. About 8 p.m. they relieved guard, and Hines breathed once more freely. Marmaduke was arrested and taken to Camp Douglas. Col. St. Leger Grenfel was court-martialed, and sentenced to the Dry Tortugas for life. I have been informed since that he and a companion made their escape from the island in a frail canoe or skiff, and that both were lost before reaching Cuba.\footnote{Grenfell died after escaping from Fort Jefferson on Dry Tortugas in the Florida Keys in April 1868. Starr, Colonel Grenfell’s Wars, 322-26}

Capt. Hines had another plot on hand. This was to mount his men and start South. He commissioned me and three other Confederates, named Seabring, Schultz and Ignatius,\footnote{Probably William H. Sebring, private of the Second Tennessee Infantry Regiment, CSA; Theodore Schultz, private of the Crescent Infantry Regiment of Louisiana, CSA, and Manwell [Manuel] Ignatio or Ignatius, private of the Second Missouri Cavalry Regiment, CSA. All three appear in Hines’s roster of Confederate soldiers involved in the Chicago uprising attempt in August 1864. Hines, “The Northwestern Conspiracy,” 573.} to go to Augusta, Ky. (above Cincinnati, on the Ohio river), and there, under the pretext of purchasing horses for the United States government, to buy ourselves each one, and ascertain the whereabouts of 15 or 20 more to mount the others upon his arrival, which he promised should be in the course of four or five days, or as soon as he received a favorable report from us. He intended to purchase saddles, box them in Cincinnati, and ship them on board the same boat that he and his men intended taking passage on to Augusta. Hines not having turned up at the appointed time, I went back in person to Cincinnati. Hines ordered me to return, saying he would surely be up on the following Thursday. I did so and took rooms at the hotel. My comrades remained in the country a greater part of the time, but generally came into the town at night.

The appointed time, Thursday, arrived, and with it the packet for Cincinnati with three men, claiming to be “rebels,” on board. They got off at Augusta and made the acquaintance of a very strong Southern sympathizer and inquired our whereabouts. This gentleman, accompanied by the three strangers, came over to the hotel,
and upon introducing them to me said they had sorrowful news to tell me. One of them, under the name of Dr. Jeffreys, seemed to be spokesman, and said he had been a surgeon under Gen. Magruder in Missouri.\textsuperscript{154} He said nearly all our men who were in Cincinnati had been arrested and very likely Capt. Hines among them. He was so well posted that he knew nearly all the boys' real as well as their fictitious names, and the very rooms they occupied. His business at Augusta was to assist in getting us together when we were all to go South. Two or three of Hines' men were at Maysville Hill further up the river. What about them? Jeffreys' two companions volunteered to go up and notify them to meet us at a certain [sic] place south of that point. How very strange that they wanted to go. Why not let one of my men go who was acquainted with them? Arguments were brought forward against me, and I was overruled [p. 145] \textit{as I had nothing to do with them I suppose}. Dr. Jeffreys, his two comrades and myself were all in my room. Supper was over, and shortly afterward my comrades came in from the country, and Dr. Jeffreys related to them the sad tidings of Hines' unlucky mishap in Cincinnati. In the meantime the Doctor's partners took the first boat for Maysville.

After a consultation we came to the conclusion to get a horse for the Doctor and go to the country that night, agreeing to come back on the following night to see if there was any news from Hines or any of his men. We started, intending to go out about 12 miles, and remain all the next day. On our way out Jeffreys talked incessantly of what he had done in Missouri, but not making his story hold together very well, I because [sic] in the end so suspicious that I

