

From: The History of Vernon County Missouri, published 1887
Brown & Company, St Louis, Mo.

Every member of the Mayfield was pro-Confederate. From the mother to the youngest child there was no exception. Even the daughters became strong partisans and rendered active and valuable service for the cause. Their experience, while painful upon the whole, was highly thrilling, perilous, and interesting, and ought to be related in full, without exaggeration or embellishment.

The oldest three of the Mayfield sisters Ella, Sallie and Lenora, were married when the war came on. The husbands of all three wore the gray.

Sallie's husband, D. P. McGiboney, was killed Feb. 7, 1862, in a fight with Kansas troops, who did not bury the body for three days, and then tossed it into a shallow grave, near the bank of a small stream. Some time afterward, the young widow, she was then but 23, although the mother of two small children, exhumed the body herself and carted it to the old Montevallo graveyard, where it was reinterred March 10, after another exposure of five days.

Lenora's husband, John Gabbert, was a partisan ranger and was killed April 25, 1863 by a Federal scouting party from either the 6th Kansas or 3rd Wisconsin in the road between the Gabbert farm and Old Montevallo. He was but 24 years of age and his wife was much younger.

Ella was separated by the war from her husband, a Mr. Phillips, and in the spring or summer of 1863 was married to a noted bushwacker named David Majors, of Cass County, but she was invariably known as Ella Mayfield.

The Mayfield sisters were scouts, spies, guides and couriers as the occasion demanded. In Aug., 1862, when so many Vernon County men were in prison at Springfield, captured during Coffee's campaign, Ella Mayfield and Miss Eliza Gabbert went unattended to the prison and by their persistent intercession with the Federal military authorities secured the release of half a dozen or more men. Lieutenant Joe Woods, who was a prisoner at the same time, furnished them with money to pay their hotel bills while in Springfield, but other assistance they had none. Young John McNeil was in prison practically with a rope around his neck. He had twice taken the oath of loyalty, and had been captured in arms when Camp and the four others were killed near Montevallo. Fearful that his identity would be discovered, he could scarcely sleep day or night. Ella Mayfield saved him by pleading with the genial Adjutant Kirk, averring that young McNeil was her lover, and that it would break her heart if her "true love" were kept in that cruel prison. A pretty girl pleading for her lover's liberty is usually irresistible, and in this case was no exception to the rule. McNeil was released upon taking another oath, and went away with his alleged "sweetheart", a woman he had never seen before.

At the time of the Gabbert house fight Ella Mayfield was one of the very first at the scene and with her own hands washed the aghast faces and prepared the bloody corpses of the bushwackers for sepulture; and she and her sisters assisted in their burial.

While Ella Mayfield was helping bury Bridgeman and his dead companions, a messenger came to her with the word that she was wanted instantly at Ft. Scott on a

matter of life or death. Mounting a swift horse she set out at once, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and compassed the distance without drawing bridle, arriving at the house of a rebel friend, four miles north of Ft. Scott, at nightfall. Dr. Davis of Ft. Scott, had secured a photograph of Kaiserman, the slayer of the Mayfield brothers, and the picture had been conveyed to the bushwackers near Montevallo. The widow of Brice Mayfield had given out that her husband's death would be avenged if ever Kaiserman fell into the hands of her husband's friends, and the picture was to be used to identify him. Dr. Davis had been called on for the photograph, and informed that he would be shot unless he produced it within twenty-four hours.

Remounting her horse the woman galloped through the night to her mother's house, which she reached a little after daylight. In an hour the picture was in her hands and she was speeding away again to Ft. Scott. She arrived at her destination in time for Davis to produce the photograph and save his life, having ridden 125 miles in 24 hours, day and night, across the country, fording streams and threading intricate byways, with but two hours rest and repose.

Dave Majors was a rough rider and a fierce fighter. His wife, Ella, shared many of his perils. On one occasion she was with him when he and his band had just gone into camp on "Little Cynthia" in the southern part of Montevallo Township, northeast of Dunnigan's Grove. The men were preparing supper, when suddenly a company of Cedar County militia burst upon them. The bushwackers scattered in every direction, but Mrs. Majors seized her husband's saddle and revolvers and hid them and herself from the militia. In a gloomy, lonely thicket, she concealed herself for two days and nights, without food or water, with no companionship save that afforded by the skunks, opossums, and prairie wolves, which visited the abandoned camp to feed upon some fresh meat left by the bushwackers in their flight.

