



SKEDADDLE

NINETEENTH CENTURY ANECDOTES, POETRY, AND INCIDENTS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

April 12, 2004

A view of the war unfettered by 20th and 21st centuries filters and not blurred by revisionist history.

A Scout To East Tennessee

By the Lochiel Cavalry

AT sunrise, on December 20th, 1862, ten companies of the Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry—460 men, under command of Major Russell, and eight companies of the Second Michigan—800 men, under command of Col. Campbell, marched due east from Nicholasville, Ky., on a secret expedition, for which thirty days were allotted for those who should be so fortunate as to return. The orders were to move "light and easy," without tents, baggage or extra clothing; carry on your horse all you wanted, and two shoes and twenty nails for him. There were ten days' rations issued, which each trooper carried. Marching through the farms and by-paths to avoid all towns and villages, crossing the Kentucky river at an out of the way ford, and ascending Big Hill south of Richmond, we arrived at McKees, county town of Jackson county, Ky., containing six or eight houses, being the first village we had passed through. We were halted here one day, for a corn and provision train to come up that had pack-saddles in it. There were fifty mules packed here with two days' rations, and the wagons sent back to Lexington with half team force, leaving corn for our return, there being none in Jackson county. *Continued on page 2*

About the images on our pages:

In many instances, the images on our pages are the images that appeared with the associated text when it was first published. In other instances, images have been selected that are appropriate for the context of the article.

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A Scout To East Tennessee *(continued from page 1)*

December 24th.—The weather had been very fair and beautiful, except this last day, which was rainy and cold, and we marched out in the rain for Goose creek, near its junction with the Red Bird fork of Kentucky river. Halting in the meadow an hour to give the horses a bite of hay (the first they had for four days, and about all they ever got on the march), we were joined by the Seventh Ohio Cavalry—240 men—from Winchester, Ky., under command of Major Reany. The whole force now numbered 1,000 men, and was under command of Brig. Gen. Carter, having on his staff Col. Carter, Col. Walker, Col. Garrett, Capt. Watkins, Capt. M'Nish, Capt. Easley and others, all acting as aids, assistants, or guides. We now ascertained we were sent to burn the bridges on the East Tennessee railroad, and were expected to foot it half the way over the successive steep and rugged mountain ranges of Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee, and recommended to cheerfully endure all the hardships and place ourselves on half rations to begin with.

I will say for the soldiers that no man cavilled at it, or wanted to turn his back, but all went cheerfully forward, bearing their own burdens as best they might, without sleep, on half rations, food half cooked, and boots worn off their feet by tramping over the rocks to ease their own good horses, and trusting to Providence to keep down the wide and swift rivers that drain these wild mountains. There was to ford, on going and coming, the Cumberland, Powell's river, Wallen's river, the Clinch, North Holston, South Holston and the Watauga, the Holston and Clinch being navigable for steamboats when the waters are up. *Providentially* they were kept down for us. In three days after our exit they were in full flood, so that they could not even have been swum by our horses, from Goose creek we had only bridle-paths, and marched by file across a deep depression in the ridge to the Red Bird, up that and across it scores of times to its topmost spring.

December 27th.—Crossing the Kentucky Ridge, and down to the waters of the middle fork of Kentucky river. Crossing and rising that, we came down to Straight creek and halted for half an hour to breathe, ere breasting the pine mountain that appeared to push its rocky side up like the wall of a house to near the clouds then lowering and dripping on our heads. The zig-zag paths up the face of this mountain turn and return on each other as often as a fox trail, and the toiling men and horses crawling up its side, looked, from the valley, like flies ascending and sticking to a wall. Its sandy eastern front was too steep to ride down, and there were several miles of arduous marching over the Pine Mountain ere we reached the Poor Fork at the Cumberland. Marched up its quicksand shores and beside the horizontal rock ledges that are natural fortresses, ready made to the hand of the men of Harlan county to defend themselves from invasion, by way of Cumberland Gap or any other in the mountain range. Fording the Cumberland and Clover Fork and following up Martin's creek, we camped during the rainy night and slept by the fires for the last time for many days until our return into Kentucky again.



