

Early History of La Grange, Tennessee



La Grange is the oldest town in Fayette County, Tennessee, originally being a Chickasaw Indian village named "Itey Uch La", meaning "Cluster of Pines". For a number of years it was quite a trading post for the Indians, who would visit the town regularly to dispose of their game, hides, etc.



[Learn about the first inhabitants of La Grange.](#)

Situated on a high bluff overlooking north Mississippi, La Grange lies 50 miles east of Memphis, Tennessee along State Highway 57 and 3 miles north of the Mississippi state line.

La Grange was laid out on the southern end of land entry #712 which contained originally 274 acres and was surveyed in 1822 for the heirs of William Rains who were all non-residents of Tennessee. According to Court Minutes, in October 1827, the Rains' heirs petitioned for a division of this tract of land. Following the division, Samuel B. Harper acquired 167 acres on the southern part of the tract. La Grange was started on Harper's acreage and he has been credited with laying out the town and basing the layout on Philadelphia, PA.

There were initially seven owners and proprietors of La Grange, many of whom had Madison County, Alabama, interests just prior to their La Grange venture. These seven were: James Titus, Robert Fearn, [Robert Cotton](#), Thomas Fearn, Samuel B. Harper, the heirs of William Lawrence and John J. Winston. By 1833, the Lawrence heirs were no longer in the group and Robert Cotton died in 1837, leaving the others as the surviving proprietors. Samuel B. Harper held the Power of Attorney from several of the non-resident proprietors and Harper himself had moved to Marshall County, Mississippi by 1840.

The Post Office was established in February 1828 with Amos David as Postmaster. Samuel Killen was the second Postmaster. The town was first chartered in 1829 with F. Titus, John H. Moss, A. S. Edmondson, B. Harper, William Harper, William B. Merryweather and Peachy Franklin being declared a "body politic" (Acts of TN Chapter XCVII). One of these was to be elected as mayor. (An incomplete list of early mayors includes Thomas Brown Firth in 1833, Thomas Haslen Kean in 1849, E. D. Jenkins in 1857, and George P. Shelton in 1860. There may have been others who served during these years.) There were at least two other incorporations in the early years: 1836 and 1851, and a later incorporation in 1901.

225 town lots were first laid off, all of them lying south of Fourth Street with the exception of lots 1 through 14 situated just north of Fourth Street. Main, Pine, Poplar, Chestnut and Walnut Streets ran north and south. Running east and west were Fourth, Third, Second, Commerce, Arch, and Vine Streets. Angled streets in the south part of town were Spruce, Pearl, Center (also called Orange), Spring, Union and Holly (also called Locust). Most of the original 225 lots were deeded between 1833 and 1839. Another group of lots were sold by Samuel Dickens north of town. North of Fourth Street, another 19 lots were laid off on both sides of the railroad by Thomas Gloster Anderson on a plat drawn by M. A. Kerr. Another group of lots (64 to begin with) were laid off by William L. Hix around the

depot. John Clay laid off another group of lots north of Fourth Street bounded on the west by the Somerville Road (now Ewell Road).



[View an 1862 topographical map of La Grange](#)

The first store was opened in 1827 by George Gray and other early merchants from 1830 to 1840 were Jones & Harper, George Cossett, Irish & Bailey, Gray and Macbeth, Glaster & Hackney, Lynn & Davis, Robert Locke, George Shinporch and Nelson & Co. Between 1850 and 1860 the merchants were Wm. R. Baugh, J. S. Day, George P. Shelton, H. H. Falls, B. Houston, C. F. Chapman, Brown Bros., D. T. Fowler, George C. Cossett, A. D. Lewis, Lock and Hasley, John Thompson, and R. W. Smith & Co. Between 1860 and 1862, the merchants were J. T. Foote, George P. Shelton, O. S. Jordan, C. F. Chessman, Cossett, Davis & Bryan, Fowler & Louston, T. S. Parham, R. J. Bass & Co., and John Goodwin. Business was suspended from 1862 until the close of the war, and from 1865 until 1870 the merchants were J. T. Bowers, Wm. Frank, King & Fairfield, S. W. Baird, Crenshaw & Denny, Arthur J. Quinn, Pollack & Co., Benj. Word, Adams & Toombs, Day & Proudfit and Curtis & Coolidge. Between 1870 and 1880 the merchants were C. T. Hodges, W. P. Lipscomb, Cowan & Cowan, Jones & Co., Lipscomb & Gibbons, Wright, McNance & Co., F. L. Adams, J. M. Crenshaw, J. E. Osborn & Son, T. G. Toombs, A. Michaels, Benj., Word, Adams & Moody and J. M. Guthrie. The merchants in 1887 were: Joseph Gibbons & Co., Cowan and Simms, Moody Bros., W. P. Lipscomb, M. Michael, Mrs. Fannie McNance and F. M. McNance, general stores; Jesse Stafford and W. R. Pankey, groceries; T. G. Toombs, drugs; Halton & Anderson, foundry, mill & cotton-gin combined.

Immanuel Episcopal Church was organized in 1832 through the efforts of Mary Hayes Willis Gloster and Reverend Samuel G. Litton was the first Rector.



[Learn more about the Immanuel Episcopal Church](#)

The first newspaper in the entire county of Fayette also started in 1832 in La Grange called the "Western Whig and the La Grange Herald". Later, two other papers were published: "The La Grange Monitor" in the 1850's and "Spirit of the Age" in 1871. The first bank in the county was located in La Grange in 1833 -- a branch of the Planter's Bank of Tennessee (later to become known as Union of Planters Bank and still later as Union Planters bank.)

In 1834, because it was so far to Somerville and Bolivar for conducting county seat business, La Grange town fathers got citizens along the southern edge of the county, and some from Hardeman county, to join them in their attempt to form a new county out of a 12 to 15 mile deep strip across the southern boundaries of both Fayette and Hardeman Counties with La Grange as the county seat. This venture was not successful. (Still later, the attempt to form Bell County never materialized either.) Plans to make "Tiara" in La Grange the new county courthouse thus never came about either.

[Learn about more historic homes in La Grange](#)

In 1835, a petition from La Grange was read in a Somerville Lodge meeting for a charter for the Grand Lodge. Masonic officers of La Grange Lodge #81 in 1837 were Thomas N. Giles, master, A. C. Satterfield, senior warden; and Thomas H. Ormsby, junior warden. The lodge contracted in 1837 to build on part of lot # 96 a two-story building to house the Baptist Church on the first floor and the Masons in the upper story. H. P. Hayward was pastor of the Baptist Church in the 1839-40 time period as his name is recorded in marriage book A at the courthouse. In 1848, the Baptists acquired lot #173. The Methodist Church was deeded lot #69 in 1836. Marriage records at the courthouse show marriages performed in 1838 by Elder I(saac) L(emuel) G(illespie) Strickland. He was the Methodist preacher in La Grange at the time and is said to have preached there in 1836.

[Learn more about the Methodist Church](#)

An act was passed on December 14, 1835 to incorporate the La Grange & Memphis Rail Road Company. The financial panic of 1837 threw funds for this railroad into jeopardy and later the road was sold to the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Co., and was later a part of the Norfolk-Southern Railway system.



[Learn more about the Railroad](#)

The first documented school in La Grange (although there was probably instruction earlier) was a Female Private Seminary advertised in the October 10, 1834 issue of the Tipton County newspaper, Randolph Recorder; Spelling, reading, writing and French will be taught...Mrs. Johnson to instruct on the piano forte...Drawing and Painting will be superintended by Mrs. Anderson". Trustees for this school were Thomas Booth, George H. Wyatt, John Anderson, Haywood Johnson and Charles Michie. In 1837, Reverend Samuel G. Litton of the Episcopal Church, advertised a Female Boarding and Day School at La Grange in the October 14th Somerville Reporter. The first known school for males was the Synodical College in existence as early as 1839. Ninety-one citizens signed a petition to the Legislature in 1839 (Petition #152-1839-6) protesting the sale of liquor "within 3 miles of the La Grange Synodical College."

