



BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH

Northern Birth, Southern Sacrifice

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Battle of Chickamauga by Kurtz & Allison | Library of Congress

Private Kirby Brown was 20 years old when he was killed in action on September 19, 1863, the first day of the Battle of Chickamauga. He had been a soldier for a little more than 14 months, having enlisted in his hometown of Augusta, Georgia, in the Clinch Rifles, Company A, 5th Georgia Volunteer Infantry, in July 1862. Before joining the army, Kirby had been employed as a draftsman by the Confederate ordnance department in Augusta, possibly at the arsenal or powder works.

The 5th Georgia was in the brigade of Gen. John K. Jackson, an Augusta lawyer. In his after-action report, Jackson told of how his brigade had been thrown into line of battle in the face of the advancing Union army: "A charge being ordered, the troops responded with intrepidity, driving the enemy before them from a half to three-quarters of a mile." After a two-hour fight, the brigade began to run out of ammunition and had to be withdrawn and re-supplied. Sometime during this mêlée, Kirby Brown lost his life. The battle continued for another day and ended in Confederate victory.

Dawn on September 21 revealed a landscape strewn with the residue of combat. Survivors searched for their comrades; many of the dead were shoveled into hasty graves. Fearing that Kirby Brown might be one of those, Capt. Joseph B. Cumming of Augusta wrote to his wife on September 24: "Poor Kirby Brown was killed Saturday. I am afraid I cannot save his body."

But Kirby was saved. His guardian, 58-year-old Judge Charles J. Jenkins of the Georgia Supreme Court and an Augusta resident, came to Chickamauga himself, searched personally among the rows of corpses, recovered the body, and brought it back to Augusta. Four days before the battle, Gen. William H. T. Walker of Augusta had written to his wife: "I saw ... Gen'l. Jackson and Kirby Brown, all well," but on September 30 the General wrote: "[Judge Jenkins] has succeeded in recovering the body of Brown, poor young fellow. He has been more fortunate, though, than many of the gallant dead whose remains will sleep on the field they so nobly defended. He certainly has a good friend in the judge who seems to have taken every pain to secure his body." Kirby was buried in the Jenkins family plot in the Summerville Cemetery near Augusta.



Maj. Gen. Jacob Jennings Brown, Kirby Brown's grandfather | National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Kirby's death notice appeared in the *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel* on October 17. A year after the battle, his name was published on a Confederate Army Roll of Honor, selected by his comrades in the Clinch Rifles as the outstanding soldier of their company in the bloody carnage at Chickamauga. And Confederate Chaplain Charles T. Quintard, later Episcopal Bishop of Tennessee, penned these elegant lines honoring Kirby: "He was one of ourselves—a child of the Church by birth and baptism ... and in the rite of confirmation he cheerfully owned his allegiance to the cause of Christ."

