

STUART'S REPORT OF HIS RIDE AROUND McCLELLAN'S ARMY

Jeb Stuart's report of his celebrated ride around McClellan's Army during the Peninsula Campaign

This is Jeb Stuart's report concerning his famous ride around McClellan's army during the Peninsula campaign. General Lee ordered the reconnaissance to learn whether the right flank of McClellan's army was vulnerable to attack. In a letter to his daughter-in-law, Lee says of the report that "The General deals in the flowering style...". Both Fitzhugh Lee and Rooney Lee took part in the expedition. General Lee's congratulatory General Orders No. 74 are also included on this page.

Stuart's raid, including skirmishes at Hawes' Shop, Old Church near Hanover Court-House, Garlick's Landing on the Pamunkey, etc.

June 13-15, 1862.

Report of Brig. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Brigade, with congratulatory orders.

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HDQRS. CAV. BRIG., DEPT. OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA
June 17, 1862.

GENERAL: In compliance with your written instructions I undertook an expedition to the vicinity of the enemy's lines on the Pamunkey with about 1,200 cavalry and a section of the Stuart Horse Artillery. The cavalry was composed of portions of the First, Fourth, and Ninth Virginia Cavalry. The second named, having no field officer present, was, for the time being, divided between the first and last mentioned, commanded, respectively, by Col. Fitz. Lee and Col. W. H. Fitzhugh Lee; also two squadrons of the Jeff. Davis Legion, commanded by Lieut. Col. W. T. Martin, the section of artillery being commanded by First Lieut. James Breathed.

Although the expedition was prosecuted farther than was contemplated

in your instructions I feel assured that the considerations which actuated me will convince you that I did not depart from their spirit, and that the boldness developed in the subsequent direction of the march was the quintessence of prudence.

The destination of the expedition was kept a profound secret (so essential to success) and was known to my command only as the actual march developed it. The force was quietly concentrated beyond the Chickahominy, near Kilby's Station, on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, and moved thence parallel to and to the left of that road. Scouts were kept far to the right to ascertain the enemy's whereabouts, and advanced guard, flankers, and rear guard to secure our column against surprise. I purposely directed my first day's march toward Louisa, so as to favor the idea of re-enforcing Jackson, and encamped just opposite Hanover Court-House, near South Anna Bridge (Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad), 22 miles from Richmond.

Our noiseless bivouac was broken early next morning, and without flag or bugle-sound we resumed our march, none but one knew whither. I, however, immediately took occasion to make known my instructions and plans confidentially to the regimental commanders, so as to secure an intelligent action and co-operation in whatever might occur. Scouts had returned, indicating no serious obstacles to my march from that to Old Church, directly in rear of and on the overland avenue of communication to New Bridge and vicinity.

I proceeded, therefore, via Hanover Court-House, upon the route to Old Church. Upon reaching the vicinity of Hanover Court-House I found it in possession of the enemy; but very little could be ascertained about the strength and nature of his force. I therefore sent Col. Fitz. Lee's regiment (First Virginia Cavalry) to make a detour to the right and reach the enemy's route behind him, to ascertain his force here and crush it, if possible; but the enemy, proving afterward to be 150 cavalry, did not tarry long, but left, my column following slowly down, expecting every moment to hurl him upon Lee; but owing to a bad marsh Colonel Lee did not reach the intersection of roads in time, and the cavalry (the Regular Sixth) passed on in the direction of Mechanicsville. This course deviating too much from our direction, after the capture of a sergeant they were allowed to proceed without interruption on their way.

Our march led thence to Taliaferro's Mill and Enon Church to Hawes' Shop; here we encountered the first pickets, surprised and caught several vedettes, and pushed boldly forward, keeping advance guard

well to the front. The regiment in front was the Ninth Virginia Cavalry (Col. W. H. F. Lee), whose advance guard, intrusted to the command of the adjutant (Lieutenant Robins), did admirable service, Lieutenant Robins handling it in the most skillful manner, managing to clear the way for the march with little delay, and infusing by a sudden dash at a picket such a wholesome terror that it never paused to take a second look.

