



Chickasaw, a Mississippi Scout for the Union: The Civil War Memoir of Levi H. Naron, as Recounted by R. W. Surby

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A well-to-do planter and slave owner in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, Levi Holloway Naron was an unlikely supporter of the Union. And yet, at the outbreak of war in 1861, his agitation against the Confederacy so outraged his fellow Mississippians that they drove him from his home. Bent on retaliation, Naron headed North, contacted the Union army, and was ushered into the presence of General William T. Sherman, who quickly saw the possibilities for employing such a man. Thus began Levi Naron's career as "Chickasaw," Federal scout, spy, and raider.

Dictated in 1865, when his memory of events was still fresh -- as was his passion -- Naron's memoir offers a rare and remarkably vivid firsthand account of a southerner loyal to the Union, operating behind Confederate lines. Active primarily in northern Mississippi and western Tennessee, Naron proved invaluable to Federal commanders in the West, not only Sherman but William Rosecrans, John Pope, Grenville Dodge, Benjamin Grierson, and others -- leaders whose official testimony to that effect is included in an appendix here. Naron stood before Rebel commanders as well -- Sterling Price, James Chalmers, and John C. Breckinridge -- having bedeviled their security forces and intelligence agents. In these pages, he tells how he maneuvered under their noses, burning bridges and railcars full of supplies intended for Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Bell Hood, recruiting for the Union while clad in a Confederate uniform, chasing down Union deserters and Rebel spies, and, for diversion, suppressing guerrillas and bushwhackers.

This long-forgotten historical document, newly edited and annotated, provides indispensable information about Confederate as well as Union espionage and counter-espionage activity. Naron's adventures illuminate this clandestine war in the West while allowing readers to experience with startling immediacy the agony, frustrations, and convictions of a pro-Union southerner trapped inside the Confederate States.

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