

# ENGLISHMEN IN THE CONFEDERATE SERVICE



Many Englishmen played active roles in the Confederacy. Their loyalty resulted from having similar beliefs with American Southerners, who were often their neighbors in the more cosmopolitan southern cities like New Orleans. Their active participation in the army was encouraged by the South, as demonstrated in this excerpt from an 1863 article printed in the Richmond *Examiner* newspaper. “Wherever and whenever a war for freedom is given, there Englishmen will be found, not for glory only, but for the natural bull-dog love of fighting and the inborn British love of the just cause and the weak side. ... We bid the Anglo-Confederate comrades God speed, good luck, and plenty of promotion, for they are sure to deserve it. And if they are disposed to settle down in Dixie, we have no objection to their forming an alliance with some of our pretty Southern girls.”

Francis W. Dawson, age twenty, was one such Briton who, after reading about the war in British newspapers, decided to join the Confederacy. “I had a sincere sympathy with the Southern people in their struggle for independence, and felt that it would be a pleasant thing to help them to secure their freedom. It was not expected, at the time, that the war would last many months, and my idea simply was to go to the South, do my duty there as well as I might, and return home to England.” However, this would not be proven the case for many British subjects offering their help to the Confederacy. Like thousands of Southerners who signed up with the Confederacy for “the duration of the war,” British volunteers were caught up in the deadly world of warfare for four long years. However, this hardship did not dull their enthusiasm for the cause in which they believed. In a letter written to his mother in 1862 Dawson explained, “You may be rest assured that [as long as] one of [Britain’s] children has the power to wield a sword or pull a trigger, the South will never desist from the struggle against the northern oppressor. The bitter, bitter hate with which the name of Yankee is received here, and the deep-rooted contempt with which every thing so called is met, would be

sufficient proof that the conquest of the Southern Confederacy must be nothing short of annihilation.” Dawson’s beliefs in the Confederacy were so strong that he refused to compromise them even at the end of the war. “As an officer of Robert E. Lee’s Army, although not present at the surrender, I was entitled and received my parole. I am now on parole and *not allowed to leave the country*. I could cancel the parole and free myself by taking the oath of allegiance to the United States Government, but this I am not willing to do, so as soon as a British Consul comes to Richmond, I shall endeavor to obtain protection as a British subject.”

Colonel Arthur Fremantle of Great Britain’s Royal Army was the best known British subject who wrote of and published his experiences with both the Union and Confederate armies in his role as an “observer.” He wrote about his feelings over the conflict in the preface of his book entitled, *Three months in the Southern States*. His comments may reflect not only similar feeling among his countrymen at the time, but may explain why historians and the general public of today continue to be mesmerized with the American Civil War. “At the outbreak of the American war, in common with many of my countrymen, I felt very indifferent as to which side might win; but if I had any bias, my sympathies were rather in favor of the North, on account of the dislike which many Englishmen naturally feels at the idea of slavery. But soon a sentiment of great admiration for the gallantry and determination of the Southerners, together with the unhappy contrast afforded by the foolish bullying conduct of the Northerners, caused a complete revulsion in my feelings, and I was unable to repress a strong wish to go to America and see something of this wonderful struggle...fore I think no generous man, whatever may be his political opinions, can do otherwise than admire the courage, energy, and patriotism of the whole population, and the skill of its leaders, in this struggle against great odds.”



Thomas E. Williams

England had strong ties with the South, as it needed the South's valuable cotton for its textile industry. Although England had abolished slavery in its homeland in 1815, it understood the use of the institution in the agriculturally based South. Many British-born subjects and first generation siblings living in the city of New Orleans had similar beliefs and joined the Confederacy. They viewed the South's secession from the Union very similar to that done by the United States from England in 1776.

Britons and their first generation American-born descendants also joined the Washington Artillery. Thomas E. Williams was one such example. His parents had migrated to America from England and settled in New Orleans. Williams grew up there and developed a strong bond and loyalty to his Southern birthplace.

Thomas E. Williams did not join the Washington Artillery in New Orleans but instead chose the 18<sup>th</sup> Mississippi Volunteers on April 29, 1861, while employed in Mississippi. He was elected Second Lieutenant of Second Company. Ordered to Virginia with his unit, he saw action in the Confederate victories at Manassas and Ball's Bluff, Virginia. Williams was appointed Adjutant of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Mississippi Volunteers Department of the Mississippi on June 14, 1862. However, on August 23, 1862 while stationed in Vicksburg, he requested a transfer to and was accepted into the Washington Artillery, dropping in rank to private. This request was officially granted by order of Brigadier

