

Calvin Crozier

A Noble Texas Patriot

By James Dark

When studying the involvement of the Lone Star State in the War Between the States, the name of Calvin Crozier comes up often in the remembrances of the old veterans. Many UCV, SCV, and UDC, and Cof C camps and chapters are named after this Texas hero, but few even know who he is. I wish to bring more light on the subject of this genuine Texas hero from the War Between the States, who has been called "The Sam Davis of Texas."

Calvin Crozier enlisted in Dallas in Good's Battery, but later switched units to the company raised by future Confederate General Richard M. Gano, who was from Tarrant County. Gano's unit went by several designations after it joined the famous brigade of General John Hunt Morgan. It was referred to as the Third Regiment, Morgan's Brigade, or as the 7th Kentucky Cavalry. Crozier was with this unit until the end of the war. He was captured during Morgan's Kentucky Raid, and confined in a Northern prison camp until the end of the war.

Crozier suffered greatly due to sickness contracted in prison, and his departure for home was delayed because of his illnesses. Finally in September, 1865, Crozier was passing through South Carolina enroute to his home in Texas. Crozier had been entrusted with the care of several ladies on the trip, and upon their arrival in Newberry, South Carolina on September 7, 1865, they discovered that a lack of hotel rooms would force them to stay on the train overnight.

During the night, several Negro troops from the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops entered the car and conducted themselves in a manner that the ladies found offensive. Crozier ordered the men from the car, and when they failed to do so, a fight erupted. Crozier's only weapon was a small knife, which he used to slightly injure one of the soldiers on the neck during the altercation.

The troops departed and returned later with more of their men and some white officers. In their search for their assailant, they set upon Mr. Jacob S. Bowers, the superintendent of the railroad, and despite his protestations of innocence, made preparations to lynch him.

Crozier, without hesitation, surrendered himself to the men, to save the innocent Bowers. He was taken to the camp of the 33rd U.S.C.T., where he was shot to death with little if any ceremony. He was buried on the spot in a shallow grave. The commander of the 33rd U.S.C.T., Lieutenant Colonel Charles T. Trowbridge, was heard to say that he took full responsibility for the act.

When the facts of the case became known, Colonel Trowbridge was taken to account for the actions of his men, and he was brought before a court-martial on a charge of murder in the death of Calvin Crozier. It seems that Crozier was executed for the murder of one

Private Mills. The Union district commander was somewhat miffed to discover that Crozier's victim, Mills, was not only alive, but had in fact already returned to duty after being injured.

The good intentions of the district commander, Major General Charles Devens, a political general from Massachusetts, fell to pieces with the appointment of the President of the Court-Martial board. Appointed to bring justice in the case was Brevet Brigadier General William T. Bennett. Unfortunately, before Bennett received his promotion to Brigadier General, he had served as the commander of the 33rd U.S.C.T., and had been Trowbridge's commanding officer. I probably don't need to say this, but Trowbridge was acquitted.

Devens was incensed by the findings of the court-martial board. He requested that the board reconsider its findings. In his statement to the board he said, "The execution of Calvin Crozier seems to me to be, an act without form of law or justifiable cause. That Crozier had committed an act worthy of death is not now even pretended in the defense. How then can this officer, who caused him to be executed, be held guiltless? It is earnestly urged on the court martial that this act is one which ought not to go entirely unpunished."

At this juncture, General Bennett, showing a remarkable lack of concern over his military career, sent a message standing by the findings of the board. He did not see fit to state any reason for standing by the findings, or to refute any of the statements made by his commanding officer.

Devens signed his last order on the subject on November 21, 1865. In it he said, "The findings of the above case are disapproved Calvin Crozier was executed summarily by Lt. Col. Trowbridge for the murder of Private Mills 33rd U.S.C.T. who was not only not murdered, but is today alive and well it was in my opinion, a most unjustifiable act and indicates a weakness in yielding to momentary clamor and excitement unworthy of a brave and judicious officer." He then went on to state that he had requested reconsideration but that the board had adhered to its decision. Given that, he stated that he was "compelled" to order Trowbridge's release from arrest and return to duty.

In 1891, Crozier's remains were moved from the field in which he was carelessly tossed and placed in the Rosemont Cemetery by the citizens of Newberry. In 1913, the UDC erected a memorial to Crozier on the spot on he died. On the marker are these words, and a quote from an O'Hara poem:

Calvin Crozier
Born At Brandon, Missssissippi
Murdered at Newberry, S.C.
September 8, 1865

Rest on embalmed and sainted dead
Dear as the blood you gave,

No impious footsteps here shall tread,
The herbage of your grave,
Nor shall your glory be forgot,
While fame her record keeps,
Or honor points the hallowed spot
Where valor proudly sleeps.