

December 2, 1864 - December 5, 1864 - Operations against stockades and block-houses held by U. S. C. T. on N&C Railroad^{Note 1}



The following reports present a good indication of the fighting at the railroad blockhouses.

HDQRS. FORTY-FOURTH U. S. COLORED INFANTRY, Nashville, Tenn.,
December 4, 1864.



LIEUT.: I have the honor to submit the following report of the affair which occurred on the 2d and 3d instant, at Stockade No. 2, on Mill Creek (Chattanooga and Nashville Railroad), between the troops temporarily under my command and the enemy under Gen. Forrest:



At 8 a. m. the train containing the Forty-fourth U. S. Colored Infantry and Companies A and D of the Fourteenth U. S. Colored Infantry left Murfreesborough and arrived at the bridge over Mill Creek, guarded by Block-house No. 2, at about 11 a. m., when suddenly a battery opened upon the train, nearly all of which was upon the trestle bridge. The locomotive and first car were struck and several of the men injured. I immediately got my command off the train and moved it up to the stockade, which I supposed was evacuated, but, on my arrival there, found it occupied by a detachment of the One hundred and fifteenth Ohio Volunteers, commanded by Lieut. Harder. As the block-house was full, and three batteries were shelling us terribly, and a heavy musketry fire commenced from all sides, I formed my men around the house and then pushed a portion up a hill on the east side of the fort, which entirely commanded it, and from where the heaviest fire was kept up. Unable to carry the crest of the hill I kept the men on the side of it, and had logs and stumps of tress converted into a breast-work. This position afforded them much shelter, and they held it against several assaults of the enemy. The batteries, which continued their fire, injured the block-house constantly; they had to change position a dozen times, being silenced by our musketry. At about 5 p. m. the enemy managed to establish a battery on the hill which I spoke above, and it was this battery which did more harm than all the rest. It knocked the lookout of the stockade to pieces, and also the roof, which caved in at several places. The shots fired by it struck the house every time, and a number penetrated it; one shell, exploding inside, killed the railroad conductor, who had sought shelter in the house, and wounded several of the garrison. It was now dark and the artillery fire ceased, but musketry was still kept up. I drew the command back to the block-house, and left a strong skirmish line at the position which we had occupied during the day. As my ammunition was nearly exhausted (the men who came off the train only had forty rounds), and I expected an assault, I stopped all firing in order to reserve the four rounds I had left per man for the last effort. The firing was kept up until 3 a. m. of the 3d, but not answered by my men. My position was quite desperate, and when I took into consideration that my stock of ammunition was almost expended, the stockade so much used up that a few shots would have

knocked it down, and having lost one-third of the men, I resolved to abandon the stockade and fight my way to Nashville.

I knew that should the place be surrendered or taken by assault a butchery would follow, and I also knew that re-enforcements would have been sent to me if it had been possible to send them. I therefore left the block-house at 3.30 a. m., and, contrary to my expectations, got through the rebel lines without much trouble. I arrived at Nashville about daylight. In addition to the above I have to state that I left Surg J. T. Strong, Forty-fourth U. S. Colored Infantry, and Chaplain Railsback, Forty-fourth U. S. Colored Infantry, in the block-house to take care of the wounded men.

The soldiers and officers of the different commands behaved well and steady during the entire fight, and especially during the retreat; every man did his duty; not a shot was fired, but silently they marched, determined to die rather than be taken prisoners.

The forces engaged numbered as follows: Forty-fourth U. S. Colored Infantry, 227 muskets; Companies A and D, Fourteenth U. S. Colored Infantry, 80 muskets; detachment One hundred and fifteenth Ohio Volunteers, 25 muskets; total, 332 muskets.

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I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. JOHNSON, Col., Cmdg.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. I, pp. 540-541.

Report of Capt. Clarence W. Baker, Fourteenth U. S. Colored Troops, of operations December 2, 1864.

CAMP FOURTEENTH U. S. COLORED INFANTRY, Nashville, Tenn., November [December] -, 1864.

LIEUT.: I have herewith the honor to submit a report concerning the conduct and loss of Companies A and D, Fourteenth U. S. Colored Infantry, in action at Stockade No. 2, December 2, 1864.

The train was very unexpectedly fired upon by a rebel battery from a commanding position. The men left the cars hastily, were formed in line, and moved upon the hill in rear of the stockade, subsequently deployed as skirmishers, lying exposed to a heavy fire from artillery and musketry from 11 a. m. until about 6 p. m., when the larger part of the command was drawn in, leaving pickets posted upon the skirmish line held during the day, and throwing up a rude breast-work, with traverses, on two sides of the stockade. Upon a due consultation of the place was determined upon, whereat the men were much pleased, expressing themselves as ready to cut through the rebel lines, or, failing, die in the attempt. Fortunately we succeeded in passing through the line of rebel pickets without losing a man in killed or wounded.



