THE FOURTH MICHIGAN CAVALRY: A CIVIL WAR REGIMENTAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

THE FOURTH MICHIGAN CAVALRY:
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The history of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment is traced in this study to further the already great wealth of material now covering the Civil War. Many general works on various aspects and phases of the war have been presented in books, monographs, and articles. However, no work has ever been published recently on some of the smaller fighting units of which the Fourth Michigan is a prime example. Works glorifying the Fourth have been written but I find them much too prejudicial to be of much value. An example of this apotheosis can be found in Joseph Vale, Minty and the Cavalry, where, at times, the truth was stretched to such an extent in order to exalt the brigade Minty led, that glaring contradictions appear--facts not verified in the Official Records. The claims of extraordinary prowess made by Vale and other contemporary writers required substantiation.

A careful perusal of the War Department publication, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, a less biased authority than Vale or other writers. Using the Official

Records as a matrix, I checked background on particular battles and leaders of the war to get a true picture of the Fourth Michigan. From the successful charges at Stone's River, the delaying tactics at Chickamauga, the capture of several heavily-fortified cities, to the final chapter in its proven glorious history (that is, the capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis fleeing Richmond), this regiment validly earned its nickname of the "Fighting Fourth."

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ORGANIZATION AND MOVEMENT SOUTH

The roar of a cannon acted as a signal for all the guns encircling Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor to open fire and shattered the cold, early dawn of April 12, 1861. All that day and throughout the next, shells rained into the fort, battering the thick walls and ripping the Stars and Stripes from its flagpole. The Union troops in the fort tacked the flag's tattered remnant on the wall, but the situation worsened as the walls were reduced to rubble by the Confederate cannon. The garrison in the fort was forced to capitulate, and the Civil War, which many had felt to be inevitable, had finally come. On the day following the surrender of the fort, President Abraham Lincoln issued his proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to defend the country and the flag.

People all over the North heard Lincoln's appeal. In large cities, in small towns and villages, patriotic feelings welled up in men indignant that soldiers of the so-called Confederacy had fired on the American flag. "Yankee Doodle" enlivened meetings where men enlisted in response to Lincoln's call. Michigan citizens, not to be left behind in those inspiring first days of the war, held meetings in Detroit on the Campus Martius, resplendent with

red, white, and blue bunting. Bands playing stirring martial music heightened the general atmosphere of chauvinism that prevailed throughout the state. Largely because of these meetings, Michigan quickly met its quota for the first call of troops. State and municipal governments raised funds to outfit these soldiers. Volunteer organizations pledged help for the families of the men who might well give their lives to preserve the Old Flag.

Responding to subsequent calls by Lincoln, Michigan continued to meet her quota of volunteers. As soon as enough men enlisted to form a regiment, the group received a designated number, so that the first unit became the First Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment; the second, the Second Regiment, and so on, until that particular quota was fulfilled. Cavalry, artillery, and engineer units organized on the same basis. Many of the leaders of these regiments, like those whom they recruited, had had no formal military training but had joined to help their country in the hour of need. The officers, therefore, as well as the men, had to learn military tactics.

Even as many of the men and officers had had no military training, so also had they had no training in fighting on horseback. Few of the men recruited in the different companies of the various cavalry regiments had ever ridden a horse. The majority of these men were farmers and woodsmen whose only experience with equestrian life

had been to follow behind big draft horses pulling a plow or a load of logs. However, cavalry involved a certain amount of dash and glamor not found in the organizations of foot soldiers, so that men eagerly enlisted in these units and learned the commands necessary for cavalrymen. The uniforms, when first issued, were much more ornate than those of the infantry; and the saber gave a definite distinction to the horsemen. Also, the government issued to cavalrymen good boots which infantrymen could acquire only by paying extra.

A call for troops on July 1, 1862, resulted in the formation of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment, whose companies originated in various parts of the state and then congregated in Detroit, as opposed to some regiments organized and mustered exclusively in one region of the state. Most people believed that this regiment could easily meet its quota of 1,000 men with speed and be in the field at an early day, a belief proved correct. By July 3, a company of the Fourth being recruited in Detroit by Horace Gray needed only fifty more men to fulfill its complement of one hundred. During the time it took to recruit his company, activity centered in his office on Griswold Street and he was praised as being "most emphatically the right man in the right place."[1] Thus, with the speed and efficiency

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[1]Detroit Free Press, July 3, 1862.

shown in enrolling this one company having been matched by equally rapid enlistments in the other companies, this regiment, even in its formative state, had achieved a reputation later proved valid on the field of battle.

By the end of August, this state unit was mustered into the service of the United States at Detroit. From this time until called to the front the men trained, learned to handle their mounts, to give and obey commands, and, in general, to act as an integrated unit rather than as a number of independent companies, each going its own way.

Robert H. G. Minty, a lieutenant-colonel who had already distinguished himself in the war, led this Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment. The son of a British officer, he had left England and had emigrated to Michigan in 1853.[2] He came with some military experience, having served as an ensign in the English army. A series of commands gave Minty experience with the cavalry before he took over the leadership of the Fourth. In September, 1861, he was commissioned a major in the Second Michigan Cavalry. Philip H. Sheridan, a captain in the United States Army who later became famous as one of the outstanding battlefield commanders in the Union Army, led the Second Cavalry. But before Minty could move out with the Second, he was commissioned a lieutenant-colonel in the Third Michigan Cavalry. This regiment left for the

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[2]Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1934), XIII, 33.

field on November 28, 1861, under the command of Minty, who led it through the sieges of New Madrid and Island No. 10 on the Mississippi River. At the end of March, 1862, Minty returned to Michigan to prepare for the recruitment of still another cavalry regiment, a unit not called for officially as yet, but deemed inevitably necessary in the near future. This regiment, designated the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, was mustered with Minty as its colonel.[3]

For the following month, the camp grounds in Detroit used by the Fourth teemed with action. The regiment pursued the usual camp procedure and routine as did other campsites surrounding the Fourth on the Campus Martius. The bugle sounded roll call at five in the morning; then, after breakfast, drill began. The regiment averaged four hours of drill per day and spent the rest of the time fiddling, playing cards, swearing, complaining, and raising a ruckus to pass the time during the remaining days of summer. The enlisted men slept in tents which held between fourteen and eighteen men. The occupants of these tents filled them with hay to keep the blankets away from the hard ground. These tents were laid out in the usual company streets, and the area was policed to keep the filth that naturally accumulated in an army camp from taking over entirely. However, the men were not completely disciplined and could be considered anything but proficient soldiers.

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[3]John Robertson, Michigan in the War (Lansing, 1880), p. 474.

This camp had the usual likes and dislikes for officers, but occasionally members of various units would buy magnificent sets of spurs, sabers, and holsters for their officers if they thought them worthy of such expensive gifts. The payment, or bounty, offered men to join this regiment was $100. Added to this, each man received the payment of thirteen dollars per month, along with an additional fifteen dollars for the month in which the company was mustered into service.[4] Money was, therefore, dearly earned by the enlisted men and to give gifts to the officers meant that much respect was accorded them. One illustration of this practice and evidence that the Fourth possessed good officers is shown by an advertisement that appeared in the Detroit Free Press on August 24, 1862. Company "A" of the Fourth Michigan advertised to procure a splendid horse for its captain, Allen G. Wells.[5]

This regiment, considered sufficiently well-trained to leave the state on September 24, left for Michigan City, Indiana; one half going by way of the Michigan Southern Railroad, the other half on the Michigan Central. From there the two wings of the regiment proceeded south toward Kentucky together. Wherever the trains stopped along the way, the citizens of the towns provided the weary soldiers with coffee.

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[4]Detroit Free Press, July 4, 1862.

[5]Detroit Free Press, August 24, 1862.

One noteworthy accident occurred during the movement of the regiment south toward the battlefields. One soldier riding on the top of one of the cars (it being a warm day) forgot to duck as the train passed under a low bridge. The resultant injury broke his jaw and almost tore off his scalp. Another soldier, Othniel Gooding, commenting on the incident, remarked that it might be better to be injured this way than on the field where there was a good chance the wounded person would be forgotten in the excitement. The majority of the men, never having seen a battle nor the results of it, talked little about the prospect of their being wounded or killed.[6]

While heading for Louisville, Kentucky, the Fourth Michigan camped on the northern bank of the Ohio River just upstream from Louisville, at Jeffersonville, Indiana. The men of the regiment were anxious to cross the river and get into battle, but their superiors thought they needed more drill, so they remained on the northern side of the river, anxiously awaiting the march into Rebeldom. The soldiers stationed in Jeffersonville did not remain continually in camp. At the order of their commanding officer, parts of

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[6]Othniel E. Gooding to Lucy Dexter, September 30, 1862, MS 6hh, Michigan State University Museum. Gooding, a member of Company "A," wrote many wartime letters to his sweetheart, Lucy Dexter in Milan. The writer found it necessary to correct the spelling and punctuation of quotes in the interest of clarity. Letters by Gooding hereinafter mentioned are in the collection deposited in the Michigan State University Museum.

the regiment went on foraging expeditions into the surrounding farmlands. Never collecting much here as the property belonged to supposed Unionists, the men were eager to cross over the river and plague the farmers with secessionist tendencies. Some men, not at all anxious to enter the fray, left camp whenever they could with no intention of returning. One private jumped off the train before it left Detroit; a natural shirker, he was not missed for some time following his escape.

At various times the regiment received marching orders, but for one reason or another each was countermanded. Early one morning after the gear was collected, rifles and revolvers were issued, and tents were struck, the men stood in readiness for action. Noon came and went with the men still waiting. Owing to a mixup in orders, the necessary baggage wagons designated for the regiment were not available. Impatiently the men waited to cross the river because they could hear the sounds of battle on the other side. One week later, on October 8, again they received marching orders, but these, too, were countermanded, since some of the regimental horses were not shod. Finally, on October 10, the Fourth left Jeffersonville. Marching for three days along the Louisville and Bardstown Stone Road, the green troops experienced their first action October 10, when the regiment, as part of a larger cavalry force, attacked John Morgan's Confederate troopers and drove his seasoned soldiers several miles. Since Morgan possessed a numerical advantage

of almost two to one, this success could be considered a good omen.

This action so wore out the regiment, unused to fighting and the rough life of cavalrymen, that by November 1 the number of effective troops had been reduced from 1233 to 543. The number of casualties had been slight, but the number of men on sick call was high. Although there had been some degree of sickness in the camp before it even left Detroit, this first encounter prostrated many of the men; throughout the war, a great amount of sickness prevailed, leaving about one-half of the force effective.

The Fourth Michigan had joined the Third Cavalry Brigade commanded by Colonel Minor Milliken in the fight against Morgan in Stanford, Kentucky. Colonel Milliken complained to the Chief of Staff of the Union army that his force was nowhere near sufficient to deal with Morgan and his more than 2,000 men and two pieces of artillery. Milliken had at his disposal 575 seasoned troops--375 First Ohio and 200 First Kentucky--and 600 green troops--the Fourth Michigan--never under fire before, and not one piece of artillery. Milliken was thankful that Morgan did not turn to fight with the probable resultant disaster for the northern force.[7]

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[7] War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (U.S. War Department, Washington, 1887), Series One, vol. XVI, Pt. 2, 647-49. Hereafter cited as O.R.; unless otherwise noted, all citations are to Ser. 1.

The Union and Confederate armies had fought a large inconclusive battle near Perryville October 8, and the regiment passed wagonloads of wounded threading their way back towards Bardstown, Kentucky. The men marched by the battlefield on the 13th a little before sundown and saw several rebel dead who had lain in the fields since the onslaught of the battle. These men, left by their compatriots as they retreated, were being buried by Union details as fast as was practicable. The men of the Fourth, noticeably disturbed by the sight of the black bodies, would visualize them for years to come.

The regiment spent the remainder of October chasing Morgan around the state of Kentucky. The Fourth could get little help from the citizens, for although many of them claimed to be Union sympathizers, they professed ignorance of Morgan's movements. At times, the Fourth entered an area where Morgan had been but an hour previously, but could never seem to catch him.

The constant movement of the regiment did not permit it to burden the hard-working horses with unnecessary equipment, since the necessities were held to a minimum. The Fourth did not use tents during the pursuit of Morgan. Fortunately, the men were favored with good weather the majority of the time, having suffered but one snowstorm. By the time they made camp at night it usually was quite late, and too dark to bother with tents. So the men rolled

up in their blankets, waiting for the bugle to sound "Boots and Saddles" at almost any time during the night; at that sound they unrolled themselves from the protecting warmth and mustered in. They were sometimes called out several times a night, only to be told that it was a false alarm.

The men of the Fourth, like their comrades in other regiments, found the diet monotonous. Gooding wrote, "We have plenty to eat; hardtack, bacon, and coffee for breakfast; bacon, hardtack, and coffee for dinner; coffee, bacon, and hardtack for supper, and some other good things."[8] The regiment was on the move so much that cooked rations could not be provided. Thus whenever they stopped, the men would quickly gather wood, find water, and start boiling their coffee beans. Lacking a grinder for the beans, they boiled them in water and drank the mixture as fast as they could; for soon they would hear again the order to mount and have to leave any coffee remaining, climb into the saddle, and again take up the trail of the elusive Morgan.

During the month of November, 1862, the Fourth temporarily joined the First Cavalry Division, commanded by Colonel John Kennett. The regiment did not spend its time continuously with the division; for, on the orders of Major General Thomas Crittenden, it again pursued Morgan. Colonel Kennett, in a letter to General George Thomas, stated that

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[8]Gooding to Dexter, November 24, 1862.

by November 14, the Fourth Michigan, Fourth Ohio, Fourth and Fifth Kentucky, and one battalion of the First and Third U.S. Cavalry had already been detached from his division, and the troops remaining were insufficient to hold the 6,000 men of Nathan Bedford Forrest who was at Lebanon.[9]

From November 19 until the 28, although nominally still a part of the First Cavalry Division, the Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment scouted for Major General Rosecrans as a separate detachment. Although the Fourth tried to draw Morgan into a fight, every time the Michigan unit appeared, Morgan would leave the field. Consequently, the men of the Fourth began walking with a little more of a swagger than the average northern trooper, thinking themselves the best regiment in Rosecrans' army.[10]

The men of the Fourth did not constantly scout, for they spent some time foraging for additional supplies. About 100 men went out on horseback with ten to twenty wagon-teams following. They first fed the horses, and then went to the nearest plantation to load the wagons with corn, hay, oats, sheep, pigs, poultry, honey, sweet potatoes, or anything else edible. They often took more than they needed, feasting greedily on the food before it could spoil. The rationale of the soldier was that he was only reciprocating in

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[9] O.R., XX, Pt. 2, 47.

[10] Gooding to Dexter, November 24, 1862.

kind what the Rebels did where Unionist sentiment prevailed. Martial law permitted foraging, although not to such an extreme extent.[11]

On November 28 the Fourth Michigan joined the forces of Major General David S. Stanley, chief of cavalry, stationed at Camp Rosecrans outside of Nashville. Stanley, a West Point graduate, received his commission and reported for duty at the cavalry school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. From 1853 to 1861 he gained experience in the West and by the beginning of the war he became a captain of cavalry, having spent the majority of the pre-Civil War years fighting Indians. He had had a close brush with death when an Indian fired point-blank in his face; the gun misfired, and Stanley's life was saved by a comrade-in-arms, Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart, who later became so important to the cavalry of the Confederacy.[12] Stanley distinguished himself early in the Civil War and was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers on September 28, 1861. During the course of the war his gallantry and skill in ordering troop movements was repeatedly commended. He commanded a division, then a corps, and for a short time directed the Army of the Cumberland in the absence of its commander. He felt that a general should be with his men and on various occasions

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[11]Gooding to Dexter, November 19, 1862.

[12]Joseph G. Vale, Minty and the Cavalry (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1886), p. xvi.

led a brigade in a saber charge against the enemy. A fearless leader, he was wounded twice during the war.