The La Grange Female College was holding exercises in December of 1846. The La Grange Female Institute was advertised in the Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer on March 22, 1853. Superintendent James Nicholson Cocke and his wife were in charge of this school. The La Grange Military Academy was in operation in the late 1850's and early 1860s. A. W. Lanier was principal of the La Grange Male Academy in 1872.



[Learn more about La Grange colleges](#)

In the spring of 1855, La Belle Village (as the town was also known) was in the midst of preparations for building a new brick Synodical College under the sponsorship of the Memphis Presbyterian Synod. The building committee was made up of John Walker Jones, Robert Locke, J. L. Pulliam, Hugh H. Falls (who built Chantilly), and Charles S. Palmore. The architect was R. Fletcher. In the early fall, Rev. John H. Gray, D.D., pastor of the Beale St. Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis had been unanimously chosen as president. Citizens of the town had collected

subscriptions of \$40,000 by December and L. B. Gaston (of Mississippi) assisted in raising a subscription of \$20,000. The college was taken over by Federal troops during the Civil War who used it as a hospital and partially tore it down to get material with which to build barracks (This war claim was not settled by the government until around the turn of the century).

The most successful educational facility ever built in the town, however, was the La Grange Female College, founded about 1854. Completed in 1856, containing about 25 rooms, it was built at a cost of \$27,000 on a lot known as the Holcombe lots bought by John Hunt from Thomas Booth and deeded in 1858 to the college for \$3,000 by Charles W. Hunt. Its first president was Professor David Bancroft Johnson who died shortly after the college opened. Professor John D. Meredith, who had earlier been in Macon, TN, had a connection with this college in the 1858-1867 time period. The college closed during the war, reopened and continued operating for a long time. Later, the building was used as a public school until it burned in 1921.

Hotels: Early known hotels in La Grange were the La Grange Hotel, the Central House and the Galt House and the Farmer's Inn. The La Grange Hotel was situated on Lots 196, 197, and 216 in the south part of town. It is not known when it first opened but it was operating in 1835. Thomas Gloster Anderson owned The La Grange Hotel in 1855 and it was operated by John Holden. F. W. Lee was the proprietor of the Galt House in 1839 which was a brick hotel built by William L. Hix and was situated north of the Memphis Charleston Railroad Depot. Edwin Dabbs sold the Farmer's Inn in 1856 to Charles McNamee at the southwest corner of Commerce and Orange Streets. The Eagle Hotel on Commerce St. was owned in 1841 by Thomas Brown Firth and John Parham. There was also the Central House tavern operated in 1842 by John W. Burton.

Infirmary: In 1855, Dr. James Nicholson Cocke, who had been practicing medicine for 30 years, the last 17 years in La Grange, opened his Greenhigh Infirmery where patients received water cure baths coupled with calisthenic exercises. Dr. Cocke died before this infirmery could get well established.

Leaders: With the possible exception of Samuel B. Harper, the early town leaders were never the owners and proprietors of the town. Instead, the leaders were the business and professional men. Among these were Arthur Brehon Gloster, Thomas Booth, Hugh H. Falls, Thomas Gloster Anderson, George Germain Cossitt, Beverly La Fayette Holcombe, Aldolphus Fenton Tucker, Edmund Winston, John J. Potts-attorney, Epps Moody, John Anderson, Thomas Brown Firth, Joseph Shinporch, Peachy Franklin, [Frederick H. Cossitt](#), Fielding Hackney, George Anderson, George P. Shelton, Robert Locke, John W. Burton, Joel M. Sledge, Dr. James Nicholson Cocke, Harrison Locke, Charles Michie, John R. Roan, Joel Anderson, John Thompson, Dr. John Junius Pulliam (who built [Hancock Hall](#)), Charles S. Palmore, Robert T. Mahaffy, Dr. Henry Skipwith Taylor, and Daniel S. Parrish.

Thomas Gloster Anderson: Of those named above, however, it is clear from land deeds that Thomas Gloster Anderson (son of John Anderson above) was the predominant leader and prime mover in the town from the late 1840's to 1860. Although he was a young man at the time, he had extensive railroad, land and business interests. In 1853 he owned the drugstore operated by John McGuirk and a house nearly opposite the Methodist Church as well as about 30 residential lots and a two-story brick store occupied by Cossitt, Winston & Co.

[The Thomas Anderson home](#)

He also owned the La Grange Hotel and his holdings were not confined to La Grange. He owned 2,000 acres near Moscow with a mill site and a large number of lots in Moscow adjoining the depot and owned 400 acres known as Cromwell (Railroad) Station 5 miles west of La Grange as well as land in Obion county. Disheartened due to some business reverses in the late 1850's on account of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, he moved briefly to Memphis, then New Orleans and by 1875 was a citizen of the town of Jefferson in Marion County, Texas. Before he left La Grange, he sold his 200 acre residence tract in 1861 to James W. Rogers. His residence tract adjoined La

Grange on the east and was bounded on the north and east by Charles Michie's property, on the south by the Winchester old state line and on the west by the tract claimed in 1853/4 by Edmund Winston at a chancery sale. Included and excluded in the sale of this 200 acre tract were at least 5 lots previously sold by Anderson individually to Whitson A. Harris, J. R. Blake, Mrs. Lucy G. Cocke, J. B. Nebhut, and James L. Meigs.



The town of La Grange played an important role during the American Civil War, such that it merits its own separate section. [Learn about the rich Civil War history of La Grange](#), and about [Grierson's Famous Raid](#).

Post-War: The Civil War brought great hardships to La Grange. Federal troops were quartered there due to the town's strategic location and also because of the railroad. Much damage was done and many of the fine old homes were destroyed. Struggling back, the whole west side of Main St. was destroyed in a fire in 1873, with the exception of Leach's Tin Shop. The Yellow Fever Epidemic dealt the town another hard blow in 1878. It is reputed that during the fever Epidemic, more La Grange homes were deliberately burned in order to prevent the germ from spreading. The list of the La Grange Yellow Fever Victims is as follows:

- Aston, Lucy
- Beck, Nellie
- Clay, John H.
- Dement/Dement, C.
- Fields, Mrs. E. A.
- Freeman, Miss. Carrie
- Green, Mrs. Viola S.
- Hammond, Mrs. L.B.
- Hatton, A. J.
- Humphries, Parson
- McAssey, Robert
- McNamee, Earnest
- Mars, Sigmund
- Maxwell, Louisa
- Maxwell, W.
- Michaels, Myer
- Pulliam, Mark P. (Pres. of the Howard Association of La Grange)
- Reeves, Ben
- Robertson/Robinson, Jas. P.
- Rosser, James
- Rossine, Henry W.
- Shelton, Leon M.
- Shelton, T.J. Jr.
- Smith, Nancy
- Spillman, Jerry
- Todd, J. R.
- Todd, Mrs. Anna
- Waddell, Samuel
- Ward, Miss Malinda
- Ward, Ben
- Ward, John H.
- Ward, Miss Victory
- Webb, Mrs. T. H.
- White, Todd
- White, Miss Mattie
- Wiggs, child of Mrs. W. B. of Memphis
- Wiggs, Jessie Page of Memphis
- Wiggs, Miss Josie, children of W. B. and Laura Rebecca (Taylor) Wiggs
- Williams, Louis
- Yancey, Arthur

Note: Census taken October 4, 1878

Population: 145 Whites, 175 Blacks, 320 total population (Source: Memphis Daily Appeal, papers 9, 13, 22 Oct. and 6 Nov. 1878.)

On November 23, 1900, a great tornado, or "[cyclone](#)" as it was reported in The Commercial Appeal newspaper of Memphis, struck La Grange and destroyed much of the business district, the Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and many homes. La Grange has withstood financial panics, war damage, epidemics, storms and fires. While a few might feel that fate certainly has not been kind to her, many others hold the opinion that La Grange is blessed. She still has her land, her heritage, many fine old homes and structures, her honor and charm-many of the things that really matter.

Sources:

- The Goodspeed Histories of Fayette & Hardemen Counties of Tennessee, originally published in 1887.
- The History of Fayette County, Tennessee; 1986, by the Fayette County Historical Society.
- John W. Hunt's History of La Grange, Tennessee

Alethea D. Sayers, historian.



