February 3, 1863 - February 5, 1863 - Expedition from Murfreesborough to Auburn, Liberty, Alexandria, Lebanon, Carthage and Gallatin environs[Note 1]

FEBRUARY 3-5, 1863.-Expedition from Murfreesborough to Auburn, Liberty, and Alexandria, Tenn.

No. 1

Report of Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Reynolds, U. S. Army, commanding Fifth Division, Fourteenth Army Corps.

HDQRS. FIFTH DIVISION, FOURTEENTH ARMY CORPS, Murfreesborough, February 8, 1863.

MAJ.: I have the honor to submit the accompanying report of the operations of the recent expedition of the Fifth Division, Fourteenth Army Corps: Left Murfreesborough February 3, 1863, with the following force, viz.,: First Brigade, Col. [J. T.] Wilder; Second Brigade, Col. [A. S.] Hall; Lilly's Eighteenth Indiana Battery, six guns, Capt. [E.] Lilly; Harris' Nineteenth Indiana Battery, four guns, Capt. [S. J.] Harris; two mountain howitzers, Lieut. [W. B.] Rippetoe, of the Eighteenth Battery; and detachments of the Third Ohio Cavalry, Maj. Paramore; Fourth Ohio Cavalry, Lieut.-Col. [J. L.] Pugh; Third Indiana Cavalry, Capt. [G. F.] Herritt, and Fourth Indiana Cavalry, Capt. [J. T.] Deweese; in all about 3,600 men.

When about 8 miles from Murfreesborough, on the Auburn pike, the advance guard reported rebel cavalry in sight. The body proved to be a scouting party of the enemy, some 30 strong, who retired as we advanced, without an exchange of shots. The position was such that we could not get round and capture them. We encamped the night of the 3d at Auburn, 21 miles from Murfreesborough by the lower pike. Ascertained that a rebel camp was situated at the forks of the roads, about 2 1/2 miles west of Liberty. Made an early start on the 4th, hoping to encounter the enemy in that position. After marching some 3 miles, met the enemy's cavalry outpost, about 150 strong. Skirmishing between this advance and our cavalry continued for some 2 miles, but not at short range, during which we wounded 1 rebel. This advance party retired to the main camp, partially destroying the bridge over Smith's Fork, which, being fordable, did not impede our progress. We pushed on to the enemy's camp, and it had been hastily vacated, and that they had retreated toward Liberty. Send cavalry in pursuit, and drove them beyond Liberty.

Moved with my main body through Alexandria, about 15 miles from Auburn, and encamped. Found here some flour and bacon belonging to the rebels, of which we took possession. The loyal people stated that the mills at Alexandria and Liberty, although occasionally impressed for the use of the rebels, were of great benefit to them, and I did not order their destruction.

On the 5th, moved with main body toward Lebanon, and sent the detachment of Fourth Indiana Cavalry, under Capt. Deweese, to New Middleton, on the Carthage pike, some 6 miles south of Carthage, with orders to destroy the

machinery of a large mill. This mill had for a long time been used exclusively for the rebels, and was of no use to the loyal inhabitants; in fact, it was used for grinding the grain of the loyal people to make food for rebels. The machinery was effectually destroyed, and also a large quantity of what and flour found in the mill.

We encamped the evening of the 5th on Spring Creek, 4 miles east of Lebanon. Three of our infantry went a short distance outside the lines to get some straw for bedding (we had not nets, and the weather was very inclement) and were pounced upon and taken off by a small squad of rebel cavalry. Lieut. Green, commanding my headquarters provost guard, took some 8 or 10 men and gave chase. After a race of 7 miles, overtook the rebels, recovered all of our men, brought back 1 prisoner.

During the day of the 5th, destroyed a quantity of rebel bacon and flour, which we could not transport; also 3 wagons and contents, loaded with flour, bacon, and sundries, on the way to the rebel camp, but which had been hidden in the woods on learning of our approach.

On the 6th, marched the main body through Lebanon, which was occupied on the night of the 5th by the One hundred and twenty-third Illinois Volunteers, Col. [James] Monroe, and encamped at Baird's Mills, on the pike to Murfreesborough. This morning sent out cavalry on the New Middleton road, to cross back on to the Alexandria road, and catch rebel hangers-on in our rear; also on road to Rome, as far as Big Spring, and on road to Gallatin. All these parties join main camp at Baird's Mills in the evening. At Lebanon found and brought away some 8,000 pounds of bacon, stored there for rebel use.

