

# CIVIL WAR

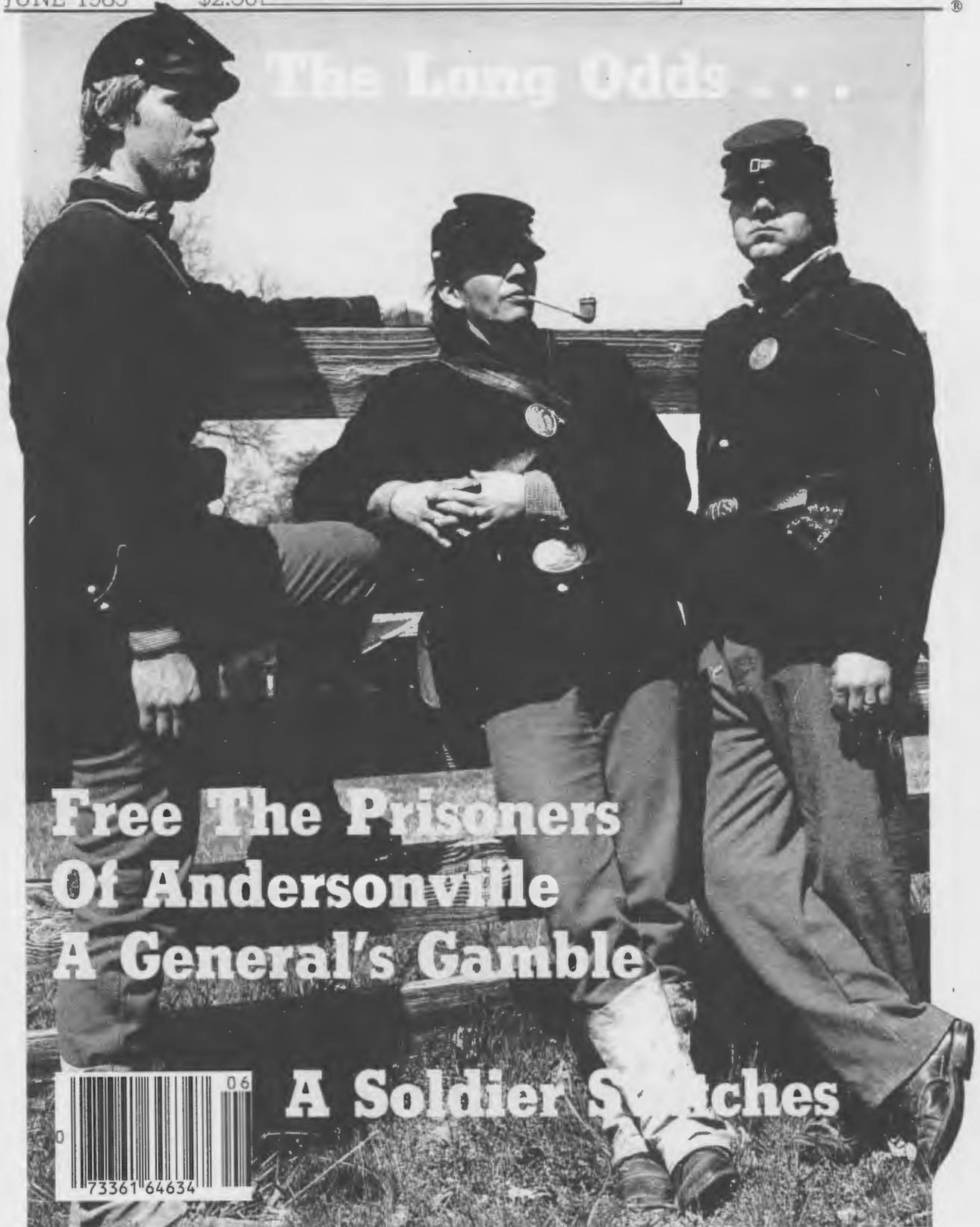
TIMES

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The Long Odds . . .



**Free The Prisoners  
Of Andersonville  
A General's Gamble**

**A Soldier Swatches**



HE CAME AS A LIBERATOR—HE LEFT AS A PRISONER

# The Union General Lost In Georgia

By William Harris Bragg

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## STONEMAN RIDES AGAINST MACON IN 1864

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The orders came from Union Major General William T. Sherman's headquarters. Issued on July 25, 1864, they were clear enough. Yankee cavalymen, striking out from either flank of the Union host investing Atlanta, Georgia, would circle toward each other and meet on the night of July 28, thirty miles below the city. There they would wreck up to five miles of the Macon railroad, Atlanta's only supply line. As they did this, Sherman's Army of the Tennessee would move against the same railway six miles below the city. The results were "expected to be decisive": Atlanta's defender, Confederate General John Bell Hood—denied communications, supplies, and reinforcements—would be pressed to abandon his complex fortifications and confront Sherman's superior force in the field.

