

Lexington

**tennessee
civil war
preservation
association**

NARRATIVE

On December 18, 1862 a Union force commanded by Col. Robert Ingersol was attacked by Confederate cavalry led by Col. Frank Gurley attached to the command of Brig. Gen. Nathan Forrest on the Clifton-Decaturville Road near Shady Hill at Lexington. In the Confederate attack that followed Ingersol was force to retreat to Lexington where he later surrendered. Union casualties consisted of 11 killed, 124 captured and 147 missing while Confederate casualties were three dead and five wounded.

HISTORICAL THEMES

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

EXPLANATION OF ATTACHMENTS/VIDEO:

Map; reports from Official Records; Newspaper article

LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

N/A

COUNTY:

Henderson

DATE:

12/18/1862

GEO COORDINATES:

35.616828° N,
88.299175° W

PRESERVATION

OPPORTUNITY INDEX:

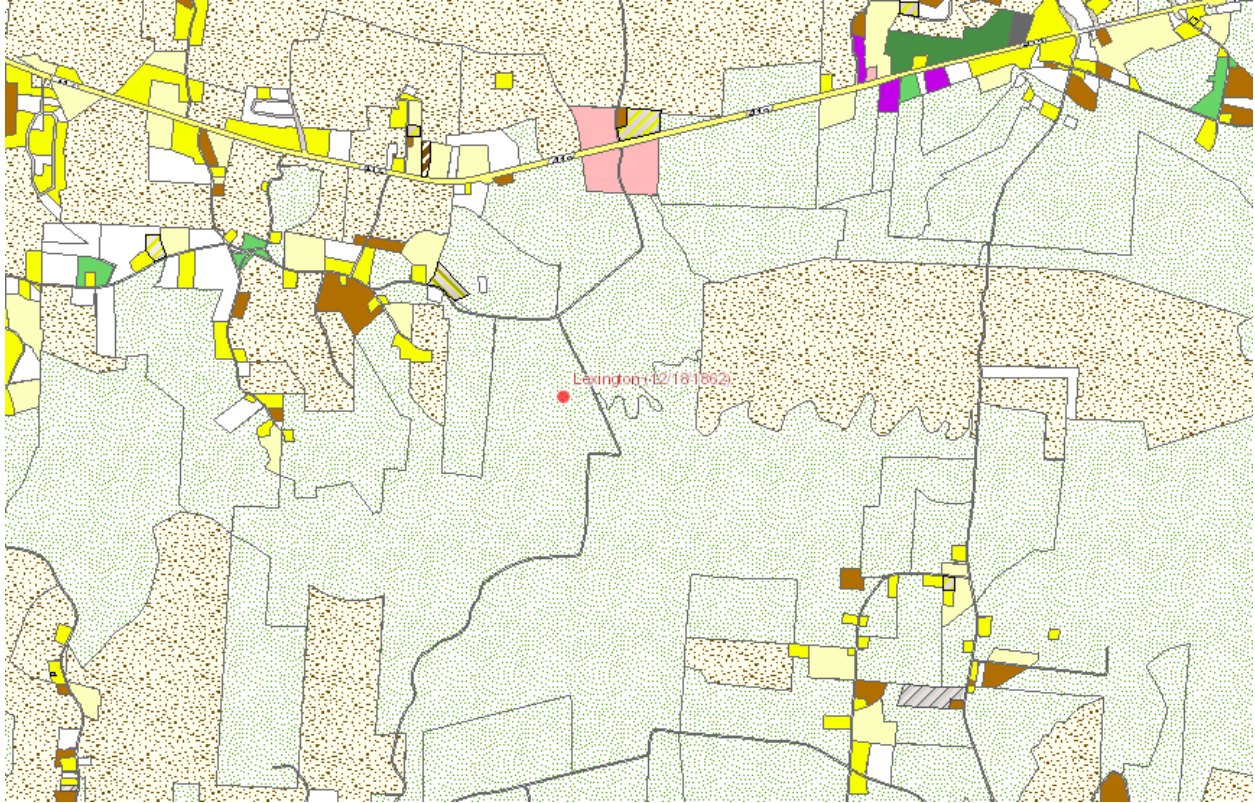
LOW

CONFEDERATE UNITS:

Forrest's Cavalry
4th Alabama Cavalry

UNION UNITS:

11th Illinois Cavalry
5th Ohio Cavalry
7th Tennessee
Cavalry
11th Indiana Battery



December 17, 1862 - U. S. Cavalry Scouts from Tennessee River to Lexington
Environs

JACKSON, December 18, 1862—2 a. m.