****Note:** The following information is an excerpt from "The History of Fayette County, Tennessee 1986" by the Fayette County Historical Society, reprinted here with permission.

FIRST RAILROAD

The TN. Legislature passed an Act December 14, 1835 to incorporate the La Grange and Memphis Rail Road Company. The commissioners for this company were Epps Moody, Chairman-Eastin Morris, Joseph Shinpock, Fielding Hackney, E. S. Davis, Samuel McManus, John T. Foster, John P. Robinson, George Anderson, John Anderson, Thomas Booth, J. M. Walker, R. T. Mahaffy, Hugh Davis, Will Cage, Edmund Dupuy, Robert Cotton and Charles Michie. Books were opened for stock subscriptions at five places-At La Grange, at Hiram S. Morgan's store north of La Grange near the Hardeman county line, at Moscow, in Memphis, and at Somerville. The stockholders met at La Grange, organized, and elected Eastin Morris, president; John Anderson, Secretary-treasurer; John J. Potts, attorney; all of La Grange, and Charles Potts of Philadelphia, PA., chief engineer.

In La Grange in 1836, town lots 167 through 172 facing the Somerville-La Grange Road, bounded on the north by Fourth St., and on the south by Third St. (now State Highway 57) were deeded to the Railroad directors. Work commenced soon after at which time the country was in a prosperous condition. The financial panic of 1837 dealt the first cruel blow to this venture. By 1843 labor prices had gone up and people who had ledged to buy stock were unable to pay for their subscriptions, consequently, the Board of Directors was forced to tell the legislature that they could not complete the road by 1844, the agreed upon completion date. They asked for additional time (to 1848) to complete the road. But even this was not sufficient to save the road and on 8 January 1846 the railroad iron, the engine and all rolling stock was to be sold. Only about 6 miles of track had been laid out of Memphis, but the land had been secured all along the southern edge of Fayette County and road bed work had been done. An Act was passed Februaru 2, 1846 to incorporate the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Books were opened for stock subscription at La Grange by John J. Potts, Thomas B. Firth, John W. Burton, Elisha W. Harris, Charles Michie and Thomas Polk. At Somerville, Burchett Douglas, Levin H. Coe, Robert J. Yancey and Lewis P. Williamson were in charge of subscriptions. Thomas B. Firth and Hugh Davis were the agents who handled the legal transaction in the 1851 deed of conveyance on behalf of the La Grange and Memphis Railroad to the Memphis Charleston Railroad.

In 1853, (8 July, Memphis Daily Appeal) passenger train stops were announced, including three in Fayette County. The first one of these was between Collierville and La Grange at the rail crossing on S. P. Walker's plantation. This location is now in the town of Piperton. The second stop was between LaFayette (Rossville) and Moscow at the road crossing leading to Hay's Bridge. The third was between Moscow and La Grange at the road crossing near Cromwell's. The 22 March 1853 edition of the Daily Eagle newspaper credited Colonel Joseph Royal Mosby with being instrumental in bringing the railroad to where it then was. He also wanted the lateral line extended to accommodate Somerville and this was done. Lewis P. Williamson was also influential in getting this railroad completed through Fayette County.

The Somerville Accommodation line ran from about 1857 to about 1930. Mike Brady was its most famous engineer. Mike Brady and the Accommodation departed Memphis from the old Union Station at Calhoun and Main in the late afternoon and arrived in Somerville about 8:00 p.m. where it remained until the next morning when it began its run

back to Memphis. There was the equally famous conductor, George Greer Higgins, called "Cap'n Higgins" and Bond, the flagman and Jaybird the black brakeman and Stone, the baggageman. The train and it's activities were much storied about in the country. It was thought that during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878, the Accommodation brought the germ to Somerville in a box of ladies' hats. The hats had been shipped to Memphis by boat from New Orleans. Many young people strolled arm-in-arm to the depot each night to see who was coming in. Here people of the community bade farewell to the "boys" as they left Somerville for service during the Civil War, some never to return. The Accommodation carried passengers only at first, later it added freight.

In 1898, the Memphis Charles Railroad property was purchased by the Norfolk-Southern Railway Company.

Excerpt from John W. Hunt's "History of La Grange" written at the turn of the century:

AN ANCIENT RAILROAD

But there are other sides to La Grange history which, while not as rich in sentiment, are none the less substantial and interesting at this time. John W. Hunt, a citizen of La Grange, has in his possession an interesting relic of the old days of wealth and prestige in La Grange. It is a certificate of stock in an old railroad. The face value of the certificate is \$1,000, and it was issued by the La Grange and Memphis Railroad Company, and mind you well that La Grange comes before Memphis in the compact. This company was chartered December 14, 1835, with a capital stock of \$375,000. The certificate in Mr. Hunt's possession was issued April 20, 1841, has upon it the seal of the railroad company, and is signed by Eastin Morris, president and George W. Adams, cashier. At the top of the certificate is a curious picture, the picture of an engine, tender, and one coach of the kind used in that day. The rails of this road were strings of wood upon the top of which was spiked a strip of iron. The spikes often got loose and would come out. Sometimes the strip of iron would bend at the end and run up through the wheels of a coach or pierce through the bottom of coaches and injure, and sometimes kill passengers. Older lawyers will remember many damage cases growing out of accidents of this sort on the railroad in question. The first coaches used on this railroad were the regular old stagecoaches. The tongue and wheel of the stage coach variety were removed, flange wheels were placed on the coaches and they were coupled together. The certificate of stock now in the possession of Mr. Hunt has a picture on it of one of these coaches attached to a curious looking tender behind a curious looking engine.

(La Grange Depot photo is courtesy of Collection of Allen H. Cogbill)

The first engine used on this road was shipped from Philadelphia by sea to New Orleans, placed on the front end of a steamboat at New Orleans and sent to Memphis by river.

Here is an early Memphis celebration:

The few citizens who had gathered on the Chickasaw bluffs at that time had the same progressive spirit which they show today, and they manifested a keen appreciation of the advance guard of the mechanical revolution. They met the boat which had the engine by the time her nose touched the wharf. They covered the engine with flowers. They tied ropes to it and headed by a band of music, they pulled it through the streets of the town to the terminal of the railroad. Appropriate speeches were made on the occasion. The engine was finally put on the track. Fire was kindled under the boiler. But the thing was new to them, and it was several days before they could get the engine to move. When it did move, according to a faithful chronicler, "everybody was afraid to ride behind it." However, the start for La Grange was made, and it took the same length of time to go from Memphis to La Grange as it took under the old stagecoach system. When the engine would get out of wood the train was stopped, the train crew would get out with their axes, and cut enough wood to start the engine. The trip was finally made, and great was the rejoicing of the La Grange folk and the country generally.

Nearly all the stock of the road, amounting to \$375,000 was subscribed in La Grange. The president of the company and all of the other officers had their offices in La Grange. This was the first railroad chartered in the State of Tennessee and the second in the South. The road was afterwards sold to the Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company, and is now a part of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad Company.

First Inhabitants: *The Indians*

While walking across plowed fields or garden plots in Fayette County today one may stumble upon a flint arrowhead. These chipped stone artifacts are the only remaining evidence of primitive people who inhabited this land for thousands of years and whose ancestry spanned hundreds of generations.

The first white settlers in this area found it inhabited by Indians who had a language, a form of government, a religion, and agriculture. These Indians called themselves "Chicawca"; to the settlers they were known as the Chickasaws. The ancestors of the Chickasaw people had migrated into North America many thousands of years earlier. It is fairly certain that Indians had reached the region of Fayette County by 15,000 years ago.

The Paleo-Indians are considered to have been the first Indians. Only a few artifacts of the Paleo culture have been found in the county. These people lived in harsh times, when the Pleistocene glacier covered much of North America.

The Paleo-Indians were succeeded by an Indian culture of long duration known as Archaic. Many artifacts can be found over Fayette County today as evidence of this culture, which lasted from 10,000 years ago to about 3,000 years ago. Things began to change as the Ice Age drew to a close and the climate slowly became warmer and drier. During this transitional period, a culture developed which predated the Archaic. It is referred to as the Dalton period, a name derived from the type of spear tip these people fashioned from flint, which is called the Dalton point. It was during the Dalton period that the Indian population first began to grow. Many sites throughout Fayette County today show evidence of the Dalton people, one of the most productive sites being about a mile east of Moscow in the floodplain of Wolf River, where several complete and broken points have been found.

