

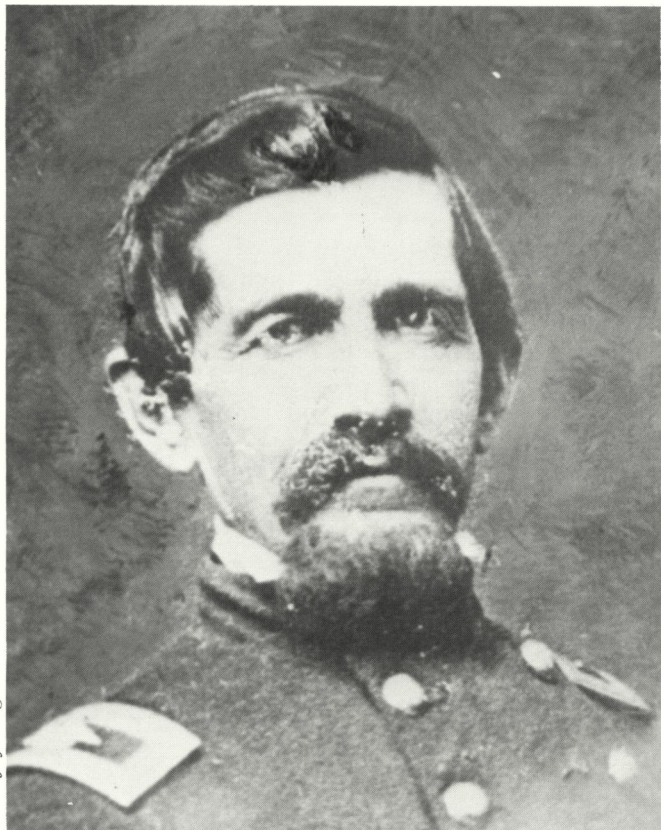
West Tennessee Unionists in the Civil War: A Hawkins Family Letter

By CHARLES L. LUFKIN

On October 11, 1864, Colonel Isaac R. Hawkins,¹ who would later serve three terms in Congress, wrote a letter² to his cousin Alvin Hawkins,³ who one day would be governor of Tennessee, about a series of misfortunes which had beset him during the year. He had been captured with his regiment in a controversial surrender to the Confederates, imprisoned, and released as part of an exchange—all within a five month period. Now free and in command once more of what remained of the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, U.S.A., he took the time to write a lengthy letter about his experiences. It was natural enough

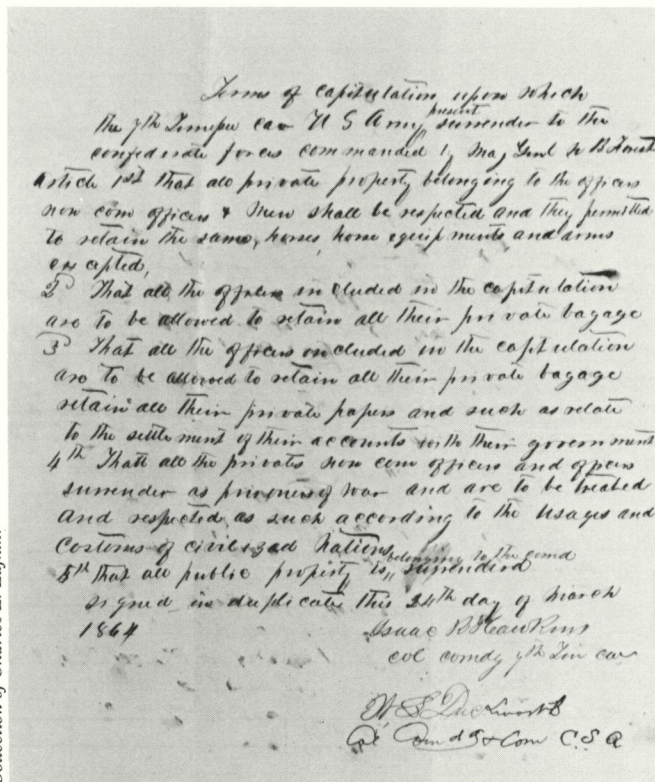
that Isaac would write his cousin and confidant Alvin Hawkins. They had been law partners in Huntingdon, Tennessee before the war and were drawn even closer together during the conflict by their tenacious opposition to secession.

In the opening pages of the letter, Hawkins gave his opinions on the upcoming presidential election, then only a month away, between Abraham Lincoln and George B. McClellan. He indicated that he supported Lincoln because, as an "old Whig," he could not believe that the secessionist Democrats, the party which had "brought so much trouble" was "the party



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Isaac Roberts Hawkins



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The surrender document signed by Isaac R. Hawkins and William L. Duckworth on 24 March 1864 at Union City, Tennessee.

to save the country.”⁴ Hawkins too had something to save; his reputation, tarnished by his seemingly premature surrender at Union City, Tennessee, needed to be restored.

Hawkins, as commanding officer, surrendered about 500 men of the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry at Union City on March 24, 1864. His men, mainly West Tennesseans from Carroll and Henderson Counties, capitulated to Confederate troops who were part of a large raiding force under General Nathan Bedford Forrest. On this incursion behind Union lines, Forrest’s men struck the Federal garrisons at Paducah and Columbus in Kentucky and at Union City and Fort Pillow in Tennessee. Despite the Confederate attacks, the Union forces in Paducah and Columbus held out. Fort Pillow, on the other hand, fell to an assault about three weeks after the surrender at Union City.

