



September 2019

License Plate Along the French Broad and Little Pigeon



*This battlefield preservation supporter visited Walters State Community College in Sevierville where a Civil War Trails marker describes the largest Civil War skirmish in Sevier County. The **January 27, 1864** battle between Union and Confederate cavalry extended from the French Broad River at Dandridge to the Little Pigeon River at Sevierville.*

In a strategy to push Confederates out of their winter headquarters, Union Cavalry moved to the south side of the French Broad River disrupting Confederate foraging and capturing supply wagons. Anxious to curtail federal operations, Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's cavalry brigades and artillery

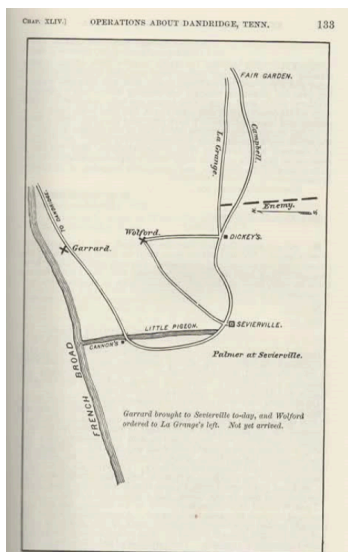
concentrated near **Fair Garden**. On the morning of January 27th, in heavy fog, Union Brig. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis ordered an attack. During the ensuing battle, the 4th Indiana Cavalry, under the command of Col. Edward McCook charged with sabers, routing and scattering the Confederates. The next day, Sturgis broke off another attack when he discovered the approach of Longstreet's large force.

Before he left, he attacked Confederate Brig. Gen. Frank Armstrong's reinforced cavalry, about 3-4 miles away. Suffering serious casualties, and lacking ammunition and supplies, the federals withdrew. Battle casualties: Union: 65 Confederate: 100.

Facing insufficient forage and supplies for a further offensive campaign in Tennessee, Longstreet's Corps moved to Virginia, joining Lee's army at the Battle of the Wilderness in May. Union forces continued to contend with small actions and guerilla warfare but would no longer face a major Confederate threat in East Tennessee.

"The nicest battle we ever fought" Henry Campbell, a bugler with Captain Eli Lilly's 9th Indiana Artillery wrote these words in his account of the battle. Campbell was likely reflecting on Lilly's effective use and deployment of his artillery and the dramatic saber charge of the 4th Indiana. Lilly went on to become the founder of the Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Company.

"They would rather have his head..." Campbell also recounts the story of Col. James P. Brownlow with the 1st East TN who was separated from his men during the battle. Brownlow captured a Texas Ranger and agreed to give him a "fine gold watch and his liberty if he would guide him through the Rebel lines." When safely beyond the Confederate pickets, Brownlow released the prisoner along with his watch. Campbell remarked, "if the rebels only knew he was in their power, they would never get over it...they would rather have his head than a whole regiment of our forces."



Filed by Brig. Gen. Sturgis on the day of the battle, this map shows the positions of Union Commanders LaGrange, Garrad, Campbell, and Wolford and their troops as they attacked Confederate forces, "within 2 miles of Sevierville," across the road to Fair Garden. Dickey's farm was Sturgis' HQ during the battle.

Campbell's account is from *Yankee Artillerymen, Through the Civil War with Eli Lilly's Indiana Battery*, by John W. Rowell.

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