Between Hawes' Shop and Old Church the advance guard reported the enemy's cavalry in force in front; it proved to be the Fifth Regular Cavalry (formerly the Second, commanded by yourself). The leading squadron was ordered forward at a brisk gait, the main body following closely, and gave chase to the enemy for a mile or two, but not coming up with him. We crossed the Totopotomoy, a strong position of defense, which the enemy failed to hold, confessing a weakness. In such places half a squadron was deployed afoot as skirmishers till the point of danger was passed.

On, on dashed Robins, here skirting a field, there leaping a fence or ditch, and clearing the woods beyond, when not far from Old Church the enemy made a stand, having been re-enforced.

The only mode of attack being in column of fours along the road, I still preferred to oppose the enemy with one squadron at a time, remembering that he who brings on the field the last cavalry reserve wins the day. The next squadron therefore moved to the front under the lamented Captain Latane, making a most brilliant and successful charge with drawn sabers upon the picketed ground, and, after a hotly-contested hand-to-hand conflict, put him to flight, but not till the gallant captain had sealed his devotion to his native soil with his blood. The enemy's rout (two squadrons by one of ours) was complete; they dispersed in terror and confusion, leaving many dead on the field and blood in quantities in their tracks. Their commander, Captain Royall, was reported mortally wounded.

Several officers and a number of privates were taken in this conflict, and a number of horses, arms, and equipments, together with five guidons. The woods and fields were full of the scattered and disorganized foe straggling to and fro, and but for the delay and the great incumbrance which they would have been to our march, many more could and would have been captured.

Col. Fitz. Lee, burning with impatience to cross sabers with his old regiment, galloped to the front at this point and begged to be allowed to participate with his regiment (the First Virginia Cavalry)

in the discomfiture of his old comrades, a request I readily granted, and his leading squadron pushed gallantly down the road to Old Church; but the fragments of Royall's command could not again be rallied, and Colonel Lee's leading squadron charged without resistance into the enemy's camp (five companies), and took possession of a number of horses, a quantity of arms and stores of every kind, several officers and privates. The stores as well as the tents in which everything had been left, were speedily burned, and the march resumed.

Here was the turning point of the expedition. Two routes were before me. - the one to return by Hanover Court-House, the other to pass around through New Kent, taking the chances of having to swim the Chickahominy and make a bold effort to cut the enemy's lines of communication. The Chickahominy was believed by my guide to be fordable near Forge Bridge. I was 14 miles from Hanover Court-House, which I would have to pass. If I returned, the enemy had a much shorter distance to pass to intercept me there; besides, the South Anna was impassable, which still further narrowed the chances of escape in that direction; the enemy, too, would naturally expect me to take that route. These circumstances led me to look with more favor to my favorite scheme, disclosed to you before starting, of passing around. It was only 9 miles to Tunstall's Station, on the York River Railroad, and that point once passed I felt little apprehension beyond. The route was one of all others which I felt sure the enemy would never expect me to take. On that side of the Chickahominy infantry could not reach me before crossing, and I felt able to whip any cavalry force that could be brought against me. Once on the Charles City side, I knew you would, when aware of my position, if necessary, order a diversion in my favor on the Charles City road, to prevent a move to intercept me from the direction of White Oak Swamp. Besides this, the hope of striking a serious blow at a boastful and insolent foe, which would make him tremble in his shoes, made more agreeable the alternative I chose. In a brief and frank interview with some of my officers I disclosed my views, but while none accorded a full assent, all assured me a hearty support in whatever I did.

With an abiding trust in God, and with such guarantees of success as the two Lees and Martin and their devoted followers, this enterprise I regarded as most promising. Taking care, therefore, more particularly, after this resolve, to inquire of the citizens the distance and the route to Hanover Court-House, I kept my horse's head steadily toward Tunstall's Station.