On the 7th, marched from Baird's Mills to Murfreesborough (19 miles), crossing East Fork of Stone's River on bridge of wagons, and made our camp after dark.

Five miles from Baird's Mills, our train was fired into by a body of rebel cavalry, about 150 strong. They came out of thick cedars, which abound in that vicinity; delivered one fire at random, and then ran. The fire was returned by the infantry escort, the One hundred and twenty-third Illinois Volunteers, Col. Monroe. We wounded several of the rebels at this point, and took 1 prisoner. Two shells from one of Harris' guns dispersed a body of men and horses from an open space in the woods; they ran precipitately, leaving behind several saddles, &c., and a large quantity of boots. Precise damage done them could not be ascertained. We had 1 man very slightly wounded.

During the trip, at various points we captured 43 prisoners, representing various corps in the rebel service, more than 300 animals, about 50 beef-cattle, besides destroying the subsistence stores above named.

We had 5 men reported missing on coming into camp; they had straggled or are prisoners.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. J. REYNOLDS, Maj.-Gen., Cmdg. Division.

No. 2.

Report of Lieut. Col. Douglas A. Murray, Third Ohio Cavalry, commanding Second Cavalry Brigade.

HDQRS. SECOND CAVALRY BRIGADE, Camp Stanley, Tenn., February 8, 1863.

GEN.: I have the honor to report, for your information, the part taken by a portion of the Second Cavalry Brigade, consisting of the Third and Fourth Ohio Cavalry, with detachments of the Third and Fourth Indiana Cavalry, from the 3d to the 7th of February, 1863, while attached to the command of Brig.-Gen. [J. J.] Reynolds.

Joined the command of the general on the morning of the 3d, and proceeded in rear of the command till about 4 miles to the front of our pickets on the Liberty pike, when the cavalry, with the exception of the Fourth Indiana, were ordered to the front as advance guard, and to push on to Auburn, and, if possible, to Prosperity Church, about 3 1/2 miles beyond it. The general learning that the enemy were there in strong force, we moved carefully, with a strong advance and flank guard, without any interruption, as far as ordered. Hearing that about 30 rebel cavalrymen had moved at a rapid pace along the road toward the church half an hour ahead of us, we did not succeed in coming up with them, therefore, in compliance with instructions, returned to Auburn and encamped one-half mile in front of the command to furnish the requisite number. Nothing occurred during the night worthy of mentioning. Next morning, at daylight, moved on in advance toward Liberty, driving in a picket of the enemy, consisting of about 50 or 60 men. About 2 1/2 miles this side of Liberty, we passed over on the road that led to Alexandria, where also a small body of the enemy were seen and a report that the enemy were in force to our right, which was without foundation. Passed through Alexandria, and encamped about 3 miles from it on the Lebanon pike, throwing out strong pickets front and rear. The pickets reported hearing that small bands of rebel cavalry were in the country, consisting of from 5 to 10 in number, plundering and stealing all they could lay their hands on, and committing all manner of depredations. Moved early next morning in the advance. Received orders to send scouting parties both on Rome and Gallatin pikes, to proceed about 8 miles on both these roads. The Third Ohio Cavalry, consisting of 100 men, took the former, under command of Maj. J. W. Paramore, and made several important arrests, viz.,: Gen. R. Anderson, senator; Col. W. L. Martin, representative; W. B. Parsley and John Cox, conscript agents, and G. A. Parsley, lieutenant so-called C. S. Army, besides 3 enlisted men. The Fourth Ohio Cavalry, under command of Maj. [C. G.] Megrue, consisting of 100 men, took the Gallatin pike, and made several arrests. The entire command, with the balance of the cavalry in advance, proceeded through Lebanon, and took the Murfreesborough pike as far as Baird's Mills, and encamped, throwing out pickets to the front on the road and roads leading from the main road as soon as we arrived in camp.

