

**THE CAPTURE OF JEFFERSON
DAVIS; A NARRATIVE OF THE
PART TAKEN BY WISCONSIN
TROOPS**

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The capture of Jefferson Davis; a narrative of the part taken by Wisconsin troops by Henry Harnden

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HENRY HARNDEN

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DAVIS; A NARRATIVE OF THE
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1850



of Henry J. Saunders

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PREFACE.


THE following account of the part taken by the First Wisconsin Cavalry in the Capture of Jefferson Davis was originally prepared substantially as it is now presented, at the request of Comrades of the G. A. R., and has already been given before a number of the different Posts. It has been put into its present form for the reason that it is believed it will be a pleasure to the surviving members of the regiments, and to their children and friends to have the same for convenient perusal.

My personal recollection has been refreshed as far as possible by re-reading the official records and reports made at the time, and also by letters and correspondence had with persons who took part in the capture. I have endeavored to make it as correct as possible, and the

more so on account of the very unfortunate collision which took place between the First Wisconsin and the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, mention of which it seems almost necessary to make in any narrative concerning the matter. I have endeavored to tell a plain story in a plain way, and as such I submit it to the judgment of my comrades who took part with me in the struggle which occurred almost a generation since.

HENRY HARNDEN.

Madison, November 8, 1898.



The Story of the Capture of Jefferson Davis.

AFTER the defeat of Hood's army at Nashville, Tennessee by General Thomas, on the 15th and 16th of December, 1864, the Union cavalry under General Wilson pursued the retreating rebels until the remnants of their army escaped across the Tennessee river into Mississippi. General Wilson encamped his cavalry at Gravelly Springs and Waterloo, along the line of the Tennessee, preparatory to the commencement of his great raid through Alabama and Georgia, which resulted in the rout of the

rebel General Forest, and the scattering and capture of the greater part of his army, also the capture of Selman and Montgomery, Alabama, and Columbus and Westpoint, Georgia, finally winding up with the capture of Macon, Georgia. The First Wisconsin Cavalry composed a part of these forces, and bore a conspicuous part in all that was accomplished on this, the greatest and most successful cavalry raid of the war.

The rebel army which General Thomas defeated at Nashville was the same that had opposed General Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta the previous summer, and was, at the time of the battle of Nashville, composed of about forty thousand of the best troops of the confederacy, but so total was their defeat and rout that when they

finally got across Tennessee, there was only about twelve thousand of their infantry left. General Wilson, with the First, Second, and Third Divisions of the Cavalry Corps, and three batteries of artillery, about fifteen thousand men, crossed the Tennessee river on the 11th day of March, 1865, at Chickasaw, Alabama, arriving at Macon, Georgia, April 20, 1865.

While resting quietly in camp about two miles north of the city on the evening of May 6, 1865, I received orders to report at once to headquarters. I mounted my horse and rode over to headquarters as ordered. I there found General J. G. Croxton in command, in the absence of General McCook. The General informed me that it was reported that Jeff. Davis was in South Carolina, making his way south into