



Dual Destiny

Gould Hagler, October 12, 2020
blueandgrayeducation.org



Dual Destiny Monument, Double Springs, Alabama

The seat of Alabama's Winston County is Double Springs, a small town where about 1,000 of the county's 24,000 people reside. Both highways leading into Double Springs, U.S. 278 and Alabama 195, are but two-lane roads as they approach and pass through the community. Located here are some government offices, a few shops and other businesses, a post office, four churches (by my count), and, of course, a courthouse.

Before 1877, when Cullman County was formed from Winston's eastern side, the county encompassed approximately double its current territory. During the Civil War the county held a population of about 3,500 souls.

Outside the courthouse stands a bronze statue of a soldier, built in 1987, sculpted by Branko Medenica of Birmingham. This work of art is entitled "Dual Destiny." The plaques around the statue recount Winston County's experience in the Civil War.

According to one tablet, 351 Winston County men fought in the war, two-thirds of whom fought for the Union.

"The Civil War was not fought between the North and South," reads one inscription, "but between the Union and Confederate armies. Perhaps as many as 300,000 Southerners served in the Union army. The majority of the Appalachian South from West Virginia to Winston County was pro-Union."

The monument does not pay homage to the Confederate cause that was lost, nor does it praise the Union cause that prevailed. It does not recount their brave deeds on the battlefield or extol their martial virtues. There is no passage lauding the fidelity and courage of the women. There is no Latin motto explaining how sweet it is to die for one's country.

Instead, we are presented with an image of the exhausted, even broken, men who made it home. It honors the ordinary soldiers who filled the ranks, men who had little or no say in the political decisions that split their country, their state, their community, and their families. It honors them, but does not attempt to glorify them.

"This Civil War soldier, one-half Union and one-half Confederate, symbolizes the war within a war and honors the Winstonians in both armies. Their shiny new swords of 1861 were by 1865 as broken as the spirits of the men who bore them, and their uniforms of blue and gray, once fresh and clean, were now as worn and patched as the bodies and souls they contained. Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, disillusioned by the realities of war, shared dual destinies as pragmatic Americans in a reunited nation."

It is odd, perhaps, that nothing is said about the many men who did not survive. For those who did, healing would not be easy or certain.



The Gaylesville, Alabama, monument

Some Winston County men served in the First Alabama Cavalry, U.S.A., which was part of Col. Abel Streight's raiding force that was pursued by Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest and captured in May 1863.

When Streight surrendered, he asked for and received Forrest's assurance that all his men would be treated as prisoners of war, a significant assurance considering the Alabamians were subject to the Confederate draft and could be considered deserters.

A monument in Gaylesville, Alabama, was built in 1939 to commemorate this event.

All photos courtesy of the author.



This Civil War Dispatch has been brought to you by the Blue and Gray Education Society, a non-profit 501-3C educational organization. Please visit us at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove®
Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.
View this email [online](#).

P.O. Box 1176
Chatham, VA | 24531 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.



[Subscribe](#) to our email list.