

September 30, 1863 - October 14, 1863 - Wheeler/Roddey's Raid on Rosecrans' communications: Reports of Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, C. S. Army, and Brig. Gen. George Crook, U. S. Army^{Note 1}



SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 17, 1863.-Wheeler and Roddey's Raid on Rosecrans' Communications.

SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN TENNESSEE.

September 30, 1863.-Skirmish at Cotton Port Ford, Tennessee River, Tenn.

October 1, 1863.-Skirmish at Mountain Gap, near Smith's Cross-Roads, Tenn.

2, 1863.-Skirmish at Pitt's Cross-Roads, Sequatchie Valley, Tenn.

2, 1863.-Skirmish at Anderson's Cross-Roads, Tenn.

2, 1863.-Skirmish on the Valley road, near Jasper, Tenn.

2, 1863.-Skirmish near Dunlap, Tenn.

3, 1863.-Affair at McMinnville, Tenn.

3, 1863.-Skirmish at Hill's Gap, near Beersheba, Tenn.

3, 1863.-Skirmishes near McMinnville, Tenn.

5, 1863.-Skirmish near Readyville, Tenn.

5, 1863.-Skirmish at Stone's River Railroad Bridge, near Murfreesborough, Tenn.

6, 1863.-Affair at Christiana, Tenn.

6, 1863.-Skirmish at Readyville, Tenn.

6, 1863.-Skirmish at Garrison's Creek, near Fosterville, Tenn.

6, 1863.-Skirmish at Wartrace, Tenn.

7, 1863.-Action at Farmington, Tenn.

7, 1863.-Skirmish at Sims' farm, near Shelbyville, Tenn.

9, 1863.-Affair at the Railroad Tunnel, near Cowan, Tenn.

9, 1863.-Skirmish at Sugar Creek, Tenn.

9, 1863.-Skirmish on Elk River, Tenn.

13-14, 1863.-Skirmishes at Fayetteville, Tenn.



OR, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, p. 663.

Note 1: *Dyer's Battle Index for Tennessee* refers to this as "Operations against Wheeler's and Roddy's Raid on Rosecrans' Communications."

Report of Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Corps, Army of Tennessee.

HDQRS. CAVALRY CORPS, October 30, 1863.

Colonel.: On the 29th [September], I received orders to cross the Tennessee River with that portion of my command then with me (one brigade having been left with the army) and three brigades which Gen. Forrest had been ordered to send to me.

On the morning of the 30th [of September], I learned that these commands had just arrived at a point about 20 miles from the point of crossing. I ordered them to the latter place and proceeded there with the commands of Gen.'s Wharton and Martin. The enemy had occupied the opposite bank and immediately concentrated a force nearly if not quite equal to our own to resist our crossing. This force had followed me up the river, and I found that any point at which I should attempt to cross could be reached as easily by them as by my command. Under these circumstances, I determined to cross at the point I then was. The three brigades from Gen. Forrest were mere skeletons, scarcely averaging 500 effective men each. These were badly armed, had but a small supply of ammunition, and their horses were in horrible condition, having been marched continuously for three days and nights without removing saddles. The men were worn out, and without rations. The brigade commanders made most urgent protests against their commands being called upon to move in this condition. With this state of things, I allowed the worst horses to be returned to the rear, and, with the remainder, crossed in the face of an enemy nearly as large as our own force. We assailed and drove the enemy about 3 miles.

On the morning of November [October] 2, I reached Sequatchie Valley, and at 3 o'clock on the following morning [October 3] proceeded down toward Jasper with about 1,500 men. After traveling about 10 miles we overtook and captured 32 six-mule wagons, which were destroyed. The mules were carried on with the command.

On approaching Anderson's Cross-Roads, we were met by a considerable force of cavalry, which we charged and drove before us. We here found a large train of wagons, which proved to extend from the top of Walden's Ridge for a distance of 10 miles toward Jasper. This train was heavily loaded with ordnance, quartermaster's, and commissary stores. The number of wagons was variously estimated at from 800 to 1,500. No one saw, perhaps, more than half the train. The quartermaster in charge of the train, as well as other employes, stated that there were 800 six-mule wagons, besides a great number of sutler wagons. The train was guarded by a brigade of cavalry in front and a brigade of cavalry in rear, and on the flank, where we attacked, were stationed two regiments of infantry. After a warm fight, the guards were defeated and driven off, leaving the entire train in our possession. After selecting such mules and wagons as we needed, we then destroyed the train by burning the wagons and sabering or shooting the mules. During this work my pickets were driven in on both flanks and my rear. Fortunately, the enemy was repulsed, and we remained undisturbed for eight hours and until our work was thoroughly accomplished. Just before dark [October 3], as we were retiring, a large force



of cavalry and infantry moved upon us from Stevenson, skirmishing with our rear until dark. During this, Gen. Martin, Col. Avery, and Lieut.-Col. Griffith were distinguished for gallantry.



