

## ABSTRACT

Joseph W. Powell, Jr. From Columbia to Averasboro:  
February 16 - March 16, 1865. (Under the direction of  
Dr. William N. Still, Jr.) Department of History, 1986.

This thesis has been written in an effort to examine closely the military activities of both the Union and Confederate armies from the Confederate evacuation of Columbia, South Carolina, on February 16, 1865, to the conclusion of the battle of Averasboro on March 16, 1865.

This paper studies one segment of the Civil War commonly referred to as Sherman's march. General William T. Sherman, the person for whom the march was named, commanded a Union army of approximately 60,000, and was driving north the Confederate army under the command of General Joseph Johnson. Meanwhile, Union commander-in-chief Ulysses S. Grant was holding Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia immobile in Virginia.

Many works have been published concerning Sherman's march, concentrating on the major events that occurred during the march, such as the battle of Bentonville and the burning of Columbia. While this paper also deals with the main events of Sherman's march, its primary focus is on the several minor skirmishes that occurred. Virtually ignored in most works, these skirmishes often paved the way for the more important events of the march to occur.

Sherman's military philosophy with regard to the Confederacy was to take the war to the people. After capturing

Savannah in late 1864, the army under his command began its trek north, foraging liberally and destroying what it could not use. As Sherman's army moved towards Columbia, the Confederates retreated slowly in the path of its advancement. No major action took place while the Union army advanced from Savannah to Columbia, although the Confederate forces rather heavily bombarded their counterparts with artillery while withdrawing from Columbia.

The one month period spanning the Confederate withdrawal and Union occupation of Columbia to the battle of Averasboro was filled with contrast. There were the much publicized activities of the Union "bummers" who confiscated citizens' food and valuables while destroying private dwellings and public property, while there were also sympathetic Union soldiers who performed good deeds for unfortunate Confederate citizens. Impressive military movements took place, but blunders also occurred. Perhaps the most costly Confederate military blunder was the failure to confront Sherman at one of the five major rivers between Savannah and Fayetteville, North Carolina. Sherman later conceded that a small force placed strategically at any of the five crossings would have made reaching his destination, Goldsboro, North Carolina, virtually impossible. Why this did not occur is a question that may never be answered.

The Confederates had virtually no chance to stop Sherman's advance, as they were outnumbered by a ratio of twelve to

one. Despite being outnumbered, however, the Confederates showed several examples of bravery during their continuous withdrawal in the wake of Sherman's advance, thus making this period a very interesting chapter in the annals of American History.

FROM COLUMBIA TO AVERASBORO  
FEBRUARY 16 - MARCH 16, 1865

A Thesis  
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## INTRODUCTION

On December 17, 1860, a convention assembled in Columbia, South Carolina, for the purpose of defending the state against the "election of an enemy to southern institutions," namely the election of Abraham Lincoln as president of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Three days later, on December 20, the convention recessed to Charleston and by unanimous vote declared that the constitution of the United States was repealed, and that "the Union, subsisting between South Carolina and other states under the name of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved."<sup>2</sup>

South Carolina was soon followed by several other southern states. Mississippi and Florida followed suit on January 11, 1861. Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas withdrew from the Union shortly afterward. Delegates from these seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 4, 1861, for the purpose of drawing up a provisional government. A provisional constitution was adopted on February 9, which called for the election of a president and vice president, who were to hold their offices for one year or until the government could be

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<sup>1</sup>J. L. M. Curry, Civil History of the Confederate States (Richmond: Johnson Publishing Company, 1901), 34, herein-after cited as Curry, Civil History.

<sup>2</sup>Curry, Civil History, 35.

succeeded by one more stable. These offices would be elected by ballot, with each state having one vote. After short deliberations, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi was elected president, with Alexander Stephens of Georgia elected vice president.<sup>3</sup>

Davis was startled to learn that he had been elected the first president of the Confederacy. He learned of his election on February 10, 1861, when a messenger brought him a telegram bringing the news. At the time the messenger arrived he was assisting his wife, Varina, in pruning rose bushes.<sup>4</sup> Although he had served in congress and as secretary of war under Franklin Pierce, Davis had hoped for a military commission in the Confederate army.

The Confederacy was born due to several differences occurring between the southern states and the northern states. One of the primary reasons was the issue of states' rights, which were guaranteed by the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. According to former Chief Justice John Marshall, the purpose of the Tenth Amendment was to "quiet the excessive jealousies which had been excited."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Davis and Stephens were inaugurated in a lavish ceremony at the state capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 18, 1861.

<sup>4</sup>Hudson Strode, Jefferson Davis: American Patriot (New York: Harcourt Brace, and Company, 1955), 401, hereinafter cited as Strode, Jefferson Davis.

<sup>5</sup>Alpheus Thomas Mason, The States Rights Debate (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 6, hereinafter cited as Mason, States Rights Debate.



The states' rights issue was not new to southerners; Madison and Jefferson had earlier proposed the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, while John C. Calhoun had proposed a concurrent majority, which would grant each sectional majority a veto over acts of the federal government.<sup>6</sup> Southerners argued that each state should be allowed to retain its sovereignty, as the northern industrialists often passed laws hampering the development and welfare of the agriculturally oriented South. An example of this was the tariff issue; the North wanted a high tariff levied to protect its manufacturing interests from competition from foreigners, while the South wanted a low tariff in order to trade its cotton for cheap foreign goods.

Another reason for secession was the question of slavery. Certain northern members of Congress desired to prohibit slavery in the western territories, while northern abolitionists wanted to abolish slavery throughout the nation, including the South. Prohibiting slavery in the western territories would limit the number of slave states while allowing the number of free states to increase, thus allowing the free states to gain much greater influence over slave states in Congress.

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<sup>6</sup>John C. Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government (Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill Company, 1953), 20, hereinafter cited as Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government.

The catalyst that motivated the southern states to secede, however, was the election of Abraham Lincoln as president. One of Lincoln's goals was to fight the expansion of slavery, and his election prompted the southern states to withdraw from the Union rather than lose political leverage.

After his inauguration on February 18, 1861, Jefferson Davis initiated negotiations with Washington with regard to the Union continuing to occupy military bases in the Confederacy, especially Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Lincoln was unwilling to negotiate, however, vowing to "hold, occupy and possess" U. S. property within the boundaries of the Confederacy.

With the refusal of Lincoln to evacuate Fort Sumter, the Confederacy decided that it should be taken by force. At 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, commander of the southern forces in Charleston, ordered his batteries to fire upon Fort Sumter.<sup>7</sup> This firing lasted for two days, until April 13, when Major Robert Anderson, commander of Fort Sumter, surrendered to Beauregard.

After learning of the surrender of Fort Sumter, Lincoln issued a call for seventy-five thousand volunteers to combat the rebellious southern states. This was considered a declaration of war by the Confederacy, and prompted the

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<sup>7</sup>Raleigh Daily Ad Valorem Banner, April 25, 1861.

states of North Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee to secede.<sup>8</sup>

The next few months were spent by both countries in organizing their respective armies for the oncoming war. Southerners were enthused about having the opportunity to fight for their independence. Enthusiasm ran so high that over two hundred thousand volunteers for military service were turned down by the Confederate government because it was unable to feed or clothe that many. Meanwhile, in the North, the consensus feeling was that the North would teach its erring sisters a lesson in a matter of months.

The northerners were wrong with that assumption. What followed was a conflict lasting four years, pitting brother against brother in a struggle that caused bitter memories for years after its conclusion.

The Confederates got off to a successful start, emerging victorious at Manassas, and making good showings in most of the early battles. The Union army slowly became organized, however. New Orleans, a major Confederate port controlling the mouth of the Mississippi River, fell to Commodore David Farragut on May 1, 1862. This was followed by the double Union victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, each occurring

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<sup>8</sup>Craig L. Symonds, A Battlefield Atlas of the Civil War (Annapolis: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1983), 1, hereinafter cited as Symonds, Battlefield Atlas.

in July, 1863. From this point on the tide seemed to turn in favor of the Union.

The next significant Union offensive occurred at Chattanooga, Tennessee, where General Ulysses S. Grant successfully attacked and defeated a Confederate force on November 23 - 25, 1863. This offensive drove the main Confederate Army of the West from Tennessee, with the Confederates retreating towards Atlanta. As a result, General Joseph Johnston assumed control of the Confederate Army of the West, taking over from General Braxton Bragg.

General William T. Sherman began his march from Chattanooga to Atlanta on May 4, 1864, and reached his destination on July 17, 1864. His army was immediately attacked by forces under the command of General John Bell Hood, who assumed command of the Confederate forces with the removal of General Johnson.<sup>9</sup> These attacks did little to stop Sherman, as he countered by ordering a Union offensive against Atlanta. This series of offenses continued until September 1, 1864, when Hood evacuated Atlanta, with his rear cavalry guard destroying supplies they could not carry with them, along with six locomotive engines. The following day,

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<sup>9</sup> John G. Barrett, Sherman's March Through the Carolinas (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 19, hereinafter cited as Barrett, Sherman's March.

September 2, Union General Henry Slocum met with the mayor of Atlanta, James Calhoun, who made a formal surrender of the city.<sup>10</sup>

Sherman remained in Atlanta until November 15, when he left the city to begin his march to Savannah. Prior to withdrawing from Atlanta, Sherman divided his army into two wings, and placed them under the command of Generals Slocum and Oliver Howard. The two wings began their marches along parallel roads, with Slocum's wing marching toward Milledgeville, the capital of Georgia, and Howard's wing marching toward Macon.

Aware that Sherman was marching toward Milledgeville, the state legislature of Georgia enacted legislation to arouse the citizens of the capital to attempt to impede Sherman's progress. Depicting Sherman as an ogre, the legislature called on the citizens of Milledgeville "to die free men rather than live slaves."<sup>11</sup> This act was not passed in time to help protect Milledgeville from Sherman, as there was no time to organize a united effort. Sherman also threatened to destroy the houses and property of those people that destroyed roads or hindered his march in any way.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>John Bell Hood, Advance and Retreat (New Orleans: Hood Orphan Memorial Fund, 1880), 196, hereinafter cited as Hood, Advance and Retreat.

<sup>11</sup>Jacob Cox, Atlanta (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), 207, hereinafter cited as Cox, Atlanta.

<sup>12</sup>Cox, Atlanta, 207.

Sherman, marching with Slocum's left wing, reached Milledgeville on November 22, and remained there until November 24, when the march to Savannah was resumed.<sup>13</sup>

On November 22, Lieutenant General Richard Taylor, son of former president Zachary Taylor, arrived in Macon. Meeting with Confederate General William J. Hardee, Taylor's assignment was to study Sherman's movements and plan the Confederate defense of Georgia. Prior to the arrival of Taylor, the Confederates had been busy constructing earthworks around Macon. Taylor ordered that the construction cease, as he predicted that Howard was merely feinting toward Macon. His suspicions proved to be correct when Howard's division turned away from Macon.

After making certain that Sherman would not occupy Macon, General William J. Hardee, a Georgia native who was the Confederate commander of the Departments of South Carolina and Georgia, ordered General Gustavus Smith to move the Georgia Militia stationed in Macon to Augusta in an attempt to defend that city should Sherman turn north and march in that direction. This homeguard was untrained, consisting mostly of young boys and old men, with many claiming that General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry division

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<sup>13</sup>Jacob Cox, The March to The Sea (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), 29, hereinafter cited as Cox, March to the Sea.

had rounded them up and forced them to fight.<sup>14</sup>

Smith ordered General P. J. Phillips to advance with the militia in the direction of the Union advance, and instructed him to avoid skirmishing with the Union troops due to the small number of soldiers at his command, numbering approximately 3,700. Phillips encountered Union pickets on November 22 at Griswoldville, located about eight miles from Macon, and seeing that his command outnumbered the pickets decided to attack.<sup>15</sup> These Union pickets were a brigade commanded by General Charles Walcutt, and were part of General Charles Woods' division.

Although outnumbered, Walcutt's brigade was situated in a defensible position with both flanks protected by swamps, and the front located along the crest of a hill. Phillips ordered a frontal attack, which was supplemented by artillery. Although possessing more artillery, the Confederates were repulsed. Phillips renewed the attacks on two more occasions, only to have his command repulsed on both assaults.<sup>16</sup> After several hours of fighting, Phillips ordered his command to retreat. The Confederate losses in this skirmish were over

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<sup>14</sup>Cox, March to the Sea, 29.

<sup>15</sup>Burke Davis, Sherman's March (New York: Random House, 1980), 51, hereinafter cited as Davis, Sherman's March.

<sup>16</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 56.

600 killed and wounded, while the Union army suffered eighty-four casualties.<sup>17</sup> This action was the only serious resistance Sherman encountered during his march from Atlanta to Savannah.

The Union army continued its march to Savannah, creating a swath of destruction sixty miles wide. The troops were instructed to forage liberally, with food as well as valuable materials being obtained in this manner. Sherman's army reached Savannah on December 10, but halted on the outskirts of the city as it was held by General Hardee and 18,000 Confederate soldiers.

Sherman's first action at Savannah was to capture Fort McAllister, which overlooked Ossabaw Sound.<sup>18</sup> Fort McAllister was captured on December 13, and Sherman responded by writing Secretary of War E. M. Stanton to inform him of his activities.<sup>19</sup> Sherman also wrote Hardee demanding the surrender of Savannah, but Hardee refused. Aspiring to

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<sup>17</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 56.

<sup>18</sup>Cox, March to the Sea, 30.

<sup>19</sup>Oliver O. Howard, "Sherman's Advance From Atlanta," (Battles and Leaders of the Civil War), edited by Robert V. Johnson and Clarence G. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 4 volumes, 1888), IV, 664, hereinafter cited as Howard, "Sherman's Advance."



frighten Hardee into surrendering Savannah, Sherman ordered his army to surround the city on all sides on December 18.<sup>20</sup>

On December 21, Sherman discovered that Savannah had been evacuated that morning. Hardee's command had crossed the Savannah River on a pontoon bridge, carrying with it the light artillery. The Confederates destroyed their naval yard before withdrawing, but abandoned numerous stores, railroad cars, and heavy artillery.<sup>21</sup> Sherman's forces took possession of Savannah on December 22. He immediately sent the following telegram to President Lincoln: "I beg to present to you as a Christmas gift the City of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton."<sup>22</sup>

In Savannah Sherman outlined his plan for the remainder of his march. After leaving Savannah he would feint toward Augusta and Charleston while marching to Columbia. From there he would march to destroy the Charleston and Wilmington railroad, which was located between the Santee and Cape Fear

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<sup>20</sup>William T. Sherman, Memoirs of William T. Sherman (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 2 volumes, 1875), II, 201, hereinafter cited as Sherman, Memoirs.

<sup>21</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 201.

<sup>22</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 217.

rivers. After ordering an attack upon Wilmington, which would close North Carolina's most important port, Sherman would march to Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina. Sherman predicted that this movement would cause one of the two following situations: Lee would surrender due to his facing Grant and knowing that Sherman was marching in his direction, or he would withdraw from Richmond and move toward Raleigh, where he would confront Sherman, with Grant closing in on his rear from Virginia, which would force Lee to fight two fronts.<sup>23</sup>

The Union army remained in Savannah for approximately a month, allowing the troops to rest while the trains were filled with ammunition and rations.<sup>24</sup> General Howard's right wing advanced by water to Beaufort, South Carolina, while General Slocum's left wing, accompanied by General Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry, moved along the Savannah River to Sister's Ferry, where a crossing was to be attempted. The right wing was ordered to advance toward Charleston while the left wing was to feint toward Augusta, with Sherman hoping that the Confederate forces in those two cities would remain there while he marched unencumbered to Columbia.

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<sup>23</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 217.

<sup>24</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 231.

Sherman's entire command had crossed into South Carolina by February 1st. The progress of the army was slowed considerably by heavy rains. The swampy areas of lower South Carolina flooded, forcing Sherman to order that the roads be corduroyed so that passage could be made. The advance continued into South Carolina, and on February 7 the army captured the Charleston-Augusta Railroad at Midway, and succeeded in destroying the tracks for a distance of fifty miles.<sup>25</sup>

On February 11, Kilpatrick's cavalry started for Aiken, South Carolina. General Wheeler learned of this advance, and directed his cavalry to proceed to Aiken. Reaching Aiken before Kilpatrick's arrival, Wheeler prepared to ambush the Union cavalry. When Kilpatrick arrived, Wheeler's command charged, forcing the Union troopers to scatter in mass confusion.<sup>26</sup> A skirmish followed, during which Kilpatrick's forces began to retreat. They were closely pursued by Wheeler's cavalry, which drove Kilpatrick back a distance of five miles.<sup>27</sup> Wheeler's men were on the verge of capturing

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<sup>25</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 225.

<sup>26</sup>Howard, "Sherman's Advance."

<sup>27</sup>John M. Gibson, Those 163 Days: A Southern Account of Sherman's March from Atlanta to Raleigh (New York: Coward-McConn, Inc., 1961), 116, hereinafter cited as Gibson, Those 163 Days.

Kilpatrick when a detachment of Union pickets arrived, prompting the Confederates to retreat.

Despite this Confederate attack, Sherman's men succeeded in marching unhindered through the heart of South Carolina. After passing through Midway, his army marched to the town of Orangeburg, located approximately thirty miles southeast of Columbia.

Arriving in Orangeburg on February 12, Sherman's troops began to occupy and plunder several residences and businesses. One home was occupied by several officers, who upon arriving there were notified by a servant that the ladies of the house desired to confer with them regarding the protection of their home. One officer replied: "If it hadn't been for them (the ladies of the South) encouraging and egging on the men to fight the war would have been squelched years ago."<sup>28</sup>

The Union army left Orangeburg on February 14 and resumed its march to Columbia. As Sherman's forces neared Columbia, the small Confederate force occupying the city began to withdraw in the wake of his rapid advance. Wheeler's cavalry, deciding to leave little for Sherman's foragers to possess, broke into stores in Columbia's business district and looted them of their goods.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 137.

<sup>29</sup>Katherine M. Jones, When Sherman Came: Southern Women and the Great March (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1964), 143, hereinafter cited as Jones, When Sherman Came.

By February 16, the entire Union army was situated across the Saluda River from Columbia. Within one day, Sherman would occupy the city that was his primary target after leaving Savannah.

SHERMAN'S MARCH FROM COLUMBIA TO THE  
NORTH CAROLINA BORDER

Columbia was the first major town in the line of Sherman's march from Savannah. As the capital of South Carolina, the Union soldiers wanted to capture the city for purposes of revenge, as many of them felt that South Carolina, the first state to secede from the Union, was responsible for the Civil War. Also, the first shots of the war were fired at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, thus adding to the desires of the Union soldiers seeking revenge. Sherman expressed the feelings of his soldiers when he stated that the army was "burning with an insatiable desire to wreck vengeance upon South Carolina."<sup>1</sup>

After crossing from Georgia into South Carolina in early 1865, the Union army moved relentlessly in the direction of Columbia. Confederate lines of defense had been established along the South Edisto River for the protection of the South Carolina capital. These lines fell February 9, 1865.<sup>2</sup> On several occasions Confederate forces established defensive positions in Sherman's path, only to be forced to withdraw after being outflanked by Sherman's larger forces.<sup>3</sup> Sherman's rapid advance was supplemented by Union amphibious

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<sup>1</sup>E. Merton Coulter, "Sherman and the South," North Carolina Historical Review, VIII (January, 1931), 49, hereinafter cited as Coulter, "Sherman and the South."

<sup>2</sup>Nathaniel C. Hughes, General William J. Hardee: Old Reliable (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 277, hereinafter cited as Hughes, Hardee.

<sup>3</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 277.

attacks against Charleston.<sup>4</sup>

On February 11, 1865, General William J. Hardee was ordered to evacuate Charleston and to concentrate his scattered units in the path of Sherman's march. Hardee delayed this evacuation until February 18, when he withdrew from Charleston and journeyed by rail through Florence to Cheraw.

South Carolinians had earlier felt that Charleston would be the primary destination of Sherman rather than Columbia, as that was where the war had begun. Rumors had circulated throughout South Carolina that Charleston would be destroyed in an effort to gain revenge for the role it had played in initiating the conflict. As the citizens of South Carolina would later learn, Sherman was merely feinting toward Charleston while concentrating on Columbia.

Although Charleston was not occupied by Sherman's troops, it was visited by scattered detachments of "bummers" that had strayed from the main forces. These "bummers" wasted little time in destroying several of the fine mansions owned by the Charleston aristocrats. One such plantation that was visited by the "bummers" was Middleton Place, which was built by Henry Middleton, the president of the

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<sup>4</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 277.

First Continental Congress. His son Arthur was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Middleton Place had been ransacked by the British during the American Revolution as a result of the patriotic activities of the Middletons.

When the Union soldiers reached Middleton Place, they burned it so badly that only the south wing could be later restored. The fine garden was the only thing that was saved.

Magnolia was another plantation destroyed by the Union soldiers. This stately home, located along the Ashley River, was burned so badly that only the front steps were salvaged. The mansion was promptly rebuilt at the conclusion of the war.

Drayton Hall was yet another of the magnificent Charleston plantations visited by the "bummer," but it did not suffer the miserable fate that befell several of the other mansions. As the Union soldiers approached the estate, a quick thinking slave informed them that the mansion was being used as a hospital for smallpox victims, prompting their hasty withdrawal.

Sherman's threat to Charleston prompted several Confederate moves. General Robert E. Lee commissioned Lieutenant-General Wade Hampton to assume charge of the defense of Columbia. Hampton, an aristocratic native of Columbia who would later serve as governor of South Carolina following the Civil War, was an experienced cavalry commander.



Another move occurred on February 13 when General Pierre T. Beauregard, commander of the Military Division of the west, ordered his troops to withdraw from Augusta, Georgia, and march to Columbia.<sup>5</sup> His order came too late to help defend the city from the Union army, however, so Beauregard moved his forces to Chester, located approximately fifty-five miles north of Columbia.<sup>6</sup> Located in Chester was a railroad running through Charlotte to Danville, Virginia, and on to Richmond, the Confederate capital.

In preparing for the defense of Columbia, Beauregard ordered Confederate cavalry leader General Joseph Wheeler to resist Sherman's troops attempting to cross the Broad River just outside of Columbia on February 16.<sup>7</sup> Wheeler's men engaged the Union troops with the Broad to their rear and slowly withdrew. While the fighting was going on, soldiers with combustible materials were ordered to set fire to the bridge spanning the Broad. Wheeler and the last of his men would cross while it was in flames.<sup>8</sup> After crossing

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<sup>5</sup>Liddell Hart, Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1929), 365, hereinafter cited as Hart, Sherman.