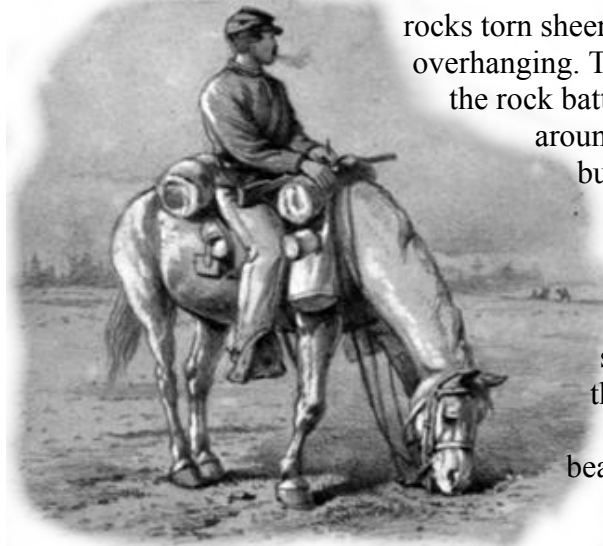
Marching over a high ridge, the bold and beautiful Cumberland mountain rose majestically before us, and extended like a frowning barrier to right and left as far as the eye could reach without a perceptible break in the uniformity of its crest. Two-thirds of the way up the mountain was a level shoulder, as it were breaking the uniformity of its side and appearing as if there had been great waves running the length of the mountains, and thus arrested and changed to rock while in motion adding greatly to its beauty while the softened rays of the declining sun shone in contrasted light and shadow on the gray rock waves, the green pines and the bare, brown poplars and oaks. Halting beside the little stream in the pleasant valley, an hour was spent in giving corn to the jaded horses, sending back the whole pack mule train, all inefficient horses and a few sick men to Lexington.

At sunset leading our horses for a two mile march up, and a one mile march down, we cheerfully addressed ourselves to the task of crossing the Cumberland mountain. We reached the summit in two hours under the light of the full soft moon that silvered and beautified the scene, and passed over into the State of Virginia through Crank Gap, so called from its tortuous break in the horizontal rock crest of the Cumberland, some 200 feet deep and a quarter of a mile in width. This pass is more beautiful and picturesque than anything I have ever seen. It arrested the attention of every soldier and according to his temperament he viewed it to right and left in silent admiration at the wonderful works of God, or in rapturous comment as the soft moonlight silvered o'er and smoothed the ruggedness of each natural "frieze and coign of vantage" that was broken or rounded and carved, and overhung our winding path with all the softness of a summer Italian landscape by Claude Lorraine.

Passing the crest we turned to the left and went down an easy grade on a projecting Sierra from the face of the mountain, with a precipice on each side. Reaching the end of that we turned short again to the left with our faces to the mountain and slipped down into chaos, pitching and sliding from rock to rock into a wild gorge. Looking directly up to the Kentucky heights was rock scenery of such savage character over our heads, as would have delighted the heart of Salvator Rosa. It would but have required a camp fire while our troops were filing and plunging down, and his pencil, to more than rival his scenes in the Appenines. The cliffs here were in shadow from the moon, and crested the whole northeastern face of the mountain in one rude unbroken strata, and projected like a threatening arm from Kentucky, raised to chastise any invader. It is not to be wondered that the white man had his superstitions in invading the western home of the Indian while climbing these cliffs from the east.

This Crank pass has the singular appearance of having fallen two hundred feet into some subterranean gulf, the pass being level for a quarter of a mile in width, winding over the mountains in a curve between the buttressed walls for more than half a mile, with the rocks torn sheer down from both sides, leaving the singular rock walls overhanging. The pass has the same kind of soil and trees on it that cap the rock battlements, and to soften the wild scene, were glassy glades around a dilapidated house, where some mountaineer had once built him a home, now abandoned. Below his house the sounds of falling water greeted our ears as we crossed the sunken pass, through an avenue of hemlocks and gigantic rhododendrons, intermingled with isolated rocks, moss covered by the falling waters, that were of such enormous sizes as would have made dwellings for the Genii or the Titans.