During his time in captivity, Hawkins was unaware that Union military authorities in West Tennessee, particularly General Stephen A. Hurlbut,⁵ had blamed him for the capitulation at Union City. Hurlbut, anxious to switch attention away from his own failure to deal with Forrest’s incursion, accused Hawkins of “pure cowardice” in the affair,⁶ inferring that he surrendered to intimidation rather than to overwhelming numbers. In addition, several of Hawkins’ own officers, who had escaped shortly after their capture at Union City, testified before a congressional investigating committee that Colonel Hawkins negotiated the surrender of the Seventh Cavalry despite the protests of the officers and men of his command.⁷

In his letter, Hawkins denied these allegations and related his version of what happened at Union City. The officers agreed to surrender after meeting in council, Hawkins asserted, without a “dissenting voice,” quibbling only about the terms.⁸ An examination of their contradictory statements, made after the surrender, supports Hawkins’ contention.⁹ Hawkins also indicated that he was gathering evidence, most of it from military telegraphs and messages, in order to call for a court of inquiry which he believed would clear his name and “see that full justice” was meted out to General Hurlbut.¹⁰ Hawkins maintained, and rightfully so, that his dispatches which warned of the movement of large numbers of Confederates towards his position, were ignored. As a matter of fact, Union authorities in Cairo not only failed to respond to Hawkins’ pleas for assistance but asked him, at a time when his unit was being enveloped, to send some of his men on a scout into Kentucky.¹¹ The garrison at Union City, isolated and far from the protection of

Federal gunboats or artillery, capitulated without great resistance.

In the last half of the letter, Hawkins described his experiences in various Confederate prisons, culminating in his release at Charleston harbor, near Fort Sumter, where he and forty-nine other Federal officers were exchanged under fire. Before the exchange, the officers were placed in a section of Charleston which was being bombarded by Federal guns. This action provoked a controversy of so serious a nature that it required the attention of both Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln before it was resolved.

A dispatch from General Samuel Jones, commanding Confederate forces in Charleston to Union General John G. Foster, announced the intentions of Confederate authorities. It was stated that:

Five generals and 45 field officers of the U.S. Army all of them prisoners of war, have been sent to this city for safe keeping. They have been turned over to Brigadier-General (Roswell S.) Ripley commanding the First Military District of this department, who will see that they are provided with commodious quarters in a part of the city occupied by non-combatants, the majority of whom are women and children. It is proper however, that I should inform you that it is part of the city which has been for many months exposed day and night to the fire of your guns.¹²

Foster replied to Jones a few days later, justifying Union shelling of the city because of the presence of factories and shipyards in the area. In addition, he stated that ample warnings had been issued about the removal of non-combatants from Charleston. Foster then lodged a strong protest against the action of “placing defenseless prisoners of war in a position exposed to constant bombardment. It is an indefensible act of cruelty,” he alleged, “and can be designed only to prevent the continuance of our fire upon Charleston.”¹³ He warned Jones that he had requested the permission of President Lincoln to place “an equal number of prisoners of the like grades” in positions exposed to the fire of Confederate guns.¹⁴

The decision to take the officers from Macon “for special use in Charleston” originated from General Jones and had the approval of Jefferson Davis.¹⁵ General Foster’s subsequent protest and the threat of retaliation made the contending parties hesitate, aware that negotiations were necessary to avoid an incident that both would regret. After some sparring, an agreement was made; the fifty Federal officers were exchanged for fifty Confederate officers. On August 3, under a flag of truce, the two sides carried out the exchange off Fort Sumter.¹⁶ Hawkins was one

of the Federal officers.

Harper's Weekly carried a picture of a house on the corner of Broad and Rutledge Streets in Charleston, sketched by one of the officers who was placed there under fire. *Harper's* reported that although the men were "nominally under fire, only one shell came near them, and that not sufficiently near to do any harm."¹⁷ Hawkins' letter written about two months after his exchange, seemed to confirm the fact that the entire affair was more bluster and threat than anything else. Hawkins wrote that "on the 3 of August we were exchanged passed out by Fort Sumpter and went aboard of one of our ships spent the day fine and just before sun down set sail for Hilton head. . . ."¹⁸ At the time he wrote this letter, he was apparently unaware of the circumstances behind his brief stay in Charleston and his subsequent exchange.

Hawkins release was an individual action. For the most part, the men of the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry languished in captivity until the closing months of the war. Because many of them died or suffered great privation in Andersonville or other Confederate prison camps, it is plausible that the surviving soldiers and their families in Carroll and Henderson Counties

would bear strong resentments toward the persons or person responsible for the surrender at Union City and the subsequent hardships. Since these same Union people elected Hawkins to Congress three times after the war, they apparently did not feel that he deserved blame in the affair.

Although Isaac and Alvin Hawkins were good friends, as previously noted, and married to sisters, they still addressed each other in formal terms when corresponding. From the opening salutation to the close of the letter, there is little indication of the warm and loyal relationship that actually existed between these men in their lifetimes.

Mayfield Ky Oct 11th 1864

My dear sir, as I have an opportunity to forward you a note, I write, but am somewhat at a loss when I undertake to comply with your request to write you all the circumstances, not knowing whether you desire to know the military status of affairs, or my views of the political prospects, when I say political I wish to be understood as meaning the prospects of the respective aspirants for the presidency—if it be the former of course you know in the first place if I should



Quarters of the Union officers exposed to the Federal fire in Charleston.

chance to know more than can be seen in the papers I forward you, that it would be contraband, and therefore could not be written, If you wish to know what I think of the election I have only to say that the only advantage that I have over you in that would be that I see the papers more regularly than you and perhaps may know more of the feeling in the army. I know nothing of the eastern army except what I see in the papers, and what I learned from officers while a prisoner of war, That was of course before the adoption of the Chickaugo platform, and the nomination of Genl' McClellan;¹⁹ and from what I saw of officers and I was with many of them, and from most of the states, I should think that the army from the New England states would undoubtedly cast its vote for Mr. Lincoln, but even in Masacusetts Genl' McClellan has many friends—it is hard to make a old Whig believe that a party that has brought so much trouble, is the party to save the country; and many men who do not believe that Mr. Lincoln has pursued the best policy, will be slow to vote for Genl McClellan. In fact I have heard but few even among his most active opponents, express any want of confidence in him but they wage a most furious warfare on Mr. Pendleton²⁰ and I have seen but few even of his friends who approve of the platform, and regard it as most unfortunate for him that the nomination was made on such a platform, but it may not be unfortunate for the country that such a platform has been made, and such a letter as his acceptance written. As it seems to have killed out at one blow all the feeling of resistance that was springing up in the north, And to have caused as great a slaughter among the peace men north, as Sampson made among the Phalistine. They are killed so dead that they will never speak again until the condition of peace and the full and complete restoration of the Union.

