

**Gen. Sherman's Left Wing, 14th and 20th Corps, Army of Georgia,
along with Gen. Kilpatrick's Third Division Cavalry,
enter Fairfield County over the Broad River in February 1865.**

While perhaps not absolute and all inclusive for each of Kilpatrick's four brigades, the following reports and correspondence records support the conclusion that Bvt. Maj. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick's Third Division Cavalry crossed the Broad River on the night of Feb. 19 and at daylight on Feb. 20, 1865, as Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's Left Wing entered Fairfield County. These records also support that this crossing took place using the pontoon bridge that had been erected by Sherman's 14th Corps at a site located near Freshly's Mill where Wateree Creek entered Broad River from the west.

Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, commanding Sherman's Left Wing (Army of Georgia); report March 30, 1865 (pg. 421, Part I):

When the heads of the two columns were within three miles of Columbia I received orders from General Sherman to cross the Saluda River, at Mount Zion Church, and push on to Winnsborough, crossing the Broad River at some point below Alston... A pontoon bridge was constructed across the Broad River, near the mouth of Wateree Creek, at a place known as Freshly's Mills. My entire command was across the Broad River before 2 p.m. on the 20th of February...

The order of crossing on pontoons at the Saluda River had Slocum's 14th Corps in the lead, followed by Kilpatrick's cavalry, and finally the 20th Corps. Slocum would write in his report that Kilpatrick's cavalry "moved to our left", and Kilpatrick, in correspondence with Sherman, would later write that he "moved north." Slocum's 14th and 20th Corps marched straight for the Broad River and Freshly's Mill. The order of crossing at the Saluda would be the same at the Broad on Feb. 19 and 20.

Bvt. Maj. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis, commanding 14th Army Corps; report March 28, 1865 (pg. 430, Part I):

...the 17th... went into camp near the mouth of Wateree Creek, with a view to crossing Broad River at or near that point. On the morning of the 18th the pontoniers commenced erecting a bridge across Broad River at what is called Freshly's Mills...

Bvt. Maj. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, commanding 20th Army Corps; report March 31, 1865 (pg. 583, Part I):

On the 19th I moved up to Freshly's Ferry, on Broad River, near the mouth of Wateree Creek, and went into camp to await the crossing of Fourteenth Corps and Kilpatrick's Cavalry. On the 20th I crossed Broad River...

Col. Nirom M. Crane, commanding 107th New York, 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, 20th Corps, report March 28, 1865 (pg. 648, Part I):

Broke camp at 10 a.m. on the 19th instant; marched seven miles and camped at 1 p.m. near Broad River. On the 20th instant broke camp and moved to the pontoon bridge; *were delayed in crossing by Kilpatrick's cavalry, fog very dense; crossed Broad River...*

Bvt. Maj. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick, commanding 3rd Division Cavalry; report April 5, 1865 (pg. 859, Part I):

I reached Alston, on Broad River, on the evening of the 18th, and here remained in camp till the evening of the 19th, when I crossed Broad River, and on the evening of the 20th reached Monticello.

J. Kilpatrick to W.T. Sherman from Alston Bridge, Feb. 19, 1865 (pg. 491, Part II):

One of my brigades is crossing the river, and will push well up the country and give timely notice of any danger. My entire command will cross in the morning, when I will push well up and on the left flank... I reached Alston Bridge yesterday at 12m., but could not save the bridge... *I would give a year's pay to cross the river to-night at this point.*

Kilpatrick could not cross Broad River "to-night at this point" because the railroad bridge at Alston had been burned. (See section on Second Brigade, Col. George Acker, report March 29, 1865.) One of Kilpatrick's four brigades, the 1st Brigade, crossed Broad River on the pontoon bridge "during the night of the 19th", as he wrote this correspondence to Gen. Sherman. (See section on 1st Brigade.) While Kilpatrick stated in his report of April 15 that he "remained in camp till the evening of the 19th, when I crossed Broad River", he corresponded with Sherman on Feb. 19, stating that "my entire command will cross in the morning", which would be Feb. 20. The timing of Kilpatrick, and the rest of his command, crossing the morning of the 20th correlates perfectly with the 20th Corps being "delayed" crossing the pontoon bridge "by Kilpatrick's cavalry."

