

# Calloway County's First Confederates

by: Dieter C. Ullrich

In late October and early November of 1861 sixty-three men from thirty-four counties in the Commonwealth of Kentucky gathered at Russellville to participate in a convention to form a separate Confederate government. Eight of those men identified themselves as Calloway countians. After three weeks of deliberations the convention ratified an ordinance of secession that established a provisional government, elected officials and sought admittance to the Confederate States of America. When they returned to their homes and communities, they were confident that they had participated in a historic event that would forever change the United States, Kentucky and Calloway County.

The eight men that signed the ordinance of secession were Thomas M. Jones, Daniel Matthewson, Francis W. Dodds, Peter S. Hamlin,

Alexander A. Wesson, Crawford A. Duncan, Andrew J. Holland and William J. Mathes. The seed that eventually grew into the local movement to join the Confederacy was the election of Abraham Lincoln in November of 1860. Before Lincoln's inauguration in March of 1861, seven states in the South had seceded from the United States and established their own national government. Within weeks after the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12th, four other states left the Union to join the newly formed Confederacy. On May 16th, Governor Beriah Magoffin declared that Kentucky would remain neutral during the hostilities between the North and South.

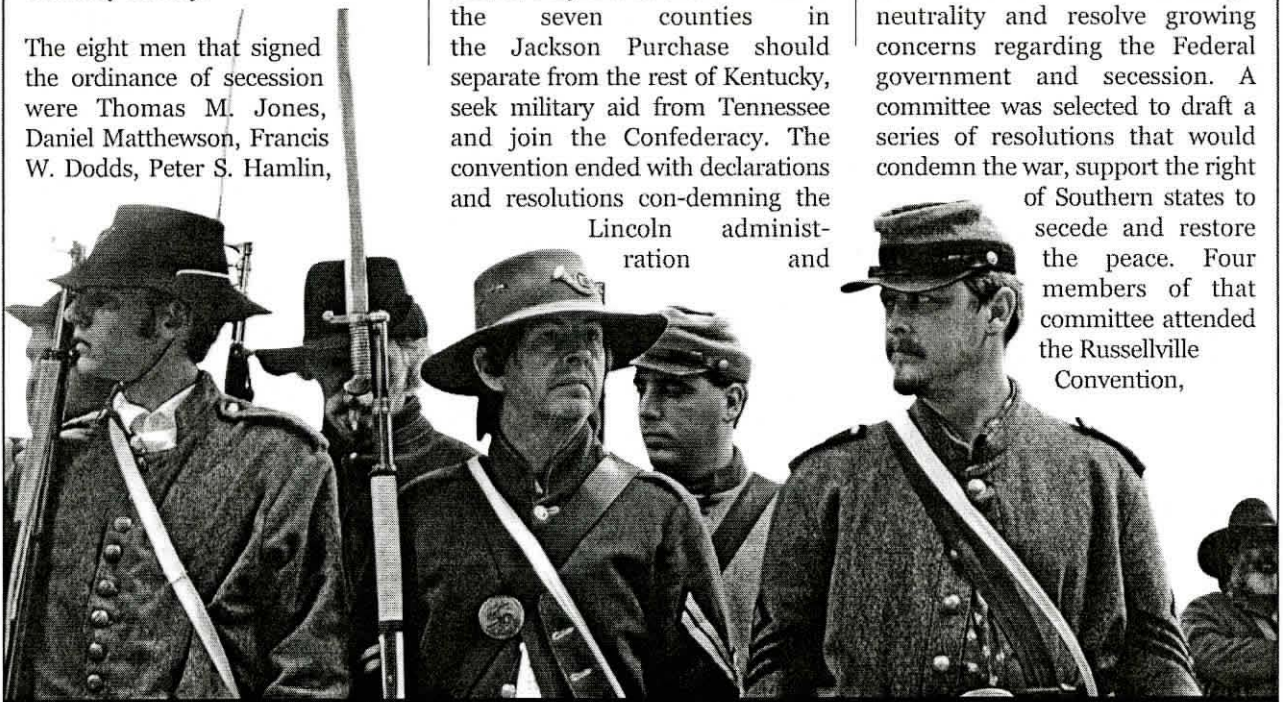
Three weeks later, a convention was held at Mayfield to debate whether the seven counties in the Jackson Purchase should separate from the rest of Kentucky, seek military aid from Tennessee and join the Confederacy. The convention ended with declarations and resolutions con-demning the Lincoln administration and

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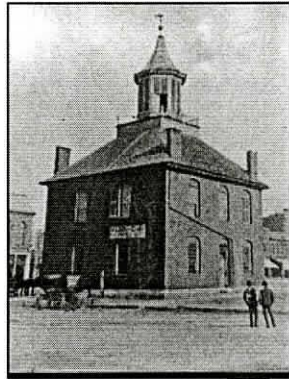
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supporting the Southern cause but did not commit to seceding from the Commonwealth. News-papers in Frankfort and Lexington mentioned Matthewson as having served as a member of the committee on resolutions. And although no complete list of the over 150 attendees of the convention exists, there is a very strong possibility that others from Calloway County were present.

