First Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.)
LRT Talking Points – December 14, 2023
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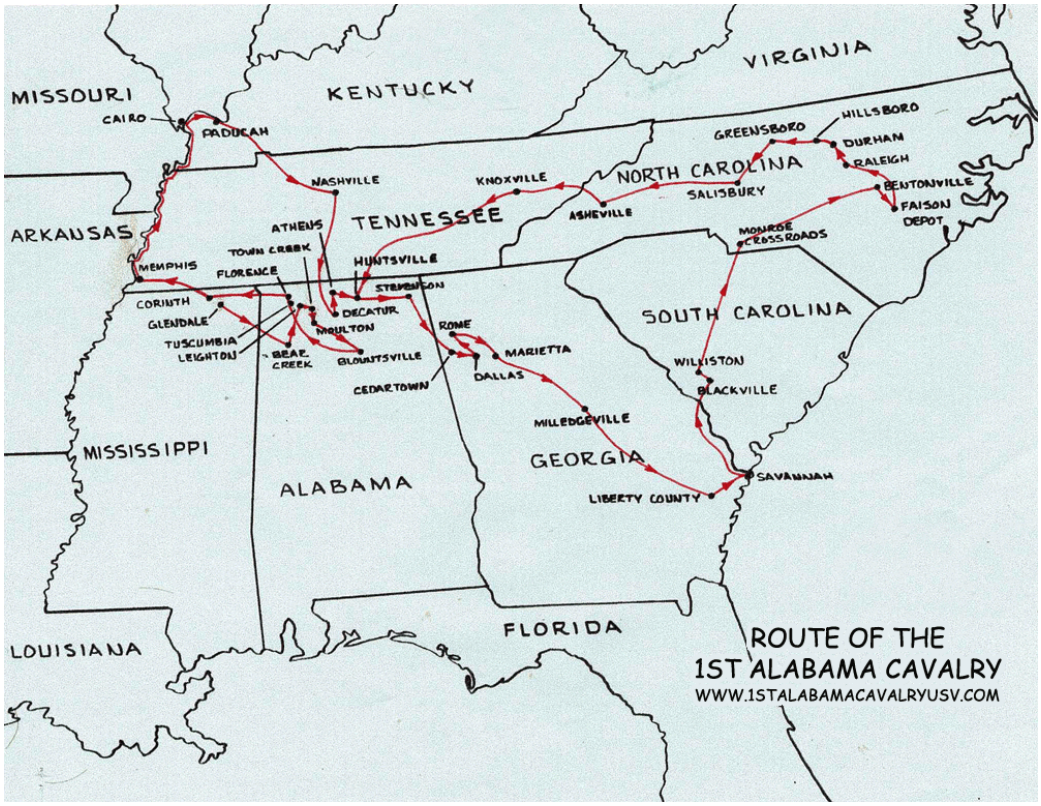
BACKGROUND - The 1st Alabama Cavalry Regiment was a cavalry regiment recruited from Southern Unionists that served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. It was the only predominantly-white Union regiment from Alabama. Of the 2,678 white Alabamians who enlisted in the Union Army, 2,066 served in the 1st Alabama Cavalry.

The 1st Alabama Cavalry was raised from Alabama Unionists at Huntsville, Alabama and Memphis, Tennessee in October 1862 after Federal troops occupied the area. It was attached to the XVI Corps in various divisions until November 1864, when it became part of the XV Corps. During this time, its duties primarily consisted of scouting, raiding, reconnaissance, flank guard, and providing screening to the infantry while on the march.



Much of the men who would ultimately service with the regiment were recruited south of the Tennessee River, often in Winston County (which included much of what is now Cullman County) by Colonel Abel Streight in August 1862. The unit initially called the 1st Regiment, West Tennessee Cavalry formally becoming a unit in Memphis, Tennessee, as Huntsville was no longer under Federal control by early September 1862 - the first occupation lasting less than five months.

Most of the troopers were assigned to the Army of the Tennessee. However, Companies I and K were retained with Colonel Streight's command in the Army of the Cumberland. These companies accompanied him on his infamous raid in April and early May 1863.

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Three members of the Penn family (James, Pleasant, and Richard) were assigned to Company I during Streight's Raid. The Penn farm would serve as the site of Streight's camp just before they ascended Brindley Mountain at Day's Gap, NW of present-day Cullman. Their mother, Esther Penn, was a Day, daughter of the Gap's namesake. Two of the three brothers would ultimately become prisoners of General Nathan B. Forrest's troopers at Lawrence, Alabama, after Streight was forced to surrender.

Later, the regiment would be selected by Major General William T. Sherman to be his escort as he began his famous 1864 March to the Sea. It was assigned to the Third Division of the Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi, in January 1865. This special duty did not mean the 1st would not see battle. Soon after entering North Carolina, at Monroe's Crossroads, the regiment was surprised at dawn while still in camp by Confederate cavalry under Generals Joseph Wheeler and Wade Hampton. Bloody hand-to-hand fighting resulted lasting more than three hours. On the last-minute appearance of a section of field artillery tipping the balance for the Alabamians allowing them to drive the Rebels from their camp and holding them at bay until additional help arrived. When the smoke finally cleared, the 1st and two other regiments numbering 800 men of the Third Brigade of General Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry division had routed over 5,000 Southerners inflicting 103 dead and scores others wounded, missing or captured. Union losses in comparison were 18 dead, 70 wounded and 105 missing.