<sup>6</sup>Hart, Sherman, 365.

<sup>7</sup>John W. Dubose, General Joseph Wheeler and the Army of Tennessee (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1912), 430, hereinafter cited as Dubose, General Joseph Wheeler.

<sup>8</sup>Dubose, General Joseph Wheeler, 430.

the bridge, Wheeler's troops continued to fire across the river, preventing the Union soldiers from extinguishing the burning bridge.<sup>9</sup>

Although a gallant effort was displayed by the Confederate cavalry in attempting to defend Columbia, militarily there was but one possible chance to delay the Union advance into the city. After crossing the Broad, the Union troops advanced along the banks of the Congaree River, which protected the western portion of the city. With bridges crossing the Congaree destroyed, Sherman would have had to cross higher up on the Saluda River, which joined with the Broad to form the Congaree. Sherman later stated that if the Confederates had concentrated at the upper crossing, fifty men could have held his troops at bay for five days.<sup>10</sup> The Confederates failed to adopt this plan, however, deciding instead to shell the Union troops, which was unsuccessful.<sup>11</sup>

Sherman ordered his artillery to continually shell Columbia in an effort to drive out the remaining Confederates.

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<sup>9</sup>Dubose, General Joseph Wheeler, 431.

<sup>10</sup>Lloyd Lewis, Sherman, Fighting Prophet (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932, 500, hereinafter cited as Lewis, Sherman, Fighting Prophet).

<sup>11</sup>Lewis, Sherman, Fighting Prophet, 500.

He also ordered Captain Francis DeGress, an artillerist, to fire three cannon balls at the newly constructed state house.<sup>12</sup> He also ordered General Oliver Howard to destroy public buildings, railroad property, and manufacturing shops once the city was occupied.<sup>13</sup>

On the morning of February 17, the Confederates withdrew from Columbia and fell back to Chester. The withdrawal was hastily carried out, not allowing the Confederates to destroy ordnance stores.<sup>14</sup> Stragglers quickly descended upon the stores, and also began to loot downtown businesses, with one eyewitness testifying that he saw looters draw pistols on General Hampton.<sup>15</sup>

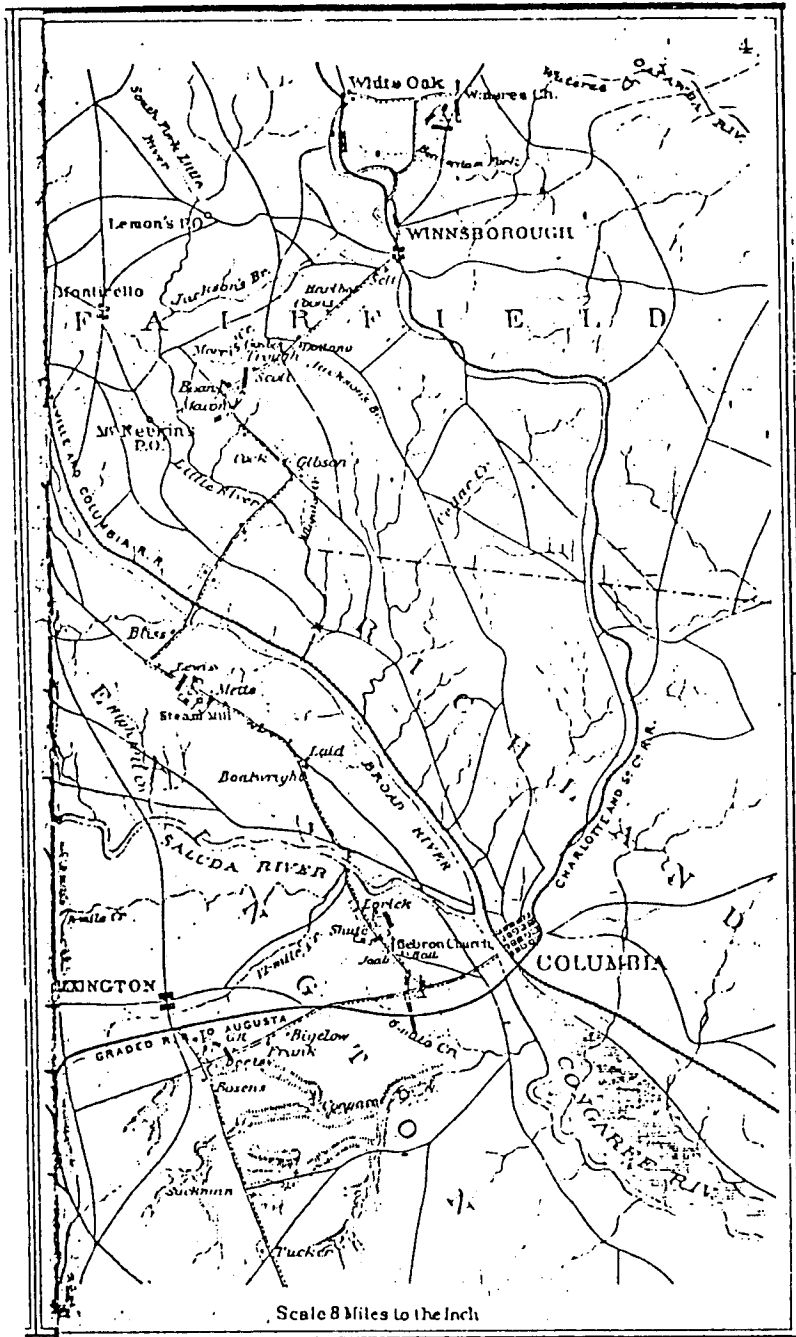
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<sup>12</sup>A Captain Matthews, commander of Company C, Eighth Confederate, was killed during this skirmish. His body was taken into Columbia for burial in the city cemetery. While funeral services were being conducted, Union mortar shells landed among the crowd gathered at the site of interment.

<sup>13</sup>Robert H. Woody, "Some Aspects of the Economic Condition of South Carolina After the Civil War," North Carolina Historical Review, VII (July, 1930), 347, hereinafter cited as Woody, "South Carolina After the Civil War."

<sup>14</sup>Hart, Sherman, 366.

<sup>15</sup>Hart, Sherman, 366.



COLUMBIA AND VICINITY (from The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Plate LXXXVI)

The Union army occupied Columbia shortly after the Confederates had withdrawn to Chester. While the Union troops were marching into town, vast multitudes of Blacks crowded the streets to meet them. The Blacks enthusiastically greeted Sherman's troops, thinking that their "saviors" had finally arrived. One slave was overheard shouting the following:

Tank de almighty God, mister Sherman has come at last. We knew it; we prayed for de day, and de Lord Jesus heard our prayers. Mr. Sherman has come wid his company.<sup>16</sup>

T. J. Goodwyn, mayor of Columbia, met with Sherman to surrender the city, and to inform him that all Confederate troops had withdrawn. Sherman told Goodwyn that public buildings, railroad property, and manufacturing shops were to be destroyed, but that private property would be respected: "Go home and rest assured that your city will be as safe in my hands as if you had controlled it," Sherman informed the mayor.<sup>17</sup>

As Sherman rode into town, he noticed that multitudes of people, black and white, were gathered in the streets. In his Memoirs, he later recalled that a heavy wind was blowing out of the north, carrying with it pieces of cotton

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<sup>16</sup>James M. Merrill, William Tecumseh Sherman (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), 282, hereinafter cited as Merrill, William Tecumseh Sherman.

<sup>17</sup>Lewis, Sherman, Fighting Prophet, 504.

which caught on tree limbs, reminding him of a northern snowstorm.<sup>18</sup> The loose cotton had come from a pile of burning cotton bales, which a brigade of Union infantry attempted to put out.<sup>19</sup> Some Union soldiers testified that they saw Confederate cavalry setting fire to the cotton as they were withdrawing from Columbia.<sup>20</sup> In order to avoid the burning cotton, Sherman was forced to ride his horse, Sam, along the sidewalk.<sup>21</sup>

The Union army had not long been in Columbia when "bummers" began raiding the dwellings of residents, despite Sherman's promise to Mayor Goodwyn that no private property would be damaged. One such forager appeared at the home of Mrs. Mary Rowe and began to bang on the door, demanding that he be given the household supply of flour. Before Mrs. Rowe could answer to his demands, the forager began to curse and chopped the door down with an axe.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 280.

<sup>19</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 280.

<sup>20</sup>Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe (ed.), Marching with Sherman. Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock, Major and Assistant Adjutant General of the Volunteers, November, 1864 - May, 1865 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), 268, hereinafter cited as Howe, Marching with Sherman.

<sup>21</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 280.

<sup>22</sup>Mary Rowe, "A Southern Girl's Diary," Confederate Veteran, XL (July, 1932), 264, hereinafter cited as Rowe, "A Southern Girl's Diary."

A regiment of these foragers had been nicknamed the "Tigers" by Sherman due to their relentless foraging activities. The "Tigers" wore shoes with steel covered toes, allowing them to kick open locked doors. However, Union provost troops patrolled the streets with some success in an attempt to prevent looting.

General John Fuller, commander of the First Brigade, Seventeenth Corps, selected the home of Mary Leverette for his headquarters. Upon arriving there he discovered that Mrs. Leverette's young daughter, Kati, had recently died from the measles and was lying in state. Nevertheless, Fuller remained in the home until the Union troops withdrew from Columbia. A group of Union soldiers arrived at the Leverette home with torches the night of February 17, intending to set it on fire, but were stopped by the guard protecting the house.

Although the Union soldiers took a variety of valuables from individuals, the most popular items to be confiscated were watches.<sup>23</sup> Many of the soldiers would stop men in the streets and ask them the time. When the men would pull out their watches, the soldiers would take them.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Edward A. Pollard, The Lost Cause (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1866, 666, hereinafter cited as Pollard, The Lost Cause).

<sup>24</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 666.

Although most confiscations took place in this manner, a few soldiers would stop ladies and feel of their breasts in searching for valuables.<sup>25</sup>

Clothing was one of the main items taken by the Union soldiers. Men's clothing was the more popular with the soldiers, although ladies' clothing was also taken, with the soldiers intending to send it home to their wives. Mrs. Harriott Ravenel, wife of Professor Julien Ravenel, was visited by "bummers" and noted that one soldier left her home wearing a blue dress, carrying a lace parasol over his head.<sup>26</sup>

A group of Union soldiers razed the old state house, destroying statues of Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun, and breaking the cane off of a statue of George Washington.<sup>27</sup> A few of these soldiers discovered a picture of Jefferson Davis hanging in the state house, and promptly used it for target practice.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Daniel H. Trezevant, The Burning of Columbia, South Carolina (Columbia: South Carolina Power Press, 1866), 10, hereinafter cited as Trezevant, Burning of Columbia.

<sup>26</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 73.

<sup>27</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 73.

<sup>28</sup>Emma LeConte Diary, February 18, 1865, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Emma LeConte Diary.



When the Union army reached Columbia, the town was serving as a storage depot for vast quantities of liquor. These spirits had been brought there by refugees, and the numbers increased when several Charleston merchants sent their stores of liquor to Columbia for safety.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the Confederate evacuation of Columbia, several Blacks managed to obtain much of this liquor, and as a gesture of southern hospitality proceeded to supply the Union soldiers with liquor as they marched into town, resulting in the widespread intoxication of many of the soldiers.<sup>30</sup>

Desiring more liquor, the Union soldiers broke into business establishments and took what they could find. A native of Columbia was caught trying to destroy forty barrels of whiskey before it could be drunk by the soldiers. Thinking he may have poisoned the whiskey, the soldiers required him to drink from every barrel.<sup>31</sup> Although most of Columbia's citizens detested the presence of the Union army, a few of the ladies openly associated

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<sup>29</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 72.

<sup>30</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 73.

<sup>31</sup>Alexander S. Salley (ed.), Sack and Destruction of the City of Columbia, South Carolina. By William Gilmore Simms. (Atlanta: Oglethorpe University Press, 1937), 45, hereinafter cited as Salley, Sack and Destruction of Columbia.

with the soldiers.<sup>32</sup> In some cases citizens complained to the Union troops about the lack of respect for private property.<sup>33</sup> That night, Mayor Goodwyn was talking with a Union soldier when rockets were suddenly fired from the capitol square.<sup>34</sup> Flames broke out shortly afterwards.

Firemen responded quickly to the fire, but were stopped from fighting it by drunken Union soldiers, who also cut the fire hose into small pieces.<sup>35</sup> The fire spread quickly; streets were immediately filled with women and children in their nightclothes, running from their burning homes seeking safety.<sup>36</sup> The fire spread to South Carolina College, which was being used as a hospital for wounded Confederate soldiers.<sup>37</sup> The hospital staff worked vigorously to move as many of the patients they could outdoors. Several of the wounded soldiers, unable to walk, perished during the fire.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Trezevant, Burning of Columbia, 10.

<sup>33</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 668.

<sup>34</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 668.

<sup>35</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 668.

<sup>36</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 668.

<sup>37</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 668.

<sup>38</sup>Emma LeConte Diary, February 18, 1865, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

In the meantime, Sherman was resting in his headquarters when he noticed a light flickering on the walls. Thinking a house was burning, he ordered a member of his staff, Major George Nichols, to find out. Nichols returned and told Sherman that the block of buildings opposite the cotton that had been burning earlier was on fire, and was spreading rapidly due to strong winds.<sup>39</sup> Sherman immediately ordered Generals Oliver Howard, John Logan, and William Woods to assign men to attempt to extinguish the fire. Union soldiers worked diligently to stop the spread of the fire, but failed to do so due to repeated gusts of strong winds.<sup>40</sup>

The soldiers worked all night trying to put out the fire. Officers were forced to shoot some of their own drunken men who were trying to stop all attempts to put out the fire.<sup>41</sup> Finally, around 4:00 a.m., the wind died, allowing the fire to be brought under control.

Columbia was in ruins. Eighty-four squares of buildings had been destroyed, along with the Capitol, six churches, and

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<sup>39</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 286.

<sup>40</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 286.

<sup>41</sup>Hitchcock, Marching With Sherman, 264.

eleven banks. Tall chimneys were all that remained in the area devastated by the fire.<sup>42</sup>

Columbia's citizens blamed Sherman for the fire, claiming that it was a planned course of action. Sherman denied these charges, claiming instead that Hampton's cavalry had set fire to the cotton that morning during withdrawal, and that the strong winds of the evening fanned the sparks until it reached full blaze.<sup>43</sup> Hampton repudiated this accusation, claiming that he did not order the cotton to be fired, and insisting that none of the cotton was on fire when the Confederates withdrew.<sup>44</sup> Sherman later admitted that he accused Hampton of setting the fire in an effort to persuade the people to lose faith in the Confederate general.<sup>45</sup>

Sherman reported that his men worked hard to stop the spread of the fire, but that other soldiers not on duty could have helped spread the fire after it started.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Pollard, The Lost Cause, 669.

<sup>43</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 287.

<sup>44</sup>Wade Hampton, "Letter From General Hampton on the Burning of Columbia," Southern Historical Society Papers, (VII March, 1879), 157, hereinafter cited as Hampton, "Letter."

<sup>45</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 287.

<sup>46</sup>Clement A. Evans, Confederate Military History, (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 12 volumes, 1899), V, 365, hereinafter cited as Evans, Confederate Military History.

General Henry Slocum later issued the following statement concerning the fire:

I believe the immediate cause of the disaster was a free use of whiskey (which was supplied to the soldiers by citizens with great liberality). A drunken soldier, with a musket in one hand and a match in the other, is not a pleasant visitor to have about the house on a dark, windy night.<sup>47</sup>

On February 18, Sherman ordered that five hundred cattle be given Mayor Goodwyn to feed the inhabitants of Columbia. He also provided the mayor with 100 muskets in order to arm a guard with which to retain order following the evacuation of his forces.

Sherman remained in Columbia through February 18 and 19, while his soldiers destroyed public property.<sup>48</sup> Howard's troops were ordered to destroy the railroad, while others were ordered to destroy the Confederate arsenal located in Columbia. The arsenal was well-stocked with ammunition, which was carried by wagon to the Saluda River, and buried in deep water.<sup>49</sup> While the ammunition was being destroyed, a percussion shell struck another, causing it to explode.

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<sup>47</sup>Evans, Confederate Military History, 365.

<sup>48</sup>W. T. Sherman to H. W. Halleck, April 4, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 22.

<sup>49</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.

The resulting flame followed a trail of powder, which had been sifted out of the shells, to the wagons, which were partially loaded.<sup>50</sup> A tremendous explosion followed, killing sixteen soldiers and destroying several mules and wagons.<sup>51</sup>

The Treasury Note Bureau, which was located in Columbia, had been established in 1862. Ladies representing each of the Confederate states were employed there, signing their names on treasury notes. The Treasury Note Bureau employees were evacuated on the morning of February 16, with the department being transferred to Richmond.<sup>52</sup> Dyes used in the printing of money were taken to Richmond, but several presses were left behind and destroyed by the Union soldiers. A large quantity of Confederate money was discovered there, which Sherman's men spent and used for gambling.<sup>53</sup>

Following the destruction of Columbia, the Union army began its move toward North Carolina with its destination Fayetteville. On February 21, the Fifteenth Corps, part of

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<sup>50</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.

<sup>51</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.

<sup>52</sup>Mary DeTreville, "Letters of a Confederate Girl," South Carolina Women in the Confederacy. Columbia: The State Company, 1903, hereinafter cited as DeTreville, "Letters of a Confederate Girl."

<sup>53</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.

the Union Right Wing, arrived in Ridgeway, a small village located approximately twenty-five miles north of Columbia. That night the village was burned, along with a railroad depot. One observer stated that "nothing but flames, smoke, and destruction were to be seen in every direction."<sup>54</sup>

Several of the Union soldiers camped for the night on the grounds of Mt. Hope plantation, situated three miles from Ridgeway. Here the usual foraging activities took place, with "bummers" searching for jewelry and confiscating foodstuffs. The foragers removed most of the stored grain from the plantation, but took only shelled corn, leaving the unshelled corn behind. The residents of the estate took the corn left untouched by the soldiers and ground it into meal with a coffee mill.<sup>55</sup> Sea shells were used in the place of spoons as the silverware had either been buried or stolen.<sup>56</sup>

Sherman, marching with the right wing of his army, began marching toward Winnsboro on February 20, and arrived there on the 21st. There he encountered General Slocum and the left wing, which arrived via a different route.<sup>57</sup> At this

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<sup>54</sup>Jones, When Sherman Came, 215.

<sup>55</sup>Jones, When Sherman Came, 216.

<sup>56</sup>Jones, When Sherman Came, 216.

<sup>57</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.

point Sherman ordered the right wing to turn east and march toward Cheraw, while the left wing was ordered to advance in the direction of Chester, then turn east and travel to Rocky Mount.<sup>58</sup> The right wing was instructed to cross the Wateree River at Peay's Ferry, while the left wing was ordered to cross at Rocky Mount.<sup>59</sup> Kilpatrick's cavalry was ordered to feign toward Chester before joining the left wing at Rocky Mount. Kilpatrick's cavalry advanced to within a close distance of Chester, destroying railroad track and telegraph lines.<sup>60</sup>

Crossing over to march with the left wing, Sherman arrived in Rocky Mount on February 22. Kilpatrick's cavalry arrived the next day, and was immediately ordered to cross the Catawba River and advance to Lancaster, giving the impression that the next destination of the Union army was Charlotte.<sup>61</sup> Sherman had heard that Beauregard ordered his forces to concentrate at Charlotte, and he desired to keep them there as long as possible while his army marched toward Fayetteville.

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<sup>58</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.

<sup>59</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 98.

<sup>60</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 98.

<sup>61</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 288.



On February 22, Kilpatrick received word that eighteen of his soldiers had been found along a roadside with their throats cut. Notes were found on the bodies, exclaiming the following message: "Death to all foragers."<sup>62</sup> Kilpatrick immediately contacted Wheeler, threatening to execute eighteen prisoners, all of whom were members of Wheeler's cavalry, if a satisfactory explanation was not given. Wheeler answered Kilpatrick's demand, informing him that he would investigate the matter and punish those soldiers found guilty of committing the crime. Sherman learned of the matter, and informed Hampton that he held one thousand Confederate prisoners. If such atrocities continued to occur, according to Sherman, those prisoners would be executed in a similar manner.<sup>63</sup> Sherman and Hampton continued to exchange threats, although none of the proposed executions occurred.

Kilpatrick arrived in Lancaster on February 23. There his troops were met by members of Wheeler's Confederate cavalry. The Confederates succeeded in driving the Union cavalry out of town before much damage was done, with only

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<sup>62</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 187.

<sup>63</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 103.

two buildings, the courthouse and the jail, being burned.<sup>64</sup>

The right wing of Sherman's army crossed the Wateree River at Peay's Ferry on February 23. At Liberty Hall, a small town near the Wateree, General Logan divided the Fifteenth Corps into two units. One unit began marching in the direction of Cheraw, while the other unit was sent to raid Camden. This unit, led by Colonel R. N. Adams, brigade commander of the Fifteenth Corps Fourth Division, reached Camden the afternoon of February 24, after brushing aside a small force of Confederate cavalry.<sup>65</sup> The Union troops proceeded to burn government buildings and the railroad depot. Fourteen Federal prisoners were found and released.

Learning of the Union advance in the direction of Camden, the mayor and town council had prepared an elaborate ceremony commemorating the town's surrender. However, the Union soldiers were concerned with destruction and ignored the ceremony.<sup>66</sup> Later that day, Colonel Adams' troops withdrew from town and rejoined the remainder of the Fifteenth Corps, which was encamped six miles northeast of Camden.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 195.

<sup>65</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 174.

<sup>66</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 175.

<sup>67</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 102.

After leaving the Camden area, the Union army continued its march towards Fayetteville. Heavy rains during this time made the swampy terrain nearly impassable, thus delaying the army's march considerably. The army encountered little resistance until March 2, when it was approaching Chesterfield.