Our loss was as follows: Company A, Fourteenth U. S. Colored Infantry-killed, 1 private; wounded, 1 corporal, 2 privates, missing, 1 corporal, 7 privates; total, 2 corporals, 10 privates; total, 1 corporal, 12 privates. One wounded man from A and 2 wounded from D Company were left in the stockade, unable to be moved.

It is no more than simple justice to say for the men and officers under my command that they behaved admirably and did credit to the regiment.

CLARENCE W. BAKER,

Capt., 14th U. S. Colored Infnty., Cmdg. Companies A and D.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. I, p. 538.

Report of Col. Thomas C. Boone, One hundred and fifteenth Ohio Infantry, of operations December 2-5, 1864.

LIEUT.: I have the honor to transmit herewith a report of the operations of my regiment during Hood's late advance into Tennessee.

On the 25th of November, as per instructions from headquarters post of Murfreesborough, I started to Duck River Bridge, at the same time sent the adjutant northward toward Nashville on an inspection tour. I found the troops from here to Duck River supplied with the requisite amount of ammunition and subsistence to December 10, 1864. The adjutant returned November 27, making a similar report. I immediately forwarded twenty days' rations to all the detachments of the regiment from Nashville to Duck River, supplying the troops to the 1st of January, 1865.

Block-house No. 2, five miles from Nashville, commanded by Lieut. George D. Harter, was the first attacked by the enemy. About 8 December 2, 1864 a force was seen approaching the block-house, a large majority of whom were dressed in Federal uniform. The force began gradually to surround the block-house. About this time a railroad train was heard approaching from the south. When it came in sight it was discovered to be loaded with colored troops. The train came up very slowly, and when on the bridge at the block-house was fired into by the enemy's artillery, disabling the engine and wrecking the train immediately. This began the fight, and seven pieces of artillery opened fire on the block-house. The colored troops, which consisted of parts of the Fourteenth and Forty-fourth U. S. Colored Infantry, and numbering in all about 350 men, under command of Col. Johnson, of the Forty-fourth U. S. Colored Troops, sought protection at the block-house. They were scarce of ammunition, and Lieut. Harter gave to Col. Johnson for the use of his command 2,000 rounds, without which they could have rendered but little or no assistance to the block-house garrison. The garrison kept up constant firing on the enemy, forcing them to change the position of their artillery frequently. One piece, however, which did them the most damage, was stationed on a hill about 500 yards north of the block-house. It was loaded under cover of the hill, pushed to the crest, sighted and fired, and then drawn back to reload. The garrison was unable to



force this gun from its position. Firing was kept up continually from 10 a. m. until dark. Near 500 rounds solid shot and shell, from 10 and 20 pounder guns, were fired at the block-house. The rebels told our wounded (who were left in their hands) that they fired upward of 460 rounds. Night found the block-house in a ruinous condition, the north wing being completely destroyed, outside casing of west wing was badly damaged, the lookout gone, two large breaches made in the roof, and one of the posts-the main support of the roof-knocked out, while the other center posts were badly splintered. Lieut. Harter, taking into consideration the condition of the block-house and that his ammunition was nearly all expended, regarded it as certain capture to remain until daylight. Consequently, at 3 a. m. December 3, 1864, the garrison evacuated the block-house, and, accompanied by the colored troops, arrived safely in Nashville at daylight. Upon reporting to Maj.-Gen. Thomas, Lieut. Harter was informed that an order had been issued two days previously directing the abandonment of all block-houses from Nashville to Murfreesborough. The courier failed to get through the rebel lines, consequently the order was not received. Casualties of the garrison at this block-house (No. 2) were 1 enlisted man killed and 3 enlisted men wounded.

No. 1, block-house, four miles from Nashville, commanded by Lieut. Jacob N. Shaffer, was attacked and the entire garrison captured December 3, 1864. The amount of firing upon and damage done to block-house and garrison before its surrender has not been ascertained. It is reported, however, that firing was kept up throughout the day and that a flag of truce was sent in five times during the day.

Block-house No. 3, near Antioch, commanded by Capt. D. N. Lowrey, was attacked on the 3d of December by artillery. The rebel guns here were placed in such positions as to prevent the block-house garrison from doing them much injury other than occasionally picking off a gunner. After holding out for thirty-six hours and receiving ninety shots, from 12 and 20 pounder guns, the garrison was compelled to surrender.