Judson "Kill Cavalry" Kilpatrick

It went on to participate in the battle of Bentonville, North Carolina and was present at the surrender of the Confederate General Joseph E. Johnson's Army of Tennessee at the Bennett Place effectively ending Sherman's March to the Sea.

Afterwards, in June 1865, the regiment was sent back to the District of Northern Alabama, Department of the Cumberland. The regiment was mustered out of service at Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama, on October 20, 1865, with only 397 men present. Out of the 2,000-

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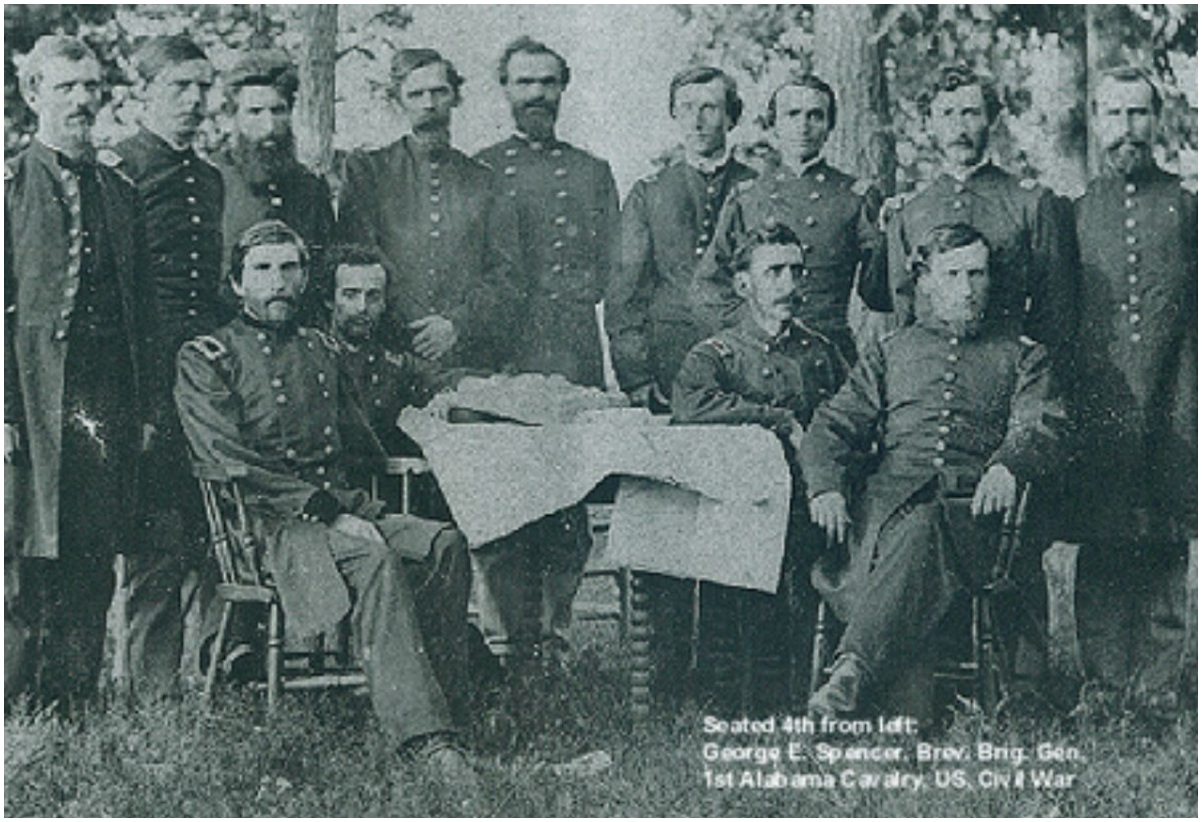
plus men who served in the unit during the war, 345 were killed in action, died in prison of disease or other non-battle causes, 88 were captured, and 279 deserted, with no accurate count of wounded.



Casualties (estimate

- Killed and mortally wounded: 5 officers, 482 enlisted men
- Died of disease: 1 officer, 13 enlisted men
- Wounded: 2 officers, 450 enlisted men
- Total: 8 officers, 945 enlisted men

Books on the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.)

- Butler, Clayton J. (2022). *True Blue: White Unionists in the Deep South during the Civil War and Reconstruction. LSU Press.* ISBN 9780807177549.
- Hoole, William Stanley. *Alabama Tories: The First Alabama Cavalry, U.S.A., 1862-1865* (Tuscaloosa, 1960)
- Rein, Christopher M. *Alabamians in Blue: Freedmen, Unionists, and the Civil War in the Cotton State* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2019)
- Sean Michael O'Brien (1999). *Mountain Partisans: Guerrilla Warfare in the Southern Appalachians, 1861-1865*. Praeger. p. 92.

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- Willett, Jr., Robert L. (1999). *The Lightning Mule Brigade: Abel Streight's 1863 Raid into Alabama.* Pp. 232. Carmel: Guild Press of Indiana. ISBN 978-1-57860-025-0.

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Question #1 – What was the role of Northern Alabama in the Alabama vote to secede from the Union?