Judging from the views of officers from New York and Pennsylvania I am much inclined to the opinion that the army of these states will vote for Genl McClellan and think the states will so vote, but many think otherwise Ind I regard as doubtful and Illinois as uncertain in these states and New Jersey the soldiers have no vote and they have many men in the field which will I am shure make an immense difference, but then the circumstances may change. Prices invasion of Missouri²¹ makes the vote of that state certain for Mr. Lincoln and will afford an opportunity for transferring large numbers of men from both the Eastern and western army from these states to points where they can avail themselves of a free mans rights with out prejudice to the service and in the event they would decide the vote of the two states, as it was by

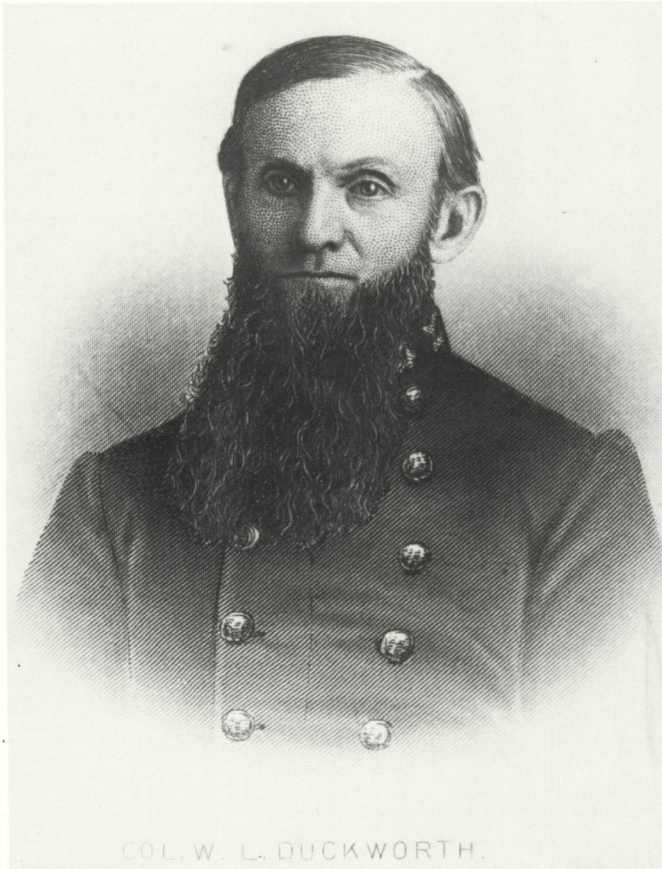
the democratic party that they have been deprived of the right to vote I presume but few of them, will be found to sustane it. From all I can see, I think Gov Morton²² will be elected Gov of Ind; but he has been so peculiarly the friend of the soldier, and I have heard so few objections to him individually that I should not regard that as a shure indication of the result in the presidential election. I am much inclined to the opinion that Ky will cast her vote against Mr Lincoln My reasons for thinking so are numerous but I cannot say whether her soldiers are allowed to vote or not you will perhaps know how this is, My family are at Greencastle²³ boarding at thirteen dollars per week—you may be sure that I was somewhat surprised when I first heard of how they had been treated in my absence, I presume that some wise and politic persons, who have perhaps been my pretended friends for years figured largely in the matter, but Ellen²⁴ does not seem to have even a well ground suspicion of who it was; and in that case I am left to conjecture It will not seem strange to you that I have a deep feeling upon this matter; If I had indulged in personal or individual bitterness, or if I at any time held women and children responsible for the acts of their male friends and relatives, or even for their own acts then it would not have seemed so strange—But such has never been my policy, and I have spent weeks and months using all the arguments with comding officers of many regiments and brigades Divisions and even with Corps comds to prevent abuse wrongs and insults to the females and I have never failed to use when in the vicinity all the power and influence I possessed to prevent such things, and even depredations on property and many times when officers thought I was assuming privileges that did not belong to me—And this is the way it has been repaid—I was for conducting the war upon the most humane principles and causing the least misery compatible with war, and for this my family rec just such treatment as a set of vagabonds saw proper to measure out to them—and no man save Adam Hall²⁵ dared to say a word I at first heard that one of the McNeils²⁶ had but in this I was mistaken and take back all the thanks I expressed to him, but if I had the power to so arrange it, Mr Hall should live a hundred years in peace & quiet surrounded with all things needed, and then spend eternity in bliss, suppose the rule of expulsion should be reciprocal; does any man of sense think the community would be more comfortable, or that the stock of happiness would be enlarged Are rebels and their simpathisers so deaf to the voice of reason so blind to the signs of the times that they cannot see in such things their own ruin. The natural feeling of men is

not very different and every mans feeling are a pretty shure indication of what his neighbor feels what has been the result in the Shenandoah valey, caused by the treatment by the rebs in their late invasion of Md.²⁷ you will see in the Commercial Ma²⁸ in her letter says that Ellen is going away and she feels that if she does, that I will not come back there again, but in this she is mistaken, I will shurely be there, The when, you will know when you see me, quite a force has been placed at my disposal It may be, that you desired to have my statement in regard to my capture and imprisonment if so I will give you a short sketch of it. On the morning of the 23 of March about 8 o clock my scout arrived from Jackson, and informed me that Forest had reached that place with between six and seven thousand men and artillery, and gave me their statements, I immediately telegraphed the fact to Genl' Braman²⁹ at Cairo³⁰—in about one hour another individual arrived and informed me of what had been transpiring in Gibson Dyer and Obion on the day before I immediately telegraphed the facts to the Genl' and in about an hour another individual came in and informed me that a party of about forty rebs were that morning at about give one mile of Garners station³¹ I telegraphed that fact and the location of the place to the Genl', and also telegraphed to the railroad superentant at Columbus³² to send up a car to me. it came and I shiped all my extra guns—all my tents and even broken [?], I then sent John Robson³³ with a party of men in the direction of Troy with instructions to keep watch in that direction and return at one that night, Capt Parsons³⁴ with another party was sent to Wallaces Mill³⁵ to watch there and return at day light if no other orders should be received, Lieut Royal³⁶ was sent to Mink station³⁷ in the directions to watch the turnpike, and advise me of any approach in that direction but to fall back and not to fight should a strong force appear, At about half past four I rec a dispatch from the Genl' enquiring of me how many men I could send to Graves Co Ky³⁸ and if men could get subsistence in that country, to this I replied, that I could send no men to Graves county that I should be attacked within the next twenty four hours by five times my number, and I asked if it was possible that my three dispatches of that day had not been received, and that I thought that the post should be immediately abandoned or heavily reinforced, To this he replied that my dispatches had been all rec and that I shoud rec all the aid I neded to fortify and fight them, I had some eight or ten spads & went to work expecting sufficient reinforcements—But before receiving this dispatch The order to abandon the place had been written though not published, My sick were