During the night [October 3], I moved over Cumberland Mountains, and early next morning [October 4] joined Gen. Wharton near the foot of the mountains and went forward to attack McMinnville. The enemy was pressing close behind, but we succeeded in capturing the place with an enormous supply of quartermaster's and commissary stores, with the fortifications and garrison, which numbered 587 men, with arms, accouterments, &c.; 200 horses were also captured.



The day and night [October 4] were occupied in destroying the stores, a locomotive and train of cars, and a bridge over Hickory Creek, such of the stores as could be transported having been distributed to the command.



On the following day [October 5] we marched to Murfreesborough. After making a demonstration upon the place, we moved over, and, after a short fight, captured a strong stockade guarding the railroad bridge over Stone's River, with its garrison of 52 men. The day [October 5] was occupied in cutting down the bridge and thoroughly burning the timber. We also burned the railroad ties and track for 3 miles below the bridge.

The following day [October 6] we destroyed a train and a quantity of stores at Christiana and Fosterville, and destroyed all the railroad bridges and trestles between Murfreesborough and Wartrace, including all the large bridges at and near the latter place, capturing the guards, &c. We also captured and destroyed a large amount of stores of all kinds at Shelbyville, the enemy running from his strong fortifications upon our approach. That night [October 6] I ordered Davidson's division to encamp on Duck River near Warner's Bridge, Martin's division 2 miles farther down, and Wharton's 2 miles below Martin's.

During the evening [October 6], I learned that the enemy, who had been closely pursuing, had encamped near Frazier's farm. I immediately informed Gen. Davidson of the position of the enemy, and directed him to keep the enemy observed and to join me should the enemy move toward him. This order was shortly after repeated with this modification, that he should move immediately to my position (Crowell's Mill). Unfortunately, he failed to comply with this order, and on the following morning [October 7] was attacked by a superior force of the enemy. I received two consecutive dispatches [following] from Gen. Davidson which indicated that he was moving down Duck River, but on questioning his couriers I ascertained that he was moving toward Farmington. I immediately started at a trot toward Farmington with Martin's division, ordering Gen. Wharton and the wagons to follow me. I reached Farmington just in time to place five regiments of Martin's command in position when the enemy appeared. I had ordered Gen. Davidson to form in column by fours on the pike and to charge the enemy when they were repulsed by Martin's division, Gen. Davidson having officially reported to me that only three regiments of the enemy had been seen during the day. The engagement

commenced warmly, but the enemy was soon repulsed. Gen. Davidson had failed to form as stated, and instead had moved for some distance. The enemy soon after came up in strong force with a division of infantry and a division of cavalry. We fought them with great warmth for twenty minutes, when we charged the line and drove it back for some distance. Gen. Wharton's column and our train having now passed, and the object for which we fought being accomplished, we withdrew without being followed by the enemy.

The enemy, in his own account of the fight, acknowledged a loss of 29 killed, including 1 colonel, and 159 wounded.

My entire loss was less than one-fourth of the above figures.

A reconnoissance was made toward Columbia [October 7? 8?], which caused the enemy to evacuate that place and destroy all their stores, including thirty days' rations for the garrison. We then proceeded to the Tennessee River at Muscle Shoals, the only fordable place on the river, where we crossed without difficulty, the enemy reaching the river just after I had crossed. . .

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Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOS. WHEELER, Maj.-Gen.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, pp. 722-725.

Report of Brig. Gen. George Crook. U. S. Army, commanding Second Cavalry Division.

HDQRS. SECOND CAVALRY DIVISION, Maysville, Ala., November 5, 1863.