When the gathering dark clouds of war and the cry for secession were all-encompassing throughout South and in Northwest Alabama in particular in the spring of 1861, the voices of dissent were loud in Northern Alabama. While there some eager to fight for a newly created secessionist government, there were many others who considered an impending war as a wicked, treasonous undertaking and wanted no part of it.

Indeed, a majority located in the hills of Northwest Alabama, mostly poor yeoman dirt farmers, had little value or reason in taking up arms against the federal government. These hill folks realized quite early on they did not consider it their fight viewing it was landed gentry and plantation owners and their political spokesmen who were fanning the flames and talking the loudest of leaving the Union. With their money, property and political power, it was the wealthy planters who felt the most threatened by the election of Abraham Lincoln as president.

The "*Black Republican"* Lincoln, the planters claimed, would mongrelize the races. He would destroy everything they built as a finer civilization. Southern women, they charged, would not be safe from roving gangs of black thieves. The only course of action, they contended, was to fight to protect their very way of life, to secede and create a government that would protect their interests, protect their property rights, and protect that "*peculiar institution*"—aka slavery.

But in the rugged landscape of northern Alabama, slaves were few and far between. The same was true in the mountains of East Tennessee and North Georgia and western North Carolina, and western Virginia, which would later become a state because of its overwhelming anti-confederate sentiment.

Few slaves were owned in the upland South, simply because the land would not support a plantation economy. Those who did work the land in the mountain South were a fiercely independent breed, poor but proud, and of no mind to lend support to plantation owners who looked down upon them as uneducated and inferior.

Winston County resident James B. Bell, a farmer who owned no slaves, was typical of an Alabama unionist. He blamed secession on large *"Negroholders."* In a letter to his pro-confederate son in Mississippi on April 21, 1861, he wrote. *"All they [slave holders] want is to git you pupt up and go fight for there infurnal negroes and after you do there fighting you may kiss there hine parts for o [all] they care."*

Southern unionists were not threatened by Lincoln's election but saw him more as a blank slate. They were willing to give him a chance as president and did not see the federal government as any threat to their property rights.

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If the inhabitants of the upland South were willing to give a new president the benefit of the doubt, they revered a former president. This was a man who had led their fathers and grandfathers against wild Indians and who tamed the land. He made their very existence here possible. President Andrew Jackson, *"Old Hickory"* was seen as a man of the people. He was also a staunch unionist who warned the Southern aristocracy years before that any talk of busting up the union was madness and any actions to do so would be punished severely.

At a time when the country was about to go war, many Alabama unionists spoke about how President Jackson would have dealt with secession by hanging the ringleaders and crushing the rebellion before it got started.

Indeed, Jackson warned South Carolina on Dec. 10, 1832 that he was prepared to do just that.

"Are you really ready to incur its guilt? If you are, on the heads of the instigators of the act be the dreadful consequences; on their heads be the dishonor, but on yours may fall the punishment. On your unhappy State will inevitably fall the evils of the conflict you force upon the Government of your country. It can not accede to the mad project of disunion, of which you would be the first victims."

And many Alabama unionists would remember the parting words of their fathers and grandfathers who served with Jackson, and who sensed years before that a war over secession could erupt. The old veterans would warn on their deathbeds to be loyal to the *"Old Flag."* And their words were remembered and taken to heart.

So strong was union sentiment in North Alabama and East Tennessee that it was proposed that North Alabama join with unionist East Tennessee to form the loyal state of *Nickajack*.

The people of Winston County, Alabama, hill farmers of modest means, were typical of southern unionists. In 1860, Winston County was the poorest county in Alabama. The per capita value of property was $168 and the county ranked last in cotton production and slaveholding, with only 2 percent of the families owning slaves.

They were largely an isolated mountain people who had little influence on state government. They knew full well that the aristocracy viewed them as socially inferior and saw the impending conflict as "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

It would eventually come to that but only after the southern unionists proclaimed their neutrality. For the most part, the hill people wanted to be left alone, to sit the war out.

But the authorities in Montgomery would have none of it. Montgomery took a dim view to these unionists when they flocked to the riverside to profess their support to arriving gunboats on the Tennessee River in Florence and Decatur. Shortly thereafter, Gov. John Gill Shorter warned that if requisitions made upon the state for volunteers were not duly met by the hill people, then a draft would be ordered on the delinquent counties.

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"…in case a draft should be ordered, the Western portion of Walker – And the whole of Winston County will be among the first included, as it is notorious that they have not furnished anything like their proportion of volunteers," the governor wrote.

On January 7, 1861, Alabama Governor Andrew B. Moore called delegates from Alabama to Montgomery for a convention to debate the Articles of Secession. Delegates from South Alabama wanted the convention delegates to determine the vote, while northern delegates wanted the issue put to a popular vote. Because the apportionment of delegates to the convention was based on total population (including slaves), the Southern delegates effectively voted "on behalf" of the African-American slaves, who made up a large proportion of the population in the region. The results of the poll determined that the balance of power would shift to the North, where the population was mostly white.

Ultimately, the Alabama Ordinance of Secession was passed by a vote of 61 to 39, split along geographic lines, on January 11,1861. In addition to Nickajack, Winston County, Alabama, threatened to form its own Free State of Winston. These threats of internal separation never materialized, but men in the region fiercely resisted conscription into the Confederate Army, with many joining the Union Army.

