

'Skirmish At King's Farm'

1983 Copyright

By James B. King Jr.

On the 25th day of October 1863 Lt. Charles C. Twyford, Fifth Missouri State Militia Cavalry left the Union Army fort at Waynesville with a small patrol, of 15 men.

His mission was to scout westward from Waynesville in search of information about a man named Benjamin Moore who had been reported killed or captured by Rebel forces.

The first day's travel was quiet and the patrol members camped for the night at a point some 15 miles south of Waynesville. About 3 a.m. the next morning the duty guard reported to Lt. Twyford that some one was trying to sneak up on the camp. Twyford and several others ran to the place where the guard had heard the noise.

The noise was repeated and the guard shouted a challenge to Halt! The unknown persons in the dark answered with a volley of

gunfire. Twyford's men returned the fire for a moment and the men in the brush were heard to flee.

At dawn Twyford concluded his command was no longer in danger. Since the guard who first reported the bushwhackers approach had been struck in the chest by a bullet Twyford sent him back to the Waynesville fort with an escort of seven men.

With his group reduced to just seven men Lt. Twyford continued on another ten miles and arrived at a farm owned by Hiram King. During the trip Twyford's men saw no sign of rebels or any fresh horse tracks.

In talking with Hiram King, Lt. Twyford learned that Benjamin Moore had been captured by rebel forces but had escaped or had been released on parole.

With his mission now complete Lt. Twyford decided that since it was noon the group might as well

feed horses and men so he ordered a noon camp.

While dinner was cooking Lt. Twyford suddenly noted the approach of some 20-25 bushwhackers at a charge. Although the rebels had achieved complete surprise Lt. Twyford's men were able to stop the first charge with rifle fire. The bushwhackers then spread out and completely surrounded the farm.

Cut off from escape Twyford looked for a defense. In building his farm Hiram King had constructed two log cabins for his family's use. A large main cabin and a smaller one next to it with a five foot separation between the buildings. Some three hundred feet to the rear of the cabins he had also built a blacksmith shop and barn.

Twyford ordered his men to take cover in the small family cabin. Inside the cabin they found Hiram King and his entire family. By this time the bushwhackers were

pouring a steady rain of bullets into the building. Twyford's men and the King family were now trapped.

Hiram King pleaded with Twyford to leave before his home was destroyed. Twyford responded by prying up the wooden floor and forcing the King family into the crawl space under the house where they would be safe from the gunfire.

As the afternoon passed the Rebels made several charges on horse back but were driven off. Then they tried a charge on foot and were again driven back. The Rebel commander evidently concluded that as long as Twyford's men had the solid protection of the log cabin he would lose the fight. So the Rebels set fire to the main cabin.

With the cabins only five feet apart, flame from the roof of the main cabin soon jumped over to the roof of the small cabin. With his fort burning down just over his head Twyford estimated their chances for a quick dash to the blacksmith shop to the rear and "concluded to ask for terms of surrender. Saw from their number it was useless to contend against them."

Twyford's men ran out a white flag. As they faced the immediate prospect of capture Twyford and his men who were veterans of several other battles in the Pulaski County area against the bushwhackers feared the worst.

In his battle report Lt. Twyford stated; "We burned all the papers that would give any of our names or identify us in any way;

changed our names, company and regiment for the reason that the bushwhackers had often sworn and circulated the report in the country if Frank Mason, Michael Williams and Lt. Twyford should fall into their hands, they would burn or shoot them full of holes; We thought it best to assume fictitious names."

With the white flag waving and the house still burning Lt. Twyford and the Rebel second in command a Captain Bristoe discussed the terms of surrender. After Captain Bristoe gave his word of honor that Twyford and his men would be treated as prisoners of war; the Union unit surrendered at 3 p.m.

Although the Rebel force consisted mainly of enrolled Confederate Troops under the command of a Col. Love, there were a large number of bushwhackers riding with the unit. The bushwhackers wanted to shoot the prisoners but Col. Love refused to let them.

After surrender Twyford's men were stripped of weapons and uniform. They were given old clothing to wear and "Col. Love would not allow any unbecoming language used to us." Love's command plus prisoners then marched toward Waynesville and camped for the night some twelve miles west of Waynesville.

During this camp the bushwhackers continued to question Twyford's men "very closely." At 10:00 a.m. the camp broke up; some 75 bushwhackers left Love's command. Love's men marched toward Lebanon,

Missouri until 3:00 p.m. that same day. When they stopped to feed and rest the horses Col. Love told Lt. Twyford that he would release the union unit on parole.