Maj. Gen. U. S. GRANT:

The following was received from our cavalry scouts sent out yesterday:

Capt. O'Hara who went out at daylight yesterday, reports that the enemy are crossing the Tennessee at Wright's Island in considerable force. At noon yesterday 3,000 infantry, 800 cavalry, and six pieces had crossed and were still crossing. O'Hara had 70 men; fell back to where I now am, at Buck River, 5 miles southeast of Lexington.

When first seen the enemy were 10 miles from the Tennessee. Their pickets are now within 6 miles of me. I have sent out two companies of Col. Hawkins' to reconnoiter. I will keep you as well informed as possible. Intended to push on in the morning. I believe they are going on the Bolivar and Clifton road.

I have now 450 men. Our pickets are now in slight of the enemy's.

R. G. INGERSOLL, Col. Eleventh Illinois Cavalry.

JER. C. SULLIVAN, Brig.-Gen.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 17, pt. II, p. 429.

December 18, 1862 - Skirmish near Lexington Note 1

No circumstantial reports filed.

TRENTON, December 18, 1862.

Gen. SULLIVAN:

Six men of Col. Hawkin's Second West Tennessee Cavalry, just arrived from Lexington, report that they, with cavalry from Jackson, met the enemy at daybreak this morning near Lexington; that our troops, after a sharp fight, were repulsed and two pieces of artillery taken from us.

JACOB FRY, Col., Comdg. Post.

OR, Ser. I, Vol. 17, pt. II, p. 432.

Note 1: Not referenced in Dyer's Battle Index for Tennessee or the OR Index. For lack of a better designation this "sharp fight" is classified as a skirmish.

The Dead at Lexington, December 18, 1862 by Phillip Renfroe, Henderson County Historian

Originally published in the Lexington Progress
December 18, 2018

When Nathan Bedford Forrest began his first raid into West Tennessee in December 1862, it was in Henderson County somewhere near where Shady Hill Road now crosses Beech River that he first met Federal resistance. The six hundred or so Federals under Col. Robert Green Ingersoll had been dispatched to Lexington from Jackson a few days earlier to intercept Forrest's advance. The Union forces included men from the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, the Fifth Ohio Cavalry, the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, and one section (two cannons) from Eleventh Indiana Battery. Forrest, having vastly superior numbers, slowly drove Ingersoll's forces back and captured him along with many of his officers and men.

In this conflict, and the subject of this writing, were left several dead soldiers both along the road into Lexington and near the battery of cannons that were taken within a half mile of the town square.

Reports of the conflict at Lexington are few and far between. Due to the nature of Forrest's campaign, reports on both sides were hastily prepared and in at least one instance inaccurate. We are one hundred fifty six years removed from the battle, so any effort to count the number of dead is not without some level of assumption. These assumptions must also be open to addition or subtraction upon the discovery of evidence or reports not known at the time of this writing. Forrest,

being in a rush to get farther west to destroy Grant's supply lines, made no attempt to bury his or his enemy's dead. It was left to the townspeople to bury the dead from the conflict, and they chose a relatively high spot just to the rear of where the fairgrounds exhibit building is now located.

After his capture, Ingersoll soon reported that the "Eleventh Illinois lost in killed First Lieutenant Slater, Second Lieutenant Wagner, and seven men and the Fourteenth Indiana had two men killed." It appears that Ingersoll's report of Slater and Wagner being killed is incorrect. The Adjutant General's report of the Eleventh Illinois states that Wagner and Slater were both captured, and it appears that both were mustered out in 1865, at the end of the war. This would bring the Union dead at Lexington total to nine.

The Confederate dead included Fourth Alabama First Sergeant J.L.P. Kelley, who according to his Captain Frank Gurley, "was blown to bits" just as they reached the battery of cannons. According to another account, Kelley "had his hand on the muzzle" of the cannon when it discharged, killing him instantly. There is a grave marker for Kelley in the Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville, Alabama. This could be a memorial marker, Kelley having likely been buried with the dead at Lexington.

Another Confederate soldier killed at Lexington was mentioned in the account of Dr. J.C. Steger, medical officer of the Fourth Alabama. He mentions that he "came upon Orderly Sergeant Kelly, who was killed by the last shot of the artillery" and that a "Mr. Rison, of Huntsville, was brought to me with a severe wound in the forearm," and that he later died. Steger also states that "these were the only casualties in the command reported to me." This could possibly be the Wilson B. Rison who is also buried in Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery near Sgt Kelley. Wilson Rison's death date is 12 Jun 1863, so if Wilson Rison is the "Mr. Rison" referred to in Steger's account, he likely died and was buried at home some six months after the battle.

