

Charleston & Calhoun

**tennessee
civil war
preservation
association**

NARRATIVE

On December 28, 1863 Confederate cavalry commanded by Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler attacked a Union wagon train on the Hiwassee River bridge at Charleston, Tennessee. The 2nd Missouri Infantry (Col. Bernard Leibold) and a brigade of cavalry commanded by Col. Eli Long successfully defended the train and routed Wheeler's cavalry.

HISTORICAL THEMES

Controlling Resources, Crucible for Leadership, Guerilla Warfare, Influence on Campaign

EXPLANATION OF ATTACHMENTS/VIDEO:

Maps and reports from Official Records

LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

N/A

COUNTY:

Bradley

DATE:

12/28/1863

GEO COORDINATES:

35.2873° N,
84.7583° W

PRESERVATION

OPPORTUNITY INDEX:

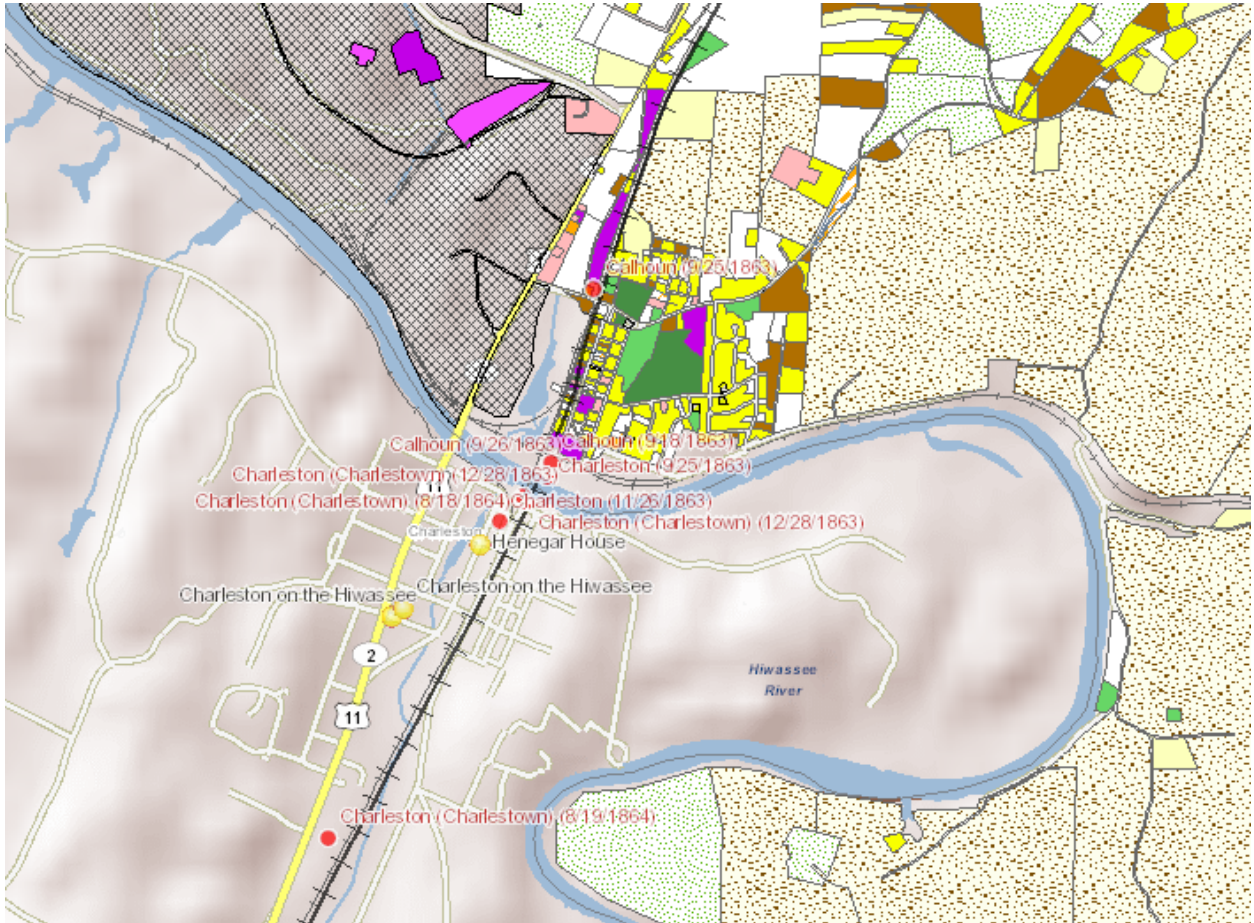
LOW

CONFEDERATE UNITS:

Gen. Joseph
Wheeler's Cavalry

UNION UNITS:

2nd Missouri Infantry
2nd Cavalry
Brigade-Col. Eli Long





DECEMBER 28, 1863.-Action at Calhoun and Skirmish at Charleston, Tennessee
REPORTS.

No. 1.- Major General George H. Thomas, U. S. Army, commanding Department of the Cumberland, with complimentary letter to Colonel Eli Long.

Numbers 2.- Colonel Eli Long, Fourth Ohio Cavalry, commanding Second Cavalry Brigade.

Numbers 3.- Colonel Bernard Laiboldt, Second Missouri Infantry.

No. 1.

Report of Major General George H. Thomas, U. S. Army, commanding Department of the Cumberland, with complimentary letter to Colonel Eli Long.

CHATTANOOGA, Tennessee, December 29, 1863.

(Received 1.45 p. m., 30th.)

SIR: Colonel Eli Long, Fourth Ohio Cavalry, commanding Second Division of Cavalry, reports from Calhoun, Tennessee, December 28, that the rebel General Wheeler, With 1,200 or 1,500 cavalry and mounted infantry, attacked Colonel Laiboldt, escorting a supply train from Chattanooga to Knoxville, about 10 this a. m., Charleston, on south bank of the Hiwassee. The train and escort had reached and encamped at Charleston last night, and Colonel Laiboldt's skirmishers were hotly engaged with the enemy this a. m., before Colonel Long was apprised of their approach. He immediately mounted the small