Question #2 – Why was there such a strong Union sentiment in the northern counties in Alabama?

In war it's helpful if soldiers learn to hate the enemy, something the citizens of a democracy aren't normally brought up to do. In the case of the 1st Alabama Cavalry, United States Volunteers (U.S.V.), however, hatred for their enemy wasn't something learned under fire. Soldiers of the regiment brought their hatred for secession, and secessionists with them to the battlefield. Their blue uniforms clothed a red fury at the state government and its citizens that sought to coerce them into the Confederate army. These minions harassed and brutalized their families, drove them from their homes into the Alabama hills, then into Union lines, and at last into the ranks of the U.S. Army.

In an irony not lost on modern historians, the Confederacy, created to preserve the principle of states' rights over the primacy of the central government, instituted the first wartime draft in American history. Passed by the Confederate Congress April 16, 1862, the Conscription Act imposed manpower quotas on the individual states. Every able-bodied white male between the ages of 18 and 35 was subject to military service. Each state was required to produce a certain number of men for the Confederate armies. If a state's quota wasn't filled by volunteers, the men must be conscripted.

The hill people found themselves in a quandary, unwilling to fight for the Confederacy and unable to remain neutral, many voted with their feet taking to the hills, caves and caverns they knew well hiding from Southern conscription parties. Of course, volunteering fell far short of the numbers required. Frustrated at the refusal of these *"Tories"* to see the light, Governor Frank Shorter of Alabama sent conscription parties, most composed of Home Guards, into the northern counties

with leave and license to coerce their reluctant neighbors into the Confederate army. To refuse meant jail at the very least, and, quite possibly, death.

To make matters worse, through much of the war north Alabama was occupied by the forces of both sides, and groups of bushwhackers, many of them deserters from both armies, sprang up to prey on the people. Farms were burned, livestock, goods and money looted, and murder was not uncommon. Little wonder, then, that these men, set upon in every conceivable way by their fellow citizens, chose to take up arms and return the favor.

Slowly, by ones, twos, and handfuls, the north Alabama men filtered into the Union lines around Corinth, Mississippi and Memphis, Tennessee. By the middle of 1862, Union forces also occupied Decatur, Huntsville, and Nashville.

Although generally unknown today, all eleven states of the old Confederacy, including Alabama, had expatriate sons who fought in Union blue. Strong ties to the *"Old Flag"* existed in the South, mostly in the hill country where few owned slaves. They had no wish to fight what they saw as a planters' war to preserve slavery and the political and economic power that went with it.

Unionist feeling in Alabama was strongest in the northern half of the state and, while centered in Winston County, was heavy throughout the region. The 1st Alabama Cavalry, U.S. Volunteers (U.S.V.) was the military result of that anti-secession feeling.

Question #3 – What was the proposed state of *Nickajack*?

So strong was Union sentiment in Northern Alabama and Eastern Tennessee that it was proposed the two regions combine to form a new loyal state. This area known as *Nickajack* generally refers to the loosely defined region rugged Appalachian foothills in East Tennessee and northeastern Alabama where public sentiment adhered more strongly to the Union. The name *"Nickajack"* is a corruption of a Cherokee word which translates to Coosa Town, but more likely references Koasati Town.

In the period leading up to the American Civil War, there had been increasing talk of secession by the politicians representing the interests of wealthy plantation owners in the Black Belt that stretched across central and southern Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Citizens in the more mountainous regions of North Alabama and East Tennessee, where slave ownership was less common, often remained in favor of the Union, believing, as some said at the time, that rebellion would become *"a war for the rich, fought by the poor."* A proposal arose, should Tennessee and Alabama attempt to secede, that adjacent territories in North Alabama and East Tennessee secede from their respective states and join into a new state called *Nickajack* that remained within the Union joined at the southeast corner of Kentucky. Nothing became of the idea, although Winston County, Alabama discussed secession. The area's reputation as the Free State of Winston persists and was mentioned in the bestselling novel *'To Kill a Mockingbird.'*

Question #4 – What came of the meeting at Looney's Tavern?

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Located along Winston County 41 approximately 3.5 miles north of Addison at a placed called Inmanfield. Meeting held July 4, 1861 by parties opposed to succession. It was at this location that a resolution was accepted which, in effect, called for the "Free State of Winston." The meeting was the result of a series of serious and unfortunate circumstances ending with the passage of the Secession Ordinances on January 11, 1861, by the Convention meeting in Montgomery. The northern counties of Alabama opposed succession and, in fact, there had been discussion of several northern Alabama counties leaving the state and forming a new state called *Nickajack*. This they never did, but the discussions lead to a meeting held around June 1, 1861 at Houston, then the county seat of Winston County, by prominent citizens of the county and surrounding counties. At this meeting definite plans for a future convention was made and it was decided that Looneys Tavern would be the site.

On July 4, 1861, 2,500-3,000 persons from a dozen northern counties and some from as far away as Georgia, Tennessee and Mississippi converged on the site. The resolutions accepted at this meeting stated: *"We agree . . . that no state can legally get out of the Union, but if we are mistaken in this, and a state can lawfully and legally secede or withdraw, being part of the State, by the same process of reasoning, a county could cease to be a part of the State."* It was this resolution that caused *"Uncle"* Dick Payne (Richard Elliott Payne), one of the few Confederate sympathizers present, to shout *"Oh, Oh, Winston seceded! The Free State of Winston*." **NOTE:** Served as a Private in Company D "Capt H. B. Irwin's Company", 27th Regiment Alabama Infantry under Longstreet. March 22, 1826 to March 25, 1900; buried in Pine Torch Cemetery, Lawrence County AL.