Maj.: I have the honor to report that on the 23d of September I was ordered by the commanding general of the department to proceed to Washington, Tenn., with my command, numbering about 2,000 effective men, for the purpose of guarding the fords along the Tennessee River for a distance of some 50 miles. The roads leading to the different fords and ferries were in many cases 5 miles apart. Between these points there were practicable fords almost every half mile. It was impossible to patrol along the bank of the river between these roads, and to go from one to the other required us in many instances to make a detour of 10 and even 15 miles.

It was at one of these intermediate points that the enemy, dismounting his men, crossed and established himself on the north bank of the river, with a force far superior to mine, commanded by Maj.-Gen. Wheeler. I immediately informed Gen. Rosecrans of the fact, who ordered me to gather all the cavalry and mounted men and pursue the enemy, who had crossed the river for the purpose of making a raid in the rear of our lines.

Learning the enemy was crossing Walden's Ridge opposite Smith's Cross-Roads, I collected together the First and Second Brigades of my division, commanded respectively by Col.'s Minty and Lont, and Capt. Stokes' Board of



Trade battery, and ascended the mountain some 5 miles south of Smith's Cross-Roads, directing Col. Miller, commanding brigade of mounted infantry, to join me on top of the mountain that night; but he did not join me until near morning, when I resumed the march, entering the Sequatchie Valley at Pitt's Cross-Roads. Learned here that the enemy had divided his force, one portion under Gen. Wharton ascending the Cumberland Mountains at Pikeville, while the remainder, under Gen. Wheeler, had passed down the valley, and would ascend the mountain at Dunlap, concentrating at some point beyond the Cumberland Mountains and then move on McMinnville. I also found here that the enemy had some fourteen hours the start of me. I took the intermediate road, Robinson's Trace, and, although the mountain was very bad to ascend at this place, I succeeded in getting up my entire command that night. Next morning, after marching some 10 miles, I struck Wharton's trail where he came into the Robinson Trace. I did not meet any of his force, except some stragglers, until I arrived at the descent of the mountain, where he had left some sharpshooters to oppose my advance, and drove them before me, they leaving 5 of their dead and 1 wounded on the field.

After descending the mountain I found the country rocky and brushy, no place for cavalry to operate. As soon as I could get my infantry down the mountain I dismounted them, sending them so as to completely surround their force, holding my cavalry as a support. In this way I had Col. Crews' Texas brigade completely surrounded in a space not over 10 acres, my men under cover and his exposed. My men poured several volleys into them, but by this time it had become so dark we could not tell friend from foe. Under cover of darkness they broke through my lines, my men not firing for fear of shooting each other. The fight lasted for a couple of hours after night, the remainder of Martin's division coming to Crews' support.

My loss was 46 killed and wounded. The enemy's loss is not definitely known. We found some 10 of their dead close by the road, and a good many of their wounded scattered along the road in houses. I pushed on after them early next morning, and could not ascertain their loss. I left instructions with the citizens to collect them and give them all proper attention. I saw nothing of the enemy until within a couple of miles of McMinnville, where some of his scouts fired into us.

On arriving at McMinnville I found that the garrison had surrendered without making any resistance. The enemy sacked the place, destroying a great deal of public and private property, and left in the direction of Murfreesborough. I was also informed by an intelligent Union man that he counted 4,000 of the enemy, and saw enough more that he was unable to count to make up fully 6,000.

After leaving McMinnville I became satisfied, from the time occupied by his force in passing a given point, he had between 5,000 and 6,000 men, my own force at this time numbering about 3,500 effective men. I had not marched more than 2 miles on the Murfreesborough road until I came upon his rear guard, posted in the edge of a woods, who commenced skirmishing with my



advance. Being satisfied that the guard intended to detain us so that the main body could march unmolested, I ordered Col. Long to send a regiment ahead to make a saber charge. The Second Kentucky, Col. Nicholas commanding, with Col. Long at their head, made a most gallant charge of some 5 miles, breaking through his lines, killing and wounding several of his men, capturing 11 prisoners, and driving the remainder into the main column, compelling him to turn round and give me fight.

