

They Were There

by

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Next year (2014) marks the 150th anniversary of Price's Raid into Missouri and the Battle of Pilot Knob. To honor and remember those who participated, our newsletter will tell some of their stories over the next several editions. If you have a story from someone who was there, please consider sharing it. Please email your story to jabney@hughes.net or mail it to John Abney, P.O. Box 183, Ironton, MO 63650

Joshua and David Crockett Mason

This is the story of service by a father and son during the Civil War. As undoubtedly happened to thousands of others during the war, circumstances would conspire to impact their lives. One would be wounded at the Battle of Pilot Knob and the other would die while fighting off Confederate soldiers during Ewing's retreat after that battle.

Joshua Mason was born in Hyde County, North Carolina on 30 September 1809.¹ Joshua and his wife, Marina Ann (Jarvis) would have nine children with all but one of these being born in White County, Tennessee.² The family moved to what would become Iron County in 1852 and Joshua would be one of the organizers of the Pleasant Grove United Baptist Church (near Goodwater) in 1856.³

With the coming of the Civil War, one of Joshua's sons, 18 year-old David Crockett Mason, enlisted in the 12th regiment of the Missouri State Militia

(MSM) Cavalry on 6 March 1862 at Ironton.⁴ The 12th would later transition to the 3rd MSM and young David would rise to the rank of Sergeant while serving at places all around southeastern Missouri.⁵

On 7 January 1864, while still in the service, David Mason married Amanda Jane Gillam at the home of her father near Webster (now called Palmer), in Washington County, Missouri.⁶ The newlyweds would live at the home of his father in Iron County for three months after his discharge from the 3rd MSM on 11 February 1864, before moving to near Webster in Washington County.⁷



Joshua Mason

On 28 June 1864, the commander of Union Forces in Missouri, Major General William Rosecrans, issued General Order 107.⁸ The order sought to reorganize the state's Enrolled Missouri Militia

¹ Donald L. Mason, "Joshua and Marina Ann (Jarvis) Mason", *Past and Present: A History of Iron County, Missouri 1857-1994, Vol I*, (Ironton, Missouri: Iron County Historical Society, 2004), 297.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 298.

⁴ Compiled service records of volunteer Union soldiers who served in organizations from the State of Missouri, NARA M405, roll 733, carded records of David C. Mason, Sgt., Co. M., 3rd Missouri State Militia Cavalry. Digital image, (www.fold3.com: accessed 1 April 2013).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Marriage entry of David C. Mason and Amanda Gillam, Washington County Marriages Book C (1861-1884), Recorder of Deeds, Potosi, Missouri (microfilm copy (MF#143), Washington County Public Library, Potosi, Missouri), 36. and Widow's pension application of Amanda J. Gillam #191,710, Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁷ Compiled service records and Widow's pension application.

⁸ Official Record (OR), Series I, Vol. 34, part 4, p. 581-582.

(EMM) against continuing Confederate threats and called upon each county to form “one or two companies of about 100 men each, selected for courage, energy, and willingness to serve for the protection of your respective counties.”⁹

Citizens from parts of Washington and Iron counties formed a company of this new provisional militia and elected Andrew J. Harris as the company’s Captain and Joshua Mason as the company’s Lieutenant.¹⁰

Because of his prior service, David Mason volunteered to help drill the new militia company which was then at nearby Webster.¹¹ With Price’s forces already in Missouri, the elder Mason was sent to Pilot Knob sometime around the 24th of September to obtain provisions for the militia company.¹² Unfortunately for Joshua, his arrival in Pilot Knob corresponded with the arrival of Price’s forces in the Arcadia Valley.¹³

Taking shelter in Fort Davidson, Joshua took part in the ensuing battle until he was wounded by a Confederate sniper.¹⁴ Describing the actions of Mason, the Rev. D. A. Wilson who was nearby said that Mason was,

... taking deliberate aim with his squirrel rifle, when a ball cut through his rather abundant flesh of his throat and the blood spurted in a stream as large as the orifice made by the bullet. His chief concern

seemed to be his shirt, for he leaned over and still over until he was actually on all fours. At the rate the blood was flowing, he must have bled to death in a minute. Seeing his critical case, I went to him saying, “My man, you must hold up your head.” I reined him up, and led him behind an earthwork. Laying him there with his head raised, I tied my red silk handkerchief round his neck. As the bleeding was staunched, I saw no more of him until going to the hospital about nine o’clock that night.¹⁵

