

WAR TIME'S DISASTER AT MAXWELL HOUSE

[In the *VETERAN* for December 1901 (page 554), there is an account by John C. Cates, Fulton, Miss., and in the June issue of 1902 (page 264), by J.A. Templeton, Jacksonville, Tex., there are reports of the killing and maiming of many Confederate prisoners in the Maxwell House at Nashville (known then as Zollicoffer Barracks— who can tell why this last name?) in the fall of 1863. As the unfortunate victims were from nearly every Southern State, and as the following article indicates the spirit of that time and the character of publication as it was then, the entire report kindly furnished by a friend, is given verbatim. Comrade Templeton reports five of his company in the crowd, all of whose names do not appear in this report. This report is from a Nashville paper under Federal military surveillance.]

TERRIBLE ACCIDENT AT THE "ZOLLICOFFER BARRACKS"

One of the most startling and fatal accidents occurred in our city yesterday that we have ever been called upon to chronicle. The scene of the sad disaster, so fraught with human suffering, was the unfinished building, situated on the corner of Church and Cherry Streets, known as the Maxwell House, which was used as a barracks for our soldiers. At the time of the accident about six hundred Confederate prisoners were confined there in the upper fifth story. At the signal for breakfast, the prisoners rushed to the head of the stairs on their way to the dining room, all gayety and thoughtlessness. The rush was so sudden and their weight so great that the stairs gave way with a loud crash, and one hundred of the prisoners were suddenly precipitated, with a perfect avalanche of broken and scattering timbers, through two sets of flooring to the third floor, where they landed one quivering mass of bleeding, mangled humanity. Two (whose names we have been unable to learn) were instantly killed, and the whole of them more or less injured. Many of them were frightfully disfigured, having their legs, arms, or heads broken.

The news of the accident spread rapidly through the city, and in a short time the streets in the vicinity were crowded with person anxious to learn the extent of the terrible affair.

Guards were immediately thrown around the building to prevent the unfortunate sufferers, who were now being removed from the wreck, from being crowded. Ambulances were hurried to the spot, and the misguided and suffering Confederates, who had braved the dangers of many a hard-fought battle, to be maimed for life by an accident, were taken to the prison hospital. Here they were attended by our surgeons and nurses with all the kind and tender care that could have been shown a Federal soldier wounded under the stars and stripes, fighting for the Union. The secesh ladies also waited on them with an untiring devotion that would reflect honor on a more righteous cause. One of the injured prisoners, a mere stripling, who has been captured several times before, remarked that he would not care half so much if he had taken his breakfast.

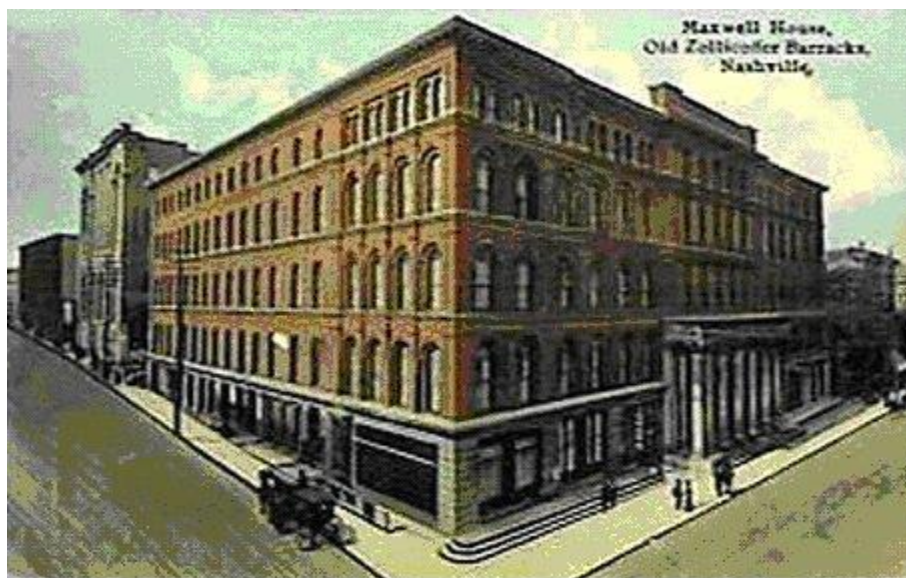
In another part of the building were some Union refugees, lately arrived from Northern Georgia. Upon the occurrence of the fatal accident, some of the men rushed to the rescue among the foremost. One of them found among the sufferers three of his neighbors from Georgia, who had long since left their homes for the Rebel service. Another refugee found his son, who had been conscripted and of whom he had not heard in sixteen months. A third encountered a brother from Texas, from whom he had been separated eight years. Such are the sad and impressive scenes, which can scarcely be called strange in this unnatural war.

