



Shelby's Expedition to Mexico: An Unwritten Leaf of the War

John Edwards

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Major John Newman Edwards (1839 – 1889) was famed General Joseph O. Shelby's adjutant during the American Civil War, an author, a journalist, and the founder of the Kansas City Times. He is perhaps best known for contributing to the folk hero status of outlaw Jesse James.

Joseph Orville "Jo" Shelby (1830 – 1897) was a noted Confederate cavalry general in the Trans-Mississippi Theater of the American Civil War. Shelby led his "Iron Brigade" of Missouri volunteers on what was at that time the longest cavalry raid of the war, Shelby's Raid. He was promoted to brigadier general on December 15, 1863, following the successful conclusion of his raid.

In June 1865, rather than surrender, Shelby and approximately 1,000 of his remaining troops rode south into Mexico. For their determination not to surrender, they were immortalized as "the undefeated". A later verse appended to the post-war Confederate anthem, "The Unreconstructed Rebel" commemorates the defiance of Shelby and his men:

"I won't be reconstructed, I'm better now than then.
And for a Carpetbagger I do not give a damn.
So it's forward to the frontier, soon as I can go.
I'll fix me up a weapon and start for Mexico."

Their plan was to offer their services to Emperor Maximilian as a 'foreign legion.

This account of the expedition is the first-hand account by Shelby's adjutant Newman who accompanied him on the expedition.

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