sent on the train to Columbus and men to attend them, men were sent with the bagage and arms to Columbus, Soon after I rec a dispatch from the adjutant Genl'³⁹ that Capt Williams⁴⁰ scouts confirmed my reports and that he would start on the train immediately, I expected him to bring troops-but when he arrived about an hour in the night I went to the depot & found he had only a train guard with him, I then repeated to him all I knew of the matter and told him that I thought any force to arrive after daylight would come to late, he did not seem to think so, A short time after one Robson came in & had seen nothing; a short time after four a mesenger from Royal came in and stated that they had been fired on eight miles out, and that a heavy force was approaching on the road, that no correct estimate could be made of the number but that the line was two miles long or more, and had wagons and he thought artilery-The adjutant was waked up and the mesenger made his statement to him, he then asked me what he should do I replied that I should need all the help I could get, he said he thought he had best go back with the train & took the guard and left-and in twenty minits or less the pickets at the camp were fired on an driven in on the east, and charged by I should think a company, They came up close to camp and were driven back, soon after Capt Parsons came in, At four Robeson had again started out on the Troy road but when he heard the firing came back, Just before the fire on the pickett an other man came in from Royals comd' and stated they the enemy were aproaching on all the roads east in heavy force, and that Royal had been cut off, I sent Parsons out on the north side with directions to attack them in flank which he did, but was soon driven in, in a few minits Falkners reg⁴¹ fired on and drove in the pickets on the Troy road and made a charge on the south west corner of the camp-this was the strongest part of my camp and the only part that had about it men enough to defend it, when they came within say, one hundred and twenty yards a fire was opened on them and quite a number were left on the ground some dead some wounded and others perhaps not hurt, They fell back and dismounted and sent forward quite a force as if with the intention of assaulting the camp but it amounted to nothing more than to carry away their dead and wounded- While this was going on or soon after an other regmt moved in from the north and down the railroad and made a demonstration against the west side of the camp had some men killed, and some wounded, and retired, They afterwards made an other move on foot which did not amount to much, before any serious attempt had been made on the camp I had The shanties standing outside

of the camp set on fire, for two reasons one to prevent them from affording shelter to the enemy- and to throw light on the ground- And the reg' on the west took shelter in the rail road cut while a heavy force occupied a position in the fallen timber around the camp and the fight continued until eleven o'clock, I could see that there could not be less than 1800 or two thousand men engaged, and how much more there was in the timber I of course could not tell, At about eleven a flag of truce was sent in demanding a surrender and promising to treat us as prisoners of war I went out and met it some two hundred yards from camp and rec the note addressed to the comding officer signed N B Forest-⁴² and stated to them I would take say fifteen minits for consideration and they were directed to retire which they did- On my return to camp I called all officers who comd' even detachments to meet in council when the note was read and I stated to them that I did not believe it was Forests hand writing I further stated to them that I had communicated to them all the information I had, and then asked what should be done stating that whatever they should say that would I do Whereas some said if so and so was so, we could whip them Bradford⁴³ said he would as leave die as surrender, but then some one also would say that if the fort was assaulted it would be carried and then the men would be slaughtered- I again said there must be a decision of the matter that there was but a few moments to consider of the matter When there was not a dissenting voice some said that I must endeavour to get the terms so that the officers should retain their side arms- others proposed that arrangements should be made to parole the men- to this I stated that I presumed that the rebs would wish to parole the men As I did not see how they could get them out, but that I presumed that they would carry the officers out, after the matter had been settled Capt Harris of the 24th Missouri⁴⁴ wrote the answer to the note, And I went out with Capt Parsons to meet the flag Col Duckworth⁴⁵ meeting me when a written agreement was made, that the men should retain their private property, the officers their private property & private papers & such as relate to the settlement⁴⁶ of their accounts with their government and that the force there present surrendered as prisoners of war and were to be treated as such according to the customs of the most civilized nations- I had in the fort or camp about four hundred and fifty men The men were marched of the camp burnt- And I was immediately seperated from them, not much devilmnt was done that night, the men were camped near Gardners station and I was carried to John A Gardners,⁴⁷ who

treated me with great politeness—That night Lieut Helmer⁴⁸ made his escape and the next morning early, Sam⁴⁹ made his[.] Capt Baty⁵⁰ and Lieut Allender⁵¹ were on parole, if any others were I do not know it Neither Sam or Helmer were- The next day a proposition was made to place all the officers on parole which was done and I heard of but few depredations until we reached Trenton, I at the first pass had all my clothing taken except what I had on- and at Trenton had my saddle bags taken & was left without a blanket Bob Smith⁵² gave me a blanket & a shirt and did me other material favours, the blanket was taken from me at Trenton. there we staid two nights and one day, on the 2 night Lieuts Bradford Neely and Morgan⁵³ violated their parole of Hon and made their escape, The officers came to me in a body to know if I thought they should report the fact then, I replied that the lieuts had acted badly, but that they could use their own plasure about reporting them; and they all went and did so Maj Smith⁵⁴ and myself excepted, Next night we camped at Humbolt and staid at the house of Mr Lannom the brother of the Lieut Col who was wounded at Union City,⁵⁵ he treated us Kindly and gave me two pair of socks and a handkerchief That night Capts Parsons and Baty violated their parole & ran off so did Sergeant Gray,⁵⁶ And the next morning all the officers remaining were placed under guard including your humble servt; But I have overlooked some transactions at Trenton the men were being robed, I called on Col Duckworth and protested, he said he would stop it, that it was forest Reg doing it and he would put his own on guard, in a short time it was reported to me it was worse than before; I then went to him again; and he said although the money was being taken that an account of it would be kept and it returned, over \$1500⁵⁷ was taken. On reaching Jackson we, I mean the officers, were very promptly put in the guard house with a lot of negroes as filthy a place I think as I have seen[.] T P Scurlock Gen Hays & Mr McRay⁵⁸ proposed to go on a bond for 100 000\$ for my forth coming if they would permit me to go to Genl Hays he was answered that by God that had played out, I was taken to a hous to get something to eat had some cold bread cold meat and nothing that I could eat, late that evening Forest had us sent to the hotel fare moderate Mrs McRay sent us a cake & her husband was immediately put under guard. Mrs Long⁵⁹ sent to know if lieut Hawkins and Murray⁶⁰ were there and though her husband is a capt in the rebel army she manifested great kindness for them and repeated it when Sam was carried through there afterwards her kindness has so endeared herself and litle girls to me and others that it will not soon be



