

BRIDGE BURNERS



Hangings at the Depot



After Unionists burned several East Tennessee railroad bridges on November 9, 1861, Confederate engineer Col. Danville Leadbetter soon arrived to rebuild the bridges and capture the perpetrators. Later that month, his forces captured Henry Fry, Jacob Hinshaw, and Hugh Self, and confined them in the Greeneville jail. A court martial convicted them on the morning of November 30 and sentenced them to death. Self's sentence was commuted to imprisonment because he was only 16 years old.



Col. Danville Leadbetter
Courtesy Library of Congress

That afternoon, “a detail with hangman’s ropes in hand” approached the jail. Fry and

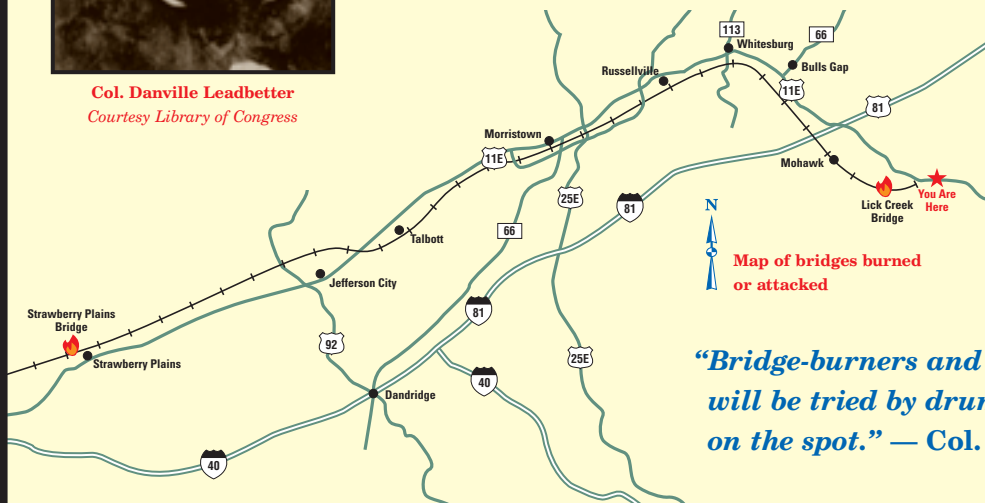
Hinshaw, with “hands bound behind them,” marched up Depot Street “in a hollow square of soldiers.” They walked across the railroad tracks near the depot and then “up a gently sloping hill to the edge of the woods where two ropes were dangling from a hung



Hangings of Fry and Hinshaw, from *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 1862

limb of a huge oak tree.” At 2 P.M., they were hanged. “Their bodies were left swinging in the air all that afternoon, and through the night, and until 4 o’clock P.M. the next day.” A witness could see the bodies from his home at the corner of Depot Street and Morehead Street (present-day Cutler Street).

Unionist prisoners cut the bodies down and buried them under the tree. Confederates reburied them on Andrew Johnson’s property west of town on a rise west of present-day Nanci Lane and called the burial ground the Rebel Graveyard. Their families reburied them again after the war, Hinshaw in a private cemetery and Fry at Blue Springs Cemetery.



“Bridge-burners and destroyers of railroad tracks ... will be tried by drum-head court-martial and be hung on the spot.” — Col. Danville Leadbetter, Nov. 30, 1861