At the close of 1862 the cavalry was not considered a separate unit; it was attached to infantry as pickets and scouts. In the West, as early as January, 1862, cavalry units had been joined for various ventures. In the eastern theater the older practice of using cavalry primarily as scouts continued until late in the war, not utilizing this force to its fullest extent. The idea of a cavalry division or corps as such was not considered except for special missions and, after these had been accomplished, the unit was disbanded and its components returned to their supporting role. Regiments were so split that one battalion might be fighting in the West while another battalion in the same regiment might be stationed with an infantry division in the Army of the Potomac. Under these circumstances it was virtually impossible to develop an esprit de corps, so necessary for the psychological motivation of a military unit. A regimental commander seemed to have little say as to where his troops were to be stationed. Even the concept of brigades of cavalry was relatively new when the Fourth Michigan took the field after the war had been in progress for over a year. Army leaders tend to be quite conservative in their thinking and strategy and find it difficult to accept new ideas without a great deal of trepidation and forethought. Independent commands of cavalry could be very destructive

to the enemy, yet the cavalry units continued to be attached to the infantry for their traditional assignments as scouts and pickets.

General Stanley changed this tradition and organized a cavalry expedition in the area around Murfreesboro, Tennessee on December 4. The Fourth Michigan and Seventh Pennsylvania Cavalry regiments were to work together to relieve Franklin, Tennessee, from the hands of the rebels. The official report of Colonel Minty to the Assistant Acting Adjutant-General of the First Cavalry Division stated that he had with him only 302 officers and men and that he successfully drove the enemy pickets into Franklin, destroyed two bridges, and wounded one rebel, returning that evening without a loss to the Fourth.[13] Joseph Vale, the biographer of Minty's war years, attributes much of the success of the subsequent capture of Franklin to the mettle of the Fourth Michigan, which entered the town dismounted ahead of the mounted Seventh Pennsylvania. Minty, the first Federal soldier into the town, promptly took a prisoner singlehandedly. Another factor in the favor of the Union force was that it possessed repeating rifles; these weapons, the Colt-Patterson Revolving Rifles, could fire six shots in relatively rapid succession but had such a kick that they could not be safely used on horseback.

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[13] O.R., XX, Pt. 2, 29-30.

General Stanley recognized the need for reorganizing the cavalry and formed two divisions of two brigades each. The Fourth Michigan Cavalry became part of the First Brigade, Second Division, with Colonel Minty commanding the brigade. The latter, known throughout the war as Minty's Brigade, was composed of various units and by its exploits and accomplishments achieved a fame which seems almost fictional. Other units in the original brigade, besides the Fourth Michigan, were the Second Indiana, the Third Kentucky, and the Seventh Pennsylvania. Rosecrans, the commanding general of the Army of the Cumberland, heartily approved the reorganization.

Shortly afterwards, Captain Alfred Abeel of "A" Company of the Fourth, commanding a picket detail of forty men under a flag of truce, was captured by a rebel force on December 15. A Confederate lieutenant-colonel had been detained after he had negotiated with the Union command of the Fifth Division; in retaliation, a scouting party of the First Alabama Cavalry attacked and captured all the cavalry outposts of the Fourth Michigan picketing the area in front of the Fifth Division. A squadron from the Fourth, sent out to bring back information on the capture, escorted some of the prisoners who had managed to escape to the Union lines and the story was pieced together. Brigadier-General Horatio P. Van Cleve, commanding Fifth Division, sent in a report stating that Captain Abeel "had been very remiss

in suffering his men to dismount and leave their ranks while the rebel party with the flag of truce was there. . . . If the facts are as reported, it was a disgraceful outrage on the part of the rebels. At the same time, those bearing the flag of truce may have borne no part of it, and the conduct of Captain Abeel was very culpable and unsoldierlike."[14] After an investigation, General Rosecrans sent a letter to Braxton Bragg, commanding general of the southern forces opposing the Army of the Cumberland, and Bragg answered on December 23, refusing to accede to the demands that Rosecrans had proposed; namely to return the captured men. Bragg directed that, in the future, flags of truce would be honored only on Mondays and Thursdays between the hours of noon and 4:00 p.m. He said that the detention of a flag of truce, of which the Union forces were guilty, made the flag lose its sanctity, and therefore the First Alabama Cavalry Regiment was within its right in capturing Abeel and his command.[15]

Captain Frank Mix of the Fourth left camp December 21 early in the morning with fifty men to report to General James Negley on the Franklin Pike, as an escort for a forage train and to procure as much information on the enemy's position as possible. This detachment found a small northern

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[14] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 82.

[15] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 84-85.

force fighting rebels who were trying to destroy the Union supply train. Having Colt's rifles the men started into battle dismounted but could not dislodge the Confederates, so they mounted to chase them. The rebels got off two heavy volleys, wounding a sergeant of Company "B," and then fled. An aide-de-camp of the commander of the Union force originally under fire detached Mix's men for other duties, thus eliminating the possibility of pursuing the rebels and taking prisoners. In his official report, Mix lamented that fact but praised the men who "all behaved nobly, and although the bullets fell fast and thick, not one faltered, but did his best to keep up. I cannot speak too highly of Sergeant McIntyre, who although wounded, showed coolness and courage not often exhibited by older and more experienced soldiers. Had it not been for the interference of the lieutenant, I am confident that we might have captured a fine lot of them."[16] General Stanley sent Captain Mix a complimentary note, saying that the detachment made a gallant charge.

Some of the men of the Fourth found such action exhilarating. "It is a good deal exciting and makes a fellow feel good all over to have the bullets whistle around as they did in that place. The Rebels were in a mill and some other buildings, but our guns were so much the best that they had to run. By the way, we have got new guns; have

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[16] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 131-32.

got Colt's Revolving Rifle, the best gun in the world, and we can go in on our nerve now. I guess we are about equal to the mounted riflemen now."[17]

Owing to pressure from President Lincoln and other impatient Washington officials, the Army of the Cumberland became active again, and detachments of that army began moving out of Camp Rosecrans in the last days of December, 1862. Chattanooga had been considered by the Union command as a very important city in the winning of the war, located as it was on the Cumberland Plateau, an important crossing point of the Tennessee River as well as being a focal point of several vital railroad lines. The northern forces stationed around Nashville had a long way to go to reach Chattanooga, and many battles, both large and small, would have to be fought before that objective could be attained. The Confederate army commanded by Bragg, placed squarely in the way between Nashville and Chattanooga, would have to be defeated or pushed aside to keep the forthcoming march by Rosecrans from bogging down. The South would not let Chattanooga go without a valiant effort, because they, too, realized the significance of its location. On December 7, 1862, Morgan led from Murfreesboro a lightning-like raid on a Federal garrison near Hartsville, Tennessee, a town northeast of Nashville, where he took 2,000 prisoners.

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[17]Gooding to Dexter, December 22, 1862.

This showed the Union leaders that the South still had an effective cavalry force that could move almost at will with little opposition from the cavalry commands of the North. It was therefore imperative that the reorganization created by General Stanley be effected at the earliest possible moment.

As the crow flies, the distance between Nashville and Chattanooga is 115 miles, the topography rugged. The Cumberland Plateau presented some barrier to movement as did a series of rivers and large creeks crossing at right angles to the main direction of movement. Supplies had to accompany the large Army of the Cumberland and communications had to be maintained with the base at Nashville. At that stage of the war, it was unheard of for a whole army to move into enemy territory without an adequate supply line to its rear. A raid like that of Morgan against Hartsville showed that this supply line could be disrupted without too much effort. The job of the Union cavalry was to mop up resistance that could develop any time the army began its long push toward Chattanooga.

The Army of the Potomac had met General Robert E. Lee at Fredericksburg on December 13, and the army dashed itself against the strong Confederate defenses on the heights behind the city. The Union army had lost 12,000 men in the attempt to take these heights, and the command of that large army passed from General Ambrose Burnside to General Joseph

Hooker. Rosecrans had taken the command of the Army of the Cumberland from General Don Carlos Buell because of the latter's inaction and planned a great offensive before the cold weather made the roads impassable. The officials in Washington wanted him to take his army into East Tennessee, but that plan was not easily executed. Rather, Rosecrans knew of a Confederate concentration in the area around Murfreesboro, and on December 26, 1862, the Army of the Cumberland broke winter camp and set out for this objective with 43,000 men.

Colonel Minty had command of the First Brigade of the cavalry division still under Colonel Kennett. The other components of the brigade had been changed so that besides the Fourth Michigan there were the Third Kentucky, Seventh Pennsylvania, and Company M of the Second Indiana. In the march out of Camp Rosecrans the First Brigade led the advance of the Army of the Cumberland. Ten miles from Nashville, the first rebel outposts were attacked and driven to La Vergne, where the brigade met a force of 2,500 cavalry and four pieces of artillery under the command of General Joseph Wheeler. After a sharp skirmish the enemy was driven off the field of battle, and this victory was followed the next morning by an advance of part of the brigade to Stewart's Creek where it was to secure and hold a bridge for the safe crossing of the Union army. This battalion, composed of four companies of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry,

routed a full regiment in gaining possession of the bridge, and then had to defend the easily-won prize against a whole brigade of Grey cavalry for two hours until Federal reinforcements arrived. The report of Colonel William B. Hazen, Forty-first Ohio Infantry, commanding the Second Brigade and reinforcing the battalion, said that much credit was due to Captain Mix, in command of the battalion of the Fourth. The little group of Federal troops had much spirit and daring, and "had they been armed with sabers, in place of rifles, by slashing upon their rear the rout would have been pushed to a panic."[18]

The remainder of the Fourth covered the right flank under the command of Minty on December 27, and camped near Stewart's Creek for the night. The next day, the Seventh Pennsylvania relieved the battalion under the command of Captain Mix located on the Stewart's Creek bridge. December 29 found the Fourth in reserve as the army began its further advance. The regiment, along with a battalion of the Seventh Pennsylvania, on the 30th was sent to the rescue of a wagon train on the Nashville pike where Wheeler's cavalry, a formidable enemy, was raising havoc. At La Vergne Wheeler captured and destroyed an immense Union supply train on its way to Murfreesboro. On the 31st, Minty's command reported to General Stanley who was with the reserve brigade

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[18] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 542-43.

of cavalry. The combined force moved to the right of General Alexander McCook's corps, which was the right wing of the Army of the Cumberland in the hours immediately preceding the Battle of Stone's River. A group of the Fourth under Lieutenant-Colonel William Dickinson was left behind to support an artillery battery. The force under Minty then charged the rebels, getting in the way of their Union artillery. The Fourth dismounted and began moving forward as skirmishers, whereupon they were attacked by 2,500 Confederates, culminating in a retreat of Minty's whole brigade. Reforming, General Stanley gave the order to charge; he personally led two companies of the Fourth and fifty men of the Fifteenth Pennsylvania, driving the enemy from the field. Then Minty led a charge with the remaining force, completing the rout.

To view the battle of Stone's River as a whole and see just how important the actions of the various units of the Fourth Michigan were to prevent the complete collapse of the Union army, one must look at the over-all battle plans of both commanding generals. Both Rosecrans and Bragg decided to attack on December 31, both generals having identical plans of attack. The plan was that each would hold with his right wing and attack with his left. The concerted action, following such attacks, if properly executed by both armies, would have meant that the armies would still be roughly parallel to each other but would have

changed direction from an east-west line to one pointing north-south. However, the Confederates attacked the Union right wing before it was ready for action and McCook's Corps on the right completely collapsed, leaving Thomas, commander of the center wing, holding a very tenuous but redeemable position.

The two cavalry charges in which the Fourth was involved, the one led by Stanley, the other by Minty, were so conclusive that Wheeler's routed cavalry force retired from the field of battle for the next three days. Thus, the time gained by the charges of Stanley and Minty allowed the Union forces to survey their situation, and by noon of December 31, the tide of battle slowly began to turn. At that time, the right flank of the right wing of the Army of the Cumberland had been forced behind the lines formed in the center, so that the Federal line looked like a wedge. By afternoon, the northern army began to take the offensive and refused to yield to further stubborn southern attacks. New Year's Eve was spent in a council of war. Only Thomas refused to believe that the army would have to retreat. For some unaccountable reason, Bragg did not renew the offensive the following day but left the field to the Union, retreating to Tullahoma, after having inflicted a total of 13,000 casualties in the previous day's battle. Only some skirmishing with advance units of the Union forces marred that first day of 1863.

The Fourth in general, and Minty in particular, were commended by General Stanley, chief of the Cavalry forces, and by Colonel Kennett, commander of the Cavalry Division.[19] General Stanley stated that the conditions under which the cavalry force suffered taxed it greatly, as shown by the fact that from December 26 to January 4 the horses were unsaddled to be groomed only.[20] During this time, the men, short of rations, worked night and day in wet, cold fields without tents and never complained of their conditions.

The detachment led by Dickinson, separated from the rest of the brigade on December 31, joined the Tenth Ohio Infantry under Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Burke. This force, on January 1, acted as videttes in the rear of the collapsing right wing of the Blue army, reorganized over 4,000 stragglers fleeing the battle, formed them into regiments, and returned them to the front. The four companies of the Fourth Michigan were then sent to Colonel William P. Innes, commanding First Michigan Engineers, where he was being attacked behind the collapsed Union lines near the baggage train. In his report, Burke stated that a citizen informed him that the battalion was returning, without reaching the Engineers or even firing a shot.[21] According to Lieutenant-

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[19] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 620-21.

[20] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 618.

[21] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 654-56.

Colonel Dickinson, he stopped his advance in the support of the Engineer Regiment three-quarters of a mile from the place where Wheeler was burning the baggage train and harassed Wheeler's rear, thus forcing him to fight on two fronts.[22] The Engineers made a gallant stand, saving the majority of the train and protecting the rear of the Union army from the ravages of Wheeler, and the detachment under Dickinson played a large role in this victory.

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[22] O.R., XX, Pt. 1, 628-29.

II

THE FOURTH MICHIGAN IN CENTRAL AND EAST TENNESSEE

While the efforts of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment during January and February, 1863, were not as spectacular as those it exhibited in the Battle of Stone's River, nevertheless its endeavors did show the commanders of both the North and South that a well-led cavalry force could be a very useful arm of the army. The theater of operations in the West was much more advantageous for cavalry movements since there was more clear space generally on the Western battlefields. The riders, although few had ever ridden before, had a daring not found among foot soldiers. One reason why the Union forces, despite being outnumbered two to one the first years of the war, could hold their own against great odds was their boldness and daring. Evidence of this was shown by Minty's Brigade on several occasions, which scored great victories over its enemy led by such important figures as Wheeler, Forrest, and Morgan. Northern troopers, outnumbered by Confederate cavalrymen, had to stay in the field much longer than their counterparts in the South; consequently, there were more breakdowns among both men and horses. Owing to the need for quick movement, the horses were sometimes left saddled for two or three days, a great discomfort for animals which sometimes had to go

on half-rations or without any food for several days at a stretch. At the end of a hard day of marching or fighting, men and animals were often compelled to subsist on whatever they could forage for themselves.

Although the Union cavalry used the McClellan saddle, considerably lighter than its western counterpart, it still was a great hardship to have even this onus and also a horse blanket rubbing the hide off the horse's back. Care had to be taken to prevent sores and each regiment of cavalry had hostlers to fix defective harness, shoe the horses, and attempt to keep them in reasonable condition. But even with precautions a certain number of horses fell by the wayside and the demand for good mounts always exceeded the supply. This problem was alleviated somewhat by large breeding-farms in the North and West where horses were raised and specially trained for the cavalry forces. These horses were trained further in camp by their new owners, and taught not to shy at the sounds of battle. The trappings of the saddle and reins were specifically designed to withstand the strain as the rider leaned out of the saddle to swing his saber or to fire his carbine. The mount had to be taught to respond to foot pressure while the rider's hands were otherwise occupied. All in all, a well-trained mount was all-important for the safety of both the horse and rider.

January and February were spent in skirmishes with the enemy near the base in Murfreesboro and on scouting

expeditions when the men of the Fourth, as part of the First Brigade, did not even have shelter tents to shield them from the severe Tennessee winter. A long scouting expedition took most of the Fourth out of camp for about a week while the Army of the Cumberland was still licking its wounds after the battle of Stone's River. The horses were not unsaddled for six days and nights, and the men were mounted a good share of that time, acting as pickets, scouts, and guards of bridges needed to be kept intact. Although exceedingly weary, the men set out on another scouting expedition from January 12 to January 18 and suffered greatly because it rained or snowed almost the whole week. From January 31 to February 13, the regiment, along with the rest of the First and Third Cavalry brigades, all commanded by Minty, went on an expedition from Murfreesboro to Franklin. The cavalry, vanguard to the First Infantry Division, Twentieth Corps, commanded by General Jefferson C. Davis, met with the opposition of Wheeler's force that first day, thus delaying the progress of the infantry. In this encounter, Minty's command captured ninety-eight men, forty-eight of whom had saber wounds.[1] These men were captured when the Union force charged into the rebel camp before the Southerners had had time to saddle their mounts. The saber charge had been made by the Seventh Pennsylvania, as the Fourth

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[1] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 26.

