

Primary Source: Life Under Union Occupation ^[1]

Alice Williamson was a sixteen year old girl who lived in Gallatin, Tennessee and kept a journal from February to September of 1864. Gallatin is located in Middle Tennessee's Sumner County, which was taken by the Union in February of 1862. Although it was reclaimed briefly by the Confederacy in July of 1862, Union forces reclaimed the county in November of 1862 under the control of General Eleazar Arthur Paine, and the county remained occupied by Union forces through the end of the war.

Sumner County was an important Union military stronghold because a major railroad and the Cumberland River ran through the county. Troops were stationed in the county to protect the railroad and to police the local population. At the time of Williamson's journaling, these troops were under the control of Union General Eleazar Arthur Paine. General Paine -- spelled "Payne" in the journals -- was notoriously brutal. Although some Union generals acted in a similar manner, not all ruled with such violence. Paine was eventually replaced by another general who upheld the rule of law and ended the executions of men in Sumner County. Paine later faced investigation and punishment for his actions against civilians, and resigned from the military in 1865.

Below are excerpts from Williamson's journal where she discusses events that unfolded during the time General Paine, including the execution of those suspected to be Confederate spies without a proper trial and the arrival of Freedmen and establishment of a contraband camp in the area.

Feb. 19, 1864

What a negligent creature I am I should have been keeping a journal all this time to show to my rebel brothers. I have been studying all the morning and talking all the evening seeking & sighing for rebels. [Our king\(old Payne\)](#) has just passed. I suppose he has killed every rebel in twenty miles of Gallatin and burned every town. Poor fellow! you had better be praying old Sinner! His [Lordship](#) left Tuesday. Wednesday three wagons loaded with furniture came over. I do not pretend to say that he sent them. No! I indeed, I would not. I would not slander our king. Any old citizen can see by going to his (Paynes) palace that his furniture was not taken from Archie Miller's house & other places near by. He always goes for rebels but-invariably brings furniture. I suppose his task is to furnish the contraband camp, i.e. the camp of his angels (colored).

March 3

Snow all melted and weather fine. Gen. Payne rode out this evening to look at the stock, in his last trip he killed only one man (citizen, he always kills citizens when he cant find soldiers) swears he will kill every man in Gallatin and Hartsville if [bush whacking](#) isn't stopped shortly.

March 6

Yesterday was the day of elections and as only the union men were allowed to vote nobody knows how it turned out nor do they care. Sallie Montgomery rode out this evening, the [pickets](#) ^[2] would not let her pass, so she slipped them as many do. I suppose they are scared again. Perhaps that scamp [John Morgan](#) is about. I only hope he is, for we have not seen a rebel for more than a year and our day must come soon

March 10

Old Payne dined at Mrs. Hales today: every one [despises](#) ^[3] him but are afraid to show it. Yesterday he went up the country a few miles to a Mr. Dalton's whose son came home from the Southern Army the day before and had the same day taken the [Amnesty Oath](#). Riding up to the door he enquired of Mr. Dalton if his son was at home but before he answered his son came to the door. Old Nick then told him to get his horse and go with him. After insulting the father he carried his son a half mile away and shot him six times. One of Payne's escort hearing the young man groan with pain placed a pistol to his temple and remarked, I will stop that, sir, he shot him again. But this is nothing new this is the fifth man that has been shot in this way, besides numbers that have been carried off by scouts and never return.

March 11

I learn today that Gen. Payne had no charge against Mr. Dalton, so he told his (Dalton's) father. After killing him he rode back to the house and told Mr. D. that his son was in sight -- he could bury him if he wished. Today a gentleman (Col. E____) was in Paynes office when he was trying a young man about sixteen years old and the only support of an aged father who was with him. His crime was being a rebel. Payne sent the young man to jail telling the guard to bring him out at seven o'clock. The father actually fell upon his knees before the heartless tyrant but was heartlessly bidden to rise and go home, the young man has never been heard of since.