Though many of the prisoners are badly hurt and will be crippled for life, we are told that not more than four or five are likely to die from the effects of their injuries.

We will here remark that the present efficient commander of the barracks, Capt. Lakin, of the Eighty-Ninth Ohio, is in no way to blame for the accident, for he has frequently warned the inmates of the barracks against crowding around the stairways.

The names of the prisoners and their commands are:

C. Knox, 4th Tenn.; J. S. Starnes, F, 29th Miss.; J. M. Dickey, A, 44th Tenn.; C. Swader, K, 3d Con. Cav. (dangerous); J. Jones, H, 20th Tenn.; A. Griffin, C, 2d Ky; S.O'Neal, I, 50th Ala.; R.H. Henderson, D, 4th Tenn. Cav.; G. T. Eckhart, 10th Tex.; P. Nichol, E, 1st La.; M. Williams, B, 1st Bat. Ga. Sharpshooters; J. P. Smith, C, 16th Ala.; J. T. Killingsworth, H, 17th Tenn.; H. C. Nutt, B, 17th Tenn.; S. H. Orr, D, 50th Ala.; W. Park, I, 6th Ark.; R. Marshall, F, 41st Tenn.; S. J. Tealey, C, 8th Ga.; William Freeman, G, 27th Miss.; S. A. Foster, C, 1st Bat. Sharpshooters; R. H. Leonard, B, 3d Va.; John Simpson, A, 34th Miss.; J. J. Sleilings, C, 57th Ga.; S. V. Green, citizen; J.J. Polk, C, 4th Tenn.; S. Summers, I, 37th Miss.; J. T. Riddle, E, 50th Ala.; J. Mathew, citizen; R. Kendall, K, 13th Ark.; C. G. Odom, I, 10th Tex.; A.H. Killingsworth, F, 3d Con. Cav.; J. A., Clark, F, 44th Tenn.; J. T. Gray, B, 44th Tenn.; M. J. Tucker, D, 9th Tenn.; J. Fowler, citizen; W. M. Carter, B, 27th Tenn.; J. W. Burch, F, 5th Ky.; W.R. Paine, E, 39th Ga.; E. R., Paine., E, 39th Ga.; J. H.Burke, Q, 10th Tex.; J. W. Jones, Q, 3d Ark.; James Miller, K, 38th Ala.;, T. P. Hinsure, D, 33d Ala.; C. H. Bailey, L, 14th Tex.; P. F. Brooks, G, 34th Ala.; John Taylor, 2d Ky. Cav.; R. A. Lasseur, C, 4th Ga.; C. Killingsworth, H, 3d Con. Cav.; J. T. Harris, B, 29th Miss.; J. W. Harris, B, 29th Miss.; J. L. Olea, B, 29th Miss.; J. Reed, K, 27th Ala.; D. N. Forde, F, 24th Miss.; B. Gilmore, B, 34th Miss.; T.H. Terry, K, 13th Ark.; J.C. Hill, C, 34th Ala.; J. W. Ernest, D, 28th Tenn.; J. H. Pierson, H, 7th Miss.; John Bridges, B, 19th Ala.; Terry Money, B, 13th La.; Butler Horner, B, 9th Tenn.; Mike Harlan,, B, 13th La.; B. A. Hewey, A, 8th Ark.; S. A. Mulling, Waite's Light Art.; William Ayers, K, 39th Tenn.; F. Thomas, A, 3d Con. Cav.; D. Walker, E, Con. Cav.; W. A. Moodey, F, 34th Miss; T. J. Burns, E, 39th Ga.; J. R. Byrd, E, 43d Ala.; R. R. Fillby, I, 1st Ga.; G. W. Monfort, K, 2d Ky.; William Reece, 1st Ala. Legion; G. C. Maddock, 1st Bat. Sharpshooters; J. A. Pierson, H, 7th Miss.; W. E. Bradford, E, 44th Tenn.; J. D. Cox, A, 28th Miss.; N. Heinstran, Cort's Battery; W. Lambert, citizen; R. Fox, E, 37th Ga.; W. C. Evit, citizen; E. R. Conner, B, 1st La.; H. B. Fowler, citizen; R. Ranch, B, 19th Ala.; T. M. Dane, C, 17th Tenn.; J. B. Millard, E, 34th Tenn.; J. W. Wells, D, 19th Ala.; J. Williams, B, 19th Ala.; Patrick Comor, B, 13th La.; M. Burke, I, 13th La., J. S. Lamb, D, 50th Ala.; N. Etchman, Carnes's Battery; J. Allison, 3d Con. Cav.; H. A. Vaughan, D, 18th Ala.; **G. W. Hearn, K, 37th Ga.**; J. McAltart, Miss. Cav.; G. Vandever, 37th Ala.; G. W. Hoffner, E, 2d Ky.; L. M. Poe, E, 28th Ala. (dangerous); L. B. Scott, A, 9th Tenn. (dead); L. Lewis, K, 9th Tenn.; J. B. Hambelin, G, 18th La.; J. T. Simmons, C, 51st Tenn.--over one hundred in all.



