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“SO LOST TO HONOR”: THE MASS DESERTION OF THE CAMP FORD GUARD JULY 20, 1864

Vicki Betts

The Austin, Texas, newspaper printed a “special correspondence” from Tyler, dated July 29, 1864:

Editor Gazette—About a week ago 150 men of Col. Anderson's Regiment, who were guarding the Federal prisoners near here, organized under a Lieutenant, and left. Their horses had come in from grazing the day before, and they are well-armed and mounted. Col. Anderson endeavored to overtake them with a small force, and induce or compel them to return, but was unable to overtake them. They deserted in open day, fell into line at the sound of the trumpet, and are by this time on the frontier, I presume.

For a day or two the Federals were very insecurely guarded and some apprehensions were felt that they would escape and do much damage, but all is safe now. What should be the punishment for men so lost to honor as to desert their post, leaving 3000 or 4000 miscreants almost unguarded in the heart of the country, thus endangering the lives and property of the whole country to pillage and slaughter?¹

The federal prisoners mentioned in this article were being held at Camp Ford, the largest Confederate prisoner of war camp west of the Mississippi, and the lieutenant at the head of the deserters was 2nd Lieut. G. N. “Nick” Hardeman, eighteen years old, of Matagorda County. Why would he leave his assigned post along with so many others, and what happened to him as a result?²

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Nick Hardeman was no ordinary Texas farm boy. In 1845 his father, D. Hardeman, had moved from Tennessee and points in between to join his extended family already well established in the new state.

Ten years earlier, in 1835, forty-five Hardemans, led by Nick's great uncles Bailey, Peter, and Thomas, all veterans of the Battle of New Orleans, had located in Texas, receiving grants along Caney Creek in what is now Matagorda County. Bailey Hardeman assisted in writing the Republic of Texas' Declaration of Independence as well as its Constitution, and served as the Republic's first Secretary of the Treasury. Four of Nick's first cousins once removed fought with the army of the Republic of Texas, including one at San Jacinto. A brother-in-law and four cousins fought in the Mexican War, mostly with McCulloch's Rangers. 3

The family had enjoyed outstanding political and social connections for generations. His grandmother was a friend of Martha Washington. His parents attended Andrew Jackson's inaugural party at the Hermitage in Nashville. One great aunt was also the aunt of President James K. Polk. A Missouri cousin was a close friend of Thomas Hart Benton, while another was the first governor of the state of California and friend of John C. Fremont. 4

As might be expected, the family was quite wealthy. After the rest of the Hardeman clan gradually moved away from the coast to claim new land, D. Hardeman took their place in Matagorda County where his eldest daughter, Sallie Ann, married her first cousin once removed, Samuel H. Hardeman, the son of Bailey Hardeman. In the 1859 tax rolls, D. owned almost three thousand acres, worth $42,529, or almost $14.26 per acre, well above the state average. He owned forty-nine slaves, plus his wife owned twelve in her own right, placing them comfortably within the planter aristocracy. They kept thirty horses, seventy-five cattle, and one carriage. However, about that same year D. Hardeman decided to sell out and move elsewhere in the state. By the 1860 tax rolls, he only reported 711 acres, and he did not appear in the 1861 Matagorda County tax rolls at all. 5

Politically D. Hardeman was a staunch Democrat. He represented his region to the State Democratic Convention in 1859. 6 The local newspaper called him a "warm supporter of the Democratic nominees against the Sam Houston pow wow. He does not know of a man in his neighborhood who will vote for Houston." 7

Nick was the ninth of eleven children, five boys and six girls, although four of the children had died early in life, and the three oldest girls had married by 1860. That left D. Jr., Dickerson, Martha Evelyn, Nick, and
William Perkins at home when the war began. Two months after Fort Sumter, on June 13, 1861, Captain Edward S. Rugeley formed the Caney Rifles in which one of Nick's brothers-in-law served as 3rd Lieutenant and his two brothers and another brother-in-law served as privates. Five weeks later this group reorganized as the Caney Mounted Rifles, which later became Company D, Reuben Brown's Regiment Texas Cavalry. Nick's two brothers soon left the Rifles—D. Jr. joined Terry's Texas Rangers, and Dickerson joined the Fourth Texas Cavalry, part of Sibley's Brigade. One Hardeman cousin became a major in the Quartermaster Corps, another a captain in the 28th Texas Cavalry of Walker's Texas Division, another served in the 16th Texas Infantry, and another in Hood's Texas Brigade. The highest ranking family member was Nick's cousin William Polk Hardeman, who rose to Brigadier General by the end of the war. William Polk Hardeman was Samuel's first cousin as well as his step-father.

