

WILLIAM REESE JULIAN

William Reese Julian was one of the bravest soldiers and most devoted patriots of the South, and after the war continued to earn the affection and confidence of his fellow citizens in northwest Alabama by service in public office and otherwise.

He was born near Moulton, in Lawrence County, Alabama, but most of the years of his life were spent in the vicinity of Tuscumbia, formerly in Franklin County, but now the county seat of Colbert County. His first military experience was in the Mexican war, enlisting at Columbus, Mississippi, June 7, 1846. He was mustered in at Vicksburg on the 15th of June as corporal of Company J of the Mississippi Volunteers, commanded by Colonel Jefferson Davis. He was promoted to sergeant, and was with the company until December 1846. At the battle of Monterey he was the first soldier over the walls, and the story was frequently told of how he raced with another member of his regiment to see which would reach first the bishop's palace in that city.

He was one of the first men from Alabama commissioned by Governor Moore (his commission being dated January 20, 1861) and from the independent state of Alabama. He was appointed a lieutenant of artillery, was stationed at Fort Morgan and promoted to captain of Company E of the First Battalion, Alabama Artillery. He was in the artillery service about eighteen months, but found that branch distasteful and therefore resigned and was discharged August 14, 1862, at once returning to Tuscumbia and raising a company of cavalry. In the cavalry he was at his best and met all the exacting demands of his chief, General J. B. Forrest. He commanded what was known as the Julian Battalion at the battle of Day's Gap, where General Forrest first fought Streight. In September 1863, he was put in command of the ordnance train of Roddy's Division, and with it continued until the close of the war. As a soldier it was said of him that his bravery was of the heroic stamp, his fidelity to friends in principle above the power of temptations, and his devotion to the cause of the south as lofty as General Lee's.

Major Julian was known and loved by practically every resident of Colbert County and had a wide acquaintance throughout Alabama. After the division of Franklin County and the creation of Colbert County he was appointed sheriff and afterwards filled the position by election. He was offered the office of United States marshal by Referee Calvin Goodloe in Grant's administration, but declined the office because he was a democrat and a former Confederate soldier. He felt he could not conscientiously hold office under a republican administration. This refusal was the more significant when it is remembered that the emolument of the office would have done much to ease his impoverished conditions. Julian died in August 1899. His death brought forth letters and editorial comments of praise as to his upright life, his career as a soldier, his unfailing neighborliness and helpfulness, his kindness, and upright character. He was a loyal and consistent Mason and Knight of Pythias, and a member of the Presbyterian Church.

Information above from *History of Alabama and Her People*, Volume II, 1927, The American Historical Society, Inc.

From *North Alabamian (Tuscumbia) Newspaper*, A. H. Keller, Editor, the following excerpt from an article about Sheriff William Reese Julian published on March 21, 1879:

"We were pleased to see this distinguished man in town last Friday. We were still more pleased to see that he wore a high-toned, three-story plug hat, such as a Christian gentleman and Sheriff of Alabama should wear. The law requires the Sheriff to wear their hats in the Courtroom as a display of the majesty of the law embodied in the Sheriff, but many Sheriffs were slouch hats and other abominations, such as law breakers wear, but Mr. Julian wears a hat that no evil doer ever dons. Mr. Julian is also the best billiardist, bird shot and Sunday school lecturer now living. ..."

The home of William Reese Julian which was built in 1819 and moved from Cherokee to Tuscumbia in the 1840's is still located in Tuscumbia on Dickson Street.



Photo by Jean May – Taken March 2014