The early stages of the Archaic culture were similar to the Dalton. The Indians developed many different types of spear tips, examples of which have been found at sites where they camped

along the floodplains of the Wolf and Loosahatchie rivers. After some 7,000 years, the archaic culture gave way to another called the Woodland.

In this period, which lasted from about 1000 B.C. to about 500 A.D., pottery was introduced. Experimentation with the growing of selected food plants began to take place, a social order developed, and extravagant burial customs with large dome-shaped earthen burial mounds evolved. A small burial mound is located east of Moscow on the North Fork of Wolf River, and in a field adjacent to it can be found artifacts of the Woodland and earlier Indians. Almost all of Fayette County was inhabited to some extent by the Woodland Indians.

The Mississippian culture followed that of the Woodland Indians, lasting from approximately 500 A.D. to 1800 A.D. The Mississippian Indians developed a sophisticated social order, with chieftains ruling over the people. Large flat-topped earth mounds were constructed, on top of which the chieftain's temple was built. One such temple mound about 20 feet high can be found with two smaller mounds on the Ames Plantation. A few other temple mounds exist today in other parts of the county, but most have been destroyed.

By the mid-1500s, the Chickasaws were organized as a nation. They controlled all of what is now West Tennessee and the northern part of Mississippi. They reserved the area of Fayette County and West Tennessee as a hunting ground, traveling from their larger towns in north Mississippi to search for game.

Eventually the Chickasaws yielded their homeland to the axe and plow of the white settlers. In 1818 all of West Tennessee was purchased from the Chickasaw nation, and the Indians were removed to regions west of the Mississippi River. All that is left to remind us of this proud handsome race of people are the many small arrow points found throughout the county, probably lost on hunting trips during the era preceding the coming of the white man.

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written by Alethea D. Sayers

At the onset of the American Civil War, La Grange Tennessee was a thriving community of over 2,000 inhabitants. Known for its culture, society and education, La Grange became a country seat for the wealthy citizens of Memphis, who built their elegant antebellum homes on the bluffs overlooking the Wolf River. What made La Grange geographically desirable to the newcomers, unfortunately, also made it strategically vital to both the Union and Confederate armies.

Situated on a high bluff, La Grange commanded a view well into Mississippi, its neighbor to the South. It is said on a clear day, one could see the town of Holly Springs, twenty-three miles in the distance. The Memphis & Charleston Railroad ran through La Grange, continuing three miles to the east and the town of Grand Junction, where it bent sharply southward towards Corinth, Mississippi. Providing the only rail-line running East and West, the Memphis & Charleston Railroad was essential for shuttling troops and supplies.

Initially, the idyllic lifestyle of La Grange's citizens were altered very little in 1861. However, when the entire and only graduating class of the newly built Presbyterian Synodical College for Men volunteered for the Confederate Army in July, change was seen quickly approaching.

The Civil War arrived on the very doorsteps of La Grange on June 13, 1862, less than one week after the fall of Memphis to Union troops. From that moment on, the town was occupied by Union or Confederate armies, who vied for its strategic importance.

General Ulysses S. Grant, in his personal memoirs, made note of his first visit to La Grange on June 23, 1862, recalling:

"I halted in La Grange. General [Stephen A.] Hurlburt was in command there at the time and his headquarters tents pitched on the lawns of a very commodious country house.* The proprietor was at home and learning of my arrival, he invited General Hurlburt and me to dine with him. I accepted the invitation and spent a very pleasant afternoon with my host, who was a thorough Southern gentleman fully convinced of the justice of secession. After dinner, seated on the capacious porch, he entertained me with a recital of the services he was rendering the cause. He was too old to be in the ranks himself-he must have been quite seventy then--but his means enabled him to be useful in other ways. In ordinary time the homestead where he was now living produced the bread and meat to supply the slaves on his main plantation, in the low lands of Mississippi. Now he raised food and forage on both places, and thought he would have that year a surplus sufficient to feed three hundred families dependent upon the "patriotism" of those better off. The crops around me looked fine...I felt...the greatest respect for the candor of my host and for his zeal in a cause he thoroughly believed in, though our views were as wide apart as it is possible to conceive."

* The home General Grant refers to is [Hancock Hall](#), occupied by Dr. J. J. Pulliam.

In late July of 1862, Sherman evacuated his troops from La Grange, fortifying his garrison at Bolivar, Tennessee and sending the rest back to Memphis. While in this same month, Confederate, Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn was planning to converge with forces under Maj. Gen.

Sterling Price and Maj. Gen. John C. Breckenridge at Grand Junction, 3 miles to the east of La Grange for the purpose of attacking Grant's extended line in West Tennessee.

By August, Price's Cavalry, commanded by Act. Brig. Gen. Frank Armstrong, were seen in and around La Grange. On September 16th, Union cavalry scouts noted Van Dorn's presence in La Grange, along with a force estimated at 10,000. With the movements of two large Confederate forces in the area, the Federals could only guess the objectives to be either Bolivar or Corinth.

Price, moved to occupy Iuka on September 13 and await further developments. When Grant received this information, he planned to attack Price on September 20, before Van Dorn could reinforce him. A surprise attack by Price's Confederates on Rosecrans leading brigade on the 19th, resulted in a premature but bloody battle in which Price took heavy casualties and withdrew from Iuka during the night. Price fell back to Ripley, Miss. to await Van Dorn's forces.

Excerpt from the Official Records of the War of Rebellion: "At this time Price was at Ripley with his force; Van Dorn was at La Grange, with cavalry thrown out to the neighborhood of Somerville, and Villepigue (and Lovell probably) at Salem. With this disposition made of his cavalry Van Dorn was enabled to move from La Grange to Ripley without being discovered..."

On October 3-4, the battle of Corinth was fought between Van Dorn's 22,000 and Rosecrans 21,000. The Confederates lost the battle, suffering over 4,000 in killed, wounded and missing. Van Dorn fell back on Holly Springs, establishing an outpost at La Grange to protect the rear of his army. For their own safety, many of the wounded Confederates were sent to the rear of the army, some making their way to La Grange.

By November 4, Sherman's forces were again closing in on Van Dorn. Van Dorn ordered his pickets back to Holly Springs, Miss.

Excerpt from OR's (Van Dorn's correspondence to Price): "General: The enemy are advancing and have driven in our pickets at La Grange and Grand Junction. Have your command placed in readiness to move at once. Cook three days' rations. Reported thirty regiments infantry and four cavalry. Have no report yet from direction of Corinth: may have to-night. Have sick in readiness to be sent to the rear by cars."

On November 6, a sharp skirmish ensued at La Grange between Van Dorn's pickets and Sherman's advancing column. Sherman's forces reoccupied La Grange on November 7, while Van Dorn deemed it advisable to withdraw from Holly Springs and take a strong line behind the Tallahatchie.

Thus, the citizens of La Grange found themselves once more the host to the Federal army. General Grant and Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson both arrived at La Grange on the 10th, Grant to prepare for upcoming campaign against Vicksburg. In preparation for the campaign, some 30,000 Union soldiers were camped in and around La Grange. And on Nov. 16, Grant issued orders that no civilians were allowed to travel outside of the Federal lines. On Nov. 27, Grant left La Grange, traveling to Holly Springs, where his wife, Julia, would take up temporary residence while Grant went on to Oxford.

On Dec. 20, Grant's plans were disrupted when Van Dorn, and a cavalry force of 3,500, swooped down on Holly Springs, forced the Federal garrison to surrender and destroyed over 3 million dollars of Federal supplies -- supplies needed for the Vicksburg Campaign. At the same time, Forrest's cavalry was tearing up tracks just north of Jackson, Tennessee, in Grant's rear. Grant reluctantly cancelled his movement on Vicksburg, falling back to La Grange and Grand Junction. In the months following, from Dec. 1862 to April of 1863, Grant's center wing (16,000), commanded by Maj. Gen. James McPherson, and various cavalry units were encamped at La Grange, while his right wing, commanded by Sherman, was located at Memphis.

