

Roots in Ripon

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Maximilian's Men

Unless you're a Civil War buff you won't know who Maximilian is, and even then, you may not. It's stories like this that keep me intrigued with the history of our nation's bloodiest conflict.

The War of Northern Aggression as Southerners like to sometimes refer to the Civil War, was a slug-fest for most of four years before the outcome was determined. But even after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant there were numerous Southern combat units that either had not received word yet of the surrender, or they chose not to surrender and continued to carry the fight to the enemy.

Among the groups and units that chose to ignore the surrender of the South are names you might be familiar with such as Quantrill and his raiders. But here's a listing of the Confederate forces that surrendered as they realized the War was over. *"While the war in the East was over, there were still Confederate armies under arms elsewhere. When Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox he only surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia. The Confederacy itself could not surrender because by now there was no 'Confederacy.' Richmond had fallen, the government officials had fled, and many of the papers had been burned. It would be up to each commander in the field to surrender his army as the news from the East reached him."* (<http://civilwarhome.com/confederatesurrender.htm>).

First, of course, is General Lee meeting General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia on April 9, 1865. The two generals met and discussed the terms of surrender. Once settled, it is touching the manner in which these two warriors honored each other. They had served together prior to the War and had respect for each other's military prowess and character. *"Riding back to his lines, Lee was swarmed by his adoring troops, many nearly hysterical with grief. Trying to soothe them with quiet phrases—'You have done all your duty.' 'Leave the results to God...' -- he rode slowly on, followed by many who wept and implored him to say that they should fight on. The next day he issued his eloquent farewell to his army. On the morning of 11 April, following a Spartan breakfast and tearful good-byes from his staff, the general mounted his warhorse, Traveler, and with a Union honor guard left Appomattox for home."*

As word made its way west that the War was in effect over, various Confederate forces surrendered their commands to Federal commanders. General Joseph E. Johnston met with Major General William T. Sherman in North Carolina to hammer out the surrender of Johnston's army on April 26.

In Alabama, Lieutenant General Richard Taylor surrendered to Major general E.R.S. Canby on May 4.

Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Confederate forces, was still fighting the war well through the month of May. Even

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after hearing that Lee had surrendered, and that Richmond had fallen, Kirby was still attempting to rally forces to carry on the fight. He rode to Houston to see if he could get support for his efforts in rallying a remnant of forces only to hear that morale was so low that there was no longer a Trans-Mississippi Army. However, *"Not all of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates went home. Some 2,000 fled into Mexico; most of them went alone or in squad-sized groups, but one body numbered 300. With them, mounted on a mule, wearing a calico shirt and silk kerchief, sporting a revolver strapped to his hip and a shotgun on his saddle, was Smith."*

The last Confederate commander to surrender was Brigadier General Stand Watie, leader of the Confederate Indians. Watie was also a chief of the Cherokee Nation. Other Indian nations that were part of the Confederate Indians besides the Cherokee were the Creek, Seminole, and the Osage. *"Dedicated to the Confederate cause and unwilling to admit defeat, [Brig. Gen. Watie] kept his troops in the field for nearly a month after Lt. Gen. E. Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi May 26."* On June 23 Watie surrendered his forces to Federal authorities.

All of this is to lay the groundwork for the next article where I will introduce you to those Southerners who continued to fight the War, and to be introduced to Maximilian and his men.