These orders worried one of Sherman's cavalry commanders. Union Major General George Stoneman was preoccupied with a scheme of his own, freeing Federal captives from the prison pens of central Georgia. One hundred miles south, at Macon, 1,400 Union officers were confined in the Camp Oglethorpe stockade. And sixty miles farther south, at Andersonville, the rough palisades of Camp Sumter held over 29,000 Yankee soldiers. There, men perished by the hundreds each month. Suppose Sherman's plan succeeded? Atlanta's evacuation would place Hood's Rebel army squarely between the Federal forces and the suffering prisoners. If a prisoner rescue was not attempted before Hood moved, it would not succeed.

Stoneman presented Sherman with a proposal of his own. After riding against the Macon railway, why not strike south to release the captives? Sherman, deluged with letters decrying the prisoners' plight, was taken with the idea and gave his permission for Stoneman to try it with

his own force. He was, however, emphatic on one point: the rescue mission was to be undertaken only after Atlanta's last rail artery had been severed.

While accepting its risks, Sherman considered Stoneman's raid a "rash adventure," a scheme calling for more than he could probably accomplish. The expedition plan demanded hard marching over hundreds of miles of hostile territory, heavy fighting, and the rough work of railroad destruction, as well as the reduction of a sizeable town and the capture of a fortified prison camp—all during the energy-sapping days of a hot Georgia July. Were Stoneman and his men equal to the task? Their records suggested not.

"I can vouch for my little command," Stoneman assured Sherman. He was mistaken. But his well-armed 2,050-man cavalry corps appeared impressive. It was comprised of three brigades: Colonel James Biddle's Indiana brigade, Colonel Silas Adams' Kentucky brigade, and Colonel Horace Capron's force—made up of Illinois and Michigan regiments, plus McLaughlin's Squadron of Ohio's "Sherman Brigade." Along with a two-gun battery section, the force boasted picked men and mounts; all "not able to go through fire and water" had been culled. And the men were motivated for the rescue attempt; all units had members imprisoned at Andersonville.

But most of Stoneman's regiments had only begun campaigning the previous year. They were not thoroughly battle-tested. Some of the veteran units were less than reliable, particularly the notorious 1st Kentucky. Although inarguably brave fighters, its members were strangers to discipline and stragglers without peer. Over all, Stoneman needed a more experienced, better disciplined command to help him earn victory.



*George Stoneman (seated, with legs crossed) was a brigadier general when this photo was taken with his staff near Richmond, Virginia, after the June 1862 Battle of Seven Pines. Two years later, Stoneman, then a major general, would be "the highest ranking Yankee officer ever captured by the Confederates."*

And the force needed a steadier commander.

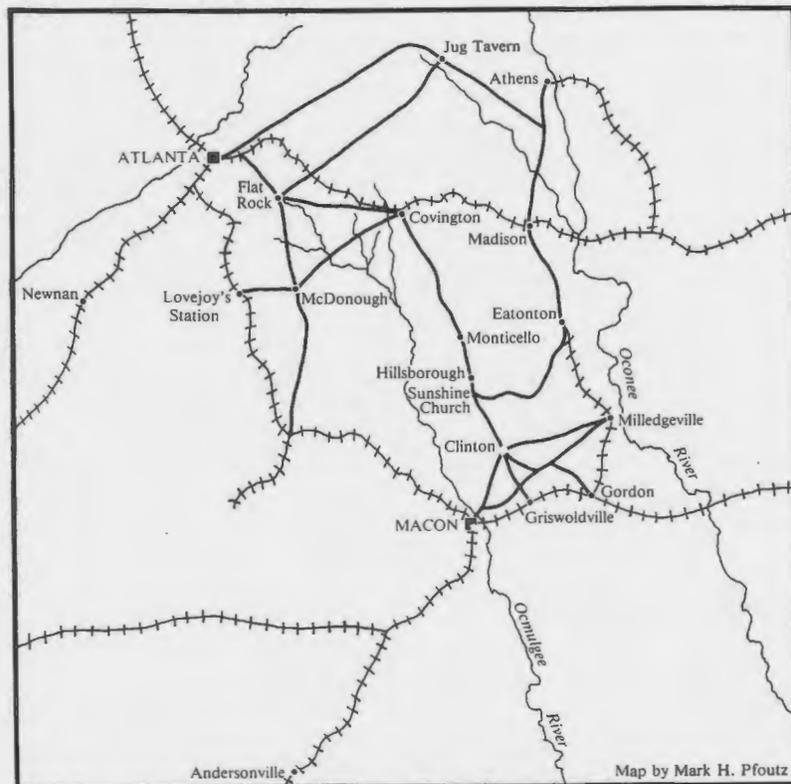
New York born, an 1846 graduate of West Point, forty-four-year-old Stoneman had served in California during the Mexican War and in Texas with the illustrious 2d U.S. Cavalry prior to the secession crisis. His rise in the Union army had been rapid, his early service praiseworthy. But the 1863 Chancellorsville Campaign in Virginia had brought his competence into question. Accused of disregarding orders, he was soon replaced as the Union Army of the Potomac's cavalry commander. In early 1864, Stoneman, a man Lieutenant General U.S. Grant called "an officer who had failed," was "exiled to the West."

