

Snow Hill

**tennessee
civil war
preservation
association**

NARRATIVE

On April 3, 1863, two Union brigades under Gen. Stanley advanced to this position to battle a Confederate Division commanded by Col. Gano of Morgan's Cavalry ½ mile east on Snow Hill. Union wounded were taken to the Williams house 300 yards to the east. Union dead were buried 300 yards northeast in unmarked graves. Confederate dead were buried near the Methodist Church 4 miles east in unmarked graves. Stone breastworks used by the Confederates are still present at the foot of Snow Hill (From Tennessee Historical Commission Marker near site)

HISTORICAL THEMES

Crucible for Leadership, Guerilla Warfare

EXPLANATION OF ATTACHMENTS/VIDEO:

Account of engagement

LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

N/A

COUNTY:

DeKalb

DATE:

4/13/1863

GEO COORDINATES:

36° 0'31.89"N

85°57'26.09"W

PRESERVATION

OPPORTUNITY INDEX:

MEDIUM

CONFEDERATE UNITS:

Brig. Gen. John Hunt

Morgan

Col. R.M. Gano

Col. Basil Duke

UNION UNITS:

Col. James

Parramore, 2nd

Cavalry Brigade

Account per Thomas Gray Webb (A Bicentennial History of Dekalb County, Tennessee Hardcover – January 1, 1995; contributed by the Savage-Goodner Camp 1513 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans):

"On April 2, 1863, an advance was made by a force of Federals under John T. Wilder and including part of Stokes' cavalry. After some skirmishing, the Confederates took a position just east of Liberty and camped that night in line of battle. The Federal forces spent the night a mile or so west of Liberty. During the night the Confederates sent out scouts, and they reported that not only was there a large force of infantry behind the Federal cavalry, but that more Federal troops were advancing from Readyville and Carthage. With the odds so heavily against them, it was decided to withdraw most of the Confederate force to Snow's Hill during the night. The Sixth Kentucky Regiment under Major Bullit remained in front of the town, where they were charged at day break by the Union cavalry. The Confederates were rapidly pressed backward through the town until the Federals came within range of the Confederate artillery on the hill east of Liberty. This checked the Federals for a while, but they soon pushed forward again until they reached the covered bridge across Dry Creek, where Dowelltown now is. When the Federals were crowded up at this bridge, Byrne's Confederate battery opened fire and burst shells right in their midst. However, Federal artillery soon drove the Confederate artillery away and the main Federal force advanced on to Snow's Hill." "It was thought that Snow's Hill would be easily defended, but this turned out not to be the case. The Confederates had established their positions on the turnpike all along the hill, but heavy artillery fire and infantry attacks soon forced them to withdraw farther back toward the top of the hill. Meanwhile a column of Federals, possibly led by Joe Blackburn, had gone up Dry Creek and out the Mann's Hill road to cut off the Confederates from the rear. This road went through the Farler Hollow, up the hill and out the ridge to meet the turnpike near what was then the Atwell Schoolhouse, where the Snow's Hill Community Center now is. Captain Quirk's scouts fought a delaying action against these Federals on the Mann's Hill road and were able to prevent them from cutting off the Confederate force and trapping them between the two parts of the Federal army. The Confederate troops on Snow's Hill soon saw the danger they were in. Lieutenant B.L. Ridley wrote,

'Suddenly we saw the Yankees coming around the hill on the Dry Creek road. Some of the men said it was Joe Blackburn in lead of the cavalry. We fell back on Duke's regiment, while they fell back on another regiment, so that we were all jumbled up together. Then our stampede began. We were stampeded like cattle on the prairie.' Lieutenant Ridley was almost captured when his pony ran into a mudhole and fell over two or three other horses that had floundered there. However, he escaped with wet clothes and a mouthful of mud."