When I arrived with the main column I found the enemy drawn up in line of battle in the edge of a woods, a large field between us with high fences intervening. I dismounted my infantry, and with my artillery drove them out of the woods, he forming in another thick jungle a short distance in the rear. The fight lasted for two hours, until after dark, when I camped in the field. Here, again, I was unable to ascertain the number of his killed and wounded, but left instructions for the citizens to collect them. I learned that it was the intention of the enemy to take Murfreesborough and then go to La Vergne, destroying the railroad between these two points, and that he had sent squads of men who were familiar with the country to destroy telegraphic communication between Murfreesborough and Nashville, which they succeeded in doing. I tried to get a dispatch through to the commanding officer at Murfreesborough to hold out until I could get there, but the courier could not get through. At Readyville I crossed over on to the Liberty pike, so as to get between them and La Vergne, and also to prevent them from ambushing me on the road. By this move I drove them off in the direction of Shelbyville. I found every person at Murfreesborough in great consternation, and overjoyed to see us. They were momentarily expecting an attack from the enemy, and felt that their force was too weak to repel him. I found here an officer of the Engineer Department who was very kind and energetic, giving me all the assistance in his power. Through the want of proper attention to duty on the part of the assistant quartermaster and commissary of subsistence, I was unable to procure anything for my men and horses until nearly morning (although I had marched 41 miles that day and my men had had no rations for five days), greatly retarding my march. The next night I camped 2 miles beyond Guy's Gap.

From this point I sent my scouts in different directions, who brought prisoners from the enemy's camp. Gen. Mitchell, with the First Cavalry Division, came up with us here.

Next morning I was ordered by him to march on the road to Farmington, south of Duck River. About 3 miles from Shelbyville I found Davidson's division encamped on Duck River, some 2 miles north of the road. The brigade of mounted infantry being in the advance, and seeing the enemy's ranks in confusion, I ordered them to charge on horseback. They drove the enemy a short distance into a cedar thicket, and I then dismounted them. At the same time I ordered Col. Long's brigade to the front, and, headed by Col. Long, it made a most gallant saber charge, driving the enemy 3 miles, killing and capturing a great many rebels. The enemy made another stand in a cedar thicket, where it was impossible for the cavalry to operate in. I sent the



mounted infantry to the front as soon as possible, when they dislodged the enemy, who again made a stand on the main road, and were driven from this point, falling back toward Farmington, skirmishing as they retreated.

About three-fourths of a mile from Farmington I found him posted in force in a dense cedar thicket. I at once dismounted my infantry, deploying them on each side of the road. When I attacked Davidson's division in the morning, breaking through it, part of his column went to the right. Fearing that it would turn my flank I sent back instructions to Col. Minty, whose position was in the rear of the column, to move to the right and anticipate them.

I supposed that Col. Minty had carried out my instructions, but when I arrived at Farmington I learned from one of my staff officers, much to my chagrin and surprise, that Col. Minty was not with me. The absence of Col. Minty and some 500 men left at Murfreesborough, having been dismounted during the march, left me but about 1,500 effective men.

Finding the enemy vastly superior to me, I left one regiment of cavalry to protect my rear, holding the other two regiments as a support to the infantry the country being impracticable for the cavalry to operate in. The enemy's battery was posted in the cedar thicket some 400 yards distant from me, pouring into me a heavy fire of grape, canister, and shell, and made one or two charges on my men, at the same time attempting to turn both of my flanks. At this critical moment I ordered Capt. Stokes forward with his battery to operate upon the enemy. He could only find position for one piece, which was in full view of their battery, and not over 350 yards distant. They turned their fire from the infantry on to Capt. Stokes' battery, mowing down his horses and men. The captain sighted his own piece, and in three shots he disabled one of their pieces, blowing up a caisson, and throwing their ranks into confusion.

At this moment, my infantry making a charge, broke through the enemy's line, scattering them to the right and left, capturing four guns, some wagons, and several prisoners. The enemy then being in an open country, I ordered Col. Long to the front to make a saber charge, but they had the roads barricaded so as to render it impossible. It now getting dark, I went into camp near Farmington.

Had Col. Minty, with his brigade, been there at the time the enemy broke, I should have thrown him on the left flank, and as things turned out since, I would have captured a large portion of his command, together with all his artillery and transportation. I learned here that I fought Gen. Wheeler with his entire command.