Turning with a sigh from all this wealth of natural beauty, thinking how much it would be endeared to us could



the loved ones at home be at our side to appreciate it, and pondering on the thought of how far distant was the day when we could visit it with smiling peace waving her wing over the land, we looked the present toils and dangers fully in the face, and strode manfully on. Passing north up Poor Valley to avoid alarming Jonesville, we forded Powell's river and crossed Lee county during the night, reaching Wallen's Ridge at sunrise, where resting two hours, cooking our coffee and toasting our meat on long sticks or eating it raw (as many preferred), and feeding our horses with the corn we carried over the Cumberland we pushed on for Tennessee, crossing Powell's mountain. At sunset we reached the broad and swift Clinch river; fording it, we halted at a very picturesque spot, where was a large old-time mansion and the only good flouring mill we had seen in our travels, with its very large wheel driven by the tumbling waters at a mountain brook poured on, the top of it, glistening like silver in the soft twilight, while the river waters murmured by. Halting here for an hour for coffee, and to give to the horses a good feed of corn, which the mill and farm-house furnished, and was paid for in "greenbacks," though under the confederate iron rule the miller would not dare to use them, we pushed on through the mountain passes at Purchase Ridge and Copper Ridge for Estillville.

We had captured many small squads of confederate soldiers and conscripts on our way, paroling them all. We this night captured several, under charge of a lieutenant, who were halting at a farm-house by the road-side. Before starting, orders were given that we were to report ourselves to inquirers along the road as confederate Georgia and Tennessee cavalry returning from a secret expedition, and every one along the road was deceived by it, as they thought we were purposely disguised in blue clothes.

Passing Estillville, crossing Scott county, Virginia, and fording the north fork of the Holston at night, we reached Blountsville, Tennessee, at eight A. M. The Ninth Pennsylvania and Seventh Ohio were halted here an hour, and the Second Michigan were pressed forward six miles to Union Station, where the East Tennessee railroad crosses the south fork of Holston on an expensive bridge 1,000 feet long. Here, as we had understood from our prisoners of last night, were stationed three companies of the Sixty-second North Carolina confederate troops under Major McDowell. After all our marches, toils and trials, here was to be tested the complete surprise and success of our expedition, or we were to be met by the enemy, repulsed and driven back over the mountains without accomplishing our object. It was a moment for anxious thought on the part of General Carter, which was fully shared by each one in the expedition from highest to lowest.

As it proved, the Almighty was pleased to bless our cause, for never was surprise more complete. We had outtravelled all certain information, but rumors of a coming host had preceded us like the mutterings of a thunder storm. Within eighty rods of the station Sergeant Whitmore, Co. A, commanding the Michigan Videttes, met six citizens riding up; they asking who our troops were, were answered First Georgia Cavalry. They were delighted, shook hands with the Sergeant and said, "The d—d Yankees were in Estillville, fifteen miles off, five thousand strong" —that "they had raised a hundred men besides the troop, and were going out into the country to raise more men to defend the post—that the Major was coming along right up and the Sergeant would meet him before he got to the bridge."

Col. Carter came up to the citizens at that moment and passed them to the rear. The Sergeant told him he would go down to meet the Major. He said, "Yes, do so." The Sergeant moved forward to a sharp curve in the road and saw the Major and two citizens, at sixty rods distance, talking to the sentinels at the bridge. He came back out of sight, dismounted three men and himself, sent the horses back to the column halted up the road, and secreted his men in a fence corner behind the road curve to await the Major's coming.