W.L. Duckworth

fogotten, It is pleasant now and then along the wastes of time, when nearly all are corrupt, and every thing dreary and sad, to meet a kind and gentle being it heals many deep wounds and causes one to still believe that in these days that virtue and feeling for our kind has not been entirely lost-Next morning I started a foot and at the bridge met Forest who halted us and wanted to know how we were a foot and sent back for our horses but did not get them just there I met Frank Hawkins⁶¹ who gave me four 50\$ bills in old issue of confederate money I have heard that he circulated many false reports we had but a few moments to talk he was there on his way from Mis and told me where Bill was every word that I have heard as coming from him has been false whether he ever said it or not I can not say hope he did not Forest dismounted some of the rebs and furnished us horses which we rode to Pocahontas,⁶² there he dismounted us and we all took it a foot, After leaving Jackson we camped in some sixteen miles of Purdy,⁶³ they got a scare that night and we lef early next morning, and marched to with in three miles of Pocahontas- and had next to nothing to eat up to that time from the time we left Jackson, There Genl Forest told me he had been expecting an attack and that he had ordered in that event that we should all be shot, we were then turned over to Col

White⁶⁴ who was civil to the officers, the next night we camped where the men had nothing to cook with, the next night we reached Ripley Where there was plenty provided for the men and the officers fared well but were still under close guard, The ladies were out in force and said to me that they had heard of me but never saw me, but had had often seen the men and had never heard of one of them insulting a woman or taking anything that they did not pay for and that they had prepared the provision because they thought that there should be a difference made between my men and others They had pies bread of various kinds milk &c next day marched to Kellys Mills 12½ miles from Ripley⁶⁵ got there at 3 and waited for Genl' Gholston⁶⁶ who was very civil to me and asked me to give my parole which I did and he furnished me a horse, just as we were about to start a gun was accidentally fired that killed one of my men and wounded two more, camped at Ellistown⁶⁷ that night and Lieut's Wallac⁶⁸ and Allender attempted their escape next morning and were recaptured next day reached Tupelo⁶⁹ where we remained a day- The incidents in detail from this out would spin this letter out to such a length that you would lack patience to read it and I the patience to write them I will bring them up more in detail- on reaching Mobile we were all placed in a wearhouse and remained there for several days. I saw quite a number of men here who I knew among them Lewis McKisick and a Captain Bransford⁷⁰ I gave him all my confederate money to change off for new issue as the old would not pass, we got fifty cents on the dollar for it and one dollar in greenback would command ten in new issue I disposed of some of mine in that way- I lost at this place forty dollars in Greenback on the 12th of Aprile left Mobile passed across the uper part of the bay on the steamer southern republic⁷¹ and landed at Ten saw⁷² took the railroad to Pollard⁷³ On the 17th of Aprile Lieut Sam reached us at Mobile and gave us a glowing account of his adventures, and the manner in which he had been treated by *Harris Maj Jones brother in law,*⁷⁴ *he made him walk thirty five miles in a day and refused to let him ride when a capt offered him a horse, and gave him nothing to eat* The light of day will have to be closed on my earthly tenement when this shall be forgotten and when the affairs of earth shall have passed away it will still be vividly fresh in the minds of others-18th camped at Pollard and on the morning of the 19th started for Montgomery reached it near night and camped there was but little exultation and the women were generally dressed in black, and looked care worn and mournfully sad: I have never seen in all my life a people, who so universally presented such a dejected

and funeral like appearance, The morning paper denounced me in the roundest & most bitter terms pronounced me a renegade, said I was a lawyer of great ability, and cruel to all who fell in my power, that the other officers seemed to be clever, but that I required watching, that I had said I wanted to be exchanged to fight the south harder than ever, but it would be some time first 20 left for Macon reached Columbus Ga just at night, changed cars and started for andersonville reached that place about 8 in the morning and there I was seperated as well as the other officers from the men while we sat waiting for the train to convey us to Macon a stout looking fellow in butternut came up in a few feet and pointing at me said there was the yankee Col who cut the rebel soldiers tounge out, I told him he was damed liar and Sam said if they chose to give in sults they ought to be willing to give satisfaction and if they had a coupel of sabers & would furnish him one, he could call them, the guard then ordered the man away- Sad and sick at heart, I left my men to the mercy of men who were destitute of that great virtue, rolled on my way to Macon, was kept standing in the street for several hours and finally marched to the city jail, its dark walls with its iron grated windows, looked as if it had been the abode of crime for years Twelve of us were put into a room twelve by fifteen feet, The next room was ocupied by Negroes and the next by eight of our officers who had been there without being out for seventeen days, The jailors wife proved to be a Union woman and in her composition there was as much of the milk of human kindness, as was ever found in one person, she was to us like a mother, and did all she could to make us comfortable, prepared our meals and brought in at the back gate other union ladies who did us many favors, furnished clothes and one offered us money without limit said she had thousands more than she would ever spend, But it was not for us to be where we could be so treated, and we were on the 28th transferd to the county jail here we found a man bred and born to the business our fair was regular jail fair, but we bought goopers milk & busicuits; busicuits at 25 cents each, milk 50¢ per quart butter sweet \$1,00 goopers \$1,00, On the 13 of May lieut Murray and others escaped-⁷⁵ They had sawed through the floor and dug out under the wall, Next morning The man hunters were on hand with their dogs, but this had all been looked to, and it was no go, That night we were put in the third story of the jail in almost an iron cage- At the rising of the sun and as the smoke from the various manufacturing establishments rose slowly the city was coved with a light mist here and there penetrated by a ray of light that gave to it a soft and