The resolutions went on to request that both the Confederacy and the Union allow the people of Winston County to work out their own political and financial destiny in the hills and mountains of North Alabama. They stated that they felt the South had made a mistake *"when the bolted the convention and the Democratic Party, resulting in the election of Mr. Lincoln."* And an even greater mistake when they attempted to secede and set up a new government. However, they did not want to take up arms against their neighbors, but neither did they want to fight against the County of their forefathers.

While it is true that the people of Winston County opposed secession and elected officials who would not cooperate with State and Confederate officials and that many of those of military age refused to serve in the Confederate army, there is no evidence to substantiate the idea that the county actually seceded from the State or that the resolutions adopted at Looney's Tavern had any legal bearing.

Nonetheless, Governor "Shorter" interpreted the resolutions as treasonable and stated that, *"Everyone who participated in the convention is a traitor to the state and to the South and should of possible be arrested."* Although several men were escorted men who wished to join the Union Army to their lines, the most famous was William Bauck "Bill" Looney, a school teacher before the war and owner of Looney's Tavern. He earned the name the *"Black Fox"* by the Rebels for

the skill he used to elude their grasp. William Looney was also a scout and carried recruits across enemy territory to enlist in the Union Army. Credited for bringing more than 2500 Confederate deserters and more than 500 men who never served in the Confederate army to the Union lines to enlist. He was awarded a special pension by congress for his service

Question #5 – Beside the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.), what other Union regiments contained with Northern Alabamians?

The regiment was formed in October 1862 in Huntsville and Memphis, and mustered into Federal service that December in Corinth, Mississippi. Company officers were chosen from among the men and Captain George E. Spencer was later named Colonel and given overall command. The "1st" was one of six Union regiments from Alabama, the only cavalry unit, and its ranks contained both whites and blacks. The other five were infantry and artillery units raised during the war, were composed of ex-slaves, and officially called "African Descent" regiments.

During the war over two thousand loyal Alabamians would serve in the 1st Alabama: farmers, mechanics, traders and others, from 35 counties of Alabama and eight other Confederate states. They ranged in age from as young as 15 years to as old as 60. Some, young and old, lied about their ages in order to enlist. There were also men from the border states of Kentucky and Missouri, from seven northern states, and from eight foreign countries. The First Alabama Cavalry one of nine Union Alabama-related regiments from that had Alabamians in their ranks; whites and blacks, both freemen and slave. To some degree, the "1st" was diversity 130 years before it became *"politically correct."*

The others raised during the course of the war were the 1st Regiment, Tennessee-Alabama Independent Vidette Cavalry; 54th (originally 2nd Reg. Ala. Inf. (A.D.),, 55th (originally 1st Reg. Ala. Inf. (A.D.), 56th (originally 3rd Reg. Ala. Inf. (A.D.), 57th (originally 4th Reg. Ala. Inf. (A.D.), 106th, 110th and 111th Regiments {referred to originally as "African Descent"} United States Colored Infantry, and 6th Regiment, United States Colored Heavy Artillery (originally 1st Reg. Ala. Siege Artillery (A.D). These numbers do not include the numerous Union Scouts and Guides organized in numerous north Alabama counties. It's estimated 10,000 men volunteered to wear Yankee Blue—7,300 African-American and 2,700 white!

Question #6 – Who directed the formation of the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.A.)? Where were men primarily recruited?

The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Concerning the 1st Alabama

Series 1, Volume 10, Part 2 (Shiloh), Page 431

Columbus, Miss., April 21, 1862.

Colonel Thomas Jordan,

First Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.)
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Assistant Adjutant General, C.S.A.

DEAR SIR: You are aware how important this place is in view of the subsistence, Ammunition, and sick and wounded sent here, and of the factories here established. The enemy are roving in detachments over the counties of Franklin and Lawrence, in North Alabama. They are at Russellville, in Franklin County, Alabama, say 300 me. It is reported here that they are seizing horses and mules, and are mounting infantry on them.

The northern counties of Alabama, you know, are full of Tories. There has been a convention recently held in the corner of Winston, Fayette and Marion Counties, Alabama, in which the people resolved to remain neutral; which simply means that they will join the enemy when they occupy the country. Since Mississippi seceded people from these counties have been in this State carrying the United States flag. There re suspected men even in this county, Fayette County, Alabama, joins this county. The enemy can approach through that county without being exposed, make a dash on this place, and in afew hours destroy all the public property and shops in the town.

There are some 800 infantry and three companies of cavalry, aall without arms, at this place. Perhaps there may be 300 guns ready for issue in the shops here. They are making good cannon here.

I present briefly some of the crude statements made with great confidence here. You know much more, perhaps, of this mattery than I am able to communicate at present.

I am improving as rapidly as could be expected, and hope soon to be ready for duty.

