

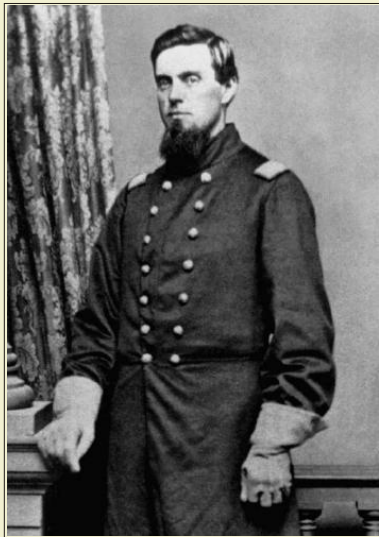


ACTIONS AT RINGGOLD

CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL



On September 11, 1863 Federal forces from Van Cleve's Division of the 21st Army Corps of the Army of the Cumberland invaded Ringgold from the west. At the same time, Colonel John T. Wilder's Mounted Infantry Brigade invaded from the north. A few Confederate cavalymen made a token

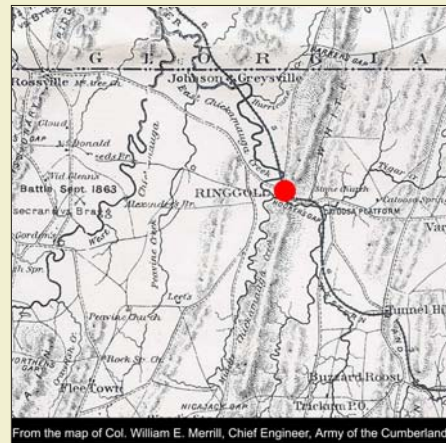


COLONEL JOHN T. WILDER

resistance and fell back through Ringgold Gap. As Van Cleve's men rushed into Ringgold, they encountered civilians who were attempting to get out of the town ahead of the advancing army. Many of the people had placed their belongings on a train. "I well recollect the confusion and dismay there was in their town," J. A. Reep, a member of the

19th Ohio Infantry Regiment, later wrote, "when our forces came into the place. Everyone was moving their possessions, when our arrival interrupted the work by capturing a train of cars, and a large amount of stores of various kinds and character. Among our captures made here, was a large amount of Southern mail, both to and from the army. The town was strewn with letters, opened and unopened. They were lying in heaps or scattered at random in dooryards, on sidewalks, along fences and hedges."

"On arriving in the suburbs," T. J. Wright, 8th Kentucky Infantry Regiment [Federal] wrote, "our progress was obstructed by light paling fences. As each company neared one of these gardens or yards, a shout and simultaneous rush against these fences laid them flat as if swept by a tornado. The



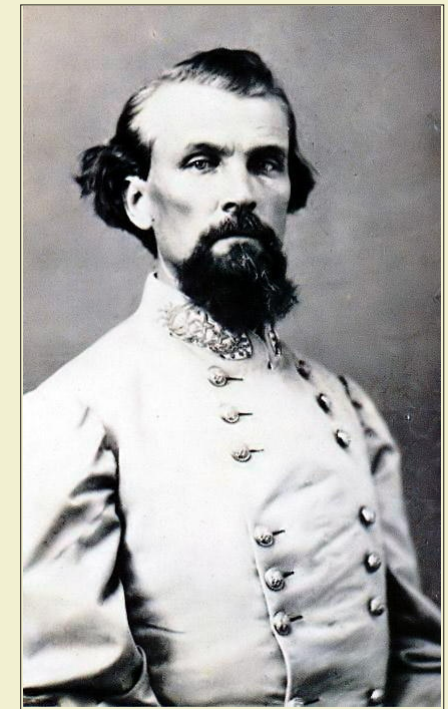
From the map of Col. William E. Merrill, Chief Engineer, Army of the Cumberland

terrified inhabitants were fleeing in every direction for safety from our noisy boys."

Colonel John T. Wilder's brigade of mounted infantry attacked Ringgold along the road from the north, coming in on Tennessee Street at the same time that Van Cleve's men were coming from the west. Wright noted that they "continued to fire at the armed rebels, whose flight through the streets was hastened by Col. Wilder's mounted infantry who came charging and yelling down the Knoxville road trying to cut off their retreat." In his official report, Colonel Wilder blamed the untimely advance of Van Cleve's men and their milling about as the reason of his mounted troops being unable to cut off the retreating Confederate cavalry.

Van Cleve's men returned to their unit in the vicinity of Lee and Gordon's Mills. Wilder pursued retreating cavalymen through the gap and fought a brief skirmish with Confederate cavalry under General Nathan Bedford Forrest at Dick's Ridge. Forrest fell back to Tunnel Hill, where he was reinforced by four regiments of Tennessee Cavalry. The Confederates then drove Wilder out of the area.

Five days later, on September 17th, the Federals again came to Ringgold. This time, however, they received a surprise for the Confederates had received massive reinforcements. Longstreet's newly arrived men easily drove them back to the west. During the next two days thousands of



GENERAL NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST

Confederate soldiers passed through Ringgold coming from Catoosa Station, they passed through the gap, through Ringgold and continued on to fight in the great Battle of Chickamauga.

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<http://www.ChickamaugaCampaign.org>