gentle appearance and it looked as if it might be the dwelling place of happiness, but the appearance was deceptive; wicked men controlled and never was the old proverb: That when the wicked rule the people mourn, more completely verified, The papers almost every day announced that Sherman had moved forward and severe battle had been fought in which he had been repulsed, and that Genl Johnson had fallen back to secure his communication or to secure a better position,⁷⁶ and a prayer meeting called and the people exhorted to pray for their cause, many the mother, and many the wives who upon their bended nees-in their very hearts cursed the authors of the rebellion, and the men who brought on them their grievous calamities; trains went out with supplies and returned laden with the wounded and the dying, women and children, white and black come by hundreds and thousands fleeing with terror from their homes while the papers daily exhorted people to stay at home and stated that the yankees did not interfere with private property except where the people had fled, and it did no good to leave some one else to take care of it. The fact was they themselves had created the panick and were having two much of a good thing About two days after Muray escaped the paper announced that one of the yankee officers in the county jail had a baby-and the next day or two three or four ladies came to the jailors and sent a negro in to say, they wished to see the yankee baby, I told her to say to them that we had none on hand but if they really wished one there was no better place to go to get it, and that was the last of the baby story On the 18th of May was moved to the camp about three quarters from the jail and found some thirteen hundred officers there, some perhaps frome from every state in the Union, Here we did our own cooking, had three sketils and two camp kettles to the hundred men, $\frac{1}{3}$ of a pound of bacon and a pound of corn meal to the man and for a long time had no shelter, Many the plans laid for escape but none succeeded to any considerable extent, though a few individuals made their escape. On the 10th of June I bid I bid adieu to most of fellow prisoners and in company with forty nine others took the cars for Charleston, I was sick and coughing at all most every breath and so sore that I could hardly bear to be touched on any part of my body, On the 11th arrived at Savanah and was not able to set up on the 12 started again for Charleston and reached place about 3 P'm and was lodged in the jail, Wet and hungry had nothing to eat that day, nor until half past two the next and then had $\frac{1}{3}$ of a lb of bacon rolled with worm eaten cabage turnip tops & turnips making a kind of soup almost without salt served in a large dish pan The fare

was but little varied for the time we stayed at that place it only being to substitute aged stock peas & rice for some of the ingredients we stayed there until the 18th and were then under an agreement that we would not attempt to escape transfered to the side of the Ashley river and but [put] in a frame building Where we had an opportunity of buying from market people such things as we desired, we rec 5\$ dollars in confederate money for one in green back, Paid 2\$ per quart for tomatoes Irish potatoes and snap beans, from four to \$10 for water melons—Figs 40 cents per doz for common 25 c three fine, on the 3 of August we were exchanged passed out by Fort Sumpter and went aboard of one of our ships, spent the day fine and just before sun down set sail for Hilton head spent one day there and sailed for New York reached there on the ninth and was at the great McClellan meeting left for the land of my friends at 7 next morning by way of Buffalo and was at Cincinnati at four next evening staid there a day & then to Green castle ind & so on Reached Columbus and heard of the conduct of Parsons Baty and others found them both under charges⁷⁷ saw that Hurlbert and Bramen had done— & Parsons and Baty have both been tried but the proceeding have not yet been made public all things will come straight in the end and when the other officers come back I intend to put them through for wrongs done me in my absence I do not care for Parsons and Baty but will see that full justice is done Genl Hurlbert One of my men came in today from Andersonville he says that a good many of the men have died Joseph MCracken⁷⁸ was well, Wily Wright⁷⁹ was somewhat sick and he did not know Hugh Caldwell,⁸⁰ They have all ben sent to Sc [South Carolina] and I expect to hear from them soon I heard from Sam on the 24th of Sept he was well, all the officers were well except Fayett Robeson⁸¹ he was slightly sick—you will let Jon and Fayett's sister know that I have heard from them and if you have a chance let Mrs Hays⁸² and Mrs Smith⁸³ know that the capt and the major are well—I have passed over many details but find that the letter would be two long if I attempted details except incidents with which I was immediately connected, I kept a diary and would send it to you if I thought it would be safe But on the next good opportunity will continue the story, and give you somthing of the association answers, through which I passed: yours res Isaac R Hawkins

¹Isaac Roberts Hawkins (1818-1880) was born in Maury County, Tennessee. He practiced law in Huntingdon, Carroll County before enlisting as a lieutenant in the Mexican War. He served as a delegate to the Peace Conference in Washington in 1861 and as a circuit judge the following year until he resigned to organize the Second West Tennessee Cavalry, U. S. A. (Seventh Tn. Cav.). After the war, he was elected as a Republican to the Thirty-ninth, Fortieth and Forty-first Congresses. In 1868, he served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington, 1971), 1090. (hereafter BDAC)

²This letter from Isaac R. Hawkins to Alvin Hawkins, dated October 11, 1864 (hereafter the Mayfield letter), has not been published before. It is in the possession of Anne E. Quigley of Huntingdon, Tn., the great granddaughter of Isaac Hawkins.

³Alvin Hawkins (1821-1905), a Kentucky native, practiced law in Huntingdon, Carroll County as Isaac Hawkins' partner. He served a term in the Tennessee General Assembly as a Whig (1853-1855) and was an elector for John Bell in 1860. He was United States district attorney for West Tennessee (1864-1865), state supreme court justice from 1865 to 1869, United States consul general to Havana, Cuba (1869-1870), and governor of Tennessee (1881-1883). Robert M. McBride and Dan M. Robison, *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly*, 2 vols. (Nashville, 1975), 1:346-47. (hereafter BDTGA)

⁴Mayfield letter, 1.

