

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY

NOVEMBER 23



General George Crook

On November 23, 1862, General George Crook ordered the Second (West) Virginia Cavalry to launch a raid against a Confederate camp in the Sinking Creek Valley. Major William H. Powell, who led the attack, was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at Sinking Creek.

CSO: SS.8.22, ELA.8.1

Investigate the Document: (Civil War Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I Vol. 21)

1. What instructions did General Crook give that was intended to save Colonel Lane, commander of the Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Infantry, ten miles of marching? What was the objective of the mission?
2. According to the report given by Colonel Lane, they were seventeen miles from _____ despite the delay of crossing the Gauley River on November 24. What happened when Lane's regiment encountered a party of enemy scouts? Was the weather a concern? If so, how?
3. According to the report given by Colonel Paxton, where were the Confederate troops discovered by the Second West Virginia Volunteer Cavalry? Why were the Confederates stationed at this location?
4. Who did Colonel Paxton credit for leading the charge? How many Confederate troops were captured?

Think Critically: How were the Union troops able to successfully complete the raid without a single casualty? Did the weather and terrain play a role in these operations? Who was in control of western Virginia at this point in the war? Union or Confederates?

upon the person of Burke disclosed the fact that a man by the name of Wrench had been, and still is, engaged in purchasing cloth for the Confederate Army. I sent over to-day and arrested him, and searched his premises, but found nothing. He is also held as a prisoner. I caused the town to be partially searched for arms, but nothing was found, except a few boxes of cartridges, which were brought over to this side.

Last night I also sent Lieutenant Taylor, First Maine Cavalry, across the river at Mercerville, 3 miles above here, with a small force of cavalry. They succeeded in capturing a guerrilla by the name of King, a citizen of the District of Columbia, formerly of the Twelfth Virginia Regiment, but whose time expired in July, and since that time he has been acting as a scout for the rebels. These are his own admissions.

Both expeditions were well conducted, and their object fully accomplished without accident, which speaks well for the officers conducting them.

There is general rejoicing by the loyal citizens here. Burke and his party had become a perfect terror to all law-abiding men. Leopold and Hipsley both dispute the honor of having killed Cookus, at Dam No. 4, last week. I would respectfully suggest the propriety of sending the prisoners forward immediately.

Inclosed will be found the report of Captain Scott, which will give the details of the expedition.*

Inclosed will also be found the statement of A. M. Indow, a conscript, who deserted on the — instant, and whom I sent to your headquarters on the 24th instant.

I have information that the rebel cavalry stationed at Smithfield, Bunker Hill, and Lectown were moved away on Saturday last, which I believe to be true.

Your obedient servant,

S. COLGROVE,
Colonel, Commanding Third Brigade.

Major-General MORELL.

P. S.—I also send the parole of 18 prisoners, taken in the hospital (wounded). These men were paroled since the battle of Antietam, but since exchanged. Our party recaptured and paroled them the second time.

NOVEMBER 24-30, 1862.—Expedition from Summerville to Cold Knob Mountain, W. Va., and skirmish (26th) at Lewis' Mill, on Sinking Creek.

REPORTS.

No. 1.—Brig. Gen. George Crook, U. S. Army.

No. 2.—Col. Philander P. Lane, Eleventh Ohio Infantry.

No. 3.—Col. John C. Paxton, Second West Virginia Cavalry.

No. 1.

Report of Brig. Gen. George Crook, U. S. Army.

HEADQUARTERS FIRST KANAWHA DIVISION,
Charleston, December 13, 1862.

MAJOR: I have the honor to report, for the information of the general commanding, that on the 24th ultimo I sent the Eleventh Regiment Ohio

* Not found.