Near Big Black Creek, located on the Camden and Cheraw road, the Sixty-Third Illinois Volunteer Infantry, part of the Fifteenth Corps, encountered a party of about thirty Confederate cavalrymen dressed in Union uniforms.<sup>68</sup> In the skirmish that followed, the Confederates captured Lieutenant Colonel James Isaminger, along with one enlisted soldier. One Union soldier was killed.<sup>69</sup> The Union mounted command was ordered to pursue the retiring Confederates following the skirmish, but returned after failing to overtake them.<sup>70</sup>

After crossing Big Black Creek, the Union forces marched unencumbered until about 2:00 p.m. when, within one mile of Chesterfield, they once again encountered enemy opposition. The Union advance guard, consisting of the Fifth Regiment Connecticut Veteran Volunteers, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H. W. Daboll, and the Fourteenth Regiment New York Volunteers, commanded by Captain William Merrill, came under

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<sup>68</sup>John E. Smith to Max Woodhull, March 3, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 665.

<sup>69</sup>John E. Smith to Max Woodhull, March 3, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 665.

<sup>70</sup>John E. Smith to Max Woodhull, March 3, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 665.

fire. Additional brigades were brought up for support.<sup>71</sup>  
A lively skirmish followed, in which heavy firing occurred at times. The skirmishing continued for about two hours until the Confederates withdrew. The Union troops then marched into Chesterfield, which they occupied at 4:30 p.m., and stacked their arms near the courthouse.<sup>72</sup>

However, shortly after stacking arms, the Union troops received orders to move out in light marching order and march to Thompson's Creek, where a lone detachment of the army, the Second Massachusetts Volunteers, was engaged in driving the Confederates across the bridge spanning the creek. This additional support was not needed, however, as the Second Massachusetts succeeded in clearing the bridge of all Confederates.<sup>73</sup>

While withdrawing across Thompson's Creek, the Confederates set fire to the bridge in an effort to slow the Union advance. Although they made repeated attempts to destroy the bridge, the Union forces maintained a continuous fire which prevented the Confederates from completely

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<sup>71</sup>James L. Selfridge to E. K. Buttrick, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 610.

<sup>72</sup>Frederick H. Harris to J. R. Lindsay, March 26, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 644.

<sup>73</sup>F. Harris to J. R. Lindsay, March 26, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 644.

destroying the bridge.<sup>74</sup> Situated on the opposite bank of Thompson's Creek, the Confederates fired several artillery rounds at the Union skirmish line, but failed to dislodge them from their position.<sup>75</sup>

On the morning of March 3, the Union troops left Chesterfield and continued their march. Driving the Confederate pickets from the opposite bank of Thompson's Creek, the soldiers in blue began to ford the creek while the bridge was being repaired. The repairs were completed by 3:00 p.m., with the remainder of the army crossing.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile, the Confederates under Hardee's command continued to occupy Cheraw until March 3, when they were forced to withdraw in the wake of Sherman's advance. General Matthew Butler's cavalry was ordered to act as the Confederate rear guard, and was also instructed to attempt to stop the Union advance into Cheraw.

Advance scouts from the Seventeenth Corps first encountered the Confederate cavalry at 12:00 p.m., with a running skirmish following, covering a distance of seven miles.<sup>77</sup>

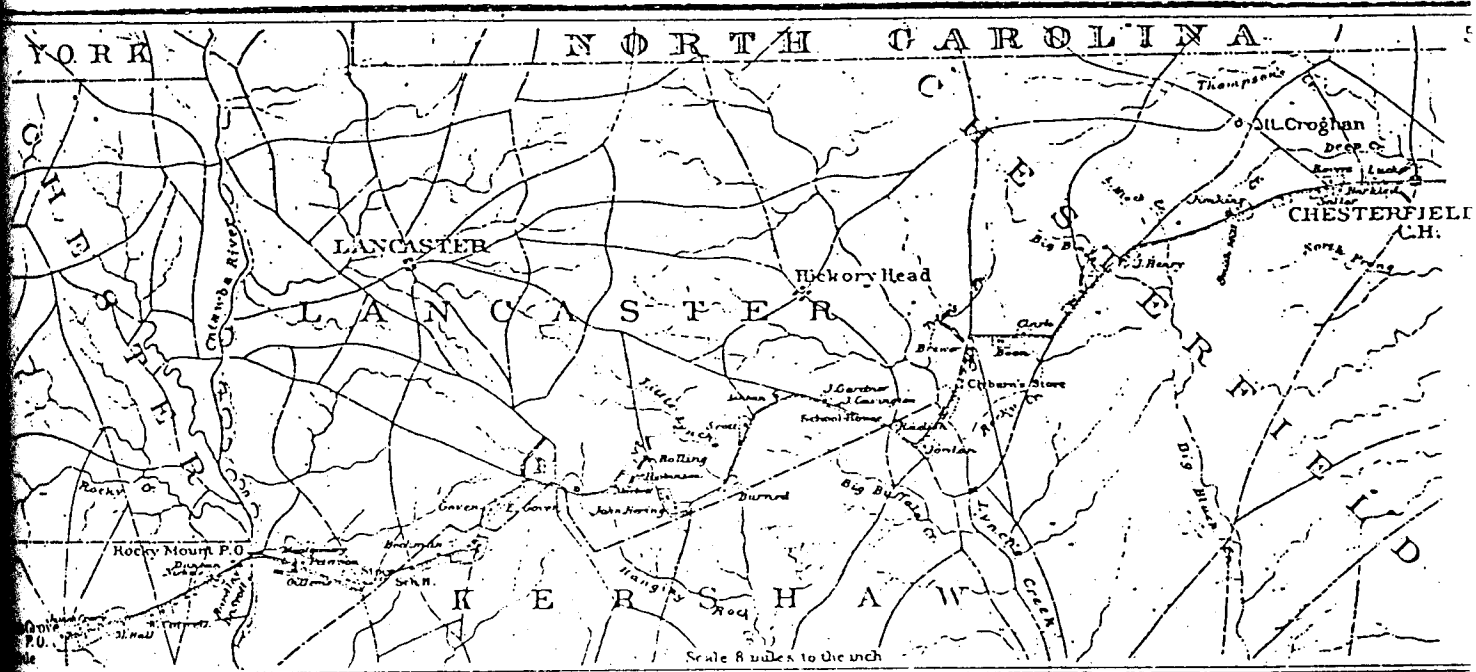
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<sup>74</sup>Henry Daboll to D. W. Palmer, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 617.

<sup>75</sup>James L. Selfridge to E. K. Buttrick, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 610.

<sup>76</sup>James L. Selfridge to E. K. Buttrick, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 611.

<sup>77</sup>Frank Blair to L. M. Dayton, March 3, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 666.



SHERMAN'S MARCH BETWEEN COLUMBIA TO THE NORTH CAROLINA BORDER (from The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Plate LXXXVI)

The Confederate defense of Cheraw was well-planned, but the Union force was too large for it to be effective. Aware that the Confederates were retreating over the bridge spanning the Great Pee Dee River, the Union soldiers pressed forward on their skirmish line in order to save the bridge. They arrived too late, however, as the Confederates had soaked the bridge with rosin, and retreated after setting it on fire.<sup>78</sup>

Sherman had hoped to catch Hardee at Cheraw and force him to fight before he could cross the Pee Dee.<sup>79</sup> Such a maneuver would have placed Hardee in the precarious position of having a large river at his rear, virtually cutting off his only avenue of retreat while facing a vastly superior army. However, Sherman failed in his attempt to catch Hardee before he could cross the Pee Dee.

With the Confederates having withdrawn, the Union army took possession of Cheraw. They wasted little time in taking large numbers of stores located there that had been transported from Charleston when it was evacuated. Among these stores were twenty-five cannon. Union General Joseph Mower fired these guns the following day, March 4, in a salute to the

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<sup>78</sup>Frank Blair to L. M. Dayton, March 3, 1865, Official Records, (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 666.

<sup>79</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 280.

inauguration of President Lincoln for his second term.<sup>80</sup>

After establishing his headquarters in Cheraw, Sherman ordered a detachment of mounted infantry to destroy the tracks of the Cheraw and Darlington Railroad. This force succeeded in destroying one mile of track as well as a depot and a locomotive.<sup>81</sup>

Sherman also ordered a detachment of mounted infantry to journey to Florence, forty miles east of Cheraw, to destroy a railroad terminal there, along with depots, trestles, and bridges. This expedition was successful in destroying all of the railroad trestling between Cheraw and Florence.<sup>82</sup>

As the detachment advanced towards Florence along the rail line, it discovered a train approaching in the direction of Darlington.<sup>83</sup> The Union troops quickly deployed along the side of the tracks in an effort to capture the train, but the engineer discovered the Union forces lying in ambush and turned the train back in the direction of Florence.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>George W. Nichols, The Story of the Great March from the Diary of a Staff Officer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1965), 199, hereinafter cited as Nichols, The Story of the Great March.

<sup>81</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 180.

<sup>82</sup>John A. Logan to A. M. Van Dyke, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 700.

<sup>83</sup>Reuben Williams to Max Woodhull, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 266.

<sup>84</sup>Reuben Williams to Max Woodhull, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 255.



The Union command then continued its advance toward Florence. As the soldiers approached the city the Confederate position was observed.<sup>85</sup> The Union troops quickly formed a skirmish line, and attacked the Confederates.<sup>86</sup> As the Union troops advanced, the Confederates re-enforced their left with infantry and drove back the Union right. The Union troops countered by placing the Seventh Illinois on the left of the skirmish line to prevent a flank movement that was being attempted by the Confederates.<sup>87</sup>

During the midst of the skirmish the Union command was informed by a picket that another train was advancing from the direction of Kingsville. Realizing that they would be outflanked and outnumbered with the arrival of Confederate re-enforcements, the Union troops withdrew in the direction of Darlington, leaving the Ninth Illinois to cover the retreat. The Confederates pursued the retreating Union soldiers, charging their rear guard three times between Florence and Darlington.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Reuben Williams to Max Woodhull, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 255.

<sup>86</sup>Reuben Williams to Max Woodhull, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 255.

<sup>87</sup>Reuben Williams to Max Woodhull, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 255.

<sup>88</sup>Reuben Williams to Max Woodhull, March 6, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 255.

While the raid on Florence was taking place, General Francis P. Blair, commander of the Seventeenth Corps, was establishing his headquarters in one of Cheraw's most luxurious homes. Blair invited Sherman to join him for lunch, which was served in the basement of the home. Sherman was served wine while dining, later proclaiming it to be some of the "finest madeira I ever tasted".<sup>89</sup>

Blair later sent Sherman a dozen bottles of the wine. It had previously belonged to some of the wealthiest families in Charleston, and had been sent by wagon to Cheraw for safe-keeping when Charleston was evacuated.<sup>90</sup> Blair succeeded in locating eight wagonloads of the wine, which he distributed to his soldiers.<sup>91</sup>

After finishing lunch, Blair asked Sherman if he needed some saddle blankets or a rug for his tent. He then led Sherman to an area under the staircase in which a number of fine carpets were being stored. Although Sherman proclaimed that he was not an ardent supporter of foraging activities, he later sent his orderly to Blair's headquarters, who returned

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<sup>89</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 291.

<sup>90</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 291.

<sup>91</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 291.

carrying a load of the carpets.<sup>92</sup> Sherman shared these carpets with his staff, which promptly turned them into saddle cloths, tent rugs, and blankets.<sup>93</sup>

Also discovered in Cheraw was a vast amount of weapons and ammunition that had been shipped there for safekeeping following the Confederate evacuations of Charleston and Columbia. Among these were two thousand muskets and three thousand, six hundred barrels of gunpowder.<sup>94</sup>

Sherman ordered his men to use what they could, and to destroy the rest. As such, much of the gunpowder was carried to a ravine near Cheraw where it was buried under a thick covering of sand.<sup>95</sup> Guards were posted at the site to protect against carelessness by the soldiers that could result in an explosion.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the precautions taken, there was an explosion, as recalled by Theodore Upton, a member of the Union army:

When we made a fire to cook our coffee there was a little flash of powder ran along the ground and one yelled, 'Look out for the magazine!' We did look out and ran for the river. The powder flashes ran in every direction . . . then there was a tremendous explosion . . . the dirt and stones flew in every direction . . . we made some pretty quick moves.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 292.

<sup>93</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 292.

<sup>94</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 292.

<sup>95</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 182.

<sup>96</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 182.

<sup>97</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 203.

The explosion killed one Union officer and three enlisted men.<sup>98</sup>

Sherman was incensed when he learned of the explosion, convinced that local citizens had ignited the gunpowder in retaliation for the Union occupation of Cheraw.<sup>99</sup> He considered ordering the town burned and city officials executed until he was informed that the explosion was caused by his men.<sup>100</sup>

On the evening of March 4, the Seventeenth Corps began crossing the Great Pee Dee River east of Cheraw, and completed the crossing the following morning. The Fifteenth Corps crossed the night of March 5 and the morning of March 6. The Twentieth Corps crossed at Cheraw following the Fifteenth Corps, while the Fourteenth Corps crossed the Great Pee Dee at Sneedsboro and took a more direct road to Fayetteville.<sup>101</sup> With the exception of minor skirmishing in the vicinity of Bennettsville, this was the final military activity to occur in South Carolina for the duration of the war.

By Wednesday, March 8, the state of South Carolina would

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<sup>98</sup>Jones, When Sherman Came, 329.

<sup>99</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 204.

<sup>100</sup>The Union soldiers killed in the explosion were taken to the cemetery at St. David's church for interment. One of the soldiers was buried in a lot belonging to the family of Virginia Tarrh. When informed of the burial, Mrs. Tarrh had the fence surrounding her cemetery lot moved so that the dead soldier's grave would be excluded.

<sup>101</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 189.

be free of the Union army that had plagued its citizens for over a month. South Carolina had suffered greatly at the hands of the Union troops, and its people had been left facing many hardships. During this withdrawal from the state, Sherman was busy planning the final segment of his march through the Carolinas.

## SHERMAN'S ENTRY INTO NORTH CAROLINA

Upon leaving Lancaster, South Carolina, the Union cavalry feined a movement in the direction of Charlotte, North Carolina. General Joseph Johnston, who had been given command of Confederate troops in North Carolina, was in the process of assembling his scattered forces in Charlotte in an attempt to stop Sherman's advance. Kilpatrick feined toward Charlotte so that Johnston would remain there while Sherman marched to Fayetteville.

Kilpatrick's cavalry crossed into North Carolina on March 1, 1865, and immediately began foraging. Most of this foraging activity took place in southern Anson County between the towns of Wadesboro and Lanesboro.<sup>1</sup> The first major cavalry raid conducted by Kilpatrick's troopers after entering North Carolina occurred in the town of Monroe, located twenty-five miles west of Wadesboro. While no buildings were destroyed, the usual looting of citizens' property occurred. A party of refugees, fleeing from the Union army in Chester, South Carolina, happened to arrive in Monroe simultaneously with the arrival of Kilpatrick's cavalry. Ten wagons carrying the possessions of these refugees were captured by the Union cavalry.

Prior to the invasion of North Carolina by the Union cavalry, Wheeler's Confederate cavalry had roamed throughout

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<sup>1</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 20, 1865.

Anson County. Stragglers from Wheeler's cavalry prowled extensively in Stanly and Anson counties, stealing horses and other valuables from the residents. These stragglers took fifty of the stolen horses to Albemarle, where they were sold.<sup>2</sup> They boasted that the horses had been captured from the Yankees.<sup>3</sup>

The Union cavalry occupied Wadesboro on March 3, capturing the town without opposition. This was not planned by the local citizens, as a small band of them had formed a home guard. When reports reached Wadesboro that Kilpatrick was rapidly approaching, the homeguard, accompanied by aged citizens, Negroes, and children, gathered at the courthouse. As the Union cavalry entered the town it charged the crowd, yelling and firing pistols. The crowd quickly scattered, leaving the homeguard standing in the street with bullets whizzing by them. They wisely surrendered without offering any opposition.<sup>4</sup> The pocketbooks and wallets of the captured homeguard were confiscated by the Union soldiers, but in most cases were returned to the owners if they contained nothing but Confederate money.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Raleigh Conservative, April 12, 1865.

<sup>3</sup>Raleigh Conservative, April 12, 1865.

<sup>4</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865: J. A. Bozden to ?, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>5</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865.

The Union soldiers continued to wreck havoc as they set fire to several buildings in the town.<sup>6</sup> Soldiers frequently rode up to ladies and pointed loaded pistols at them, threatening to fire if their jewelry and watches were not instantly delivered.<sup>7</sup> Storehouses filled with wheat and corn were broken into, with the Union soldiers throwing the stored grain into the street where it was hastily gathered up by the curious Negroes and poor whites that were observing.<sup>8</sup>

When Kilpatrick's men entered the town, H. B. Hammond, the president of the bank of Wadesboro, took the holdings of the bank to his home for safekeeping. He then turned the money over to W. O. Bennett, the bank's cashier, who took it to his home. Bennett was later robbed of his watch and valuables while in town by a Union soldier. After the robbery occurred, Bennett sent word to a negro servant to hide the bank's holdings. The servant placed the money in a keg and dropped it in a well.

Later, Union soldiers rode to Bennett's home in search of the money, and found that the only person there was the Negro servant. They threatened the servant in an attempt to find the location of the money. He replied: "White folks

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<sup>6</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865.

<sup>7</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865.

<sup>8</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865.



wouldn't tell a nigger where dey keeps der money." The soldiers left, and the money was returned to the bank following the departure of the cavalry.<sup>9</sup>

H. B. Hammond's home, located between Wadesboro and White's Store, was ransacked by a number of stragglers from Kilpatrick's cavalry. After taking a number of valuables and foodstuffs, the soldiers demanded that Hammond's young daughter, Jane, entertain them by playing a tune on the family piano. She sat down silently and played "Dixie" with spirited defiance, much to the chagrin of the startled soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

Another citizen, Mrs. George Washington Willoughby, lived in a house just outside Wadesboro. She owned a large orchard, and had a pantry stocked with canned fruit from the orchard. Two Union soldiers had been caught in some offense in Wadesboro, and were placed in a guard house near Mrs. Willoughby's home. Sympathizing with the imprisoned soldiers, she baked cherry pies for them. The soldiers did not forget her kindness, and wrote and thanked her after they returned home at the conclusion of the war. Despite this good deed, Mrs. Willoughby's home was later ransacked by "bummers."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Mary L. Medley, History of Anson County, North Carolina, 1750 - 1976 (Wadesboro: Anson County Historical Society, 1976), 118, hereinafter cited as Medley, History of Anson County.

<sup>10</sup>Medley, History of Anson County, 120.

<sup>11</sup>Medley, History of Anson County, 120.

On Sunday, March 5, the Union cavalry left Wadesboro. This withdrawal was prompted by Kilpatrick's discovery from scouts that Confederate cavalry under the command of Generals Hampton and Wheeler was approaching rapidly. Two Union stragglers were surprised by Wheeler's advance scouts, one of them being killed in front of the Masonic hall. Upon learning of this incident, the Federals threatened to return to Wadesboro and burn the town in retaliation, but failed to do so due to the sudden appearance of the main portion of the Confederate cavalry.<sup>12</sup>

After withdrawing from Wadesboro, most of Kilpatrick's cavalry had remained in the vicinity of the town. One of these units became involved in a skirmish with a small detachment of Confederate cavalry under the command of a Lieutenant O'Neal on a hill behind the residence of William P. Kendall. Nine Union soldiers were captured during the skirmish.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the withdrawal of Union cavalry from Wadesboro, a detachment of Kilpatrick's cavalry was involved in reconnaissance activity to the east on March 3. This detachment, consisting of the Ninth Pennsylvania, the Ninety-Second Illinois, the Ninth Michigan, and the Tenth Ohio, camped for the night at Phillip's Cross Roads, located near Hornsborough, approxi-

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<sup>12</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865.

<sup>13</sup>Wadesboro Argus, March 30, 1865.

mately ten miles south of Wadesboro.<sup>14</sup>

At 7:00 a.m. the next morning, March 4, this detachment of Union cavalry was attacked in the rear by Wheeler's cavalry.<sup>15</sup> The first charge was repulsed by the Federals, prompting the Confederates to establish a skirmish line. Judging from the size of the lengthy skirmish line, Lieutenant Colonel David Kimmel of the Ninth Michigan, thinking that the Confederates possessed heavy forces, prepared his soldiers for a second attack. This attack never occurred, however, as the Confederates were content to maintain a heavy skirmish fire.<sup>16</sup>

This skirmishing action continued until noon, when Kimmel ordered a detail of one hundred soldiers to advance in the direction of White's Store. Simultaneous with this movement the Confederates changed position, shifting from what had been the Union forces' rear to their right flank. Here they mounted a charge against the Union pickets, forcing them to withdraw.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Smith Atkins to L. G. Estes, April 1, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 880.

<sup>15</sup>David H. Kimmel to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 876.

<sup>16</sup>David H. Kimmel to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 876.

<sup>17</sup>David H. Kimmel to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 876.

Prior to the Confederate attack, the Tenth Ohio had dismounted and taken position in barricades. This unit was forced out of its position by the Confederate assault, and as it retired it was joined by the Ninth Michigan and the Ninety-Second Illinois. They took up a new position near Phillip's Cross Roads and successfully repulsed the advancing Confederates.<sup>18</sup>

Calculating that the attacking Confederates numbered only about two hundred, Kimmel ordered Adjutant Issac Landis to move a detachment of his command to the left in an attempt to flank the Confederates.<sup>19</sup> Delayed briefly by minor skirmishing, this detachment occupied a hill in the rear of the Confederate line, from where they could observe new activities. Landis estimated that the strength of the Confederate cavalry numbered between eight hundred and one thousand soldiers.<sup>20</sup> Fearful of a possible Confederate attack upon the brigade camps, Kimmel ordered Landis to rejoin his brigade.

The size of the opposing Confederate force persuaded the Union cavalry to again construct barricades to hold off any large scale attack. They were in the process of

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<sup>18</sup>Smith Atkins to L. G. Estes, April 1, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 880.

<sup>19</sup>David H. Kimmel to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 876.