\textsuperscript{154} Robert L. Jeffries was a physician from Franklin County, Missouri. In the 1860 census, he is listed as twenty-two years old. Military authorities in Cincinnati arrested Jeffries in April 1863 on suspicion that he was a rebel spy and smuggling medicines to the South. Jeffries told them that he was opposed to the war and had refused to serve in the Confederate army as a surgeon. He told his captors he had left Missouri a year before for his health. After being held over a month, the army released Jeffries on taking an oath of allegiance. He subsequently became a hired detective (i.e., spy) for the military commanders at Cincinnati. See Record Group 393, Part IV, Post of Cincinnati, Ohio Records, Entry 216, Register of Letters Received, volume 1, 33, 186, 187, 193, 302, National Archives. Gen. John B. Magruder (1807-71), a West Point graduate, served in the Army of the Potomac and in Texas and Arkansas.
disarmed him and took all his papers away until we could reach our destination, when I proposed to examine them, and if found to be all right to hand them back to him with his arms. It was all I could do to prevent Ignatius from shooting him. This, however, I would not tolerate. Jeffreys told me that among his papers were several letters from a young lady by the name of Miss Bettie Wilson, of Flat Rock, Bourbon county, Ky., and that she was a Southern sympathizer, and I would see by the tone of those letters that he was certainly all right. I had heard of the Wilsons, and was satisfied Miss Wilson would not knowingly correspond with any but a Southern man. Jeffreys, Sebring, and myself went to one house, while the other two found quarters somewhere else. When we put up our horses it was about 4 o’clock in the morning. I saw the signatures of the letters were as Jeffreys had represented them, and I handed them and his pistols back to him, when I proposed to retire. Sebring and I slept up-stairs, and Jeffreys down on the first floor. He said that it was unsafe to sleep up-stairs “such times as these.”

About 11 o’clock the following morning Sebring and I were aroused from our slumbers by some young ladies playing on the piano and singing down-stairs. We dressed ourselves at once and went down. I soon met the gentleman of the house, and asked for Mr. Jeffreys. He told me that about 8 o’clock Jeffreys had ridden off to get his horse shod at the shop, about half a mile distant. I knew this was only a pretext to get away from us, and, of course, for no good, as his horse had been freshly shod, I learned, not a week before. I informed Sebring, and went out and saddled our horses and hitched them near the house, as there was a company of Federals at Maysville, and Jeffreys had gone in that direction.

We remained here all day, and at night rode down to Augusta. Still not a word from Hines, or any of his men. We remained in the neighborhood two or three days, when one night a gentleman handed us a Cincinnati daily Commercial—the date has escaped me—some

\[155\] Betty Wilson, the seventeen-year-old daughter of wealthy farmer Joseph Wilson, appears in the 1860 Federal census for Flat Rock in Bourbon County, Kentucky.
Robert L. Jeffries was a Missouri-born physician recruited by the U.S. Army to work as a spy. He was identified and killed by George A. Ellsworth and other Confederate secret operatives in January 1865. *Thomas Henry Hines Papers, Special Collections and Digital Programs, University of Kentucky*.

...time, however, in the last days of November, 1864—containing these flaming headlines: “Further particulars of a portion of Hines’ marauders and cutthroats at Augusta. Detective Roberts in their clutches, but makes his escape. Threat of Capt. Adams, Morgan’s chief telegraph operator, to tap the wires and order Gen. Burbridge to Kentucky, and then capture him,” etc. There was nearly a column of particulars.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ See the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial* of November 21, 1864. The article, entitled “The Recent Guerrilla Operations in this City and Vicinity—Additional Details as to Their Movements at Augusta and Vicinity—Interesting Particulars of the Attempts Made to Arrest Them,” detailed how a Detective Roberts, working for Cincinnati post headquarters, infiltrated Captain Thomas Henry Hines’s group of Confederate soldiers operating in Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. The article quotes a report about meeting with six Confederates in Augusta, Kentucky, “one of whom was Captain Adams [i.e., Ellsworth], celebrated as being...
And so my friend Jeffreys was Detective Roberts of the United States government detective force! Upon learning this I at once decided to go to Bourbon county and notify Miss Wilson of the character of the man with whom she was corresponding. I cut out the piece from the newspaper and put it in my pocket, and started that very night for Bourbon county. I rode day or night, as I found it necessary. The country was full of Federals. I kept the main road, and at a ferry on Licking river I came upon 200 or 300 Federals, and I crossed the river on the boat with a squad of 10 or 15 of them. They did not have much to say to me. [p. 152] The [sic] questioned me very little as to my business & c & c [p. 153] I had no difficulty whatever—