⁵Major General Stephen A. Hurlbut (1818-1882) commanded the 16th Army Corps, with headquarters in Memphis, when Gen. N. B. Forrest raided West Tennessee in the spring of 1864. Although urged by his superiors to attack Forrest, he declined to leave his base in Memphis. As a result he was relieved of his command for "timidity." After the war, he was a two term congressman from Illinois, a founder of the G. A. R., and a minister to Peru. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue* (Baton Rouge, 1964), 244-45; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter OR), 128 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), ser. 1, Vol. 32, pt. 3: 366, 382, 405-06.

⁶U. S. Congress, *House Reports*, 38th Cong., 1st sess., No. 65:68.

⁷*Ibid.*, 68-75; OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. 1: 543-46.

⁸Mayfield letter, 8.

⁹OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. 1:543-46.

¹⁰Mayfield letter, 17.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 5-6; OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. 3:129.

¹²OR, ser. 1, vol. 35, pt. 2:132.

¹³*Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁵OR, ser. 2, vol. 7:216-17.

¹⁶Memorandum from Prisoner of War Records, Compiled Service Records, Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, U. S. A., Isaac R. Hawkins muster records, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (hereinafter NA).

¹⁷*Harper's Weekly*, August 27, 1864, pp. 549-50.

¹⁸Mayfield letter, 16.

¹⁹George B. McClellan (1826-1885), a brilliant but overly cautious Union general, accepted the Democratic nomination for the presidency in August of 1864, although he repudiated the peace or copperhead platform in the Chicago platform. In November, Lincoln carried every state except New Jersey, Delaware and Kentucky.

²⁰George H. Pendleton (1825-1889), an Ohio lawyer and congressman, ran as a Democratic vice-presidential candidate in 1864. After the war, he served as a United States senator and as a minister to Germany. BDAC, p. 1527.

²¹Confederate Major General Sterling Price (1825-1889), a former congressman and ex-governor of Missouri, invaded the state in September of 1864, but was repulsed after some initial successes against Union forces. Lincoln did carry Missouri as Hawkins predicted. BDAC, 1569; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray* (Baton Rouge, 1959), 246-47.

²²Oliver P. Morton (1823-1877), a lawyer and former judge, served as a wartime governor of Indiana. He was elected to the United States Senate in 1867 as a Radical Republican. BDAC, 1446.

²³Greencastle, Indiana is located in Putnam County, southwest of Indianapolis. Ellen Hawkins, Isaac's wife, apparently had to flee their home in Huntingdon, Tennessee because of intimidation by Confederate partisans. Their home was looted later.

²⁴Ellen Amelia Ott (1822-1884) married Isaac Hawkins, March 29, 1843. She was from Murfreesboro, Tennessee and was the sister of Justina M. Ott who married Alvin Hawkins. Nancy W. Walker, *Out of a Clear Blue Sky* (Cleveland, Tn., 1971), 199-201.

²⁵Adam Hall might be A. R. Hall who was identified in the 1870 Census as a forty year old retail merchant in Huntingdon, Tn., with personal and

real property worth a total of \$65,000. U.S. Census, 1860, Tn., Carroll, 11 Dist., p. 32.

²⁶ The McNeils or McNeals cannot be definitely identified.

²⁷ Hawkins implied that the policy of devastation being carried out by General Philip H. Sheridan's forces in the Shenandoah Valley was in retaliation for raids carried out by Jubal Early's Confederate troops into Maryland in July and August of 1864.

²⁸ Hawkins probably referred to his mother, Nancy Roberts Hawkins, the daughter of General Isaac Roberts. She died in 1866.

²⁹ General Mason Brayman (1813-1895) commanded the District of Cairo and was Hawkins' immediate superior. He attempted to reinforce Hawkins but arrived too late, some five hours after the surrender. Warner, *General in Blue*, 43-44; 38 Congress, *House Report* 65, pp. 8-9.

³⁰ Cairo, Illinois served as a Federal storage facility and staging area on the Mississippi.

³¹ Gardner Station, in Weakley County, was located on the rail line from Union City to Dresden.

³² Columbus, Kentucky, a Union strongpoint and storage facility on the Mississippi, was situated some twenty-five miles from Union City.

³³ Captain John T.C. Robeson, H Co. of the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, U.S.A. (hereafter 7 Cav.), Compiled Service Records (hereafter CSR), NA.

³⁴ Captain Pleasant K. Parsons, E Co., 7 Cav. CSR, NA.

³⁵ Wallace's Mill cannot be identified.

³⁶ Lieutenant Elbert M. Royall, B Co., 7 Cav., CSR, NA.

³⁷ Mink Station (Harris Community), in Obion County, was located on the Memphis and Paducah Railroad, northeast of Union City.

³⁸ Graves County, Kentucky is located north of Weakley County, Tn.

³⁹ Hawkins referred to the assistant adjutant-general at Cairo, Captain James H. Odlin who served on General Brayman's staff.

⁴⁰ Captain Isaiah H. Williams, served as district provost marshal at Columbus, Kentucky. OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. 3:128.

⁴¹ Faulkner's Kentucky Regiment (Twelfth Kentucky) was raised by Colonel W.W. Faulkner in the border counties of Western Kentucky and Tennessee. Robert Selph Henry, *"First With the Most" Forrest* (New York, 1944), 205.

⁴² General Nathan Bedford Forrest was not present at Union City.

⁴³ First Lieutenant Robert Y. Bradford, E Co., 7 Cav. CSR, NA.

⁴⁴ Captain Wyatt Harris, Twenty-fourth Missouri Infantry (provost troops for the Sixteenth Army Corps, U.S.A.

⁴⁵ William L. Duckworth, Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, C.S.A. Marcus J. Wright, *Tennessee in the War 1861-1865* (New York, 1908), 85.

⁴⁶ Original surrender terms in possession of Anne E. Quigley of Huntingdon, Tn.

⁴⁷ John A. Gardner (1809-1892), lawyer, newspaper editor and planter served in both the house and senate of the Tennessee General Assembly. In 1860, he was one of the wealthiest planters and largest slaveholders in Weakley County (100,000. real, 75,000. personal property), *BDTGA*, 1:276-77; U.S. Census 1860, Tn., Weakley, Dist. 3, p. 289.

⁴⁸ First Lieutenant Robert W. Helmer, K,B Co., 7 Cav., CSR, NA.