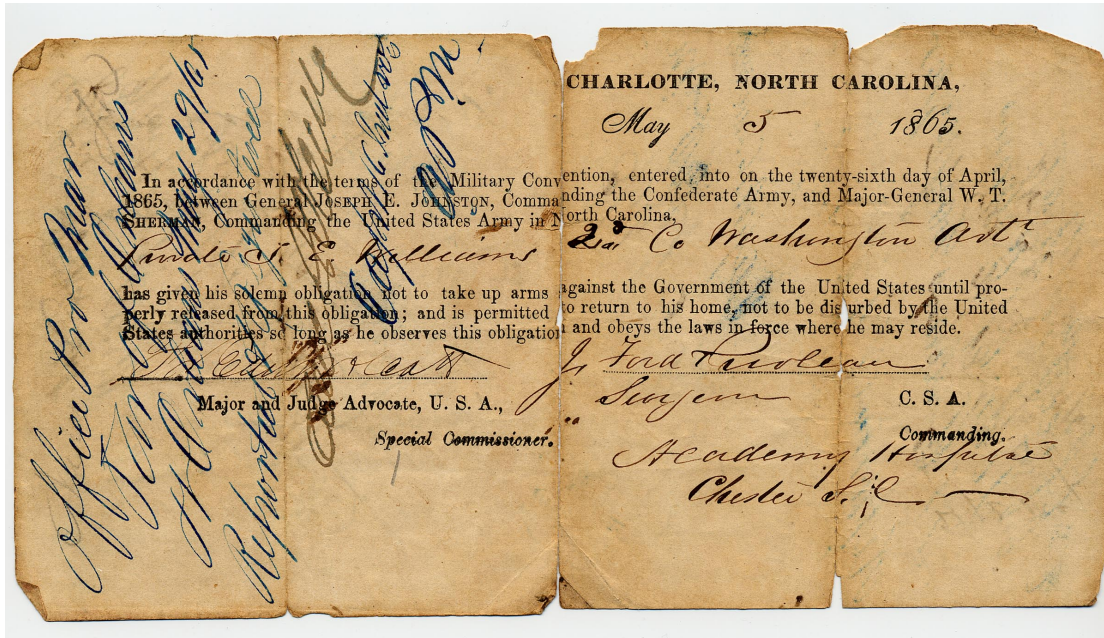
General S. D. Lee on December 3, 1862. His transfer papers to the Second Company Washington Artillery listed him as born in Louisiana, 25 years of age, single, 5'8" tall, light hair and complexion, and with the occupation of "soldier." The reason for his transfer is uncertain. He may have desired to transfer to a New Orleans unit, especially one with the credentials of the Washington Artillery, which he observed at the battle of Manassas. But his reason may have also arisen due to a different motivation. An official document dated March 10, 1863 concerned his request for back pay and "bounty" for joining the WA. This suggests that the transfer was, for one reason at least, monetary.

Head Quarters Lee's Brigade  
 Special Order, Vicksburg Miss Decr. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1862.  
 No. 7  
 T. E. Williams late Col. Adjutant of  
 the 6<sup>th</sup> Miss Battalion, of this Brigade having  
 presented a certified copy of Certificate of  
 Muster to these Head Quarters, is by his own  
 request under provision of par. XII. Gen Order  
 27. dated Adjutant and Inspector Genl's office  
 Richmond Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1862. assigned to the Battalion  
 of Washington Artillery. Major Nelson Commanding  
 and will report to him, forthwith  
 By Command of  
 Brig Genl. S. D. Lee  
 B. S. Moore A. A. Genl.

Transfer orders for T.E. Williams signed by General S. D. Lee

The same day of Williams' acceptance in Mississippi to the Washington Artillery, his newly adopted Second Company was engaged in a hot battle over the Rappahannock River in Virginia. By the time Williams finally caught up with the WA he was able to participate in the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. In the latter battle he was wounded while performing his duty during the July 3<sup>rd</sup> artillery duel. T. E. Williams was present during the great siege at Petersburg, Virginia in 1864. He managed to survive the war, even refusing to surrender at Appomattox, running into the hills with other WA members. He surrendered later at Charlotte, North Carolina on May 5, 1865.





T. E. Williams' Parole

He returned to Louisiana, married, and settled in Madisonville, north of Lake Pontchartrain. He died on February 27, 1872 at the young age of 34. His funeral procession left his home on 515 Royal St, corner of Lafayette Ave, and terminated with services held at his Masonic Lodge #102. (Daily Picayune 2/28/1872,p.4, col. 6)

The battalion had one other British New Orleanian named "Thomas Williams" who saw action with the 5<sup>th</sup> Company as a driver, but he was discharged on January 19, 1863 at his request as being a British subject. Tired of fighting but loyal to the cause, he remained with the company as Captain Slocomb's personal attendant. He was present with that unit's surrender at Meridian, Mississippi on May 10, 1865.

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