When the Major and the two citizens came up, conversing about the "Yankees" to within five feet of the ambush, they were appalled by the sight of the bright revolving rifles close to their heads at

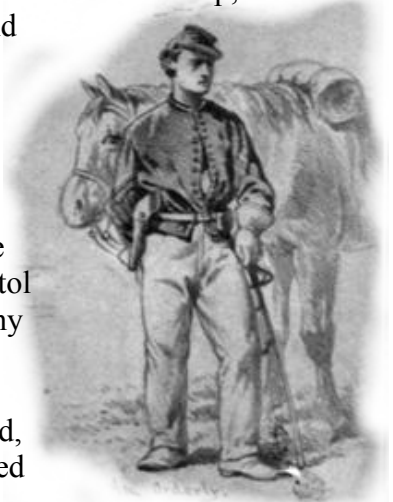
full cock. The Sergeant said, "You are my prisoners." Involuntarily they halt, wheel their horses to flee, when a sharp halt! brought them to front face again. The Sergeant moved them up toward the column. Colonel Campbell had come to the point with Colonel Carter. Colonel Campbell addressed the Major, took his hand and told him he had come to take his post, and if he did not surrender unconditionally he would take it at any rate; saying also, "My men are posted to fire on you—you have not a moment to lose to avoid use-less bloodshedding.

The Major wrote a note to the Captain in command at the post and advised its surrender. It was sent down with a flag of truce and the place was surrendered at once; the rifles peering across the Holston from the hill commanding the camp being persuaders too potent to be gainsaid. The telegraph was instantly destroyed before an intimation of our presence could be conveyed and the railroad bridge fired. The two hundred prisoners (who appeared to be rejoiced) were placed under guard, and the Ninth Pennsylvanian and Seventh Ohio ordered forward from the Blountsville road.

On their arriving, an expedition was ordered under Colonel Walker and Colonel Carter to capture and burn the bridge nine miles south-west across Watauga river, consisting of companies A, C, and D, the twelve rifles of Co. B, fifteen of Co. F, Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry; companies A, and F, Second Michigan Cavalry, and two companies of the Seventh Ohio Cavalry. The balance of the troops were kept back by General Carter to destroy the county bridge, the turn-table, cars, ammunition, camp and commissary stores, and to follow us down to Watauga and defend our rear from the enemy's 800 troops at Bristol, fourteen miles by railway, and Humphrey Marshall's force at Abingdon, thirty miles off by railway. At five miles out the Watauga expedition heard a whistle. The troops were instantly dismounted and ambushed at both ends and besides a deep cut, a rail cut out with our axes in front, and men ambushed with orders to cut out a rail in her rear the instant the engine ran into the deep cut—all in less time than it takes me to write it. A locomotive and tender came in sight, ran into the cut, saw the rail out, reversed and backed out instanter, but not before the rail was up in their rear, and they were fully caged on the rifles peering over the bank. We had gotten a prize, having captured Col. Love, of the Sixty-second North Carolina, a Major, a Captain and a telegraphic staff coming up to ascertain why the telegraph would not work. Five minutes sufficed to put a guard on the locomotive and run her down after us, and we were again on our way and on the alert.

It had been raining slowly all day and now came on heavily. Nearing the rebel camp, Col. Carter, who knew all the ground, arranged the attack, Col. Walker assisting. Companies A and F, Second Michigan, dismounted on the right; the twelve rifles of Company A, Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry, in the centre, and Company D, Seventh Ohio, with their rifles, on the left, were to surround the camp, the balance of the rifles being posted as rear guard and on the left of the road, and then it was to be summoned to surrender, to save useless bloodshed.

Unfortunately there were some rebel soldiers on the outskirts of the camp chopping wood, six of whom were captured as the troops deployed, but two ran in and alarmed the camp. A shot was fired by some one on the left, and the attack became general. The rebels were under arms and the firing was very heavy on both sides for the numbers engaged, for ten minutes, when the Ninth Pennsylvania, followed by the Seventh Ohio, charged on the camp pistol in hand, and the enemy fled. Companies C and D and the balance of Company A, Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry, had been formed in fours around the hill to charge with sabre should there be resistance. When the firing slacked they were ordered to charge, and did so, on the camp. Finding it almost abandoned, they galloped over the Watauga. Companies C and D filed left into a ploughed



field to head off the retreating enemy. Company A kept the road, and at full charge came on them drawn up in two ranks by the roadside. Capt. Jones ordering them to throw down their arms at thirty paces, the rebels were so startled by the rush of horses and glancing of sabres that they all obeyed the order, but a half dozen, who came near losing their lives by not doing so.