Grant resumed his offensive against Vicksburg in March, leaving a garrison at La Grange. Some of the units that occupied La Grange during this time were the 6th Iowa Infantry, 103d Illinois Infantry, 46th Ohio Infantry, the 6th & 7th Illinois Cavalry and the 2d Ohio Cavalry.

During the month of April, 1863, Grant worked his way down the Mississippi River where he was poised to land his forces at Grand Gulf on April 29. To create a diversion, Grant assigned Col. Benjamin H. Grierson to lead a cavalry raid through Mississippi.

[Grierson's Raid](#), which began in La Grange, was considered one of the most daring Union cavalry raids during the Civil War. In terms of success, the raid achieved its goal by drawing away almost one-third of the Confederate infantry, and Pemberton's entire Confederate cavalry away from Vicksburg. Grant was able to cross the Mississippi on April 30, and after a long siege, Vicksburg surrendered on July 4, 1863.

Throughout the remainder of 1863, La Grange continued to be occupied by Union soldiers, who considered it strategically vital to maintain. Various skirmishes and engagements took place frequently in nearby towns, such as Moscow, Collierville, Grand Junction, Somerville and in La Grange through the summer and fall.

In late November, Confederates were again threatening the Federal garrison at La Grange. While Forrest was busy recruiting for his cavalry in the vicinity of Jackson, Tennessee, Federal cavalry began closing in on him. To assist Forrest in getting back to Mississippi safely with his recruits, Confederate General Stephen D. Lee ordered cavalry forces under Brig. Gen. Chalmers, Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Ferguson, and Col. L. S. Ross to create a diversion by operating along the Memphis-Charleston Railroad between La Grange and Memphis.

From New Albany, Mississippi, the 4,000 Confederates moved to the railroad bridge at Moscow, Tennessee, located approximately 10 miles west of La Grange, arriving there on Dec. 4. Forrest had already been skirmishing with the enemy at nearby Somerville and Collierville Nov. 26-28th.

When Chalmers and Ross reached Moscow, they encountered a brigade of 3,000 Union cavalry, commanded by, Colonel Edward Hatch preparing to cross the railroad bridge at the Wolf River. Sent out from La Grange by Grierson on Dec. 3d, Col. Hatch had been ordered to scout out the area for Confederate cavalry. A severe engagement broke out between the two forces on the bridge, resulting in Union casualties of 4 killed, 11 wounded and 45 captured. According to Grierson's battle report, the Confederates left 26 dead on the field. Also, a major loss to the

Union cavalry was over 125 horses, they being pushed or shot off of the bridge and drowning in the icy waters of the Wolf River. The Confederates retreated south to Mount Pleasant on Dec. 5th, pursued by Federal cavalry.

As a result of Lee's diversion, Forrest managed to escape the tightening Federal noose, crossing the Wolf River at a point very near La Grange. According to a letter sent by Forrest to Maj. Gen. S. D. Lee, on Dec. 29; "GENERAL: I have succeeded in getting out with about 2,500 men." and "Owing to my having to leave Jackson so soon there are about 3,000 men left that I could not get together in time. If arrangements can be made to go back again, can bring out at least 3,000 men." OR's Vol. 1, Ser. XXX1/3.

Confederate cavalry continued to harass the garrison at La Grange throughout the months of January and February of 1864 as they slipped in and out of West Tennessee. On Feb. 2d, a colonel Jno. McGuirk, commanding the 3d Mississippi Cavalry, of Chalmer's Brigade, reported the following; "Yesterday at 11 a.m., when I was about starting for Moscow, my scouts reported the enemy in force at Junction. I went with my command to the edge of the place and offered them battle, which they declined, and remained in the fort. They were confined closely in the fort. I did not allow them to picket outside. At dark retired with my regiment and went into the fortifications at La Grange, where I remained until sunrise this morning, when I moved out, being exhausted and horses without forage twenty-four hours. I was, on this account only, compelled to abandon the town and move to forage my command..." (Or's Vol. 1, Ser. XXX1/3) According to Union reports of this action, the Confederates suffered 2 killed and 8 captured.

In July of 1864, Sherman ordered a cavalry force of 14,000, commanded by Brig. Gen. Andrew Jackson (A. J.) Smith to move from La Grange into Mississippi, intercept Forrest and protect Sherman's supply line. In a fierce engagement between Smith and the combined forces of Forrest and S. D. Lee, at Tupelo, the Confederates suffered a defeat and Forrest was wounded.

In August, another expedition involving 10,000 Union Cavalry, led by Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson (A. J.) Smith was sent out of Memphis via La Grange to Oxford, Mississippi. They returned to La Grange at the end of August, having marched a distance of 106 miles.

By September of 1864, the North and South turned their attentions to Sherman at Atlanta and Lee's struggle at the seige of Petersburg. Though a Confederate victory now looked bleak, Southerners in West Tennessee were enjoying the brief triumph of yet another of Forrest's daring raids.

To prevent another advance by Smith into Mississippi, Forrest led 2,000 men on a bold raid of Memphis on August 21. At the time, Memphis was manned by a Federal garrison of 5,000 troops. Forrest withdrew from Memphis with minor casualties and inflicting little damage. But the incident was embarrassing for Federals and increased Sherman's determination to stop Forrest.

With the crushing defeat of the Western Confederate Army at Franklin, Tennessee in November of 1864, and the Battle of Nashville in December, the hopes of ridding the state of enemy occupation were dashed.

As winter turned to spring in La Grange, April brought the close of four years of bloodshed to an end with Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. The people who had stayed behind in La Grange could only survey the damage to their town in disheartened dismay.

During the course of the war, over 60 engagements, skirmishes and raids are recorded in the OR's for La Grange. More than 40 houses and structures were burned or dismantled by the Federal soldiers to provide firewood. The fine, newly built, Male Synodical College was used as a prison, a hospital and then dismantled brick by brick to build fireplaces for Federal soldiers in the winter of 1862-63. Over one-hundred and fifty Confederate soldiers now lay buried in a mass grave in the small cemetery. And as Charles Wills, a Union soldier of the 103d Illinois Infantry would write in his diary in 1863; "This town has been most shamefully abused since we left here with the Grand Army last December..."

While the once prospering town of La Grange would never fully recover from the damage suffered at the hands of enemy occupation, some of the homes that witnessed and endured this tragic era still remain, restored and as picturesque as the Union soldiers found them over 137 years ago.

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 - 4. The History of La Grange, Tennessee, author unknown
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Lucy Holcombe was regarded as one of the most beautiful and brilliant women of the old South. She was known as the "Queen of the Confederacy," and her picture was placed on the Confederate money issues during the first days of the war. She was perhaps the most celebrated of all Southern beauties.

Her life was full of romance. She met Mr. Pickens, the distinguished politician who later became "War Governor" of South Carolina, at Green Brier, White Sulphur Springs, Virginia. It was rumored at the time that Mr. Pickens had been offered the appointment as minister to England, and had refused to accept it. But he had in the meantime fallen deeply in love with the beautiful Lucy Holcombe, and he had made it known to her. She told him that if he had accepted the position as minister to England she would have married him. Thereupon he hurried to Washington to withdraw his refusal, but found that the place had been filled. But he was appointed minister to Russia, and in a few weeks Mr. Pickens had married the beautiful La Grange girl, and they were on their way to St. Petersburg.

This position Mr. Pickens filled with satisfaction and honor to his country, and at the same time the members of the Pickens family became the intimate friends of Alexander II and the Czarina; it was in their winter palace that the Pickens household was honored by the appearance of a daughter, their first born. At the baptism of the child the Czar and Czarina stood as godfather and godmother, and the Czar gave her the name of Olga Neva Francesca Eugenia Dorothea Pickens. The Czar also gave her the pet name of Douschka, which is the Russian term for 'my darling.'