<sup>20</sup>David H. Kimmel to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 876.

establishing positions for the night behind the barricades when, at nightfall, the Confederates charged. The Union pickets were attacked repeatedly without success.<sup>21</sup> After the initial charge had been beaten back, Lieutenant Charles Blanford, commanding a howitzer battery, was ordered to open fire on the Confederates. The artillery continued firing until 9:00 p.m., at which time the Confederates retired to camps situated only a few hundred yards in front of the Union positions.<sup>22</sup>

The Union commanders anticipated an attack again the following morning, as their scouts had discovered that both Wheeler and Hampton had arrived on the battlefield during the night with their combined forces. Preparations were made for an attack, with wagons being sent to the rear. When daylight came, it was discovered that the Confederates had withdrawn during the night.<sup>23</sup> Wheeler apparently felt that it would be more beneficial if his troops were to get in front of Sherman rather than skirmish with Federal cavalry.

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<sup>21</sup>George S. Askes to H. J. Smith, March 29, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 886.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas J. Jordan to L. G. Estes, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 867.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas J. Jordan to L. G. Estes, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 867.

During this skirmish, General Wheeler's force had captured fifty-seven Union soldiers. They also freed several southerners, including members of the Wadesboro home guard that had been captured the previous day.<sup>24</sup>

Following the skirmish at Phillip's Cross Roads, Wheeler's command on March 6 proceeded to Grassy Island, a ferry crossing on the Pee Dee River. Wheeler desired to cross the Pee Dee and travel north so that he could communicate with General Hardee. Upon reaching the Pee Dee, however, Wheeler discovered that it was at flood stage. Ferry operators refused to transport his troops across the swollen river, so Wheeler decided to ford it. Accompanied by twenty volunteers from Texas, Wheeler entered the water and began to swim toward the opposite bank. Only Wheeler and two of the volunteers succeeded in crossing the Pee Dee, the others apparently drowned. As such, Wheeler's command had to wait two days until the river could be safely crossed before crossing and resuming its march toward North Carolina.

Kilpatrick's cavalry left the vicinity of Phillip's Cross Roads on the morning of March 5, and proceeded to march to Morven Post Office, a distance of eight miles. The troops halted there and ate, then resumed the march, proceeding

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<sup>24</sup>Raleigh Daily Confederate, March 8, 1865.

six miles to the Pee Dee River.<sup>25</sup> Upon arriving there, however, it was discovered that the pontoon bridge being constructed across the river had not been completed. Thus, the cavalry was forced to camp on the banks of the Pee Dee until the next day, when the bridge was completed.<sup>26</sup>

After crossing the Pee Dee on March 6, Kilpatrick's command continued its march toward Rockingham, which it reached at 10:00 a.m. on March 7.<sup>27</sup> Advance units, consisting of portions of the Ninth Pennsylvania and Third Kentucky, under the command of a Captain Boyle, along with infantry foragers from scattered regiments, moved into Rockingham.<sup>28</sup> There they encountered Confederate cavalry under the command of General Matthew G. Butler, which was acting as the rear guard for Hardee's troops. After a brief skirmish Butler withdrew, allowing Kilpatrick to take possession of the town.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, General Wheeler, after crossing the Pee Dee, made contact with a number of his scouts. Wheeler took

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<sup>25</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 115.

<sup>26</sup>Robert H. King to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 875.

<sup>27</sup>Thomas J. Jordan to L. G. Estes, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 867.

<sup>28</sup>Thomas J. Jordan to L. G. Estes, March 28, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 867.

<sup>29</sup>Robert H. King to E. W. Ward, March 27, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 875.

twenty of these scouts and raided Rockingham. Confusion followed. Wheeler's troops entered the town at the same time the Union cavalry was driving Butler out of town. Wheeler reported that thirty-five Union soldiers were killed or captured during the skirmish that took place.<sup>30</sup>

After occupying Rockingham, the Union troops began their acts of destruction. A factory and the jail were among the first to be set on fire. A free Negro, charged with murder, was in the jail awaiting sentencing, but was released before the jail was burned.<sup>31</sup>

A prominent citizen of Rockingham, Colonel Henry Harrington, the chairman of the Richmond County Court, took it upon himself to assist in defending the town against the invading army. Hiding in bushes at his residence, he succeeded in bushwhacking two Union soldiers. He was promptly discovered, captured, and executed.<sup>32</sup>

After capturing Rockingham, Kilpatrick predicted the anticipated movement of the Confederates. Informed that Hardee's troops had left Rockingham for Asheboro, Kilpatrick concluded that he was going to form a junction with General

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<sup>30</sup>J. Wheeler to J. E. Johnston, March 23, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 1130.

<sup>31</sup>Raleigh Conservative, April 12, 1865.

<sup>32</sup>Raleigh Conservative, April 12, 1865.



Pierre Beauregard's force at Greensboro. From Greensboro, Kilpatrick thought that the combined armies would then march toward Raleigh. Kilpatrick's predictions were based on the facts that no Confederate resistance had been met by his scouts on the roads leading to Fayetteville, and that the Confederates had made inquiries in Rockingham concerning the availability of bridges spanning the Haw River.<sup>33</sup>

While in Rockingham, Kilpatrick received a dispatch from General Sherman, who was encamped thirteen miles north of Cheraw along the Fayetteville road. Sherman informed Kilpatrick that he was in the process in marching to Fayetteville, and ordered him to head in that direction while giving the appearance that he was merely pushing after Hardee.<sup>34</sup> Sherman also ordered Kilpatrick to deal as fairly with the North Carolinians as possible, because they were among the last states to join the Confederacy, and still retained a large amount of sympathy toward the Union.

In compliance with the orders issued by Sherman, Kilpatrick's division left Rockingham and proceeded in the direction of Fayetteville. One of his first stops was

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<sup>33</sup>H. J. Kilpatrick to L. M. Payton, March 7, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part II, XLVII, Series I, 720.

<sup>34</sup>W. T. Sherman to H. J. Kilpatrick, March 7, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part II, XLVII, Series I, 721.

Lumberton, located thirty-five miles south of Fayetteville. Lumberton escaped with comparatively light damage. The railroad depot was the only building burned, with several horses being stolen.<sup>35</sup>

While Kilpatrick was moving towards Fayetteville, Sherman was doing likewise. His command crossed the North Carolina state line on March 8 in the vicinity of Laurel Hill.<sup>36</sup> After entering the Old North State, a detachment of mounted infantry from the Fifteenth Corps marched to Stewartsville. General Howard reported that an abundance of forage was discovered in the area. He also remarked that his impression was that the schools and churches were an improvement over those in South Carolina.<sup>37</sup>

Sherman established his first headquarters in North Carolina at Laurel Hill Church. It was while camped there that he wrote the following letter to General Alfred Howe Terry, who had taken Wilmington on February 22, 1865.

We are marching for Fayetteville, will be there Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, and will then march for Goldsboro.

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<sup>35</sup>Raleigh Conservative, April 12, 1865.

<sup>36</sup>O. O. Howard to E. M. Dayton, April 1, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 202.

<sup>37</sup>O. O. Howard to E. M. Dayton, April 1, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 202.

If possible, please send a boat up the Cape Fear River, and have word conveyed to General Schofield that I expect to meet him about Goldsboro. We are all well and have done finely. The rains make our roads difficult, and may delay us about Fayetteville, in which case I would like to have some bread, sugar, and coffee. We have abundance of all else. I expect to reach Goldsboro by the 20th instant.<sup>38</sup>

Copies of the letter were carried to Wilmington by three scouts, Sergeant Amick of the Fifteenth Illinois Cavalry, Private Quimby of the Thirty-Second Wisconsin Infantry, and Corporal James Pike. Corporal Pike was ordered to work his way to the Cape Fear River, obtain a boat, and float down to Wilmington.<sup>39</sup> Sergeant Amick and Private Quimby were ordered to cross the Lumber River at Campbell's Bridge and take as direct a land route as possible to Wilmington, while avoiding Elizabethtown and Lumberton.<sup>40</sup> Both parties succeeded in reaching Wilmington within forty-eight hours.

Sherman's rapid advance into North Carolina worried a large portion of its residents, including Governor Zebulon Vance. When Sherman crossed the border into the state, Vance was approached by Confederate Senator William A. Graham of North Carolina, who was one of a growing number of Confederate

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<sup>38</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 293.

<sup>39</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 293.

<sup>40</sup>O. O. Howard to E. M. Dayton, April 1, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 203.

congressmen who felt that the Confederacy should admit its failure and cease all military operations.<sup>41</sup>

In his meeting with Vance, Graham suggested that the governor issue an order recalling all North Carolina troops. Vance refused, claiming that if he did issue such an order it would later be implied that the "Confederacy might have succeeded if not for the treachery of North Carolina."<sup>42</sup>

D. K. McRae, editor of the Raleigh Confederate, learned of Graham's proposal to withdraw North Carolina troops, and confronted Vance to learn whether or not he was considering the proposal. Vance replied:

I have no thought of such a thing, nor is any such thing contemplated. I mean to stand on Confederate soil as long as there is ground enough to pirouette on one toe, and under the Confederate flag while there is a flag left to flutter in the breeze.<sup>43</sup>

Leading the advance of the Union army was a detachment of the Fifteenth Corps. Straying temporarily from the road to Fayetteville, this detachment conducted a raid on Laurinburg, located five miles from Laurel Hill. In Laurinburg, the Union troops wasted little time in destroying the buildings

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<sup>41</sup>Richard E. Yates, "Governor Vance and the End of the War in North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, XVIII (October, 1941), 324, hereinafter cited as Yates, "Governor Vance."

<sup>42</sup>Yates, "Governor Vance," p. 324.

<sup>43</sup>Yates, "Governor Vance," p. 325.

at the railroad depot, as well as one locomotive engine. Mike Cranby, a citizen of Laurinburg, was robbed of ninety-thousand dollars in Confederate currency. A warehouse owned by Cranby filled with a large quantity of goods that had recently been shipped from Wilmington was burned.<sup>44</sup>

Learning that the Union troops were marching toward Laurinburg, slaves in the vicinity conducted secret meetings in an effort to gain their freedom. They decided that when the Federals neared the town, they would join together and march towards the Union lines. White citizens of Laurinburg learned of the plot before it could be carried out, however, and the home guard broke into one of the secret meetings. Twenty-five of the slaves were convicted and sentenced to hang.<sup>45</sup>

On March 9, General Sherman, escorted by his staff, crossed over and joined the Fifteenth Corps. Late in the afternoon a heavy rainstorm erupted, causing Sherman to seek refuge in a local church. Inside the church, soldiers prepared a bed of carpet for Sherman to sleep on in front of the altar. Sherman refused to sleep on the carpet: "That's for some of you younger fellows. I'm used to hard sleeping." He than lay down on a pew for the night.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Raleigh Conservative, April 12, 1865.

<sup>45</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 135.

<sup>46</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 208.

The heavy rains continued throughout the night, causing the roads to become nearly impassable. This slowed Sherman's progress, as much of the following day was spent corduroying the roads.

This delay in the march also allowed the foragers more time with which to loot and destroy private dwellings. One lady living along the Fayetteville road had learned of Sherman's advance into the area and had taken precautions to resist the foragers. Foodstuffs were buried at different locations around the yard, and the silverware was sewed under the hoopskirts of the ladies.<sup>47</sup>

Foragers appeared at the plantation later that afternoon. Frightened, the lady invited the foragers to have supper with her. They refused the invitation and began looting the house. When darkness fell, the Federals claimed that they needed a light by which to see, so they set fire to the house, and stood by until it had burned to the point where it could not be extinguished. The lady became so infuriated that she ran into the house, sat down at the piano, and began to play Dixie. She was pulled from the house just prior to the collapsing of the walls.<sup>48</sup>

During this segment of the march, some of the foragers

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<sup>47</sup>Mrs. Andrew J. Howell, "Sherman's March Through North Carolina," Prize Essays (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Co., 1941), 112, hereinafter cited as Howell, "Sherman's March."

<sup>48</sup>Howell, "Sherman's March," 113

received justice for their misdeeds. Four foragers, marching along the Fayetteville road, encountered three men dressed in the uniforms of the Union army. Supposing that they were Union soldiers, the foragers began to brag about their recent deeds, including accounts of women they had frightened and the valuables they had stolen. After listening to their boasting, the three soldiers ordered the foragers to surrender. The foragers quickly drew their pistols, but not in sufficient time, as the soldiers fired, killing all four of the foragers. The three soldiers were not members of the Union army; instead they were three Confederate scouts dressed in Union uniforms.<sup>49</sup>

During his march to Fayetteville, Kilpatrick discovered from Confederate prisoners that General Wade Hampton's cavalry was somewhere in his rear. Consulting a map and determining that Hampton's cavalry could be advancing on any of three different roads in the area, Kilpatrick placed each of his brigades in the corner of a triangle which would block the Confederate march and also allow the brigades to assist one another in the event they were attacked.

A May, 1861 graduate of West Point, Kilpatrick was commissioned captain of volunteers immediately after joining the army, and swiftly climbed through the ranks. He joined

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<sup>49</sup>Howell, "Sherman's March," 113.

Sherman during the march to the sea, and was promoted to major general shortly afterward.

Although having a reputation as a hard fighter and brilliant commander, the twenty-nine year old Kilpatrick also earned a reputation for his passion for members of the opposite sex. One of his prisoners, H. Clay Reynolds, a member of Hampton's cavalry, was forced to march alongside Kilpatrick's carriage, where he had the opportunity to view the general's actions. Reynolds was appalled at what he saw; when Kilpatrick would return to the carriage after making his rounds among his men, he would lay down with his head resting in the lap of Marie Boozer, his beautiful companion whom he had met in Columbia, South Carolina.<sup>50</sup>

Kilpatrick's command encamped at Monroe's Crossroads, also known as Solemn Grove, at 9:00 p.m. on March 9. Headquarters were established in the home of Charles Monroe, with the wagons and artillery being parked in the yard.

While Kilpatrick's forces were in the process of preparing camp for the night, Confederate cavalry was approaching their location. The Confederate cavalry consisted of General Matthew Calbiarth Butler's division, with Captain M. B.

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<sup>50</sup> Reynolds also noticed that a French chef was traveling with the Union cavalry and was in charge of preparing Kilpatrick's meals. The mess wagons were loaded with gourmet foods intended for Kilpatrick's table, including wine, spices, coffee, beans, and sugar.



Humphrey's Sixth South Carolina Cavalry serving as the advance guard for the column, and General Wheeler's division bringing up the rear. While these troops were moving toward the Union encampment, General Hampton's troops maintained light skirmishing with the enemy to disguise the movement.

About dusk that evening, Humphrey's command halted at the intersection of one of the roads leading to Fayetteville when he noticed a small detachment of Union cavalymen riding towards them. General Butler, upon learning from Humphrey that he had no pickets situated in the direction of the enemy advance, rode down the road until he met the Union cavalry. He called out to the cavalry: "Who comes there?" The reply was: "Fifth Kentucky." Recognizing that the cavalry unit was a part of Kilpatrick's command, Butler ordered the officer at the head of the column to ride up and speak with him. The Union officer, assuming that Butler was a Union officer, complied.<sup>51</sup> The unsuspecting Union officer and his orderly rode with Butler into the midst of Humphrey's command, during which time Butler drew his pistol and demanded the surrender of the two soldiers. After disarming them, Butler ordered Humphrey to surround the Fifth Kentucky.

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<sup>51</sup>Fayetteville Observer, June 16, 1963.

Humphrey's men followed the order, capturing the remaining twenty-eight soldiers without firing a shot.

Following this capture of Union troopers, a Union officer accidentally rode into Confederate lines and was taken to Butler. In questioning him, Butler discovered the location of Kilpatrick's headquarters. At midnight, Butler and his men scouted Kilpatrick's encampment, and discovered that no pickets had been posted to the Union rear.

At 1:00 a.m., General Thomas J. Jordan, whose brigade of Union cavalry was posted on the southernmost road leading to Fayetteville, was informed of a large Confederate force moving by his position on a road approximately two and one-half miles away. General Smith Atkins' brigade was also outflanked and separated from the Third Brigade, thus isolating Kilpatrick from his other two brigades while leaving him with his weakest brigade.<sup>52</sup>

With the information provided by Butler's reconnaissance, the Confederate cavalry leaders began to plan their attack upon Kilpatrick. The first phase of the attack was to begin at dawn, when Butler was to move his brigade around a swamp protecting the right and rear of the Union camp and attack from the west. A Captain Bostick of Young's Brigade was to

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<sup>52</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 126.

attempt to enter the Union camp during the attack and proceed directly to the Monroe house in an attempt to capture Kilpatrick. He was instructed to surround the Monroe house and remain there until reinforcements arrived. Wheeler was to advance through the woods and attack from the rear.<sup>53</sup>

At dawn on March 10, the Confederate cavalry advanced in the direction of Kilpatrick's headquarters. They charged directly into the camp, surprising the sleeping Union soldiers. General Butler had not advanced far into the enemy camp when he was met by approximately one hundred forty Confederate soldiers charging in his direction. Butler's first thought was that the charge made by Colonel Gid Wright, commander of Young's brigade, had been repulsed, but soon learned that the soldiers were prisoners taken by Kilpatrick that had been freed by Wright's men.

The sudden cavalry attack surprised Kilpatrick's troops, many of whom were sleeping only in their underwear. They immediately scattered in all directions, many of them fleeing to the swamp. Several of the men grabbed their rifles and attempted to fight the attacking Confederates, but were forced to retreat.

Kilpatrick was also surprised to hear shots firing

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<sup>53</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 126.

amidst the rebel yells emitted by the Confederates.<sup>54</sup> Forced to leave the bed he had shared for the night with Marie Boozer, Kilpatrick stepped onto the front porch of the Monroe house to see what was happening. When he realized that the Confederates were attacking, he thought: "My God, four years of hard fighting and a Major General's commission gone up in four minutes."<sup>55</sup>

Kilpatrick was observed by a Confederate cavalryman, who seeing him in his nightshirt assumed that he was an ordinary soldier. The Confederate soldier asked him if he had seen General Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick pointed to a soldier riding away and stated: "There he goes on that black horse." The Confederate took off in pursuit of the other soldier, while Kilpatrick mounted his horse and hastily rode away in the opposite direction, toward the swamp.

While the Confederate attack was taking place, Marie Boozer became frightened and ran outside during the midst of the firing. Seeing the carriage in which she and Kilpatrick had ridden the previous day she ran toward it, but then realized that there were no horses attached to pull it.

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<sup>54</sup> John W. Rowell, Yankee Cavalrymen (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 232, hereinafter cited as Rowell, Yankee Cavalrymen.

<sup>55</sup> Davis, Sherman's March, 212.

Captain Sam Pegues of the Third Alabama noticed Boozer in her distress, prompting him to go to her aid and carry her to the safety of a nearby ditch, where she remained until the fighting had ended.<sup>56</sup>

After driving most of the Federals from their camp, Wheeler ordered his men to take possession of the Union artillery and wagons. While carrying out those orders, the Confederates continued to fight, as the retreating Federals continued their fire until they gained refuge in the swamp. While this final segment of fighting took place, a shell landed near the Union artillery, causing a mule to panic and fall into the Monroe well.<sup>57</sup>

Suddenly the Confederate attack ended almost as quickly as it had begun, as they stopped to plunder. This gave Kilpatrick time with which to organize his men located in the swamp. The officer in command of the artillery, along with two members of his command, crept to the location where the Confederates were attempting to harness the guns. They succeeded in unlimbering one of the loaded guns. They aimed the gun in the direction of the Confederates and fired a charge into a group of them only twenty yards away. The

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<sup>56</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 213.

<sup>57</sup>Fayetteville Observer, October 8, 1961.

Confederates fell back in mass confusion, giving the Union cavalry the opportunity to move out of the swamp and form a line of defense in front of the recaptured artillery.<sup>58</sup>

After this line of defense had been established, the Federals began to attack the Confederate position, which responded with heavy fire. The firing continued at this location until about 8:00 a.m., when a brigade of Federal Infantry under General J. G. Mitchell of the Fourteenth Corps came to the assistance of Kilpatrick, having been encamped a short distance away on the plank road to Fayetteville. Realizing that Union reinforcements had arrived, the Confederates withdrew.

In his official report, Kilpatrick claimed that the Confederates were eager to plunder and thus failed to follow up their attack. Butler, however, offered a different explanation. According to Butler, Colonel Wright's men had become widely scattered during the initial assault. Butler called back for General Evander M. Law to take possession of the Union camp. Butler then discovered that General Hampton had ordered Law to proceed to some other location, and his messenger had been unable to reach him.

While looking for Law's command, General Wheeler approached Butler, who was escorted by his staff. Wheeler

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<sup>58</sup>Fayetteville Observer, November 15, 1939.

inquired as to the condition of Butler's command, to which Butler replied: "Scattered like the devil; where is yours?" Wheeler replied that he had confronted a swamp through which his division could not pass, forcing him to proceed around the swamp, whereby he was unable to carry out his assault to the rear.

Casualty reports for this engagement, known as the skirmish at Monroe's Crossroads, are conflicting. Kilpatrick reported that four officers of his command were killed, as were fifteen soldiers. Seven officers were wounded and sixty-one soldiers were severely wounded with several others suffering slight wounds. One hundred and three soldiers were captured. He also reported that more than eighty Confederates were killed, including many officers, and that a large number were wounded. Thirty Confederates were captured, as were one hundred fifty horses with their equipment.<sup>59</sup>

Wheeler reported that he captured more than three hundred fifty prisoners.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Confederates were unable to capture Kilpatrick or rout the Union forces in this battle, they achieved some

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<sup>59</sup>H. J. Kilpatrick to E. B. Beaumont, April 5, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 862.

<sup>60</sup>J. Wheeler to J. B. Johnston, March 23, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 1130.

success. Besides gaining a morale victory, the Confederates succeeded in opening the road to Fayetteville, which the Union cavalry had blocked, thus allowing the Confederate cavalry to go to the assistance of General Hardee, who was in Fayetteville. Also, the Confederates succeeded in delaying Kilpatrick's advance toward Fayetteville, thus giving Hardee more time with which to successfully withdraw his command from Fayetteville.



## THE OCCUPATION OF FAYETTEVILLE

The city of Fayetteville was one of the Union army's primary targets during its march through North Carolina. By taking Fayetteville, Sherman sought to open communications with the other sectors of the Union army, as he had not been in contact with them since he had left Savannah. Located upon the Cape Fear River, Fayetteville was situated approximately eighty-five miles from Wilmington where General Terry was positioned, thus giving Sherman access to him via riverboat.