On the 20th of May, 1864, the house of the widow Mayfield, south of Montevallo, was burned. Aided by the bushwackers Mrs. Mayfield loaded a wagon with her goods preparatory to going south into Arkansas. Joe Ray and John Hinman were to accompany the party with their wives and household goods loaded in another wagon, and Dave Majors with his band was to escort the little caravan. Early one morning the party was ready to set out, but Joe Ray's ax had rung out clear and loud as he prepared some firewood, and a scouting party of Federals in the neighborhood heard the sound. Half a dozen blue coated troopers dashed up yelling and firing, and the bushwackers, who outnumbered them two to one, retreated in great precipitation, thinking that at least 50 "Feds" were after them. The Federals hauled off the wagons, and the trip south was postponed.

A few days later, Ray, Majors, and John Hinman, with their wives, were quartered in an abandoned log cabin in the woods, two miles northwest of Bellamy. Some other bushwackers were present, and another trip to the south was being arranged. The bushwackers had just returned from a raid into Cedar County and had brought some cattle and a wagon load of household goods, besides some horses, as a portion of their spoil. Suddenly a detachment of Cedar militia, who had been following the trail of the raiders, appeared and opened fire on the bushwackers who were in front of the cabin, and who fled at once. Majors chanced to be mounted and escaped easily. Hinman sprang upon a horse which was hitched to a small bush, and leaning forward over the animal's neck tugged at the halter strap to unfasten it, while the beast was plunging and the bullets were

whizzing about him. Ella Mayfield ran out of the cabin to assist him, regardless of the bullets, but the strap came suddenly loose, and whirling the steed about, Hinman dashed forward right upon the woman. The horse's breast struck her full in the face knocking her down, and she was fairly ridden over. She arose with her face covered with blood, but not seriously hurt, to the great relief of her female companions, who witnessed the scene.

Joe Ray was killed. The militia recaptured the most of their property and took it back home with them. Ray's body was buried, and the grave dug by Ella Mayfield and Mrs. Hinman, assisted by the daughters of Mr. Riley, who lived near. Eventually Ella Mayfield accompanied her husband to Northern Arkansas where he was killed, near Kingston, in January 1865. There is not room enough here to give the thrilling experiences of Ella Mayfield in full, interesting as they may be to a certain class of readers of this volume.

Mrs. Sallie McGiboney (or Sallie Mayfield), now Mrs. Morgan, of Kansas City, was another of the "Mayfield girls" celebrated in the annals of the Civil War in Vernon County. After the death of her husband, previously narrated, she devoted herself to helping on the Confederate cause, and as the guerrillas and bushwackers were generally the only exponents of that cause in this quarter, she helped them when she could.

About the 1st of July, 1864, Sallie Mayfield, her 16 year old sister, Jennie Mayfield, Mrs. Nancy Burrus, and Miss Nannie McConnell were out riding with a squad of bushwackers. The party were going to the site of Old Montevallo and were riding up the valley to the southward, when they came upon a detachment of Co. C, 3rd Wisconsin, out from Balltown on a scout. The bushwackers ungallantly deserted their fair charges and sought only to save themselves. Deserted by their cavaliers the women did their best to escape, and Nannie McConnell succeeded. The two Mayfield girls and Nancy Burrus were captured. Being found in company with the bushwackers, they were taken first to Balltown and kept three days; then to Ft. Scott, where they were detained for a week; then to Kansas City, where they were kept another week, and finally sent to Gratiot Street Prison (McDowell College) in St. Louis and afterwards transferred to the Confederate female prison, on the corner of 7th and Chestnut Streets.

Miss Burrus was released upon taking the oath in Kansas City. Miss Ella Simms, another "lady bushwacker: who lived near Montevallo, was taken prisoner soon afterward, and either died in prison or on the way home.

At 2 o'clock in the morning on the 19th of October, the Mayfield girls made their escape from the Seventh and Chestnut street building, accomplishing a most remarkably skillful and successful feat, but at the same time one full of difficulty and peril. They were imprisoned in a room in the third story of the building, with other Confederate girls and women. Sallie Mayfield fashioned a screwdriver from a table knife, which she had secreted, and opened the door of the room by taking off its hinges. Then, carrying their shoes, she and her young sister slipped noiselessly down the stairways, passing safely the drowsy sentinel snoozing on the landing. The door opening from the foot of the stairway on the street was a formidable one, with heavy bolts and bars, and there was a soldier on guard upon the outside pacing his beat with his musket on his shoulder. Drawing the bolts and forcing the lock with some difficulty, the girls waited until they heard the sentinel turn the corner of the street and start to walk the pavement on the side of the building fronting on Chestnut, when they quickly stepped out on Seventh Street, closing the door behind them, and tripped away.

They walked the streets till daylight. Unacquainted with the city, and not daring to ask for assistance, they encountered all sorts of difficulties, and had many narrow escapes. At last they contrived to reach the tracks of the old North Missouri Railroad (now the Wabash), on which they walked nearly to St. Charles, and eventually reached some friends in the western part of St. Charles County. Not long afterward they were forced to leave this retreat and repaired to the then residence of their mother, in Morgan County.