

Virginia Porter Fiser heard the story of Sherman's march through SC many times as a child as told to her by her grandmother, Emma Catey Jones Porter, and her great aunt Sarah Elizabeth Jones, both born in Fairfield County.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHERMAN'S ARMY IN FAIRFIELD

(R. H. McMaster)

"Having utterly ruined Columbia," says General Sherman in his Memoirs, "the right wing began its march northward toward Winnsboro; on the 20th, which we reached on the 21st, and found General Slocum with the left wing, who had come by way of Alston."

Sherman's strategy, after passing Columbia, was to simulate a movement on Charlotte, in order to deceive the Confederates and lead General Beauregard to concentrate his forces at Charlotte, but actually to have the Union Army execute a broad turning movement to the Eastward and direct its march on Fayetteville, N. C. From Fayetteville it would be an easy matter to establish water communication with the Union Garrison at Wilmington.

The order for this movement was issued "In the Field, near Columbia, S. C.," on February 16, and read as follows:

"1. General Howard will cross the Saluda and Broad Rivers as near their mouths as possible, occupy Columbia, destroy the public buildings, railroad property, manufacturing and machine shops, but will spare libraries and asylums and private dwellings.

He will then move to Winnsboro, destroying en route utterly that section of the railroad. He will cause all bridges, trestles, water-tanks, and depots on the railroad back to the Wateree to be burned, switches broken, and such other destruction as he can find time to accomplish, consistent with the proper celerity. For movements of his army he will select roads that cross the Wateree to the south of Lancaster.

2. General Slocum and Kilpatrick will cross the Saluda River near Mount Zion, and the Broad River below or at Alston and will cause the destruction of the bridge at Alston and the railroad back to Columbia, as far as possible, aiming to be in communication with Winnsborough by the time General Howard reaches that point. They will study to get roads in the direction of Lancaster.

The strategy of General Sherman produced the results which he expected.

General Beauregard, who was in Chief Command of the scattered detachments of the Confederate Army in the South-east,

dropped back from Columbia toward Charlotte, and was followed by Wheeler and Butler's Cavalry under the command of Lieut. General Hampton.

The remnants of Hood's army, under Cheatham, Stephen Lee, and Stewart, were drifting across Georgia and upper South Carolina and were also directed on Charlotte.

In the meantime Sherman's Army executed a grand wheel to the right, pivoting on Muddy Springs (a point about 13 miles North-east of Columbia, not far from the Camden road), and swept through Fairfield County to the crossing of the Wateree (or Catawba River) at Peay's Ferry and Rocky Mount.

The extreme left element of the wheeling army consisted of Kilpatrick's Cavalry which passed through Western Fairfield and the lower part of Chester County and crossed the Catawba at Rocky Mount.

For several days nearly every road in Fairfield County was congested with the movement of these marching columns.

They filled the East and West roads as well as those of the North and South; and Fairfield was foraged upon and burned more thoroughly, perhaps, than any other County in the march of the Army north from Savannah. *(A shattering and scattering of our cities)*

Major General Oliver Otis Howard commanded the Right Wing of the Army, and under his were Major General John A. Logan, with the Fifteenth Corps, and Major Frank P. Blair, Jr., with the Seventeenth Corps.

Major General H. W. Slocum commanded the Left Wing of the Army and under him were Major General Jeff C. Davis, with the Fourteenth Corps, and Brigadier General A. S. Williams, with the Twentieth Corps.

Each Corps consisted of three or four infantry divisions. The Cavalry Division was commanded by Major General Judson Kilpatrick. General Sherman's headquarters traveled near the center, and with whichever wing of the Army as best suited his plan.

The Commanding General of the Fifteenth Corps, John A. Logan, of Illinois, enjoyed the notoriety of being the most destructive of all in carrying out Sherman's policy of devastation.

The axis of advance of Logan's Corps from Columbia was along the Camden road as far as Roberts, then north via Rice Creek Springs, Round Top, across Twenty Five Mile Creek, and Sawney's Creek, past Harrison's Crossroads, and Dutch-

man's Creek to Poplar Springs Church, thence by Flint Hill to Peay's Ferry on the Catawba River.