In 1861 Nick was only fifteen years old, but he made regular trips to Camp Winston near Matagorda Bay where Brown's Regiment was stationed. His sister, Sallie, sent Nick out with letters, boxes, and jars of goodies for her husband Samuel, and Samuel sent Nick back with letters, redfish, oysters, and seashells. Nick may have picked up the measles in camp—he was sick for New Year's Day, 1862. D. Sr. visited the part of his family remaining in Matagorda County from time to time, and sent bolts of cloth when he could.

He wrote them letters from “Fairview” although it is unclear whether that is a plantation name, or one of several towns in Texas called “Fairview.” In one letter he suggested that Samuel go and see General and Mrs. Hamilton P. Bee in San Antonio as “they are my most intimate friends.”

In March, 1863, Samuel, by then age forty-two, received an honorable discharge from the army and the correspondence slacked for a while. However, by late January, 1864, he had again rejoined Brown's Cavalry. At about the same time, Philip Fulcrod of Goliad formed Fulcrod's Cadet Cavalry from young men not quite old enough for the regular service, among them Nick Hardeman. They were promised “active service and gallant leaders, and the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing their country as much service, as the noble men who have gone before them.” As soon as the command assembled, General Bee ordered one company to picket duty on the coast, four companies under Col. Fulcrod to head “west” to arrest deserters, and one company to be stationed at Columbia as couriers. As of February 14, 1864, three more companies were in the process of being raised, but they might not have ever been completed.
early April the commands of Philip Fulcrand and John Pelham Border were combined, with Col. Thomas Scott Anderson, formerly of the Sixth Texas Infantry, placed in command. From that point on, the unit would be known as Anderson's-Border's Cavalry.18

On April 11, immediately after the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, Border received orders to take his battalion from their camp on the Lavaca River to Camp Ford to assist in guarding the anticipated influx of thousands of new prisoners.19 Nick was not in camp at the time—he was again “quite sick” but recovered sufficiently to accompany the regiment north in early May.20 Col. Anderson arrived in Tyler on May 13 to replace Col. R.T.P. Allen as commandant of Camp Ford. He found Sid Richardson’s company of Walter P. Lane’s Rangers already on guard duty but anxious to join the fighting at the front.21 They would not consider handing over their arms to their replacements.22 For a while the veterans and the young raw recruits overlapped at the prison. W. W. Heartsill, a veteran, was not impressed—one of Anderson’s Regiment managed to kill himself by an accidental discharge of his gun within half an hour of going on duty for the first time.23

Nick and the rest of Anderson’s-Border’s Cavalry arrived at Camp Ford during the worst period of the stockade’s history. The Mansfield and Pleasant Hill prisoners had already arrived, necessitating enlarging the facility.24 On May 21 another almost 500 came in from Arkansas and six days later 540 earlier prisoners returned after the Red River Campaign canceled their anticipated exchange, making a total of 4400 men within the walls. Ten days later another 160 arrived.25 The new prisoners were provided with no shelter from the early summer sun and heat. Sanitation became an immediate problem.