Stoneman "in exile," an officer with a reputation to refurbish, a man with something to prove, was inclined to be over-ambitious, to ignore daunting obstacles. And, notwithstanding his genuine concern for the prisoners of war, he was aware this raid offered him glory as

*Below: Confederate Colonel W.C.P. Breckinridge. Under orders from Brigadier General Alfred Iverson, he led a brigade of Kentuckians in pursuit of Federal cavalry. On August 3, he "almost annihilated" the remains of a Union brigade at Jug Tavern, Georgia.*



J.B. Castleman's Active Service (1917)



### STONEMAN'S RAID INTO CENTRAL GEORGIA JULY 1864

well as redemption. As Sherman expressed it, the liberator of Andersonville would be entitled to the "love and admiration of the whole country."

Bugles sounded "Boots and Saddles" at 3:00 a.m. on July 27 in Stoneman's camp just east of Atlanta. The day had come for the general to raise himself up before "the whole country." As Union batteries boomed to cover their departure, his raiders moved eastward, ostensibly circling around to the town of McDonough, then to the railway beyond. Off to their right rode Union Brigadier General Kenner Garrard's 3,500-man reserve force. These troopers, bound for Flat Rock, ten miles down the McDonough road, were to attract and delay any Rebel pursuers.

After almost continuous marching, Stoneman's men rested briefly the morning of the 28th near Covington, having covered almost forty miles. Upon leaving the village (where many 1st Kentuckians had become riotously drunk), Stoneman sent Adams' brigade along the Ocmulgee River's east bank in search of a crossing to McDonough. There, that night his command was to gather and communicate with Union Major General E.M. McCook's 3,000-man cavalry force before their joint attack on the rail line. But Stone-

man's main force continued to push south. Nightfall found the Federals in Monticello, practically equidistant from Macon and McDonough. This was not as Sherman ordered.

A staff officer later claimed Stoneman expected the river to be bridged near Monticello; disappointed, he was obliged to abandon McCook and thrust into central Georgia. More than likely, however, Stoneman had planned an independent operation all along and looked only for an excuse to launch it. He had skirted the Ocmulgee's narrow headwaters and marched over thirty miles from his immediate objective. He would ignore the railway and press on to the prisons.

Stoneman directed his command to proceed southward from Monticello early on the 29th. No explanation could be offered. He clearly violated his orders. But given his raid's success so far, there could be little quibbling about disobedience. Continued success depended only upon rapid movement and surprise.

**S**toneman, however, was slow. His raiders, delighted by the "astounding abundance" which surrounded them, lost time foraging in orchards and fields. Wrote one, they "gathered up large numbers of fine horses

and mules and contrabands to lead them." Some troopers plundered homes and farms, leading one officer to worry that "thieving expeditions never thrive." Assuredly, theft, and the vandalism and casual arson that marked their track, would not speed the Yankees to their target.

As for surprise, there was none. Confederate Major General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry, alert to threats against Atlanta's supply line, had discovered Stoneman's movements almost immediately. A small mounted force soon tracked the Federals. Before sunset on the day of Stoneman's departure, Confederate authorities at Macon and Andersonville, knew raiders were at large. Both town and prison braced for attack. At Andersonville, which Hood considered extremely vulnerable, the commandant had slaves constructing additional defenses. In Macon, Major General Howell Cobb, commander of the Confederate Reserve Force, gathered troops and artillery. Macon, not just a prison town, but an important military-industrial complex and the site of numerous Confederate hospitals, could not be lost.

What was lost was time. Hood focused on Sherman's infantry movements, apparently considering the cavalry activity diversionary. His horse soldiers, instead of pursuing, manned trenches east of Atlanta. Not until after nightfall on July 27, did he grant Wheeler's request to pursue Stoneman. But finally allowed to follow in force, Wheeler and his men sped south, happily abandoning trench warfare.

As Stoneman hoped, Wheeler took the road toward Flat Rock. But when the Confederates hit Garrard's force on the 28th, the Federal commander—a reluctant participant in the raid—failed to hold them. Yanks taken prisoner soon revealed that Garrard was screening Stoneman's men, somewhere farther south. Then came dispatches from Hood alerting Wheeler to McCook's movements. The awesome scope of the Yankee threat took form in the Rebel cavalry general's mind.

It seemed Wheeler could offer little resistance to this "stupendous cavalry operation." His disposable force probably numbered no more than 4,000 battle-weary effectives, most mounted on weakened, malnourished horses. Nevertheless, the young cavalry leader acted rapidly to counter the three commanders arrayed against him. One brigade

he left to keep watch on the unaggressive Garrard. Then, before riding west to challenge McCook, Wheeler ordered three brigades to chase Stoneman and "attack him wherever found."

