

The Woodruff Gun

Annotations to the Margreiter Article

Woodruffs during the Battle of Vincent's Crossroads, Ala.

Thanks to Michael McMurray of Irving, Texas, for the lead on this engagement.

Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume 30, Part 4, pp. 118-119.

Correspondence, Orders, and Returns Relating to Operations in Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, North Alabama, and North Georgia, from August 11, 1863-October 19, 1863.
Union Correspondence, etc.

Correspondence from Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut, commanding Sixteenth Army Corps, to Col. J. C. Kelton, Assistant Adjutant-General, Headquarters Army:

On page 118, Hurlbut forwards information about the First Alabama Cavalry (U.S.):

...Colonel Spencer's regiment [*the First Alabama Cavalry*] is wholly composed of refugees from Alabama. They have been in several engagements and behaved well. They are thoroughly acquainted with the country, well mounted and armed; have two light steel guns [*Woodruffs*], take with them as volunteers 6 engineers who can either run or destroy railroads or steamers....

On page 119, Hurlbut's Assistant Adjutant-General Henry Binmore sends the mission instructions to Col. Spencer:

...You will take all the available and well-mounted men of your command and proceed rapidly through Jasper, Ala. to Montgomery, or to some point east of Montgomery on the West Point railroad. Arriving there you will proceed to destroy effectually the Montgomery and West Point Railroad in its rolling-stock, track, and depots, doing the most thorough amount of damage possible....

daily to Major Willard, as indicated in the above order. These regiments will be relieved daily until further orders.

Major Maurice will detail the artillery, relieving it daily until further orders.

By order of Brigadier-General McArthur :

WALES W. WOOD,
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
Memphis, Tenn., October 6, 1863.

Col. J. C. KELTON,
Asst. Adjt. Gen., Hdqrs. Army, Washington, D. C. :

SIR: I have the honor to report that Maj. Gen. B. M. Prentiss reported to me for duty some ten days since. Having no adequate command to give him without displacing officers in my opinion better qualified, and having been informed by Maj. Gen. U. S. Grant that he had no command for him below, I have given him a leave of absence for twenty days, to report to Washington for such assignment as the Department may order. His resignation, so far as I am informed, is still pending, and as he still insists upon its acceptance on the grounds of his own health and the situation of his family, I recommend that it be at once accepted. His address will be at Quincy, Ill.

Your obedient servant,

S. A. HURLBUT,
Major-General, Commanding Corps.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
October 6, 1863.

Col. J. C. KELTON,
Assistant Adjutant-General, Headquarters Army :

COLONEL: I have the honor to inclose for the information of the general-in-chief my letter of instructions to Col. George E. Spencer, First Alabama Cavalry.

Colonel Spencer's regiment is wholly composed of refugees from Alabama. They have been in several engagements and behaved well. They are thoroughly acquainted with the country, well mounted and armed; have two light steel guns, take with them as volunteers 6 engineers who can either run or destroy railroads or steamers. The expedition is directed against the Montgomery and West Point Railroad, because it is a connecting link of great importance and of a different gauge from the other southern roads. Spencer is certain that he can get through the outer cordon without observation, and if he does so, I am satisfied he will make his way to Montgomery. His force will be about 650 men.

While I am now writing I would remark that the enemy's force of cavalry has been largely increased in North Mississippi, and that I have this moment (2 p. m.) intelligence of an attack upon our advanced cavalry on Coldwater below La Grange with artillery.

Your obedient servant,

S. A. HURLBUT,
Major-General.

[Inclosure.]

HEADQUARTERS SIXTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
Memphis, Tenn., October 3, 1863.

Col. G. E. SPENCER,
Comdg. First Alabama Vol. Cavalry, Corinth, Miss. :

SIR : You will take all the available and well-mounted men of your command and proceed rapidly through Jasper, Ala., to Montgomery, or to some point east of Montgomery on the West Point railroad. Arriving there you will proceed to destroy effectually the Montgomery and West Point Railroad in its rolling-stock, track, and depots, doing the most thorough amount of damage possible.

You will, as far as possible, avoid all public and known roads before striking this road, and will see to it that your men are kept together and held thoroughly in hand.

It is exceedingly desirable that the breaking of this road should be thorough and complete.

Men will be carefully instructed not to interfere with private property further than is necessary for remounts and for sustenance to the command. All public stores and works will be destroyed.

After completing the destruction of this road, if it be possible, you will strike for the Georgia road, east of Atlanta, and do all damage possible there.

The movements of the command, however, must be governed by circumstances, and will be left in the discretion of Colonel Spencer.

The line of escape will probably be by Pensacola.

By order of Major-General Hurlbut :

HENRY BINMORE,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
Memphis, Tenn., October 6, 1863.

Brig. Gen. J. C. VEATCH,
Commanding Fifth Division, Memphis, Tenn. :

GENERAL : The enemy's cavalry in three columns have attempted the passage of the Coldwater to-day. Two have been beaten back, the third is moving on La Grange or Moscow, or perhaps La Fayette.

McCrillis, with his brigade of cavalry, re-enforced by the Seventh Illinois, is on their trail. A brigade of Sherman's infantry is now going on the cars to Moscow.

Let the troops on the out lines be under arms by 4 a. m. to-morrow.

Let Fuller's brigade be in readiness to march at half an hour's notice, with three days' rations in the haversacks.

Let the two regiments in the fort be ready to relieve them at any time after sunrise to-morrow if necessary.

Picket line to be inspected by 3 a. m. to-morrow morning.

Your obedient servant,

S. A. HURLBUT,
Major-General.

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Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume 31, Part 1, pp. 37-38.

Operations in Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, North Alabama, and North Georgia, October 20-December 31, 1863.
Reports.

Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Ferguson, C. S. Army:

On page 119, Ferguson reports on his engagement with the 1st Alabama Cavalry (U.S.), in which he captured their two Woodruffs:

...After pursuing this road about 3 miles I received the first positive information of the position of the enemy from a scout I had sent out, who reported them advancing on the same road. I immediately sent to recall the squadron previously ordered to Bay Springs [*Alabama*], and continued the march until the advance guards met and skirmishing began—about 1:30 p.m. The enemy were formed in thick woods across the road, with an open field in front, through which, swept as it was by two pieces of light artillery planted in the road, I had to advance to the attack....

...I captured two piece of artillery [*the Woodruffs*], 5 stand of colors, 60 elegant breech-loading carbines, with an ample supply of ammunition for present purposes, 25 Colt hostler [*sic*] pistols, 10 pack-saddles, 52 horses and mules, and 56 saddles...

OCTOBER 26, 1863.—Skirmish at Vincent's Cross-Roads, near Bay Springs, Miss.

REPORTS.

No. 1.—Report of Capt. John W. Barnes, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

No. 2.—Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Ferguson, C. S. Army.

No. 1.

Report of Capt. John W. Barnes, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

CORINTH, MISS.,
October 27, 1863.

Spencer yesterday, at 2 p. m., was attacked some 40 miles south-east of Glendale, in the direction of Jones' Cross-Roads. The messenger reports the rebel force, supposed to be Hanner's [?] and others, at 2,000 strong. Spencer had about 500.* He is said to be getting the worst of the fight. Shall I send the cavalry at Corinth to his aid?

Respectfully,

JOHN W. BARNES,
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

No. 2.

Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Ferguson, C. S. Army.

HEADQUARTERS BRIGADE,
Near Courtland, Ala., October 31, 1863.

GENERAL: I have the honor to report that, pursuant to verbal orders from yourself, I left camp at Cane Creek shortly after dark on the evening of the 25th instant with two regiments of my brigade (the Second Tennessee, Lieutenant-Colonel Morton, and the Second Alabama, Colonel Earl), for the purpose of intercepting a raiding party of the enemy reported to be on their return from Walker County, Ala. Traveled all night, and at sunrise next morning halted and fed my horses at a ford of Bear Creek, about 2 miles above Mann's Mills. After a delay of two hours for this purpose, I pushed the command across Bear Creek and on to the Fulton and Iuka road. Here, as there was no sign of the enemy's having passed, I turned toward Fulton, and after reaching the intersection of this road with that to Bay Springs, I sent one squadron in the latter direction for the purpose of holding the enemy in check, should they move toward that point, and preventing their escape. With the remainder of my force (about 300 effective men) I moved toward the Bull Mountain country.

After pursuing this road about 3 miles I received the first positive information of the position of the enemy from a scout I had sent out, who reported them advancing on the same road. I immediately sent to recall the squadron previously ordered to Bay Springs,

* First Alabama Cavalry (Union).

and continued the march until the advance guards met and skirmishing began—about 1.30 p. m. The enemy were formed in thick woods across the road, with an open field in front, through which, swept as it was by two pieces of light artillery planted in the road, I had to advance to the attack. As rapidly as possible I formed my lines, had the men dismounted, and attacked the enemy, who were soon driven back by the Second Tennessee, under the able and gallant leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Morton, and a portion of the Second Alabama. As soon as the horses could be brought up the fleeing enemy were hotly pursued and their retreat converted into a wild panic. The chase was kept up for some 10 miles through dense woods and over a mountainous country until dark. Their perfect knowledge and our ignorance of the country enabled most of them, however, to escape by separating into small squads and leaving the road.

It may be proper to remark that before the engagement began I had met Major Moreland, with his battalion, and ordered him to get in rear of the enemy on a road leading from their left flank to Bay Springs, of the existence of which he informed me, stating it was the only road by which they could escape, except directly back into Alabama. Had my instructions been strictly and energetically followed, few of the enemy would have escaped.

With a loss of 2 killed and 11 wounded, I have succeeded in effectually destroying the First Alabama Tory Regiment. Up to the time I left, the enemy's loss, as far as could be ascertained, was 20 killed, including 2 captains, the adjutant of the regiment, and 1 first lieutenant; 9 wounded, including 1 first lieutenant mortally, and 29 prisoners. The woods was so dense and the fight kept up for so great a distance that many killed and wounded were not found. I do not think the number would fall short of 100 in all.

I captured 2 pieces of artillery, 5 stand of colors, 60 elegant breech-loading carbines, with an ample supply of ammunition for present purposes, 25 Colt hostler pistols, 10 pack-saddles, 52 horses and mules, and 56 saddles. I have received no report from Major Moreland, but understand he has collected a large number of prisoners, horses, mules, &c. My force scarcely equaled that of the enemy.

I am indebted to the officers and men of the command for gallant conduct and cheerful endurance of hardship and hunger on this scout; but to Lieutenant-Colonel Morton and Maj. H. W. Bridges more than a passing tribute is due. The former led his gallant band with a cool skill and determination, admirable in the extreme, until knocked from his horse by a spent ball. The latter was, as usual, foremost in the fight, everywhere inspiring and encouraging the men and officers. With his own hand he killed 1 and wounded and captured several other Yankees. His horse was shot under him and his coat pierced by a bullet, an evidence of the close character of the fight.

To the officers of my staff who were present—Captain Nugent, assistant adjutant-general; Captain Irwin, assistant inspector-general; Lieutenant Tomlinson, aide-de-camp, and Lieutenant Richardson, picket officer—I am indebted for zealous and efficient discharge of duty in gallant style.

S. W. FERGUSON,
Brigadier-General, Commanding.

Maj. Gen. S. D. LEE.

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