

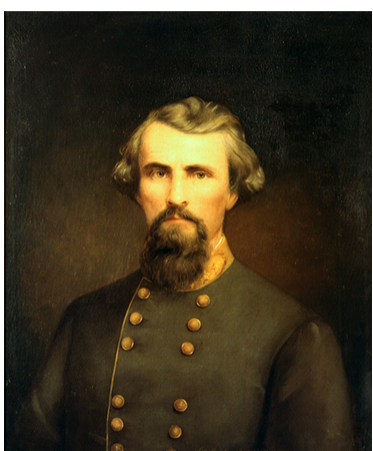


BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH

Forrest–Streight Raid: Skirmish at Black Creek

Norman Dasinger, Jr., April 30, 2021

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Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest | Alabama Dept. of Archives and History



Union Col. Abel Streight | Library of Congress



Emma Samson | Alabama Department of Archives and History

In 1863, there was one useable bridge over Black Creek, just north of Gadsden, Alabama, allowing passengers to enter Gadsden from the north and west. In most instances, this bridge was of no national importance. That changed on the morning of May 2, 1863.

That day, over 1,500 Union soldiers, some riding mules, under the command of Indiana native Col. Abel Streight, arrived along Black Creek. Their objective was the destruction of Rome, Georgia, and the Western and Atlantic Railroad that connected Atlanta to Chattanooga. These Yankee raiders were pursued by Confederate Gen. Nathan B. Forrest and fewer than 500 of his veteran cavalry.

One Confederate soldier that morning described the waterway as such: “Black Creek is a crooked, deep and sluggish stream with precipitous clay banks and mud bottom. It has its source on the Plateau of Lookout Mountain...”

Once at Black Creek, Streight quickly crossed on the Tuscaloosa Road Bridge and continued into Gadsden, but he left behind a small force to impede Forrest and his men. As the Confederates arrived, they were met by gunfire from the Federals, and a brisk skirmish ensued as both sides fired from opposite banks of Black Creek.

The 15-year-old Emma Sansom guided General Forrest to a nearby and little used crossing site—a cattle ford—over Black Creek, enabling the Confederate cavalry to overpower the defending Federals posted on and around the bridge. In doing so, the Confederates lost a man, Robert Turner, a private in the 4th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. Forrest later returned to the Sansom home and told Emma, “One of my bravest men has been killed, and he is laid out in (your) house. I want you to see that he is buried in some graveyard near here.” Emma and her family buried Private Turner in the family cemetery next to Emma’s father, where both still rest today.

Forrest would capture Streight and his entire command the morning of May 3 outside of Cedar Bluff, Alabama. Colonel Streight would eventually be sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, as a prisoner of war.

Join BGES on our upcoming tour, "[All's Fair in War, Streight's Raid and Forrest's Bluff](#)," on June 25–27, 2021, with Norm Dasinger, Jr., and Brian Steel Wills.



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