Yours, truly,

B. R. JOHNSON.

Series 3, Volume 2, Part 1 (Union Letters, Orders, Reports), Page 233

Huntsville, Ala., July 19, 1862
(Received 5:35 p.m. 20th)

Edwin M. Stanton,
Secretary of War:

I request authority to organize and muster Alabamians into service in companies or regiments as they present themselves.

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D. C. Buell,
Major-General, Commanding

Series 3, Volume 2, Part 1 (Union Letters, Orders, Reports), Page 235

War Department,
Washington, D.C., July 21, 1862.

Major-General Buell,
Huntsville, Ala.
You are authorized to organize and muster into service such number of Alabamians in companies and regiments as you may deem essential for the service. You are also authorized to arrange with the Governor of Pennsylvania for raising three companies of cavalry, as requested in your telegram of the 18th, just received.

Edwin M. Stanton,
Secretary of War.

Series 3, Volume 4, Part 1 (Union Letters, Orders, Reports), Pages 16-17

Hdqrs, Left Wing, Sixteenth Army Corps, Pulaski, Tenn., January 9, 1864.

Hon. E. M. Stanton,
Secretary of War:

I respectfully request authority to raise one or more regiments of cavalry from Alabamians. There are large numbers coming to our lines, and a better class of men than has ever come through before, being men who have furnished substitutes upon being drafted for the rebel service. Several of them are anxious to raids a regiment, and I have no doubt [it can] easily be dome. I recruited one regiment at Corinth, Miss. – the First Alabama Cavalry, nearly 1,000 strong – and that fact being well known in North Alabama nearly all the refugees from there seek my lines.

I also desire that authority be given me to appoint the officers, most of which I should select from old regiments now in service.

My advance is opposite Decatur and at points on the river easily reached from the Alabama mountains, from which these men seek our lines. We have to feed them, and it is no more than right that they should enter the service. Most of them are anxious to do so, but prefer to go into an organization of their own.

An early response to this would be of great benefit to the service.

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A am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. M. Dodge,
Brigadier-General.

Understandably, many of those hiding in the hills looked forward to a federal invasion. In July 1862, unionists began arriving in small groups into the camp of the 51st Indiana Regiment in Decatur, Morgan County, Alabama. The regiment's commander, Col. Abel D. Streight was moved by these "brave mountaineers" who requested protection and a chance to fight the Confederacy.

"Never did people stand in greater need of protection. They have battled manfully against the most unscrupulous foe that civilized warfare has ever witnessed. They have been shut off from all communication with anybody but their enemies for a year and a half, and yet they stand firm and true. If such is not to be rewarded, if such citizens are not to receive protection, then their case is deplorable indeed."

On the night of July 14,1862, Streight, who was intent on organizing the Alabamians into a fighting force, spoke to a gathering of unionists before introducing Chris Sheats to them.

Sheats apparently gave a stem-winder of a speech, telling his fellow Alabamians that the time had come join the army of the United States and fight the Confederacy "to hell and back again."

"Tomorrow morning I am going to the Union army…I have slept in mountains, in caves and caverns, till I am become musty; my health and manhood are failing me, I will stay here no longer till I am enabled to dwell in quiet at home."

Apparently, the appeals to their patriotism succeeded, 150 men signed up in less than three days.

It is unclear how many Alabamians wore blue, because many, after secreting themselves to federal lines, simply joined other state regiments. Perhaps as many as 5,000 served in federal units. We do know that about 400 joined the Streight's 51st Indiana in July 1862. We know that Alabama unionists served in 4th Ind. Cav.; the 12th Tenn. Cav; the 7th Ill Cav.; the 1st Middle Tenn Cav.; the 10th Mo Cav.; the 5th Tenn Cav.; the 14th Mich. Inf.; the 41st NY Inf.; the 56th Ill Inf. and the 11th Wis Inf.

In his book Lincoln's Loyalists, Richard Nelson Current estimated that 100,000 white southerners served in the federal army in contrast to 850,000-900,000 confederates. That means about one out of 10 southerners wore blue rather than gray. If you add the 185,000 blacks who fought in the union army, and most of them were southern including 10,000 from Alabama, it is apparent that the war was not between North and South but rather as Colonel Oates called it, "The War Between the Union and the Confederacy."

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P.D. Hall, a Marion-Franklin County resident, joined the 1st Alabama Cavalry and suggested that the Alabama unionists who fought "made a greater sacrifice for the Union than the men of the North."

"Consider the loyal men in the South, especially as far south as Alabama, what they had to endure for their country. They were exposed and in danger every minute of their lives. They were shot sitting by their firesides or walking on the road; they had to leave their families to the abuse of the enemy; had to keep themselves closely concealed like the vermin in the woods until they could make escape through the lines, and then had to share the same hardships of soldiers life that the comrades of the North bore."

Unionist feeling in Alabama was strongest in the northern half of the state and, while centered in Winston County, was heavy throughout the region. More than 2,000 served in the 1st Alabama Cavalry, around 239 from Winston County alone. The 1st Alabama Cavalry, U.S. Volunteers (U.S.V.) was the military result of that anti-secession feeling.

The regiment was formed in October 1862 in Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama and Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee, and mustered into Federal service that December in Corinth, Alcorn County, Mississippi. Company officers were chosen from among the men.

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Question #7 – What were the consequences of choosing the serve the Union?

Many of the unionists tried to hide their political views in order not to draw attention to themselves. It worked to a point.

