The Free and Independent State of Scott

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When various people think of Scott County they think of a location where nothing ever happens. Well, they are mistaken. Scott County is full of interesting memories. In this article we will explore some exciting facts about Scott County’s role in the Civil War.

Before we get into all that I’ll give you some background information. General Winfield Scott, for whom the county is named, was the leader of the Union army until he retired. He also devised the Anaconda Plan, the blueprint for the strategy that lead to the defeat of the South.

Many citizens today seem to think Scott County showed southern sympathy. They hang Rebel flags and talk about how “the South’s gonna rise again”. Contrary to popular belief, Scott County was loyal to the Union. Our forefathers stood up for what they believed in and when Tennessee seceded from the Union, Scott County seceded from Tennessee and became its own state. This took place after Andrew Johnson gave a speech on the Huntsville Courthouse steps. He was requesting that Scott County stay loyal to the Union. Four days later, the citizens voted against separation with the highest percent margin in the state. The final vote was 541 to remain Union and 19 to secede. After the war ended Tennessee rejoined the Union very quickly but Scott County didn’t petition for readmission to the state until its Homecoming celebration in 1986. During the separation, Scott County paid Tennessee state taxes and Tennessee gave Scott County state revenues.

Since Scott County had seceded from the Confederacy, Confederate raiders saw it as fair game to loot and plunder. As a result, the citizens formed the Home Guard. The Home Guard was a band of Scott County citizens who protected the county against raiders and plunderers.

Two minor skirmishes took place in Scott County during the Civil War. They were named for where they took place. The Battle of Huntsville occurred on August 13, 1862, when a Union supporter, Colonel William Cliff (believed to be actor Montgomery Cliff’s great-grandfather) came to Scott County in order to raise troops. These men became the 7th Tennessee Infantry. The skirmish took place at the breastworks on River Road in Huntsville. The 7th Tennessee went up against a full regiment of Confederate soldiers.

The Confederates routed the Tennesseans and the 7th Tennessee was never reformed. In this small battle there were only two or three Scott County natives killed and a few wounded. Two months earlier, the Battle of Brimstone took place, but this time the Union Home Guard had the
upper hand. The Confederate soldiers, from General Kirby Smith’s regiment, had to charge up a hill in order to get to them. In this small skirmish, only one Union soldier was killed. His name was Amber Strunk and he lived near Strunk, Kentucky. The young man’s mother came all the way down here in a wagon in order to take his body home.

Another important event that took place in Scott County was General Ambrose Burnside’s 23rd Army Corps of the 9th Army, consisting of 15,000 soldiers, marching through during August and September of 1863. It took his men three days to make the trek through Scott County. It is said that a year prior to this event, General Felix Zollicoffer, of the Confederacy, predicted it. During this time the 2nd Tennessee was made up of about 1,000 men. After Burnside’s march, two-thirds were captured and two-thirds of those captured died of starvation in the Andersonville, Georgia prison.

Scott County has always been an independent and proud region. Although they were exposed to many trying times the citizens always seem to endure. We owe this trait to our forefathers, who fought and died bravely during the Civil War to preserve our rights and privileges.