

Thought this would be of interest. Hope you are well - Hope to see you soon Love, MaMa

Sherman's medieval army in Winnsboro

Karen Stokes

Listing in Confederate in 1861 at the age of Alfred Manigault of leston survived nearly years of what his older er Louis Manigault ibered as "the ghteous and diabolical yaging between the ederate States and the ed States." Alfred was on of Charles Izard igault, a wealthy leston merchant and planter, and he served elite cavalry unit n as the Charleston

Light Dragoons. On February 16, 1865, the unit was in Columbia and Alfred was acting as a courier. Already suffering with a cold, he took a chill when his clothes were drenched as he crossed a creek on horseback and he soon became seriously ill. The next day, his unit and all the Confederate defenders were forced to evacuate when Columbia was surrendered to Gen. William T. Sherman's massive army. Alfred was taken to a hospital in Winnsboro, where he died on February 20. His remains, however,

would not rest in peace. The following day he would encounter the enemy one last time in an act of gruesome desecration. After leaving much of Columbia in ashes, part of Sherman's army moved into Fairfield District. The "bummers" (foragers who operated in advance of the main army) arrived in the town of Winnsboro on February 21, 1865, and were soon followed by troops of the 14th and 20th Corps. William W. Lord was the rector of the Episcopal church in Winnsboro. He was a refugee from

Yicksburg and had seen a great deal of the brutality of war, but even he was shocked by his encounter with Sherman's army in Winnsboro. In a memoir, his son recalled how the Rev. Mr. Lord went out as an emissary to Gen. Sherman as the Federal army approached. Lord met with some of Sherman's officers, who conveyed the clergyman's plea for mercy to their commander:

"This [plea] was to the effect that as Winnsboro contained no cotton held in storage and sheltered only helpless women and children, the army on its march be not permitted to burn and pillage it.

"[Sherman's] reply came quick and terse: 'Burn and pillage be damned! My soldiers may do as they please!'

"My father protested indignantly against what he called an 11th-century answer to a 19th-century appeal; but he was promptly warned back to silence by the remark of a staff officer, that gentlemen of his cloth had been sent North in irons for saying less ... A passport through the Union lines was handed to him and a promise was made that the headquarters of General Sherman and his staff would certainly be fixed within the residential part of the village, which would avail to save the rectory.

"[The] advance-guard of unofficered and undisciplined stragglers ... rode along our little street without making any deprecations or paying any attention to the closed shutters and doors of the frightened villagers; for the pioneers seemed to know that their conquering general — 'Uncle Billy,' as they fondly called him — was to make his headquarters on that street ... Downtown, however,



Alfred Manigault (1840-1865).

the torch was soon applied by the main body of the army, which had entered the village by another road and the business portion of Winnsboro was at once wrapped in flames. Like truants out of school, these overgrown 'Boys in Blue' played snowball along the fire-lit streets with precious flour; made bonfires of hams and sides of bacon ... set boxes and barrels of crackers afloat on streams of vinegar and molasses that were sent flowing down the gutters from headless barrels; and fed their horses from hats filled with sugar, throwing what remained into the flames or the mud. In this wanton horseplay enough foodstuff was destroyed to have nourished the community abundantly for at least a year.

"While high carnival was held thus amid the burning stores downtown, the residential sections of the village were not neglected. All homes outside the sacred limits of the headquarters precinct were stripped of food and treasure ...

"That the conflagration was at last controlled was due to the intervention of Gen. Slocum, of New York. Claiming that an extension of the fire line might endanger the headquarters residence, he organized a bucket brigade of bluecoats and saw to it that 'Uncle Billy's' house and the public buildings escaped the flames."

A resident of Winnsboro, Mrs. Margaret C. Adams, wrote of the widespread pillage and destruction:

"The cats and goats seemed to feel it in the air that something was approaching, for they had disappeared and did not reappear for days. The watchdog had, in fear, crouched under the dining table, when a soldier spying him there, shot him! All day the bummers were passing the yard and garden, searching, prodding, digging, for hidden treasure which, happily, they did

not find. They did find and took off, everything we had to eat ...

"The coming, the going, of this army," she added, "was a horrible nightmare. We awoke from it to realize we were destitute."

Between 20 and 30 buildings in Winnsboro were burned, including St. John's Episcopal Church. An 1868 report published by the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina contained the following statements concerning St. John's:

"This church was wantonly burned by Sherman's troops on their march through Winnsboro. The public square was destroyed, but the Church was not touched by that fire. It was on the outskirts of the town in a large lot and was deliberately set fire by the soldiers, after the central square was consumed. The organ, furniture, books and all the Church property perished."

While the church burned, soldiers exhumed a new grave in the churchyard, thinking it might hold buried valuables. Splitting open the coffin, they found only a corpse — that of Alfred Manigault, who had been buried there the day before. Alfred's brother Louis preserved a letter from a friend, Edward Horibeck, who informed him that some of Sherman's soldiers had taken his brother's body out of his grave and put a potato in his mouth, while others carried the organ out of the church to play music and dance around it as the building burned. Horibeck also expressed his regret that he had not known of Alfred's presence in Winnsboro before Sherman's arrival. "I did not hear anything about him," he wrote, "until after the Great Incendiary Sherman passed and permitted such acts to be perpetrated by his followers the seum of the nation."

A year later, in February 1866, the Manigault family removed Alfred's body from St. John's graveyard and reburied him at St. Philip's churchyard in Charleston.

Karen Stokes is an author and an archivist at the South Carolina Historical Society. Her books include "South Carolina Civilians in Sherman's Path," "The Immortal 600" and her newest book, "Confederate South Carolina." She has also published historical fiction and her latest novel is "Honor in the Dust," set in the South Carolina Midlands in 1865.

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