

Laurel Creek Massacre ^[1]

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by Paul E. Kuhl, 2006

In April 1864 a Union brigade from Tennessee, commanded by Col. George Washington Kirk, entered [Madison County](#) ^[2] to recruit "home Yankees" for the 2nd and 3rd North Carolina Mounted Volunteers, defeat Confederate forces, and chastise Confederate sympathizers. Kirk's Brigade arrived unopposed and scoured the Laurel Valley, where Shelton Laurel Creek flows into Big Laurel Creek. Madison County was defended only by [Home Guard](#) ^[3] units from [Yancey County](#) ^[4] under Brig. Gen. John W. McElroy, who was ensconced at Mars Hill bracing himself for an attack.

Kirk's Mounted Volunteers encountered the home of a 40-year-old widow, Nance "Granny" Franklin. They characterized Granny Franklin's four sons as Confederate sympathizers who had fought alongside Confederate forces and bushwhacked Union troops moving through the area. Only three sons were present that day, George Franklin being away. When troops surrounded the house, Granny Franklin urged her sons to defend themselves. Balus, James, and Josiah emerged from the cabin shooting. A return volley killed Balus and James. Fifteen-year-old Josiah crawled under the house and killed two soldiers who tried to capture him. Granny Franklin was trying to prevent the soldiers from burning the cabin when one of them shot off a lock of her hair. On emerging from under the burning building, Josiah was killed immediately. As Kirk's Brigade left Granny Franklin with her three dead sons, they rode off shouting, "Bloody Madison!"

This and the earlier [Shelton Laurel Massacre](#) ^[5] were the most notorious incidents of western North Carolina's own civil war within the Civil War.

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Additional Resources:

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Authors:

[Kuhl, Paul E.](#) ^[11]

Origin - location:

[Madison County](#) ^[12]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[13]

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