After her return home in America, once every year the Czar wrote her a personal letter, and after he fell victim to a fatal explosion in the dining room of his winter palace, his son, who succeeded him to the throne, by the law of Russia also succeeded to the obligations of the godfather to Douschka. He kept up the letter writing until the death of the child. At the marriage of Miss Pickens to George Dugar, he sent her a beautiful set of diamonds.

On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Pickens to America, Mr. Pickens was elected Governor of South Carolina, and it was said at the time that his election was due largely to the superior political management of his wife. They afterward made their home at Edgewood, near Edgefield, South Carolina.

Grierson's Grand Raid
by *Alethea Sayers*

Grierson showed his concern for the welfare of Southern civilians by issuing strict orders: "drive out stragglers, preserve order, and quiet the fears of the people."

The winter of 1862-63 was harsh on the soldiers encamped along the Tennessee-Mississippi border. Alternate freezing temperatures and cold rain found the Union soldiers stationed at La Grange, miserably mired in a sea of mud. As a consequence of their misery, the fences surrounding the grand homes, along with many of the smaller houses, had disappeared into the campfires to provide warmth for the men garrisoned there. Dozing before one of these fires, on New Year's Day, Colonel Benjamin Henry Grierson was despondent over more than just the foul weather. His wife, Alice and his two small sons had left Memphis for their home in Jacksonville on December 23d, his men were suffering from illnesses due to the weather and were short on supplies and equipment, and his pay was two months in arrears. In addition to the inactivity that winter brings to armies, Grierson had received no word on his expected promotion to brigadier general; though Grant and Sherman had both written strong recommendations. Suddenly, his reverie was broken by the smell of something burning -- he had accidentally let the fire burn off the soles of his boots, which would result in a cost of fifteen dollars for a new pair. Little could Benjamin know what good things the New Year would bring for him.



General Benjamin Grierson at the close of the Civil War. Photo courtesy of Fort Davis National Archives, Fort Davis, Texas.

As part of Mizner's brigade in late December of 1862, Grierson had received orders from Grant to pursue the triumphant rebel, Earl Van Dorn, whose thirty-five hundred troopers had successfully swept around Grant's left flank and raided his supply lines at Holly Springs, Mississippi. Ben had reached Holly Springs eager to pursue the rebel raiders, but was ordered to return to Oxford by the post commander at Holly Springs. By the time Grant's second order reached him, directing him to "pursue Van Dorn into Tennessee," Grierson was hours behind. When he did catch up with the retreating Confederates at Ripley, Mississippi, Mizner refused to launch a night attack and the pursuit ended at Pontotoc on December 28. As a result of the raid on Holly Springs, Grant was forced to withdraw to Memphis, his central Mississippi campaign now in shambles.

Characteristic of Grant's dogged determination, he settled down in his headquarters at the Hunt-Phelan home and continued to assemble a force of eighty-thousand for a renewed effort to take Vicksburg. But after moving to Milliken's Bend, twenty miles upstream from Vicksburg, Grant spent the next three months in futile efforts to reach the east bank of the Mississippi River and the city. After two attempts of digging canals and two attempts to force passage through swamps

and bayous, Grant realized he would have to risk running the batteries at Vicksburg if his campaign were to be successful. On the evening of April 16, Union ironclads and supply-laden transports ran the gauntlet of rebel batteries, sustaining only one transport lost.

As part of Grant's plan, he intended to create several diversions for the Confederates at Vicksburg to distract them while he crossed the river and swung around to approach the city from the east. Sherman was ordered to make a demonstration up the Yazoo River, and Hamilton was ordered to ready Grierson's cavalry for a major raid into Mississippi in February.

Sherman's demonstration caused a panic at Chickasaw Bluffs, resulting in the Confederate commander at Vicksburg, Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, rerouting 3,000 troops that had been marching south to oppose Grant.

Grant's other diversion, the cavalry raid, proved to be more successful than was hoped for by the Union commander. And the thirty-six year old cavalry colonel who led the raid, while a most unlikely candidate for the task, certainly proved to be worthy of Grant's bidding.

At the onset of the Civil War, Ben Grierson's sole military experience was as a trumpeter in the Ohio Militia. He had spent the better part of his adult life as a music teacher and band leader, and in 1861 found himself deeply in debt. While the war-clouds gathered, Ben wrote to his brother, John who at the time was a resident of Memphis, Tennessee; "I am not a volunteer," and "it would be hard for me to go and fight my brothers in the South as you are well aware."⁽¹⁾ Nonetheless, when Ben finally did decide to join the company he had been instrumental in helping to recruit, Company "I" Tenth Illinois Infantry, all of the positions were filled. While waiting for something further to develop, Ben spent hours pouring over books on infantry, cavalry and artillery tactics.

In May, Ben was offered the position of aide-de-camp with the rank of lieutenant, but without pay, by his friend, Brig. Gen. Benjamin M. Prentiss. He quickly accepted the offer, though he hoped the matter of pay would be temporary. In late summer, when a rift over seniority of rank took place between Grant and Prentiss, Ben realized his military career was hanging in the balance. A quick trip was made to Springfield and Governor Yates to plead Ben's case in mid-August.

When Ben received word of his appointment as major to the Sixth Illinois Cavalry, it must have seemed an ironic twist of fate, as an almost fatal childhood accident had left him very distrustful of horses. But upon his arrival at Camp Yates at Shawneetown, Illinois, Ben's optimism and hard work soon paid off with his undisciplined and ill-prepared regiment. Unfortunately for Ben, his superior, Colonel T. M. Cavanaugh was consistently absent from camp. Cavanaugh's long absences and neglect left the Sixth largely unhorsed and unarmed. Thus Grierson and his regiment were little more than spectators in the early months of 1862.

On April 9, a petition was circulated among the officers of the Sixth, requesting the removal of Colonel Cavanaugh and the appointment of Grierson as colonel. When Cavanaugh resigned, Governor Yates replaced him with a surprised Grierson, who soon wrote to his wife; "The more I have to do, you know, the more I can do--at least you have known it to be some times."⁽²⁾

Ben's wish for military action was soon granted when he, with five companies of the regiment, were ordered to report to the city of Memphis on June 6th. Arriving on June the 18th, Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace, commander of Memphis, put Grierson in the field immediately to combat local Confederate Guerillas. From that point on, Grierson proved his military abilities with each successive raid. And when Sherman replaced Wallace at Memphis, he was so pleased with Grierson's September raid on Hernando that he presented him with a silver-plated carbine.

In disposition, Grierson was affectionate, kind, humane, humorous and generous to a fault. He had a temper but rarely lost it and avoided arguments or controversy whenever possible. He managed his troopers with understanding and insisted on impartial treatment. Towards his enemy, he displayed coolness and courage yet insisted his men take no part in looting or searching of private homes. The ladies he encountered during his raiding expeditions found him to be, a "very pleasant gentleman." Of slight build, described as wiry and tall, Grierson's most distinguishing feature was a long facial scar, left by the childhood accident with a horse, that he attempted to cover with a full facial beard.

On April 13, while on a long awaited leave home, Grierson received a telegraph from Maj. Gen. Stephen Hurlbut, now the Federal commander at Memphis, "Return Immediately." Grierson boarded the train from Memphis to La Grange on April 16, writing to his wife; "My command is ordered to leave...you must not be alarmed should you not hear from me inside a month..." (4)

After conferring with General William Sooy Smith, commanding at La Grange, Grierson issued orders for "light rations" to his brigade, which now consisted of the Sixth and Seventh Illinois, and the second Iowa. On the beautiful spring morning of April 17, Grierson led the long column of seventeen hundred officers and men out of La Grange and headed south. Grierson himself, carried a small-scale map of plantations and Confederate storehouses, and a jew's harp in his blouse. The command met no opposition on the first day, traveling an easy thirty miles to halt just short of Ripley, Mississippi at the Ellis plantation.