There was something of the sublime in the implicit confidence and unquestioning trust of the rank and file in a leader guiding them straight, apparently, into the very jaws of the enemy, every step appearing to them to diminish the faintest hope of extrication. Reports of the enemy's strength at Garlick's and Tunstall's were conflicting, but generally indicated a small number. Prisoners were captured at every step, and including officers, soldiers, and negroes.

The rear now became of as much importance as the front, but the duties of rear guard devolving upon the Jeff. Davis Legion, with the howitzer attached, its conduct was intrusted to its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Martin, in whose judgment and skill I had entire confidence. He was not attacked, but at one time the enemy appeared in his rear bearing a flag of truce, and party, 25 in number, bearing it, actually surrendered to his rear guard, so great was the consternation produced by our march. An assistant surgeon was also taken. He was route and not in charge of sick.

Upon arriving opposite Garlick's I ordered a squadron from the Ninth Virginia Cavalry to destroy whatever could be found at the landing on the Pamunkey. Two transports loaded with stores and a large number of wagons were here burned, and the squadron rejoined the column with a large number of prisoners, horses, and mules. A squadron of the First Virginia Cavalry (Hammond's) assisted in this destruction. A few picked men, including my aides, Burke, Farley, and Mosby, were pushed forward rapidly to Tunstall's to cut the wires and secure the depot. Five companies of cavalry, escorting large wagon trains, were in sight and seemed at first disposed to dispute our progress, but the sight of our column, led by Lee, of the Ninth, boldly advancing to the combat, was enough. Content with a distant view, they fled, leaving their train in our hands. The party that reached the railroad at Tunstall's surprised the guard at the depot (15 or 20 infantry), captured them without their firing a gun, and set about obstructing the railroad, but before it could be thoroughly done, and just as the head of our column reached it, a train of cars came thundering down from the Grand Army. It had troops on board and we prepared to attack it. The train swept off the obstructions without being thrown from the track, but our fire, delivered at only a few rods' distance, either killed or caused to feign death every one on board, the engineer being one of the first victims from the unerring fire of Captain Farley. It is fair to presume that a serious collision took place on its arrival at the White House, for it made extraordinary speed in that direction. The railroad bridge over Black Creek was fired under the direction of Lieutenant Burke, and it being now dark, the burning of the immense wagon train and the extricating of the

teams involved much labor and delay and illuminated the country for miles. The roads at this point were far worse than ours, and the artillery had much difficulty in passing. Our march was finally continued by bright moonlight to Talleyville, where we halted 3½ hours for the column to close up. At this point we passed a large hospital of 150 patients. I deemed it proper not to molest the surgeons and attendants in charge.

At 12 o'clock at night the march was continued without incident under the most favorable auspices to Forge Bridge (8 miles), over the Chickahominy, where we arrived just at daylight. Lee, of the Ninth, by personal experiment having found the stream not fordable, axes were sent for and every means taken to overcome the difficulties by improvised bridges and swimming. I immediately dispatched to you information of my situation and asked for the diversion already referred to. The progress in crossing was very slow at the point chosen, just above Forge Bridge, and learning that at the bridge proper enough of the debris of the old bridge remained to facilitate the construction of another, material for which was afforded by a large warehouse adjacent, I moved to that point at once. Lieut. Redmond Burke, who in every sphere has rendered most valuable service and deserves the highest consideration at the hands of the Government, set to work with a party to construct the bridge. A foot-bridge was soon improvised, and the horses were crossed over as rapidly as possible by swimming. Burke's work proceeded like magic; in three hours it was ready to bear artillery and cavalry, and as half of the latter had not yet crossed, the bridge enabled the whole to reach the other bank by 1 p.m. Another branch of the Chickahominy still farther on was with some difficulty forded, and the march was continued without interruption toward Richmond. Having passed the point of danger, I left the column with Colonel Lee, of the First. I rode on to report in person to you, reaching your headquarters at daylight next morning.

Returning to my command soon after, the prisoners, 165 in number, were transferred to the proper authority; 260 horses and mules captured, with more or less harness, were transferred to the quartermaster's departments of the different regiments, and the commands were sent to their respective camps. The number of captured arms has not been as yet accurately ascertained.

