

MOORE'S BRIDGE SKIRMISH

JULY 13-14, 1864

Horace King, a free African-American and noted bridge builder, built Moore's Bridge in 1858. The bridge was a wooden covered span 480 feet long that connected Carroll and Coweta Counties. King, and his family lived near the foot of the bridge on the west (Carroll Co.) bank of the river and were the principal toll collectors.

One of his white partners, James D. Moore and his family lived near King on the ridge overlooking the bridge. Charles Mabry was the third partner in the toll bridge effort.

In the summer of 1864 Union General William T. Sherman was intent on capturing the City of Atlanta, a major supply center for the Confederacy. He was concerned that the Confederate forces under General Joseph E. Johnston were reinforcing Atlanta from the south. Sherman sent Maj. General George Stoneman's cavalry to capture bridges across the Chattahoochee River and to destroy railroad access from the south of Atlanta.

Stoneman's cavalry moved south along the west side of the Chattahoochee River and was repulsed by Confederate forces in an effort to cross at Campbellton. Stoneman then moved down the west side of the river in an effort to capture the bridge at Franklin, in Heard County. While en route, he was informed of the existence of Moore's Bridge in Carroll County. He sent the 11th Kentucky cavalry under Col. Silas Adams to capture the bridge so as to allow Union forces to cross the river and cut the Atlanta and West Point Railroad at Newnan.

Around noon on July 13th a nine man detachment wearing captured Confederate uniforms approached the bridge from the east. The bridge was defended by a picket post of approximately twenty Confederates of the 1st Tennessee Cavalry, who were bathing in the river. Caught by surprise and after a brief fight, the Confederates were captured. One Confederate officer was wounded and at least one

Confederate escaped to spread the alarm at Newnan. Bridge owner James D. Moore approached the bridge and was also captured.

Union troops spent the rest of the day and the next foraging on both sides of the river. Building an ever larger spoils-laden column, Stoneman was ready to cross the river in force and move toward Newnan and the railroad. At this moment,



COVERED BRIDGE CONSTRUCTED BY HORACE KING

however, caution overtook the general and he hesitated. He had received a captured Confederate dispatch warning of his approach and requesting support troops to defend the bridge. He ordered Captain Alexander Hardee to place his two Rodman guns on a rise on the west side of the river near the Moore house to cover the bridge approaches.

Upon receiving the alarm from Newnan, Confederate Brigadier General Frank C. Armstrong moved his force from Campbellton on the night of the 13th. Moving down the east

side of the river were parts of the 1st and 2nd Mississippi Cavalry, Ballentine's Regiment and two 3 inch rifled guns of King's Missouri Battery. By daylight of the 14th, Armstrong's command was positioned at the edge of the woods near the eastern (Coweta Co.) approach to the bridge. A column of Union Cavalry appeared on the west (Carroll Co.) side of the river and prepared to cross the bridge. The Confederate forces opened fire on the unsuspecting Union troops who quickly dispersed, sought cover and responded with fire from their Rodman guns to little effect. The firing on both sides was heavy enough that neither force was able to safely approach the bridge.

Fearing the bridge was about to be captured by the Confederates, Stoneman decided to burn it and the boats along the bank to deny the Confederates their use. Lt. William P. Ballard of the 1st Kentucky Cavalry volunteered for the almost suicidal run to the bridge. Carrying aloft a lighted torch he braved the Confederate fire and set alight the pine knots and straw placed there earlier by the first Confederate defenders of the bridge. Making it safely back to his lines he watched as smoke billowed from the bridge and within minutes the bridge was ablaze and shortly slid off its pilings and fell into the river.

Around 4:00 PM on June 14th the main body of Union troops withdrew back up the West side of the river toward Sandtown. A detachment of the 8th Michigan Cavalry moved toward Carrollton, arriving there on the 15th. These movements left Armstrong's Confederate forces in control of the burned bridge site.

It was difficult for either side to claim complete victory over the skirmish. While the bridge was burned, denying Confederate forces its use, the Union troops had failed to move on Newnan and destroy the rail lines which Sherman had so desired.

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