On August 26th citizens from Murray and surrounding communities gathered at the courthouse to address Kentucky's neutrality and resolve growing concerns regarding the Federal government and secession. A committee was selected to draft a series of resolutions that would condemn the war, support the right of Southern states to secede and restore the peace. Four members of that committee attended the Russellville Convention,



including Jones, Dodds, Hamlin and Wesson. Jones was the chairman of the committee and Hamlin served as the secretary that wrote the resolutions. The final draft endorsed the platform of the State Rights party and the politicians who supported secession. It declared that the Union was in violation of the United States Constitution when it invaded the South and protested the use of State and Federal taxes to fund an unjust and illegal war. The resolutions were later published in newspapers in Louisville and Frankfort. Only a few months before the Russellville Convention, the majority of citizens in Calloway County had determined that the best course would be to sever relations with the governments in both Frankfort and Washington.



Courthouse Russellville

Who were the men that ventured to Russellville in late October of 1861? Three of the men served in the State legislature, two helped found the New Concord Male and Female Institute and one was the county sheriff. The most prominent of the contingent from Calloway County was Thomas Marion Jones, a fifty-three year old Kentucky native and father of seven children. He was the owner of a hotel and tavern located on the north side of the court square in Murray. He served briefly in the State legislature in 1842 and 1843 and was the county judge for Calloway County when the convention was held. Judge Jones was very influential in having the Calloway County seat moved from Wadesboro and situated on the western side of the Clark River at Murray. He was arrested and removed from his judgeship by Union soldiers for being a Southern sympathizer in early 1863. Following the war, he resumed his

duties as county judge and was on the first board of trustees for the Murray Male and Female Institute. He died in 1877. His place of burial is unknown.

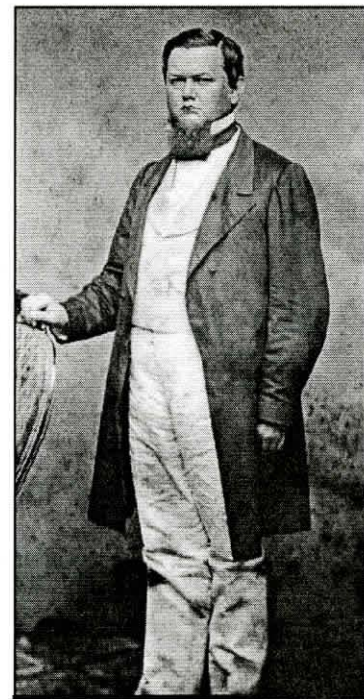
Daniel Matthewson was a fifty-one year old merchant from Murray who

had a wife and six children. He was born in Smith County, Tennessee and relocated to Murray soon after the county seat was established in 1843. Prior to the convention he co-owned a mercantile business on the court square with Charles Curd, on whose land the town of Murray was situated. Matthewson served as a State Senator from 1855 to 1859 and was elected to the State legislature in 1861 on the Southern Rights ticket. On December 21, 1861, he was expelled from the State Legislature for giving aid and comfort to the Confederate Army and for attending the Russellville Convention. Throughout the war, he would campaign to further Kentucky's ties to the Confederacy and to support the Southern cause. Two of his sons would serve with the 3rd Kentucky Infantry Regiment during the war. Matthewson died on August 19, 1880 and is buried in the Murray City Cemetery.

Francis Ulysses Dodds was a fifty-one year old farmer with a wife and five children. He was a native of Caldwell County, Kentucky. He served as a Justice of the Peace before the war and in the State Legislature from 1848 to 1853. Dodds was elected captain of Company H, 7th Kentucky Infantry Regiment but was honorably discharged after several months of service due to his age. He returned to public office after the war and

was reelected to the State Legislature in 1867. He joined the majority of Kentucky representatives that voted against the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1869. Dodds died on June 17, 1880 and is buried in the family cemetery in the southwest corner of the county.