Anderson placed Border in control of Camp Ford, and Border’s adjutant, Lt. B. W. McEachern soon became the tyrant of the stockade. During this period the tension between the guards and the prisoners, and even in the outside community, was intense. On May 18, Van Zandt County resident Joseph E. Holcomb and Collin County residents James L. Read and James M. McReynolds, the latter two accused of murder, were removed from the Smith County jail and lynched.26 On May 22, one of Anderson’s men shot and killed a prisoner, allegedly for cursing him, although others denied the excuse.27 Five prisoners escaped on June 9 but were recaptured the next day.28 On June 22 a Yankee was found shot dead in the woods where he had gone after brush, and after that the federals hired Confederate
The next day a slave woman was severely whipped in full view of the prisoners, as if to prove the powerlessness of abolitionist federals to protect her.\textsuperscript{30} The prisoners somewhat broke the tension on the Fourth of July, when they held an Independence Day celebration, including music, speeches, and the possible brief raising of a secreted U.S. flag.\textsuperscript{31} A few days later about a thousand of the earliest prisoners were paroled and marched toward Shreveport for exchange, easing the overcrowding somewhat.\textsuperscript{32} Still, on July 11 another guard killed a Yankee for cursing him,\textsuperscript{33} and on the fifteenth a prisoner killed his messmate.\textsuperscript{34} Nick's first commander, Philip Fulcrod, was ordered to Tyler on July 13 to stand court martial for some unknown reason, perhaps something he did in reaction to losing his command.\textsuperscript{35} At sunrise on July 16, the veterans of Walter P. Lane's Rangers joyfully "bid farewell" to Camp Ford,\textsuperscript{36} heading east to Marshall and on to Shreveport, leaving the prisoners under the care of the hated Lt. McEachern and the recruits of Anderson's/Border's Cavalry, many of them still in their teens. All in all, this was probably not the "active service" that Nick Hardeman perhaps thought he had been promised when he enlisted in the Confederate Army.

As the Austin newspaper stated, on Tuesday, July 19, the cavalry horses were brought in from pasture. The next day the trumpet sounded and the men, many of them only boys, mounted their horses and headed west, leaving all behind.\textsuperscript{37} While the State Gazette said 150 men deserted their posts, Col. Scott Anderson put the number at Lt. Hardeman and ninety-eight additional men.\textsuperscript{38} Only two prisoner diaries are known to have survived from that period. On the 20th, Capt. William McKinney, 19th Kentucky Infantry, noted "quite a number of the guards desert. 160 in number."\textsuperscript{39} Jacob W. Paulen, 130th Illinois Regiment, wrote in his diary "163 Rebs deserted from this camp this morning. The authorities started after the deserters but don't hear from them." He added for the following day—"Sixty Rebels from Tyler deserted taking with them a 6 pounder. Joining those left this camp yesterday."\textsuperscript{40} No other reference to this second desertion has surfaced.

Anderson sent Capt. Gus Patton, Co. G, with two lieutenants and forty men in pursuit of the deserters. They carried Texas rifles borrowed from Col. Gabriel Hill of the Tyler ordnance works, the entire stock of guns he had reserved for the protection of that facility.\textsuperscript{41} Anderson also ordered a courier to ride to the nearest telegraph office in Henderson with a telegram to be sent to Houston. The next day, the headquarters of the District of
Col Bradford will proceed forthwith, exclusive of Mann's Battalion via Bastrop and Austin to Fredericksburg and use all means to intercept Lieut. Hardeman and one Hundred men deserted from Col. Anderson's Command Tyler on yesterday. . . ; Col. Bradford will leave sufficient number of men at points on the road from Bastrop to Fredericksburg to surprise & capture the men (who will march in an irregular and loose manner), also to communicate with each other, so that chase can be made in any direction the deserters may take. The officers & men under your command will shoot down without hesitation any of these men and particularly the officers should they attempt to escape or offer the least show of resistance. Col. Bradford will use the utmost vigilance and activity to intercept & capture the deserters, the safety & honor of the country require it.\textsuperscript{42}

General James E. Slaughter, chief of staff to Gen. John Bankhead Magruder, informed Lt. Col. Fulcrod, still in Houston, about the mass desertion from his former unit. Fulcrod responded the next day: "This subject has ever since been one of very painful reflection to me. I have thought that I could advance the service if I were permitted to go in search of them. The relations of the men have been such to me that I think I could induce them to return to their duty with comparatively little trouble. As you are aware I am at present under arrest and of course cannot act unless permitted."\textsuperscript{43} Fulcrod was not allowed to go after his men.