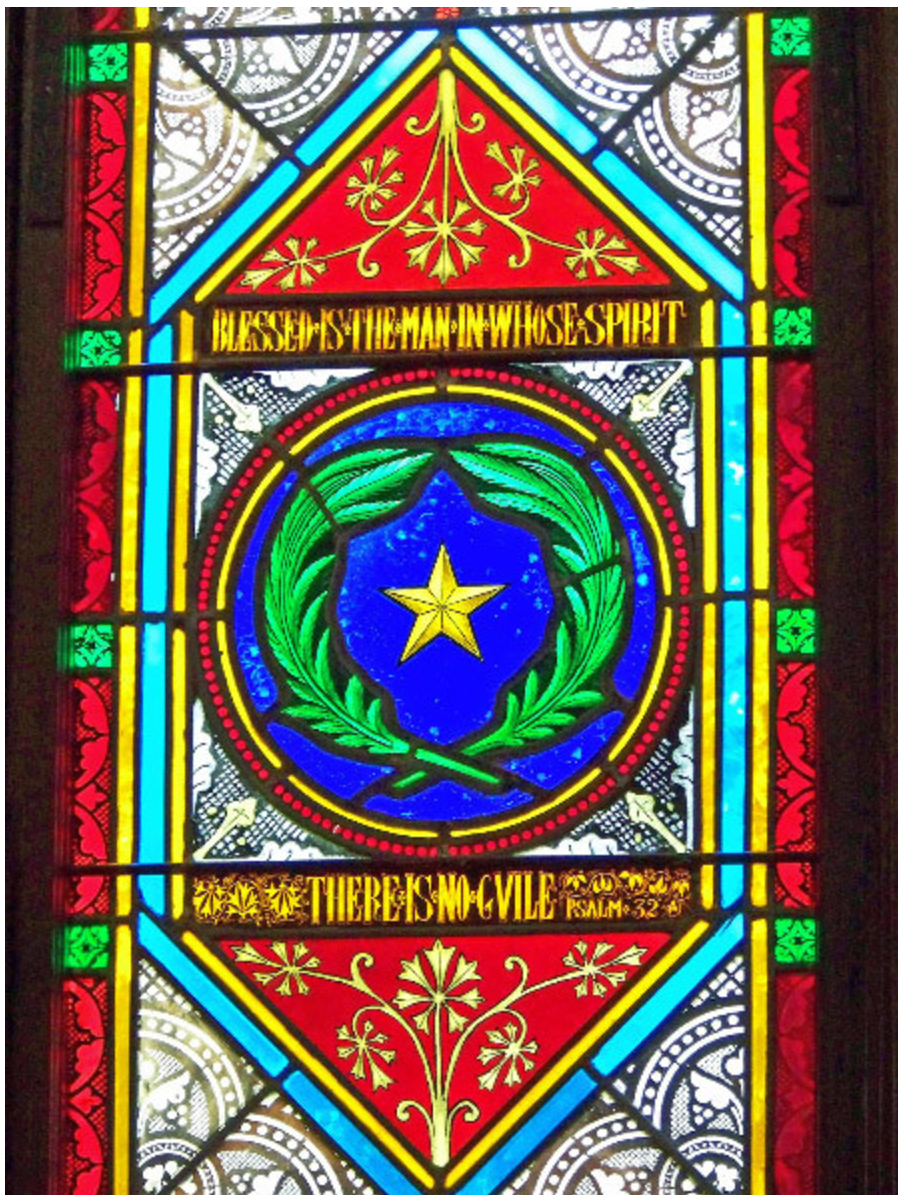
How Jacob Kirby Brown (his full name) came to be the ward of Judge Jenkins is an unusual story in itself. Kirby was the grandson of Maj. Gen. Jacob Jennings Brown (1775–1828), Commanding General of the U.S. Army from 1821 to 1828. One of the general's children was William Spencer Brown, who graduated from West Point in 1835 but took up a career as a civil

engineer and built railroads across the South. Kirby was born in Georgia in 1842 while his father was thus employed. In 1852, William S. Brown drowned during construction of a railroad bridge across the Broad River near Columbia, S.C. He left his widow, Elizabeth Barnes Brown, with five young children, Kirby and his four sisters.

Elizabeth's sister, Emily Barnes, came to Columbia from Philadelphia to help care for the children, and in 1854 Emily married Charles J. Jenkins, an eligible widower. When she came to live in the Jenkins home in Augusta, Emily brought the five Brown children with her, and Jenkins became their legal guardian. Jenkins was later notorious as the Reconstruction governor of Georgia who in 1868 absconded with the state treasury and state seal to keep them out of the hands of Federal occupying forces.

Kirby Brown's other illustrious connections included a first cousin, Union Lt. Edmund Kirby, who was mortally wounded at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863. When President Abraham Lincoln came to visit the dying Edmund Kirby, the young man expressed concern about his widowed mother's well-being, and Lincoln gave him a promotion to brigadier general, thus insuring an adequate pension for the mother. Another connection was Confederate Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, related to the Browns and Kirbys by marriage. Finally, Joseph Barnes, brother to Elizabeth and Emily and uncle of Kirby Brown, was U.S. Army Surgeon General during the Civil War. It was he who later attended at the deathbeds of two assassinated presidents, Abraham Lincoln in 1865 and James A. Garfield in 1881.

Befitting his Christian life, Kirby is honored with a stained-glass window, commissioned by Governor Jenkins, in the sanctuary of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Summerville. Part of the inscription is from Psalm 32: "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile." At the bottom of the window, the additional inscription reads, "In memory of Kirby J. Brown [sic], who fell on the battle field of Chickamauga September 19 1863 in the 21 year of age." Kirby's legacy lives on in this artifact.



Stained-glass window in Kirby Brown's honor, Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Augusta, Georgia | courtesy of the author



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