There were two lieutenants and seventy-two men who surrendered and saved much bloodshedding. They were making their way to a log house close at hand—a capital fortress—which we would have been compelled to have stormed at once. Companies C and D went down the road and overhauled sixteen more. The short, sharp action cost several lives. One man of Company D, Seventh Ohio, shot dead; one man of Company A, Second Michigan, mortally wounded in the abdomen, and two of the twelve men, Company A, Ninth Pennsylvania, wounded in the leg; one had to be amputated and the man left with the rebel wounded. Of the rebel forces, there were two killed and fifteen wounded. Our surgeon assisted in dressing their wounded, and two of our wounded men were left at the station, Col. Love and Lieut. Hill promising they should have the same care as their own men. The two Lieutenants, Hill and——, of the Sixty-second North Carolina, fought their commands with great gallantry. What a pity that it should be exerted in so evil a cause as the disruption of their country.

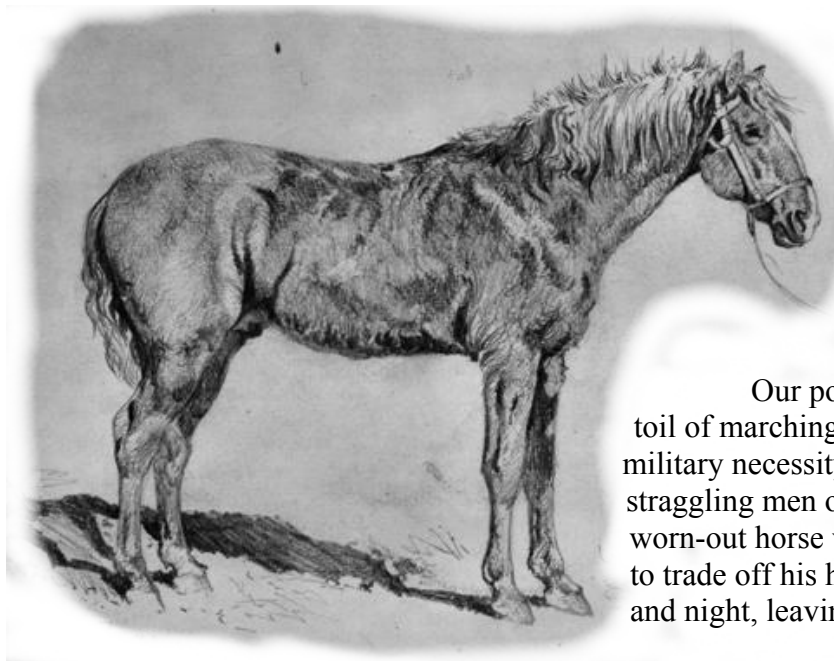
Our prisoners were all paroled on the road, and here, amounting to near four hundred and fifty, inclusive of one Colonel, two Majors, two Captains and five Lieutenants.

It was now dark. The telegraph was instantly destroyed, the camp and the bridge fired, the arms broken and put on the locomotive, and after the bridge had fallen, steam was drawn on the engine and she was run over the abutment on to the burning mass below with a great crash.

In our haste to expedite these matters we lost a prize of another locomotive and train that came up in sight at the burning bridge, reversed her wheels and scudded down the road toward Knoxville. Jeff Davis himself might have been on the train. It is the only thing we have to reproach ourselves for during the expedition as being left undone, or half done.

There were two hundred and fifty cavalry came up after dark to reinforce the infantry. Hearing of the fight they wheeled about and marched over into North Carolina, reporting there were thirty thousand of us at the railway.

Our men were ordered to feed their horses on the rebel corn, and rest for a few hours; but there



was no rest after the excitement of the day and night, and at one o'clock on the night of December 30th, we commenced our retreat, and by strategy to baffle the enemy that our scouts told us were massing to cut us off and pursue us. We felt confident they must be great adepts if they could outmanœuvre Gen. and Col. Carter and our guides.

Our poor horses were sinking under the severe toil of marching, and it became a matter of prime military necessity to replenish the stock or leave straggling men on our retreat. Every man having a worn-out horse was sent out with a sergeant or corporal to trade off his horse at any farm-house right or left, day and night, leaving his own horse in exchange, it taking