The citizens of Fayetteville were ardent supporters of the Confederate cause, despite the dislike of many of them for Jefferson Davis. As strong supporters of the war, the citizens had done more than their share of supporting the Confederacy from the time that North Carolina seceded from the United States. As early as May, 1861, a group of boys between the ages of sixteen and eighteen formed a battalion of independent guards to assist in the war effort. Mayor Archibald McLean helped to promote this activity, lobbying state officials in an attempt to secure arms, ammunition, and uniforms for them. Fayetteville's older citizens also encouraged the youths to fight for the cause of southern independence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald McLean to Warren Winslow, May 15, 1861, Civil War Military Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

The raising of companies within the city was not limited to the youth. One citizen requested that the state authorize him to raise a company of mulattoes for Confederate service. He reported that there were between fifty and one hundred able bodied mulattoes in Fayetteville that at the present were "unemployed and lurking about town."<sup>2</sup> This company was raised and enrolled in the Confederate army.

North Carolina's Governor Zebulon Vance personally recognized Fayetteville for its support given to both the state and Confederate government. In a letter dated March 7, 1865, Vance said that no town in the Confederacy had assisted the needy and suffering during impoverished times as had Fayetteville.<sup>3</sup>

Fearful of a Union attack up the Cape Fear during the early stages of the war, the citizens of Fayetteville met and made preparations for the defense of the town. One questionable defensive action devised was that of collecting several barrels of spirits of turpentine and placing them on convenient spots on both sides of the Cape Fear. If the Union forces were to approach the city via the river,

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<sup>2</sup>T. J. Mines to Warren Winslow, June 10, 1861, Civil War Military Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin Robinson to Zebulon Vance, March 7, 1865, Civil War Military Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History; Fayetteville North Carolina Presbyterian, March 8, 1865.

the barrels would be emptied into the water and set on fire, thus blocking their path. This plan, however, was never put into action.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the steps taken by the citizens of Fayetteville to defend the town against a Union attack, the town was not invaded until March, 1865. The Confederates were the first to enter Fayetteville, with a portion of Hardee's troops entering the town on March 8.<sup>5</sup> This force was small, consisting mostly of officers and their staffs, along with a few scattered detachments. The bulk of the Confederates entered Fayetteville the following day, March 9. The Confederate troops were preceded by a group of Union prisoners under guard who were equipped with tools to repair the roads that had been made impassable by heavy rains so that the Confederate army could travel upon them with little hinderance. After they repaired the roads, the artillery moved in, followed closely by the infantry.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Josephine Bryan Worth, "Setting the River on Fire," Civil War Military Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>5</sup>Josephine Bryan Worth, "Sherman's Raid." War Days in Fayetteville, North Carolina. (Fayetteville: Judge Printing Company, 1910), 46, hereinafter cited as Worth, "Sherman's Raid."

<sup>6</sup>Worth, "Sherman's Raid," 46.

Although Hardee's troops were ragged, they were eagerly welcomed by the citizens of Fayetteville, and were supplied with whatever food was available.<sup>7</sup> Local women became cooks for the soldiers, baking biscuits and sacrificing their chickens.<sup>8</sup>

After establishing position in Fayetteville, Hardee decided to burn the Clarendon bridge which spanned the Cape Fear. Reportedly the only bridge crossing the river between Fayetteville and Wilmington, the decision was made in an effort to slow the Union advance. Unfortunately, for the approaching Union forces, the Cape Fear was at flood stage due to heavy spring rains. As such, the order was given by Hardee to soak the bridge with rosin so that it could be set afire following an evacuation of the city by Confederate troops.

On March 11, several columns of Union infantry began to approach Fayetteville. That morning, General Howard sent his chief scout, Captain William Duncan, with a force to reconnoiter Fayetteville. This mission coincided with the withdrawal of the Confederate forces from the city. General Wheeler's cavalry was left behind to cover the retreat.

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<sup>7</sup>Alice Campbell, "Return of the Bethel Heroes," War Days in Fayetteville, North Carolina, 31, hereinafter cited as Campbell, "Return of the Bethel Heroes."

<sup>8</sup>Sarah Ann Tillinghast to Mary ?, "Memoirs of Sarah Ann Tillinghast," 8, unpublished manuscript in the North Carolina Collection, Anderson Street Library, Fayetteville, North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Tillinghast, "Memoirs."

Upon reaching the city, Duncan was surprised to find that there were no pickets. Deciding that the Confederates had withdrawn, Duncan led his group into Fayetteville.<sup>9</sup>

As Duncan's men were entering the city, General Hampton, along with Hugh Scott, a member of his cavalry, was eating breakfast in the downtown hotel. Upon finishing his breakfast, Scott left the hotel and immediately heard shots. Simultaneously he saw members of Wheeler's cavalry hastily retreating down the street, firing at rapidly approaching Union horsemen.<sup>10</sup> Hampton also heard the shots, and scurried into the street in an attempt to rally the retreating troopers. Scott approached Hampton and said: "General, there are not over ten or fifteen Yankees here. Give me four or five men and I will whip them out of town." Hampton replied: "You scouts follow me, and I will lead this charge."<sup>11</sup>

Hampton rallied three members of his cavalry detachment that were in the vicinity, along with one of Wheeler's men that did not retreat. These six men on horseback charged the advancing Federal forces with success, despite being outnumbered more than ten to one. The Federals retired

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<sup>9</sup>Gibson, "Those 163 Days," 201.

<sup>10</sup>Manly Wade Wellman, Giant in Gray, A Biography of Wade Hampton of South Carolina (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 173, hereinafter cited as Wellman, Giant in Gray.

<sup>11</sup>Wellman, Giant in Gray, 174.

towards the Clarendon bridge. Before crossing, however, they spread out, appearing to have surrounded Hampton's small force. Hampton then ordered his men to be still and to pick the Union soldiers off one by one.<sup>12</sup> This they did, killing thirteen of the Union soldiers and prompting the remainder of the party to retreat. The Confederates then charged the retreating Federals, capturing twelve, including Duncan and David Day, a Union spy.

There were no Confederate casualties during this skirmish. However, one of the horses ridden during the charge was shot, with the bullet entering its chest and emerging behind its girth. Despite being wounded, the horse continued to carry its rider through the charge, and died after it had been completed.<sup>13</sup>

The Union soldiers that escaped returned to Howard's lines south of the city. Major General G. A. Smith, commander of the Fourth Division, sent approximately two hundred cavalrymen into Fayetteville in an effort to rescue the captured soldiers. They arrived too late, however, as the Confederates had already departed with their prisoners.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Wellman, Giant in Gray, 174.

<sup>13</sup>Wellman, Giant in Gray, 174.

<sup>14</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 202.

Hampton had not left the city, however, and was sitting on his horse beside the Market House in the downtown area. A Union soldier suddenly came around the corner of Russell Street south of the Market House, and recognizing Hampton fired at him, but missed. Hampton also fired his pistol at the Union soldier, wounding him fatally. Realizing that more Union troops had entered the city, Hampton left by way of the Clarendon Bridge, after which it was set on fire.<sup>15</sup>

The Union cavalry sent by Smith continued to advance into Fayetteville, firing at scattered Confederate stragglers from Wheeler's cavalry. The Federal troops, taking cover behind the breastworks forming the outer defense of the Fayetteville arsenal, exchanged fire with the remaining Confederates. One Federal soldier wandered from behind the breastworks into the line of fire. A Confederate soldier immediately rode up and took him prisoner in front of the Federals, who were afraid to open fire out of fear of hitting their comrade.<sup>16</sup>

Hearing shots, another straggling column of Confederate cavalry rode toward the arsenal to investigate. But warned by local residents that Union troops were behind the breastworks, the Confederates formed in single file and retired,

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<sup>15</sup>John A. Oates, The Story of Fayetteville (Charlotte: Dowd Press, 1950), 418, hereinafter cited as Oates, Fayetteville.

<sup>16</sup>Worth, "Sherman's Raid," 49.

with each soldier firing his pistol in the direction of the Federals upon turning a street corner.<sup>17</sup> These soldiers were the last of the Confederates to leave Fayetteville. They rode to the Clarendon Bridge only to see that it was burning; they then turned and rode north, fording the river four miles upstream, and joined the remainder of Hardee's forces on the Averasboro Road.

General Hardee had expected the Federal troops to enter Fayetteville from the north, and had ordered a series of breastworks be erected in that direction along the Raleigh road. These breastworks were not needed, however, as Sherman entered Fayetteville from the south.<sup>18</sup>

Local residents had assumed that Sherman's troops would bypass Fayetteville. Instead, they thought that the Union army would march toward Charlotte after leaving Columbia. They became nervous with the capture of Fort Fisher and Wilmington, and increasingly alarmed as Sherman advanced daily in the direction of Fayetteville.<sup>19</sup> Some people took the news with a carefree attitude; others busied themselves making preparation for the battle that they considered inevitable,

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<sup>17</sup>Worth, "Sherman's Raid," 49.

<sup>18</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 415.

<sup>19</sup>Tillinghause, "Memoirs," 5.



hiding provisions and valuables. The people had heard rumors of Sherman's notorious "bummers." One family killed a hog the day prior to the Union arrival, butchered it, and packed the meat in a box. The meat was then hidden in a nearby swamp.<sup>20</sup> Family members themselves buried the meat, not trusting the servants to conceal the identity of the location. The family had been informed that the bummers would put pistols to the heads of the Negroes and force them to reveal where foodstuffs and valuables were hidden.<sup>21</sup>

In order to protect their valuables from Union foragers, several of the residents concealed their valuables in glass jars that were buried. Most of these jars were recovered when the Union army left Fayetteville, with the exception of those found by "bummers," frequently the result of Black informers.<sup>22</sup>

The bulk of Sherman's forces were in Fayetteville by March 11, 1865. The entry of his army into the city was in marked contrast to the entrance of the Confederate army three days earlier. The ragged Confederates had entered the city in a disciplined manner, while the Union forces invaded Fayetteville with a conquering spirit.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Tillinghaust, "Memoirs," 10.

<sup>21</sup>Tillinghaust, "Memoirs," 12.

<sup>22</sup>Tillinghaust, "Memoirs," 12.

<sup>23</sup>Campbell, "Return of the Bethel Heroes," 31.

Most of the Union forces entered Fayetteville in an uncontrollable manner. Martha Graham, a 22-year old slave at the time, recalls the entrance of the Union army into Fayetteville:

They (the Yankees) came from everywhere but up out of the ground and down out of the sky. They took all the corn from the crib and the things we had stored. When they left, we didn't have nothing. We had chickens before they came. After they left I didn't see another chicken for a long time.

While the Union army was marching through the streets of Fayetteville, the local residents ventured out of their homes to watch the parade with fearful eyes. The first band to march through played "Dixie," the Confederate national anthem.<sup>24</sup> That was more than the residents could bear, as many of them began to weep openly in the streets. One Union soldier, Lieutenant McVeagh, noticed a group of women crying and tried to comfort them.<sup>25</sup> Such acts of kindness by Union soldiers were few, however, as foragers wasted little time in collecting booty from the citizens. To those that had taken the precaution to hide their belongings there were few losses, but those that failed to take such precautions suffered much more heavily.

The foragers immediately began to ravage individual dwellings. In entering homesites, foragers occasionally ignored the gates. Instead, they tore the pailings off the

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<sup>24</sup>Worth, "Sherman's Raid," 50.

<sup>25</sup>Worth, "Sherman's Raid," 50.

fences and sped toward the houses.<sup>26</sup> In one home, the cook was busy preparing a meal when foragers entered the house. A soldier speared a ham with his bayonet out of the pot in which it was being cooked. The soldier then went outside and, with his companions, killed a pig, quartered it, and carried it off hanging on their bayonets.<sup>27</sup>

Fayetteville was unable to escape the wrath of the Union army. Many homes and other buildings were burned, including factories, warehouses, banks, and stores. The First regiment of Michigan engineers was apparently responsible for the vast majority of incendiaries.<sup>28</sup>

Sherman also destroyed buildings housing the city's two newspapers, the Fayetteville Observer, and the North Carolina Presbyterian.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the Civil War, the Fayetteville Observer had been a strong voice for the Whig platform. The editor, Edward Jones Hale, opposed secession, speaking out strongly against it in his editorials. His position changed, however, when President Lincoln issued a call for North Carolina troops, after which the Observer became a staunch

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<sup>26</sup>Tillinghaust, "Memoirs," 19.

<sup>27</sup>Tillinghaust, "Memoirs," 19.

<sup>28</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 399.

<sup>29</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 139.

supporter of the Confederacy.<sup>30</sup> This sentiment irritated northerners, who regarded the newspaper as one of the seeds of rebellion. Union sentiment was so strong against the Observer that it was one of the first buildings in Fayetteville to be burned.

Sunday, March 12, was a quiet day in Fayetteville. The majority of its citizens were descendants of Scotch highlanders who piously observed the Sabbath. There was also little activity within the Union army. The soldiers spent the day resting and recuperating from the rigors imposed during their march from Savannah.

Shortly after noon, the shrill whistle of a steamboat was heard down the river. The steamboat, Davidson, which had departed from Wilmington at 2:00 p.m. the previous day, docked at Fayetteville amidst the cheers of thousands of jubilant soldiers lining the river banks.<sup>31</sup> The arrival of the Davidson confirmed to Sherman that Corporal Pike and the other scout had succeeded in reaching Wilmington, where they had delivered his message to General Terry. Sherman was pleased with the arrival of the Davidson, as it was the first contact his army had had with the rest of the U. S. Army since leaving Savannah two months earlier.

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<sup>30</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 139.

<sup>31</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 205.

Ensign Charles Ainsworth, the commander of the Davidson, went to Sherman's headquarters immediately after docking, carrying with him a sack of mail from General Terry. A short conference followed, during which the two men discussed the condition of the Cape Fear, as it was at flood stage level due to recent heavy rains.<sup>32</sup> Sherman then ordered Ainsworth to prepare to leave for Wilmington at 6:00 that evening.

Sherman ordered General Howard to send some of the camp followers to Wilmington on the Davidson in an effort to retain more food and supplies for the use of his soldiers. He also prepared letters for Generals Grant, Terry, and Halleck, as well as Secretary of War Stanton.<sup>33</sup> In his dispatch to Terry, Sherman requested that clothing and foodstuffs be shipped to Fayetteville.<sup>34</sup> He also wrote:

I am delighted that General Sheridan is slashing away with his column of cavalry. He will be a disturbing element in the grand and beautiful game of war, and if he reaches me I'll make all North Carolina howl. I will make him a deed of every gift horse in the state, to be settled for at the day of judgement.<sup>35</sup>

That night, three Union officers arrived in Fayetteville. Sent by General Terry to determine if Fayetteville could be successfully reached by land, these officers made the journey

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<sup>32</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 295.

<sup>33</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 296.

<sup>34</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 298.

<sup>35</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 298.

from Wilmington on foot, avoiding the Confederates by traveling through swamps and secondary roads.<sup>36</sup>

On Monday morning, March 13, the Davidson arrived in Fayetteville for the second time, carrying General George S. Dodge, the Chief Quartermaster in Wilmington. He informed Sherman that the Union forces stationed in Wilmington were unable to supply his request for clothing. Instead they had sent small quantities of sugar, oats, and coffee.<sup>37</sup>

Two Union gunboats under the command of Captain George W. Young followed the Davidson from Fayetteville. These gunboats, along with two captured Confederate steamboats, the Hurt and the Carolina, were ordered to patrol the Cape Fear as long as the water level would permit.<sup>38</sup>

Several transports later arrived from Wilmington. These were used to carry many of the Black camp followers to Wilmington. These refugees, which had followed the march of the Union army from Savannah, slowed the progress of the army and consumed many of its supplies. Troops under the command of General Howard loaded 4,500 men, women, and children onto the transports which took them to Wilmington.

The transports were also used to ship much of the loot collected by the "bummers" during the march from Savannah.

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<sup>36</sup>Nichols, Story of the Great March, 250.

<sup>37</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 299.

<sup>38</sup>Raleigh Conservative, March 15, 1865.

to Fayetteville. In Wilmington, the confiscated goods were immediately loaded on a ship bound for New York. Many of the Confederate citizens were relieved when they learned that the ship carrying these goods burned before reaching its destination.<sup>39</sup>

As all of the Black refugees could not be transported down the Cape Fear, Sherman made arrangements for the remainder of them to travel to Wilmington over land. Major John Wilson with two hundred troops of the 116th Illinois Infantry was ordered to escort the refugees.<sup>40</sup> This was done for two reasons; to have more supplies available to the army, as the refugees consumed many of the army's supplies, and to disencumber the army in the event it was attacked during the remainder of the march.

One of the primary objects of Sherman during his march was the Confederate arsenal, which was located in Fayetteville. The arsenal manufactured guns and ammunition for the Confederate war effort. By destroying the arsenal, Sherman could further weaken the battle worn Confederates.

The Fayetteville arsenal had been established in 1836 when Congress appropriated funds for four additional Federal arsenals. These were in addition to the nineteen Federal

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<sup>39</sup>Jones, When Sherman Came, 273.

<sup>40</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, 300.

arsenals already in existence. The bill appropriating funds for the new arsenals was introduced by J. Iver McKay, who resided in Bladen County, North Carolina.<sup>41</sup> It was through his efforts that one of the four arsenals was located in Fayetteville.

The national government purchased forty acres of property in Fayetteville for the arsenal site in the fall of 1836. The land selected was in the Haymount section in the western sector of the town. This site was considered to be safer than a site on the Cape Fear River, due to health problems such as malaria caused by locating in the marshy areas next to a river.<sup>42</sup> The site for the arsenal was chosen by Captain James A. Bradford, who would later serve as its commander. During the following two decades, the arsenal property expanded to more than ninety acres, purchased in twenty-one separate lots.<sup>43</sup>

William Bell, an architect from Scotland with a national reputation in the United States, was hired by the government to design the proposed arsenal.<sup>44</sup> The cornerstone was laid

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<sup>41</sup>Thomas W. Belton, "A History of the Fayetteville Arsenal and Armory." Unpublished master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 1979, 9, hereinafter cited as Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal."

<sup>42</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 10.

<sup>43</sup>The North Carolina Arsenal (2 volumes, Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1973), II, 316, hereinafter cited as The North Carolina Arsenal.

<sup>44</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 280.



April 19, 1838, and construction began shortly afterward. Local craftsmen were hired to do much of the construction work, and materials for construction were manufactured within the Fayetteville area, including brick, stone, and timber.<sup>45</sup>

When completed, the arsenal was one of the most handsome structures in Fayetteville. It was built in a square shape, five hundred feet on each of the four sides, with two story, hexagonal towers at each of the corners.<sup>46</sup> The main building, located in the center of the complex, was a storehouse for manufactured arms. Barracks were located within the structure to house officers and enlisted personnel.<sup>47</sup> A building housing a laboratory for the testing of ammunition was located outside the arsenal walls, along with two storage magazines.<sup>48</sup>

The arsenal was originally located in Fayetteville because there was a widespread belief that an extension of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad would be built there. This however, never materialized. Plank toll roads built in the

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<sup>45</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 280.

<sup>46</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 11.

<sup>47</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 11.

<sup>48</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 11.

1850's were prosperous, but could not compete with the railroads. Steamboat transportation on the Cape Fear from Fayetteville to Wilmington was slow and expensive. Due to these problems of transportation, the war department degraded the arsenal to the use of only one deposit, but did not abandon it because of the funds already spent.

In 1857 Congress called for the funding of machinery and tools for the Fayetteville Arsenal, with more than \$50,000 being appropriated. These items were installed by 1859. This funding was pushed through Congress by southern representatives who predicted secession and attempted to prepare for it.<sup>49</sup>

Due to John Brown's unsuccessful attempt to take over the Federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in 1859, the residents of Fayetteville became concerned that a similar situation could occur there. Mayor Archibald McLean requested that Federal troops be sent to Fayetteville to guard the arsenal against such an attempt. These troops, from Fort Hamilton, New York, arrived in Fayetteville on November 14, 1860, receiving an enthusiastic greeting from local citizens.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 15.

<sup>50</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 24.

Following the surrender of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, President Lincoln called for troops from North Carolina to assist the United States Army in defeating the Confederacy. North Carolina Governor John Ellis responded to Lincoln's call for troops by ordering aide Warren Winslow to negotiate for a peaceful surrender of the Fayetteville arsenal to the state of North Carolina.<sup>51</sup> General Walker Draughon, the commander of the state militia, was ordered to occupy the arsenal.<sup>52</sup>

The arsenal was vacated by U. S. troops on April 22, 1861. The Fayetteville Independent Company, a local militia unit, took over. This company had approximately thirty-five active members prior to the occupation of the arsenal. Two days following the order to seize the arsenal, its membership had expanded to more than a hundred men. These men, along with a number of local residents and dignitaries, marched to the arsenal and demanded its surrender. The Federal forces occupying the arsenal had no choice but to surrender, as they numbered only fifty men.<sup>53</sup> After occupying the arsenal, the

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<sup>51</sup>The North Carolina Arsenal, I, 195.

<sup>52</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 280.

<sup>53</sup>Melinda Ray Diary, entry for April 22, 1861, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, hereinafter cited as Melinda Ray Diary.

local forces lowered the flag from its staff. In its place, the Confederate flag was risen, and a fifteen gun salute was fired.<sup>54</sup>

Once in Confederate hands, the arsenal was put to use manufacturing much needed arms to outfit the Confederate army. These arms were important to the Confederacy, as hundreds of volunteers had been turned away each day due to a lack of sufficient arms. The Fayetteville arsenal was used for the manufacture of minnie rifles, ammunition, and bayonets, and could turn out approximately 500 rifles per month. The first Confederate rifle came off the assembly line in February, 1862.<sup>55</sup> In July 15, 1861, between fifty and sixty White women were employed at the arsenal to manufacture cartridges and minnie balls. By October, 1861, this number grew to 220 employees that made guns and changed outdated flint muskets to percussion muskets.<sup>56</sup>

A battalion of Confederate soldiers was stationed at the arsenal. Most of these soldiers, some 500 in number, had previously seen active duty. This detachment under the

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<sup>54</sup>The Fayetteville Observer, April 29, 1861.

<sup>55</sup>Belton, "Fayetteville Arsenal," 43.

<sup>56</sup>The Fayetteville Observer, October 21, 1861.

command of Lieutenant Colonel Francis S. Childs, and Major Matthew P. Taylor consisted of seven companies.<sup>57</sup> The battalion maintained a constant guard at the arsenal until Sherman's troops entered the city.