Volunteer Infantry and the Second West Virginia Cavalry on an expedition to Greenbrier County, West Virginia, via the Cold Knob road, instructing Colonel Lane, commanding Eleventh Regiment, to march by Job's Knob, thereby saving a distance of 10 miles, and to get between the enemy's pickets and their camp on the morning of the 26th ultimo by 10 a. m. Colonel Paxton's orders were to meet the pickets in front at that time. The severe snow-storm they encountered prevented this arrangement from being carried out in the manner as directed. The object of the expedition was to surprise and capture the enemy, who were encamped in small bodies through this valley, and to push some cavalry to Covington via Coleman's [Callaghan's?], and release Dr. Rucker, a Union prisoner, who was being tried there for his life. Colonel Lane turning back before meeting the main body of the enemy, the cavalry in turn were forced to return, being so much encumbered with prisoners after taking their first camp, only in part accomplishing the object of the expedition. Too much praise cannot be given to Colonel Paxton and his regiment.

For details, see accompanying reports of Colonels Paxton and Lane. I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

[GEORGE CROOK,
Brigadier-General, Commanding.

Maj. G. M. BASCOM,
Asst. Adjt. Gen., District of Western Virginia.

No. 2.

Report of Col. Philander P. Lane, Eleventh Ohio Infantry.

HDQRS. ELEVENTH REGT. OHIO VOLUNTEER INFANTRY,
Summerville, Va., December 1, 1862.

GENERAL: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to your order, I left the post on the 24th ultimo with 500 men. We were delayed several hours in crossing Gauley River, and it was after noon when the march was resumed. We reached a point 17 miles from Summerville that night. We marched at 6 o'clock on the morning of the 25th, and encamped that night near Cranberry road, on the top of Cold Knob.

Our march was resumed at 6.30 o'clock on the morning of the 26th, and we reached Cranberry road at 8 a. m. The storm and bad roads had delayed the cavalry, and they were three hours behind time. On their arrival, Colonel Paxton ordered me to take the advance and drive in the enemy's pickets, and then to open ranks and allow the cavalry to pass us and dash into the camp, and from that point return to our camp at this place. We proceeded down the mountain several miles, and met a party of the enemy's scouts. We fired upon them, and wounded 2; then opened ranks and allowed the cavalry to pass us, according to the previously arranged plan, after which we marched to the camp of the previous night, and on the morning of the 29th arrived in camp at this place.

Rain commenced falling the morning of the second day, and continued until we reached the top of Cold Knob, where we found a furious snow storm raging. Our clothing was completely wet through, and we had no opportunity of drying it. The snow continued to fall for the next thirty-six hours, and the cold to increase, and on the morning of the 26th we found our clothing frozen fast. In the rifles many of the hammers had collected ice between them and the lock-plates, so that

they could not be moved. The snow was from 6 to 8 inches deep; the cold was intense, and the men almost exhausted. Under these discouraging circumstances, a further prosecution of the expedition was abandoned.

I omitted to state that I found it impossible to gain the rear of the enemy's camp from the top of Cold Knob, as all the roads and paths came in above even their pickets.

Respectfully submitted.

P. P. LANE,

Colonel, Commanding Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

[Brig. Gen. GEORGE CROOK.]

No. 3.

Report of Col. John C. Paxton, Second West Virginia Cavalry.

HEADQUARTERS SECOND WEST VIRGINIA VOLUNTEER CAVALRY,
Camp Piatt, December 2, 1862.

SIR: In obedience to your order, I marched my command, consisting of Companies G, I, F, A, K, D, E, and H, Second West Virginia Volunteer Cavalry (in all, 475 men, rank and file, in good order), on the morning of November 24, for Summerville, arriving there at 10 p. m. the same day, a distance of 53 miles.