Col. Love then released Twyford's men with a small escort of Rebel troops and sent them toward Lebanon. However a short time later Col. Love discovered the band of bushwhackers had followed his unit all day and fearing for the safety of Twyford's unit he ordered them returned to camp.

In camp the bushwhackers swore to Col. Love that the prisoners would never reach Waynesville alive. However Col. Love had other plans; He placed the bushwhackers under arrest and had them guarded while he sent Twyford's unit toward Lebanon with a large escort.

Despite all of Col. Love's efforts a small number of bushwhackers followed the prisoners all the way to Lebanon. Twyford's men reached the union army post at Lebanon after dark on October 28, 1863.

In his final report Lt. Twyford quoted Col. Love's statement that he lost five men killed and four men wounded along with seven horses killed or wounded. The losses in Twyford's unit consisted of the guard who was wounded the first night and two union horses shot.

Other than the embarrassment of capture, Lt. Twyford's unit was very lucky throughout the scout. History did not record the reaction of Hiram King as he watched his home burn to the ground.

Saloon Keeper

The saloon keeper Sterling Teeple (until the fateful day of July 5, 1898) was a man of striking appearance and personality. He was more than 6 ft. tall, weighed 250 lbs. and had the strength to lift bodily any undesirable customer from his establishment. He had flashing white teeth in contrast to almost black hair and matching handlebar mustache. He was greatly admired by the townspeople for his looks, friendliness and ability to restore order out of disorder on his own. He stood for no "monkey-doodle" business. With one hand, he grasped the back of the neck of a troublemaker and with the other hand, he grasped the seat of his pants and out he went without touching the floor.

Sterling Teeple was not a drunkard but was in a business which breeds trouble and in his case, tragedy. The Fourth of July (1898) had passed without incident, except for a visit of two horsemen who came riding into town from the south. They had no money to pay for their drinks, or else, no desire to pay for them. As had happened on other similar occasions, they were picked up bodily and pitched into the street.

Minutes past dusk on the following calm, peaceful evening, a young boy, in the manner of a town crier, ran down the two blocks of main street-breaking the news that Sterling Teeple had been shot. It was his custom to sit on the front porch of his saloon, facing the railroad

track, and watch boys playing marbles between his building and the depot each evening. This evening, minutes after he had lit his famous cigar, he was shot from the rear-the bullet went through his head and was found in the head of the section foreman. Dr. Tice of Waynesville was in town. He and Wm. H. Murphy (Crocker Lawyer) gave their services with little to be accomplished by either.

W.D. Rowden and another man seated in front of W.D.'s building across the street from the rear of the saloon, saw two men running down the street north of his store building in the direction of the bridge (near the present Thomas and Fortner homes). Investigation proved that horses had been hitched to saplings in a thicket across and nearby the bridge. In this thicket, all clues ended and the plot thickened. Rumors became so rampant and wild that one law abiding citizen became distracted; thinking that some innocent person, maybe even himself, might be implicated and falsely convicted. He made a trip to the Stokes settlement to make known his anxiety. Men of his acquaintance convinced him that he had nothing to worry about and quieted his imagination. Someone reported that a man rode out of town on a squeaking saddle-the squeaking part indicating that it was a new saddle. So, men with new saddles were looked upon with suspicion.

Every man, who was an enemy of Teeple was rounded up and questioned. Not one used the fifth amendment. One man telling about his interview, later stroked his beard and said, "I told them that I didn't do it, but that I was glad that someone did." One "Far-out" story was that two men in white went out of town. Years later a dying man "was said" to have confessed that he fired the fatal shot-and thus: the story with all its twists and turns lives on-even after his son, Dick Teeple (late undertaker at Richland) and daughter Edith (Teeple) Porter have died.

One more story of the saloon before we leave it. The story of the little black boy, "Snowball." Snowball lived in Iberia. He often came to Crocker to burn his way with colored trainmen to Lebanon where he had relatives. People now living remember him as a happy, pleasant little fellow who could really "cut the pigeon wing." Men in the saloon liked him and his dancing. One night he danced for them until he was exhausted-but still they called for more. Snowball refused to respond. One man raised a 45 revolver and said "Now, you little black devil, you dance." The revolver fired accidentally and little black "Snowball" was dead.

First Dram Shop

1852. A.J. Bryant opens the first dram shop in Pulaski County, located in Waynesville.



THE SPORTS PORCH

Women's and Men's Active Sport Wear

by: **Munnsingwear Jantzen**
Dog Gone Its and more

Watch for our summer clearance in August. Fall merchandise arriving daily

OPEN 12 noon

Buckhorn Bowling Lanes