MAXWELL HOUSE, NASHVILLE, TENN., 1861-65.

[Colonel Overton built the Maxwell and named it for his wife, who was Harriet Maxwell.]

Mr. W. H. Isham, of Kellar's, Tenn. in writing to the *VETERAN* of this disaster, says that he was one of the unfortunates who fell; but, aside from a severe shaking up, was not hurt and did not go to the hospital. He was standing at the head of the stairs when the crash came, and doubtless owed his life to this position, as the mass of humanity below him in a measure broke his fall. Mr. Isham says the second floor did not stop them; and when they did stop, he lit on his feet, with the dead and wounded beneath and piled above and around him. He was soon relieved, and thinks that out of the one hundred and fourteen that fell with him he was the only one that went back upstairs.

Some other accounts:

[*Confederate Veteran* - June 1911]

THE MAXWELL HOUSE DISASTER IN WAR TIMES.

BY JOHN M. DICKEY (44TH TENN. REGT.), KELSO, TENN.

I was one of the four hundred Confederate soldiers confined in the Maxwell House (Zollicoffer Barracks), Nashville, Tenn., when that terrible disaster of September 29, 1863, occurred. The accident is described in a *Banner* of recent date, and the writer says the victims fell to the third floor, also that some of the prisoners were at breakfast. That is incorrect. I was standing near the head of the stairway when breakfast was announced, and the hungry men were crowding when they were stopped by the guard. All at once, the floor gave way, and down we went to the first floor. We fell near where the pool tables were. I fell lengthwise between two joists, and a man fell across me. His brains were scattered over my coat, and the spots were on it when I left prison in 1865. I lay pinned down until the rest of the wounded and dead were cared for. When they pried the rubbish off of me, I was carried into the lobby.

There were one hundred and twenty six of us in the fall, forty five killed outright or died in a short time. One man, a Mr. Dodd, went with me to Rock Island, and died there of his wound. I had this statement from the best authority. John P. White, whom I had known all my life, visited me almost daily. He was a merchant in Nashville at the time and long afterwards. He said there were one hundred and twenty six. I was surprised to see in the *Banner* that we fell only to the third floor. [That evidently was intended to mean that they fell three floors.]

I was taken to the Central Baptist Church, which was used as a hospital, and it was twenty two days before I could stand up. After sixty five days, I was sent to the penitentiary, and from there to Rock Island Prison, Barrack No.44, from which I was discharged May 4, 1865.

[W. C. Jennings, in *Tennessean and American*.]

There were one hundred and four Confederates who fell. There were four killed in the fall and four died within a few minutes. Fifty were sent to the hospital, several of whom died. Several of my company fell: R. A. McGill, who died in Texas some years ago, Burrell Brown, who died in prison at Chicago the next year, Thomas Lain, who died at Camp Morton, Indianapolis, Ind., the next year, T. H. Woods, who is a conductor on the N., C. & St. L. Railroad, Shelbyville, G. B. Harral, of Beech Grove, and myself of Hillsboro, Tenn., of Company G, 17th Regiment, were captured in the battle of Chickamauga, September 19, 1863. We were on the top floor of the Maxwell House, and every floor fell through to the bottom. A guard standing on the second step with his gun was slightly injured. Realizing the danger, I kept back.

I will never forget how the guards pushed the good women of Nashville with their bayonets (they were bringing bandages and trying to relieve the crippled men), but they were ordered to do so by the officers. I always have loved the women of Nashville, and hope they will be rewarded for their goodness in trying to relieve those poor sufferers. We left there Friday morning for Camp Douglas, Chicago. I was the first volunteer from the third district of Coffee County and the last one to get home after the war was over. I am in my seventieth year and badly crippled. I know of but eight of my company now living, five in this county, one in California, and two in Texas. I have a complete roll of the company. A. S. Marks was colonel of the regiment.

[This was one of the noted calamities of the War. The Maxwell has ever been and still is one of the best hotels South.]

The Zollicoffer Barracks was likely so named for **Felix Kirk Zollicoffer** (1812 – 1862), who was a Nashville newspaperman, three-term U.S. Congressman from Tennessee, an officer in the United States Army, and a Confederate brigadier general during the Civil War. The building was under construction right at the outset of the War and was seized by Confederates to shelter their troops.