About one-half hour after the arrival of the command, reported currently there that Morgan with his command would to a certainty make a strong attack upon us at Stone's River next day, which turned out to be, like the majority of such reports, without foundation. Received orders from Gen. Reynolds to send 50 men as an escort to an officer and 5 men, who were to carry a dispatch to Gen. Thomas. The escort had orders to proceed to the river and see the dispatch party across and then return. They met with no interruption, neither say anything to indicate that any force were in that vicinity, and arrived at camp about 8 p. m. Left camp next morning in advance, and proceeded to Stone's River without the least interruption of any kind; crossed the river, the rear portion of the train being fired into by a party of rebels, supposed to number about 120 or 130 men, who, after firing, retreated and fled in every direction, I was told. When we recrossed the river, and met the command advancing, ordered again by the general to proceed in the advance to the river, and not cross over until the entire command did so. I threw out strong pickets to the rear and flanks, which I did not withdraw until the entire command had passed over the river, which they did by means of a bridge formed by wagons. We had two small pieces of mountain howitzers with our brigade, which the lieutenant in charge informed me that Gen. Reynolds said to him might with his section remain with us. It appears from all I heard that Col. Wilder will not allow it, as he claims them as his, and wishes them to accompany his brigade (infantry) when they are mounted, which is the intention, I believe. They would be a great acquisition to us, and, if possible, if I cannot obtain those, I hear that there are several such pieces in Nashville, Tenn. Could I not, on your recommendation, procure a section of such guns? I could easily man them, having a number of old artillerymen in the command.

Our horses had ample forage during the scout; worked very hard, and traveled over a large section of country. The country passed through was principally hilly, the roads good, and with the exception of the bridge over Stone's River, the different bridges on the road were in good order. Our command returned last evening about 8.30 o'clock.

Our casualties were 6 enlisted men, 1 of the Third Ohio Cavalry, 5 of the Fourth Ohio Cavalry, supposed to be captured by the enemy.

The command picked up some fine-looking horses and mules, 91 of the former and 19 of the latter.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. A. MURRAY, Lieut. Col. Third Ohio Cavalry, Cmdg. Second Cav. Brigade.

No. 3.

Report of Capt. John T. Deweese, Fourth Indiana Cavalry.

HDQRS. FIRST BATTALION, FOURTH INDIANA CAVALRY,
Murfreesborough, Tenn., February 10, 1863.

LIEUT.: In obedience to orders from brigade headquarters, on the morning of the 3d of this month I reported to Maj.-Gen. Reynolds, commanding the Fifth Division of this army. My command consisted of 125 men, being parts of Companies A, B, C, D, and E, of this regiment.

On the 3d and 4th instant nothing of importance occurred worthy of note. We marched each day 25 miles without any opposition from the enemy, camping on the night of the 3d at Auburn and on the 4th at Alexandria.

On the morning of the 5th, in pursuance to orders from Maj.-Gen. Reynolds, I left the road occupied by the main column of our march, and marched due north 9 1/2 miles, on the Midway pike, to Elesin's Mill, where the rebel army had collected a large amount of wheat and corn, and were grinding it for their own use. The enemy having heard of our approach, fled before we entered the village. We immediately proceeded to destroy the mill by tearing and breaking the machinery, so as to render it entirely unserviceable for months. We also captured and destroyed about 30,000 pounds of flour, sacked up for army use, and about 600 bushels of wheat and corn. After resting our horses we started for Lebanon, at which place we encamped for the night.

On our way from the mill we were closely followed by some 700 of Breckinridge's men; but, taking things coolly, we recaptured and burned three of the wagons taken from our army at the fight at Hartsville; also 7 prisoners and their arms, and 22 horses and 3 mules. Our loss was 2 privates from Company C, captured by being allowed to straggle behind the rear guard by the officer who commanded the same. One of the prisoners captured turned out to be a rebel mail-carrier, only thirty-six hours from Tullahoma, having in his possession valuable information of the movements of the enemy.

On the morning of the 6th, we took up our line of march for our camp, at which place we arrived at 9 o'clock at night, making a march of over 200 miles in four days the men sleeping without tents and subsisting on half-rations.

My thanks are due to the officers and men, without exception, for the cool and determined manner in which they behaved themselves while pursued by a force seven times their number, and more than fifteen miles from our army, and in country where we were all strangers and the enemy were thoroughly posted on the nature of the country.

On our line of march we were warmly greeted by the friends of the Union, and at the town of Alexandria we were treated to a sight of our glorious old flag, which a lady had successfully hidden during the reign of terror under the rebel Gen. Bragg.

We found forage and provisions of all kinds plentiful, and the country well watered and amply able to support an army for its own protection of 15,000 or 20,000.

With great respect, lieutenant, I remain your fellow officer and grateful friend,

JNO. T. DEWEESE, Capt., Cmdg. First Battalion, Fourth Indiana Cavalry.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 23, pt. I, pp. 42-46.

Note 1: There were three lengthy reports on this expedition; only one is presented here.