Michigan did not carry these weapons with them during this fray.[2] The men of the Fourth had been told before this combative mission that all they required for food were three days' rations. They soon discarded what little bacon they had and ate the hams from the smoke houses on the plantations. Until the day they returned to camp, the volunteers spent the majority of the time in the saddle or sleeping on the snowy, wet ground. Success capped their effort, as the cavalry force took a total of two colonels, one major, four captains, seven lieutenants, and one hundred sixty-eight enlisted men, while the losses to the Union force were almost minimal.[3]

Though the battle lines remained quite rigid in Tennessee, from time to time Confederate raids penetrated far behind the Union lines. One such raid by cavalrymen under Wheeler and Forrest attacked Fort Donelson on February 3, 1863, but were driven off by the Union defenders. A month later at Thompson's Station, south of Franklin, a Confederate cavalry force under Forrest and General Earl Van Dorn captured a Union command consisting of one brigade of cavalry, four regiments of infantry, and four pieces of artillery. The northern forces had difficulty defending this territory owing to the expanse of the area between the

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[2]Gooding to Dexter, February 14, 1863.

[3]O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 27.

Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. East Tennessee had to be occupied by the Federals for two reasons: first, the land to the east of the Cumberland Plateau was a natural avenue for Confederate advances into Kentucky; second, the people of East Tennessee were, on the whole, strongly Unionist in feeling. One of the foremost difficulties was that the Plateau could not be crossed easily except by moving over two hundred miles of very hazardous mountain roads with a supply train of 10,000 wagons. Indeed, General Buell's reluctance to cross the Plateau in the fall of 1862 convinced Lincoln that he should relieve him of his command and give the Army of the Cumberland to General Rosecrans. Rosecrans also saw the difficulty of crossing the mountains, but offered a plan in which the Northern army could first take Chattanooga and then move northwards into East Tennessee.

The Fourth Michigan, along with the rest of the brigade, embarked on an eleven-day scouting tour on March 4, having been previously advised that it would be of only six days' duration, so they again--as so often happened--had to forage to allay the deficits in their food allotments. They did much damage, capturing many prisoners, wagons, tents, food, and mules. General Sheridan, in command, praised the work of Minty's Brigade. Although the Fourth did not see much action, the regiment conducted itself quite well. The Seventh Pennsylvania, along with a few members

of the Fourth, charged with sabers in one engagement on March 4, and captured fifty-one prisoners, thirteen of whom were severely wounded on and about the head.[4] Reporting to General-in-chief Henry Halleck, General Rosecrans lauded the brigade and stated he wished "to report the gallant conduct of our cavalry, under the brave Colonel Minty. They drove the rebel cavalry wherever they met them, captured one of their camps, seventeen wagons, forty-two mules, and sixty-four prisoners. They used the saber where the carbine would delay."[5]

After the eleven-day circuit, Minty received orders to take his brigade to the assistance of Colonel Albert S. Hall, 105 Ohio Infantry, commanding the Second Brigade, Fifth Division, Fourteenth Army Corps, at Murfreesboro. Hall complained that Minty spent six hours to ride a distance of thirteen miles over one of the finest roads in Tennessee. Minty's report states that it took him three and one-half hours rather than the six as reported by Colonel Hall.[6] The enemy force approximated 2,250, but it left the field several hours before Minty and his troop arrived. After a fruitless search for the enemy the next day, Minty moved back to Murfreesboro. Thus, even this gallant brigade

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[4] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 130.

[5] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 127.

[6] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 157-60.

could not maintain its high standing at all times.

Many officers of the Fourth began resigning about this time. Colonel Minty, commander of the regiment, received promotion to take charge of the brigade, and Lieutenant-Colonel Dickinson, soon to resign, commanded the regiment. Next in line for the regimental command was Captain Frank Mix, of Company "D." "We did not like to lose our Colonel for he was good blood and went ahead. Dickinson was a little cowardly and we were glad to get rid of him."[7] This regiment was as depleted as any other which had been in the field the same length of time. Seldom did cavalry regiments lose as many men in one engagement as the infantry. Nevertheless, the sheer number of cavalry encounters took its inevitable toll. The hard life the cavalry led, resulting many times in sickness and death from disease, precluded the cold statistics of a high percentage of casualties at the end of the war.[8] This attrition was the reason many officers and men tried to obtain furloughs and discharges; they could not keep up with the fast pace set for them merely because they were cavalrymen and not infantrymen.

The majority of April was spent on expeditions. On April 19, Minty led a scouting force to strike enemy

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[7]Gooding to Dexter, March 15, 1863.

[8]William Fox, Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (Albany, 1889), p. 6.

cavalry and harass enemy positions. This unit included the Fourth United States Cavalry; the First Brigade (made up of the Fourth Michigan, the Seventh Pennsylvania, the First Middle Tennessee, and the First Section of the First Ohio Artillery), the Second Brigade (composed of the Third and Fourth Ohio Cavalry), and the Third Brigade (made up of the Second and Third East Tennessee and the Fourth Middle Tennessee). Lieutenant-Colonel Josiah Park of the Fourth Michigan commanded the First Brigade; and Major Mix, the Fourth Michigan Regiment. This force met some resistance, but accomplished its main objective of destroying property. It returned to Murfreesboro April 27, having suffered no casualties but having inflicted great damage to railroads, thereby creating some concern in the ranks of the Southerners, who saw this outcome as an omen of the future; for now the Union cavalry constantly outnumbered them and they saw the possibility of being flanked at any time.[9]

Although the total number of skirmishes cannot be considered a major series of battles when one looks at the total war, it does show the extreme importance that cavalry had in the western theater. An intelligent use of cavalry not restricted only to scouting for the infantry but rather grouped in a large fast moving strike-force under good leadership doubled the potential of the mounted men. However, when they were forced to move at the infantry pace, enemy

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[9] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 277.

horsemen could attack them at will on grounds of hostile choosing. The ability to put the enemy on the defensive gave a great advantage to the Union troopers, who were also better supplied and equipped. Every piece of southern railroad rolling stock destroyed meant that the Confederates had that much less on which to rely, because the majority of heavy equipment was irreplaceable. Iron factories were concentrating on armaments and could spare little for other essentials. The Union blockade was becoming more and more effective, so that foreign shipments to the South were reduced. Thus a slow process of attrition was taking place which, insignificant in each isolated example, gradually wore down the rebel resistance. This diminution took place not only in the industrial sector but also on forages through farmlands. Mules and horses which could be used to haul Confederate supply wagons were taken or destroyed, and supplies of poultry and hogs were either confiscated or done away with so that neither side could make use of them.

Another sortie occurred May 21 and 22. General Stanley learned that a great number of enemy cavalry was carelessly grouped around Middleton, Tennessee, so he conducted part of the Second Cavalry Division against them. Leading a charge against one rebel camp, General Stanley became aware one-half mile from his destination that only the advanced guard accompanied him; the remainder of the cavalry, with Lieutenant George Lawton of the Fourth Michigan

in the front, took a wrong road, diverting it at right angles from the enemy encampment. Notwithstanding this mishap, Stanley was able to redirect the diverging column into battle where it completely overran three rebel camps, catching the Confederates off guard. Had Lawton not led the column away from the camp, Stanley believed that he could have met with even greater victory than was accorded him; therefore he blamed Lawton for his less than total triumph.[10] Immediately following the Confederate rout at Middleton, the Fourth Michigan was placed in ambush to slow down the returning and oncoming rebels who were counterattacking the rear guard of the Union cavalry force. This ambush was successful; the Confederates were caught in a crossfire and suffered considerable losses.

Pickets of the Fourth Michigan reported skirmishing with a vastly superior force on June 3. In camp, the bugle sounded "Boots and Saddles," then "To Horse," whereupon the Fourth quickly covered the three miles between their camp and the pickets. Because of Confederate artillery, Colonel Minty sent his battery forward to combat the rebels who were firing cannon from a mill building and sniping from behind Negro shanties as protection. The Union battery quickly dispersed the rebels and the Fourth crossed Stone's River in pursuit. The Federal troopers were reluctant to raze

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[10] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 335.

the Negro shanties across the river but, recognizing it as a military necessity, were compelled to do it.[11]

Engagements with Morgan's troops occurred with such frequency that they sometimes created little excitement. On one occasion, the Fourth Michigan returned to camp to feed and water their tired horses: "We were laying in the shade," Gooding accounted, "our horses afeeding when all at once a half dozen guns go off and our pickets come arunning into camp the rebels close after them. It did not scare us much for we are used to such actions. Major Mix calls out, 'Company A, mount your horses,' which is done in double quick time and out we go. We run them back into their lines."[12] That night, Morgan counterattacked while the men were trying to sleep with the horse reins tied to their wrists. The Union force galloped across fields and through the woods with the rebels close on their heels the whole distance. "This was the first time we have ever run from rebels and we should not of done it now if we had had our battery with us. Old Morgan thought he had us sure, but we played one of his tricks. It will learn him to look out when Colonel Minty and the Fourth Michigan are around."[13] The expeditionary force had traveled many miles those two days and some

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[11]Gooding to Dexter, June 8, 1863.

[12]Gooding to Dexter, June 18, 1863.

[13]Gooding to Dexter, June 18, 1863.

men had not even been out of the saddle for more than several hours the whole time. The overtaxing march, the absence of decent roads, the mountainous terrain, the lack of food, and the need of rest for the horses and riders left the entire entourage jaded upon their return to Murfreesboro.

On June 24, the Army of the Cumberland, leaving the camp at Murfreesboro, began moving toward the strong Rebel concentration at Tullahoma. Subsequent to the battle of Stone's River, Rosecrans had stopped to regroup his forces and give the men a respite, but Washington officials deemed six months sufficient to prepare for the next offensive against Bragg's army. Heavy rain fell on the 24th and 25th, turning the field of operations into a sea of mud; yet the First Brigade was detailed to clear a mountain pass, Guy's Gap, of enemy troops. The brigade's formidable attack put the rebels to flight who melted under the furious saber charge and fled into Shelbyville and the surrounding defenses. These entrenchments were taken by another saber charge on the 26th.[14] Even with the concentration of the entire enemy within Shelbyville, Minty's task was not yet accomplished, for there was a possibility that the embattled enemy was still powerful enough to circumvent the Army of the Cumberland and retake Murfreesboro, cut the supply lines

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[14]Vale, on page 177 of his book Minty and the Cavalry, says this was the first time in the history of the war where strong entrenchments protected by an abatis, ditch, and parapets were taken in a direct cavalry saber charge.

of the large mobile Union army and so render it helpless. Shelbyville, although not in the direct line of march, was a definitive place which had to be captured before Rosecrans could assure himself there would be no harassment at his army's back.

The forces present in Shelbyville included all rebel cavalry commanded by Major General Wheeler, Bragg's chief of cavalry, whose leading lieutenants--John D. Martin, John Wharton, and Nathan Bedford Forrest--were all able officers. Minty saw how imperative it was for his expedition to take the town as rapidly as possible. Through a series of charges, the Fourth with the rest of Minty's brigade had reached the Shelbyville pike at the edge of the town. The Seventh Pennsylvania charged down the pike and the part of the Fourth under command of Captains Horace Grant and Benjamin D. Pritchard intermingled with the Pennsylvania group. With a wild yell, the charging men successfully passed the batteries protecting the town and continued their plunge into the center of Shelbyville, leaving a path of destruction from their honed sabers wherever they rode. A retreating rebel cavalry column was split by the charge with 250 prisoners taken when they rode into a dead-end garden. The rebel cavalry retreated out of town, hoping to defend themselves at the Duck River rather than face the madmen who were seemingly riding into the face of almost certain death, as the Blue totaled 1,500 and the Grey, 4,000 with three

pieces of artillery.[15] There was one bridge across the now swollen and treacherous Duck River, where Wheeler hoped to rally his command to effect a safe crossing for the entire force. However, an artillery caisson accidentally overturned on the bridge and forced the rebel cavalry, being charged by the Union troopers, into the swirling deep waters. The Confederate losses in this total action were 200 killed and wounded, an undetermined number drowned in Duck River, 599 prisoners, and all artillery pieces captured. Minty's brigade suffered thirty-six casualties, seven killed, twenty-six wounded, and three missing.[16]

During the Fourth's offensive against Shelbyville some rebel prisoners claimed that their plan was to await the Union volley after which they themselves would charge, expecting that by sheer numbers they could successfully rout the Federals. However, Northern troopers equipped with revolving rifles--with no need, therefore, to reload--so thwarted the Rebel initiative that the latter simply threw down their arms and surrendered.[17]

Gooding felt that this gallant undertaking did not receive sufficient recognition in the newspapers, despite the commendation of the Fourth by Brigadier General Robert

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[15]Robertson, Michigan in the War, pp. 496-97.

[16]O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 558.

[17]Gooding to Dexter, July 8, 1863.

Mitchell, commanding the First Cavalry Division, who said: "I cannot refrain from expressing in this connection my admiration of the conduct of Colonel Minty and his brigade. Though not under my command, they came under my immediate observation. Before the gallantry and skill of this commander and the dashing bravery of his troops, all efforts of the rebels to withstand his advance were ineffectual."[18] Stanley, chief of cavalry, noted the deeds of Minty and said that this was only one more example showing his reputation as a first-class officer.[19] Without the cooperation of his men, an officer cannot be recognized as a superior leader. Minty was promoted to a brigade command because he had already proved his worth with the Fourth. Major General Gordon Granger, commanding the Reserve Corps of which Minty's brigade was a part, extolled the whole cavalry with particular mention of Minty. "I cannot praise too highly the bold dash and gallant conduct of our cavalry at Shelbyville. The efficiency of this branch of the service, not only in this, but in all of our late engagements with the enemy, has been established without a doubt. The enemy can no longer boast of the superiority of their cavalry and of its accomplishments."[20]

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[18] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 545.

[19] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 541.

[20] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 536.

Because of the need for mounts, a detachment of fifty from the Fourth left camp on July 15 for Alabama and returned July 24 with a quantity of horses, mules, and 500 Negroes who deserted their homes to follow the Federals north. Scouting took up the majority of the remaining regiment's time. Following the return of the detachment, a reorganization took place within the cavalry corps. On July 31, the First Brigade of the Second Cavalry Division under Minty was enlarged considerably and now was composed of the Third Indiana, Fifth Iowa, Fourth Michigan, First Middle Tennessee, Seventh Pennsylvania, and the Fourth United States, under the overall divisional command of Brigadier General George Crook.[21]

Rosecrans refused to advance his army except under certain conditions, remaining based in the area around Murfreesboro for six months. He asked Washington to send aid in the form of General Ambrose Burnside with his army which was slowly moving on Knoxville, Tennessee, a request ultimately granted. Burnside promised to come to Rosecrans' assistance but instead of moving over the Appalachian Plateau, maneuvered his quickly gathered army of 15,000 in East Tennessee. In addition, Rosecrans felt that he should not move from his stronghold around Murfreesboro as long as Ullyses S. Grant continued his campaign to capture Vicksburg,

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[21] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 2, 580.

Mississippi; for if the Army of the Cumberland went south after Bragg, that Confederate general could go west to help John Pemberton by attacking the flank of the army under Grant. Rosecrans' third reason for not moving onto the rebel defenses at Tullahoma was that he wanted to await the ripening of the crops in the rich farm lands around Murfreesboro.

Word was received that Grant was in the process of siege on Vicksburg and it would only be a matter of time until the brave defenders of that Mississippi River fortress would surrender on Grant's terms. He was becoming known as Unconditional Surrender Grant, first because of the terms of the surrender of Fort Donelson and now at the impregnable Vicksburg. The six-month rest period in Murfreesboro was to come to an end, and on June 23 the army moved out from the camp that many of the soldiers lamentably had thought would be permanent. Military officials and civilians alike had been criticizing Rosecrans for moving so slowly; but the capture of Shelbyville in which the Fourth Michigan had played such a prominent role, preceding the maneuvering of Bragg out of Tullahoma in Rosecrans' brilliant strategic move convinced Washington that the Army of the Cumberland was still a viable and active strike force. With the Shelbyville defeat, the rebels became disorganized and demoralized, while at the same time, the Union troops throughout the long line from the Mississippi River to Virginia waxed increasingly

optimistic. The victories of the capture of Vicksburg on July 4 and the defeat of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg July 1-3, coupled with the capture of Tullahoma by the Army of the Cumberland on July 4, did much to raise the morale of the Federal troops.