A pole was broken, which obliged us to abandon a limber this side of the Chickahominy.

The success attending this expedition will no doubt cause 10,000 or

15,000 men to be detached from the enemy's main body to guard his communication, besides accomplishing the destruction of millions' worth of property and the interruption for a time of his railroad communication.

The three commanders (the two Lees and Martin) exhibited the characteristics of skillful commanders, keeping their commands well in hand and managing them with skill and good judgment, which proved them worthy of a higher trust. Their brave men behaved with coolness and intrepidity in danger, unswerving resolution before difficulties, and stood unappalled before the rushing torrent of the Chickahominy, with the probability of an enemy at their heels armed with the fury of a tigress robbed of her whelps.

The perfect order and systematic disposition for crossing maintained throughout the passage insured its success and rendered it the crowning feature of a successful expedition.

I hope, general, that your sense of delicacy, so manifest on former occasions, will not prompt you to award to the two Lees (your son and nephew) less than their full measure of praise. Embalmed in the hearts and affections of their regiments; tried on many occasions requiring coolness, decision, and bravery; everywhere present to animate, direct, and control, they held their regiments in their grasp and proved themselves brilliant cavalry leaders.

The discipline maintained by Lieutenant-Colonel Martin in his command and referred to in his report is especially worthy of notice, as also his reference to the energy displayed by First Lieut. James Breathed, of the Stuart Horse Artillery.

I am most of all indebted to First Lieut. D. A. Timberlake, Corpl. Turner Doswell, and Private J. A. Timberlake, Fourth Virginia Cavalry; Second Lieut. Jones R. Christian and Private R. E. Frayser, Third Virginia Cavalry, who were ever in advance, and without whose thorough knowledge of the country and valuable assistance rendered I could have effected nothing.

Asst. Surg. J. B. Fontaine, Fourth Virginia Cavalry (the enemy giving him little to do in his profession), was bold and indefatigable in reconnaissance, and was particularly active in his effort to complete the bridge.

Capt. Heros von Borcke, a Prussian cavalry officer, who lately ran the blockade, assigned me by the honorable Secretary of War, joined

in the charge of the First Squadron in gallant style, and subsequently, by his energy, skill, and activity, won the praise and admiration of all.

To my staff present my thanks are especially due for the diligent performance of the duties assigned them; they were as follows: First Lieut. John Esten Cooke, ordnance officer, my principal staff officer for the occasion; First Lieut. C. Dabney, aide-de-camp.

Rev. Mr. Landstreet, Captains Farley, Towles, Fitzhugh, and Mosby rendered conspicuous and gallant service during the whole expedition.

My escort, under Corporal Hagan, are entitled individually to my thanks for their zeal and devotion to duty, particularly Privates Carson, of the Jeff. Davis Legion, and Pierson, of the Fourth Virginia Cavalry.

Herewith are submitted the reports of subordinate commanders, marked A, B, and C, and a map, D, showing my route, and papers, E, containing recommendations for promotion, and F, containing congratulatory orders published to the command upon its return.

I have the honor to be, general, your most obedient servant,

J. E. B. STUART,
Brigadier-General, Commanding Cavalry.

General R. E. LEE,
Commanding Department Northern Virginia.

[Inclosure E.]

HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY BRIGADE,

June 17, 1862.

General R. E. LEE,
Commanding Department of Northern Virginia:

GENERAL: I have the honor to append to my report of the Pamunkey expedition the following recommendations, which were suggested more particularly by the distinguished service rendered there:

1. Col. Fitzhugh Lee, First Virginia Cavalry, for promotion as brigadier-general of cavalry. In my estimation no one in the Confederacy possesses more of the elements of what a brigadier of cavalry ought to be than he.
2. Col. W. H. F. Lee, rivaling his cousin in the daring exploits of this expedition, established a like claim to promotion to the same grade.
3. Lieut. Col. W. T. Martin to have Shannon's and two other companies added to the Legion, so as to be colonel; a grade which he has fairly won.
4. Assist. Surg. J. B. Fontaine to be surgeon of his regiment (Fourth Virginia Cavalry), now without one. Dr. Fontaine is a man of signal military merit and an adept in his profession.
5. M. Heros von Borcke, a Prussian cavalry officer, has shown himself a thorough soldier and a splendid officer. I hope the Department will confer as high a commission as possible on this deserving man, who has cast his lot with us in the trying hour.
6. First Lieut. Redmond Burke to be captain, for the important service rendered by him on this occasion.
7. Capts. W. D. Farley and J. S. Mosby, without commission, have established a claim for position which a grateful country will not, I trust, disregard. Their distinguished services run far back toward the beginning of the war, and present a shining record of daring and usefulness.
8. First Lieut. W. T. Robins, adjutant Ninth Virginia Cavalry, would be a valuable addition to the Regular Army.

I have the honor to be, general, your most obedient servant,

J. E. B. STUART,
Brigadier-General, Commanding Cavalry.

[Inclosure F.]

GENERAL ORDERS No. 11.
HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY BRIGADE,

June 17, 1862.

The general of cavalry, profoundly grateful to Divine Providence for the signal success attending the late expedition to the enemy's rear, takes pleasure in announcing in orders his high appreciation of the bravery and cheerful endurance of the command. History will record in imperishable characters and a grateful country will remember with gratitude that portion of the First, Fourth, and Ninth Virginia Cavalry, the Jeff. Davis Legion, and the section of the Stuart Horse Artillery engaged in the expedition. What was accomplished is known to you, to the public, and to the enemy, but the passage of the Chickahominy under existing difficulties furnishes a separate chapter of praise for the whole command.

The general will certainly despair of no enterprise when he can hold such guarantees of success as Cols. Fitzhugh Lee, W. H. F. Lee, and Martin, and their brave and devoted commands.

The loss of the gallant and heroic Captain Latane, leading his squadron in a brilliant and successful charge, was a severe blow to us, but the enemy routed and fleeing before him will bear witness to a heart intrepid and a spirit invincible, whose influence will not be lost after death, while his regiment will want no better battle-cry for victory than "Avenge Latane!"

Proud of his command, the general trusts that it will never lose sight of what is at stake in this struggle - the reputation now its province to maintain.

By command of Brigadier-general J. E. B. Stuart:

J. T. W. HAIRSTON,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

GENERAL ORDERS No. 74.
HDQRS. DEPT. OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA.

June 23, 1862.

The general commanding announces with great satisfaction to the Army the brilliant exploit of Brig. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart with part of the troops under his command. This gallant officer, with portions of the

First, Fourth, and Ninth Virginia Cavalry, a part of the Jeff. Davis Legion, with whom were the Boykin Rangers and a section of the Stuart Horse Artillery, on June 13, 14, and 15, made a reconnoissance between the Pamunkey and Chickahominy Rivers, and succeeded in passing around the rear of the whole Federal army, routing the enemy in a series of skirmishes, taking a number of prisoners, and destroying and capturing stores to a large amount. Having most successfully accomplished its object, the expedition recrossed the Chickahominy almost in the presence of the enemy with the same coolness and address that marked every step of its progress, and with the loss of but one man, the lamented Captain Latane, of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, who fell bravely leading a successful charge against a superior force of the enemy.

In announcing this signal success to the Army the general commanding takes great pleasure in expressing his admiration of the courage and skill so conspicuously exhibited throughout by the general and the officers and men under his command.

In addition to the officers honorably mentioned in the report of the expedition, the conduct of the following privates has received the special commendation of their respective commanders: Privates Thomas P. Clapp, Company D, First Virginia Cavalry, and J. S. Mosby, serving with the same regiment; Privates Ashton, Brent, R. Herring, F. S. Herring, and H. F. Coleman, Company E, Ninth Virginia Cavalry.

By command of General Lee:

R. H. CHILTON,
Assistant Adjutant-General