General Oliver Otis Howard traveled this route, on the night of February 20th he was near Rice Creek Springs; on the 21st he was at Dr. Boyd's house, about 6 miles east of Winnsboro near the crossroads which leads to Poplar Springs; on the 22nd he was at Peay's Ferry.

General Wood's 1st Division of Logan's Corps was diverted on the 21st to Longtown to make a demonstration toward Mickle's Ferry. Woods reported his headquarters that night as within one mile of the Cross roads at Longtown. One of the minor accomplishments of this detachment was the burning of the Peay Mansion at Longtown.

The same night General Hazen, Commanding 2nd Division, Fifteenth Corps, was 400 yards East of the road crossing at Dutchman's Creek; General John E. Smith, Commanding the 3rd Division had his headquarters at the fork of Harrison's Crossroads; General Corse, Commanding the 4th Division had his headquarters on the south bank of Dutchman's Creek.

Durham property
The axis of advance of Blair's Corps of the Right Wing was north along the railroad from Columbia to Winnsboro. His rate of march was slow due to his task of destroying completely the railroad. On the afternoon of February 18 he encountered some slight opposition from General Butler's Cavalry along the line of Killian's Mill Pond and Creek.

Jones property
General Blair on the 20th was at Level Post Office, and his orders were issued from Doko; on the 21st he was at Simpson's Turnout, 6 miles south of Winnsboro; on the 22nd he marched through Winnsboro and then turned east along the Peay's Ferry road, camping that night at Poplar Springs.

The order for this days march, issued at Simpson's Turnout, is typical; "The march tomorrow will be via Winnsborough to Poplar Springs Post Office. The Third Division, Brigadier General M. F. Force, Commanding, will have the advance, and will move forward at 8:00 A. M.

The Fourth Division, Bft. Maj. General G. A. Smith, Commanding, will follow the Third Division, being prepared to move at 9 o'clock.

The Third Division, Major General J. A. Mower, Commanding, will follow the Fourth Division, being prepared to move at 10 o'clock.

The train of the First Michigan Engineers and Mecha. will follow the Fourth Division Train.

A Brigade from each Division will be detached to destroy the railroad. The First Division will destroy two miles, commencing at the station and working north. The Fourth Division will destroy the next two miles, and the Third Division the next two miles. The work will be done in the same manner as today; that is the rails will be twisted by the First Michigan Engineers" etc., etc.

While General Howard with the Right Wing was marching Eastern Fairfield, General Slocum with the Left Wing was marching up the West side of Broad River and crossing at Alston and nearby points. On the night of February 19, Slocum wrote to Sherman:—"Davis has crossed Broad River, and Williams will cross tomorrow. We have been much delayed by lack of pontoon boats, not having enough to bridge both rivers. Kilpatrick will cross tonight at this point. Tomorrow night the Fourteenth Corps will be at Ebeneser Meeting House, on Little River; the Twentieth will be at about two miles south-east of that point, at the Crossing one mile south-east of Kincaid's. On Tuesday morning the Corps will, unless otherwise ordered by you, advance to Winnsboro. * * * My headquarters will be with the Twentieth".

On February 19th, Kilpatrick, Commanding the Cavalry, wrote to Sherman,—“I reached Alston yesterday at 12 m., but could not save the bridge. We are capturing some prisoners and doing very well * * * one of my brigades is crossing the river * * * my entire command will cross in the morning * * * I would give a year's pay to cross the river tonight at this point.”

In spite of the impulse to destroy which came from the top, General Slocum appears to have made a sincere effort to enforce discipline among his troops. Anyhow his troops were much more moderate and humane than these of the Left Wing, which was Commanded by O. O. Howard, known as the Christian Soldier

Slocum on February 19 issued the following order: "Measure must be taken to prevent the destruction of forage in advance of the Army. No foraging will be allowed in advance of the troop and any person found in front of the advance guard will be arrested and severely punished. No property will be burned except by the rear guard in obedience to the order of a Corps or Division Commander."