force for duty in his camp at the time (150 men) and crossed the river to Colonel Laiboldt's support. The rebels shortly afterward gave way, Long pursuing them closely.

Discovering a portion of their force cut off on the right, he charged them with sabers, completely demoralizing and scattering them in great confusion in every direction. Several of the enemy (number not known) were killed and wounded. One hundred and twenty one prisoners, including 5 commissioned officers, were captured. The main rebel column fled, and was pursued for 5 miles, on the Dalton road, and, when last seen, was fleeing precipitately. Long's loss was 1 man slightly wounded. For this and many other gallant acts of Colonel Long, since serving in this department, I earnestly recommend him for promotion to brigadier-general of volunteers.

The officer in command of the courier station at Cleveland also reports that he was attacked early this morning, December 28, by a force of about 100 rebels. He drove them off.

GEO. H. THOMAS,

Major-general.

Major General H. W. HALLECK,

General-in-Chief.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND,

Chattanooga, January 1, 1864.

Colonel ELI LONG,

Commanding Brigade, Calhoun:

COLONEL: Your report of your engagement with the enemy on the morning of the 28th was duly received. It was a very pretty affair indeed.

I have the honor to inform you that there are now en route to your station four pieces of artillery, escorted by two regiments of infantry. This artillery is intended as a re-enforcement to your post. The infantry will return to this place.

The battery was ordered to Calhoun before heard of your defeating Wheeler.

I am, colonel, very respectfully,

WM. D. WHIPPLE,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

P. S.- The command will probably move from Harrison to-morrow morning. It is reported that Wheeler is at Georgetown preparing for an attack on Harrison.

Numbers 2.

Report of Colonel Eli Long, Fourth Ohio Cavalry, commanding Second Cavalry Brigade.

HDQRS. SECOND BRIGADE, SECOND DIVISION CAVALRY,

Calhoun, Tennessee, December 28, 1863.