Left Summerville next morning at 7 o'clock, and arrived at the Hinkle farm at 4 p. m., 35 miles, and, being able to obtain some hay there, remained until 4 a. m. the 26th, when we took up the line of march, in a blinding snow-storm, for Greenbrier, via Cold Knob Mountain, where we arrived at 10 a. m. the same day; distance, 20 miles. Met Colonel Lane, Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Infantry, who was to assist me in breaking up a camp of the rebels at the foot of the mountain; but, on account of the severity of the weather and hard marching, he wished to return to his camp at Summerville. I asked him to take the advance, until we met the enemy's pickets, which he did, and, in about 1 mile, exchanged shots with 6 of the enemy, wounding 1. Colonel Lane at once opened his ranks, and gave us the road. We pushed rapidly into the enemy's camp, a distance of some 5 miles, effecting a complete surprise, at 12 m., the enemy scattering in all directions.

We killed 2, wounded 2, paroled 1, and captured 2 commissioned officers (1 captain and 1 second lieutenant), 111 non-commissioned officers and privates, 106 horses, and 5 mules; burned and destroyed about 200 Enfield and Mississippi rifles and 50 sabers, with other accouterments, stores, and supplies, and their camp tents, &c. I had 2 horses killed in the enemy's camp, and lost 10 on the march from fatigue and exhaustion.

The enemy was found 3 miles from the foot of Cold Knob Mountain, on Sinking Creek, Greenbrier County, West Virginia, at Lewis' Mill, and consisted of a part of five companies of cavalry, viz, Rockbridge Cavalry, Braxton Dragoons, Churchville Cavalry, Valley Cavalry, and Nighthawk Rangers. They were men who had been in the service fifteen months, and were located at this point to guard the mountain pass, and to organize a part of A. G. Jenkins' brigade. Our success was complete. We never lost a drop of blood.

After securing the prisoners and horses and destroying the camp, &c., we marched at 4 p. m. (26th) for Summerville, where we arrived on the 27th at noon, making 120 miles for men and horses, without food or rest,

except one feed of hay for horses, over the most rugged and mountainous part of Western Virginia. Remained in Summerville until the 29th. Left for Camp Piatt, and arrived in camp on the 30th at noon. My men suffered severely from frost. I left 2 men in the hospital at Summerville, whose boots we cut from their feet. Others were more or less frozen. My horses were very much cut down.

I cannot close this report without deservingly complimenting the officers and men; but, where all behaved so gallantly, it is impossible to particularize. But all honor is due Major Powell, who led the charge, and Company G, Captain McMahan, who led the column.

I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,

J. C. PAXTON,

Colonel, Comdg. Second West Virginia Volunteer Cavalry.

Capt. R. P. KENNEDY,

Asst. Adjt. Gen., First Div., Dept. of the Kanawha.

NOVEMBER 25, 1862.—Raid on Poolesville, Md.

REPORTS.

- No. 1.—Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Division.
- No. 2.—Brig. Gen. William E. Jones, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Brigade.
- No. 3.—Maj. E. V. White, Thirty-fifth Virginia Cavalry Battalion.

No. 1.

Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Division.

HEADQUARTERS CAV. DIV., ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,
March 3, 1863.

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward reports of scouts and skirmishes which took place in November last in the valley. These reports were very long reaching me, and then got accidentally mislaid until now.

I concur in the commendations bestowed by Brigadier General [W. E.] Jones upon Major [E. V.] White, Major [Thomas B.] Massie, and Lieutenant [E. C.] Randolph, Twelfth Virginia Cavalry. The last-named officer, now that a vacancy has occurred, is a meritorious case for promotion, for valor and skill, as major Twelfth Virginia Cavalry, *vice* Massie, promoted lieutenant-colonel, *vice* [R. H.] Burks, resigned.

Most respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. E. B. STUART,

Major-General, Commanding.

Brig. Gen. R. H. CHILTON,

Acting Adjutant and Inspector General.

No. 2.

Report of Brig. Gen. William E. Jones, C. S. Army, commanding brigade.

HEADQUARTERS JONES' BRIGADE,
Bartonsville, Va., December 7, 1862.

GENERAL: Please find inclosed the report of Maj. E. V. White relative to an expedition into Maryland by one of his companies. The daring