The capture of Vicksburg meant that the South was effectively split in two, and the doctrine of divide and conquer was applicable to the Union cause. Yet still Rosecrans refused to move on Chattanooga until the grain had ripened in the fields. He would have to cross the mountains to the north of Chattanooga via mule paths and needed all the grain he could possibly carry. The land immediately to the north of Chattanooga was almost destitute of grain for horse fodder. Washington, however, continued to needle Rosecrans into dealing a lethal blow to the retreating forces of Braxton Bragg.

The grain finally ripened and Rosecrans began moving south from Tullahoma toward Chattanooga. The Army of the Cumberland left on August 16, and the line of march was the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, which could be used as a supply line. The route was not a direct one to Chattanooga, but went to Stevenson, Alabama, where it turned north, crossed the Tennessee River at Bridgeport, Alabama, and then followed the path of least resistance around the highlands surrounding the city of Chattanooga, a rebel stronghold. Rosecrans' idea for the fighting of the war

in the West differed from that of General Henry W. Halleck, commanding general in the West. Grant also had his concept for western victory. He and Rosecrans both wanted to prosecute the war, Grant taking his victorious army eastward toward Alabama, and Rosecrans moving south to clear the whole Southwest of rebel soldiers. Grant had with him 75,000 seasoned veterans who knew how to fight and Rosecrans had a sizeable army at his disposal. Halleck, however, divided Grant's army into smaller units which were sent to outposts in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri, thereby making ineffective any help to Rosecrans' army to any great extent. This meant that Bragg might retreat no farther than Chattanooga, where Rosecrans, to force him out, would have to engage in a pitched battle.

The Union cavalry began extending the left flank of the Army of the Cumberland toward the lines of Burnside in East Tennessee, but they moved too late, as General Morgan had already slipped north between the two armies and began a raid in Kentucky designed to cut the communications of Rosecrans' now overly-extended supply lines. Morgan, sensing victory, then crossed the Ohio River against the orders of General Wheeler and began rampaging the countryside until July 26, 1863, when he was captured at Salineville, Ohio, the farthest Confederate penetration into Federal territory during the entire war. Morgan effected his escape shortly, but this raid showed the northern headquarters again that

the territory to the north of the advancing Union armies still was vulnerable. It was absolutely necessary to get a hold on East Tennessee to prevent any such recurrences.

The month of August was spent in various scouting raids. On August 4 and 5 the Fourth Michigan went in search of the camp of Colonel George Dibrell, commanding the Eighth Tennessee Confederate Cavalry, a relatively unsuccessful venture as the Federals captured only a few rebels and managed only to dislodge the regiment temporarily. On August 8 and 9, again Minty reconnoitered in pursuit of Dibrell, who kept shifting his camp from day to day, thus making it extremely difficult to locate the rebels. When the Union troopers engaged the Confederates, the latter ran, firing only one volley before fleeing, after which they regrouped and led the Union brigade into a trap. Dibrell, in his report, stated that Minty was very angry at his scouts for leading him into such an inhospitable position and emphasized now that extreme caution must be exercised.[22]

East Tennessee was the next destination of the Fourth Michigan in order to guard against raids similar to those made by Morgan earlier in the summer. Having crossed the Cumberland Plateau over a difficult route from the 18th to the 21st of August, the regiment arrived at Smith's Cross Roads on the 21st. There strong Unionist sentiment prevailed;

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[22] O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 848.

people streamed out of their homes bearing Union flags and made patriotic speeches, showing in every way their northern sympathy. A full battalion of men from East Tennessee, which was then attached to the brigade, was equipped with available arms.[23] Remaining at Smith's Cross Roads until September 9, the brigade patroled the surrounding territory up to the Tennessee River. An expedition of the Fourth Michigan under Major Horace Gray with 204 men left on August 31 to open communication with Burnside's army, a feat accomplished the next day. Burnside captured Knoxville, the center of East Tennessee, on September 2, and Gray's group returned to camp at Smith's Cross Roads the same day with 120 prisoners. This action joining the two armies impelled Forrest's cavalry to the other side of the Tennessee River; General Simon B. Buckner, the commanding officer of the Confederate garrison at Knoxville, also crossed the Tennessee, moving to reinforce Bragg at Chattanooga. Minty immediately relayed this information to General Rosecrans.[24] Meanwhile, the men of the Fourth used the last of their rations on August 26, so Minty was forced to request additional provisions for them.[25]

The Cumberland Mountains impeded an easy access of

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[23]Vale, Minty and the Cavalry, p. 211.

[24]O.R., XXX, Pt. 1, 316.

[25]O.R., XXIII, Pt. 1, 191.

the supply line, and the nearby countryside was almost barren. Despite this difficulty, Minty with only 1,100 men guarded, to the best of his ability, the bank of the Tennessee River for sixty miles.[26] General Crittenden, commanding the left wing of the army, continually found fault with Minty's actions and doubted the reports sent into headquarters. Brigadier General Van Cleve, commanding Third Division, Twenty-first Army Corps, however, praised Minty and affirmed that he was an able and efficient officer.[27] General Hazen, commander in the Tennessee Valley, also complimented this unit.[28] Owing to the shortage of men and provender, the situation was tantamount to double duty on the part of both the men and horses, which daily were getting weaker. The plight became progressively critical; Confederate cavalry constantly threatened to cross the river, and Minty's and Colonel John Wilder's Mounted brigades were the only deterrents between General Forrest's command and northern Tennessee and Kentucky.

The Fourth Michigan was slowly being depleted because of the men's illness. The full complement of men in this regiment was not maintained and the number finally dropped below the minimum allowed by law. Minty was

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[26] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 307.

[27] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 91-92.

[28] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 392.

determined not to allow this to happen. He sent a letter to Governor Austin Blair of Michigan complaining:

> By a late order from the War Department, regiments which are reduced below the minimum allowed by law, cannot have vacant Second Lieutencies filled; this bars all promotions from the ranks while the regiments remain so reduced.
>
> The Fourth Michigan Cavalry has been reduced to below the minimum by hard but glorious service. Most of the sergeants are deserving of promotion, and are qualified to hold and fill the position of commissioned officers. The life they have been leading has nurtured that feeling of ambition which is a part of the being of every good soldier, but suddenly finding the goal for which they have been aiming shut out from them, they must become disheartened, lose the proper feeling of interest in their professions and of course injure the efficiency of their regiment.
>
> I have worked hard and have not spared myself in any way in my endeavor to make the Fourth Michigan Cavalry a good regiment. I have succeeded in placing it first amongst the favored regiments of cavalry of the Army of the Cumberland, but if I find that its efficiency is to be injured by causes which I cannot control, that it must lose the position so hardly earned, and other regiments are to reap the laurels which it has won--and that the old 'Fighting Fourth' is to be looked on as a remnant, while the other regiments in the brigade have their ranks filled, I shall immediately send in my resignation and leave the regiment to which I can be of no further service.[29]

The Fighting Fourth did not pass from the picture, for the Army of the Cumberland began maneuvering into the prelude of the bloodiest battle in the West in which the Fourth would play a very important role. The Battle of

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[29] Regimental Service Records, Record Group 59-14-A, B 120 F6, letter dated September 7, 1863. These records are collected in the Michigan State Archives at Lansing, Michigan.

Chickamauga, yet to be fought, was one of the high points in the regimental record of this famous command of cavalry.

III

CHICKAMAUGA!

Rosecrans, in a pincer movement, progressed far downstream with most of his army, while a part of it advanced on Chattanooga from the North. However, Bragg, seeing that the Army of the Cumberland could conceivably slip behind his own located in Chattanooga, retreated on September 8 from that city believed by the Union command to be so valuable to the northern cause. Rosecrans also had had his difficulties; his army was so large that it could not cross the Appalachian Plateau at the same pass, so the three corps had to separate. Alexander McCook led the right wing; Thomas, the center; and Crittenden, the left. Minty's Brigade was assigned to Crittenden's Corps which would demonstrate to the north of Chattanooga to deceive Bragg while he was still in the city. Further complicating the movement of the army across the Tennessee River and into Chattanooga was the fact that there were only few fords. Scouts from the Fourth Michigan attempted to cross at Frazer's Bend, a point northeast of Chattanooga, but below Washington, Tennessee. The fording was reported to be good the majority of the way; however, it suddenly deepened to about twelve feet, and but one scout was able to swim across.[1] Fordable crossings were heavily

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[1] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 376.

guarded by the Confederates with strong emplacements of artillery carefully fortified.

By September 9, following the withdrawal of the rebels from Chattanooga, Rosecrans occupied the city without fighting a major battle and considered himself a very good general, even though Washington officials criticized him for not having destroyed the southern army in the process. He sent a letter to Washington similar to that sent after his capture of Tullahoma on July 4, in which he said that the War Department should "not overlook so great an event because it is not written in letters of blood."[2]

Washington now told Rosecrans to seize his prize in the form of Braxton Bragg and his army before it got too far away. The Army of the Cumberland was still split badly on account of the wide spread passes in the Cumberland Plateau, but Rosecrans felt that the three wings could regroup before any major enemy encounter. McCook's Corps was to the south of Lookout Range, Thomas' Corps in the center was past the break in the Lookout Range known as Steven's Gap and centered on McLemore's Cove. Because of the terrain, the line of battle spread out perpendicularly to this corps, placing it in an untenable position. The left wing under Crittenden held its position primarily near Rossville to the south of Lookout. The three corps were thus extended

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[2]Francis F. McKinney, Education in Violence (Detroit, 1961), p. 217.

over many miles separated by the rough hilly ground, finding themselves strategically indefensible.

The Fourth Michigan Cavalry, assigned to Crittenden's left wing, and as a part of Minty's Brigade, protected Chattanooga from a possible southern attempt to retake it. While the last few days of August and the first ten days of September were spent in the Tennessee River valley centered at Smith's Cross Roads, the regiment on the bank of the Tennessee guarded the fords against any Confederate advance. Forrest had crossed the river with a cavalry force August 23, and Minty, hopelessly outnumbered, had fallen back away from the river. Crittenden felt that Minty should not have withdrawn since he now lost his vantage point and could no longer watch enemy operations. Minty's movement created some concern among various army leaders including Generals Crittenden, James Garfield, and Rosecrans.[3] However, General Van Cleve, his immediate superior, had faith in Minty, and knew that his forces were dispersed in such a way that not much was lost by vacating one vantage point on the river.

Minty had reported that the few rebel pickets on the other side of the river had been reinforced, information verified by captured southerners, professed Union men who swam the river, and scouts of other regiments in the army. General Charles Cruft claimed that part of Joseph Johnston's

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[3] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 137.

force of 20,000 must be in the immediate vicinity.[4] A Unionist stated positively that Bragg, Forrest, Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk, and General Ambrose P. Hill were converging near Chattanooga on August 22. At the same time, Buckner was still at Knoxville and Loudon, Tennessee, but would soon be driven from those cities by Burnside's army.[5]

Rosecrans, informed that Bragg's troops were in retreat, decided to pursue him. Halleck in Washington was aggravated that the Army of the Cumberland did not attack Bragg. The Mississippi River, since the capture of Vicksburg, was now in the hands of the Federal troops its full distance; if Rosecrans could cut off Bragg, another southern army would thus be taken out of the field, relieving the pressure on the Army of the Potomac in northern Virginia. Therefore the two corps commanded by Thomas and McCook were as rapidly as possible to overtake Bragg while he was in full retreat, swinging far south of Chattanooga to get behind the southern army, while at the same time, Crittenden would attack from the north.

Not all the Union generals were in accord as to the strategy required. General Thomas felt that an unplanned pursuit of Bragg would be foolhardy without further developing a supply route to Nashville, reprovisioning the army,

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[4] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 496-97.

[5] O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 120-21.

and then moving more cautiously against the enemy. But Thomas' request was overruled by Rosecrans.[6] There was always the danger that Bragg, like a wounded tiger, would turn and strike a desperate blow at the advancing Union army, so badly split and insufficiently informed concerning the topography and the position of the Grey army.

The majority of the Union cavalry was in the corps to the north and east, under Crittenden. An insufficient number of horsemen were available in the center sector for use as scouts with the result that the army marched blindly on reports from Washington that Bragg was in full retreat. These reports continued to reach the front. Meanwhile, the scouts in the Army of the Potomac realized that General James Longstreet's Corps no longer opposed them in Virginia. Unusual rail activity on the lines south and west of Richmond precluded the possibility that part of the Army of Northern Virginia was being transported westward from the quiet eastern front. Such activity should have immediately forewarned the Washington authorities--but did not.

Because of the topography, the three corps under Rosecrans were spread a distance of fifty miles and separated by mountain ridges, making the most primitive communication difficult. Bragg had several golden opportunities to defeat Rosecrans but all failed. His lieutenants did not heed his

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[6]Glenn Tucker, Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West (New York, 1961), p. 62.

advice to move when he told them to, the Union army was not defeated piecemeal, and the Confederates did not retake Chattanooga.

Richmond authorities, fearful that Rosecrans would cut Bragg's supply route from Atlanta, had dispatched Longstreet's corps from the eastern theater. Bragg did not wish to attack until this entire force had joined his command, yet when only half of them had reported, he was willing to take the offensive against almost equal odds. By this time Rosecrans knew the reports that Bragg was retreating were false and saw the disadvantage of his outspread forces. The corps were to concentrate on the center. Yet Washington still had not informed Rosecrans of this 843-mile transferral of 12,000 seasoned veterans in a week-long trek by rail. During the four days of concentration, Bragg made little effort to harass the movements. By the evening of September 17 all was in readiness for the battle.

Halleck finally had realized the mistake and tried to remedy the situation by summoning troops from as far away as Minnesota. Washington ordered Burnside from his position in Knoxville. Had he arrived before the battle with all his forces, he would have found himself to the left of Crittenden, the very place the Confederate battle orders directed the first attack. Halleck desperately called for other troops to go to Rosecrans' aid from other parts of the Union front. But the call went out too late. Rosecrans

fought alone.[7]

On September 5, Minty tried to move his brigade nearer to the rest of the army from his position in East Tennessee. He hoped that Burnside's cavalry could close in on his left, eliminating the gap between Crittenden and himself. Crittenden summoned one regiment. Minty partly complied with one battalion of the Fourth Michigan, protesting any further assistance, as the effective number of his brigade did not exceed the original strength of the Fourth Michigan.[8] He skirmished with Forrest from September 3 to 10 and received the plaudits of Brigadier General Hazen, who said: "I have earnestly to commend to the attention of the Government the services of Colonels Wilder and Minty, commanding cavalry brigades."[9] On the afternoon of the 13th, Minty's Brigade crossed the Tennessee River on its return from East Tennessee. The colonel of the Seventh East Tennessee Cavalry Regiment said that the triumphant march of the Fourth through that hostile territory was a masterly affair. This was reported in a Detroit newspaper, which added that " . . . Michigan may well be proud of her representatives in the field, among the most able and meritoriously distinguished of whom are the genuine heroes of the

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[7]Tucker, p. 100.

[8]O.R., XXX, Pt. 3, 371-72.

[9]O.R., XXX, Pt. 1, 761.

Fourth Michigan Cavalry."[10]

The Fourth fought Confederates after crossing the Tennessee north of Chickamauga Creek on September 13. That evening Minty reported to General Crittenden at Lee and Gordon's Mills. The regiment camped at this point that night, maintaining a base of operations there for the next few days. On September 15, the brigade under command of Minty crossed Chickamauga Creek to scout in the Pea Vine Valley and toward Ringgold, Georgia. These units reported to Minty who in turn informed Crittenden. Minty then received the following reply: "The Major General commanding directs me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this 15th date, informing him that Forrest is at Ringgold, Longstreet at Dalton, Pegram at Leet's, and Buckner at Rock Springs. All this would indicate infantry, which the major general cannot believe."[11]

Minty's information was so contrary to official reports from Washington that the corps commander could not believe it. Rosecrans and Thomas believed the report might have some credence, but Crittenden so discredited it that Rosecrans acceded. It was, as the historian of Minty's brigade called it, "a case of utter ignorance and self-inflicted blindness."[12] Washington did not consider where

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[10]Detroit Free Press, September 27, 1863.