Within three of four days, seven of the deserters evidently saw the error of their ways and returned to Camp Ford voluntarily. These men were placed in close quarters.\textsuperscript{44}

Late on Friday night, the 22nd, Col. Nicholas H. Darnell, commanding the post at Dallas, received information that the deserters had reached the vicinity of Butler's Bridge on the East Fork of the Trinity River in Dallas County, and that they were making their way to the frontier. Darnell called together Capt. Smith's company of the Reserve Corps, a portion of Capt.
W. H. Darnell's company, and as many of the government employees and citizens as could arm themselves, totaling about eighty men, who started in pursuit about two o'clock on Saturday afternoon. They found tracks at the crossing of the Trinity River, at Cedar Springs, and trailed them all night, coming up on the men a little before daylight on Sunday morning a few miles southwest of Cedar Hill where they had camped. They were able to capture the whole party, except for about twenty who had left the group before they reached Dallas County, and Nick Hardeman and seven or eight others who made their escape. Capt. Patton and the squad of men from Tyler met Col. Darnell's company after the capture, and returned with them to Dallas on Sunday afternoon. On Tuesday, July 26 he escorted them back to Tyler and placed them in the guardhouse.\textsuperscript{45} The Dallas Herald declared that "The whole affair was well arranged, and carried out, and reflects much credit on the promptness and energy of Col. Darnell, as well as on the soldiers, the operatives in the Government troops at this place, and the citizens, all of whom responded with alacrity to the call of Col. Darnell for men."\textsuperscript{46}

Col. Anderson reported to Houston that most of the deserters had been returned, and Maj. Gen. John G. Walker ordered a court martial to be convened at Tyler. He instructed Anderson to choose "eight or ten of the ringleaders" to bring before the court, but at that point, none of the instigators had been captured.\textsuperscript{47} The men who returned voluntarily or who had been captured at Dallas would all later be released.\textsuperscript{48}

Meanwhile, D. Hardeman, Nick's father, was frantic to locate his "poor deluded son." He wrote Gen. Magruder on August 2nd from La Grange that he would go home in hopes of finding a letter there, but if he did not he would head to Tyler as fast as he could,

as they (the command) have not been heard of in this direction, and I am inclined in the belief that they have perhaps gone towards Louisiana hoping to get in with Genl Wharton this is merely my conjecture as I am sure they do not wish to desert the army, but it is merely some fancied wrong they think has been done them which I think I can satisfy them of their error in a few minutes if I can get to them and they will return to their duty at once. . . . I will not stop untill [sic] I find them and will inform you immediately. The more I reflect on the matter the more I
am convinced that he is not alone in this matter. I merely ask is it reasonable that a giddy foolish boy 18 years old should have more influence in a whole Battalion than all the others, Captains, Lieutenants & all put together. I do not believe it.49

In Tyler, Col. Anderson had been interviewing the returned deserters, and on August 6 he reported his findings on “the saddest mishap of my military life” to Capt. Edmund P. Turner, Walker’s adjutant. While he was willing to bring the “ringleaders” to trial, Lt. Hardeman and Lt. Kirby had still not been captured, and the men refused to name the company officers whom they considered as much to blame as themselves. Col. Anderson had determined four causes for the desertion:

1st The men desired to serve in the west, or rather, not serve at all, but to go where they could roam through the country and avoid duty as much as possible.50

2nd Most of the company officers are incompetent and have never commanded or tried to command their companies—and some of them are worthless and participated in and encouraged the desire of the men to go west and do nothing... Their action in the affair was negative and very cautiously exercised & consisted of casual expression in regard to the rights of the men to serve as a battalion under Col. Fulcro & that Gen Magruder had promised him (Col. F) that he should remain in the west & that he had now attached them to a Regt. of “Conscripts” &c &c.51

3rd The deserters tell me that they were going to report for duty in the west & that portion of Col. Pyron’s men had done the same thing & had never been punished & that Capt Pulliam’s Co. of Col. Peter Hardeman’s Regt last year left their Regt. in the Indian Territory & reported & were assigned to duty “in the west” & are there yet and have never been compelled even to return to their Regt.52

