

1865 Bushwhackers

By early in 1865 the situation in the Valley was a desperate one for citizens and soldiers. In Richard Kleese's "Shenandoah County in the Civil War", we learn that bushwhackers were a particular annoyance for Sheridan's Federal cavalry. He set up a band of special scouts to deal with them under the command of Major Henry Young. They often dressed in Confederate uniforms, passing themselves off as a body of recruits from Maryland, pursued by Yankee Cavalry.

On January 19 Young and his troops left Winchester, dressed in Confederate grey, passing through Woodstock and finally being halted at the Stony Creek bridge in Edinburg by Capt. George Grandstaff of Co. E, 12th Va. Cavalry. The disguised Federals had with them the body of a young soldier to be returned to his family in New Market. The suspicious Grandstaff allowed them to continue, but sent some of his troops along. The Federal scouts returned from New Market and headed north to Maurertown, where they camped. After dawn the next day, they returned to Edinburg where they captured the Confederate picket at the Stony Creek bridge as well as some other soldiers at camp in Humston's woods and headed north with their prisoners. Grandstaff gathered his troops and began a pursuit.

Meanwhile Confederate soldier, Silas Wright, happened upon the Federals very early in the morning as they made their way towards Edinburg, and quickly gathered a force from the Maurertown area under the command of Capt. Martin Strickler. They placed themselves in Koontz's Woods, just north of Pugh's Run. As the Federals crossed the bridge there, Strickler's troops charged into their rear guard. Strickler's small band struggled but Capt. Grandstaff arrived in time to continue the pursuit, with the Federals making stands near the tollhouse in Maurertown and at the Four-Mile House south of Strasburg.

Silas Wright later wrote "All that was needed here were a few shots and the old Confed's battle yell, and they broke into one of the wildest, craziest stampedes that I have ever witnessed. We rode through them and over them. They actually jumped off their mounts and tried to outrun them.... About three hundred yards north of the stone bridge at Fisher's Hill we recaptured the last prisoner and ceased the pursuit in the suburbs of Strasburg."

The Confederates freed all of their captured pickets and captured 17 of the enemy and 20 horses.