"It was firmly in my mind that I would never go back on "Old Glory," wrote Marion County resident John Phillips after the war. *"I had heard too much from my old grandparents about the sufferings and privations they had to endure during the Revolutionary War to ever engage against the Stars and Stripes. However, I went slow and talked but little and thought by not talking either for or against it and giving them all they asked for and treating them kindly, they would let me alone."*

Eventually, John Phillips would be found out and the Home Guard would come calling.

"They commenced robbing my family of the support I had left for them, they drove off my cattle and took my horses and mules, also my corn. They even went so far as to pour what meal my family had out in the floor and fill the sacks with meat. They event took their cups, saucers and plates, not leaving anything for their sustenance."

The severe treatment to his family by the Confederate Home Guard pushed John Phillips to making his way to federal lines and joining the 1st Alabama Cavalry, United States Volunteers.

"We all enlisted in the U.S. Army without any medical examination as we all wanted to enlist. I told them the Rebs had conscripted me and would claim me as a deserter and I never would suffer myself to be captured by them alive. The head officer said he would appoint me the Co. Sergt. And that would relieve me from guard duty, and place me in a position that would shield me from the chance of being captured as much as possible."

Murder or political assassination was a constant threat for Alabama unionists who chose to remain at home. Three sons of Solomon Curtis were all killed in Winston County. Joel Jackson Curtis was killed in 1862 for refusing to join the confederate army. George Washington Curtis, home on leave from the union army, was killed by the home guard in his yard while his wife and three children watched. Thomas Pink Curtis, the probate judge of Winston County, was arrested near Houston by confederate authorities in 1864 and taken to a bluff on Clear Creek where he was summarily executed with two shots to his right eye.

Henry Tucker, a private in Company B, of the 1st Alabama Cavalry, US, was arrested by the Rebel Home Guard at his home in Marion County and tortured to death. He was tied to a tree, castrated, his eyes removed and his tongue cut out before he was literally skinned alive. He is buried at Hopewell Cemetery, south of Glen Allen, Alabama.

But Tucker's vicious death was avenged. Home Guard leader Stoke Roberts who personally directed the torture of Tucker, was eventually caught by a group of unionists near Winfield. They

took a long iron spike and drove it through his mouth and out the back of his head and nailed him to the root of a big oak tree.

Several members if the First Alabama took leaves of absence to move their families to safety in the North.

Question #8 – Who is George Eliphaz Spencer?

Born in Champion, New York, Spencer was the son of Gordon Percival and Deborah Mallory Spencer. During the American Civil War, Spencer enlisted as a captain on October 16, 1862. While serving on the staff of Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, he requested a transfer to the 1st Alabama Cavalry Regiment, a volunteer regiment made up of Southern Unionists, which did not have a permanent commander. Receiving a promotion to colonel, he led the regiment from September 11, 1863, until his resignation on July 5, 1865. Spencer died in Washington, D.C., on February 19, 1893 (age 56 years, 110 days). He is interred at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia.

Question #9 – What singular honor was bestowed on the regiment?

At least 400 recruits began drifting into the camp of the 51st Regiment, Indiana Volunteer Infantry located in Decatur, Morgan County, Alabama under the command of Colonel Abel D. Streight. The regiment was raised at Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama and Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee during October 1862 after Union occupied the area.

The men of the 1st Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.) played a dual role in Streight's Raid led by Colonel Abel D. Streight in April 1863. The goal of the raid was to cut the Confederate railroad between Atlanta and Chattanooga that was feeding Supplies to Braxton Bragg's Rebel army in Tennessee. Two companies (K & I) from the 1st Alabama Cavalry were included in Streight's Provisional

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Brigade's four regiments of infantry within the Army of the Cumberland. The bulk of the regiment was located at Corinth, Mississippi under General Grenville Dodge as part of U. S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee.

Dodge was to screen Streight as moved by boat from Tennessee to Eastport, Mississippi April 19, 1863. From there he moved overland from Georgia. After several skirmishes, Dodge with 8,000 men moved into Alabama meeting Stright's force near Tuscumbia on April 21, 1863. Dodge then turned north in hopes of distracting any Rebel pursuit of Streight column before retreating to Corinth while Streight initially headed south toward Moulton in Lawrence County before continuing toward his target of Rome, Georgia. Forrest and Roddey were not Streight's only headache. Heavy thunderstorms on April 26th made a nightmare of the roads he had to travel.

A disaster from the start, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest discovered Streight's column shortly after Dodge turned back. The Battles of Day's, Crooked Creek and Hog Mountain in Cullman County April 30, 1863, Blountsville (Blount County) were a series of skirmishes. Mounted on the poorly mounted Union raiders and with his rearguard constantly under attack, time ran out after just a week for Streight and men on May 3, 1863 near Cedar Bluff, Alabama. The cost to the two companies of the 1st Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.) was sixteen men killed, wounded or missing. Captain David Smith, commander of the two companies accompanying Streight, was captured and held in Southern prisons until early 1865. Tragically, Smith ended up at a Camp Parole hospital in Annapolis, Maryland where he died April 18, 1865, just nine days after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia.

Battle of Barton Station, Colbert County, Alabama on October 20, 1863.

Battle of Cherokee Station, Colbert County, Alabama (10 miles west of Tuscumbia) on October 21, 1863.

