

Revenge Dear For Nancy Norton

BY BEALE FLETCHER

SHELTON LAUREL — The only moral to this story is that violence begets violence and that if you lived in Shelton Laurel, North Madison County, during the Civil War, you couldn't win for losing!

During the winter of 1862, a band of Union sympathizers from Shelton Laurel made frequent raids on nearby towns in Tennessee, looting and plundering everything of value they could lay their hands on. Then, right before Christmas, this band captured the town of Marshall and made off with a huge supply of salt and other provisions.

Brigadier General Davis of the Confederate Army, stationed in Knoxville, sent a detail of Confederate soldiers into Shelton Laurel with orders to bring in every male that could be rounded up — any type of resistance should be met with gunfire.

The Confederate soldiers found a gang of some 50 men and women right above Hickey Creek in Shelton Laurel enjoying a feast on a freakishly warm sunny day in January.

One of the gang, upon seeing the Confederate soldiers, jumped on a stump, pumped his elbows, like a rooster, then crowed: "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

"Kill that rooster!" bellowed the man in charge of the troops. A gun fire. The rooster-imitator dropped dead. The rest of the gang, stunned and confused, were quickly rounded up.

The captured women were tied with ropes, beaten, then let loose. Some of them followed along at a safe distance to see what would happen to the men. Before their horror-stricken eyes, 13 men were lined up in a little ravine and told to kneel and say their prayers before dying.

An old man, named David Shelton, refused to kneel. "I'll not kneel before no devil," he said. So he was shot standing up, but was buried in the same grave with the other 12.

A woman who witnessed this slaughter was a widow named Mrs. Nancy Franklin, better

known as Nancy Norton. She vowed revenge and eventually got it, but it cost the lives of her three sons.

Some four years later, in 1867, she told Judge James L. Henry in Burnsville: "I taught my boys to be Christians but if they had to die — to die like a fighting dog with their teeth in the throat!" Nancy instilled in her boys a burning hatred for the Confederate Army and a desire for revenge.

In the following year, 1864, the boys got their chance to put into practice their mother's teachings.

It was at a time when food was short for the Confederacy. Governor Vance had written a letter a few months earlier to J. A. Sedden, secretary of the Confederate Army, asking removal of a lot of broken-down cavalry horses from the north-western counties of the state, under the command of General Jenkins, which were (in Vance's own words) "devouring the substance of a people threatened with famine."

As food became more scarce, conditions in Shelton Laurel became worse. Confederate Army officers, seeing their soldiers die in battle because they were outnumbered resented "them slackers up in Shelton Laurel."

Resentment blazed into hatred — a hatred that burned with fierce intensity. And their hatred was matched by the Union sympathizers.

Thus, in 1864, Shelton Laurel was virtually a No Man's Land. Confederate soldiers dared not enter the valley except in large bands, as bushwhackers would pick them off, firing their long rifles from behind huge poplar trees.

During this period Nancy Norton acted as chief spy for every Union sympathizer who took delight in shooting Confederate soldiers. She would stand on a knoll near her home where she could see both up and down the valley. From this vantage point, she directed the fire of her bushwhackers, as they carried on their private, independent war against the Confederacy.

During all this fighting she con-

tinued to instruct her sons as to what they must do if they found themselves surrounded by Confederate soldiers.

One day it happened. Things had been quiet for several days when one afternoon in the early spring of 1864, Nancy Norton saw a detachment of some 30 greycloaks riding toward her house.

"Chase them rebels off! She commanded her boys.

Quickly the boys grabbed their rifles and opened fire. Robert and James who were ages 19 and 17 respectively, shot at the rebels from the windows. The Rebels returned their fire, but continued to advance toward the widow's home. James ran out on the porch, took careful aim, and shot the officer in charge, who fell from his horse. The second officer took command, ordering the siege to continue.

In the melee, Robert was killed on the porch; James ran for cover and was shot down near a wooden fence close by, but not before he managed to kill one more Rebel. Meanwhile, the youngest son, Josiah, had gone out the back door and crawled under the house from where he picked the Rebels off without being detected.

When the Rebels finally located where the fire was coming from, they sent a man under the porch to get young Josiah. Josiah shot him. Another soldier, thinking the first man was only wounded, crawled under the house and started pulling him out by the heels. Young Josiah killed him too.

"Set the house on fire!" one of the Confederate soldiers yelled. Soon the men were advancing toward the house with burning torches. Smoke rose toward the sky, flames leaped upward and licked at the windows that crackled under the heat.

Nancy Norton opened the door of her house, carrying her bonnet in her hand. She ran toward the Confederates, cursing. One soldier shot at her and the bullet snipped a lock from her flying hair. Young Josiah, fearing the burning house would crumble on him,

crawled out from under. A soldier, waiting for him, clubbed Josiah to death with the butt of a rifle.