[11]Robertson, Michigan in the War, p. 500.

[12]Vale, Minty and the Cavalry, p. 218.

Buckner had gone with his army after being pushed out of East Tennessee by Burnside. Yet on September 2 Minty had stated that Buckner was at Lee and Gordon's Mill with Bragg. Vale's writings heartily condemn the actions of General-in-chief Halleck in allowing Buckner, the 10,000 Confederates paroled at Vicksburg, and the renowned First Corps of Longstreet to come to Bragg's aid, while Grant's troops were so widely scattered since July, and Burnside fought his imaginary foes around Knoxville in September.[13]

Minty's Brigade was attacked on the 17th by scouting parties of the rebel cavalry, but they successfully held their position in Pea Vine Valley. This position became tenuous, however, so Minty moved the majority of his command to Reed's Bridge crossing the Chickamauga, where the brigade could delay any crossing of the now overwhelming Grey forces opposing it. Units were kept in the valley on the other side of the ridge to report any further developments. One detachment reported an encounter with Buckner's infantry division, which Crittenden believed was nothing more than dismounted cavalry. Another unit met part of Longstreet's corps and captured several prisoners. Minty and Thomas had been correct in their judgments as to the presence of strong rebel infantry that could easily outflank the Army of the Cumberland, drive it into the mountains,

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[13]Vale, Minty and the Cavalry, p. 218.

and then destroy it in retaking Chattanooga. Rosecrans finally ordered the other two corps commanders to close on Crittenden. By a series of forced marches, Thomas moved his corps behind Crittenden and thus became the left wing of the army. Bragg, however, continued to slide his troops even farther to the left of Thomas to outflank him completely.

The perspective of the oncoming battle of Chickamauga must be narrowed somewhat, so that the actions of the Fourth Michigan come to the forefront. By the evening of September 17, Minty's Brigade was the only Union force on the Chickamauga's right bank. Indians aptly named this stream years previously, "Chickamauga: River of Death."[14] The main force of the brigade was stationed on the road leading to Reed's Bridge to prevent a Confederate crossing. If the rebels could cross there, they could easily follow the road west to outflank Thomas or move south along the creek to join other units at Alexander's Bridge, three miles upstream.

Minty was very pleased when he found that Wilder was guarding the latter bridge. His splendid mounted infantry was known as Wilder's Lightning Brigade and had fought alongside Minty at the capture of Tullahoma and in East Tennessee. This brigade was famous, because in the battle for Hoover's Gap just a few months previously, it cleared out the strong rebel defenses, allowing the army to pass through

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[14]Tucker, p. 122.

without much resistance. The brigades of Wilder and Minty would have to hold off a large proportion of Confederates that would be thrown into the fray during the next few bloody days.

Both Minty and Wilder were to the left of Crittenden's corps on September 17, but in a night march Thomas shifted his corps around Crittenden and stationed it as the northern wing of the Army of the Cumberland. Reed's Bridge guarded the road that led directly to McFarland's Gap in the Missionary Ridge, a vital escape route to be maintained for the army. On another route at Rossville north of McFarland's Gap, Granger stood with the reserve corps. Here the road from Ringgold joined the one leading north along Missionary Ridge. The Confederate plan of attack was as follows: General Bushrod Johnson to cross over Reed's Bridge with his division; Generals W. H. T. Walker and Simon Buckner at Alexander's Bridge and a ford farther upstream; the latter two to unite eventually with Johnson and Forrest's cavalry. This combined force, quickly sweeping on the flank of Crittenden's corps, would complete the annihilation of the invading northern army.

The Fourth Michigan, as part of the First Brigade, met the first skirmishers at six-thirty on the morning of September 18. This encounter with Johnson's division reached the proportion of a general battle because by seven-thirty that morning Forrest's support division had joined him about

a mile east of Reed's Bridge. These two divisions slowly began pushing Minty backwards. Minty was contesting the Confederate advance with the three regiments of cavalry, the Fourth Michigan, the Seventh Pennsylvania, and the Fourth Regulars; and a section of the Chicago Board of Trade artillery. The enemy did not limit his assault to the area around Reed's Bridge, for about eleven a.m., a rebel column moved toward Dyer's Ford downstream. Minty rushed a message to Wilder who sent seven companies from his mounted brigade and a section of Eli Lilly's battery, directing them to Dyer's Ford, where they kept up a rapid fire to hold back the southerners.

With the situation under control at the ford, an attack hurled the rebels back over Pea Vine Ridge. Overwhelmingly outnumbered, Minty saw that the only salvation for his brigade was to withdraw across the bridge and fight from the other side. The baggage went first, followed by most of the Fourth United States. The enemy, close to the advance lines of the remaining two regiments, received a murderous saber charge. Again, the center of the Confederate forces fell back over the ridge but the right and left flanks were now at the creek. The less than 1,000 men of Minty's brigade still had to make a crossing. A careful use of the Board of Trade battery slowed the rebels enough to facilitate a safe crossing. This bridge, sufficiently damaged, delayed further immediate pursuit of the rebels.

The Fourth Michigan and the remainder of the First Brigade retarded the rebels at the bridge for more than two hours. Johnson had 4,300 infantrymen and twelve guns, yet under 1,000 men held him from his objective. Forrest tried to assist Johnson by crossing at Dyer's Ford to turn Minty's left, but Wilder's men checked him. This battalion then returned to Alexander's Bridge where the enemy there was howling at Wilder's heels. Fearful of being surrounded, Minty withdrew slowly, taking a deadly toll of the enemy. The brigade succeeded in its efforts to stay the enemy as the battle lasted from seven a.m. until four p.m. This meant that Polk could not effectively hit the center of the line at Lee and Gordon's Mills with the flanking support of Forrest, Buckner, and John Hood sweeping downstream along the west bank of the Chickamauga.

The Fourth left 102 rebels dead at the bridge, and in the full day of action retreated only five miles. After joining Wilder's Brigade at Lee and Gordon's Mills, the Fourth and this brigade fought off a heavy attack at eight in the evening, then slept on their arms, on the alert for any more attacks. The two brigades were not relieved until early the next morning. During the course of that fateful day on the 18th, the Fourth lost one man killed, ten wounded, including two captains (Benjamin Pritchard and Alfred Abeel), and three men taken prisoner. They slept that bitterly cold night without benefit of tents or even fires and awoke the

next day to find that the water had frozen solid in their canteens. Their rations were not issued until later that morning when they were relieved. Yet, following Minty's and Wilder's claims that they were being attacked by Buckner's corps, Hood's division of infantry and artillery, and some of Forrest's cavalry, Crittenden continued to disbelieve the reports, saying that it was only part of General John Pegram's dismounted and Forrest's mounted cavalry.

An incident at this point deserves mention. Brigadier General Thomas J. Wood, a divisional commander in Crittenden's corps, was inclined to go along with the surmise of his superior. He rode to the front to see for himself. He brought along a brigade of infantry and sent them into battle ahead of the two dismounted cavalry brigades. He had just inquired as to the enemy's location, when his fresh brigade returned at full speed in a rout subsequent to a tremendous burst of musketry from the Confederates. The two brigades that were to be relieved now charged the enemy, their Spencer rifles blazing. The enemy withdrew, according to an account by Minty, "considerably faster than it had advanced."[15]

Spencer rifles had been provided for both Minty's and Wilder's brigades. Wilder's men had bought them out

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[15]Charles Belknap, History of the Michigan Organizations at Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and Missionary Ridge (Lansing, 1899), p. 93.

of their own slight army pay in May of 1863, after which they were finally reimbursed by the government. This rifle was a seven-shot repeating breechloader which could be fired so much more rapidly than the conventional single-shot musket used previously, that in the battle for Hoover's Gap on June 24, General Bushrod Johnson thought he was outnumbered five to one when the numerical odds were quite even. The gun had a lever action with a hollow tube where the seven cartridges were placed one by one. On demonstration early in 1863 for the benefit of President Lincoln, seven shots were fired in less than ten seconds--the usual rate was fifteen shots per minute--as the gun would overheat and foul if used much faster than that. The result was a great improvement over the three-per-minute rate of very cool veterans under fire, using muzzleloaders and without endangering the life of the operator every time he stood up to load.[16]

At the time of the Battle of Chickamauga, very few regiments possessed this amazing rifle. Wilder reported a strange and new sight on utilizing it for the first time, saying that as the rebel column advanced, the Spencers began barking, and the "head of the Column, as it was pushed on by those behind, appeared to melt away or sink into the

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[16]Robert Bruce, Lincoln and the Tools of War (New York, 1956), p. 114. Another very careful study of the Spencer may be found in J. O. Buckeridge, Lincoln's Choice (Harrisburg, 1956). This entire monograph dedicated to the Spencer, that Twentieth Century weapon in a Nineteenth Century war, credits the repeater with the ending of the war as quickly as it did.

earth, for, though continually moving, it got no nearer."[17] These new rifles were awarded to tried and deserving regiments, and the men who received them were very pleased until they continually heard the command, "Spencers to the front."

September 18 was now history. The Fourth Michigan at breakfast on the 19th received orders to prevent Forrest from breaking the communications-line to Chattanooga, whereupon the regiment as part of the brigade reported to Granger, the commander of the Reserve Corps. The regiment moved to the fords of Chickamauga Creek near Missionary Ridge to the left of Granger's corps. Here they checked the cavalry of the enemy on their right coming from the direction of Ringgold and Graysville. On the 20th, when Granger had moved his corps to the support of Thomas on Snodgrass Hill, the brigade moved to take possession of the Rossville-Ringgold Road. After a sharp skirmish with a Confederate brigade, night fell, and the troops spent that night in full readiness for any further developments, sitting on the ground and holding the reins of their steeds at the same time. Little did they know that the whole Union army had now retreated to the Rossville gap in the Missionary Ridge. The next morning, the brigade found itself three miles to the front of the Federals, between that army and the southern one. Minty

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[17]Bruce, p. 286.

reported his position to Thomas and was told to delay the enemy as long as possible, and then withdraw to the gap. It was now September 21, and except for a slight rest on the 19th, the regiment had been continually on the alert or else fighting since the evening of the 17th.

That afternoon, following a second report to Thomas, Minty received instructions to act as rearguard for the remainder of the Union army retreating to Chattanooga. The rebels took six hours to drive the brigade the four miles from Rossville to the first defenses of the city. The Fourth passed into these breastworks at one o'clock in the afternoon of September 22. The battle of Chickamauga had lasted five days for the Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment.

The belated acceptance of Minty's reports of enemy troop concentrations from the first days of September raised the wrath of several authors. One, for example, thought that if Minty had had the star on his shoulder signifying the rank of a brigadier general, he would have attracted more attention. At the time of the battle of Chickamauga, Minty was in effect the chief of cavalry, as General Stanley was too sick to ride a horse, and the actual commander of the cavalry corps was Brigadier General Robert B. Mitchell who had not gained recognition as a leader of horsemen. Minty could have acted on his own initiative to a greater degree, thereby neutralizing some of the sting of the gathering rebel cloud. The Army of the Cumberland might have

begun its concentration at an earlier date on ground better suited for battle with a possible less loss of life as a result. The commanding generals had no reason not to believe Minty's reports as his were the only troops that could appraise the situation in front of the rapidly advancing army.[18]

Rosecrans finally saw the value of Minty's preliminary reports. He realized the value of the cavalry corps as an essential arm of the army and emphasized the debt owed that arm for its actions from the 18th until the 21st of September. In a letter from Rosecrans to Brigadier General Lorenzo Thomas, Adjutant-General of the United States Army, on January 4, 1864, he said that

> . . . Wilder's command also merits the thanks of the country for its noble stand at the crossing of the Chickamauga, where he and Minty's cavalry brigade resisted the enemy so obstinately on the afternoon of the 18th as to give us that night to anticipate him on the Rossville road.
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> As to the cavalry, the accompanying reports are so full that I need only add that as an arm of the service it has been equal to its duty on all occasions, and on the 18th, 19th, and 20th of September it behaved with conspicuous gallantry, covering our shattered right and protected our trains in the valley of Chattanooga Creek on the 20th.
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> It was to provide for the security of these trains which had been sent to that valley on the 18th, and that they should be moved into Chattanooga after our right was driven back on the 20th, that I directed special attention, and it is greatly due to the behaviour of the cavalry on that day that we lost none of our wagons, and that many of our ambulances and

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[18]Marshall Thatcher, A Hundred Battles in the West (Detroit, 1884), p. 301-03.

some of our artillery and caissons came safely into the place.

I cannot forbear calling the special attention of the General-in-Chief and the War Department to the conspicuous gallantry and laborious services of this arm. Exposed in all weather, almost always moving, even in winter, without tents or wagons, operating in a country poorly supplied with forage, combating for the most part very superiour numbers, from the feeble beginnings of a year ago, when its operations were mostly within the infantry lines it has become master of the field, and hesitates not to attack the enemy wherever it finds him. This great change, due chiefly to the joint efforts of both officers and men, has been greatly promoted by giving them arms in which they had confidence, and by the adoption of the determined use of the saber.

It requires both nature and experience to make cavalry officers, and by judicious selections and promotions this arm may become still more useful and distinguished.[19]

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[19] O.R., XXX, Pt. 1, 79.

IV

CHATTANOOGA TO ATLANTA

Although the cavalry regiments seemed to be doing all the work there was to do, a letter from one of the enlisted men had a different opinion as to what happened. He said that the cavalry had not been driven very hard the past months, but rather had life quite easy as far as the fighting was concerned. Its main task when in close proximity to the infantry was to scout the countryside, locate the enemy, and engage the rebels. Meanwhile, a courier was sent to order the infantry to join the ensuing battle so that the cavalry could move out of the area to seek other opponents.[1]

After the Army of the Cumberland had entered the defenses surrounding Chattanooga, the lack of forage for horses and rations for men dictated that the cavalry be dispersed from the city. The Fourth Michigan, under command of Major Horace Gray, left on September 24 and headed north into the territory it had occupied before the Battle of Chickamauga. Then the Second Cavalry Division moved up the Tennessee River to prevent General Wheeler with his 6,000 men from retaking East Tennessee and breaking the

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[1]Gooding to Dexter, September 26, 1863.

already strained communication and "cracker-line" connecting the besieged army in Chattanooga with the outside world. Wheeler's intentions were to take Murfreesboro and destroy the communications between that city and Nashville. Despite insufficient food and forage, the horses carried the men as far as forty miles in a day. Skirmishes continued between the Second Division and Wheeler; on October 7, the division under command of Brigadier General George Crook advanced on the entrenched enemy. He feared that he would be flanked on his exposed right and so ordered Minty to move up with his brigade. Minty never arrived. Crook blamed Minty for his own failure to capture a large part of the Confederate force when it broke after a charge by Wilder's brigade.[2]

Crook complained that during the whole expedition Minty had tried to frustrate him in a covert manner. Crook placed the colonel under arrest and sent him to the rear.[3] Surprised and indignant, Minty claimed that he had received no orders to join the battle and demanded to be removed from arrest and ordered back to the front while his brigade was still under fire. On October 28, he wrote a letter to the Assistant Adjutant-General of the Department of the Cumberland complaining that he had been in Murfreesboro for three

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[2] O.R., XXX, Pt. 2, 687.

[3] O.R., XXX, Pt. 2, 687.

weeks without hearing a word as to his status. In this letter, he summarized his work for the preceding year, including his successful command of the brigade since December, 1862, and his three recommendations for promotion by Rosecrans. He demanded an immediate court-martial or court of inquiry to prove his innocence.[4] His request was eventually granted and on February 28, 1864, Minty was tried by general court-martial on the charges of "disobedience of orders and conduct subversive of good order and military discipline" and was honorably acquitted.[5]

The Fourth Michigan, for want of horses and equipment, was split up and various segments were dispatched to find mounts, hopefully in Nashville. The regiment still felt the want of good food since Wheeler burned about 400 supply wagons loaded with clothes and rations. By this time of year, the edible crops had already been harvested by foraging expeditions. Gooding was not much worried that 400 wagons had been burned because they "don't amount to much for Uncle Sam is able to get more. We have been rather short of rations some of the time, [a few days ago] three days rations having to last us seven."[6] One detachment remained in Nashville during October and all of November, not

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[4] O.R., XXXI, Pt. 1, 844.