On March 14, Sherman's soldiers began to raze the buildings on the arsenal grounds. Discovering that the Confederates had earlier transported the arsenal's machinery and stores to Greensboro via the Egypt Coal Mine in Chatham County, Sherman ordered that the buildings be burned. In areas where the Confederates stored loaded shells that were not transported to Greensboro there were simultaneous explosions, creating the effect of a heavy artillery engagement, adding to the fear of the already frightened residents.<sup>58</sup>

Sherman stayed in Fayetteville for three days. Following the destruction of the arsenal, he decided to withdraw in the direction of Goldsboro in order to reassume his march to meet Schofield. However, the burning of the Clarendon bridge confronted him with a dilemma. It had been the only bridge in the vicinity crossing the Cape Fear, and the river was too swollen to ford due to the heavy rains that had plagued his army from the lowlands of South Carolina.

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<sup>57</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 282.

<sup>58</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 284.

Therefore, he ordered that temporary pontoon bridges be constructed. One bridge was constructed near the location of the ruins of the Clarendon bridge, while another was constructed about 3 miles further down the river.<sup>59</sup>

Upon leaving Fayetteville, the Union army marched only about three miles before going into camp. Several detachments of Union cavalry were ordered to continue up the Averasboro road and make a reconnaissance as far as Taylor's Hole Creek, approximately fifteen miles from Fayetteville. These detachments included the 55th Ohio, the 33rd Massachusetts, the 102nd Illinois Volunteers, and the 20th Connecticut Volunteers. Another detachment, including the 136th and 73rd Ohio, the 26th Wisconsin, and the 36th New York Volunteers, were ordered to follow the Goldsboro road to Great Creek.<sup>60</sup> The former detachment began its march along the Averasboro road, and after marching four miles met the enemy at Evon's Creek. Following a brief skirmish the Confederates withdrew.<sup>61</sup>

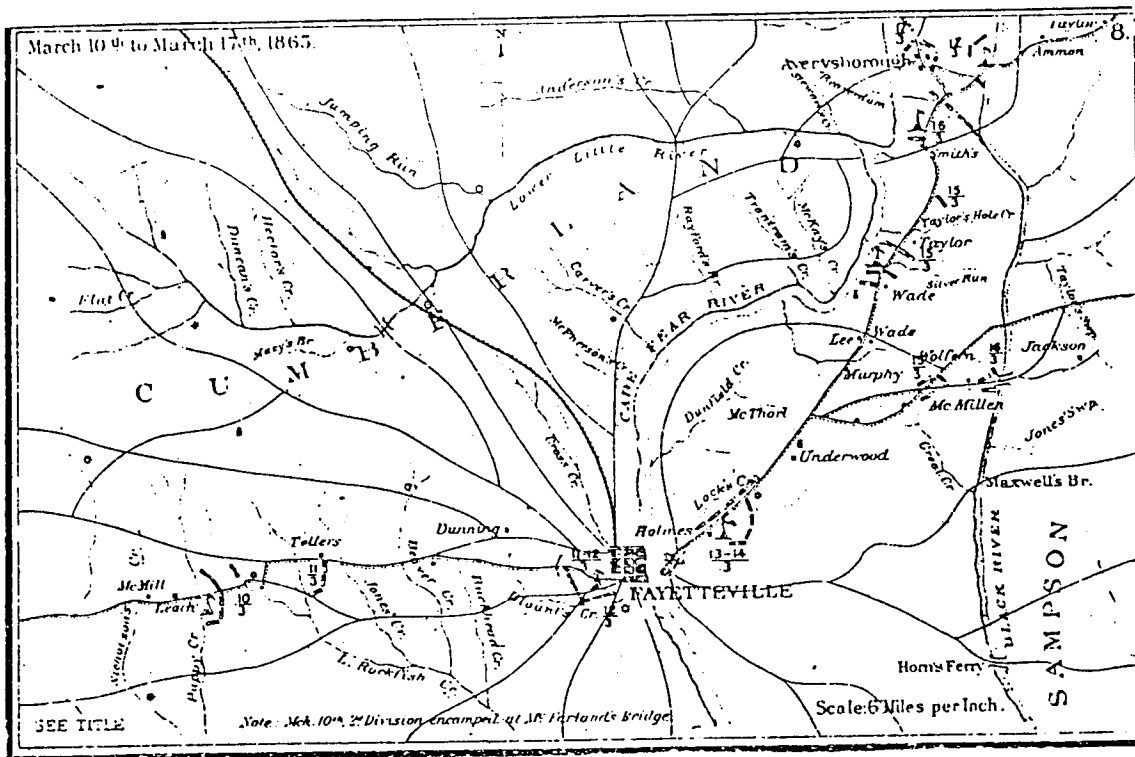
The Union cavalry continued moving towards Taylor's Hole

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<sup>59</sup>Oates, Fayetteville, 399.

<sup>60</sup>William Cogswell to John Speed, March 30, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 823.

<sup>61</sup>William Cogswell to John Speed, March 30, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 823.



THE MARCH OF THE UNION LEFT WING FROM FAYETTEVILLE TO AVERASBORO (from The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Plate LXXX)

Creek. They encountered no opposition until the eleven mile post, where the approaching troopers discovered a skirmish in progress between mounted Union foragers and about two hundred Confederate cavalrymen.<sup>62</sup> The cavalry units, however, were unable to join the battle as the bridge crossing a deep creek which separated them from the action had been destroyed.

After the skirmish had concluded, the Confederates retreated in the direction of Averasboro, allowing the Union soldiers to rebuild the bridge and cross the creek. After this was completed, Lieutenant Colonel Philo Buckingham, commander of the detachment, ordered Company D of the 20th Connecticut Volunteers forward as an advance guard, with instructions to deploy skirmishers across the road.

After advancing one mile, the Union cavalry once again came upon the Confederates, who were situated behind temporary works of rails constructed across the road. The Confederates briefly resisted before falling back to a more fortified position. Here they were reinforced by an additional force of cavalry. The Confederates also had a field piece which opened fire at the Union advance guard.<sup>63</sup> Lieutenant Colonel

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<sup>62</sup>George Johnson to Lester Wilson, March 31, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 775.

<sup>63</sup>Philo B. Buckingham to H. G. H. Tarr, March 15, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 836.



Buckingham ordered Company D of the 20th Connecticut Volunteers to halt and prepare for battle, and ordered the remainder of his force to assume a position to the right of the Averagesboro road. He then ordered the 102nd Illinois Volunteers to occupy the left side of the road, after which he ordered the skirmishers to advance.

Following a heavy but brief engagement, the Union forces succeeded in driving the Confederates to within one-quarter mile of Silver Run Creek. At that point the Confederates made their final stand of the day. They were reinforced by additional troops and additional pieces of artillery. Realizing that the Confederate numbers had increased, Buckingham reinforced his skirmish line with men from the right flank while sending other units to protect this left flank. The Union troops then attacked and drove the Confederates across Silver Run, where they took position behind earthworks.<sup>64</sup> Buckingham ordered that the advance be continued, while directing an attack upon the Confederate left flank. The Confederate force was strong enough to hold off the attacks, however, and the Union soldiers realized that they could not force the Confederates to withdraw from their position. Therefore, they withdrew and returned to camp.<sup>65</sup> This action,

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<sup>64</sup>Philo B. Buckingham to H. G. H. Tarr, March 15, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 837.

<sup>65</sup>Philo B. Buckingham to H. G. H. Tarr, March 15, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 836.

which lasted three hours, became known as the Silver Run Skirmish.

While this battle was going on, another military action was taking place a few miles away. The Union troops ordered to proceed to Great Creek were en route when within a few hundred yards of Black River they encountered a detachment of Confederate Cavalry led by General Wheeler. This detachment of Confederate cavalry had been scouting the area and was in the process of preparing to cross the Black River when it surprisingly came upon the Union troops.

The 55th Ohio, employed as skirmishers, advanced to the river and succeeded in forcing the Confederate cavalry to retire across the river. An engagement followed during which four pieces of Union artillery were brought up to fire on the Confederate position. As neither force could gain an advantage over the other, the Union cavalry withdrew and returned to its camp. Union casualties during the skirmish included one killed and one wounded.<sup>66</sup>

While the Fourteenth and Twentieth Corps were marching along the Averagesboro road, the Fifteenth and the Seventeenth Corps, under the command of General Henry Slocum, proceeded to march directly to Goldsboro via the town of Clinton.

This right wing of Sherman's army broke camp at Fayetteville

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<sup>66</sup>William Cogswell to John Speed, March 30, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 824.

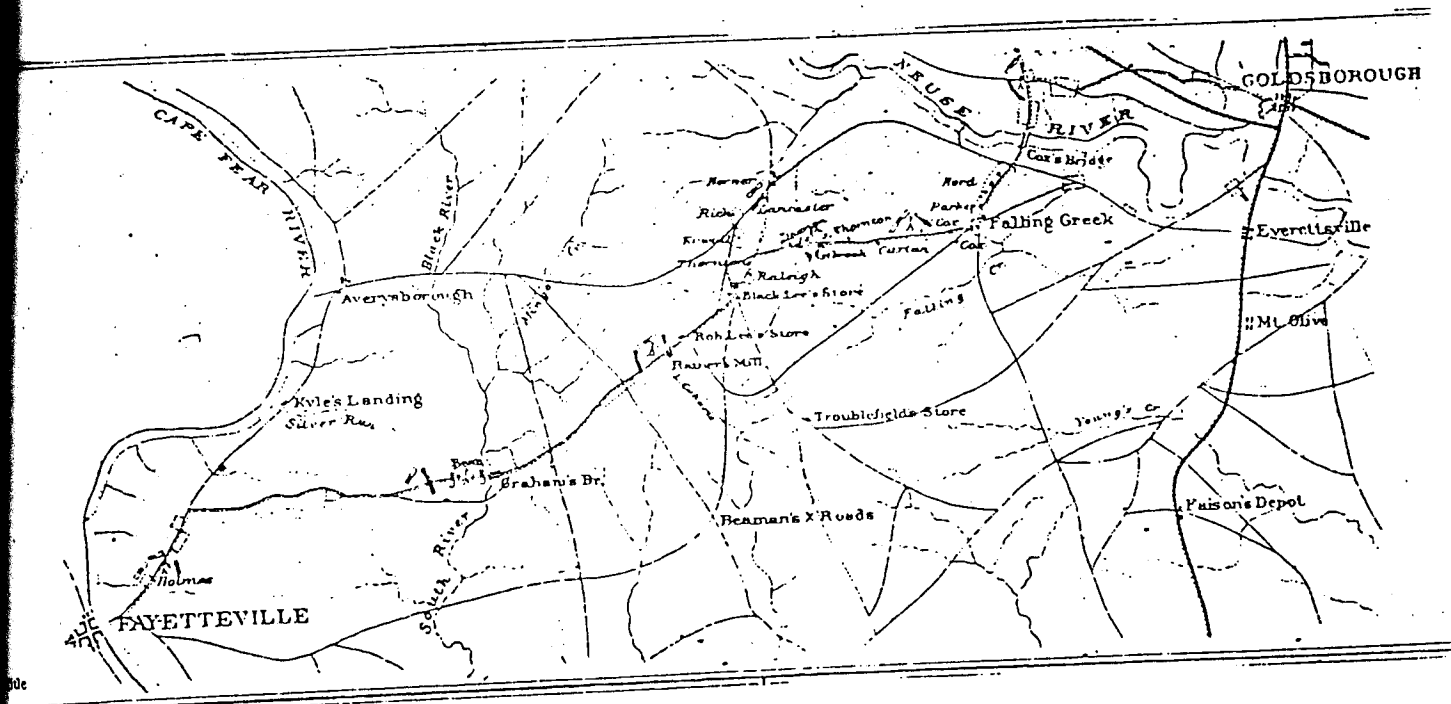
on March 14, 1865, and marched in the direction of South River, which they reached the following day. Here they discovered the Confederates established on the opposite bank of the river. The Confederates, under the command of General Butler, consisted mostly of cavalry supported by a few pieces of artillery. Prior to the arrival of the two corps, the Confederates removed the planking from the bridge crossing South River, and had thrown up breastworks.<sup>67</sup>

Determined to cross South River with as little delay as possible so that the right wing would reach Goldsboro simultaneously with the arrival of the left wing, General John Corse, commander of the Fourth Division, Fifteenth Corps, advanced skirmishers to engage the Confederates, while ordering the bulk of his forces to move to the left of the enemy and attempt to ford the swollen river. Union artillery was brought into action, and the left wing finally succeeded in making a lodgement on the opposite bank of South River. Meanwhile, the Confederates withdrew in the direction of Little Cohera Creek.<sup>68</sup> Corse then ordered his engineers to construct a new bridge to span South River.

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<sup>67</sup>John M. Corse to Max Woodhull, March 30, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 340.

<sup>68</sup>John M. Corse to Max Woodhull, March 30, 1865, Official Records (Army), Part I, XLVII, Series I, 340.



THE MARCH OF THE UNION RIGHT WING FROM FAYETTEVILLE TO GOLDSBORO (from The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Plate LXXXVI)

Due to their advantageous position on high ground overlooking South River, the Confederates expected few casualties. However, a Union soldier followed the course of the river beyond a bend to the east and climbed a tree, where he observed the Confederates behind their breastworks. At that point he became a sniper, succeeding in killing and wounding several of the Confederates before being discovered and killed.

Sherman's entire army had crossed the Cape Fear by March 15, with Goldsboro as its next destination. The Seventeenth Corps, followed by the Fifteenth Corps, marched along the right. These troops were under the command of General Henry W. Slocum. The Fourteenth and Twentieth Corps, commanded by General Oliver Howard, marched along the extreme left.

Sherman sought to confuse General Joseph Johnston by splitting his army at Fayetteville and making a mock advance toward Raleigh with the left wing of his army. This wing, numbering approximately 30,000, was to feint toward Raleigh while marching along the Averasboro road. The right wing marched toward Goldsboro on a parallel road approximately twenty miles to the east of the road to Averasboro.

Fayetteville suffered during the presence of Sherman's army, but escaped lightly when compared to the damage it caused in South Carolina. One reason may be that the Fourteenth Corps were the first to occupy Fayetteville. This

corps, being positioned along the extreme outside of the army, had not had the opportunity to capture a city, although it had endured as many of the hardships during the lengthy march as had the rest of the army. With Fayetteville being its first conquest, the soldiers of the Fourteenth Corps maintained strict order in an attempt to show the rest of the army how well they could behave.

Before leaving Fayetteville, Sherman ordered General Schofield at New Bern and General Terry at Wilmington to leave immediately with their troops for Goldsboro. If all went according to his plan, Sherman reasoned that the three armies should all meet there by March 20.

## THE BATTLE OF AVERASBORO

On February 23, 1865, in Lincolnton, North Carolina, General Joseph Johnston received a telegram from the Confederate government informing him to report for orders to General Robert E. Lee, who had been recently appointed general-in-chief of the Confederate States Army. Later that day, Johnston received a telegram from Lee ordering him to assume the command of the Army of Tennessee and all troops in the departments of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and to "concentrate all available forces and drive back Sherman."<sup>1</sup>

This reappointment to command came as a surprise to Johnston. Some seven months earlier, on July 17, 1864, he had been removed from the same command. This removal came as a result of his failing to arrest Sherman's advance on Atlanta, and for expressing a lack of confidence in his ability to defeat the Union army.<sup>2</sup>

Assuming that Sherman was marching toward Fayetteville, Johnston journeyed there to meet with generals Hardee and Hampton on March 8. During this meeting Johnston ordered Hardee to keep the movement of his troops in conformity with those of Sherman, following the Averasboro road running

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 371, hereinafter cited as Johnston, Narrative.

<sup>2</sup>Johnston, Narrative, 349.

between Fayetteville and Raleigh, which for thirty miles was also the road to Smithfield.<sup>3</sup> Hardee later began his march along this road following the Confederate withdrawal from Fayetteville.<sup>4</sup> His force was reduced when the South Caroling troops, numbering eleven hundred, were recalled to their home state.

Johnston also issued orders to General Braxton Bragg to take the troops of General S. D. Lee and General A. P. Stewart and unite with General Robert F. Hoke's command to attack General Schofield's troops in the vicinity of Kinston.<sup>5</sup> Bragg was then instructed to unite his command with Johnston at Smithfield to block Sherman.<sup>6</sup> It was obvious to Johnston that a failure to attack Sherman before he could combine his forces with those of Schofield and Terry would be the Confederates' last chance to successfully attack him.<sup>7</sup>

After reaching Fayetteville and making contact with Terry, Sherman learned of Johnston's restoration to command. Realizing that he could not easily fool Johnston, Sherman was aware that he must exercise great caution in his further movements.<sup>8</sup> He therefore accelerated his march toward

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<sup>3</sup>Johnston, Narrative, 382.

<sup>4</sup>Johnston, Narrative, 382.

<sup>5</sup>Cox, March to the Sea, 183.

<sup>6</sup>Cox, March to the Sea, 183.

<sup>7</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 299.

<sup>8</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 299.



Goldsboro so that Johnston would not have sufficient time with which to concentrate his forces.<sup>9</sup>

Sherman knew that Johnston would waste little time in preparing an attack, and predicted that such an attack would occur between Fayetteville and Goldsboro. In Goldsboro, Sherman's troops would be greatly strengthened by the addition of Schofield's and Terry's forces, which would increase his numbers to approximately ninety thousand.

Sherman's advance along the Averasboro road confronted Johnston with a dilemma. As Sherman's army had been divided in Fayetteville and was marching along two separate routes, Johnston aspired to attack one of the two wings and hopefully defeat it before the other wing could come to its assistance. Johnston's available forces numbered approximately twenty thousand, while each wing of Sherman's army contained nearly thirty thousand. Johnston would clearly have a much better chance of stopping Sherman if he attacked one wing instead of the combined Union army.

Johnston also desired to determine whether Sherman's destination was Goldsboro or Raleigh, and wanted to delay the advance of the left wing of the Union army, because each day it was delayed would greater separate the distance between it and right wing. Johnston's forces, however, were widely scattered. It would require time for the organization

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<sup>9</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 210.

of the various units of his command into an effective fighting force. With only fourteen thousand men at his disposal, Johnston needed time to allow Bragg's troops to reach Smithfield so that a sizeable army would confront Sherman. The only troops in position to delay Sherman's advance were those under the command of General Hardee, numbering approximately six thousand. With little time remaining with which to concentrate his forces, Johnston ordered Hardee to attack Sherman near Averagesboro in an attempt to delay his advance, thus allowing time for Bragg's Army of Tennessee to reach Smithfield.<sup>10</sup>

During the advance in the direction of Averagesboro, Sherman realized that a concentration of Confederate troops would be facing his army at some interval along the march to Goldsboro. Sherman estimated that Johnston's forces would number approximately thirty-seven thousand infantry and eight thousand cavalry. He therefore decided to carry all available forces with him in the event he should confront Johnston.

Although not as strategic a location as Fayetteville, Averagesboro was a thriving town that based its welfare upon trade and traffic along the Cape Fear River. In April, 1863, Averagesboro had served briefly as a recruiting center for the

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<sup>10</sup>R. Turlington to J. A. Skinner, J. A. Skinner Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

enlistment of Confederate troops.

Having spent weeks retreating in Sherman's path, Hardee's men began to prepare to fight. Since skirmishing was the only fighting that had taken place during the march through the Carolinas, some of the Confederate soldiers awaited the oncoming action at Averasboro with eagerness. Such anxiousness was displayed in the following letter written by R. H. Bacot, a Confederate soldier, to his sister:

I say fight Yankeedom forever if we have to bushwhack and live in the swamps. We've gone too far to back down and I glory in our cause; though we all become engulfed in ruin still we who have fought can say with pride "It is not our fought but that of the croakers and skulkers and extortioners. The darkest hour is before day. We are not yet whipped and<sup>11</sup> I and our people are not discouraged. We will yet be free.

A correspondent with the New York Tribune noticed the vulnerability of Sherman's exposed wings. In one of his reports he noted that a large army such as Sherman's could not be considered a single unit, as it does not move in a single column, and one road will not suffice for its travel. Instead, such an army was a vast multitude, spreading out over an area of more than thirty miles and marching along several roads at once.<sup>12</sup> The different segments of the army were, according to the reporter, so disposed that one-half of it might fight and win a great battle before the other half

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<sup>11</sup>R. H. Bacot to ? Bacot, R. H. Bacot Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>12</sup>The New York Tribune, March 24, 1865.

knew that a shot had been fired.

Although facing tremendous odds, Hardee prepared to delay Sherman's troops near Averasboro. He ordered Colonel Alfred Rhett's brigade of General William Taliaferro's division into position in a field near the Averasboro road.<sup>13</sup> An infantry skirmish line was established a few hundred yards behind newly erected breastworks.<sup>14</sup> The breastworks were made by cutting down pine trees, and clinching them underneath with pine knots.<sup>15</sup>

While Sherman was advancing toward Averasboro, his troops were frequently deployed by the constant skirmishing with Hampton's cavalry. On occasion segments of the Confederate infantry turned and struck at the Union forces. Each day that the Confederates detained Sherman would give Johnston that much more time to concentrate his forces at Smithfield.<sup>16</sup>

Hardee's final orders to attack Sherman came as somewhat of a surprise to the Confederate troops. As the Union troops

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<sup>13</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 150.

<sup>14</sup>Walter Clark, Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865, (Goldsboro: Nash Brothers, 5 vols., 1901, III, 422, hereinafter cited as Clark, Histories of the North Carolina Regiments).

<sup>15</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 281.

<sup>16</sup>Clark, Histories of the North Carolina Regiments, III, 193.

had retired from their front on the previous day, March 14, the Confederates were ordered to make themselves comfortable and enjoy a day of rest.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, intelligence received information that the Federals were advancing in large force and driving the Confederate cavalry before them, prompting a hurried disposition of infantry.<sup>18</sup> Colonel Rhett with his South Carolina brigade occupied the advance position where Smith's Ferry Road intersected the Averagesboro road near Oak Grove, the plantation home of John Smith. The Brigade under the command of General Stephen Elliot occupied a fortified position behind a swamp two hundred yards to the rear, and a line of defense was established by General Lafayette McLaws about six hundred yards to the rear of the Confederate first line.

Hardee desired that Rhett temporarily delay Sherman's advance. When he was certain that General William Taliaferro's troops were safely established in their positions, Rhett was to withdraw to the rear and join his troops with those under the command of General Elliot.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Clark, Histories of the North Carolina Regiments, III, 193.