4th The impression prevails among them that Gen Magruder’s action in making them a part of this Regt. will be disregarded & they will yet be given to Col. Fulcro & return to the west—and that Gen Smith has promised Col. Fulcro to this effect. . .53
Meanwhile, the manhunt for the remaining deserters continued. On August 3, Houston headquarters was still ordering Capt. Pool with a detachment of fifteen men to "pursue with all haste and arrest the deserters—Lt. Hardeman & ten men (the rest having been arrested), they will be sent to Tyler Texas."\(^{54}\) A week later headquarters ordered Capt. Louis Bechwitz of Col. Anderson’s regiment of cavalry to “pursue to Col. Ford’s command on the Rio Grande Lieut hargrove [sic] & men of his company—he will arrest and prefer charges against Lt. Hargrove, collect the men of his company and proceed with them to Tyler and report to Col. T. S. Anderson.”\(^{55}\) At some point during the month of August, Nick Hardeman was arrested and incarcerated in the guardhouse at either Houston, according to an August letter from his sister Sallie,\(^{56}\) or Millican, according to Col. Anderson’s letter of September 29,\(^{57}\) or perhaps he was moved from one place to the other.

By that time Nick’s father, D. Sr., had fallen “dangerously ill of congestive fever” at his new home in Burleson County, and “his physicians [said] it was not possible for him to recover.” D.’s daughter, Sallie, wrote to her husband Samuel in Brown’s Cavalry, begging him to get a furlough to assist her mother, “you know how helpless Ev and Ma will be amongst total strangers without anyone to advise them. . . Pa was in a great deal of trouble about Nick, who is under arrest in Houston, but I will not here repeat the particulars of his case, for I suppose you have heard them before this. Poor misguided young man. I am afraid it will be a serious affair for him.”\(^{59}\) D. Hardeman died later in August.\(^{60}\) His attorney, William Pitt Ballinger, wrote in his diary: “Col. D. Hardeman died recently. No Better man is left behind. If I knew the facts I wd [sic] write a biographical sketch of him.”\(^{61}\) The Austin Daily Telegraph called him “one of the oldest and widest known of Texas citizens.”\(^{62}\)

Instead of Samuel, another son-in-law, William F. Davis, requested leave on August 28 to go to Nick’s mother. “[M]y father-in-law has just died, leaving his family in Burleson County in an unprotected condition having no male on the premises and a large number of slaves most of whom are now sick, his sons are all in the Army and are remote from home to give their Mother the immediate attention which her condition requires. The length of time asked for is barely sufficient to remove my mother-in-law to Matagorda County from whence she removed to Burleson county on the appearance of the enemy last winter, she can there receive the attention her situation requires from her friends who are too old to be in the Army. . .”\(^{63}\)

Samuel Hardeman’s company had been transferred to near Harrisburg, so he was near Nick. He wrote his wife on September 6 that William Davis
would be seeing Nick the following day and that he hoped to see Nick himself in a day or two. Five days later he wrote her that “Wiggins” had been to see Nick on the 9th, that he had been sick but was now “fat and Hearty and will have a chance of getting home before long.” Evidently Davis was not so confident, because Sallie wrote her husband that “I feel more anxious about the termination of his case since I saw Mr. Davis. Do write me what you think about it and how he bears his troubles.”

It was now time to bring in the family's wide connections to try and influence the impending court martial. Confederate Congressman Claiborne C. Herbert of Colorado County informed Lt. Gov. Fletcher S. Stockdale of the situation. Stockdale wrote Maj. Gen. Walker “Being informed by the Hon. C. C. Herbert that Lieut. N. Hardeman is held in arrest with the possibility of charges being presented against him of insubordination, and knowing something of the command to which he was formerly attached, I take the liberty of joining others in making the request that he be released upon the grounds, and reasons, stated by the President of the Confederate States in General Order no. 139, of 1863, issued from Genl. Cooper's office.” That proclamation of pardon and general amnesty had been extended to “all absentees, except those twice convicted of desertion, who should return to their proper commands within twenty days after publication of the amnesty in the State in which the absentees might be.” Stockdale continued his letter by explaining that “The battalion to which Lt. H was first attached was of boys, and raised by Lt. Col. Fulcrod during last fall and winter.” Stockdale had been in the area during the winter and spring and visited the camp—the officers were inexperienced and the young men had not been trained in military discipline. Lt. Col. Fulcrod was frequently off on detached service and “the examples then exhibited to them in old regiments and among men of mature age, on the contrary, was so calculated to provoke insubordination among them, that it was a frequent subject of remark with others as well as myself. . . . I take the liberty therefore to join in the request that Lt. Hardeman be discharged, or at least that you exercise in advance your authority to consider his case, & know whether his is not one in which your discretion may be exercised to dismiss the prosecution.”