[5] O.R., XXX, Pt. 2, 668.

[6] Gooding to Dexter, October 11, 1863.

rejoining the regiment until December 2, when it finally had acquired enough horses.

The mounted part of the regiment had chased Wheeler across Tennessee and into Alabama, where it remained until the Second Brigade, under Colonel Eli Long, started in the direction of Chattanooga. The mounted force under command of Major Gray joined the Second Brigade, occasionally being detached to burn and destroy strategic targets. These diversionary tactics of the entire brigade released the Confederate cavalry from Chattanooga, which facilitated the Union advance by Generals Grant and Thomas, ending the long siege of that city.

During the month of December the Fourth Michigan Cavalry Regiment scouted. It was continually split up and different parts operated either independently or with Long's Second Brigade. The patrols were in East Tennessee and North Carolina, territory which was almost destitute of forage. The supply wagons could cross the rugged terrain only with great difficulty. On a long scout of the Second Brigade, the Fourth Michigan was used to open a line of communications with Chattanooga. But due to the lack of manpower necessary to cover such a large expanse of Tennessee, this line was withdrawn. Part of the regiment was without horses, and most of those with them had mounts which were badly shod and completely worn out. On one twenty-one-day stretch the men went on six days' half-rations, receiving further

nourishment only from sweet potatoes that they found.[7]

Those who survived such punishing conditions became quite tough and were able to endure just about any hardship that was meted out. Others were not so fortunate. Many died in camp and were given the best burial services possible considering the conditions. The common soldiers died of disease and wounds so frequently that little attention was paid to them. One exception to this indifference occurred on March 2, 1864, when one private died. Six pall bearers of the same rank carried the plain coffin to the grave, and an escort of twelve fired a three-gun salute, marching back to camp with arms reversed while the band played. "It was a solemn time. I wish every soldier could have as decent a burial, but only a few get it, and they are often left with a foot sticking out or elbow, and sometimes you will see the head, but dead men cant talk, so what is the difference."[8]

Early in 1864 the war was fought and endured with little glory and much hardship. As soon as the men put up a small shelter between two trees to ward off the snow and some of the biting winds, they received orders to break camp and move out, where the possibility of getting food was even less than in camp. Many long hours were spent in

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[7]Gooding to Dexter, December 17, 1863.

[8]Gooding to Dexter, March 2, 1864.

the saddle with no relief of duty in sight. The pay earned by the enlisted cavalryman was not enough to sustain him, and the food he received as regular rations came so infrequently that when it did come, special mention was made in letters home. Christmas dinner for one detachment of the Fourth was the luxury of bacon and hardtack, which seemed to them a welcome delight. Nor could the men of the Fourth look to a further bounty for re-enlisting as veterans, for they would have to wait until July, 1865, before they became eligible as they were three-year enlistees. A bounty of $500 and a furlough home meant a great deal to the homesick men, who had never been as far away from their loved ones nor for as long a time previously. The men, in their search for food, were obliged to disobey orders and steal from the inhabitants of Tennessee, some of whom were loyal to the Union cause. A group of four or five might ride into a farmer's yard, asking for meat. He would deny having any, whereupon the disbelieving men would search the property, possibly finding a choice ham stashed away. A quick ride back to camp, a stealthy cooking, and no officer was the wiser.

The First Brigade commanded by Minty ceased to exist for a month during January, as the various components were sent to other units. The Seventh Pennsylvania, which had been with the Fourth Michigan since November, 1862, went on a thirty-day furlough January 27, 1864. The Fourth

United States went first to Corinth, Mississippi, and then to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. One detachment of the now split Fourth Michigan under the command of Major Richard Robbins served mainly as couriers in East Tennessee. Another detachment under Major Horace Gray moved into Georgia where it then came under the command of Colonel William P. Boone, Twenty-eighth Kentucky Infantry Regiment. The First Brigade had been taken out of the hands of Minty following his arrest for insubordination, and the dismemberment of the brigade may have been part of the punishment. Its headquarters were maintained at Huntsville, Alabama, but the brigade was diffused throughout north Georgia, East Tennessee, and as far away as Pennsylvania.

The detachment of the Fourth Michigan sent to Boone left Rossville January 21 under the command of Captain Abeel. This unit, along with the Twenty-eighth Mounted Rifles, routed a camp of Home Guards on the road toward Dalton. The expeditionary force captured so many prisoners and so much booty from this camp that it did not continue to Dalton, but rather returned, having covered 150 miles in sixty hours, with only enough time out to feed the horses. A week later, another scouting expedition went in the direction of Ringgold, in front of Major General William Palmer's corps of infantry. Much resistance was encountered and the regiment found itself in some of the sharpest fighting it had seen since joining the cause late in 1862. From February 1 to

13, the regiment was in camp at Rossville.

Captain William Van Antwerp of the Fourth led two scouting expeditions in February. On February 13, a detachment under his command joined the Thirty-eighth Illinois Infantry Regiment. On this foray the Fourth entered a town at daybreak in advance of the infantry catching part of the rebel picket in bed. A girl, awakened by the clatter of the horses, came to the door of her house and was greeted by Yankees. One bluecoat asked her if she did not expect the Federals so early. She replied that she hadn't, but it was all right, for they wouldn't stay long. She was right. Nearby was a large Rebel force and Van Antwerp did not wish to risk his command against overwhelming odds in hostile territory.[9]

A detachment of 100 men of the Fourth under Van Antwerp spent several days in front of the division of Brigadier General Charles Cruft, encountering a strong enemy and driving it several miles. The next day, February 26, in chasing some pickets, the detachment was surrounded by rebels; not only by fast riding cross-country but also by small diversionary tactics, it escaped with only four men wounded. Another sharp skirmish on the 27th kept the Confederates at bay while Cruft passed by the Tunnel Hill road in Georgia. The general praised the action of Van Antwerp and his men

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[9]Gooding to Dexter, February 22, 1864.

saying that they "handled their commands with boldness and skill, and rendered great service on the march, both in scouting and escort duty."[10]

The Fourth lingered in camp in East Tennessee during most of March. The detachment under command of Major Robbins returned to the regiment on March 2, so that the unit was all together for the first time since the previous October. During the month of March Minty, cleared by the court-martial, was in command of Long's Brigade, stationed at Ringgold. On March 29, the Fourth gave up its horses to the mounted infantry of the Third Brigade and entrained to Nashville via Chattanooga and Stevenson, Alabama. In Nashville, the regiment was remounted, reinforced, and equipped with the Spencer carbine. Other units of the Army of the Cumberland were also recalled in preparation for the forthcoming summer campaign.

James H. Wilson, Chief of the Cavalry Bureau of the War Department in Washington, issued a directive of action on April 4, 1864. In this communication, a careful study showed that cavalry was most effective in small, well-equipped units. The mounted force within the Army of the Cumberland consisted of twenty-eight regiments of cavalry and seven regiments of mounted infantry. For various reasons Wilson disliked mounted infantry. They were not

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[10] O.R., XXXII, Pt. 1, 428.

responsible to the Cavalry bureau; they deprived the cavalry of forage; they paid no attention to stable duties; and they did not care for their horses properly, thus using up very valuable military assets. Wilson recommended that one infantry-trained cavalry division commander be relieved of his command on the ground that he knew nothing of the cavalry and had only two orders for his division: "Scatter!" and "Huddle up!" The Chief of the Cavalry felt that the best regiments of the Departments of the Ohio, Cumberland, and Tennessee should be armed with the Spencer carbine, and specifically mentioned the Fourth Michigan as a deserving unit.[11]

On April 4, 1864, the headquarters of the Second Cavalry Division was moved from Huntsville, Alabama, to Columbia, Tennessee, concentrating the command at that point preparatory to its reorganization and refitting for the summer campaign. At this time, Minty was temporarily relieved of his brigade command and became head of the newly-organized Third Cavalry Division, a position he held until April 17, when he was returned to his former command. The Fourth Michigan left Columbia for a scouting expedition that lasted six days, carrying the men westward into the area near the Shiloh battlefield. The country through which the regiment traveled was extremely poor and rough. The men were to insure that Forrest did not flank the Union

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[11] O.R., XXXII, Pt. 3, 255-58.

armies and move into northern Tennessee. This regiment returned to camp on April 25. Five days later, with little rest, the whole Second Division broke camp with thirty-days' rations, moving south toward Georgia. By May 7 they were more than twenty miles south of Chattanooga at Shellmound, Georgia, where the Fourth Michigan turned over all disabled horses and prepared for a six-day advance.

During the reorganization at Columbia, the Fourth received about forty new recruits most of whom, according to Gooding, were almost useless because of their fear and cowardice.[12] Some of these men would face fire in the upcoming series of battles for Atlanta, when the whole force in the West under the command of General William Tecumseh Sherman would move south slowly, inching its painful way toward that Georgia city. Joseph Johnston, now in command of the Confederate army, had rejuvenated the rebels. Despite Sherman's two to one numerical advantage, the men in blue found the going very rough when the push for Atlanta began on May 7.

Sherman's army followed the general route of the Western and Atlantic Railroad from Chattanooga south toward Atlanta and the names of the cities and villages between would be indelibly written in blood before the campaign for Atlanta was over. Johnston had set up winter quarters at

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[12]Gooding to Dexter, May 7, 1864.

Dalton, Georgia, but was forced to evacuate when Sherman outflanked him. Johnston fell back to Resaca where his army was joined by the Army of Mississippi led by General Leonidas Polk. However, this combined southern army was again outflanked and Johnston resumed his withdrawal on May 15, stopping for only a brief stand at Adairsville on May 17. On May 19, he finally attempted a counterattack at Cassville but a successful Union cavalry maneuver pulled one of Johnston's corps out of position. That night, two of his corps commanders became alarmed at the vulnerability of the rebel lines and the Confederates once more retreated. At this point Sherman gave his men a three-day rest which was greatly appreciated, as his army had moved a distance of about fifty miles with almost constant fighting since May 7. From now until the retreat of the Confederates out of Atlanta on September 1, Sherman, through a series of moves, attempted to envelop the city and cut all rail lines leading into it, starving it into submission. Varying the constant attempt to outmaneuver Johnston, on June 27, the Union forces launched a frontal assault at Kenesaw Mountain, in which the North suffered 2,500 casualties. Again Sherman tried to outflank Johnston. He fell back into Atlanta on July 9 and was replaced by the Texan, General John Hood, who abandoned Atlanta on September 1, after the last railroad connection into Atlanta fell into Union hands.

Bearing in mind this general picture of the capture

of Atlanta, we turn to the action of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry which played an important role in the ultimate victory. On May 13, the Fourth was on the right flank of the advancing army near Summerville, Georgia. There, scouts reported that William T. Martin's rebel division was drawn up and that pickets were stationed in well-fortified rifle pits at all crossings of the numerous rivers and creeks running perpendicular to the line of the Union advance. A detachment of the Fourth met a patrol at a crossing of the Oostanaula River and after a slight skirmish, drove the enemy away from that position.[13] The following day Minty's brigade was ordered to drive the enemy pickets from Farmer's Bridge, a crossing of the Oostanaula River. He successfully carried out this mission and pursued the enemy to the outskirts of Rome, Georgia, where a large enemy force drove him back. An examination of the river disclosed that a crossing between Rome and Resaca was impracticable. After the Confederate withdrawal from Resaca on May 15, the Second Cavalry Division forded the river and took position on the right of the Union army. On May 18, under orders of Sherman, the railroad between Rome and Kingston was broken and the telegraph wire between Kingston and Adairsville was cut. The enemy then retreated to Altatoona across the Etowah River; the same day the Fourth Michigan ascertained the

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[13] O.R., XXXVIII, Pt. 4, 171.

enemy strength in Kingston. They discovered only some Confederate cavalry and on May 19, the Second Cavalry Division secured and held the road-bridge on which the Army of the Cumberland crossed the Etowah.

The cavalry division then moved to the right, covering the front and right flank of the Army of the Tennessee as it moved toward Dallas. Creating a screen in advance of the army, the cavalry engaged William Bates' rebel infantry division and cavalry and then held the line of Pumpkin Vine Creek until reinforcements arrived the next day. From May 25 to 27, the Union forces tried to outflank Johnston at New Hope Church. The final day of that battle, the Second Cavalry Division moved to the extreme left of the advancing northern army, stationing itself at Rosewell, Georgia, twenty miles due north of Atlanta. The cavalry crossed the Chattahoochee River; traveled through heavily enemy-infested territory; broke the rail line of the Georgia Railroad at Stone Mountain; destroyed bridges, track, a number of cars, and a quantity of supplies; and captured many prisoners and horses. They then moved in support of General Stoneman, commanding the cavalry of the Army of the Ohio, who was raiding the Atlanta & Macon Railroad to the south of Atlanta. After waiting for two days for orders from Stoneman, the cavalry division returned to camp near Rosewell. On May 27, Minty's brigade with two regiments of Wilder's Brigade passed around the left flank of the enemy

and attacked him in the rear with a withering fire, thus rendering much service to the Army of the Tennessee. This action was acknowledged by Major General James McPherson, commanding the Army of the Tennessee.[14]

From May 28 to June 1 the Fourth Michigan picketed the area in front of the Army of the Tennessee. From June 2 until the end of the month, the regiment suffered considerable losses in almost daily skirmishing with the enemy. Minty was not at all pleased with what he called the inefficiency and mismanagement at the divisional level. Judging from the Official Records, it seems that Minty and General Kenner Garrard were constantly at loggerheads. Although Minty was a brigade commander, he kept a soft spot for his regiment, the Fourth. In a letter to General John Robertson, the Adjutant-General of Michigan during the war, Minty praised the Fourth, saying: "We have a splendid lt of officers--all the other regiments call us the best officered regiment in the command--and I must say that we have men whom the State ought to feel proud of. Captains Pritchard, Eldridge, Hathaway, Burns, Leach, Lawton, and Van Antwerp cannot be surpassed by any men in the field--while there is but one in the regiment of whom we feel ashamed and he will make a vacancy before long."[15]

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[14] O.R., XXXII, Pt. 2, 804.

[15] Regimental Service Records, Record Group 59-14-A, B-120, F7.

After the Federal defeat at Kenesaw Mountain on June 27, the Fourth helped cover the retreat of the army. The armies in the West under Sherman encountered their share of fighting, yet it seemed that the Army of the Potomac felt that it alone was the salvation of the Union. Grant had begun his fierce offensive in northern Virginia against that army commanded by General Robert E. Lee. Names such as the Wilderness, Spotssylvania Courthouse, Yellow Tavern, Cold Harbor, Richmond, and Petersburg became household words all over the country as Grant forced his way south. In actions such as the above-named battles, the Union army moved ever forward with fantastic casualties. Grant could not circumvent Lee nor could he force the Southern general to fight him on open ground. To achieve Grant's dual objectives, the attrition of the Army of Northern Virginia and the capture of Richmond, the Confederate capital, would require another ten months. In the meantime, the two opposing armies would dig in and build intricate entrenchments before Richmond and Petersburg and slowly grind away at each other.

The battle-lines were much more fluid west of the Alleghenies. The rough and ready soldiers in the West, unwilling to believe the war would be won in the East, preferred to think it could be lost in the East but won in the West.