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward, for the information of the major-general commanding the department, report of attack made this a. m. upon this place by the rebel General Wheeler. The

attack was made at about 10 o'clock by a force of from 1,200 to 1,500 cavalry and mounted infantry, led by General Wheeler in person. Brigadier-General Kelly, with his brigade, formed part of this force. Their object was evidently the capture of the supply train which arrived here last evening under charge of forces commanded by Colonel Laiboldt.

Colonel L[aiiboldt] encamped on the Charleston side of the river, and his skirmishers were at work with the enemy before I was apprised of their approach. I immediately mounted the small command which remained in camp not on duty (about 150 men), moved across the brigade, and found the infantry pretty sharply engaged, the enemy occupying position in the woods. The latter shortly afterward gave way, and I then started rapidly after them. Discovering a small portion of their

force now cut off on the right, Ordered a saber charge, and followed a retreating column of several hundred which had taken out the Chatata road, running up the Hiwassee.

Our rapid pursuit and vigorous use of the saber completely demoralized this force, which was thrown into great confusion, and scattered in every direction, their men throwing away large numbers of arms, accoutrements,&c. Several of the enemy (number not known) were killed and wounded, and we remainder till I had arrived at a creek, which was scarcely fordable, and deemed it prudent to follow no farther. The main rebel column had fled out the Dalton road. I sent a small force out that road, who followed some 5 miles, and the enemy is still retreating toward Cleveland. My own loss is 1 man seriously wounded.

Since returning to my headquarters, I have received a dispatch from the officer commanding couriers at Cleveland. He was attacked early this morning by a force of about 100 men, and drove them off.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ELI LONG,

Colonel, Commanding Second Cavalry Brigade.

Brigadier Gen. W. D. WHIPPLE,

Chief of Staff, Army of the Cumberland.

Numbers 3.

Report of Colonel Bernard Laiboldt, Second Missouri Infantry.

CAMP NEAR CALHOUN,

December 28, 1863.

SIR: It affords me great pleasure to reports to you that I have given the rebel General Wheeler a sound thrashing this morning. I had succeeded, in spite of the most abominable roads, to reach Charleston on the night of the 27th; and this morning shortly after daylight I was moving my train across Hiwassee River Bridge when Wheeler's cavalry, reported 1,500 strong, with four guns (which, however, they had no time to bring into action), appeared in my rear. I placed the infantry in line of battle, then got my train over the bridge safely, and next asked Colonel Long to

place a regiment of cavalry at my disposal. These arrangements made, I charged with the infantry in double-quick on the astonished rebels and routed them completely, when I ordered a cavalry charge to

give them the finishing touch. The charge was made in good style, but the number of our cavalry was insufficient for an effectual pursuit, and so the enemy got away, and was even able to take his guns along, which, with innumerable prisoners, must have fallen into my hands could I have made a hot pursuit.

I have now with me, as prisoners, 5 commissioned officers, among them the inspector-general of General Kelly's division, and a surgeon, and 126 men of different regiments. Wheeler commanded in person, and it was reported to him, as the prisoners state, that I had 600 wagons in my train, which he expected to take without great trouble.

The casualties on my side are as follows: Third Division, 2 commissioned officers wounded, 2 men killed, 8 men wounded, 1 man missing; Second Division, 4 men wounded.

The rebels lost, besides the number stated, several severely wounded, which I am obliged to leave behind, and probably several killed. The number of small-arms thrown away by them is rather large, and they will undoubtedly be gathered up by Colonel Long. I shall pursue my march at daybreak to-morrow.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

BERNARD LAIBOLDT,

Colonel Second Infantry Missouri Volunteers.

Brigadier General W. D. Whipple,

Assistant Adjutant-General, Dept. of the Cumberland.

P. S.- Our infantry numbered between 2,000 and 3,000 convalescent men returning from furlough, and others, who had been absent and belonged to the two divisions of the Fourth Army Corps. Long's cavalry, with which he charged the rebels, 150

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!



tcwpa



Have Information on a Civil War Battlesite?

Contact our team at info@tcwpa.org