Leading the 1,300-man pursuit of Stoneman was Wheeler's fellow Georgian, Brigadier General Alfred Iverson. Unsure of Stoneman's exact location, Iverson sent Colonel W.C.P. Breckinridge's Kentucky brigade to scout the west bank of the Ocmulgee, then cross back on ferry flats above Macon to join the main force. The balance of the command—Iverson's Georgia brigade and Brigadier General William W. Allen's Alabama brigade—headed toward Covington.

Dust-powdered and sweat-streaked, the Federal raiders reached the courthouse town of Clinton, fifteen miles northeast of Macon, before noon on July 29. Had they descended on Macon then, they would have found Cobb not fully prepared to meet them. But Stoneman gave other orders. He sent his Kentuckians directly toward Macon, and Biddle's and Capron's men southwest toward the Macon-Milledgeville road. Next morning all three brigades were to converge on

Macon. Then, lastly, and most important, Stoneman directed 125 men under Major F.M. Davidson to strike Gordon, a junction of the Savannah railroad and its rail spur to Milledgeville, Georgia's capital. Major damage to this railway would eliminate Federal fears Hood would be reinforced by troops from Virginia.

On the evening of the 29th, while Capron and Biddle bivouacked and Adams skirmished with Cobb's tiny band of Reserve cavalry, Davidson hit Gordon. Unhindered by any Confederate resistance, the Yankees destroyed several buildings and a half-mile of track, as well as 11 locomotives and 140 cars—most filled with supplies or machinery. They then rode east, burning depots, water tanks, and trestles, and finally torching the massive railroad bridge spanning the Oconee River. Turning north, they feinted toward Milledgeville before heading back for Atlanta.

Early on the morning of July 30, prior to the attack on Macon, Stoneman launched another attack on the Savannah railroad. Between Macon and nearby Griswoldville, Capron's

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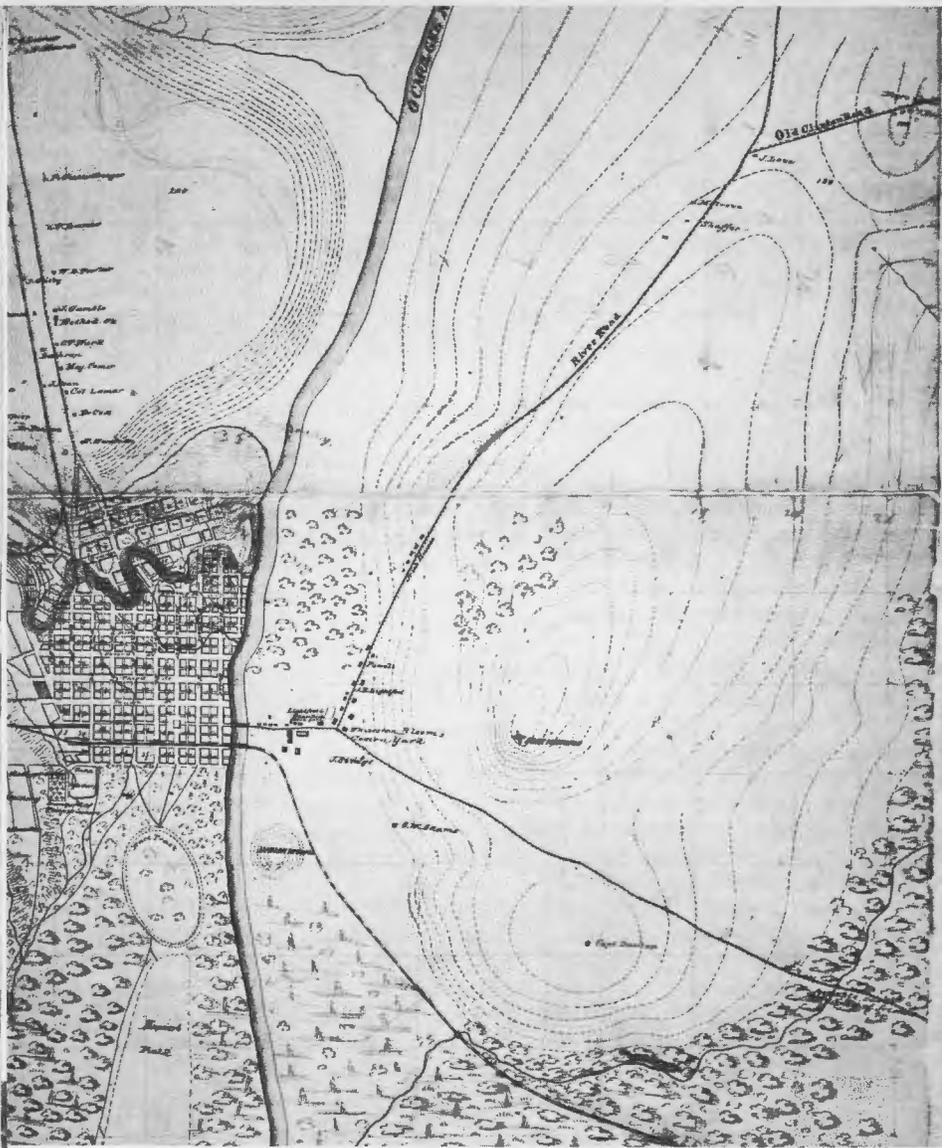
**TO THE CITIZENS OF MACON.**