H.W. Slocum to W.T. Sherman from Freshly's Mill, Feb. 19, 1865 (pg. 488, Part II):

Davis has crossed the Broad River and Williams will cross to-morrow. We have been much delayed by lack of pontoon boats... *Kilpatrick will cross to-night at this point.*

Gen. Davis's 14th Corps did finally cross the Broad River on Feb. 19 after additional pontoon boats had been sent up from the rear of the 20th Corps as ordered by Davis. Slocum's statement to Sherman that "Kilpatrick will cross to-night at this point," is left with some room for interpretation. Is he only referring to Kilpatrick's 1st Brigade that had been waiting for the completion of the bridge since the day before (see section on 1st Brigade), or is he referring to Kilpatrick's whole command?

First Brigade; Third Division Cavalry

Col. Thomas J. Jordan, 9th Pennsylvania Cavalry, commanding First Brigade; report March 28, 1865 (pg. 866, Part I):

[Feb. 18] ...From this, marching toward and threatening Alston and crossing Broad River, on the night of the 19th we encamped near daybreak seven miles from the river on the road to Monticello, which we reached on the 20th...

Maj. Owen Star, 2nd Kentucky Cavalry; report March 25, 1865 (pgs. 872-873, Part I):

17th, crossed the Saluda River and marched in direction of Broad. 18th, arrived at Broad but had to await the construction of a pontoon. 19th, crossed the river and arrived at Monticello on the 20th.

Lieut. Col Robert H. King, 3rd Kentucky Cavalry; report March 27, 1865 (pg. 874, Part I):

[Evening of Feb. 17th] ...we crossed the Saluda River on pontoons and moved on to Broad River, crossing that stream in the same way during the night of the 19th.

Second Brigade; Third Division Cavalry

Col. George S. Acker, 9th Michigan Cavalry; report March 29, 1865 (pg. 885, Part I):

February 17, left Lexington, and crossing Saluda River near Columbia, marched to High Hill Creek; eighteen miles.

February 18, marched in advance of brigade, brigade in advance, to Alston Station, Spartanburg and Union Railroad; sixteen miles. The enemy made a feeble effort to hold the magnificent railroad bridge over Broad River at this place, but upon our advancing they fired the bridge and fled. Our efforts to save the bridge were unsuccessful. After destroying the station-house and a store-house we encamped for the night.

February 19, at 6 p.m. moved down the river to _____ Ferry and bivouacked.

February 20, crossed Broad River at daylight and marched to near Monticello; ten miles.

Lieut. Col. Matthew Van Buskirk, 92nd Illinois, report March 31, 1865 (pg. 882, Part I):

17th, crossed the pontoon bridge over the Saluda River, and encamped near Mills' Ferry; sixteen miles. 18th, marched to Alston on Broad River; fifteen miles. 19th, *marched to pontoons, on Broad River, eight miles. 20th, crossed bridge...*

Col. Acker's descriptive account of the 9th Michigan Cavalry, part of Kilpatrick's 2nd Brigade, as they approach Alston and the railroad bridge over the Broad River on Feb. 18 correlates well with Kilpatrick's report for that date and with his Feb. 19 correspondence with Sherman. Each is saying the same thing: the bridge had been burned and could not be saved. The inference would be that they had intended to cross the Broad River over that bridge. As Kilpatrick had written to Sherman on Feb. 19, "I would give a year's pay to cross the river to-night at this place." Col. Acker moved down the river "to _____ Ferry." There is no historical evidence to suggest the presence of any other ferry besides Freshly's Ferry crossing the Broad River into Fairfield County below Alston in Feb. 1865. Lieut. Col. Buskirk's stated that his cavalry "marched to pontoons, on Broad River, eight miles"; this clearly states where they were heading. There were no other pontoons except at Freshly's Mill, which was located about eight miles below Alston. In addition, Col. Acker wrote that his cavalry "crossed Broad River at daylight" on February 20, which correlates well with Kilpatrick's correspondence to Sherman on Feb. 19, that "my entire command will cross in the morning..."