> For the last forty days we have been almost all the time in the saddle. We have been in more fights since we started out this time and had more loss to the regiment than ever before but I have been one of

> the lucky ones as well. I dont see much in the papers about what the army is adoing here in this department of Rebeldom. There has been some of the hardest kind of fighting and if it had been done before Richmond it would of been of some account but as it is this little army of Sherman's, only about 150,000 which is doing it, it is of not much account although he is fighting an almost equal force; has whipped them in more than a half a dozen places, driven them almost into Atlanta. If we are not about in the center of rebeldom I like to know where it is. Let the cracked army of the Potomac take half the territory from them that this army has since starting out a little more than one year ago and see where the rebels will be then. No one wants Grant to get Richmond worse than I do but if this army gets around it a little further the Rebels might find it hard to get out the truth of it. One aint much of a soldier unless he belongs to the Potomac army. If he does he is all right. I believe I would as quick stay here. I dont believe the Rebels fight any better there than here. The noise that is made about it is what makes it seem worse.[16]

Most of the time the Federal cavalry fought odds that might well have discouraged any Eastern general. At one point Minty's Brigade awoke to find out that it was completely surrounded by nine brigades of rebel horsemen. With the Third Brigade, the First charged and sent them fleeing in confusion. July was spent in the saddle, as the men of the Fourth picketed, scouted, and skirmished almost the entire month. These two brigades, capable of doing their own work as well as relieving infantry, moved into the trenches to take the place of the Twenty-third Corps on the extreme left. While the men were dismounted, the horses received neither proper exercise nor more than half rations. After this two-

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[16]Gooding to Dexter, June 6, 1864.

week interval, the horses were in no condition for a sustained march. Many things now emphasized the plight of the Fourth: lack of proper forage and exercise for the horses, the extreme heat of a central Georgian summer, and bad food.[17]

On August 18, Minty, ranking colonel of the Second Cavalry Division, took the First and Second brigades to rendevous at Sandtown, Georgia, with the Third Cavalry Division, commanded by General Judson Kilpatrick. This raid was to accomplish what Stoneman could not do; that is, successfully make a circuit of the rebel army holed up in Atlanta, thus cutting its lines of communication with the rest of the Confederacy. These two divisions under Kilpatrick skirmished lightly with the enemy until they reached the Atlanta & West Point Railroad. Southwest of that city they met the first strong resistance as the rebels were determined not to allow the Union troopers success. The Fourth Michigan rode to the assistance of the Seventh Pennsylvania on the 19th when that regiment was cut off by a rebel attack and forced the men in butternut back to their own lines. The Second Division had been following the Third; but after a general fight began, that division had been divided in such a way that the Second Brigade of the Second Division was the vanguard and Minty's the rearguard. On the afternoon of the first full day of marching, August 19, Minty's Brigade was ordered to

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[17]Gooding to Dexter, June 30, 1864.

the forefront, and the Fourth Michigan led the entire advance of the expeditionary force. The Union cavalrymen marched continuously almost the entire night, making but one stop. Various regiments were sent out to flank the movements of the advancing column and the Fourth was deployed to the right on August 20 to tear up as much of the track of the Macon & Western Railroad as possible for several miles north of Lovejoy's Station. While they were hard at work, the rebels attacked the main column in force about one-quarter mile away and the northerners were forced to fight on foot against the mounted divisions. The Seventh Pennsylvania was quickly overrun and the Second Brigade of the Second Division hastily formed and drove the enemy away. By this time the whole Union force was surrounded by infantry, cavalry, and artillery, all of whom threw a deadly fire into the raiders. Minty, pushed away from the railroad, joined his companions; and the First Brigade formed in regimental column to save the whole Federal command in dire threat of annihilation.

With the Fourth Michigan in the center, the Fourth Regulars on the left, and the Seventh Pennsylvania on the right, Minty moved to the front of his own regiment, drew his saber and barked orders: "Attention, column! Forward, trot; regulate by the center regiment; march, gallop, march!" The brigade dashed toward the rebel cavalry, charging over the rough ground. The distance was quickly covered. The Confederates broke and ran with the Federals on their heels.

The rest of the Kilpatrick party followed the First Brigade's example, charging from their dangerous predicament. The troopers then veered eastwards, fighting the enemy every step of the way and fording rivers where the bridges had been burned to slow their movement. The Kilpatrick raiders reached Lithonia to the east of Atlanta on the night of August 21 and, for the first time since the raid began late in the evening of August 17, had a chance to sleep. So exhausted were the men that on the last stretch of the march some fell asleep on horseback and tumbled out of their saddles onto the ground.

Minty turned in a first report stating very clearly that his division did most of the fighting while Kilpatrick's Third Division acted in the wake of the Second Division, as evidenced by the casualties. "I had 2,400 men. Kilpatrick had 2,300. I lost 206 men; he lost 31."[18] In his full report he added that the brigade fought for thirty-one days with little rest. Garrard endorsed this report but in order to clear any possible misunderstanding, appended: "I would respectfully state I was in command of the Second Cavalry Division during the past campaign."[19] The fact of the matter is that Garrard never joined his division on the Kilpatrick raid. Garrard then recommended for promotion almost

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[18]Robertson, Michigan in the War, p. 669.

[19]O.R., XXXVIII, Pt. 2, 815.

every brigade commander except Minty.[20] Sherman saw the futility of such cavalry raids to disrupt communications of the Confederates around Atlanta. Within a few days he shifted his whole army against the west flank of that city.

Brigadier General Elliot, however, felt that the cavalry had done much more than yeoman-service for the Army of the Cumberland.

> The entire cavalry command, during the winter of 1863 and 64, had performed service in a country affording but a limited supply of forage, particularly long forage; for the want of this and on account of the lateness of the season for grazing, the animals suffered. During the time the army depended for its supplies on its wagon transportation, the cavalry did not have transportation sufficient to haul its forage, and had to depend on the country, affording at that time corn of short growth and green wheat, the latter preventing starvation, but rather weakening than strengthening the animals.
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> In closing this report, I can say with pride that the cavalry of the Army of the Cumberland has performed its duty cheerfully, executing every order given by or through men skirmishing almost daily, and in many instances the skirmishes assuming the proportions of a sharp fight.[21]

Kilpatrick, commanding the Third Division, in his official report on the events of the attack of the rebels at Lovejoy's Station and the subsequent saber charge of the First Brigade of the Second Division, said:

> I and my command were only saved by the prompt and daring bravery of Colonels Minty and Long. Colonel Minty, with his command in three columns, charged, broke, and rode over the enemy's left,

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[20] O.R., XXXVIII, Pt. 2, 805.

[21] O.R., XXXVIII, Pt. 2, 749.

> Colonel Murray, with his regiments, broke his center, and in a moment General Jackson's division, 4,000 strong, was running in great confusion. It was the most perfect rout any cavalry has sustained during the war. . . . While it is most difficult to single out instances of gallantry I cannot close this report without mentioning to the favorable consideration of the Major General commanding, the following named officers whose gallant conduct attracted my attention on so many occasions: Colonel Minty, commanding two brigades from the Second Cavalry Division, for his untiring energy throughout the march, and the consummate skill displayed at the moment when we were repulsed at Lovejoy's Station, and the subsequent ride of his command over the enemy's barricades, deserves immediate promotion. . . . Officers were never more gallant and skillful; men were never so brave. They well deserve a success so great.[22]

Continuing the account of the Second Cavalry Division, now north of Atlanta, it again passed south along the western side of that city, covering the departure of the Fourth Army Corps from Jonesborough farther south. Part of the Confederate army under Hood sallied forth from Atlanta to draw battle and positioned itself near Lovejoy's Station, where an attack by Hood against Sherman took place on August 31. Because the telegraph and the railroad had been severed, the corps stationed near Lovejoy's and that of General Alexander P. Stewart in Atlanta lost contact with each other. Finally Hood realized that he would have to concentrate his whole army at Lovejoy's. Therefore, he deserted the city, leaving it to the various Union corps enveloping it from the north, the west, and the southwest. Waiting

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[22] *O.R.*, XXXVIII, Pt. 2, 859.

for the deathblow, Hood became bewildered when Sherman moved his entire army into Atlanta more than twenty miles to the north. The imperative need for rest discouraged Sherman from pursuit since his army had been almost constantly engaged from July 20 until September 6, when he took over the city.[23]

The Fourth Michigan went into camp from August 26 until September 10, spending time picketing and scouting the country from Campbellton to Marietta along the Chattahoochee River to the west of Atlanta. This was the only time during the whole Atlanta campaign that the regiment had full forage for their horses.[24] The division would again be split up and again reorganized for another great raid in the closing days of the war, when the men of the Fourth would play a most important role in the last action.

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[23] Stanley F. Horn, The Army of Tennessee (Norman, Oklahoma, 1941), p. 368.

[24] O.R., XXXVIII, Pt. 2, 815.

V

BEGINNING OF THE END AND CAPTURE

The time spent after the Kilpatrick raid was not wasted, for the Fourth Michigan was concerned with the possibility of the rebel cavalry flanking and infiltrating the Union lines and raising havoc with the supply trains provisioning the Union army on the long line to Chattanooga. At this time the Fourth was broadly dispersed over north Georgia and central Tennessee. The regiment of October 9 had thirty-seven mounted and ninety dismounted at Columbia but the report of the brigade commander does not state the location of the remainder.[1] Some of the troopers had been attached to infantry regiments as scouts. A detachment of the regiment placed under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Josiah Park was dispatched to furnish aid to General Lovell H. Rousseau who had attacked Wheeler's raiding force shortly after crossing the Duck River north of Columbia. Dismounted elements of the regiment were sent to the rear to guard bridges and blockhouses. One group detailed to guard a blockhouse on the railroad between Nashville and Huntsville, Alabama, withstood Wheeler's orders to surrender even though it consisted of only twenty-three men, seventeen

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[1] O.R., XXXIX, Pt. 3, 172.

of whom had Spencers, against Wheeler's 8,000 cavalrymen with artillery. The northern defenders staunchly refused to surrender and during the attack the rebels lost eight killed and sixty wounded.[2] After five and a half hours, Wheeler gave up his futile attempt and rode away with his casualties. The conspicuous gallantry of these twenty-three troopers of the Fourth resulted in their names being placed on the honorable mention list of the general orders. This responsibility for protecting the railroad was shared by the entire brigade which had its headquarters in Columbia straddling the Nashville & Decatur Railroad, sixty-five miles of which was guarded by the brigade. Some of the men of the brigade were stationed in blockhouses along this line while others were stationed mounted or dismounted either at Columbia or Franklin, Tennessee.

On October 20 the detachment of the Fourth Michigan garrisoned at Columbia advanced into Georgia once more and attacked the rebels under Wheeler near Rome. Several days later the mounted members were ordered to surrender their horses and arms to the Third Brigade before they went to Nashville. Here they were to join the remainder of the dismounted force, receive recruits, procure new horses, draw new arms, and be awarded a well-earned rest since the regiment had covered over 2,600 miles in the preceding twelve

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[2]Robertson, Michigan in the War, p. 673.

months. Rousseau, reporting on October 31, stated that the Fourth had already turned over its horses and arms to the Third Brigade. However, he directed these 350 men of the Fourth to retake their arms and remain in the field a while longer. Otherwise he would be left with an insufficient number of men to guard the important lines in the face of Hood's advancing column.[3] They complied. When relieved, they boarded trains and went to Nashville. From there, they traveled to Louisville where the regiment was reassembled from its far-flung posts. It was the first time that the Fourth was able to go to the rear for equipment and rest since it had entered the war two years previously.[4] Louisville appeared greatly different to the men from their past experiences so they took full advantage of their liberty whenever they could. The men settled down to the routine of organized camp life complete with drills and inspections. They slept four to a tent. Some of these canvas shelters had stoves to ward off the north winds. Regularly issued rations, a roof over their heads, and the promise of the arrival of the paymaster, all contributed to the general feeling of well-being among the men.

The cavalry of the Military Division of the Mississippi was again reorganized with Wilson as corps commander.

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[3] O.R., XXXIX, Pt. 3, 350.

[4] Gooding to Dexter, November 17, 1864.

He reconstituted the Second Division since the original three brigades were so depleted as to be practically non-existent. This division was now stationed at Louisville while the regiments were being outfitted and the men rested. Wilder's Brigade, formerly the Third, became the new First. The old First, made up of the Fourth Michigan and the Seventh Pennsylvania, was combined with the old Second (First, Second, and Fourth Ohio), to make the new Second Brigade, with Minty in command.[5] The new division commander, Brigadier-General Eli Long, disliked Minty immensely and hoped to have him out of his former position as brigade commander.[6] Minty was frequently criticized by others, particularly because of his boldness. However, some realized the man's stature. Rosecrans perceived the brilliance in Minty as did Stanley. Sherman, in a letter to Halleck, Chief of Staff, said: "Among the worthy colonels aspiring to the rank of Brigadier General I can only name Colonel J. A. Williamson, Fourth Iowa; Thomas J. Harrison, Eighth Indiana Cavalry; H. R. H. Minty, Fourth Michigan Cavalry, who have long and well commanded brigades, and who seem to have no special friends to aid them to advancement."[7] Minty, as brigade commander, in his General Order #1, hoped that the old First and Second Brigades

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[5] O.R., XLV, Pt. 1, 912.

[6] O.R., XLV, Pt. 1, 1148.

[7] O.R., XXXIX, Pt. 3, 413.

could, in the new organization, "have a still brighter page in the history of our country and do honor to its parentage."[8]

Minty, as official commander of the Fourth Michigan, had to find a competent leader for the regiment while he busied himself with the brigade. "The officer in immediate command of a regiment should be changed as seldom as possible. I therefore recommend a man who bears the reputation of being the best soldier in the regiment and who can always remain with his command."[9] Major Mix had tendered his resignation, Major Richard Robbins was sick and thus unfit for field duty, and Major Grant was at times incapacitated by rheumatoid arthritis. With no truly adequate field grade officers available from whom to pick the regimental commander and its accompanying rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he then recommended a captain, Benjamin Pritchard, to the Adjutant-General. Minty received no answer to this request written November 30; accordingly he dispatched another letter to Adjutant-General Robertson on December 18 complaining of failure to reply. By December 29 the commission was approved and Pritchard became the commander of the Fourth Michigan, holding this position until the regiment was disbanded.

Previously, Sherman, having removed all civilians, abandoned Atlanta to the torch on November 15 and began his

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[8] O.R., XLV, Pt. 1, 912-13.

[9] Regimental Service Records, Record Group 59-14-A, B 120 F3.

destructive "March to the Sea." He detached Thomas and General John Schofield to Tennessee to fight Hood. The impetuous Texan saw his entire army destroyed at Nashville, on December 15 and 16, the only rout of a major Confederate army in the war. Sherman presented the city of Savannah, Georgia, as a Christmas present to Lincoln, then continued north into South Carolina.

During this time the Fourth Michigan remained at Louisville. Its ranks were replenished so that by December 4, there were between 700 and 800 men present for duty, some of whom were new recruits. On December 5 the paymaster paid a visit, one long overdue, to the regiment.

> As it was the first time in one year, most of the regiment was on a bust. I never seen quite so much noise in camp before; it is enough to make one think of home. It took a quite a pile of money to pay the regiment as but a few drew less than 200 dollars. Today we have drawn horses and saddles. They say we are agoing to break camp again before many days. I wish Thomas would drive Hood away from Nashville, then I guess we could rest a little longer. The boys just come into camp with a keg of beer; got to drink it up before bedtime. . . .
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> Dec. 8: It is very cold evening and my tent is none of the warmest. Most of the company are out on picket around the city--to take every horse and mule they can find. It looks rather hard to meet a man on the road to the city with a good pair of horses and unhitch them and leave his wagon standing in the road. It makes a man look anything but goodnatured.[10]

Long disliked the order placing his cavalry division

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[10]Gooding to Dexter, December 6, 1864.

in the field as soon as possible.[11] He complained of lack of supplies and also because Brigadier General Edward McCook, commanding First Cavalry Division, took nearly all the horses available in Louisville.[12] But by December 13, the whole brigade commanded by Minty was mounted with the exception of the Seventh Pennsylvania who were expected to draw their horses momentarily. The First Brigade, Wilder's, received mounts on December 14, as a total of 1,130 horses had been impressed in Louisville and the surrounding territory. Most of these were found to be fit for service with only about one hundred rejected. Horses were found in many out-of-the-ordinary places. Some owners, fearing the loss of favored mounts, hid them in the pantries of their homes; one woman led two thoroughbreds to a second-story bedroom to save them from the prying eyes of the cavalrymen.

The Second Cavalry Division, leaving the comforts of Louisville, reported to Wilson at Gravelly Springs, Alabama, by January 26, 1865, where the men of the Fourth Michigan set up winter quarters. This was not the only cavalry division present, for within a radius of several miles there were three others, all together about 35,000 mounted men plus two infantry corps. Long had been complaining at Columbia, Tennessee, on January 15 that he had no forage,

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[11] O.R., XLV, Pt. 2, 47-48.

[12] O.R., XLV, Pt. 1, 1148.

blaming the Quartermaster's department for this oversight.[13] Now at Gravelly Springs there would be many more men competing for the very limited forage.