"General Morgan's brother-in-law, Basil Duke, along with Colonel Smith, returned from McMinnville just in time to meet the first group of men coming toward Smithville from Snow's Hill. He reported, 'The moral condition was the most singular I ever witnessed. There was no panic, no running, jostling, [nor] wild fear. They road along quietly, talked rationally, seemed utterly free from any lively and immediate apprehension but just to be their timidity. It made some of them go clear off, swim unfordable streams, and stay away for days. We were unprovided with a guard, and although we could stop these fellows until the road was jammed and packed with them, it was utterly impossible to make them turn back. At length, in disgust, we gave up the attempt, and rode on to see what was the condition of affairs nearer the scene of actual fighting.' "

"There they found that both sides had run out of ammunition, and that the Federals had ended their pursuit. The Confederates continued their retreat toward Smithville, and the wagon train was ordered on to McMinnville. Some of Morgan's men, who were dressed in blue overcoats, came out on the road in front of the wagon train. The teamsters took them for Yankees and ran off in every direction. Some turned their teams and headed back to Smithville, while others floundered off the road and tried to drive through impassable thickets. Several of the wagons were badly damaged before order could be restored. Of the entire battle of Snow's Hill, Basil Duke wrote, 'The division received more injury from this affair than I would have supposed a hard fight and serious defeat would have done it. Nearly two weeks were required to collect the fugitives. General Morgan, on his way to join us on the night of the 3rd, met a straggler, wandering loosely about, and demanded sternly why he was absent from his regiment.' 'Well, General', answered the follow ingenuously, 'I'm scattered.' "

The battle of Snow's Hill engaged about 2,000 men on each side, a sizable number, but not many in comparison with the really big battles of the war. The Battle of

Murfreesboro, for example, engaged about 40,000 men on each side. There were several casualties in the Snow's Hill battle. Some of those killed were buried near the old Atwell Schoolhouse, while a number of the wounded were treated free of charge by Dr. John A. Fuson at his home on Dry Creek.

Before April of 1863, DeKalb Countians had learned the costs of war from a distance by burying their dead and caring for wounded from Shiloh, Perryville, Seven Pines and Murfreesboro. But never before had it been unsafe to leave their homes or go about daily life. From this point until well after the final Confederate surrender in June 1865, it was never safe. In June, Rosecrans settled on other routes onto the Highland Rim at Beech Grove and Bradyville and did not bring his army into DeKalb County, but peace did not come. Instead, chaos followed as DeKalb County became strategically unimportant to both sides and not effectively governed by either. Red of blood rather than the white of the dogwoods marked the springs which followed. DeKalb County became as lawless as the border areas of Missouri and Kentucky as the bushwhackers took the place of due process

LEGEND OF TERMS:

Historical themes: Topics and subject matter that characterize the battlefield including Control of Tennessee's Resources, Crucible for Leadership, Guerilla Warfare, Transformation in Warfare, Enslaved People, and Influence on Campaign. Sites are identified that exhibit themes at moderate to high levels, and some sites may contain one or more Historical Themes.

Preservation Opportunity Index (POI): A rating assigned for each battlefield to indicate relative opportunity and potential for successful site preservation. The Index is generated by a model that evaluates ratings assigned for site significance, condition, risk of loss, protection potential, and opportunities for interpretation. Based upon the POI values for each region in Tennessee (West, Middle, East), sites are indicated as having High, Medium, or Low opportunity.

Geo Coordinates: General/central location of the battlefield area per latitude and longitude coordinates utilized in Google Earth

DO YOU HAVE INFORMATION ON A BATTLE SITE?

Please email us at info@tcwpa.org and we will reach out to you soon. If you have copies of documents or photos to share, you can include those. If you want to discuss by phone, we will schedule that too.

HELP US COLLECT INFORMATION TO PRESERVE THESE BATTLEFIELDS

TCWPA's Statewide Preservation Plan team captains are recruiting volunteers to help gather information about many of the lesser-known sites with hopes of verifying the condition of each site and identifying opportunities for preservation and interpretation.


If you are interested in helping, please contact TCWPA at info@tcwpa.org .

TCWPA will not publish nor release any confidential information, or the name of the contributor, unless you request to be recognized.

Thank you!



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Have Information on a Civil War Battlesite?

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