Third Brigade; Third Division Cavalry

Col. George E. Spencer, 1st Alabama Cavalry, commanding Third Brigade, report March 30, 1865 (pg. 892, Part I):

Col. Spencer related just enough information to reveal that he was a part of Kilpatrick's Third Division Cavalry and had already crossed through Fairfield County when he wrote: "Nothing of interest occurred for several days, and not till after we had crossed the Saluda, Broad, and Wateree Rivers, when we reached the town of Lancaster, S.C..."

Likewise for Maj. Sanford Tramel, 1st Alabama Cavalry, report March 28, 1865 (pg. 897, Part I):

On the 11th we again resumed our march with the brigade, and participated in all the different scenes through which it passed, crossing the Edisto, Saluda, Broad, Wateree, and Great Peedee Rivers, in Lexington, *Alston*, Black Stocks, Lancaster, and Sneedsborough, nothing of special importance occurring.

Yet, Maj. Tramel does mention Alston in his report, so Kilpatrick's 3rd Brigade was likely with the 2nd and 4th Brigades at Alston on Feb. 18. Two additional reports from 3rd Brigade regiment commanders never mentioned entering or leaving Fairfield County.

Fourth Brigade; Third Division Cavalry

Lieut. Col William B. Way, 9th Michigan Cavalry, commanding Fourth Brigade, report March 31, 1865 (pg. 903, Part I):

[On the] morning of the 17th, crossed the Saluda River and encamping at High Hill Creek. February 18, camped near Alston Station. Crossed Broad River the night of the 19th, reaching Monticello the 20th.

Lieut. Col. Way's description is short and to the point, yet it clearly relates that the 4th Brigade was moving with Kilpatrick's 2nd Brigade. Each had encamped at High Hill Creek after crossing the Saluda, and each had encamped near Alston on Feb. 18. They would cross the Broad River together and move in the direction of Monticello.

While Kilpatrick's 1st Brigade was "marching toward and threatening Alston" on their way to Freshly's Mill, the 2nd and 4th Brigades (and likely the 3rd Brigade) moved further northwest into Newberry County. Kilpatrick's report of April 5 relates that he "Marched all day the 18th parallel to Cheatham's corps, rebel infantry," and in following the railroad toward Alston, he "struck the railroad at Pomaria Station, destroying a portion of the track, the depot, and burned several bridges from that point to Broad River."

Kilpatrick no doubt felt a sense of urgency to get the rest of his command over the Broad River, which he shared with Sherman on Feb. 19: "I would give a year's pay to cross the river to-night at this point." He had also written in that same correspondence that "Cheatham will cross at Ashford's Ferry, I think;" and in his report of April 5, he wrote that after crossing the Saluda River on Feb. 17, he "found that Wheeler had crossed the Saluda and was moving for the railroad bridge over Broad River at Alston." He wanted to get over the river and "push well up and on the left flank." Kilpatrick's cavalry was to stay to the left in support of Sherman's left wing, and Slocum's 14th Corps had already started crossing the pontoon bridge early on the morning of Feb. 19.

Cheatham did not cross the Broad River at Ashford Ferry, a point some ten miles above Alston, and nothing in the Union and Confederate official army records suggests that Wheeler crossed any part of his command at Alston. Cheatham would receive orders from General Beauregard on Feb. 18 to "cross the Broad River at a point above Newberry" (Itinerary of Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham's corps, pg. 1081, Part I). The much anticipated crossing of rebel cavalry would actually take place at Hughey's Ferry, located midway between Alston and Ashford Ferry. Correspondence from Confederate Headquarters Cavalry Division on Feb. 17 (pg. 1213, Part II) relates that cavalry scout "Lieutenant Chapin has just arrived from Hughey's Ferry, thirty-one miles from Columbia, and reports General Humes crossing his command at that point..." Wheeler would correspond with Headquarters