On the night of February 20, the headquarters of General Jeff Davis' Fourteenth Corps was at Mrs. O'Neil's house. At 6 a. m. the 21st. General Carlin led the advance on the main road to Winnsboro; General Baird crossed Kincaid Bridge and followed Carlin; Gen. Morgan marched with the train at 10 a. m.

General William's Twentieth Corps headquarters on the night of February 20th was at the S. Owens farm, and on the morning of the 21st marched on Winnsboro keeping abreast of the Fourteenth Corps.

The entry of Slocum's Army into Winnsboro at 10 a. m. February 21st, is described by Captain Conyngham, the war Correspondent of the New York World: "General Slocum double-quickened the advance of his column into the village of Winnsboro to save the town from the torches of foragers. General Pardee's brigade of Goary's division was in advance, and every effort was made to beat the stragglers from the Grand Army into town. They were not successful. The town was pillaged and set on fire before any organized body of troops got in. All officers turned their attention to the fire and arrested the progress of the flames. General Slocum, Williams, Geary, Pardee, Barmum, and all worked with their hands, burned their whiskers, and scorched their clothes, to prevent the repetition of Columbia scenes. Nine or ten buildings were burned on the main street, before the fires were stopped, also the house of a Mrs. Pope, said to be the property of a man in New York City. Guards were posted at every house in town, and other fires were quenched as they burst out. Unfortunately the church building of the Episcopalian society was destroyed."

General Sherman arrived at Winnsboro on the afternoon of the 21st. At 6:00 p. m., he wrote to General Howard, who was at Dr. Boyds:—"Generals Slocum and Davis are here. Slocum sends his pontoons and wagons tomorrow straight for the ferry at Rocky Mount P. O. by Gladden's Grove. He will keep four divisions breaking road up as far as the Chester District line, and aim to cross his whole command the day after tomorrow. Let Blair finish up the road good to this point and then assemble at Poplar Springs and effect a crossing of the Wateree, prepared to get all across the day after tomorrow. Slocum will assemble his command at Gladden's. Communicate with me there or at Gladden's."

That night General William's headquarters of the 20th Cor^y was at Beaver Dam Creek, near Benjamin Boulware's. General Geary's division furnished the garrison for Winnsboro the same night.

On February 22nd the movements of the Fourteenth Corps were directed as follows:—General Carlin' from Adger's to Springwell Postoffice and destroy the railroad from that point back to Youngsville; General Baird to White Oak and destroy the railroad from that point to Youngsville; General Morgan with the trains and reserve artillery to march via White Oak to Wateree Church. In the Twentieth Corps General Geary's division continued to occupy Winnsboro and destroy the railroad between Winnsboro and White Oak. The other two divisions with the Artillery and trains marched via Wateree Church to Rocky Mount, and started the construction of a pontoon bridge at that point.

On the night of the 22nd General Davis, of the Fourteenth Corps had his headquarters at the Douglass house near Blackstock; Kilpatrick was also at the Douglass house; General Geary was at Wateree Church. All the rest of the forces of the Left Wing were near Rocky Mount, and those of the Right Wing were crossing at Peay's Ferry.

General Howard completed the passage of the Right Wing across the river at Peay's Ferry on February 23rd. However the passage of the Left Wing at Rocky Mount was not so easy. The famous "Sherman Freshet" was on; the pontoon bridge was swept away and all of the troops did not get across until February 28th.

General Sherman's headquarters until the 24th was at James G. Johnson's house at Rocky Mount. On that day he moved on to join his advanced troops which were marching on Cheraw.

General Kilpatrick remained at Lancaster until the 28th covering the left flank with his cavalry.

Confederate

During the retirement of the Confederate forces from Columbia to Charlotte General Beauregard was in supreme command, with Lieut. General Hampton in command of the forces actively delaying the advance of the Federals.