Before Grierson would reach the bridge at New Albany on the 18th, four other diversionary missions were well under way. General Sooy Smith, with fifteen hundred men, marched southwest from La Grange, while five thousand men from Corinth marched east toward Tusculumbia. Another force of thirteen hundred marched out of Memphis towards Panola and Chalmer's forces, while Colonel Abel Streight marched out of Fort Henry for his raid into Alabama. While Smith's expedition was designed as a smokescreen to Grierson's raid, as was the column from Corinth, Streight's purpose was to engage and occupy Forrest far to the east of Grierson. It was obvious that Grant considered Streight's raid secondary to Grierson's, as Streight's men were mounted on mules and cast-off horses, while Grierson's troopers had drawn the best horses available. **(GR)** All expeditions served their purpose, but Streight's raid ended in disaster. Relentlessly pursued by Forrest, he was forced to fight a continuous rear guard action. Streight, at the point of exhaustion, surrendered to Forrest on May 3, 1863, at Lawrence, Alabama.

When Grierson reached the Tallahatchie, on the afternoon of the 18th, he crossed the river at three points to confuse the Confederates. A battalion of the Seventh encountered slight

opposition in crossing the bridge at Albany. The Sixth and Seventh proceeded along the road to Pontotoc, while Colonel Edward Hatch's Second Iowa traveled a route some four miles to the east.

At dawn on April 19, Grierson sent one detachment to contact Hatch, and two others north and west, while the main column moved down the muddy Pontotoc road. When Hatch and the detachment caught up with each other, they united and rode into a surprised Pontotoc. Routing a body of state troops, the captured all of the town's supplies and equipment. Grierson was now seventy miles into enemy territory and had suffered no losses.

On April 20, Grierson formed up his men for inspection, culling out 175 men that were suffering from physical ailment or the usual maladies. Dubbing themselves the "Quinine Brigade," and commanded by Major Hiram Love, they made their way back to La Grange. This force also served to create the impression that the raiders were returning to Tennessee. But Grierson was again on the move, continuing south with two Illinois regiments on the morning of the April 21. Hatch, and the 2nd Iowa, broke off eastward, with orders to cut the Mobile & Ohio Railroad at West Point and destroy roads southward before returning to La Grange.

Hatch's men reached Palo Alto on the afternoon of April 21, where they encountered the Confederate cavalymen of the 2nd Tennessee, commanded by Lt. Col. C. R. Barteau. Hatch realized he could go no further south and began retreating northward along the railroad. Hatch succeeded in destroying the rails at Okolona and Tupelo before Barteau caught up with him near Birmingham on the April 24. After a two-hour battle, Hatch retreated across Camp Creek, returning to La Grange on April 26. His diversion within a diversion was a great success, having netted him 600 horses and mules, and 100 Confederate casualties, while losing only 10 men himself. He also succeeded in pulling a strong enemy force away from Grierson's flanks.

Since Hatch had dealt with any threatening enemy, Grierson felt his 950 remaining men could gallop southward with little worries or pursuit from the rear. Grierson pushed on towards Starkville, burning government property found in the undefended town. Later in the afternoon, he urged his command towards Louisville, not allowing his command to remain idle for any longer than necessary. But before daybreak on April 22, Grierson detached a battalion on the Seventh Illinois, commanded by Major Graham, with orders to destroy a large tannery and shoe factor at Bankston.

Graham captured a startled Confederate quartermaster, along with large stores of shoes, leather, saddles and bridles destined for Vicksburg and Port Gibson. He then caught up with Grierson as they approached Louisville.

By now, Grierson knew that the Confederates must be in desperate pursuit and he needed another diversion. Again, he detached a small force, Company B of the Seventh Illinois and Captain Henry Forbes, with orders to strike the railroad at Macon, thirty miles east. Forbes was instructed to rejoin as circumstances permitted, while Grierson marched towards the Southern Mississippi Railroad at Newton.

Reaching Louisville late on the afternoon of April 22, Grierson found the townspeople had

boarded up their buildings in preparation of his arrival. Again, Grierson showed his concern for the welfare of Southern civilians by issuing strict orders; "drive out stragglers, preserve order, and quiet the fears of the people." (CW) The Federal cavalrymen passed through Louisville without incident, only to strike a dismal swamp where they lost several horses from drowning. On April 23, they moved through Philadelphia, stopping to rest at 10 o'clock that evening.

Grierson, and his main column, reached Newton Station at 6 a.m. on April 24, Colonel Blackburn, and four advance companies of the Seventh, having reached that point an hour ahead of Grierson. At Newton Station, Grierson destroyed two locomotives, 25 freight cars loaded with commissary stores and ammunition (including artillery shells bound for Vicksburg), additional stores and 500 muskets found in the town. In addition, seventy-five prisoners were taken and paroled. A weary but jubilant column of cavalry stopped at the Mackadora Plantation that evening, some fifty miles from Newton Station. Grierson knew that Newton Station had been his primary tactical objective, and from there he had complete discretion as to his route and final destination. For now, his men would receive their first rest in forty hours and nine days into their raid.

When Grierson learned that Pemberton was busy reinforcing Jackson and points eastward, he decided to move southwest, crossing the Pearl River and hitting the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad at Hazlehurst. From there, he would flank Confederate forces and join Grant at Grand Gulf. Grierson's true objective, other than destroying Pemberton's supply lines, was rapidly coming to fruition.

Pemberton, having guessed Grierson's objective, could hardly allow the enemy to freely roam behind his supply lines wreaking havoc, and was forced to divert an almost full division's worth of men to intercept the Union raiders. Pemberton further weakened the force that was soon to contend with Grant, by ordering Maj. Gen. John Bowen to detach seven Mississippi cavalry companies in pursuit of Grierson.

At 6 a.m. on April 26, the raiders set out for Raleigh, crossing the Leaf River. At Raleigh, they captured the county sheriff and confiscated \$3,000 in Confederate currency, moving onto Westville, where they stopped for the night. On April 27, Grierson's advance scouting party, dressed in Confederate uniforms and dubbed the "Butternut Guerrillas," moved ahead to seize the ferryboat on the Pearl River. Here, Forbes and his detachment caught up with Grierson and were able to rejoin the column headed for Hazelhurst.

At Hazelhurst, a string of boxcars were burned, but the flames spread to nearby buildings of the town. Grierson set his men to work alongside the townspeople, fighting to save the town of Hazelhurst. Fortunately, a hard rain fell that evening and aided in putting out the fires.

Continuing west on the 28th, a battalion was detached from the Seventh Illinois to double back and destroy rails and telegraph wire. The main column stopped at a plantation near Union Church, where they encountered their first real threat from the enemy.

News of the strike on Hazelhurst had reached Pemberton, who was trying to calm a worried Jefferson Davis; "all the cavalry I can raise is close on their rear." (UW) Pemberton then

instructed Bowen to send Colonel Wirt Adam's cavalry--Bowen's only significant mounted troops --to capture the Yankee cavalry. A scouting detachment belonging to Wirt's cavalry stumbled on Grierson's column and a sharp skirmish ensued. Considering the possibility of being overwhelmed by Confederate cavalry, Grierson decided wisely that he should head for Baton Rouge.

With the Confederates now hot on his heels, Grierson ordered Colonel Reuben Loomis and the Sixth Illinois to head westward toward Fayette, and then head southeast for Brookhaven. Upon reaching Brookhaven, Grierson took over two hundred prisoners, including sick soldiers from the local hospital. He then paroled them and fired the depot and several freight cars. Again, his men had to serve as fireman to keep the town buildings from going up in flames.

Temporarily fooled by Grierson's feint toward Fayette, Colonel Adams was now closing in on the Yankee raiders, and Colonel R. V. Richardson's Confederate cavalry was hard pushing for Brookhaven.

On April 30, Grierson resumed his march along the railroad, tearing up tracks and trestles as he went. Passing through Bogue Chitto Station, after burning 15 freight cars and the depot, the proceeded onto Summit, which they reached at sunset. Here, they destroyed 25 freight cars and a large store of government sugar.

On May 1, with Confederate forces closing in on Grierson's weary troopers, he decided it best to make a "straight line for Baton Rouge, and let speed be our safety." (CW) There was still some 76 miles to cover before reaching safety. For this reason, the towns of Magnolia and Osyka were bypassed.

Nearing Wall's Bridge across the Tickfaw River, three companies of the 9th Tennessee gave Grierson's advance scouts resistance. Grierson suffered eight casualties here (accounting for nearly all the battle losses suffered throughout the raid). But Grierson brought up his artillery and shelled the enemies position across the river, resulting in losses among the Confederates.

