

# Montevallo Historical Society

*Opening the Portals of Our Heritage*

540 Shelby Street  
Montevallo, AL 35115  
[www.historicmontevallo.org](http://www.historicmontevallo.org)



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## WHEN A CONFEDERATE ARMY OCCUPIED MONTEVALLO

*Submitted by Marty Everse*

April 1864 and the headlines read, "Our Troops in Montevallo." The reporter went on to write that the men were "in excellent health, and full of enthusiasm looking forward to the Spring campaign with the brightest hopes, and eager to engage the enemy." The mining engineer Joseph Squire scribbled in his diary, "There is a camp of some 15 thousand (Confederate) soldiers lying at and about Montevallo part of them are on the John P. Morgan place and some on Ambrose's."

One reason the men were in high spirits, they were flush with vittles, at least some thought so. W. H. Berryhill of Mississippi wrote his wife, "We are getting a plenty of bacon and corn meal now, in fact more than we eat. We get flour, peas, and rice occasionally. But I do get tired of eating fried bacon by the week. We had some lettuce for supper last night which is the first thing like a vegetable that I have tasted" in weeks.

Another Mississippi soldier, William Nugent, had a differing view. "Our soldiers get 1/3 lb. of bacon & a pound of flour daily, and nothing more. They cannot well live on this long." He did like the climate, however. "The weather is generally warm up here in the mountain valley. A delightful breeze is playing all around me. How much you would like a country like this in summer. The spring water is very cool and the wind is constantly kept in motion up and down the valley. I could never reconcile myself to the idea of living here, but as a summer resort it would be pleasant."

Andrew Jackson Brown of Pontotoc County, Mississippi thoroughly relished his brief sojourn in Montevallo. In between his military duties, he found time to go hunting with his buds, killing 5 squirrels and a coon one day. What he seemed to enjoy most of all were the revivals taking place at the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in town. On Sunday, April 24th, he dressed up, putting on a clean cotton shirt and his old soldier's worn coat and pants, and headed into town to attend morning services. At three o'clock that afternoon the Baptists extended an invitation to attend communion, Brown exclaiming, "such a meeting I scarcely ever witnessed. The Sacrament was administered to about 300 members." That evening, a candlelight service was delivered to a standing room only congregation. After several songs were sung the preacher arose and, according to Brown, "taken his text which was the wages of sin is death, a fine sermon, many said they were sinners."

Among the sinners that day, though manacled back in camp, were three army deserters, sentenced to be "shot to death with musketry." Columbus Sykes, an officer in the 43rd Mississippi, recounted the scene. "The execution took place between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. I need not tell you that it was a sadly solemn scene. To see men in full tide of a vigorous manhood, sitting on their coffins, hearing the sentence, to hear the last solemn prayer of the chaplain in their behalf, the order to stand up, have their arms bound behind them, eyes blindfolded, the last messages delivered for wife and children to the commanding officer, the command to guard, 'ready, aim, fire,' they fall on their backs lifeless corpses. These men lived in Choctaw County, Mississippi, and all had families."

By May 6th, Berryhill, Nugent, Brown, and Sykes were on their way to North Georgia to join the forces facing Union General William Tecumseh Sherman. Two would survive the following year, two would perish. W. H. Berryhill was shot through the head on December 15, 1864, leading his company over the frozen ground near Nashville, Tennessee. William Nugent attained the rank of colonel and was paroled at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Andrew Jackson Brown was captured at Nashville on December 16th and spent the remaining months of the war as a prisoner in Camp Douglas, Illinois. Columbus Sykes or Lum as he was known to his men survived the carnage of the battles around Atlanta, Franklin, and Nashville only to be killed by a decayed white oak tree falling upon him while he was sleeping. He did linger a few brief moments. His last words were, "Tell my dear wife and children I loved them to the last."

Please join us for  
Montevallo Historical Society's  
next meeting

Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>  
2 p.m.

at the Montevallo Library.

Guest Speaker:  
Dr. David Morgan,  
retired University of Montevallo  
History Professor and author