**HEAD QUARTERS.**  
*Macon, July 30, 1864.*

**The enemy is now in sight of your houses. We lack force. I appeal to every man, Citizen or Refugee, who has a gun of any kind, or can get one, to report at the Court House with the least possible delay, that you may be thrown into Companies and aid in the defense of the city. A prompt response is expected from every patriot.**

**JOSEPH E. BROWN,**  
Report to Col. Cary W. Styles, who will forward an organization as rapidly as possible.

Federal cavalry raided Newnan, Macon, and Clinton on July 30, and Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown issued this plea to citizens.



National Archives

Macon, Georgia, and vicinity, circa 1864. A detail of a previously unpublished city area map, it highlights the Dunlap Farm, Fort Hawkins, Walnut Creek, the railroad bridge, and Confederate Camp Oglethorpe (with adjoining graveyard).

men tore up several miles of track, then burned both a passenger train packed with refugees' belongings and a fully-loaded livestock train. Finding Griswoldville defended, the raiders rolled blazing cars into a train parked in the village. And before leaving, they sent a locomotive hurtling backward at full throttle into the flaming wreckage. Following the tracks, Capron's men then joined Stoneman on the Milledgeville road near Macon.

Two miles east of the town wound Walnut Creek, where its banks rose gently to overlook suburban East Macon. Just beyond, the Ocmulgee barred the way to Macon. Having learned that the broad city bridge had collapsed during a recent freshet, Stoneman realized his men would have to seize the planked

railroad bridge and a flimsy pontoon bridge nearby.

At about 7:00 a.m. the Federals swept forward across the stream, scattering Confederate pickets along the creek bottom. Rushing up the slopes beyond, they took the high ground on Captain Sam Dunlap's farm, left of the road. There, in the farmhouse yard, Stoneman's artillerymen unlimbered while other troops erected breastworks with the lumber from a dismantled stable. To their right front, two blockhouses projected above the skyline. They marked Fort Hawkins, an old frontier fortification on "a commanding eminence near the river." Along a low ridge to their immediate front, astride the road, was a long line of infantry, part of the hastily gathered "army" commanded by Cobb. Neither Stoneman nor Sherman had anticipated such opposition.

The soldiers facing Stoneman belonged to two regiments of Atlanta-bound Georgia militia on loan from Governor Joseph E. Brown. (The governor was in Macon organizing state forces for transfer to Hood's regular Confederate command.) To the militiamen's left at Fort Hawkins, protected by abatis, was one battery. Another battery, supported by a 600-man Confederate battalion and more militia, commanded the Clinton road, blocking Adams' brigade. Squads of Cobb's Reserves bridged the gap between the two batteries, while a reserve force of local defense

Georgia Department of Archives and History



On "a commanding eminence" near the Ocmulgee River, the southeast blockhouse of old Fort Hawkins. This is an immediate postwar era photograph.

companies and citizen volunteers stationed itself near the bridgehead.

Cobb himself was on the field, along with a celebrated guest, late commander of the Army of Tennessee General Joseph E. Johnston. Johnston accompanied the Reserve commander as advisor. Both men knew that the fighting ability of the 2,500-man defensive force was unknown. Most had little or no training; they had never been under fire, nor had they ever before seen their officers, mainly convalescents from Macon's hospitals.

As the battle began in earnest, billowing black smoke announced Federal success at the railroad bridge over Walnut Creek. The noise from the raiders' carbine volleys and the howling of 3-inch shells from their Rodman guns, quickly created confusion and fright in the militia's ranks. But by example and threats their officers eventually rallied most of them.

A mile and a half northeast, Adams' Kentuckians were more easily discouraged. Their sole attempt at charging up the steep hill to the Rebel position was pushed back decisively by a Confederate countercharge. Adams then merely held his ground, awaiting orders. Meanwhile, Federals south of him hoped vainly he would move to silence the Fort Hawkins battery. As the day wore on, these Confederate guns often scattered Yankee troopers, particularly after a Rebel batteryman climbed a blockhouse tower to call down shots on Stoneman's line.

The Federal gunners, unsuccessful in dispersing Cobb's infantry, were also unable to effectively engage the fort's elevated battery. Instead, they settled for a "brisk shelling" of the town. Miraculously, there was little damage and no personal injury. One shell exploded harmlessly outside a hospital; another crashed into a home without detonating.

The day dragged on in stalemate. Federals made a belated attempt to rush left along the tracks and take the bridges and were turned back. By 3:00, unable either to gain ground or check the fire from the fort, Stoneman determined to withdraw. Disheartening news underscored his decision: Camp Oglethorpe had been emptied at his approach, its inmates shipped to Savannah and Charleston, South Carolina.