A young man who had been with us in Chicago—Charlie Rule—had a mother living not far from Paris. Her husband at that time was familiarly known as “Uncle Bob Palmer.” I stopped with them the first night I arrived in Bourbon, and that night a negro stole my horse, a fine animal, out of the stable. I was not long, however, without one. Mr. Wm Redmond, a near neighbor, hearing of my misfortune, gave me one of his.

I remained at this point a week or two. When I went into the neighborhood of Flat Rock, where Mr. Wilson lived, I first called on a son-in-law of his, a Mr. Fisher, giving him the facts about Jeffreys as above related. I remained with him over night, and the next morning he went with me to Mr. Wilson’s. The old gentleman, his wife and daughter all assembled to the parlor to hear what I had to communicate. The first part of my programme was to call for Miss Betty’s album, in which Mr. Fisher had told me was a picture of Jeffreys. Before opening it I remarked, now I will go through it and

Morgan’s chief telegraph operator.” The article also stated that “Adams” had a plan to kidnap General Burbridge. See also another article relating to the detectives’ infiltration of the Hines gang in Cincinnati Daily Commercial, November 19, 1864.

Ellsworth erred in believing Jeffries to be Detective Roberts. One John H. Roberts joined the U.S. Army detective force at Cincinnati in July 1864, and in November took over as chief of the force and worked with Jeffries. See Record Group 92, Quartermaster General Records, Entry 238, Persons and Articles Hired, files 1864-0234 and 1864-1884, National Archives.

Charles C. Rule of Bourbon County, Kentucky. Rule served as a sergeant in the Fifth and Eleventh Kentucky Cavalry regiments, CSA, under Morgan’s command.
pick out the photograph of the man calling himself Dr. Jeffreys, who has in his possession letters from Miss Wilson. I opened the album and turned to Jeffreys’ picture, remarking: “This is the picture of the Yankee detective, Roberts.” Handing the young lady the piece I had cut from the Cincinnati Commercial, I requested her to read it. She did so, aloud. When she had finished it the old lady said: “This accounts for the Yankees’ coming out here every time a capture was made in Paris of those Confederate boys.” [p. 154] “That accounts for the Yankees coming out here every time he would return to Paris and capture those rebel boys at the different Houses in the neighborhood.” It was all as plain as day to them now.

Mr. Fisher and I remained until after dinner, when we took our departure. The family thanked me over and over again for putting them on their guard against the scoundrel who had been pretending to make love to their daughter. He had simply been out there for the purpose of getting them and others to commit themselves, which would, in the end, cause them to be pounced down upon and perhaps burnt out, or cast into prison simply for expressing their [p. 154] time honored convictions. I went from there to Henry and Owen counties to join Col. Geo. Jesse and assist him in recruiting men preparatory to starting South.159 We were several weeks in those counties and got together about 150 men and then started for Dixie. On arriving in Bourbon county, I understood that a week or two before my friend [p. 155] Roberts or Jeffreys, as he always styled himself, visited Mr. Wilson’s one Sunday morning, and before the sun had set that day was waited on by two or three Confederate soldiers and taken prisoner. In his endeavor to escape from them he was shot about a quarter of a mile from the house of the lady he had all along [p. 155] so basely deceived.160

