

BLYTHEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Shot in the Back – Capt. J. Hogan

Online Exhibit Panel Project

Funded by the Growth Grant from South Carolina Humanities

In the Blythewood Historical Society and Museum is a fine piece of furniture, a small wood table that sits near the door to US 21, or Main Street. On the wall above is a framed picture of Captain James D. Hogan, Sr. and his wife Cynthia. The Hogans formerly lived next door to the museum building, but they moved away in 1888, after Mr. Hogan was shot in the back.

Born in Blythewood in 1838, James Hogan had recently survived typhoid fever and was in his early 20s when he enlisted with the Confederate Army. During his time as a soldier, he worked to report Union troop movement and strength. In a particularly intense battle of hand-to-hand combat in 1863, Hogan suffered a gunshot through his right lung, but survived. He also reportedly challenged General William T. Sherman himself to a duel after being brought to his tent, wounded. The Union General offered him a meal instead of the satisfaction of a duel. He eventually escaped his captors and continued to work for the Confederacy. One of the struggles of life in the Army was feeding the thousands of soldiers spread throughout the South. Hogan is credited with the “Great Beefsteak Raid” where he led his men in a capture of a cattle herd that was 5,000 strong in the fall of 1864 from the Union Army near Richmond, Virginia.



Image from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18488438/james-dickerson-hogan>

Upon returning to South Carolina at the end of the Civil War and discharged with the rank of Captain, Hogan married second cousin Cynthia M. Cloud in 1866. They had thirteen children and Hogan settled into the life of a farmer, which was the occupation of most of the men in Blythewood.



After twenty years of a fairly peaceful life, including several years serving as a local trial justice, Hogan’s life turned upside down. One of his daughters, engaged to Thomas Hoffman, a local boy from a well-established Blythewood family, gave birth in January of 1888. The new father left town and although Hogan traveled thousands of miles to try and find him, he returned home with no success. Capt. Hogan confronted the boy’s brothers, who reportedly spoke poorly about Hogan’s family, and whipped two of them on the streets of Blythewood. Someone sent for the Sheriff and a posse out of fear about a breakout of violence in the town, as the whipped boys “prepared for war.”

They patrolled in front of Capt. Hogan’s house on Main Street (Hwy 21) with shotguns but since he was not home, they went to the train depot and put away their guns. They were arrested, and Captain Hogan turned himself in, but the grand jury just “bound” them all to “keep the peace.”

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The dust seemed to have settled until August 31, 1888. Capt. Hogan and his son were walking at 9:00 at night on Main Street and were only about twenty steps from his gate when “some one stepped from concealment and fired a gunshot at his back.” The “would-be assassin” turned and ran, while Hogan fired his pistol at the man, missing him. He yelled out “Charlie Hoffman has shot me in the back.” He made it into the house and called in Dr. Campbell. They also telegraphed Dr. Hanahan in Winnsboro. The bullet struck Hogan’s backbone and glanced upward to lodge under the shoulder blade. According to the newspaper report, “This was certainly the most dastardly and cowardly outrage ever committed” in Fairfield County. Hogan survived the wound, and Charles Hoffman was arrested.

After producing an alibi of being on the porch of a nearby family’s house, Charles was acquitted during a two-day trial in Winnsboro. Capt. Hogan survived his wounds, and he and his family moved away from Blythe-wood in December. They settled in Arkansas, trading houses with a family who moved here.

Resources: The Fairfield News and Herald, Feb. 28, 1888, Sep. 26, 1888; *Yorkville Enquirer*, Sep. 5, 1888; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/18488438/james-dickerson-hogan>, accessed April 2020.



The Hogan family home in later years. It was cut into parts and moved to Lake Wateree in 2005. Undated image, courtesy of Jim McLean. (Resource: *The Country Chronicle*, May 5, 2005.)