The Battle of East Macon ended.

Ordering Adams to fall back, Stoneman led the remaining brigades across the creek. He left behind eighteen dead raiders and a relieved and joyous town. Casualties had been relatively light. They totaled about seventy on each side. Cobb, chafing because he lacked horses to pursue Stoneman, was later praised for his "gallant defense." The Reserve commander, General Johnston later wrote, repelled the raiders by "his own courage and judicious disposition and the excellent conduct of his troops, who heard hostile shot then for the first time."

Bewildered by events, Stoneman pursued a course of indecision and delay. Alarmed at false reports that Confederate cavalry had entered Macon, he directed his men first south, then east. He abruptly canceled these orders on hearing rumors that enemy forces lay in those directions.

After wavering, Stoneman canceled his Andersonville mission. Then came a report that "but a small force was on the Covington road." Eager to return north, the general determined to strike out for Hillsborough, fifteen miles above Clinton, "where he could take choice of three roads at daylight." And having chosen this course, he was to hold to it with obsessive intensity.

Nearing Clinton, the Federals discovered Confederate cavalrymen within the town. Union skirmishers, rushing in on separate roads, drove out about fifty Rebel horsemen, and released from jail thirty-five comrades captured earlier while foraging. Then, as darkness fell, the raiders torched the jail and began their march, lighted for a distance by the burning building.

Capron's brigade rode out in advance. The elderly, white-haired colonel considered Stoneman's choice of route a "fatal error" and worried that somewhere ahead, as had been rumored in Clinton, thousands of enemy troopers waited. As his men clashed with increasing numbers of Confederate pickets, crushed more and more Southern barricades, and skirmishing intensified, Capron's fear grew.

He was right to be afraid. Several miles ahead in the darkness, on carefully chosen ground, Iverson's main force lay in wait, resting after its mad dash from Flat Rock. Iverson's outlying pickets continued to fall back, drawing the Federals deeper into a deadly trap.

After midnight, skirmishing be-

came so heavy Stoneman's command halted for the night, certain an overwhelming force blocked their retreat. In the darkness random firing continued as opposing pickets exchanged shots. Jaded blue-coated troopers dropped to rest in the corn fields bordering the road; they had not covered half the distance to Hillsborough during their hellish night march.

As Sunday dawned, as hot and sultry as previous days, the weary Federals found themselves at a rural meeting-house called Sunshine Church. Many Union officers and most of the men were in an almost mutinous mood, balking at Stoneman's "infatuation" with cutting back the way he had come. Instead they argued for moving right to avoid the enemy. But to argue with Stoneman was fruitless. He confronted a classic dilemma: no problem is "more difficult for a cavalry leader than that of attacking an enemy drawn up for an engagement, unless it be withdrawing tired in the face of a fresh and superior foe."

Capron's men received orders to reconnoiter in force. Soon hitting a line of barricades, they broke through them, pushing the enemy back. Pursuing the Confederate troopers, the Yankees suddenly encountered enfilading rifle and cannon fire and retreated hastily. Iverson and his Confederates had finally bagged their quarry.

Hearing the unwelcome sound of artillery, Stoneman rode to the front. Heavy pine growth prevented him from forming a clear picture of the enemy's deployments. But it seemed a Confederate battery was positioned in the road's center, on a rise strongly fortified with logs and fence rails. From the battery, stout barricades curved outward like waiting arms.

Stoneman, undaunted, decided to break the Southern line by having dismounted men charge it. He sent the horses to the rear with a quarter of his force, then prepared his lines for the assault. He would lead the charge personally.

The decision to fight on foot shattered his men's morale. Troopers watched grimly as their horses were led away. One noted, a "cavalryman without a horse is like a fish out of water." Without their mounts they believed their carbines inadequate, their sabers useless. Iverson's Confederates believed differently.

They had served unmounted for several weeks in Atlanta's trenches. Their muzzleloaders, cumbersome on horseback, were ideal for the coming flight.

At about 10:00 the Federal line formed. The unionist Kentuckians were to the left, Capron's brigade on the right; one field piece held the center. Biddle's brigade, with the other gun, was held in reserve. The "Negro Brigade," a large band of former slaves driving stolen stock stood uneasily in the rear, near the pack train and led horses.

"Nerved with the energy of despair," the Yankees crossed the rough, gully-slashed terrain toward the Confederate barricades. A breakthrough seemed likely at first, but the Kentuckians faltered and fell back before the "destructive sheet of fire" that met them. Confederates immediately sprang from their works to strike the crumbling flank, forcing Stoneman's entire line to fall back.

Iverson, ill, waiting in the rear, ordered his field commander, Colonel Charles C. Crews, to press the enemy. Fresh parties of Rebel troopers advanced past their barricades and formed a forward line to engage Stoneman's men.