March 12

Weather moderate; so is old Payne, but as weather is changeable our general is too.

March 22

Cold and windy. Paynes behavior moderate. No murdering going on. Grand Military Ball coming off Tuesday 29th Mrs. P. looked for daily.

March 30

I have started to school and have not had time to write for Mrs. Cage keep the pupils busy for fear of having to sit on the disgrace bench with that horrid old dunce cap. The ball came off with great splendor. Old Dilsy (Mrs. Payne) came down Monday. Every negro in the country was pressed Monday to work on the fortifications [4] to keep that thief Morgan out -- so the Gen. says

April 5

My hours for writing are few and far between. Mrs. C. is so very strict that we are obliged to study from morning till night to please her. The weather is pleasant. Thunder cloud is very mild. Every one is lowspirited because he is in a good humor: they think he has heard good news and it must be very good to spread a smile over Thunder Storm.

April 6

Payne is himself again. A few days ago he went to Mrs. Princes with a young gentleman of elegant appearance and demanded said gentleman's baggage. Mrs. Prince told him it was not there and that she had never seen the man before. The stranger vowed he had never seen the house or lady before. Payne said he would carry the 'feller' back to jail and he should share the fate of 107. He has never been seen since. It originated from a lie that a contraband had told of Mrs. Prince: the gentleman was found walking on the railroad in the direction of Nashville and because he was alone he was taken for a spy.

April 7

Another soldier was shot yesterday. The yankees went to jail and brought him while a citizen was standing near. He said the soldier was very poorly clad [5] but his countenance [6] was that of a gentleman. When the guard brought his horse to him (a broken down one from the camp) he asked what they were going to do with them. On being told to "Mount that horse and say no more..." he did so remarking that he supposed they were going to shoot him. They took him to the river to shoot him but finding some gentleman there -- Mr. H. & M. they said they had gone in a hornet's nest to shoot and went somewhere else. When they carry them out to shoot them they give them a worn out horse and tell them if they can escape they may: they say they "have fine fun chasing the boy with fresh horses" I am sorry I did not commence [7] my journal when old Payne first came; he was worse then than now.

April 8

The young man that was shot Friday was from Sumner but no one can find out his name. Mrs. A and W was going from Col. G. and me! I think carrying him out to the pines. They say he wore a look of calm despair. The Yankees pretended that they were tired and sat down on the side of the road but made the soldier stand in the pike: he stood with arms folded across his noble heart (for well I know he was a noble Southron and eyes bent toward the ground as a pale as death while the yankees taunted him with such remarks as 'I will have his boots;' another would name something that he would.

April 21

"All quiet in Gallatin to-day." Old Payne and all the rest are mad about the Fort Pillow affair. This vengeance will be taken out on the citizens of G. in a few days.

April 22

No arrests have been made yet on account of the "butcher at Fort Pillow." Don't be uneasy gentlemen your time will come soon.

April 23

Well, well, was ever such a time seen before since E.A. Payne has been here, they have neither burned any houses or killed anybody in three whol days. What is going to happen? surely the rebels are coming once again to this God-forsaken village.

April 26

Weather beautiful. Yanks behaving like human beings with a few exceptions. Today a Yankee officer made his appearance in the school room accompanied by a Northern being whom I supposed to be a man, as he was not a gentleman; he came to look at the church saying that he was president of a school and that six of his assistants had just arrived and was going to teach the "freedmen" He says he will have 3 or 400 scholars and will need the largest house in town. What a learned city -- or rather yankee nest -- this will be. I suppose some of us citizens will get a situation as assistant teacher in the "Freedmens University".

April 30

Gen. Payne leaves tomorrow for Nashville. I recon we will have rest now for awhile.