When Ewing’s forces retreated from Fort Davidson in the early hours of 28 September, Mason was left behind at the hospital.¹⁶ He stayed at the hospital for nearly three days until he was warned by a friend, who was also a Rebel sympathizer, that the “Rebels were looking for him.”¹⁷ He slipped out of the hospital under the cover of darkness and, after three days of travel, made his way back home some 35 miles away.¹⁸

When General Ewing’s forces reached Caledonia on the morning of the 28th, they found their way to the north blocked by General Shelby’s Confederate forces moving south towards Pilot Knob.¹⁹ With both the north and south now blocked as avenues of escape, they turned west on the Webster road and reached Webster late that evening.²⁰

The retreating members of Ewing’s force were greeted upon their arrival by a number of the local population and General Ewing made it known that they planned on staying there till the next morning.²¹ While it’s possible that David Mason and the members of the Washington County militia

⁹ Ibid., 582.

¹⁰ Soldiers’ Records: War of 1812 – World War I, entries for Harris’ Washington County Provisional Company E.M.M., Digital images (<http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/soldiers/>: accessed 1 April 2013).

¹¹ Widow’s pension application.

¹² Dr. J. R. Adams, letter to C. A. Peterson, 9 November 1905, Box 2, Folder 10, Battle of Pilot Knob Research Collection, 1862-1914, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis, Missouri, 1, 2.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Rev. D. A. Wilson, Personal Recollection of the Battle of Pilot Knob, 6 July 1906, Box 8, Folder 8, Battle of Pilot Knob Research Collection, 1862-1914, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis, Missouri, 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 7, 8.

¹⁶ Adams, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2, 3.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹ Cyrus A. Peterson & Joseph M. Hanson, *Pilot Knob The Thermopylae of the West* (1914; reprint, Independence, Missouri: Two Trails Publishing, 2000), 203.

²⁰ Ibid., 215.

²¹ Ibid., 226.

company were part of that crowd that greeted Ewing's troops on their arrival, it has not been verified. What is known is that General Ewing had no intention of spending the entire night at Webster and that he didn't trust the loyalty of all the civilians in the area. Ewing and his troops resumed their retreat towards Leasburg at around midnight.²²

David's wife Amanda was now more than eight months pregnant with their daughter Ollie who would be born the following month on 10 October.²³ On the evening of 28 September, Amanda Mason was at the home of her uncle, Solomon Gillam, located about half a mile from Webster.²⁴ David was hesitant to leave her, but made plans, along with other members of the militia company to leave on the morning of the 29th with General Ewing's forces.²⁵ David, along with Captain Harris, Solomon Gillam, Pete Welker, and Jonas Tennyson stayed the night at Solomon Gillam's home.²⁶

At around dawn the next morning, the 29th, as the men were leaving, they were fired upon by a group of Confederate soldiers. All the members of the militia company that stayed at Gillam's house were killed.²⁷ Describing the scene, Amanda stated:

I was right there at uncle Sol's house and heard the shooting and pretty soon these rebels were in the house. They left the bodies and they were brought in. I swooned when I saw the corpse of my husband.... My mother, my aunt Polly Ann Gillam and [David] Crockett's own sister, Sallie, carried these bodies into the house of my uncle Sol's and they lay there on the floor until the afternoon of the next day when they were buried by these women and Crockett's uncle, Jim Mason, and an old man, some other old man

whose name was Duncan, I think, the other men all being gone.²⁸

Joshua Mason recovered from his wounds. He served as the clerk of the church he helped to found for some 35 years and also served a four year term as one of the judges of the Iron County Court.²⁹ Joshua died on 13 June 1898.³⁰

Author's note: The Civil War impacted our country in ways both large and small. Paraphrasing the noted Civil War historian, the late Shelby Foote, before the war, it was grammatically correct to say "the United States are..." as most people thought of our country as a group of states. After the war, that changed and we now say "the United States is." Besides making us an "is" the war impacted almost every American family, both north and south. For those that say that the Civil War has no impact on us today, I would point them to the story of David Crockett Mason and his wife Amanda. You see, Amanda was my great-great-grandmother. Had there not been a battle at Pilot Knob, had General Ewing not been able to escape, had Ewing's retreating forces been stopped before turning on to the Webster road at Caledonia, had David. Mason and members of the local militia stayed in Webster that night, Mason would not have died on the morning of 29 September 1864. Without his death, Amanda wouldn't have gotten remarried to my great-great grandfather James Midgett and their four children, along with all their descendants including me, would have never been born.



²² Ibid.

²³ Widow's pension application.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Widow's pension application.

²⁹ Donald L. Mason, 298 and Dr. J. R. Adams, 4.

³⁰ Dr. J. R. Adams, 1.