

Official Records-- SERIES I--VOLUME XVI/1 [Serial # 22]

SEPTEMBER 27-28, 1862.--Skirmishes at Augusta (27th) and Brookville (28th), Ky.
No. 1.--Report of Lieut. Col. H. Blair Wilson, Forty-fourth Ohio Infantry

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HDQRS. U.S. FORCES, *Maysville, Ky., Sept. 29, 1862.*

SIR: About dusk on the evening of the 27th instant a special messenger brought me the intelligence from Ripley that Col. Basil W. Duke, <page 1012> with about 750 of John Morgan's gang of rebels and two small pieces of artillery, had attacked Colonel Bradford's command at Augusta, 18 miles below this place, and, after a most desperate resistance on the part of Colonel Bradford and his men, had succeeded in capturing Colonel Bradford and his entire force. I immediately assembled all the available force at my command, being 325 infantry and one 6-pounder piece of artillery, and sent them, under command of the Hon. William H. Wadsworth, to Germantown, 12 miles distant from Maysville. I also dispatched a courier after 100 cavalry (the only mounted force I had) that I had sent to Flemingsburg, about 2 o'clock that afternoon, to capture or drive off a rebel recruiting party and some of Humphrey Marshall's cavalry, which were there. I instructed Colonel Wadsworth to reach Germantown before daylight and remain there until I could arrive with re-enforcements. In the mean time a boat had been sent up the river about 8 miles to bring down a body of Home Guards to take possession of Maysville and repel any attempt that I feared might be made to make a raid on that place in my absence. I then took a boat and went to Ripley, where I found 175 of the armed and organized militia and one smooth-bore 6-pounder field piece. I appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Edwards, of the Militia, commander of this force, and immediately crossed the Ohio to Dover, and started with them to Germantown, 11 miles distant, where we arrived a little after daylight. I ordered Col. E. Grand Girard, of Ripley, to procure provisions for my men, and after collecting all the force he could to press on after me.

Colonel Wadsworth had reached Germantown before daylight. He had posted pickets on all the roads and had taken every necessary precaution to aid my design of surprising the enemy. My original design was to march down from Germantown to Augusta, having ascertained that a march of only 3 miles from Germantown in that direction would bring me completely in the rear of the enemy and render a successful retreat on his part quite improbable, my design being, however, to surprise him at Augusta; but some scouts that Colonel Wadsworth sent out brought in the intelligence that Colonel Duke, after burning the best part of the town of Augusta, had retired in the direction of Brookville, and had probably reached that place before midnight. I at once set out for Brookville, 7 miles distant from Germantown, and was over-taken on the way by the cavalry from Flemingsburg, which had then marched since 2 o'clock the preceding evening more than 60 miles. I arrived within three-quarters of a mile from Brookville about 8 a.m.. when I halted and ordered Captain Youart, commanding detachment of the Forty-fourth Ohio Volunteers, to proceed by a circuitous route and take possession of the Falmouth road, concealing himself from the view of the enemy. I did this, being well assured that the enemy would retreat on that road. Captain Youart had just started when Judge Bush, who had been sent with his cavalry to the heights to reconnoiter, informed me that the enemy was forming in line of battle. I was then satisfied that the enemy had notice of our approach, and my principal force being militia and undrilled recruits, and

knowing that the enemy outnumbered me, I thought it imprudent to divide my force, and countermanded my order to Captain Youart. It was very unfortunate that I did so. The truth was that the enemy had no notice of my presence, and had formed his line with the view of marching out on the Falmouth road. This was detected upon my arrival at the heights overlooking the town. It was then too late to take possession of the Falmouth road, and I could not, from any position on that side of the town, play on the <page 1013> rebels with artillery. I therefore ordered my detachment of the Forty-fourth Ohio Volunteers to charge at double-quick time down into the town, and I ordered the artillery and the remainder of my force to follow them promptly at quick-time. This was the first notice that Colonel Duke had of our presence. He, with a guard of 25 men, was in the courthouse at that moment, and he was paroling prisoners. Some of my cavalry, seeing the Forty-fourth running into town, became excited, and imprudently and without orders rushed in advance of the Forty-fourth down a road leading to the rear of the court-house. Colonel Duke rushed out, mounted his men, and dashed off on the Falmouth road, passing within 25 yards of my detachment of the Forty-fourth Ohio, which mistook them for our own men, who had charged around the court-house. They were dressed very much as our own cavalry. I felt greatly annoyed, but under the circumstances I could not censure the men for not firing on them. We pressed to the other side of the town, and perceiving that the main body had halted about half a mile distant on hearing the alarm, I ordered the artillery into position and commenced shelling them. The third shot exploded in their midst, killing 6 and wounding 1, when they retreated precipitately toward Falmouth and were soon out of the range of our cannon. Between 30 and 40 prisoners were released that Duke did not have time to parole. Some of them rushed out and fled, and I do not know the precise number thus released.

Our loss was 1 killed. He belonged to the Fourteenth Kentucky Cavalry. He was shot from an alley, I think by a citizen of Brookville about the same time Colonel Duke escaped from the court-house.

At noon we started for Augusta, 9 miles distant, and were overtaken by two wagon loads of provisions and 100 more men, under Colonel Grand-Girard. We reached Augusta before sundown, where boats were procured, and we arrived at this post the same night before 9 o'clock.

I do not think men could be found who will bear up with more fortitude under privation, hunger, and a most fatiguing march than did all the men on this occasion. Col. Charles A. Marshall, Hon. William H. Wadsworth, and Judge Bush, of Maysville; Colonel Edwards and Colonel Grand-Girard, of Ripley, volunteered to accompany me, and I feel under great obligations to them for the part taken by each. More than half of my command were citizens, but all marched and behaved like veteran troops, excepting on the occasion when the cavalry charged without orders, and their zeal and eagerness deprived us of Colonel Duke and 25 of his men. They made, however a most handsome dash.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

H. B. WILSON, *Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding Post.*

[To] Maj. N.H. MCLEAN, *Asst. Adjt. Gen. and Chief of Staff, Dept. of the Ohio*