Capt. Lewis F. Hake, commanding at La Verge, received an order December 4, 1864, from Maj.-Gen. Thomas (which had been issued three days previously), to abandon all the block-houses from Nashville to Murfreesborough and withdraw the forces to the latter place. Couriers were started each way along the railroad on the morning of the 5th no notify the commanders of the block-house No. 4, having received this order, was in the act of evacuating his block-house, when he was attacked and compelled to surrender.

On the morning of the 5th of December, 1864, as the command at La Verge was completing its preparations to march to Murfreesborough (two wagons having already been loaded), the rebels suddenly made their appearance in considerable force on all sides, and a flag of truce was discovered approaching. It was halted at a proper distance and Lieut. Eadie sent out to meet it. Whilst a consultation was being had under the flag the rebels took advantage of the same and planted four pieces of artillery bearing directly on the command.



Under the circumstance, being surrounded by a force greatly superior in numbers, with their artillery in position commanding the whole ground ready for firing, Capt. Hake was compelled to surrender his command, consisting of 73 men (regimental martial band included), 25 horses and equipments, 2 pieces of artillery (one 6 and one 12 pounder), and small-arms.



Commanders of block-houses Nos. 5 and 6, Capt. William M. McClure and Lieut. John S. Orr, received Capt. Hake's order the night of the 4th. They evacuated their block-houses on the morning of the 5th instant. Rebels in small squads had already made their appearance on all sides. The garrisons were compelled to make a circuitous route around through Jefferson, marching over twenty miles, had several skirmishers with the enemy on the way, and arrived safely in camp at Murfreesborough about 2 p. m. of the same day.



Block-house No. 7, four miles from Murfreesborough, commanded by Lieut. H. H. Glosser, was attacked on the 4th instant by rebel artillery and musketry. Seventy-six artillery shots were fired at the block-house, thirty-two of which struck it. The railroad bridge at this point was saved, and but little damage was done to the block-house other than knocking off the lookout. This house was not again attacked with artillery. Sharpshooters remained keeping the garrison hemmed in, as the following communication, being the first that was heard from Lieut. Glosser, will explain.



BLOCK-HOUSE, No. 7, December 18, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. MILROY:

SIR: I am informed by your scout (Mr. Lee) that the rebels have retreated. He tells me that if there is anything I want to sent a note to you and say what it is. Gen., I want nothing but liberty. I have been hemmed in for thirteen days, not daring to put my head outside the block-house. The rebel sharpshooters have left, and I feel better. The health of myself and men is good; am ready for any emergency. Gen. Forrest, sent in a flag of truce four times, demanding the surrender of this house, promising to treat me well, and threatening to burn me with Greek fire if I refused. I resolved to believe nothing but such things as I could see; and as I could not see the Greek fire, I thought I would until I did.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. H. GLOSSER, First Lieut. Company E, 115th Regt. Ohio Vol. Infy., Cmdg. Block-House No. 7.

No casualties were sustained at this block-house. The garrison kept up firing at all times when the rebels appeared in sight, expending during the whole time nearly 8,000 rounds of ammunition. The detachments at block-houses between Murfreesborough and Tullahoma, with but one excepting, were not attacked by the enemy.

Block-House No. 9, near Bell Buckle Station, Lieut. M. S. Hurd commanding, was approached by flag of truce and its surrender demanded. Lieut. Hurd promptly refused, telling them "if they wanted the block-house, they must

come and take it." The rebels did not open fire with their artillery, and after a few volleys of musketry withdrew from sight. Straggling rebels were now seen all along the road to Tullahoma, quite a number of whom were picked up and forwarded to Murfreesborough.

You are already cognizant of the part taken by the detachment in and near Murfreesborough, which renders it unnecessary for me to mention the particulars. So far as I am able to learn I have good reason to believe that every detachment of the regiment throughout has done its duty as became soldiers.

I feel it my duty here to make special mention of the manner in which the little bands of veterans under their command, so nobly acquitted themselves under such trying circumstances. Too much credit cannot be given them for so gallantly defending heir block-houses against the prolonged attack of the enemy, so much their superior in numbers and furnished with 10 and 20 pounder guns.

Captured, 170; killed, 1; wounded, 4; escaped since capture, 4.

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I am, lieutenant, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOMAS C. BOONE, Col., 115th Regt. Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Cmdg.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. I, pp. 631-634.

Note 1: According to *Dyer's Battle Index for Tennessee*: " Dec. 2-3, Skirmishes Block House No. 2, on Mill Creek, Chatta. & Nashv. R. R."