Battle of Camp Davies, Mississippi on November 22, 1863.

Battle of Rocky Face Ridge, Whitfield County, Georgia May 7-13, 1864.

Battle of Snake Creek Gap, Georgia on May 8, 1864.

Battle of Resaca, Gordon and Whitfield Counties, Georgia May 13-15, 1864.

Battle of Rome Crossroads, Gordon County, Georgia on May 16, 1864.

Battle of Dallas, Paulding County, Georgia on May 28, 1864.

Battle of Nickajack Creek (aka Ruff's Mill), Georgia on July 4, 1864.

Battle of Atlanta, Fulton and Gordon Counties, Georgia on July 22, 1864.

Siege of Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia May 7-September 2, 1864.

Battle of Jonesborough, Clayton County, Georgia August 31-September 1, 1864.

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By the time of Sherman's forces entered Atlanta, Georgia in late 1864, the reputation of the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.) was secure. One general called the Alabama troops *"invaluable . . .equal in zeal to anything we discovered in Tennessee."* Major-General Logan, commanding the 15th Army Corps in Sherman's forces, also praised the troopers as *"the best scouts I ever saw, and (they) know the country well from here to Montgomery."* General Sherman knowing the value of this Alabama troops as soldiers and symbols of the loyal South, chose them as his personal escort on this famous "March to the Sea" following Atlanta.

This honor of guarding the Army's commander, by no means kept the 1st Alabama from the line of fire. They had been involved in the battles at Dalton, Resaca and Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia during the Atlanta Campaign and the assignment did not change the danger. On March 10, 1865, soon after entering North Carolina, the regiment engaged in their hardest fight. At Monroe's Crossroads near Fayetteville, the regiment found itself being ambushed in camp by a dawn attack of Confederate cavalry under Generals' Joseph Wheeler and Wade Hampton. An official report stated that "a bloody hand-to-hand conflict" followed, lasting more than three hours. The timely arrival of a section of field artillery enable the hard-pressed Alabamians to reverse the advantage driving the Confederates from their camp and hold them off until additional help arrived.

When the smoke lifted, the Third Brigade of General Judson Kilpatrick's Union cavalry division, including the First Alabama and two other regiments, roughly 800 men, had routed 5,000 Confederates. The Rebels left 103 dead on the field and as many more wounded at a cost of 18 Federal dead, 70 wounded and 103 missing. What started as a potential disaster resulted in a clear-cut Union victory.

The regiment found themselves engaged in the Battle of Bentonville, Johnston County, North Carolina March 19-21, 1865. This would prove to be the final battle between the Union army of Major General William T. Sherman and Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston.

A few weeks later, the regiment was present at the surrender of General Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army at Bennett's Place, North Carolina on April 6, 1965. With that, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman's "March to the Sea" as at last complete.

The regiment then began its long trek back to Alabama where it would muster-out of service on October 20, 1865 at Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama.

Question #10 – What became of the Regiment at War's end?

During the majority of its operational history, the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.) was part of the 16th Corps, Army of the Tennessee. In its early months, the unit was called on to fulfill traditional cavalry roles such as scouting, raiding reconnaissance, flank guard and screening for the army while on the march. The regiment fought mostly in actions related to these missions. Missions no less deadly for being small.

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It's not known for sure if the regiment had its own battle flag. None has ever been located nor mentioned in any memoirs of original troopers. Experts at the Alabama Department of Archives & History point out that battle flags were traditionally presented to departing units by the states that raised them, or the communities in which they were recruited. Being effectively an *"orphan"* unit, it is highly unlikely. Whatever guidons or banners that its various companies carried were very likely standard U.S. issue from Union stores on hand.

But if the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry U.S.A.) ever had a regimental flag, it is generally believed it would have carried names such as Vincent's Crossroads, AL/MS (October 26, 1863); Cherokee Station, AL (October 27, 1862); Nickajack Creek, GA (aka Ruff's Mill on July 4, 1864); Monroe's Crossroads, NC (march 10, 1865) and others, hardly known of at the time and perhaps all but forgotten today. There are better known places too, such as Streight's Raid through North Alabama (April 19-May 3, 1863); the battles of Resaca (May 13-15, 1864); Dalton (August 14-15, 1864); and Kennesaw Mountain (June 27, 1864) during the Atlanta Campaign. In any case, the men of the First fought and left fallen comrades on many fields while in their country's service.

When the 1st Regiment, Alabama Cavalry (U.S.V.) mustered-out for good on October 20, 1865 at Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama, only 397 men of the nearly 2,200 that had served remained with the colors. In it's three-years of active service, the regiment lost approximately 953 dead or mortally wounded on the field, dying in Southern prisons, of disease or other non-combat causes. Around 88 became prisoners-of-war and around 279 were reported as deserted. The exact number wounded is not clear but claims exist of over 450.

Bitterness between secessionists and loyalists in Alabama remained for years following the end of the war. Post-war Reconstruction did not help the souring effect on state politics over the next century of which traces of it still be seen. Many old troopers and their families suffered for their loyalty; legally, politically and socially. Some suffered physical attacks and other depredations. But they are all remembered, and honored, by their descendants today.

Survivors would meet several times after the war such as 1883, 1900, 1910 and 1912.