<sup>18</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 150.

<sup>19</sup>John G. Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 321, herein-after cited as Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina.

As soon as proper disposition of the troops was completed, Rhett was ordered by Hardee in person to advance his skirmishers. The Confederate skirmish line struck General Kilpatrick's column of the Ninth Michigan around three o'clock on the afternoon of March 15. The Ninth Michigan, with General S. D. Atkins commanding the First brigade, proceeded to drive the Confederates back into their breastworks, but in the process drew fire from the Confederate artillery, thus prompting its withdrawal.

As the Ninth Michigan continually skirmished with Rhett's brigade, General Atkins was instructed by Kilpatrick to consolidate his brigade with the remainder of the brigades of the Ninth Michigan, and then build heavy barricades in front of the Confederate breastworks. After completing the construction of the barricades, the Ninth Michigan withdrew behind them. Taliaferro's Confederates attempted to advance beyond the barricades in an effort to attack the Ninth Michigan head on. This attempt failed, however, as Union artillery allowed Taliaferro to advance no farther than his own line of breastworks.<sup>20</sup>

At 6:00 p.m. Taliaferro ordered an attack along his line. Although hard pressed, the Union forces were successful in

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<sup>20</sup>Henry W. Slocum, "Sherman's March from Savannah to Bentonville," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, edited by Robert V. Johnson and Clarence G. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 4 vols., 1888), IV, 691, hereinafter cited as Slocum, "Sherman's March."

holding their position due to the arrival of reinforcements from the Fourteenth Corps. Nightfall found the two armies in nearly the same positions they had held throughout the afternoon. Sherman, who had been in the rear of Slocum's left wing, arrived on the battlefield during the night.

During the course of the day's fighting, Colonel Rhett, accompanied by a few of his men, ventured too far beyond the front and was captured. Prior to the war Rhett had been one of the editors of the Charleston Mercury, one of the strongest secession newspapers in the South.<sup>21</sup> Rhett was taken to Sherman, who had taken refuge from the heavy rain in a cooper shop behind the lines.<sup>22</sup> Showing immense disappointment over the fact that he was captured without a fight, Rhett was handsomely dressed in his Confederate uniform and high boots that were beautifully stitched. Rhett informed Sherman that until recently his command experience had been composed mostly of garrisons in Charleston. He had been captured by two men of Kilpatrick's skirmish line. The Union soldiers ordered Rhett to surrender, and commanded in language less than polite that he ride back to them. Thinking that these soldiers were members of Hampton's cavalry, Rhett threatened to report them to General

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<sup>21</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 300.

<sup>22</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 301.

Hampton for using disrespectful language toward an officer. He soon discovered that the men were Union soldiers, however, and submitted to their demand of surrender. He was taken to Kilpatrick, but he sent him back to Slocum, who in turn sent Rhett to Sherman when he arrived upon the field.<sup>23</sup>

During the Battle of Averasboro, a Union soldier exchanged a coarse pair of army shoes with Rhett for his boots, but soon returned them after finding them too small.<sup>24</sup> Rhett later acknowledged that despite the troubles stemming from his capture, he had the consolation of knowing that none of Sherman's men could get on his boots.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, back in the Confederate lines, Rhett's brigade was placed under the command of Colonel William Butler of the South Carolina First Infantry.

That night, Taliaferro was instructed by Hardee that if Sherman's troops attacked the following day, he was to order Colonel Butler's brigade to hold its present position as long as possible. Butler's troops were then to withdraw to the position held by Elliot's brigade, which had been moved two hundred yards forward to encompass an entrenched line behind a narrow swamp two hundred yards behind the first line. This

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<sup>23</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 301.

<sup>24</sup>Slocum, "Sherman's March," 691.

<sup>25</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 151.



second line was to be held by Taliaferro's troops as long as possible before withdrawing six hundred yards to a line occupied by the division of General McLaws.<sup>26</sup>

In his devising of the battle plan at Averasboro, Hardee had employed tactics used by revolutionary leader Daniel Morgan eighty-four years earlier at the Battle of Cowpens. Hardee placed a line out front, with orders from Johnston to fall back on McLaws' veterans if the attackers pressed close enough to overrun them.<sup>27</sup>

In comparing the battle plan for Averasboro with that of Cowpens, Hardee and Morgan each had a command that consisted of reliable troops, which they positioned behind two lines of troops with little experience (Rhett's brigade, which was positioned on the Confederate first line at Averasboro, had little open fighting experience on the battlefield, as they had just joined Hardee's command several days earlier from Charleston, where they had done only garrison duty). By placing their troops in such a position, both commanders established depth and psychological support for their inexperienced troops. The front lines knew that they were to withdraw and thus held their position a little longer than

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<sup>26</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 152.

<sup>27</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 153.

they might have done otherwise, inflicting greater damage upon the enemy as a result.<sup>28</sup>

Following the activity of March 15, Sherman concluded that Hardee had to be dislodged before his troops could continue to advance along the Averagesboro road and continue his feint toward Raleigh as long as he could. Sherman once again overestimated the number of Confederate forces opposing him at Averagesboro, estimating that Hardee had twenty thousand troops at his disposal. With this in mind, Sherman ordered Slocum to advance in the direction of the Confederates.<sup>29</sup>

The Confederate command was well-pleased with the delaying tactics of March 15. Hardee had selected an excellent position for the skirmish to take place, a point between the Cape Fear River and the Black River, four miles south of Averagesboro. This area consisted of a swampy terrain, to which the majority of the Confederate forces were accustomed, thus making it difficult for Sherman to maneuver his forces. However, the presence of only six thousand men made it probable that Hardee's small band could not hold off the forces of Sherman for long.

Around 6:00 a.m. on the morning of March 16, the Eighth

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<sup>28</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 153.

<sup>29</sup>W. T. Sherman to O. O. Howard, March 16, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 861.

Indiana Cavalry attacked Taliaferro's position.<sup>30</sup> Commanded by Colonel F. A. Jones, the Eighth Indiana succeeded in driving the Confederate forces back into the breastworks. Taliaferro's forces responded with heavy fire.

Due to the heavy rains the cavalry horses bogged down in the swampy terrain on which the attack was taking place. Jones ordered that his troops dismount and join with the infantry brigade under the command of Colonel William Hawley. This dismounting gave Taliaferro sufficient time with which to regroup and attack the Eighth Indiana.<sup>31</sup>

At 11:30 a.m. on March 16, Hardee wrote the following letter to Hampton:

I have already informed you by one of your couriers that the enemy attacked me this morning by seven o'clock, and we have been fighting him ever since. Rhett's brigade fell back with some disorder, but rallied on Elliot. My principle fight will be at this point, where McLaws has his entire division. I expected to have your assistance today, and I regret that circumstances compelled you to send Wheeler elsewhere. Unless the enemy brings up a heavier force than he has yet shown I have no doubt of my ability to hold my position till night, when I shall retire, in obedience to what I regard as General Johnston's wishes, on the Smithfield road. I hope to see you tonight. When I pass Averasboro Raleigh will be completely uncovered. You must endeavor to place some cavalry to cover it.<sup>32</sup>

By ten o'clock, the Confederates had launched a counter-attack, and Kilpatrick was in danger of having his right flank

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<sup>30</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 152.

<sup>31</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 283.

<sup>32</sup>W. J. Hardee to Wade Hampton, March 16, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 1402.

turned by Taliaferro's troops. Units of the Twentieth Corps, including its artillery, arrived during this attack, and immediately proceeded to halt Taliaferro's attack. While the Twentieth Corps' artillery repulsed the Confederates, the infantry made a frontal assault on Taliaferro's line. While this frontal assault kept the Confederates occupied a brigade of infantry commanded by Colonel Henry Case moved toward the right of the Confederate breastworks. Advancing through a swamp, Case's brigade moved within three hundred yards of the Confederate right flank. Rushing from the thick underbrush surrounding the Confederate right flank, Case's brigade opened fire upon the Confederates, driving them back into their breastworks.<sup>33</sup> This action by Case was aided considerably by the Union's placement of three batteries of artillery in position near Oak Grove, which constantly bombarded Taliaferro's front line.

The surprise attack launched by Colonel Case completely stunned the Confederate right flank, with Taliaferro's troops giving way in mass confusion.<sup>34</sup> Between two and three hundred Confederate soldiers were killed in the attack, with the remainder withdrawing to General Elliot's position on the second

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<sup>33</sup>Nichols, The Story of the Great March, 256.

<sup>34</sup>Nichols, The Story of the Great March, 256.

line of breastworks.<sup>35</sup> One Union soldier described the scene following Case's attack, stating that "the Rebels ran away as fast as they could."<sup>36</sup> In retreating from their position, the Confederates abandoned three pieces of artillery that were quickly seized by the Union troops. Case's brigade actively pursued the fleeing Confederates for a distance of one-half mile until they realized that they were rapidly advancing in the direction of a more secure line of breastworks manned by a considerable amount of Confederate soldiers, prompting Case to terminate the aggression of his brigade in order to regroup.<sup>37</sup>

Simultaneous with Case's attack on the Confederate right flank was a similar attack by the Confederates, who took advantage of the swampy terrain by charging the non-suspecting Union troops. This attack, which took place near the edge of the Black River, was inflicted against General Selfridge's division and Kilpatrick's cavalry in an attempt to aid Taliaferro in his quest to turn Kilpatrick to the right, thus forcing the Union troops against the Cape Fear River. This charge failed, however, as the Confederate forces were too greatly outnumbered for it to be successful.

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<sup>35</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 153.

<sup>36</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 283.

<sup>37</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 153.

Case's success of turning the Confederate flank to the right was followed by the advancement of the First and Third Divisions of the Twentieth Corps upon the second line of Confederate defense. These two divisions were joined by General Mitchell's brigade of the Fourteenth Corps. Kilpatrick was then ordered by Sherman to draw back his cavalry and to feel forward for the road leading to Goldsboro.<sup>38</sup>

In the early afternoon of March 16, Kilpatrick's cavalry charged the left flank of the Confederate second line. The attack was hard pressed, causing the line to collapse, although the force attacking was not as strong as the one that had forced Rhett's line to collapse.<sup>39</sup>

Kilpatrick had begun his advance toward the road leading to Goldsboro when his scouts discovered a path that circled around to the rear of the Confederate position, near Oak Grove. Kilpatrick ordered the Ninth Ohio Cavalry to advance along this path. While moving toward the rear of the Confederate position, the Ninth Ohio was attacked by a brigade of McLaws' division. This division had concealed its movement through an extremely thick section of underbrush that disguised its intentions until it was within a short distance of the

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<sup>38</sup>Shelby Foote, The Civil War: A Narrative (New York: Random House, 3 vols., 1974), III, 387, hereinafter cited as Foote, The Civil War.

<sup>39</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 284.

Union troops. Taken by surprise, the Ninth Ohio was driven back approximately two hundred yards, where it regrouped. After reorganization, the Ninth Ohio managed to contain McLaws' division until relieved by a brigade of Union infantry. At that point McLaws retreated to his original position.<sup>40</sup>

Aware of the Union pressure to the front and fearful of being surrounded by Union troops, Taliaferro removed his troops to the Confederate third line of defense, where he aligned his forces astride the Raleigh-Fayetteville road, facing south between the Black River and the Cape Fear River.<sup>41</sup> Here the Confederate forces would make their last stand in resisting the advancement of the Union troops.

Taliaferro established his defensive positions on the main road, with McLaws on the left, extending from the road to the bank of the Black River. General Wheeler's troops were on the right of Taliaferro.<sup>42</sup>

T. B. Roy, an assistant adjutant general in the Confederate army, wrote to General Hampton during the afternoon of March 16, describing the effort by the Confederates to resist advance:

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<sup>40</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 154.

<sup>41</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 284.

<sup>42</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 284.

Lieutenant General Hardee has twice written to you this morning. The enemy is pressing us heavily and by flank movements compelled our withdrawal from two advanced lines. We are now on the main line. General Wheeler is here and has sent back four miles to hurry up his command. The boat howitzer has been fitted up and I sent it on the Averagesboro and Smithfield road by a courier of yours, who said you would be on that road.<sup>43</sup>

The Union troops began their final attack upon the Confederate third line around 3:00 p.m., the afternoon of March 16. General Morgan's division of the Fourteenth Corps launched a sharp attack on the Confederate right. Wheeler's troops, positioned behind a ravine, poured a devastating fire into Morgan's attacking men, stopping the attack.<sup>44</sup>

The Confederates stubbornly held their positions in the center and to the left against several Union attacks. With the approach of dusk, the Union forces made one last attempt to turn the Confederate left. This attempt was also futile, however, as Rhett's brigade reinforced McLaws' division and halted the Union attack.<sup>45</sup> The Union troops had made several repeated assaults on the Confederate third line throughout the afternoon, but were unable to dislodge the stubborn Confederate troops.

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<sup>43</sup>T. B. Roy to Wade Hampton, March 16, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part II, 1402.

<sup>44</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 212.

<sup>45</sup>Gibson, Those 163 Days, 212.



Minor skirmishing occurred during the remainder of the afternoon, with the Confederates continuing to hold their position. Late in the afternoon Hardee decided to retire toward Smithfield. This decision was made after consultation with Hampton, who reported that Howard's right wing had succeeded in crossing the Black River, thus outflanking them. As such, Howard would be in a position to block Hardee's withdrawal. If this was allowed to occur, Hardee's forces would be surrounded on both sides by Sherman's army.<sup>46</sup> Finally, around 8:00 p.m., Hardee began the withdrawal of his troops along the Smithfield road in accordance with the orders of General Johnston.<sup>47</sup> Wheeler's troops were ordered to remain behind to cover the retirement.<sup>48</sup>

During the withdrawal, Lieutenant John Albright of the Confederate army recorded his thoughts of the previous two days:

[We] marched from Fayetteville to Averasboro, where we halted for a day or two. We were marched back a mile or so, where we threw up breastworks. There we were attacked by Sherman's forces. The line of battle extended from the Cape Fear to a small stream eastwards. If two brigades next to the river had not given way, we could have held our own, but

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<sup>46</sup>Clark, Histories of the North Carolina Regiments, IV, 104.

<sup>47</sup>Clark, Histories of the North Carolina Regiments, IV, 322.

<sup>48</sup>W. J. Hardee to J. E. Johnston, March 17, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 1409.

as they did Sherman proved too hard for us. Under cover of darkness we retreated from the place in good order and marched on to Bentonville.<sup>49</sup>

After the fighting of March 16, General Howard continued to move his left wing toward Goldsboro. This continued the separation of Sherman's army into two distinct wings, of which General Johnston had aspired.

On the morning of March 17, Hardee informed Johnston of the previous day's events.

There was little important fighting after my dispatch to you of 4:30 p.m. 16th instant. My loss is between 400 and 500. Among the missing is Colonel Rhett, commanding brigade, and among the killed Lieutenant Colonel Robert De Treville. Enemy's loss is not known, but believed to be heavy. Two pieces of artillery were abandoned, the limber of one being blown off and the horses of both killed. Your dispatch of 4:00 p.m., countermanding the movement to Smithfield under certain conditions, was received at 11:00 p.m., too late to resist the movement.<sup>50</sup>

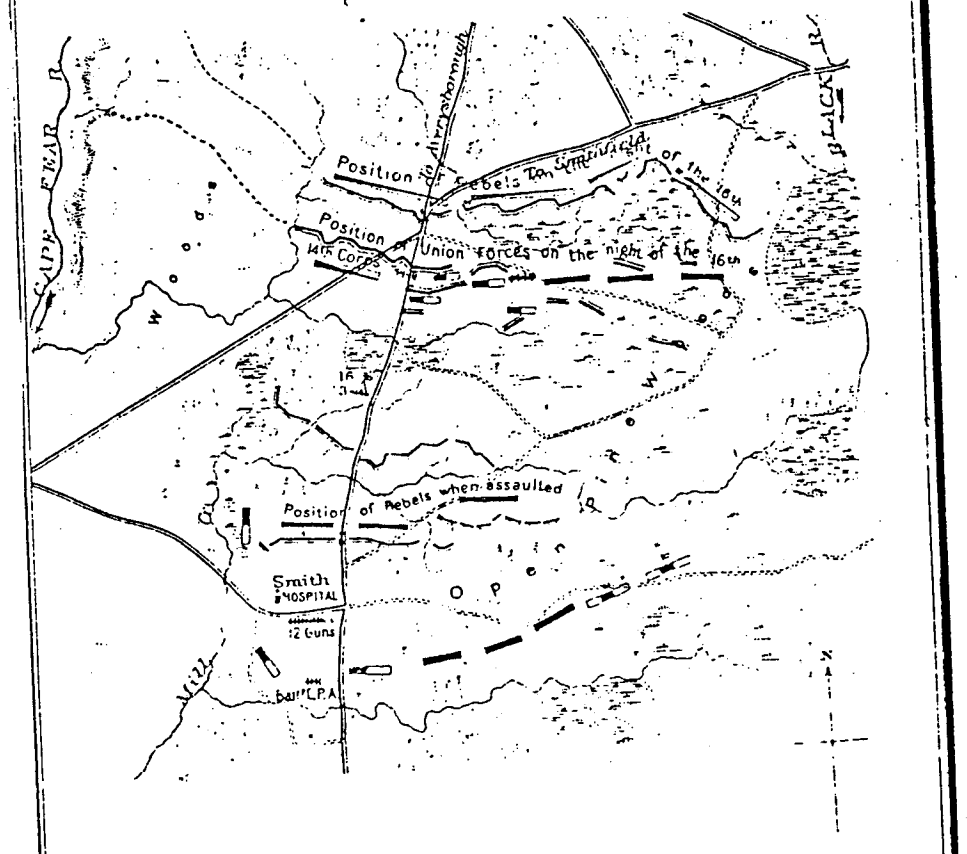
The artillery abandoned by the Confederates consisted of two twelve pound howitzers of LeGardeur's (New Orleans) battery and one twelve pound howitzer of Stuart's (South Carolina) battery. The cannon had had good results firing on the Union infantry and artillery. When Hardee's troops withdrew, due to the rains and the softness of the ground, the artillery could not be moved without great difficulty, and had to be abandoned. All of the cannoneers had been either killed or

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<sup>49</sup>Evans, Confederate Military History, 369.

<sup>50</sup>W. J. Hardee to J. E. Johnston, March 17, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 1409.

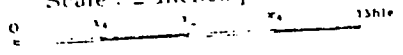
MAP  
OF  
BATTLE OF BLACK RIVER, N. C.,  
fought March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1865.  
[AVERYSBOROUGH]



EXPLANATION.

- First Division
  - Third Division
  - Kilpatrick's Cavalry
  - Rebels
  - Rebel Breast Works
  - Union Breast Works
- Positions by Topographical Engineers.*

Scale : 2 Inches per Mile



This map accompanied General Williams' report only.

THE BATTLE OF AVERASBORO (from the Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Plate LXXX)

wounded. Although the guns were abandoned, the Confederates did not leave any ammunition to fall into Union hands, firing the last shot against the enemy.

General Wheeler withdrew his troops to Averasboro early on the morning of March 17, with instructions to remain there until Sherman's movements were determined. After discovering from a captured Union soldier that Sherman was marching towards Goldsboro, Wheeler withdrew from Averasboro and marched to join Hardee on the road to Smithfield.<sup>51</sup>

Following Wheeler's withdrawal on the morning of March 17, Kilpatrick's cavalry forded the Black River just above Mingo Creek. All of the Union left wing crossed with the exception of the Fourteenth Corps and one division of the Twentieth Corps, which moved along the plank road extending to Averasboro.<sup>52</sup> Kilpatrick then moved his troops out on the Smithfield road and proceeded to Goldsboro.

The remainder of the Union left wing crossed the Black River at several points. Sherman's persistent attempts to open the Averasboro road gave the impression that his objective was Raleigh, but his movement across the Black River showed

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<sup>51</sup>Joseph Wheeler to W. J. Hardee, March 17, 1865, Official Records (Army), Series I, XLVII, Part I, 1416.

<sup>52</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 158.

that he was heading in the direction of Goldsboro.

Casualties for the fighting at Averasboro were high for both armies. Slocum reported a total of 477 men killed, wounded, or missing during the three-day skirmish. Twelve officers and sixty-five men were among the killed. The Confederate losses approximated 500 killed, wounded, or missing.

One of the Confederate losses occurred after the fighting had ended. Lieutenant Robert Laborde, whose father was a professor at Columbia College, had endured the battle with no more than a scratch.

While sitting on the fence of the Farquhard Smith residence along the Averasboro road, resting and talking with his fellow soldiers, a stray Union bullet pierced his head.<sup>53</sup>

Sherman nearly had a similar encounter with stray bullets, but escaped unhurt. While remaining in the woods behind the battle lines while the fighting was in progress, Sherman heard some stray shot land in the mud near him, while another stray shot whistled through the trees overhead. Although Sherman never moved close to the first line, newspaper accounts described him as courageously directing the battle in the midst of the heavy assault by the enemy.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Janie Smith to Janie Robeson, April 12, 1865, Mrs. Thomas Webb Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>54</sup>Barrett, Sherman's March, 155.

Janie Smith, the seventeen year old daughter of Farquhard Smith, wrote a letter to a friend in Robeson County on April 12, 1865, describing the battle that had occurred scarcely one month prior:

General Wheeler took tea here about two o'clock during the night after the battle closed, and about four o'clock the Yankees came charging, yelling and howling. I stood on the piazza and saw the charges made, but as calm as I am now, though I was all prepared for the rascals, our soldiers have given us a detailed account of their habits. The pailing did not hinder them at all. They just knocked all down like mad cattle. Right into the house, breaking open bureau drawers of all kinds faster than I could unlock. They cursed us for having hid everything and made bold threats if certain things were not brought to light, but all to no effect. One said "good morning girls, why aren't you up getting breakfast, it's late?" I told him that servants prepared Southern ladies' breakfast. He went off muttering something about them not waiting on us any more, but not one of our servants went from here, they remained faithful through it all, with one exception, and Pa has driven him off to the Yankees . . .