Captured dispatches warned Grierson that he could not afford to rest his command, and he continued to gallop southward through the night. His exhausted men and animals crossed the Amite River at William's Bridge at midnight, just two hours ahead of a heavy column of infantry and artillery. Little did Grierson know that Grant's troops had crossed the Mississippi on May 1 and were moving up to take Grand Gulf from the rear. Bowen, who had been stripped of his cavalry to pursue Grierson's raiders, would move his remaining troops to Port Gibson to intercept Grant.

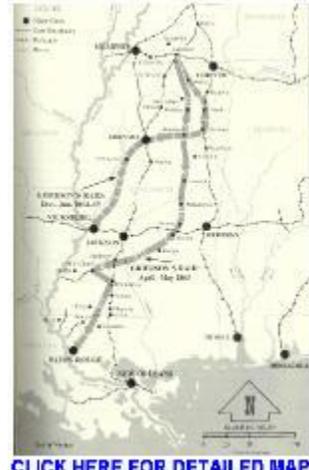
In the meantime, Grierson's men reached Sandy Creek at dawn on May 2, capturing an unsuspecting cavalry unit camped there. The camp, 150 tents, guns and ammunition were destroyed before Grierson moved on to the Comite River. At Robert's Ford, 40 more Confederates and horses were captured. But the long hours in the saddle had finally taken their toll and both men and animals could go no further without rest.

Six miles short of Baton Rouge, Grierson called a halt near a plantation house. Here, his men

slept alongside the road in the first rest they had had in twenty-eight hours. Possessing great stamina, Grierson found a piano in the nearby plantation house and sat down to play, with the Woodward family in attendance. His playing was abruptly interrupted by an anxious scout informing him that enemy cavalry was approaching. Grierson knew better and personally rode out to meet the advancing force, shaking hands with an astonished Captain J. Franklin Godfrey from Baton Rouge.

Filthy, and bone-weary, Grierson and his troopers were escorted into the city of Baton Rouge at 3 p.m.. Though thoroughly exhausted, Grierson agreed to parade his column around the town square, greeted by cheering civilians and soldiers.

Traveling more than 600 miles in 16 days, with little rest or sleep, Grierson's raiders had captured 500 Confederates, killed or wounded another 100, destroyed more than 50 miles of railroad and telegraph, 3,000 stands of arms and thousands of dollars worth of supplies and property. Over 1,000 mules and horses were captured, in addition to tying up all of Pemberton's cavalry, one-third of his infantry and several regiments of artillery. Grierson suffered, including Hatch's losses, total casualties of 36.



A most unlikely warrior, and music teacher turned soldier, suddenly found himself thrust into the role of a hero, writing to his wife; "I, like Byron, have had to wake up one morning and find myself famous." (CW) Grierson's picture was featured on the covers of *Harper's Weekly* and *Leslie's Illustrated*. He was breveted to brigadier general and later major general of volunteers.

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HIGHER EDUCATION IN LA GRANGE

(This painting of La Grange Presbyterian College is by Dr. Paul Tudor Jones, who was Pastor Emeritus of the Idlewild Presbyterian Church in Memphis. Dr. Jones was a native of Corinth, MS.)

The first documented school in La Grange (although there was probably instruction earlier) was a Female Private Seminary advertised in the October 10, 1834 issue of the Tipton County newspaper, Randolph Recorder; Spelling, reading, writing and French will be taught...Mrs. Johnson to instruct on the piano forte...Drawing and Painting will be superintended by Mrs. Anderson". Trustees for this school were Thomas Booth, George H. Wyatt, John Anderson, Haywood Johnson and Charles Michie. In 1837, Reverend Samuel G. Litton of the Episcopal Church, advertised a Female Boarding and Day School at La Grange in the October 14th Somerville Reporter.

The first known school for males was the Synodical College in existence as early as 1839. Ninety-one citizens signed a petition to the Legislature in 1839 (Petition #152-1839-6) protesting the sale of liquor "within 3 miles of the La Grange Synodical College."

The La Grange Female College was holding exercises in December of 1846. The La Grange Female Institute was advertised in the Memphis Daily Eagle and Enquirer on March 22, 1853. Superintendent James Nicholson Cocke and his wife were in charge of this school. The La Grange Military Academy was in operation in the late 1850's and early 1860's. A.W. Lanier was principal of the La Grange Male Academy in 1872.

LA GRANGE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

(Etching from Harper's Weekly, December 20, 1862)

In the spring of 1855, La Belle Village (as the town was also known) was in the midst of preparations for building a new brick Synodical College under the sponsorship of the Memphis Presbyterian Synod. The building committee was made up of John Walker Jones, Robert Locke, J. L. Pulliam, Hugh H. Falls (who built Chantilly), and Charles S. Palmore. The architect was R. Fletcher. In the early fall, Rev. John H. Gray, D.D., pastor of the Beale St. Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis had been unanimously chosen as president. Citizens of the town had collected subscriptions of \$40,000 by December and L. B. Gaston (of Mississippi) assisted in raising a subscription of \$20,000. The college was taken over by Federal troops during the Civil War who used it as a hospital and partially tore it down to get material with which to build barracks (This war claim was not settled by the government until around the turn of the century).

LA GRANGE FEMALE COLLEGE

(Photo is courtesy of Collection of Allen H. Cogbill)

The most successful educational facility ever built in the town, however, was the La Grange Female College, founded about 1854. Completed in 1856, containing about 25 rooms, it was built at a cost of \$27,000 on a lot known as the Holcombe lots bought by John Hunt from Thomas Booth and deeded in 1858 to the college for \$3,000 by Charles W. Hunt. Its first president was professor David Bancroft Johnson who died shortly after the college opened. Professor John D. Meredith, who had earlier been in Macon, TN, had a connection with this college in the 1858-1867 time period. The college closed during the war, reopened and continued operating for a long time. Later, the building was used as a public school until it burned in 1921.

(Photo is courtesy of Collection of Allen H. Cogbill)

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The following excerpt is reprinted from: "The Collierville Star," a newspaper for Collierville, Tennessee and her tributary country; original article is dated November 24, 1900, Volume IX, No. 47 (no byline given).

**A TERRIBLE CYCLONE --
Carrying Death and Destruction In Its Wake...
75 People Killed. Two Distinct Storms.**

Two of the most disastrous storms ever witnessed in Tennessee and Mississippi, passed near Collierville last Tuesday evening. One at 4 o'clock, and the another following in its track at [not legible].

LA GRANGE ALMOST SWEEP AWAY

A Star reporter visited La Grange, Tenn., a pretty little town 25 miles east of Collierville and found it almost completely destroyed. Out of nine business houses of the place, five were wrecked by the winds, scattering the goods of each [not legible].

Mr. Walter Moody, manager of the Pankey and Gaither Plow Company just across the street from the depot, was blown from a window of the factory and instantly killed. His body was found two hundred yards from the building. The factory was totally destroyed.

An old negro woman by the name of Sarah Green, was killed in the wreckage of her house, which stood in a few yards of the demolished factory. No other deaths were reported at that place.

Most of the dwellings and business houses of this ill-fated town will be rebuilt.

Three churches -- the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian -- were blown to the ground and pieces of them scattered for miles around.

A Star reporter interviewed Mr. A.D. Lewis of the Presbyterian church, who said "I think our people will rebuild, though our loss is great," and Mr. T.J. Shelton, of the Baptist church informed us that the membership was very small there and he did not think they would be able to rebuild. The loss of the church was at least \$2,000. The Rev. B.B. Thomas said to our reporter:

"My parsonage and my family had a close call, but thank God we are all safe. The cyclone missed my parsonage only six feet. I measured the width of the track of the storm today, and it was exactly 175 yards. I stood on my back porch and saw it coming. It sounded like the roaring of a thousand trains..."

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If you have any historical information, photographs, news clippings, etc., that you would like to share with us regarding La Grange and its history, please let us know, as we are striving to complete our historical picture and its story.

Email to: townoflagrange@comcast.net