For several hours the fighting waivered; opposing forces alternately took and gave ground. For periods the action would suddenly cease as the fighters crouched in the underbrush among smells of blood, sweat, gunpowder, honeysuckle, and pine. By early afternoon, Federal exhaustion and discouragement, and the "loss of many valuable officers and men, broke the Federals' will." They lost faith in their commander. One described Stoneman as "seeming almost mad." The dispirited cavalymen became harder to align, more difficult to rally. Adams' men, usually audacious, turned almost timid. Their enlistments would be up within weeks. The 1st Kentuckians disliked taking risks against long odds. And men of the 11th Kentucky, many of them former-Confederates, guessed correctly that Rebel Kentuckians were among their adversaries. They were certain defeat or surrender would put them "in the hands of the executioner." In these circumstances, the Kentucky brigade felt it was time to retire from the contest.

Capron and his men also lost their will to fight. The colonel himself grew concerned for his teenaged son, a private. Before this boy

"yawned the sepulchre of Andersonville," a place on the minds of many of Stoneman's men.

Anxiety increased as Confederate cavalry attacked Capron's exposed flank. And alarm filtered through the Federal ranks as captured Rebels described their force as devastatingly superior. When small parties of Southern troopers harried Stoneman's rear guard, the raiders became certain the Rebel force from Macon was preparing to pound them from behind, crushing them "between the upper and nether millstone."

At about 4:00 a war council was called. The Union officers present urged immediate withdrawal, disliking any talk of surrender. Despite misgivings, Stoneman finally bowed to the inevitable. He ordered the officers to prepare to break out to the right. But before the officers could return and ready their men for the movement, a Rebel charge began, backed by well-aimed artillery fire. Withdrawal became rout.

Shelled into disorder, the Kentuckians sprinted toward their mounts. This created a gap in the Union line. Confederate troopers scampered through this hole and rushed toward the led horses. Chaos spread. The already disorganized Federal line disintegrated. Only Colonel Adams, quickly getting his men mounted and moving, led his force safely through the thickets to freedom. Capron's men were not so lucky. As one recalled, some "were cut down in the act of mounting, while some of the horses were captured by rebel soldiers, who mounted them and turned them upon our forces." Numerous horses had broken loose. And "frightened negroes rushed frantically about, adding considerably to the confusion."

Many of Capron's men found themselves caught in a stampede. The horses, catching the contagion of fear, pressed into each other, eyes rolling, quivering with frenzy. Clots of horsemen and riderless horses dashed about in confusion. They became a panicked herd that knew no obstacles. One ravine was bridged with the carcasses of horses and the bodies of their riders. Barricades and fences were beaten into splintered fragments by terrified horses; expanses of undergrowth were trampled into rough roadways.

Alone in maintaining some order, Stoneman made his stand on a hill

to the right of the road. His 200-man force included Biddle, part of his brigade, and other loyalists, as well as the battery, which kept up a steady cannonade. After sending word that he would try to cover his men's escape, Stoneman was encircled by the enemy. He insisted on fighting until overwhelmed. But, after a time, the Federals' ammunition supply was almost exhausted. Stoneman's officers brought him to reason, pleading further resistance was futile.

Presently, Confederate skirmishers down the hill saw a Federal officer approaching, waving a white cloth. Soon Confederate Colonel Crews and the Union general met. Stoneman pointlessly protested the indignity of surrendering to an officer of Crews' inferior rank. The colonel soon held the sword of the highest ranking Yankee officer ever captured by the Confederates. Stoneman, apparently broken by fatigue and grief, collapsed onto a log and wept.

In addition to Stoneman's faithful band, the Confederates snared enough fleeing Federals to bring the total captured to 500. An abundance of Yankee killed and wounded—as many as 250 dead by one report—lay among the pines. Surveying the spoils, the Confederates found two cannon, 1,000 rifles, and as many horses. They also rounded up Negro Brigade members to be sent back to their owners, with the exception of one. He had guided the raiders and so was summarily hanged on the battlefield. Iverson's and Crew's victory had cost fewer than fifty Confederate casualties. And as a chagrined Stoneman noted, the ragged Southern force had been smaller than his own.