Less than a week later, on September 26, Samuel Hardeman wrote his wife:

I went to see Mrs. Sarah Wharton [mother of Confederate Major General John Austin Wharton, sister of Leonard Groce] who was at Mr. Leonard Groce's near
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Hempstead. She told me that she had been to see Genl. Walker and that he had promised to do all he could for Nick consistent with the duties of his office. Mr. Groce told me that he had spoken to Col. Scott Anderson and he thought that there would be no great difficulty about the case. Col. Anderson is the Col. from under whose command the cadets deserted. His wife is Mary McNeill, an old acquaintance of mine. I got Mrs. Wharton to agree to talk to Col. A. I assure you that what Mr. Groce told me took a great weight off of my mind for I felt much grief about it... Nick is fat and hearty and sends his love to Betsy and Catherine Chapman.

If Mrs. Wharton did indeed talk to Col. Anderson, she did not convince him to drop the charges. He probably had no choice, given his orders to put the ringleaders on trial. On September 29, he requested “that Lt. Hardeman be tried upon the charges preferred.”

On October 4, 1864, Special Order no. 24 was issued:

A Gen'l Court Martial is hereby appointed to convene at Brenham, Texas, on Tuesday the 11th day of Octr 1864, at 10 o'clock a.m., or as soon thereafter as practicable for the trial of Lieut. G. W. Hardeman of Anderson's Reg't, and such other prisoners as may be brought before it. The Court will sit without regard to hours. Detail for the Court

1. Col [Henry] M Elmore 20th Texas Infty President
2. Lieut. Col. [James] Wrigley, Timmons Reg't Infantry

Capt. George P. Finlay P.A.C.S. is appointed Judge Advocate of the Court.

Nick's case was delayed for some unknown reason. His older brother, D. Jr., was able to get leave and tried to get him additional civilian legal
representation. He visited Thomas M. Jack, Thomas Pitt Ballinger's law partner, on October 21, who then contacted Ballinger who was at that point out of town. "D. Hardeman came to see me this morning. Got his leave extended. Goes to Hempstead to see J. W. Is anxious for you to appear in defense of his brother."Ballinger arrived home within the week and wrote in his diary on the 26th "... unless [Horace] Cone could go to Brenham—I must certainly go to defend Nick Hardeman before a court martial—& must go up to-day. Cone wrote me this morning he couldn't go—& I wrote to D. H. [D. Hardeman, Jr.] and to Scott Anderson I would go up to-morrow—It puts me to great inconvenience, but I do not feel that I can with propriety decline considering any relations towards the Hardeman family—I wouldn't that he should be dishonored or seriously punished for any earthly consideration—& shall spare no effort to preserve him." On Thursday, October 27th, Ballinger traveled to Brenham to assist on Nick's case. He found that the charges had not yet been received, nor would they be the following day. He wrote in his diary:

I saw Nick Hardeman. He is a fine noble boy—one of the last I have ever seen to commit a conscious wrong. He was lying sick—His brother D was there also. He had employed [John Woods] Harris & it turned out that Col. [Leonard] Groce caused me to be telegraphed for. Harris also favored the employment of [Jabez Demming] Giddings which was done, tho' G did not seem to consider it necessary or to enter into the case with much interest. I conferred with H. fully—left him DeHart, with written mems of my views—& I left Saturday. ... I wrote Harris yestdy [November 6] fully as to Hardeman's case—He wants me to go up, but this is impossible. Court will set the 17th.

In the meantime, several witnesses were summoned: Lt. Col. Philip Fulcrod; Mr. Trabne, provost marshal at Millican; privates R. Jones, E. Nelson, and T. Dunn of Nick's company H, and Captain W. B. Coffield, Lt. W. H. Randle, and Pvt. R. Crunk of Company K.