According to the U.S. Army Quartermaster's "Statement of the Disposition of Some of the Bodies of Deceased Union Soldiers and Prisoners of War Whose Remains Have Been Removed to National Cemeteries in the Southern and Western States", the Army removed seven U.S. Soldiers' remains from their original place of interment at Lexington to the National Cemetery at Corinth in July 1867.

Assuming there were nine killed at Lexington, and we know seven were moved from Lexington to Corinth in 1867, then there are at least two soldiers who may still be buried here. They were likely either missed at the original burial location near

the fairgrounds when the seven were removed, or were initially buried somewhere along the road into Lexington. Ebb Deere mentions in his recount of the Battle published in the 1960s that he "could carry you to several places on this road where soldiers were buried from this action."

Perhaps we will know one day where the "several places" are that Mr. Deere was referring to, and perhaps also a ground penetrating radar device could determine if there are still graves near the fairgrounds.

Using various service and census records available online, we can identify by name the following men who were killed in the Battle of Lexington on 18 December 1862:

FOX, Edgar; PVT Co M, 11th Illinois US Cavalry, enlisted at Chillicothe, Illinois at age 19 on 14 Nov 1861, mustered in on 20 Dec 1861. A single farmer born in Ohio, a resident of Low Point, Woodford County, Illinois at enlistment, he was 5'4" tall, light hair, gray eyes, and light complexion. His service record indicates he was killed in battle at Lexington, Tennessee 18 Dec 1862.

CAIN, Matteson; PVT Co C 11th Illinois US Cavalry, enlisted at Peoria, Illinois at age 29 on 2 Oct 1861 by L.H. Armstrong, mustered in on 20 Dec 1861. A married farmer born in Indiana, at enlistment he was 5'9" tall, brown hair, blue eyes, dark complexion. His service record indicates that he was killed at Lexington, Tennessee on 18 Dec 1862. He was a resident of Kickapoo, Peoria, Illinois in 1860 with his wife Susan and two sons William (2) and Daniel (2/12). By 1870, Susan had remarried a Largent, and William, Daniel, and Mattie (9) were with her in Peoria, Illinois. Matteson Cain left his wife and three small children when he enlisted.

MONTGOMERY, Thomas M; CPL Co H 11th Illinois US Cavalry, enlisted at LaPrarie, Illinois on 18 Nov 1861 by J.C. Knowlton, mustered in on 20 Dec 1861. Very limited information in his file, he was 27 at enlistment. His service record indicates he was killed at Lexington, Tennessee on 18 Dec 1862. His widow Martha Montgomery filed for and was granted a Widow's pension in Peoria County, Illinois on 4 April 1864. Martha was the daughter of Simon P. and Ann Chase of Peoria County, Illinois. Martha's father and sister Sarah signed an attestation in her application.

THORP, William; Private, 14th Battery, Indiana Light Artillery, a resident of Marion, Indiana, mustered 11 Mar 1862. His service record indicates he was killed in battle at Lexington, Tennessee on 18 Dec 1862. Originally interred at Lexington, Tennessee, his remains were removed to Corinth National Cemetery in 1867. He

might be the William Thorp in the household of Thomas and Rachel Thorp of Grant County, Indiana in the 1860 Census.

GAMBLE, Corydon C.; Corporal, 14th Battery, Indiana Light Artillery, a resident of Wabash, Indiana, he enlisted on 13 Feb 1862, and mustered on March 11, 1862. His service record indicates he was killed at Lexington, Tennessee 18 Dec 1862. Originally interred at Lexington, Tennessee, his remains were removed to Corinth National Cemetery in 1867, Section A, Grave Number 406. The son of John and Hannah Gamble of Wabash County, Indiana, born about 1842, his brother Edwin Gamble was a Private in same regiment and mustered out 1 Sep 1865. A dependent pension application was filed on behalf of his mother on 9 Sep 1878 (#239108), and another on behalf of his father on 27 Jan 1890 (413389).

KELLEY, John Lovick Pierce; 1st Sergeant, 4th Alabama Cavalry (Russell's). His grave marker in the Maple Hill Cemetery in Huntsville, Alabama states that he "Fell at Lexington, Ten December 18, 1862". Kelley was married to Mary Livonia Connally in 1855, with whom he had five sons, Harry, Walter, George, Robert, and John. J.L.P. Kelley died two days after his 30th birthday.

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!

The logo for the Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association (TCWPA) is displayed in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. It is positioned in the lower-left corner of a dark blue banner that features a background image of a Civil War-era cannon.

Have Information on a Civil
War Battlesite?

Contact our team at info@tcwpa.org