⁴⁹ Lieutenant Samuel W. Hawkins (1844-1906) I Co., 7 Cav., Isaac's twenty year old son, was discharged at the end of the war as a captain. A lawyer and politician, he ran unsuccessfully for governor of Tennessee in 1888 as a Republican. CSR, NA.

⁵⁰ Captain John W. Beatty, K Co., 7 Cav., CSR, NA.

⁵¹ Lieutenant William F. Allender, C. Co., 7 Cav., CSR, NA.

⁵² Bob Smith cannot be identified.

⁵³ Lieutenant James M. Neely, M. Co. and Lieutenant James W. Morgan, E. Co., 7 Cav. CSR, NA.

⁵⁴ Major Thomas A. Smith, F & S, 7 Cav., forty-seven year old Henderson County farmer, survived his term in the Confederate prisons. CSR, NA; U.S. Census, 1860, Tn., Henderson, 12th Dist., p.172.

⁵⁵ Lieutenant Colonel W.D. Lannum of Faulkner's Kentucky Regiment received serious wounds at Union City but recovered. OR, ser. 1, vol. 32, pt. 1:608.

⁵⁶ Sergeant Thomas P. Gray acted as captain of C. and I. Companies. Of all the Seventh Cavalry men interviewed after Union City, Gray's statements were the most damaging against Hawkins. 38 Congress, *House Report* 65, pp. 68-70 115.

⁵⁷ General Brayman's report indicated that the loss to the officers and

men reached some \$60,000. OR, ser.1, vol.32, pt.1:503.

⁵⁸ T.R. Scurlock, a fifty-two year old lawyer, resided in Jackson, Tn., with property worth a total of \$31,000 in 1860. U.S. Census, 1860, Tn., Madison, Jackson, p. 33. General Samuel Jackson Hays, a nephew of Andrew Jackson, was an extremely wealthy Madison County planter who had served in the Mexican War. U.S. Census, 1860, Tn., Madison, Dist. 1, p.57; Emma I. Williams, *Historic Madison* (Jackson, Tn., 1946), passim. The McRays mentioned by Hawkins might be Mr. and Mrs. J.M. McCree of Jackson. U.S. Census, 1860, Tn., Madison, Jackson, p.14.

⁵⁹ The lady who befriended Colonel Hawkins and his son was probably Anna E. Long. Her husband, J.B. Long, served as a captain in the Confederate army. They claimed \$25,000. real and \$45,000. personal property in 1860. U.S. Census, 1860, Tn., Madison, Jackson, p. 7; Williams, *Historic Madison*, 164; 1860, U.S. Census, Tennessee, Madison, Jackson, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Lieutenant William W. Murray, I Co., 7 Cav. After the war, Murray served in the Tennessee legislature and was mayor of Huntingdon at the time of his death in 1907. He had run unsuccessfully for the U.S. Congress in 1872, for the Tennessee Supreme Court in 1886 and for the U.S. Senate in 1887. *BDTGA*, 2:651-52; CSR, NA.

⁶¹ Franklin Hawkins, Isaac's cousin, apparently was a Confederate sympathizer, as were several of the younger brothers of Alvin Hawkins. One of them, William H. Hawkins, perhaps the person referred to as Bill on this page of the letter, was a captain in B Co. Twentieth Tennessee Cavalry, C.S.A.

⁶² Pocahontas, Hardeman County, Tennessee.

⁶³ Purdy, McNairy County, Tennessee.

⁶⁴ This could be Colonel Raleigh R. White of the Fortieth (Neely's) Tennessee Cavalry, C.S.A. or Colonel T.W. White of the Ninth Mississippi Regiment, C.S.A. The latter was sent to Richmond with the Union flags captured at Union City and Fort Pillow. OR, ser.1, vol.32, pt. 1:606.

⁶⁵ Ripley, Tippah County, Mississippi.

⁶⁶ General Samuel J. Gholson (1808-1883) commanded a brigade of cavalry in Chalmers Division of Forrest's Corps. He was a lawyer and a United States congressman. Warner, *Generals in Gray*, 103-04.

⁶⁷ Ellistown, Union County, Mississippi.

⁶⁸ Lieutenant John J. Wallace, K Co., 7 Cav., CSR, NA.

⁶⁹ Tupelo, Lee County, Mississippi.

⁷⁰ Lewis McKisick or Captain Bransford cannot be identified.

⁷¹ The steamer *Southern Republic*, an unarmed Confederate inland steamboat, was used to transport supplies and men along the rivers of south Alabama. She surrendered on the Tombigbee on May 10, 1865. Thomas Scharf, *History of the Confederate Navy* (New York, 1887), 596.

⁷² Tensaw, Baldwin County, Alabama.

⁷³ Pollard, Escambia County, Alabama.

⁷⁴ Harris cannot be identified.

⁷⁵ Lieutenant William W. Murray wrote about the escape in: *From Macon, Georgia, to the Gulf, an escaping prisoner's experience*. Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Ohio, v., 88-117.

⁷⁶ Hawkins referred to the retreat of General Joseph E. Johnston before the Union army under General William T. Sherman in the spring and summer of 1864.

⁷⁷ Captains Parsons and Beatty of the 7 Cav. were both courtmartialled on separate charges; the charges were not related to the surrender at Union City.

⁷⁸ Joseph McCracken, quartermaster sergeant in the 7 Cav., survived Andersonville. After the war, he opened a retail business in Huntingdon and had property worth \$12,250. in 1870. U.S. Census, 1870, Tn., Carroll, Huntingdon, p.34.

⁷⁹ Wily Wright is probably J.W. Wright of B. Co., 7 Cav. who died in Andersonville, August 10, 1864, CSR, NA; John L. Ransom, *Andersonville Diary, Escape, and List of Dead* (New York, 1974), 355.

⁸⁰ Hugh Caldwell, C. Co., 7 Cav., survived Andersonville. His records show that he was accused of changing allegiances while in prison. CSR, NA.

⁸¹ Fayette Robeson was probably Lieutenant Jephtha L. Robeson of C. Co., 7 Cav., CSR, NA.

⁸² Captain Asa N. (Blackhawk) Hays of C. Co. 7 Cav. He was from Henderson County. CSR, NA.

⁸³ See footnote 54.