No detailed account of Nick Hardeman's trial for desertion have survived, but the final results were published on December 29. He was one of four men tried at the same time as a result of the same incident. Privates J. H. Herron of Company I and William Reed of Company K, who
deserted “and did not return” to their posts, were found guilty and given three months hard labor under guard. Private Ed. Schertz, of Company D, who deserted “and remained absent until arrested” was found guilty and given three months hard labor with ball and chain, under guard. The specification against 2nd Lt. Nick Hardeman, Co. H, Anderson's Regiment, Texas Cavalry, C. S. Army, read that he “did, on or about the 20th day of July, 1864, his regiment being stationed at Camp Ford, near Tyler, Texas, desert the service of the Confederate States, in company with about one hundred men of his own and other companies of his Regiment, and did not return to his command. To which charge and specification the accused pleaded Not Guilty.” The court, however, found him guilty to both the specification and the charge and sentenced him “to be Cashiered, forfeit all pay and emoluments due him from the Confederate States, and that he be turned over to the Enrolling Officer for conscription.”79 The findings were confirmed, and Nick was simply released from confinement.

Nick Hardeman does not show up again in any official military paperwork, although he evidently did return to the army in a different regiment. On February 5, 1865, Samuel Hardeman, Nick's brother-in-law, wrote to his wife from Camp Ford, stating that he had arrived on January 26th, “after a long trip through bad weather and bad roads” from beyond the Bernard River. Brown's Cavalry, now part of cousin Maj. Gen. William Polk Hardeman's Brigade, Bee's Division, Wharton's Cavalry Corps of the Trans-Mississippi, had been temporarily assigned to guard duty until the Reserves could be assembled and armed. Samuel wrote Sallie that “Nick plays the fiddle on one side of me and Lt. Bemehon the other.”80 Nick Hardeman was back at Camp Ford, guarding prisoners once more, but this time under the watchful eye of his brother-in-law and under the ultimate command of his cousin. He was not just visiting, either, because on March 28th, Samuel wrote from Brazos County that “Nick says you must tell Betsy that he is well and hearty and rec'd her letter with which he was much delighted. Tell her he says he is going to apply for a 30 day furlough pretty soon and come to see her.”81 Evidently he got his furlough, one way or the other, because he was at his mother's home, probably in Burleson County, by the second week of April.82 He was not mentioned in Samuel's letter of May 3rd.83

A biographical sketch of D. Hardeman Jr. states that after the war “when he returned to the once magnificent domain of his father” he found it “laid waste by the ruthless hand of the war, and the family scattered.”84 If it was truly laid waste, it was from inattention, not because of any sort
of federal invasion, and the family was only scattered between Burleson and Matagorda counties. According to that sketch, "[n]othing daunted, he, with his brother [probably William Perkins Hardeman, although it could have been Nick], rented a farm and undertook the task of tilling the soil themselves."85

On December 29, 1865, the San Antonio Daily Herald announced that Nick Hardeman had been found dead on November 29th, five miles from La Grange, on the Lyonsville road, at the crossing of the Navidad River. It stated that "he had evidently come to his death by foul means."86 An article in Flake’s Bulletin added that the jury of inquest found that he had been shot three times, twice in the right side of the body and once in the right side of the head, at the hands of someone unknown.87 The Bulletin quoting the Goliad Intelligencer, stated that while getting his horse shod in LaGrange he had remarked that he was on his way to Arizona. The “giddy foolish” nineteen year old boy had allowed $425 in gold to be seen, which was not found on the body.88 His final resting place is unknown.

Endnotes

1 Austin State Gazette, 24 August 24. For a broader view on Confederate desertion see Mark A. Weitz, More Damning Than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

2 For additional information on Camp Ford, see F. Lee Lawrence and Robert W. Glover, Camp Ford, C. S. A.: The Story of Union Prisoners in Texas (Austin, TX: Civil War Centennial Commission, 1964); Robert W. Glover, Camp Ford: Tyler, Texas, C.S.A. (Nacogdoches, TX: East Texas Historical Association, 1998); and Randal B. Gilbert, A New Look at Camp Ford, Tyler, Texas: The Largest Confederate Prison West of the Mississippi River, Third revised edition (Tyler, TX: Smith County Historical Society, 2010).


4 Devine, Some Hardeman Ancestors, 3-4.

5 Matagorda County, Texas, Tax Rolls, microfilm, Texas State Library and Archives, 1859-1861.

6 Clarksville Standard, 30 April 1859.

7 Matagorda Gazette, 18 June 1859.
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8 Wilson, Hardeman Impact on Early Texas History, 85.


