

A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF POTTERS RAID

The roots of Potter's Raid are found in Sherman's march out of South Carolina on his way to North Carolina. As Sherman's forces departed Columbia, South Carolina, he ordered his troops to take a line of march to the northeast. His intention was to convince the confederate command that he was headed to Charlotte, North Carolina while his real intention was to move toward eastern North Carolina. Kilpatrick's Cavalry was ordered north toward Charlotte and the infantry moved in a northeastern direction with Camden and Bishopville as the southern most points on the line of march. The confederate command took Sherman's bait and shifted forces to defend Charlotte and western North Carolina. With confederate troops out of his path he ordered the federal troops to move east through Cheraw and toward Bentonville and Raleigh.

Sherman's maneuvers meant that the current day counties of Sumter, Clarendon, Lee and most of Kersaw remained untouched by Sherman's main force. Large amounts of rail road locomotives and rolling stock were moved to that area on the lines of the South Carolina R.R. and the Wilmington and Manchester R.R. In addition, large amounts of military stores had also been stockpiled in the same region as Sherman's troops approached Columbia. News of the trapped trains and supplies reached Sherman and he sent orders to his South Carolina Coast garrison commanders to destroy the confederate railroad equipment and war supplies.

Major General Q.A. Gillmore ordered a provisional division assembled under the command of Brigadier General Edward E. Potter. Potter was ordered to destroy the railroads in the area between Florence, Sumter and Camden. The importance of the mission was pointedly made by Sherman's statement that "Those cars and locomotives should be destroyed if to do it costs you 500 men." Potter took command of the provisional division on 1 April 1865 at Georgetown. The division numbered 2,700 men composed of two infantry brigades and auxiliary troops.

The First Brigade commanded by Col. Philip P. Brown commander of the 157th N.Y consisted of:

157 N.Y. Volunteer Infantry augmented by a detachment of the 56th
N.Y. Veteran Volunteer Infantry
25th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry
107th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

The Second Brigade commanded by Col. Edward N. Hallowell commander of the 54th Massachusetts consisted of:

54th Massachusetts
32nd U.S. Colored Troops
102nd U.S. Colored Troops

In addition small detachments of the 1st N.Y. Engineers, 4th Massachusetts Cavalry and two guns of Battery B 3rd N.Y. Artillery accompanied the two infantry brigades.

The entire operation was supported logistically by the armed transport Savannah and light draft transports, Hooker and Planter escorted by U.S. Navy tin-clad tugs and launches on the Santee River.

Potter marched out of Georgetown on 5 April 1865.

From The Website:

<http://pottersraid.tripod.com/historicalbackground.html>

A more detailed account of the raid can be found at the website. . .

http://web.cortland.edu/woosterk/pot_raid.html

POTTER'S SOUTH CAROLINA RAID
8-21 April 1863

-INCLUDING-

Tar River
Rocky Mount
Epp's Ferry
Sumterville (Sumter)
Swift Creek
Spring Hill

Union Forces

1st Brigade - Colonel Phillip P. Brown

157th New York Infantry Regiment

(2 Companies, 56th New York Infantry--attached)

25th Ohio Infantry Regiment

107th Ohio Infantry Regiment

2nd Brigade - Colonel Edward N. Hallowell

8 Companies, 32nd U. S. Colored Troops
5 Companies, 102nd U. S. Colored Troops
54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment
Battery F, 3rd New York Artillery
4th Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment
1st New York Volunteer Engineers

CASUALTIES Killed-10, Wounded-72

Confederate Forces *

Brigadier General Pierce Manning Butler Young

Lewis's Kentucky Brigade - Brigadier General Joseph H. Lewis

3rd South Carolina Cavalry
4th South Carolina Mounted Infantry
6th South Carolina Mounted Infantry
9th South Carolina Mounted Infantry
Ferguson's South Carolina Battery

Hannon's Alabama Brigade - Colonel Moses W. Hannon

23rd Alabama Cavalry Battalion
53rd Alabama Partisan Rangers
Roswell's Georgia Battalion, 11th Georgia Cavalry Regiment
Hamilton's Field Battery

South Carolina Militia

20th South Carolina Militia Infantry Regiment --- Colonel George W. Lee
44th South Carolina Militia Infantry Regiment --- Colonel Connors
South Carolina Militia --- Colonel James Fowler Pressley
South Carolina Militia --- Colonel Caldwell
South Carolina Militia --- Lieutenant Colonel Brown
South Carolina Militia Cavalry --- Captain Colclough
South Carolina Militia --- Lieutenant Painpre
South Carolina Militia ---Lieutenant McQueen
South Carolina Militia ---Sergeant Durban
South Carolina Militia --- Lieutenant McGregor
South Carolina Militia

CASUALTIES Not Reported

* Confederate troops listed engaged Potter at different times during the raid

From The

Website:http://members.fortunecity.com/thegunny1/potters_south_carolina_raid_8apr63.htm

Account of Potter's Raid

By W N. Collins, Orderly Sergeant, Company H, 54th Massachusetts Infantry, Georgetown, South Carolina, April 30, 1865 writing in a letter home to the Newspaper describing the Units actions during Potter's Raid inland from Georgetown, SC.