May 2

A reg. of East Tennesseans have come to hold this Post. They are the meanest men I ever saw; but they have one good trait they make the negroes 'walk a chalk'

May 3

The East Tennesseans burnt a school hous last night it was a contraband school. They say they will have none of that while they stay here.

May 4

The soldiers are behaving very well I do not suppose the negroes think so though they threatened to burn the old tavern

last night (that like every thing else is filled with contrabands.) but the citizens told them if they did Gallatin would burn; they let it alone but say if they get up a school in it they will burn it and G. may go to H___

May 5

A contraband was killed today; he insulted one of Miss B's scholars & a soldier being near killed him. Go it my East Tenn

May 6

Col. Miller of East Tenn takes command to-day. The soldiers say if Capt Nicklen leave they will kill every negro in G in less than a week

May 7

Capt N. is gone now is your time East Tenn

May 9

Capt Nicklen come back today and the "Freed pussons of cullers" commensed their school today. They were dressed in style with their white swiss and hats. The citizens look for the tavern to be burnt every night

May 13

The Gen came up yesterday I suppose he came to see how we were behaving and if his 'pets' got their rights.

May 15

Gen. P. left-today no negroes killed; indeed the East Tennesseans are exceedingly quiet. -Capt K thinks he has nearly cured them of "Negro on the brain".

May 16

Mrs. Cage has gone to Nashville. The scholars went to school this morning expecting her up on the train Before the train come the President of the contraband school came over with twenty negro men and took every bench in the school house except one that was greasy; the girls told him to take that, it was good enough for negroes: but no, he said it would "soil the ladies dresses." The girls took that and threw it into the street. Mag King took the broom and threatened to break his head if he came up the step again: he seen she was determined and left.

June 5

Our school will be out in two weeks and I have been so busy preparing for an examination that I have neglected my journal though nothing has transpired of interest. The Tennesseans set fire to the contraband school, but by ringing bells and firing gun Nicklens men assembled and put it out

June 10

The country is overrun with Yanks: they are camped in the woods in front of us and have already paid us several visits killed sheep, goats and chickens Our new yankees are very neighborly. They come over to see us every few minutes in the day. Some came today and demanded their dinner at two o'clock but did not get it. They went off cursing us for being d__n rebels

Aug 14

I have been 'running around' all vacation. Nothing has taken place except a fight at Atalanta. Yanks say they whiped; Rebs say they whipped and East Tennesse says both are telling d__n lies about. Brother Joe was taken prisoner at Lexington in Morgans last raid: he is now at Camp Morton Ind. We had a letter from Rush last week: he is well but low spirited because he cannot hear from home

Aug 16

Our teacher Mrs. Cage has gone to Dixon Springs to teach. I suppose we will have to go to the 'Contraband Academy.' Sis is in debt to me. I must put it down or she will never pay it. She owes me a brass button for a remark made on the camp flies.

Aug 19

No news. Jimmie H. was brought down on the cars yesterday to be buried at the old homestead. Two sisters are all that remain of that once large family: they were driven South and know nothing of his early death. He died at [Camp Douglass](#).

Sept 16

Today's paper brings sad news "Atlanta has certainly been taken: Sherman has ordered every man, woman and child from that place Payne has been ordered from Paduca because he treated the citizens so bad. Why couldn't he have been ordered from here, he did a thousnd times worse here than there I suppose there a few union men at Paduca.

Sept 20

The citizens are running in every direction trying to get to the Southern army The yankees are drafting everyone between the age of seventeen and fifty I wonder what the deserters will do now

Sept 21

No letters from [Rush or Jo](#) yet: we are very uneasy

Sept 22

Gen. Payne stayed at Paduca 56 days and shot 67 men: he is under arrest Paduca is a union place. The noblehearted

patriots who suffered here will never be cared for save by those at home whom their wrongs have made desolate [9]. A company of negroes have just passed well armed they are going out to forage & steal I suppose.

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Union soldiers outside a house in New Bern, North Carolina, during the occupation.

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