Cavalry Corps the next day on Feb. 18 (pg. 1219, Part II), and state that, after having learned “the enemy have moved up a force on the other side of the river... I have ordered General Allen to picket Broad River up as far as Little River and General Humes to picket it from Little River to Hughey’s Ferry (General Humes crossed at Hughey’s Ferry yesterday).” It is likely that Hume’s scouts, in accompaniment with a small force as they picketed south along Broad River from Hughey’s Ferry, “fired the bridge” at Alston as Acker’s 9th Michigan Cavalry approached on Feb. 18.

Kilpatrick would move the rest of his command down river to the pontoon bridge at Freshly’s Mill and cross the Broad River at pre-dawn and early daylight on Feb. 20 in advance of the “delayed” 20th Corps.

Alston, and to use Col. Acker’s description as his 9th Michigan Cavalry approached, “the magnificent railroad bridge over Broad River,” received much attention through word and deed as Sherman’s left wing and Kilpatrick’s Third Cavalry advanced toward and entered Fairfield County.

Gen. Davis, commanding the 14th Corps, had already received orders from left wing headquarters, five miles south of Freshly’s, on Feb. 18 (pg. 480, Part II) to “commence destroying the railroad toward Alston as soon as you cross the river, and if possible destroy the railroad bridge below Alston.” The same orders went to Gen. Beard commanding the 3rd Division of Davis’s 14th Corps, through Headquarters, Freshly’s Mills on Feb. 18 (pg. 480, Part II) to move “up the river to a point two miles this side of Alston, will destroy the railroad to that point (together with railroad bridge at that place if not already destroyed)...”

And Lieut. Col. Fielder Jones, commanding the 8th Indiana Cavalry of Kilpatrick’s 1st Brigade, from his March 27, 1865, report (pg. 870, Part I), while at Monticello, had sent “Lieutenant Jackson with Company C, Eight Indiana... to burn Spartanburg railroad bridge over Broad River. The order was executed...” Lieut. Jackson responded back to Lieut. Col. Jones through his correspondence, In the Field, Feb. 24 (pg. 555, Part II), that “I proceeded as speedily as possible to the railroad bridge across Broad River... and found about 300 yards of it already consumed, having been fired by a foraging party of Company K of our regiment, under the charge of Sergeant Thompson, the evening before.”

Kilpatrick’s 1st Brigade was at Freshly’s Mill awaiting the construction of the pontoon bridge on Feb. 18 and seemingly had not been informed that the rebels had fired the bridge on that same day. Perhaps the Eighth Indiana finished the job, or perhaps they wanted to take credit, or at least part credit for the deed. While Kilpatrick and Col. Acker of his 2th Brigade, each reported trying to save the bridge on that Feb. 18, it is clear that the Union forces had planned to destroy it.

And, too, the fate of the bridge was being weighed by the Confederate forces. Finally, of interest was Gen. Wheeler’s correspondence from Headquarters Cavalry Corps on Feb. 18 at 1:20 pm (pg. 1219, Part II), where he suggested, if not pleaded, to bring no harm to the bridge:

It seems to me there is no object in burning the railroad bridge at Alston, as it would be no source of delay to the enemy and we shall need it after the enemy have passed on. I cannot see that the enemy can use that bridge for railroad purposes. They can put down pontoons quicker than they can floor the bridge to take over wagons and horses. Shall the bridge be burned?

Wheeler shared this sentiment in that same correspondence to cavalry corps headquarters, where he ordered Gen. Humes to picket along the east side of the Broad from Little River back to Hughey's Ferry. Having already crossed the Broad River on Feb. 17, the timing is such that Gen. Humes's cavalry, a part of Wheeler's command, could likely have been at the Alston bridge on that Feb. 18.

SOURCE: All referenced reports and correspondence cited are from Series I, Volume 47 of *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC, 1895; reprint by The National Historical Society, 1971).