The Confederate soldiers then left Nancy Norton with her three dead sons and the ashes of her burned home.

Nancy went to live with her brother, James Norton. The war ended the following year. Construction on a new building at Mars Hill College was started. Masons drifted in from far and wide. One of the masons was bragging one day about what a fine shot he was.

"The only time I ever missed was when I shot at an old woman during the war. I aimed at her temple and shot a lock of hair out of her head."

A college student overheard this conversation. He high-tailed it to James Norton's home.

"I found the raider who tried to kill your sister, Nancy," the student said excitedly as he repeated the conversation he had overheard. James Norton offered the boy \$5 to take him, next day to the mason at Mars Hill who had made this boast.

James took with him his long revolver.

"I hear you're quite a shot," James Norton said to the mason.

Yup — never missed but once, and that was the time I shot at an old woman in Shelton Laurel and missed her."

"About how far were you from her?" Jim asked.

"Oh about 15 feet!" James Norton stepped back about 15 feet, then said, "There ain't no excuse for a body missing that close. I know I ain't going to miss."

With that he pulled his long revolver from his coat and shot the former raider in the abdomen. He died the next day.

James Norton went into hiding after that, but he was finally arrested and brought to trial for murder.

The prosecutor, knowing it would be hard to find a jury in Madison County that would not already be prejudiced, had the case tried in Burnsville, Yancey

RICE COVE

MELVIN H. CHANDLER
Correspondent

Mr. Homer Griffie is making progress on his barn reconstruction.

Mrs. H. C. Rice is again able to be out again after an attack of flu.

Mrs. Jim Chandley has been on the sick list but is improved.

Jeter Buckner, who has been compelled to use crutches lately, is now able to walk without them.

John, Irene and Olan Rice, of Cleveland, Ohio, were recent visitors here.

Mr. Austin Rice and family visited Mrs. H. C. Rice last Saturday night.

Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Chandler were dinner guests of Mr. Collis Chandler last Sunday.

Sunday School was resumed at Midway Church last Sunday. The attendance was good and officers and teachers were elected. The Rev. Ray Roberts will preach next Sunday night.

Everyone around here is glad that a new milk route is being established in this section.



LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL'S honor students who will participate in the Commencement May 22, are June Marie Franklin (left) who will be valedictorian, and Betty Jo Cook, salutatorian. Miss Franklin has years of high school. Miss Cook's average is 95.53, maintained a scholastic average of 95.94 for the four. The school is on Marshall RFD 8.

—Cut courtesy Citizen-Times

Roaring Fork News

MRS. HUBERT PANGLE, Correspondent

We are glad to know that Dr. Kimberly of Bluff is back at home. We hope he soon will be well again. He was visited Sunday afternoon by Mr. Paul Davis and Mr. Jack Parker.

Mr. Paul Davis held his regular services at Bethel church Sunday. A large crowd attended.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Parker visited Mrs. Hubert Pangle Monday night.

Laveonia Pangle visited Lucille Caldwell Monday night.

We are glad to hear that Mr. and Mrs. Nick Parker are feeling better after being ill for quite a while. We hope both are soon well again.

Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Pangle were visited Sunday by Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Wyatt, Mr. and Mrs. Nick Parker, Mr. and Mrs. Dan

Gardin, Wilson Payne, Berry Brown, Arthur Fowler, Wade and Wayne Gardin, Dock Wills, Roy Parker, Leon Rainey and Mr. Paul Davis.

Mrs. David Frisbee and son, Gary visited Mrs. Cora Gardin Sunday.

Mrs. Forris Holt and daughter, Edna Ruth, took dinner Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Fowler.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Owensby of Wolf Creek called on Mrs. Hubert Pangle Saturday morning.

Mrs. Clyde Caldwell and son, Alan, visited Mrs. Wilson Payne Monday.

Mr. Paul Davis took Sunday dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Jack Parker.

Lucille Caldwell is on the sick list at this time. We hope for her a speedy recovery.

Revival To Begin Sunday At Price Chapel Church

A revival meeting will begin Sunday, May 3 at the Price Chapel Baptist Church on Big Pine. The Rev. N. H. Griffin, pastor, and the Rev. Jess Slagle will be doing the preaching. Services will begin each evening at 7:30 o'clock. All singers and the public are cordially invited to attend these services.

You The United Way Help More

County seat. The trial took place in 1867. Nancy Norton rode some 40 miles from her home in Shelton Laurel to Burnsville. She took the witness stand and her story brought tears to the jury. Perhaps, they thought she had suffered enough. The jury deliberated a little more than an hour then declared James Norton: "Not Guilty!"

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