



June 2018

## *License Plate Paddles to Site of the Madden Branch Massacre*



*The site of the Madden Branch Massacre is not accessible by road or trail so this battlefield preservation supporter, with license plate in tow, paddled the Ocoee River to one of its tributaries, Madden Branch, stopping below the bluff where the Massacre reportedly occurred. A US Highway 64 bridge crosses Madden Branch a few miles from the popular Ocoee whitewater rafting area.*

On November 29, 1864, “the long haired, red-bearded beast from Georgia,” John P. Gatewood, killed several pro-Union Georgians in what was later known as the **Madden Branch Massacre**.

Gatewood, who was originally from Fentress County, TN, and who sometimes operated as a Confederate guerilla and other times under no authority but his own, made numerous raids in the divided mountain communities. In November, 1864, he, with 50 men, entered Polk County, TN from Georgia on an expedition to kill Union sympathizers. He killed 24 people at several locations in the county – killing indiscriminately – including shooting one boy because he wore a Union belt buckle. When Gatewood reached Madden Branch, he met and shot eight Unionist Georgians who were on their way to Cleveland, TN to join the Union Army. Two victims survived; one of the victims, Jasper Parton, was shot six times and escaped by swimming the Ocoee River. This was Gatewood’s bloodiest raid in Tennessee.

The Civil War touched nearly every Tennessee community, extending far beyond the battlefields. Divided communities and the breakdown of civil and military authorities were increasingly evident as the War drew to a close.

*Information from [The Old Place](#), [Pioneer Life in](#)*



*Polk County, TN by Thurman Parish and  
"Anatomy of an Atrocity: The Madden Branch  
Massacre and Guerilla Warfare in North  
Georgia," Georgia Historical Quarterly 77 by  
Jonathan Sarris.*

*The bodies of the Madden Branch victims were first carried across the Ocoee River to a single grave at the McKissick Cemetery. The bodies were later moved to the Chattanooga National Cemetery. Harvey Brewster's headstone stands next to that of an unidentified victim of the Massacre.*

### **Send Us a Photo of Your Plate**

Share a photo of your Civil War license plate at a Tennessee battlefield or Civil War site. Email your photo and name of the battlefield or site to [info@tcwpa.org](mailto:info@tcwpa.org). We'll do the rest. Help tell the stories of Tennessee's Civil War history.

### **A Conversation Starter**

Noticed the Civil War license plate on another vehicle lately? As you drive the state be on the lookout for fellow preservationists who have the plate on their vehicle. Meet people who share your support for battlefield preservation or stop to compliment you on a good looking tag. They're great conversation starters!



### **Complimentary Membership**

If you've purchased a Civil War Battlefield preservation license plate you are eligible for a complimentary 1-year membership in TCWPA. For more information visit [tcwpa.org/license-plate](http://tcwpa.org/license-plate).

You can purchase the license plate at your County Clerk's office for \$36.00 plus your regular registration fees. Proceeds from the sale of the plate will help protect and interpret important battlefields in Tennessee. For more information, visit: [tcwpa.org/license-plate](http://tcwpa.org/license-plate)