10 Ibid, 62.

11 Ibid, 63.

12 Ibid, 76.

13 Ibid, 48.

14 Ibid, 91.


16 [Houston] Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 9 December 1863.


20 Saga of Caney Creek, 91, 93.


23 Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 204.


27 Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 205.


30 Jacob W. Paulen, Diary, photocopy of typescript, Smith County Historical Society Archives, Tyler, Texas, 27.

31 Paulen, Diary, 28.

32 Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 209.


38 Scott Anderson to Stephen D. Yancey, 29 September 1864, Personal


40 Paulen, Diary, 28.


42 Special Orders, no. 203, paragraph 16, pp. 65-66, Chapter II, vol. 105, July 1864, Military Departments, Special Orders, District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, July-Sept. 1864, Confederate Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.


45 Ibid.

46 Dallas Herald, 30 July 1864.


Confederate soldiers in “the west” along the frontier generally guarded against Indian attacks and hunted deserters. See Weitz, More Damning than Slaughter, 136; David Paul Smith, Frontier Defense in the Civil War: Texas’ Rangers and Rebels (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992).

Antipathy toward serving with conscripts is also noted in Charles David Grear’s Why Texans Fought in the Civil War (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 108.

Peter Hardeman was Nick Hardeman’s first cousin once removed.

Scott Anderson to E. P. Turner, 6 August 1864, Personal Service File, Scott Thomas Anderson, Civil War Soldiers—Confederate—Border’s Cavalry (Anderson’s Regiment), 8-10, Footnote.com, http://www.footnote.com/image/#66079288, #66079294, and #66079301 (accessed 21 August 2010), Confederate Record Group 109, NARA M323. By early 1863, “self-reassignment” had become a problem on both sides of the Mississippi. Men of the Ninth Texas Cavalry “believed that if enough of them deserted and went west of the Mississippi River, the regiment would be re-formed there and transferred.” Weitz, More Damning than Slaughter, 151,161-2. See also Grear, Why Texans Fought in the Civil War, 120-121.

Special Orders, no. 216, paragraph 16, p. 112, Chapter II, vol. 105, 3 August 1864, Military Departments, Special Orders, District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, July-Sept. 1864, Confederate Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.

Special Orders, no. 223, paragraph 5, p. 127, Chapter II, vol. 105, 10 August 1864, Military Departments, Special Orders, District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, July-Sept. 1864, Confederate Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.

Saga of Caney Creek, 96.


Saga of Caney Creek, 96.

Ibid.

Devine, Some Hardeman Ancestors, 10.

William Pitt Ballinger Diary, 30 August 1864, Ballinger Papers, Briscoe
Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

62 Austin Daily Telegraph, 29 August 1864.


64 Saga of Caney Creek, 98.

65 Ibid, 99-100.


67 Ella Lonn, Desertion During the Civil War (reprint of 1928 edition; Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 48-49.


70 Saga of Caney Creek, 103-4.


72 Special Orders, no. 24, paragraph 4, p. 64, Chapter II, volume 104, 4 October 1864, Military Departments, Special Orders, District of Texas New Mexico, and Arizona, Sept. 1864-Feb. 1865, Confederate Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.

73 Thomas M. Jack to Mr. Ballinger, 21 October 1864, Guy M. Bryan papers, Box 2N246, file 6, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

74 Ballinger Diary, 26 October 1864.

75 Ibid, 7 November 1864.

76 Special Orders, no. 57, paragraph 1, p. 116, Chapter II, volume 104, 6 November 1864, Military Departments, Special Orders, District of Texas, New
Mexico, and Arizona, Sept. 1864-Feb. 1865, Confederate Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, DC.


80 Saga of Caney Creek, 110.

81 Ibid, 114.

82 Ibid, 115.

83 Ibid, 117-118.

84 James Cox, Historical and Biographical Record of the Cattle Industry and the Cattlemen of Texas (St. Louis, MO: Woodward & Tiernan Printing Company, 1895), 608-609.

85 Ibid.

86 San Antonio Daily Herald, 29 December 1865.

87 Flake's Bulletin, 13 January 1866.