They left no living thing in Smithville but the people. One old hen played sick and thus saved her neck, but lost all of her children. The Yankees would run all over the yard to catch the little things to squeeze to death.<sup>55</sup>

As the battle progressed near their home on the morning of March 16, the Smith family was ordered by the Confederate command to seek refuge in a ravine on the bank of the Cape Fear River. The Smiths encountered danger late in the afternoon, however, when Union commander Morgan launched an attack against the Confederate right flank, including the ravine in which the Smiths were located:

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<sup>55</sup>Janie Smith to Janie Robeson, April 12, 1865, Mrs. Thomas Webb Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

A line of battle was formed in front of us, and we knew that was certain death to us should we be unsuccessful in repelling the charge. Lou and I started out to do the same thing, when one of the vedetts saw my white flag (my handkerchief on a pole) and came to us. I accosted him, "Are you one of our men or a Yankee?" "I am a Reb, mam." "Can't you go and report to the commanding officer and tell him that the hillside is lined with women and children he sent here for protection, and that the line of battle over there will destroy us?" "I'll do all I can for you" was the gallant reply and in a short time we were ordered home.<sup>56</sup>

The home of Mary Smith, behind the Union battle lines, became a Union hospital. Her piano was used as an operating table. Oak Grove, the home of John Smith, and Lebanon, the home of Farquhard Smith, were used as Confederate hospitals. Sixty-eight of the wounded Confederates were carried to Lebanon for treatment. Lacking space indoors to care for such a large number, the barns and outhouses were filled with wounded soldiers. Tables were carried from the house and placed under the trees of the plantation to serve as operating tables.<sup>57</sup> The wounded were nursed by ladies of the neighborhood, but under many difficulties as the country had been devastated by Sherman's army, leaving little with which to make the wounded comfortable.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Janie Smith to Janie Robeson, April 12, 1865, Mrs. Thomas Webb Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>57</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 302.

<sup>58</sup>Mrs. Ross Smith Best collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

After the Confederate withdrawal, Sherman visited Lebanon while the soldiers were at work, having to step over amputated limbs lying in the yard and on the porch. Upon hearing his name, Sherman looked to see a young Confederate officer, Captain Macbeth, lying on a bed. He had known Sherman in earlier days when the general visited Macbeth's father in Charleston. Sherman inquired about the captain's family, and allowed him to write a letter to his mother, which Sherman sent her from Goldsboro.<sup>59</sup>

A numerically superior force could usually defeat defensive formations adopted by Hardee in two ways. The first by an overpowering frontal attack against the weaker enemy first line, designed to rout it or capture it before it could withdraw to the second line. The second method was to flank the enemy movement. Slocum tried the second method and was successful in routing Rhett's brigade. After Rhett's brigade withdrew, Slocum used another flank attack to force the second line to withdraw. On approaching the Confederate third line of defense, Slocum ordered a frontal attack, which was unsuccessful. He was in the process of beginning a flank movement when darkness ended the fighting.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 302.

<sup>60</sup>Hughes, Hardee, 285.



Although the Battle of Averasboro was little more than a skirmish, it can be considered as a major factor in Johnston's last effort to stop Sherman's northward advance to unite with Grant. Even though the battle did little to influence the outcome of the war, it did accomplish its missions; that of determining whether Sherman was headed toward Raleigh or Goldsboro, and delaying Sherman long enough for Johnston to concentrate his forces for a final stand at Bentonville. From those standpoints, the Battle of Averasboro was a success, and was one of the few Confederate accomplishments during the final days of the American Civil War.

## AFTERMATH

At the conclusion of the Battle of Averasboro, General Wheeler withdrew his cavalry to Averasboro. Although Hardee had predicted that Sherman was marching on Goldsboro rather than Raleigh, Wheeler was ordered to remain in Averasboro until he was certain that the entire left wing had turned east on the road to Goldsboro.

To further guard against the left wing changing directions and marching to Raleigh, General Hampton placed detachments of his cavalry on all roads leading north from Averasboro.<sup>1</sup> Each detachment carried with it a section of artillery, but it was not used as the Confederates withdrew whenever they encountered Union foraging parties.<sup>2</sup>

By March 17, the entire left wing had crossed Black River and was headed in the direction of Goldsboro. The soldiers crossed the flooded river at various points between Averasboro and Mingo Creek, which was located two miles below Smith's mill pond. Kilpatrick's cavalry was at the head of the column, with the Fourteenth and Twentieth Corps following. The left wing was unable to travel far that day because of the flooded condition of the swampy terrain, thus limiting the distance marched to six miles.

The right wing of the Union army, unaware of the Confed-

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<sup>1</sup>Nichols, Story of the Great March, 260.

<sup>2</sup>Nichols, Story of the Great March, 260.

erate attack at Averasboro, continued its march to Goldsboro while widening the gap between it and the left wing to twelve miles. The right wing arrived in Clinton on March 18.<sup>3</sup> Although the Federals did not destroy much private property in Clinton, they did ransack the Sampson County courthouse where they destroyed records from the offices of the clerk of court and the register of deeds.<sup>4</sup>

The sheriff of Sampson County, John Oates, had been a strong supporter of the Confederacy, and had helped feed and clothe its army. He was captured by a group of Union soldiers who were aware of his support of the Confederacy. One of the soldiers rode up to Oates and exchanged caps with him. Oates responded by taking off the soldier's cap, throwing it on the ground, and exclaiming that he wouldn't wear any cap belonging to a Yankee. Angered by his action, another soldier started to shoot Oates when he was stopped by a Union officer. Oates was taken before a Union military court and acquitted. The officer of the court instructed him to use precaution in the future as he could be shot by other Union soldiers. Released, he returned home, minus his cap.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>J. D. Crozer to ?, J. D. Crozer Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>4</sup>Fred Olds Collection, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>5</sup>Oates, The Story of Fayetteville, 397.

Early on the morning of March 18, Hampton sent a dispatch to Johnston informing him that Sherman's army was definitely marching towards Goldsboro.<sup>6</sup> Hampton also told Johnston that he had skirmished with Union troops throughout the previous day, and that they consisted only of infantry.

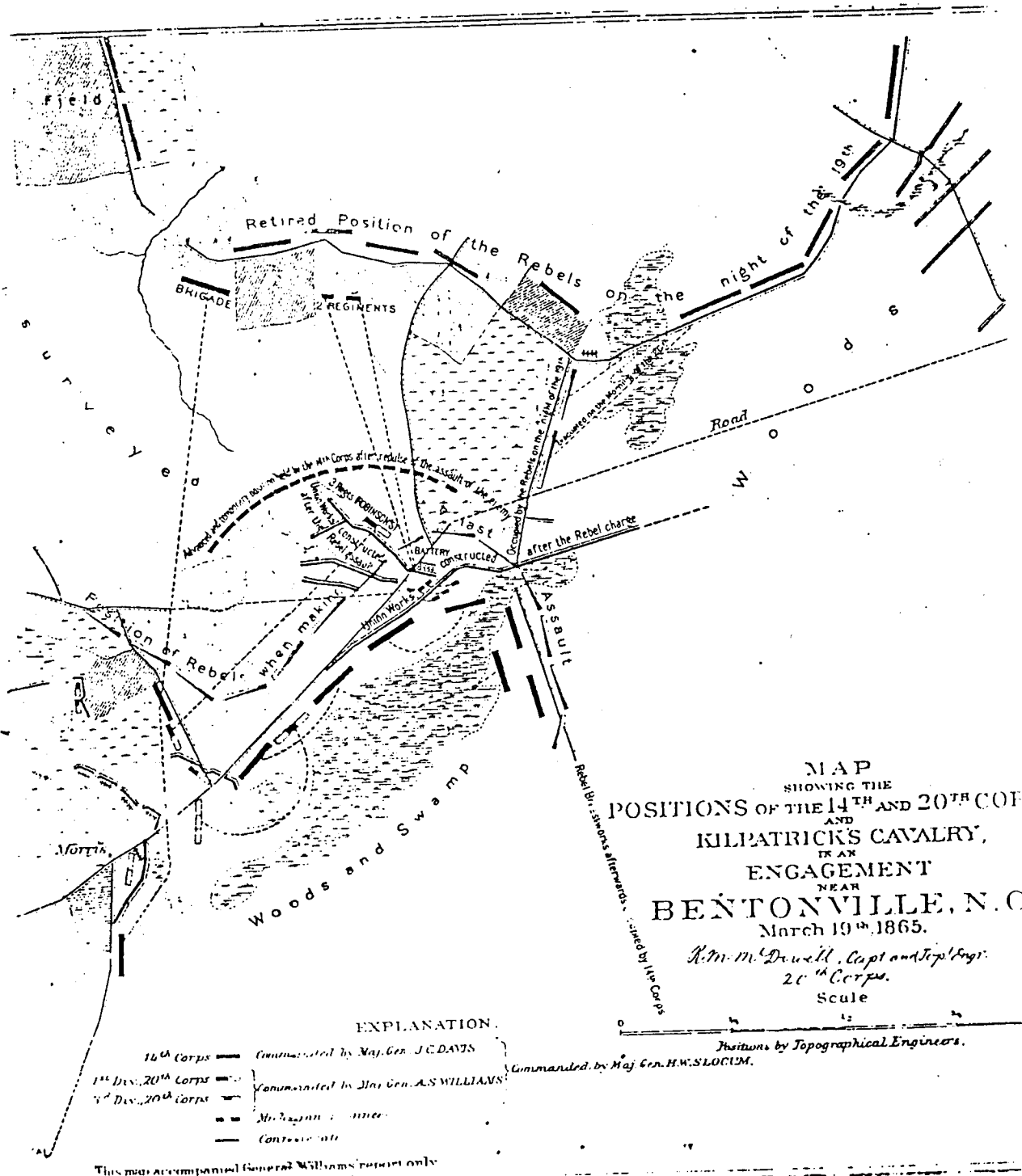
After receiving this information, Johnston decided that the time had come to give battle. With the two Union wings located approximately one day's march from each other, Johnston felt that he could successfully attack the left wing and defeat it before the right wing could come to its assistance. He realized that his army would have a much better chance of defeating Sherman if he struck one of the isolated wings rather than facing the combined army, which consisted of approximately sixty thousand men. Johnston determined that he had to attack before Sherman reached Goldsboro, because there his troops would be joined by those of generals Terry and Schofield, which would increase the Union army to approximately ninety thousand men.

Johnston had Braxton Bragg's troops and the Army of Tennessee assembled at Smithfield. The combined forces totalled approximately 10,500 men.<sup>7</sup> These troops along with the 7,500

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<sup>6</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, 384.

<sup>7</sup>J. E. Johnston to Robert E. Lee, March 18, 1865, Official Records, Part II, Series I, 1426.



MAP  
 SHOWING THE  
 POSITIONS OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CORPS  
 AND  
 KILPATRICK'S CAVALRY,  
 IN AN  
 ENGAGEMENT  
 NEAR  
**BENTONVILLE, N. C.**  
 March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1865.  
*J. M. McDowell, Capt and Top' Engr.*  
 20<sup>th</sup> Corps.  
 Scale

EXPLANATION.

- 14<sup>th</sup> Corps ——— Commanded by Maj. Gen. J. C. DAVIS
- 1<sup>st</sup> Div. 20<sup>th</sup> Corps ——— Commanded by Maj. Gen. A. S. WILLIAMS
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Div. 20<sup>th</sup> Corps ———
- Mortars
- Contested

This map accompanied General Williams' report only.

THE BATTLE OF BENTONVILLE (from The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Plate LXXX)

men under the command of Hardee, who had withdrawn to Elevation, would provide the force to attempt the destruction of Sherman's left wing.

Johnston selected Bentonville as the site for his attack upon Sherman. Bentonville was equidistant to Smithfield and Elevation, which would allow both Johnston's and Hardee's troops to arrive there in time to intercept the Union advance. Johnston had not personally seen the area surrounding Bentonville, but had relied on the reports of General Hampton, who had scouted the area. The camp of the Union left wing was closer to the proposed battle site than was Hardee, so Hampton ordered his men to build light entrenchments across the road to hinder the advance of the enemy, while ordering Butler's cavalry to keep Slocum occupied until Hardee could arrive.<sup>8</sup>

Hardee arrived in Bentonville on the morning of March 19, and the combined Confederate force journeyed to the proposed battle site, which was situated along the edge of the Harper plantation. The area selected was on the north side of the Goldsboro-Smithfield road, while three sides of the area were surrounded by dense thickets.<sup>9</sup>

Johnston ordered General Robert Hoke's division to

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<sup>8</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, 385.

<sup>9</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, 386.

establish position along the road, with its left protruding four hundred yards to the south. The two batteries of the division, which were the only artillery available to Johnston, were placed along the right of the division. The Army of Tennessee was situated on the right of the artillery, with its right extended forward.

The Union left wing arrived at the scene on Sunday morning, March 19, while the Confederates were positioning themselves, with their right attacking the left of Hoke's division. This attack was so furious that Bragg, fearing that Hoke would be driven from his position, applied to Johnston for reinforcements. Johnston responded by ordering Hardee to send Lafayette McLaws' division to Hoke's assistance.<sup>10</sup> McLaws' division arrived in time to see Hoke's forces repulse the enemy attack.<sup>11</sup> General Alexander P. Stewart's front was also attacked, but his men succeeded in repulsing the attack.<sup>12</sup> After this charge was repulsed, the Confederates prepared for a second Union attack.

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<sup>10</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, p. 387.

<sup>11</sup>L. P. Thomas, "Reminiscences of the Forty-second Georgia," Confederate Veteran, XII (January, 1904) 14, hereinafter cited as Thomas, "Reminiscences."

<sup>12</sup>Robert W. Sanders, "The Battle of Bentonville," Confederate Veteran, XXXIV, (August, 1926) 299, hereinafter cited as Sanders, "Bentonville."

At 2:45 p.m. that afternoon the Confederate infantry began its attack, advancing in two columns toward the Union front.<sup>13</sup> They succeeded in breaking the Federal line, resulting in the Union troops retreating in disorder.<sup>14</sup> The Confederates continued to press their attack until new lines were established. The fighting then died down.

The Confederates initiated a second attack at 5:00 p.m. Union position had been established again, and the Confederate assault was repulsed. The Confederates would renew the attack four additional times, but were in each instance repulsed. Nightfall brought the fighting to an end, with the Confederates having withdrawn to their original position of that morning.

Sherman was not present during the first day of fighting at Bentonville, having crossed over to march with Howard's right wing. A courier reached him on the night of March 19, carrying Slocum's urgent plea for assistance. Sherman immediately ordered the right wing to march to Bentonville. This movement was delayed by attacks from Wheeler's cavalry, but a segment of the right wing reached Bentonville at dawn, and

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<sup>13</sup>William Herring, "The Battle of Bentonville." Unpublished M. A. Thesis, ECU, 1982, 110, hereinafter cited as Herring, "Bentonville."

<sup>14</sup>Herring, "Bentonville," 113.



assumed a position to the rear of the Confederates. Combining with Slocum's command, these forces attacked Hoke, forcing him to withdraw. Realizing the strength of the opposing force, Hoke decided not to counter-attack, while Sherman also chose not to pursue the Confederates. The entire right wing reached Bentonville by mid afternoon.

The fighting erupted again on the morning of March 21. General Hardee reported around 4:00 p.m. that the skirmish line to his left had been broken, with the enemy advancing toward the bridge at Mill Creek, the only possible route of Confederate retreat. Johnston ordered Hampton and Hardee to confront the attacking Union groups, which they repulsed and drove back along the route upon which they had advanced.

This action was the end of the fighting at Bentonville, with the exception of various artillery engagements. Johnston ordered his command to retreat on the night of March 21, instructing them to withdraw across Mill Creek in the direction of Smithfield.<sup>15</sup>

The losses at Bentonville were heavy for both armies. Sherman lost 1,604 men during the engagement, while Johnston reported 2,343 casualties.<sup>16</sup> One of the Confederate casualties was Willie Hardee, the sixteen year old son of General Hardee.

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<sup>15</sup>Raleigh Standard, March 29, 1865.

<sup>16</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 305.

Willie, a volunteer with the Eighth Texas Cavalry, had just been given permission by his reluctant father to take part in the fighting of March 21. Killed while charging the enemy, the younger Hardee was mourned by many Union officers that knew him, including General Howard, his former Sunday school teacher at West Point.<sup>17</sup>

After leaving Bentonville, Sherman's army marched to Goldsboro, where it joined those of Schofield and Terry.<sup>18</sup> Sherman ordered his men to rest at Goldsboro while he journeyed to City Point, Virginia, to meet with President Lincoln and General Grant to discuss his campaign. Returning to Goldsboro on March 30, Sherman issued orders to march, with the army, totalling 88,948 men, moving out on April 10.<sup>19</sup>

The Union army reached Smithfield on April 11 and discovered that Johnston had retreated toward Raleigh and burned the bridges spanning the Neuse River.<sup>20</sup> Leaving Smithfield on April 12, Sherman arrived in Raleigh on April 13. Before entering Raleigh, Sherman had been met by a locomotive carrying four men and a flag of truce. Two of the men were William A.

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<sup>17</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 239.

<sup>18</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 306.

<sup>19</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 334.

<sup>20</sup>Sherman, Memoirs, II, 344.

Graham and David L. Swain, both former governors of North Carolina who had been Unionists prior to the outbreak of the war. Both men had advised Governor Vance to withdraw North Carolina from the war and sue for peace in the hope that other southern states would follow suit.<sup>21</sup> The men asked Sherman for the protection of the citizens of Raleigh. Sherman assured the delegation that he would attempt to negotiate peace with Johnston, as he felt that the war was virtually over.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, Johnston was instructed by President Davis to meet with him and the Confederate cabinet in Greensboro on April 12. After discussing the situation, Davis reluctantly allowed Johnston to begin negotiations with Sherman, composing a letter to be delivered to Sherman requesting that arrangements be made to "terminate the existing war."<sup>23</sup>

Although the Confederates were making arrangements to surrender, the morale among their troops was high until they received news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9. This optimism is expressed in the following letter by R. H. Bacot:

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<sup>21</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 251.

<sup>22</sup>Davis, Sherman's March, 253.

<sup>23</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, 400.

I hope in less than two weeks we will fight and whip him (Sherman) in a general engagement - then the tide will have turned in our favor. All you overrun people must keep up your spirits, the soldiers are very cheerful.<sup>24</sup>

Johnston left Greensboro on April 13 and met his command on April 14 at Hillsboro, where it had been instructed to march by Hardee after evacuating Raleigh. His troops were withdrawing in the direction of Greensboro when Sherman contacted him on April 16 requesting that they meet for negotiations. The two generals met on April 16 at Bennett farmhouse, near Durham, where Sherman informed Johnston of the assassination of Lincoln. Johnston replied that "the event was the greatest possible calamity to the South."<sup>25</sup>

Johnston and Sherman agreed to terms on April 18. Both generals announced to their troops that hostilities were suspended, and that a line had been drawn separating the two armies. President Davis agreed to the terms, but the government of the United States rejected the proposal, claiming that the terms were too lenient.

Due to the rejection by the United States of the terms for the Confederate surrender, Sherman agreed to meet a second time with Johnston on April 26 at Bennet farmhouse. Later

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<sup>24</sup>R. H. Bacot to ? Bacot, Bacot Letters, Manuscript Division, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>25</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, 402.

that afternoon they agreed upon a new set of terms which were accepted by both governments. The signing and acceptance of these terms ended the fighting between Sherman and the Confederate army, therefore terminating Sherman's infamous march through the Carolinas.

The terms agreed upon by Johnston and Sherman are listed below.

1. All acts of war on the part of the troops under General Johnston's command, to cease from this date.
2. All arms and public property to be deposited at Greensboro, and delivered to an ordinance officer of the United States Army.
3. Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate; one copy to be retained by the commander of his troops, and the other to be given to an officer to be designated by General Sherman.
4. Each officer and man to give his individual obligation in writing, not to take up arms against the Government of the United States, until properly released from this obligation.
5. This being done, all the officers and men will be permitted to return to their homes, not to be disturbed by the United States authorities so long as they observe their obligation, and the laws in force where they may reside.

The following supplemental terms were also agreed upon by Johnston and Sherman:<sup>26</sup>

1. The field transportation to be loaned to the troops for their march to their homes, and for subsequent use in their industrial pursuits. Artillery horses may be used in field transportation, if necessary.
2. Each brigade or separate body to retain a number of

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<sup>26</sup>Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations, 412.

arms equal to one-seventh of its effective strength, which, when the troops reach the capitals of their states, will be disposed of as the general commanding the department may direct.

3. Private horses, and other private property of both officers and men, to be retained by them.

4. The commanding general of the Military Division of West Mississippi, Major General Canby, will be requested to give transportation by water, from Mobile or New Orleans, to the troops from Arkansas and Texas.

5. The obligations of officers and soldiers to be signed by their immediate commanders.

6. Naval forces within the limits of General Johnston's command to be included in the terms of this convention.

Sherman's march between Columbia and Averasboro was one of the final devastating blows to the Confederacy. While southern morale was low due to the constant defeats of the Confederate army during the final year of the Civil War, this final assault initiated by Sherman succeeded in destroying any morale that remained.

Sherman's philosophy was to take the war to the people, which is evidenced by the atrocities committed by his soldiers. The destruction of private property left many southerners impoverished, and the resulting conditions along the home front worsened to the point that desertions occurred daily among Hardee's army in the Carolinas and Lee's army in Virginia, thus further weakening the outnumbered Confederate forces.

It is ironic to note that the issue of states rights, which was one of the reasons for secession, played a key role in the downfall of the Confederacy. On several occasions the

governors of the various southern states refused to co-operate when faced with an impending crisis. An example of this is Governor McGrath's recall of the South Carolina Militia from Fayetteville, North Carolina, although the enemy had left South Carolina. Another example is that of North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance, who had uniforms stored in warehouses sufficient to supply Lee's army with two new uniforms per soldier. Vance refused to supply Lee with these badly needed uniforms, reserving them for North Carolina troops.

The failure to stop Sherman at Bentonville was probably the Confederacy's last chance for survival. Uniting with Schofield and Terry at Goldsboro, Sherman was en route to join Grant in Virginia when he contacted Johnston regarding negotiating for surrender. Knowledge of Sherman's proposed advance to join Grant was a factor in helping Lee reach a decision to surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, as he realized that it would be futile to attempt to battle this combined force.

Sherman's march from Columbia to Averasboro brought desolation to an area already impoverished by the rigors of war. The hardships incurred by his command upon the citizens of the Carolinas placed the region in an era of poverty, an era from which it did not fully recover for years following the conclusion of the American Civil War.

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