... Well, we arrived at Georgetown, S.C., on the 31st (March 1865), and went into camp. On the 1st of April we started upon our errand through the State, and had nothing to molest us for three days. We saw nothing of the 'Johnnies," and on Friday the 8th of April, at Epp's Ferry, Cos. H and A were detached from the regiment to go and destroy the said Ferry. Myself, one corporal and fifteen privates were in the advance. On we went, neither hearing nor seeing any thing in particular. After advancing about two miles, and wading through water and mud, we spied a Johnny sitting upon his horse as a picket. He left his post and secreted himself. Halting my men for further orders, I received instructions to proceed forward with the utmost caution, and screen my men as much as possible in the woods. The swamp through which we had to pass was waist-deep.

Onward we went, and after getting through the swamp, not over seventy-five yards from Johnny, he saw that we were getting too close to him; and at that time the Second-Lieutenant of Co. A came along, and I told him that Johnny was getting ready to fire; and at that moment, Johnny's balls began to fall thick and fast around us.

The Lieutenant got wounded in the right arm. I had two men wounded - one in the right leg, the other in both shoulders; and it appeared to us that the Johnnies had nothing much but bird-shot to fire at us, which whizzed about our ears in perfect showers. The writer got stung slightly in the left hand by one of these diminutive missiles from Johnny's shot-gun. They saw that we were determined to complete the job, and they destroyed the levee and fled. So we returned to our command on the 8th. We entered Manningville with a loss of but one man killed, who belonged to the 4th Massachusetts Regiment.

On the 10th we left Manningville, and arrived at Sumterville on Sabbath, the 11th; and after a short and sharp fight, we took the place, captured three pieces of artillery complete, killed five rebels, wounded some more, and also captured a few.

We encamped in the city that night, and destroyed the depot, together with three locomotives and a train of thirty-five cars. We left on the 13th, after destroying every thing that fire would burn, and went to Manchester, and there destroyed one locomotive and a train of twenty cars.

The 54th was detailed to go seven miles from the place for the purpose of destroying some trestle-work. After a considerable amount of delay, the advance guard, which was from Co. F, Sergeant [Frank M.] Welch commanding, pushed forth. They had not gone far when they espied a train of cars, with locomotive attached, and a full head of steam on. The column at once halted and Colonel [Henry N.] Hooper went forward to see for himself and there, sure enough, was the train. The sharp report of a rifle soon told those on the train that the blood-hounds were on the track. The engineer immediately jumped from the train and ran for his life. Nothing could be seen of him but coat-tails and dust. The command to move forward was given. With a loud yell and tremendous cheer the boys charged over the trestle-work, three miles in length, caught the cars, and ran them ourselves in place of the rebels.

Lieutenant [Stephen A.] Swails got wounded in his right arm. There are forty cars and six locomotives, and we destroyed them all. Some of the cars were loaded. We then turned the track upsidedown. Sergeant Major John H. Wilson and Private Gee. Jorris, of Co. A, got mashed by the cars. Private Jorris got his collar-bone broken. The Sergeant Major has got partly over the injuries he received.

Leaving there, we encamped at Singleton's plantation, and sent two thousand contrabands to Georgetown in charge of the 32 U.S.C.T. When they returned, we started upon our mission - and from that time, the 14th, we fought every day with the rebels, and drove them before us. But at length they made a stand at Swiss Creek, and fought desperately. We captured nine prisoners. On the 15th we left for the purpose of taking Camden, which we did capturing all of the rebel sick and wounded there, numbering, at least, from three to four hundred men.

On the 16th. we left Camden, and from that we fought until we got to Swiss Creek, where the rebels again made a stand. Cos. F and H were on the skirmish line, the battalion on the reserve, the 102d U.S.C.T. in the centre, and the 3rd U.S.C.T. on the left wing. We drove them to their den, when they fought quite desperately for a time. For if they flee from the horsemen, how can they contend with the footmen? The rebels had a dam constructed all around them, and there was no way of getting at them but to pass over it in single file. The left

wing went to extreme right for the purpose of flanking Johnny and there it was that we lost our noble Lieutenant [Edward L. Stevens]. Who will help us mourn his loss - for he fell in defense of the dear old flag?

Corporal Uames P.] Johnson and Corporal [Andrew] Miller of Co. H had six privates wounded. But the 54th stormed the hill and carried it at the point of the bayonet, making themselves masters of the field, as they always do. Just like them! Brave boys they are! Who will say, Three cheers for the 54th Mass. Vols., 32d and I02d U.S.C.T., and for the 25th Ohio Vols., the I07th Ohio Vols., I5th and 56th N.Y. vols., and the 4th Mass., and the 3d New York Artillery, and for General [Edward E.] Potter's brave troops? For we are the ones that destroyed and drove the rebels from the field, totally demoralizing them.

The last fight we had was at Statesburg, and there the rebels stood for the last time; for we slaughtered them in great numbers. They left the field strewn with their dead and wounded. We captured, for the rest, in South Carolina, on our return to Georgetown, fifteen locomotives, and one hundred and forty cars loaded with ammunition, small arms and stores. We destroyed them all. We captured five hundred contrabands, five hundred prisoners, destroyed a vast deal of property, and captured about eighty head of horses.

We are now encamped at Georgetown, and I hope we will soon be home with our friends and relatives.

From The Website:

<http://www.awod.com/gallery/probono/cwchas/potter.html>