That night after the fighting had ceased, Col. Minty with his brigade came up, stating that he had no orders to march with me. From this, together with a disposition manifested during the whole expedition to frustrate my designs in a covert manner, I deprived him of his command and sent him to the rear.^{Note 1} I sent my scouts out in different directions that night, and learned that a large portion of the enemy had gone toward Pulaski. Being satisfied that they were



making for the Tennessee River, and that the portion cut off would join them by other roads, I the next morning pursued them on the Pulaski road, reaching that point that night. I found to-day that their retreat instead of a march was a rout. Their rear guard left Pulaski as I came in sight of the town.



On this day's march I found that the night before a portion of those cut off came into the road ahead of us at Lewisburg. On the march the next day, another portion came into the road 6 miles south of Pulaski. I found that their men were deserting and scattering over the country, and learned of a great many wounded being left along the road and through the country.



The enemy left some two or three regiments at Sugar Creek, a strong position, to oppose my advance; but instead of fighting them at long range as they expected, I ordered a saber charge. The Fifth Iowa, Lieut.-Col. Patrick commanding, being in the advance, made a most gallant charge, breaking through their lines, killing 10, wounding 9, capturing some 70 prisoners, and scattering the remainder to the mountains.



From this [point] on I met with only a few stragglers on the road. When within 8 miles of the river, although my horses were very tired, I galloped most of the way to the river, and there found that the enemy had crossed at a ford but little known of, and just above Elk River, where 12 could cross abreast. I went into camp at Rogersville, Gen. Mitchell, with the First Division, coming up that night; and from that point I was ordered with the remainder of the cavalry to Stevenson, via Huntsville.

On arriving at Huntsville, Gen. Mitchell, learning that the rebel general Roddey was passing in the direction of Winchester, ordered to Winchester, and thence to this place. I have since learned that Gen. Lee, with 5,000 men, reached Courtland the same day that Wheeler crossed the river. Roddey, with about 1, 800 men, had crossed to the north bank of the river at Gunterville, both he and Lee being ordered to join Wheeler, but the latter was driven out of the State and across the river before a junction could be effected. I have since learned that at Farmington the enemy left on the field 86 of their dead and 137 wounded, while many of their wounded were taken up by citizens through the country, of which I have no account.

The loss of the enemy from the time they crossed the river near Washington until they recrossed near Elk River, judging from the difference in the length of time their column [consumed] in coming in and going out, and other satisfactory evidence, I am fully satisfied is not less than 2,000 men. One entire regiment, the Fourth Alabama, deserted and scattered through the mountains.

My loss during the entire trip was 14 killed and 97 wounded. I regret to report the death of the gallant Col. Monroe, of the One hundred and twenty-third Illinois, who fell while bravely leading on his regiment at the battle of Farmington.

It is hard to distinguish individual cases of bravery and gallantry, when all, both officers and men, did so nobly. notwithstanding the fatigue and severe

hardships under which the men suffered-having but three days' rations In twenty days, many of them nearly naked, and several times exposed to a cold, drenching rain-yet they never complained, but were always cheerful and ever ready to perform all duties required of them.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

GEORGE CROOK, Brig.-Gen., Comdg.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, pp. 684-688.

Note 1: In February, 1864, Col. Minty was tried by general court-martial on charges of "disobedience of orders" and "conduct subversive of good order and military discipline," and honorably acquitted. See General Orders, No. 36, Department of the Cumberland, February 28, 1864, *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. II, p. 668.

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We had had about 200 wagons. We returned over the same route we had come [Bridgeport to the Sequatchie Valley]. Gen. Wheeler with his Confederate cavalry had crossed the Tennessee River, and happened to meet our train near Pikeville, and the entire train was captured. Gen. Wheeler's troops used what they could of our supplies, and burned the remainder. The mules which they didn't want were killed, and they left in the direction of McMinnville

Knoxville Daily Chronicle, March 11, 1879.

FORT MONROE, VA., October 8, 1863-7.30 p. m.

(Received 7.40 p. m.)

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK, Gen.-in-chief:

The flag-of-truce boat is just in with Richmond papers to the 8th (to-day). The following are the telegraphic news:

MISSIONARY RIDGE,

(Via Chickamauga, October 5.)

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It is reported that Gen. Wheeler has captured and burned five hundred wagons belonging to the enemy.

MISSIONARY RIDGE.

(Via Chickamauga, October 6.)

. . . Prisoners and deserters confirm the capture of the enemy's wagon train by Gen. Wheeler.

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J. G. FOSTER, Maj.-Gen.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 30, pt. IV, p. 173.