Peter Stainbach Hamlin was a fifty-five year old farmer with a wife and six grown children. He was born in Virginia and relocated to Calloway County in 1838 after residing in Rockingham County, North Carolina. Prior to the war, he was the Justice of the Peace at New Concord and one of the founding members of the local Masonic lodge. In 1854, he was one of the founding trustees of the New Concord Male and Female Institute. On Christmas Eve of 1859, he was shot and wounded in a duel with fellow convention attendee Alexander Wesson. The exchange of gunfire, as told by generations of Hamlin's, was over an alleged theft



Burnett

of a chicken by the son of Alex Wesson. Three of his sons served in the Confederate Army. The house he built, Seclusaval, on the heights above the Tennessee River (now Kentucky Lake) in 1839 has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He died on November 6, 1891 and is buried at the New Concord Cemetery.

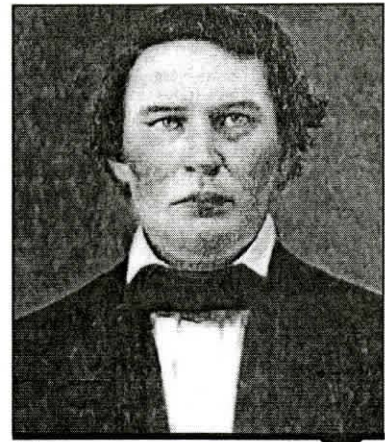
Alexander A. Wesson was a fifty year old tobacco farmer who had resided in Calloway County for close to twenty years when he decided to attend the convention in Russellville. He was born at Rockingham, North Carolina and had a wife and three grown children. In 1850, he was appointed as a commissioner to survey the county into election districts. Wesson was a member of the New Concord Masonic Lodge and also one of the founding trustees of the New Concord Male and Female Institute in 1854. He survived the duel against Hamlin having been slightly wounded in the shoulder. Soon after the war began, Wesson crossed into Henry County, Tennessee and joined a Confederate cavalry unit which later became part of the 7th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. He is believed to have died following wounds he received during the Battle of Colliersville, Tennessee on October 11, 1863. His place of burial is unknown.

Crawford A. Duncan was the owner of a boarding house near the court square in Murray. He was forty-six years old and had a wife and five children. His eldest son was the town druggist. He was a native of North Carolina. Prior to the convention, Duncan was one of the founders of the Murray Masonic Lodge and served as the first sheriff of Calloway County. On April 26, 1861 he enlisted in the 1st Kentucky Infantry Regiment and was later elected as Captain of Company F. He resigned his commission in May of 1862 and resumed his position as

county sheriff. He was removed as sheriff by Union soldiers in the spring of 1863. Duncan relocated to Jackson, Tennessee after the war where he worked as a merchant. He died on March 7, 1882 and is buried in Riverside Cemetery at Jackson, Tennessee.

Andrew Jackson Holland was a thirty-one year old farmer and dry goods store owner from Murray. He had a wife and a young child. He was born in Robertson County, Tennessee and had only resided in Murray a few years before the convention convened at Russellville. His store burned to the ground only a few months before the convention met. He returned to the dry goods business after the war but again his store was consumed by flames in 1868. Holland then ventured into the milling business and became part owner of the Murray Mills Company. He was a member of the city's Masons order and a strong proponent of prohibition in the county. He died on December 6, 1913 and is buried at the Murray City Cemetery.

The final member of the Calloway County assembly, with a certain amount of conjecture, was William Jefferson Mathes. A transcription of the ordinance of succession lists a "William T. Mathes" but no such name exists in the 1860 Federal census for the county. However there was a William J. Mathes from Rutherford County, Tennessee, who at the time of the convention was courting Matilda Emiline Parks the youngest daughter of John Parks of Calloway County. Mathes may have been acting as a representative for Parks, who was in early sixties and possibly unable to travel. Parks was native of South Carolina and a slave owner. Why Mathes wrote that he was from Calloway County has been lost to the ages but his presence in the county during the time in question was very well documented.



Johnson

Mathes married Miss Parks before he enlisted with the 12th Tennessee Infantry Regiment in May of 1861. He was captured by Union forces at Murfreesboro at the end of December in 1862. After being paroled in the fall of 1863, he reenlisted with the 12th Kentucky Cavalry Regiment which had a number of men from Calloway County. He saw action in several skirmishes and battles and was severely wounded at the Battle of Spring Hill. When the war concluded, he returned to his family farm in Rutherford County and engaged in the milling business. He died on February 20, 1926 and is buried at East View Cemetery in Union City Tennessee.

Over 150 years have passed since the secession decree was signed by the eight Confederates from Calloway County. Their deeds and sacrifices have long been forgotten and what remains of their legacy are but a few sentences from contemporary newspaper articles and county histories published generations after the Civil War's conclusion. Whether these men's actions were treasonous or patriotic continues to be debated. However, their significance to the history of the Commonwealth and county is indisputable. ▲