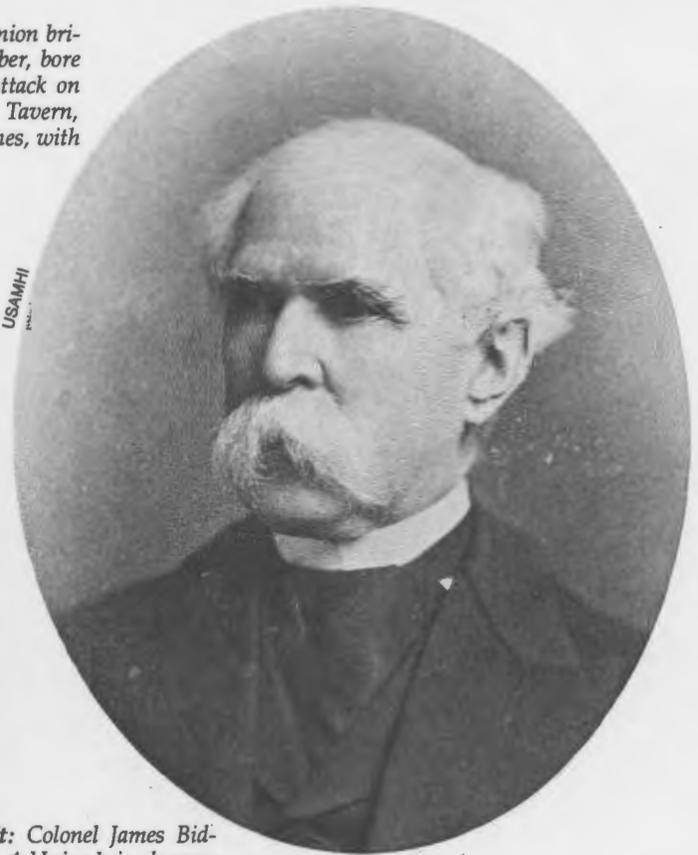
The following afternoon a "haggard and dejected" Stoneman finally crossed the river into Macon, accompanied by several captured officers. Surrounded by their captors, they were followed to the stockade by an exultant, heckling throng. Brought in shortly afterward, his men were soon closed up in boxcars for their trip to Andersonville, a journey from which many would not return.

Meanwhile, near Atlanta, where the Federal infantry movement had resulted in the indecisive July 28 Battle of Ezra Church, an anxious Sherman awaited news from his raiding parties. By July 30 he had been reduced to sending scouts to question citizens about his cavalry's whereabouts. Upon hearing Stone-

*Right: Colonel Horace Capron. His Union brigade, of which his son was also a member, bore the brunt of the Confederate counterattack on July 31. Chased all the way to Jug Tavern, Capron eventually returned to Union lines, with his boy, on August 8.*



*Left: Colonel James Biddle. A Union brigade commander held in reserve on July 31, late that afternoon he surrendered to the Confederates with General Stoneman.*



man had deserted McCook and headed for Macon, he exhibited a curious lack of surprise and irritation.

Only during the first few days of August, as survivors limped back into the Yankee lines, did the full extent of the disaster begin to take shape. Garrard's men returned first, having slowly retreated after trifling casualties. Then some of McCook's men arrived to report that after having done minor damage to the railroad, their force had been cut up by Wheeler at Newnan on the 30th. Soon afterward, the Kentucky Brigade arrived, relatively unscathed, reporting both the fiasco near Hillsborough and a subsequent disaster northeast of Atlanta at a spot called Jug Tavern. There the remnant of Capron's brigade had been almost annihilated by Colonel Breckinridge's men, the troops Iverson had sent in pursuit. Many Federals were killed, others captured. Among the latter was the redoubtable Major Davidson, whose force had rejoined Capron's command. The colonel himself, hatless and on foot, but accompanied by his son, finally returned on August 8.

In sum, the promise of neither the cavalry expeditions nor the infantry push had been fulfilled. Confederate rail service to Macon resumed almost immediately, and Andersonville's teeming population had been increased, not freed. Of course, some damage had been done, the most serious by Davidson's men at the Oconee bridge. But Stoneman had lost his freedom and over half his force, and McCook had fared little better. Cavalry operations had "terminated somewhat unsuccessfully," wrote Sherman. The truth was much worse. Decisive and resourceful, Wheeler had thoroughly wrecked the "three-pronged raid," reducing the Federal cavalry by almost half. The raiders' failure convinced Sherman infantry would have to break the railroad. Consequently, the Federal conquest of Atlanta awaited weeks of siege.

Left looking uncharacteristically foolish, Sherman wrote Chief of Staff Henry W. Halleck and attempted to defend his misjudgments—Stoneman's case in particular. If not the absolute nadir of the Atlanta Campaign for Sherman, Stoneman's debacle came close, for it was a per-

sonal as well as military disappointment. "I don't think I ever set my heart so strongly on any one thing as I did in attempting to rescue those prisoners," Sherman later admitted.

Stoneman could not have agreed more. He was imprisoned only briefly in Macon. From there he sent Sherman a vague, overwrought message, the closest he ever came to an official report of his foray. Soon transferred to a Charleston, South Carolina, prison, he wrote Union President Abraham Lincoln urging renewal of prisoner exchanges, attempting to accomplish through persuasion what he had been unable to effect by force. Exchanged in September (for Confederate Brigadier General D.C. Govan), he was raiding again by December. By war's end, Stoneman had somewhat restored his damaged reputation.

The 20th anniversary of the Battle of Sunshine Church found Stoneman embarked on his admirably progressive governorship of California. But when he died a decade later, full of years and honors, the controversy surrounding his disastrous Macon raid did not die with him. Memoirists and regimental historians continued for years to dispute, often bitterly, what had actually happened during those muggy July days in 1864. ■