159 Lieutenant Colonel George M. Jesse commanded the Sixth Kentucky Cavalry Battalion, CSA.

160 In late January 1865, the Cincinnati newspapers reported the murder of Jeffries while in Kentucky to help break up a guerrilla band. Jeffries “was betrayed by a female into the hands of the guerrillas, who murdered him” and “left his body in the woods.” Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, January 31, 1865, and Cincinnati Daily Commercial, January 30, 1865. Jeffries was to have testified in the Cincinnati treason trials of the Chicago conspiracy, and Cincinnati military
Col. Jesse and his handful of men arrived at Abingdon without the loss of a man or Horse—At Abingdon I met Genl Basil W. Duke who was in command of "Morgans men" after seeing all my old Comrades I went on to Columbia S.C. Where I volunteered on the staff of Genl Beauregard and had Charge of all the Telegraphs in His department. Sherman was marching on this City—on two or three occasions His operators would tap our wires and endeavor to find out something in relation to our strength position &c &c &c. We Changed the Signals of our offices twice a day thus it was impossible for an outside operator to ascertain signals nothing but Cypher messages were sent over the wires relating to movements or strength of our army—I did not allow any Conversation whatever to be Carried on between operators by this means Whenever any questions whatever out side of business in relation to troop movements &c was asked we would merely say "go 'way yank—this put a quietus on their asking questions—Sherman kept marching on and owing to overwhelming numbers Beauregard evacuated Columbia fell back 7 or 8 miles and every one of His men were witnesses to the ruthlessly burning of that beautiful Southern City—Beauregard fell back to Chester SC but Sherman did not come that officials suspected he was assassinated before he could testify. General August Willich to Captain C. H. Potter, February 3, 1865, RG 393, Part IV, Post of Cincinnati, Ohio Records, Entry 212, Letters Sent, volume 3, 319, National Archives. See also George W. Hull to General Willich, February 17, 1865, RG 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, M-345, Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers Relating to Individual Citizens, microfilm roll 136, National Archives. A photo of Jeffries—undoubtedly the photo from Miss Betty Wilson's album—appears in the papers of Thomas Henry Hines. It is endorsed: "Dr. Jeffries of St Louis, died near Paris KY about the first of Feb./65 with his boots on Federal Detective. Given to me by Capt Sebring of the C.S.A. near Germantown Ky about Nov. 30th/64 Carried it to Richmond & back to Canada. Capt. S. received it from a lady friend who [thought] Dr. J. true." See box 1, folder July–December 1864, Thomas Henry Hines Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.

161 Morgan was killed on September 4, 1864, in Greenville, Tennessee, while attempting to escape a Federal raid. Ramage, Rebel Raider, 235-38. Duke, who assumed command of the remnants of Morgan's command, later wrote: "It is not known whether he surrendered or was offering resistance. His friends have always believed that he was murdered after his surrender." Duke, History of Morgan's Cavalry, 539. Ellsworth repeated the popular but false rumor among southern partisans and Lost Cause adherents that Morgan had been shot dead after he had surrendered.

162 General Beauregard commanded the Department of the West, which included Georgia and the Carolinas.

163 The burning of Columbia, South Carolina, occurred on February 17, 1865, as Confederate troops evacuated the city and Federal troops entered. Advancing Federal troops found cotton bales aflame. Troops worked to put the fires out, but other drunken
route—From Chester I went to Augusta Ga. Where the Commandant of the [?] gave me a detail of Twenty men and made a reconnoissance to the Coast near Savannah—it was reported the enemy were landing troops in that vicinity I visited that portion of the Country [p. 157] and found no foundation to the report I saw but a very few white people all the fine plantations deserted—with the exception of Colored people—these had become very insolent to the few white ladies remaining—one Case in particular was reported to me by a very nice lady—she gave me the name of the Negro and on what plantation he was employed—on our approach he run—the only one that run in forty of them—he took refuge in a drain there was about two or three feet of water in it—he was completely hidden from view and all we found him by was his nose sticking up out of the water to give him air—I collected all the negroes on the place and made them witness the punishment which was applied vigorously—a stirrup strap done the work. I am satisfied when we left him that he had changed his mind and had no desire to marry a white woman as he had threatened he would—

We returned to Augusta and it was but a few days until the news of Genl Lees Surrender reached us——

George A. Ellsworth.