

O.R.— SERIES I—VOLUME XXXIV/1 [S# 61]

MARCH 23-MAY 3, 1864—The Camden (Arkansas) Expedition.

No. 6.—Reports of Brig. Gen. Samuel A. Rice, U.S. Army, commanding First Brigade.

At daylight I went to the rear to see the Thirty-third Iowa, and finding them too far from support, I ordered Colonel Mackey to bring in his skirmishers, preparatory to falling back, and sent to you for permission to bring the regiment back to the remainder of my brigade. As soon as Colonel Mackey's skirmishers commenced to move, the enemy commenced the attack. I then immediately ordered the Fiftieth Indiana up to their support, forming that regiment on the left. Receiving orders from you to fall back still farther, I formed a new line with the Ninth Wisconsin and Twenty-ninth Iowa about half a mile in the rear of my first line and withdrew my first line behind it. The Thirty-third Iowa, which had been without fires all night, was now permitted to go to the rear to get breakfast. I then formed the Fiftieth *en echelon* on the left and crossed the detachment of the Second Brigade over the creek on my right with two companies of the Twenty-ninth Iowa. My line had barely been formed and skirmishers deployed when the enemy renewed the attack. Their efforts seemed at first principally directed to my right flank. They were repulsed in this attack, but immediately made a determined assault on my left. I now sent the Thirty-third Iowa to the left of the Fiftieth Indiana. The assault of the enemy was heavy and determined, and they succeeded in turning the left flank of the Thirty-third, driving them some 250 yards. At this juncture the Twelfth Kansas Infantry came forward and I moved them up to the left of the Thirty-third. They came up with a cheer and drove the enemy before them. The Thirty-third then advanced, and at the same time my whole line was moved up nearly 300 yards beyond its former position. The enemy now again began to turn his attention to my right and threw a force across Toxie Creek, which covered my right, and moved down through the dense woods and got a raking fire on my right. The Second Kansas (colored) came up at this time, and I threw them forward in advance of the Ninth Wisconsin and Twenty-ninth Iowa to relieve those regiments, as their ammunition was nearly all expended. The Forty-third Illinois had moved up; under your orders, to support the troops on the right of the creek. The Twenty-seventh Wisconsin had also moved up to support my left. The enemy now brought up a section of artillery and furiously renewed the attack from the open field in front of my right. After a long, desperate struggle he was repulsed and the Second Kansas Colored Infantry and Twenty-ninth Iowa Infantry moved forward and took his guns. These two guns, with their caissons, <ar61\_698> were brought off. With the exception of brisk skirmishing, the firing lulled for a while, during which time my troops replenished their cartridge-boxes and prepared for another attack, which was expected to follow. The enemy now made a feint on my right and immediately followed it by an assault on the left. The Fiftieth Indiana and Thirty-third Iowa, flanked and supported by the Twelfth Kansas, four companies of the Fortieth Iowa, and the detachment of the Second Brigade (which had some time before been moved from the right to that point), vigorously poured their fire into the advancing columns of the enemy. As this fight was going on while I was moving to the left of my line I was struck by a ball in the foot and compelled to leave the field, and from this time I know nothing of the engagement from personal observation. After I left the field the fight continued nearly three-quarters of an hour, at the end of which time the rebel forces received their last repulse and drew off at 12 o'clock, leaving us masters of the field. Owing to the rain and spongy nature of the ground I did not bring my artillery into action, and to the infantry alone is due all the glory of this well-fought battle. Three colors were taken from the enemy by my command--2 were taken by the Fiftieth Indiana, and 1 by the Ninth Wisconsin.

**DOCUMENTATION OF CAPTURE OF AN ARKANSAS CONFEDERATE FLAG  
BY THE 9<sup>TH</sup> WISCONSIN INFANTRY AT THE BATTLE OF JENKIN'S FERRY,  
ARKANSAS ON APRIL 30, 1864**

While there is no word for word description of the taking of a flag by the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, it is mentioned in the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* in the report of Brig. General Samuel A. Rice. In closing his report to his superiors he states that 3 colors were taken, 2 by the 50<sup>th</sup> Indiana and 1 by the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, which thereby proves the 9<sup>th</sup> did indeed capture a Confederate flag.

The main proof of this being an Arkansas flag is determined by the after action reports of various Union and Confederate officers in describing the fighting at Jenkin's Ferry. All reports are found in the *Official Records*, which were compiled by Congress in the 1880's. The proof is in the re-creation of the fighting that centered in the field known as Cooper's Field, of which the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin was heavily engaged. The 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin had previously repelled two different brigade assaults, withdrawn and resupplied with ammo, and then placed in a reserve position behind their original line of earlier. When the 3<sup>rd</sup> Confederate brigade attacked (Gause) it met with success and drove Union regiments back stationed along the edge of Cooper's Field. The 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin and 50<sup>th</sup> Indiana then found themselves in the front lines again and eventually drove the 3<sup>rd</sup> Confederate attack back across the field. This was the only time the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin entered the field after the battle opened. In the center of the field of approximately 300 yards in size, was a swale or depression which the Confederate brigades successively took shelter from the withering Union fire to their front along the far edge of the field. All 3 brigades were all Arkansas brigades consisting of 9 different regiments. The fourth Confederate brigade made its attack as the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisc and 50<sup>th</sup> Ind were in the middle of the field and succeeded in driving them (9<sup>th</sup> Wisc and 50<sup>th</sup> Ind) back into the woods. It was evidently here that the 9<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> regiments picked up the dropped colors of 3 unnamed Arkansas regiments.

Soon afterwards, the Union troops begin breaking contact and moving to the rear to get across the swollen Saline River which had finally been bridged with a pontoon bridge. At no time other than the previously mentioned instance did the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisc Inf enter Cooper's Field where the Confederates had halted during the battle. It was only at that time they could have obtained the flag they captured. Up until that point it had only been Arkansas units in the swale, pinned down in the field which therefore gives proof the flag had to be an Arkansas unit.

For documentation purposes all battle reports can be found in the OR's, Series I, Volume 34/part 1. All of the above information can be obtained, if so desired, from those reports of commanders namely, (Union) General Rice, Colonel C. E. Salomon; (Confederate) Generals Tappan, Hawthorne, Gause, Churchill, Lt. Col. T Thomson and other regimental commanders in each of the brigades.

In summation, the flag taken by the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin had to be from one of the regiments in Churchill's Arkansas Division, consisting of the brigades of Tappan, Hawthorne and

Gause. Exactly which unit is impossible to determine but could have been any one of the following: 19/24<sup>th</sup> Ark Inf Consolidated, 33<sup>rd</sup> Ark Inf, 29<sup>th</sup> Ark Inf, 34<sup>th</sup> Ark Inf, 35<sup>th</sup> Ark Inf, ~~39~~<sup>39</sup><sup>th</sup> Ark Inf, 26<sup>th</sup> Ark Inf, 32<sup>nd</sup> Ark Inf, or 36<sup>th</sup> Ark Inf. These were the regiments pinned down at various times in the swale in Cooper's field by the 9<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin.

Included with this letter and documentation are the maps drawn by US National Park Service Historian, Ed Bearss, who is the authority on the Civil War for the Park Service. These are from his book on the Camden Expedition of which Jenkins Ferry was a part. It is titled, *Steele's Retreat from Camden and the Battle of Jenkin's Ferry*.