The Fourth Michigan remained in camp at Gravelly Springs the rest of January and all of February. Here, about ten miles from the Mississippi state boundary and one mile from the Tennessee River, the men continued to drill and train, dismounted in the morning and mounted in the afternoon. Gooding grumbled at the lack of food and was anxious to move out of winter quarters just for the change of scenery or the possibility of getting hard tack instead of roast corn.[14] Near the end of February the weather was warm enough so that the men could be comfortable without coats and the roads were dry, this combination making nearly ideal campaigning weather. The men now turned to company commanders, who in turn looked at brigade commanders, who waited anxiously for the order to march. The men were eager to get the job completed so they could return home. Considering all the hardships they themselves were forced to suffer, they did not in the least feel sorry for the new recruits and those waiting for the draft.

> The time has passed for the draft to come off and I suppose some of them poor fellows who have been trembling so long have got their sentinces (O how

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[13] O.R., XLV, Pt. 2, 595.

[14] Gooding to Dexter, February 12, 1865.

> I pity them) poor fellows have got to leve their feather beads and soft bread and try soldier life; it is rather hard but I suppose it is fair. After all, it is worse to think of it than to go and do it. There is a goodeal in a soldiers life which is pleasant but not quite enough to make me want to stay any longer than I have to. There seams to be an impression here that we will stay here some time; it dont make but little difference to me. I would as quick be on the move as to stay in camp any length of time.[15]

Grant had on February 13 requested Thomas, as commander of the Army of the Cumberland, to send a cavalry column of 10,000 to coordinate with Major General Edward Canby in his expedition against Mobile, Alabama. But the horses were still, according to Thomas' report, so worn out after the pursuit of Hood that the movement was delayed until a more opportune moment.[16]

Background data pursuant to Wilson's raid reveal that in the first months of the war, four permanent military establishments had been set up by the Confederacy to provide the soldiers with weapons and ammunition. The most important one was at Richmond. Another center was in Augusta, Georgia, where most of the gunpowder was produced. Macon, Georgia, contained a central ordnance laboratory for the production of artillery, ordnance equipment, and small arms stored here. The fourth center of ordnance was located in Selma, Alabama, where heavy artillery was produced.[17] Richmond had, by this

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[15] Gooding to Dexter, February 22, 1865.

[16] O.R., XLIX, Pt. 1, 342.

[17] William B. Hesseltine, ed., The Tragic Conflict, "The Work of the Ordnance Bureau," by J. W. Mallett, 1909 (New York, 1962), p. 341.

time, been under siege; Augusta was being attacked by Union troopers from East Tennessee; the only ones remaining free from attack were Macon and Selma. Both of these cities were objectives of the forthcoming Wilson raid.

At daylight on March 22, the cavalry march from Gravelly Springs began, each man being provided with identical arms and equipment (the majority carrying Spencer carbines), making this one of the best planned and provisioned expeditions ever organized. Since the Tennessee Valley had been ravaged by both sides, the troopers had to scatter over a large area to glean the remaining short forage. Another reason for spreading out was to confuse the southerners so that they could not concentrate their forces to defeat the whole northern column. The First, Second, and Fourth divisions crossed the Tennessee River into Alabama and began the march towards Selma. The Second Division arrived at Montevallo on March 31 following the First Division as it was slowed by the pontoon bridges which it guarded. There the Second Division went into camp for the night, awaiting the Chicago Board of Trade Battery, which had to follow the pontoon train the weight of which had made the wet roads a quagmire and markedly slowed the progress. On April 1 this great army of cavalry marched from Montevallo to Plantersville, a distance of forty-five miles. The next morning the Fourth Michigan was moved into the rear of its brigade and as the Third Ohio swept before it all Confederate

resistance, saw no action. The 444 officers and men of the regiment reached the outskirts of Selma shortly after noon and dismounted, ready to move into battle. However, Minty gave Pritchard orders to go back to the waiting horses and prepare for a saber charge. The troopers were to bide time for two hours until just before the main attack began, when they were told to support the Board of Trade Battery. This battery unlimbered in front of the Union cavalry to enfilade the rebel lines thus drawing on itself the full brunt of the guns in the city. The batteries exchanged blows until the city came under a sweeping frontal attack by the Second Cavalry Division. After the first line of strong rebel defense had been breached and was in the hands of the northerners, the Fourth Michigan was told to mount quickly and advance on the front. As they were leaving, Minty's orders (he now was division commander as Long had been severely wounded in the first charge) were superseded by orders of Wilson, who had arrived at this time. He directed the Fourth to attack the Confederates on foot as a portion of the Federals had just been beaten back from the second line of defense in Selma.

The men charged forward with the Third Ohio but before they came to the breastworks, the rebels, seeing the pennons of the famed Fourth Michigan and knowing of the sharpened sabers the troopers were wont to carry, began to flee the city. The men in blue moved forward at the

double-quick into the center of the city, their Spencers blazing, where they captured 152 prisoners. The whole city was rapidly subdued by the cavalry division, making the capture of Selma one of the most important events of the war for the following reasons: First, Selma was the second best fortified city in the Confederacy, yet it was completely in the Federals' hands only one-half hour after the original order to charge was given. Second, because the arsenal and the ordnance factories located here were destroyed, this severely crippled any further southern resistance in these last days of the war. Third, this was Forrest's first major defeat and from now until he surrendered at Livingston on May 4, he was in constant fear of further setbacks. Although in the confusion of the battle at Selma Forrest succeeded in escaping, he left with only a part of his command as several thousand prisoners were bagged at Selma. Most Civil War narratives dwell on the capture of Richmond and Petersburg in Virginia. Yet, at Selma, 1,550 dismounted men "had broken through and swept over a strongly constructed, double-bastioned line, covered by a continuous stockade, with a deep ditch containing mud and water at places, mounting thirty-two cannon of various calibers, and holding, according to the best account we could get, from five to six thousand men, cavalry, artillery, infantry, and militia."[18]

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[18]James H. Wilson, Under the Old Flag (New York, 1912), vol. II, p. 235.

Following this stirring capture of Selma, the Fourth Michigan crossed the Alabama River on a newly-constructed pontoon bridge on April 8. This was effected only with great difficulty as driftwood floating down the swollen river damaged the bridge. On April 10, the regiment was in support of the wagon and pontoon trains following the First and Fourth Cavalry divisions. Since the roads were already muddy from the rains, the additional turbulence created on the roads by two entire cavalry divisions preceding the Fourth Michigan turned the roads into seas of mud. Riding through a naturally swampy section on April 11, the men of the Fourth, now the advance regiment of the cavalry column, had to corduroy the road, sometimes for as far as 200 or 300 yards at a stretch, using fence poles or, in one instance, tearing a barn to pieces and using the planking. This necessary job kept the whole regiment busy at the same time, thus slowing the forward progress of the column. But the column was moving. By April 13, Montgomery, Alabama, was reached and passed. On April 15, passage of a swamp was delayed for ten hours while means were procured for crossing it. As they continued the march, the Montgomery & West Point Railroad was ordered destroyed; the men complied rapidly, destroying bridges and culverts, bridge timber and the mills where the timber was cut. The column reached Columbus, Georgia, early in the morning of the 17th. Minty, commanding the advance division, ordered the Fourth Michigan and Third Ohio

(they having rejoined their own division) to move quickly east and capture the Double Bridges over the Flint River before they could be destroyed. These two regiments placed under the command of Pritchard carried out the movement with such alacrity that the enemy had to abandon three pieces of artillery placed at the crossing. One battalion of the Fourth charged the bridges with drawn sabers, captured the battalion guarding the bridges, then positioned itself at the trestle to fend off any Confederate counterattack. These bridges were the only practicable ones that the army could use in traversing the Flint River. Every precaution had been taken by the rebels to burn these crossings but they had been hopelessly surprised. The rest of the column on April 18 crossed the bridges defended by the Fourth. The next day three cotton factories went up in flames as the cavalry carried out Sherman's mission of total war leaving a path of destruction behind. April 20, a small rebel force impeded the progress of the cavalry raiders; but was pushed back relentlessly by the advance party until a bridge one hundred yards long was reached which had been fired by the rebels. The planking had been removed and the lead troopers were obliged to cross the burning stringers on foot. Replacing the planks under fire, the two divisions moved quickly on until they were met by Brigadier General Robertson of the rebels under a flag of truce. Here, the Federals learned of Johnston's surrender to Sherman several days earlier.

Since Wilson's Cavalry Corps was directly responsible to Sherman, Wilson bound himself to the armistice arranged in North Carolina.

By the prescribed rules of military behavior, Wilson should have remained exactly where he was and stopped all further advance. However, Sherman, according to the rationale of George Thomas, was operating outside the limits of his territorial command, namely, the Military Division of the Mississippi. Therefore, Wilson was not held to the armistice between Sherman and Johnston.[19] Wilson, thinking that it was Sherman's intention that the cavalry, once it had assisted Thomas in ridding the West of Hood, should be reorganized and remounted. It would then march through "the richer parts of Alabama and Georgia for the purpose of destroying the railroad communications and supplies of the rebels"; then bring his "command into the theater of operations toward which all our great armies were moving."[20] Thus, Wilson hoped to be able to join Sherman somewhere in North Carolina, pushing the Confederate resistance in front of him. Here, the two large columns would meet the Army of the Potomac, hopefully driving the Army of Northern Virginia before it. Three Union armies would converge, strangling the remnant of the rebels still on the field.

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[19] O.R., XLIX, Pt. 1, 346.

[20] O.R., XLIX, Pt. 1, 371.

Minty believed that Robertson was merely delaying the Federals so that an important bridge could be destroyed. He moved forward past the white flag, captured Macon with no opposition except protests, and received the surrender of Major General Howell Cobb, 349 other officers, 1,843 enlisted men, and sixty pieces of artillery.[21] A few days later, the armistice of Johnston became an officially recognized surrender.

The work of the Fourth Michigan did not end at that point, however. Wilson received information on April 29 that Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, had slipped past the armies in Virginia and North Carolina and was moving through South Carolina, intent on reaching either the Gulf of Mexico or the Mississippi River. He could not resign himself to the fact that the war was indeed over. He had with him 2,000 cavalrymen, his whole cabinet, a large part of the Confederate treasury, his wife and family, and some important papers. He hoped to be able to join the forces of Forrest still at large in Alabama. Davis held his last full cabinet meeting at Charlotte, North Carolina, April 24, then crossed the border into South Carolina, reaching Abbeville by May 1. By this time, his escort had convinced him that the war was over but he still had hopes of setting up the government in the Transmississippi

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[21] O.R., XLIX, Pt. 1, 443.

Department. May 5, the strange group reached Washington, Georgia. Here, the half million dollars in gold was divided among the men, most of whom then surrendered; but Davis left with a picked escort of fifteen men for Atlanta, hoping to meet Forrest there. The latter had, on May 4, finally surrendered. Davis then heard of two Federal cavalry divisions in the area around Atlanta and decided to go south to try to reach the Gulf.

By May 3, Wilson had some knowledge of Davis' whereabouts and by a series of carefully executed orders, almost every road or path, most river crossings, and all important towns in central Georgia were covered by patrols. On May 6, Wilson directed Brigadier General John Croxton, commander of the First Cavalry Division, to send his best regiment under its best commander eastward to find the trail of Davis and follow him. This regiment was the First Wisconsin, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Harnden in charge. Minty, commanding the Second Division, picked the Fourth Michigan as his best regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Pritchard commanding. The Fourth was to move southeast from Macon, cross the Ocmulgee, and watch all the crossings between Hawkinsville and the Ohoopee River. Detachments of Wilson's force nearly 15,000 strong were strategically placed covering all possible escape routes in an unbroken line from Kingston to Tallahassee, Florida. Both Harnden and Pritchard had difficulty in procuring information from the white inhabitants

they met as to the movements of Davis. Their greatest assistance came from Negroes who were willing to tell all they knew. Pritchard had to resort to the lie that he was the detached rearguard of Davis but was now trying to find his Commander-in-Chief. Since many of the Confederates were, by this time, wearing blue uniforms, the falsehood worked and Pritchard slowly fell on the track of the elusive President. In the meanwhile, Harnden had definite information that he was following Davis. Several citizens told what they had seen and heard; piecing the bits of knowledge together, Harnden followed the train still loyal to Davis, at one time getting to a camp site recently vacated as evidenced by the embers yet burning. The troopers lost the track in a driving rainstorm but a citizen again helped find it and the First Wisconsin moved on. At Abbeville, Harnden met an advance party from the Fourth Michigan. Waiting for Pritchard, he told the Michigan colonel all he knew of the situation. Pritchard asked Harnden if the latter needed any more troops and offered to loan him a battalion. Harnden declined, saying that his force was adequate, also that he was having trouble finding enough forage for the horses and subsistence for his own men. The two men parted, Harnden hurrying to catch his regiment which was by this time one hour ahead.

Pritchard, thinking it useless for his regiment to follow the same road used by the First Wisconsin, moved down

along the river bank for about three miles where he came across a Negro guarding his master's wagon. The Negro told of a very important personage who had crossed the river on a ferry with secrecy and who had paid the ferryman rather handsomely. The Negro also told Pritchard of an alternate route into Irwinville than the road that Harnden was following. Though this new route was longer, Pritchard took it, thus cutting off the possible escape of Davis should he be frightened off the main road by the pursuit of Harnden. Pritchard selected the 128 best mounted men and seven officers. The remainder of the regiment was ordered to picket the river bank. By sunset, the detachment reached Wilcox' Mills, a small hamlet eighteen miles from Irwinville. A quick night march through a pine forest following a blind path led to Irwinville but Pritchard could find traces of neither Harnden nor Davis. At one o'clock in the morning of May 10, the detachment rode into town. Again passing themselves off as Confederates, the men learned that Davis was encamped about a mile outside of town.

Fearing that his men might run across the First Wisconsin advancing down the main road, Pritchard gave strict orders to his men to challenge anyone with whom they made contact. He led his column to within a short distance of the Davis camp and halted. He then sent Lieutenant Alfred Purinton with twenty-five dismounted men in a flanking maneuver to the opposite side of the campsite to cut off

that avenue of escape down the main road. Pritchard directed Purinton to reach his position and to remain quietly till summoned. All the men waited in position for about one hour until the first grey of dawn appeared. At that moment the force under Pritchard moved forward stealthily to within twenty feet of the camp, then quickly rushed it. This was done with such effectiveness that the Confederates did not have time even to touch the weapons lying next to them. Videttes were then thrown out around the site to ensure that no one escaped.

Five or ten minutes later, sharp fire emerged from the direction in which Pritchard had sent the dismounted force. Purinton, having reached his assigned position and having waited for the attack, then saw a group of dismounted men approaching him on the road from Abbeville. Knowing that it might be Harnden's men and obeying Pritchard's command, he challenged the nearing party. A voice answered "friends" but, instead of advancing, the group ran off. Thinking that it might be a detachment from Davis' escort, Purinton and his men began firing. Harnden's advance guard, led by Sergeant James Hussey, received three casualties in this quick volley. Falling back, they were reinforced by the remainder of Harnden's group. He deployed his force effectively and advanced, capturing what Harnden called a prisoner. On examination, he saw that he had been fighting the Fourth Michigan. By this time, a small guard had been

placed over the Jefferson Davis party and the remainder of the Fourth had entered the fray. Pritchard then rode up and the firing stopped on both sides. The two commanders then rode together into the Davis camp, each one thinking the other guilty of the mishap. The versions recorded by the two colonels differ to some extent. Harnden claimed that Pritchard was negligent as he did not tell him that he would not remain at Abbeville; instead he took the other road and came on Davis' camp before the First Wisconsin. Harnden also claimed that the camp had not been captured until the fight between the First Wisconsin and the Fourth Michigan had been going on for a short time, implying that if there were no fight, the First Wisconsin would have captured Davis.[22] Pritchard claimed that Harnden was amiss because Sergeant George Hussey ran off after answering Purinton, thus giving the lieutenant reason to believe that he was opposed by Davis' guard. Pritchard stated that the camp was surrounded one hour before he rode into it, and that another five minutes passed before the altercation developed between the two Union commands.

According to Pritchard's account of the capture, the so-called prisoner of the Fourth taken by the First Wisconsin was, in actuality, a sergeant who realized that his opponents were also using Spencers and went over voluntarily

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[22] O.R., XLIX, Pt. 1, 519.

to stop further bloodshed. An affidavit sworn by Lieutenant Henry Boutell of the Fourth, wounded in this action near Irwinsville, placed the blame squarely on the sergeant leading the advance guard of the First Wisconsin. Boutell, placed in the same ambulance with three of the wounded from Harnden's regiment, talked to those men who said that Hussey did not answer the challenge in a proper manner, implying that the fight might have been avoided.[23]

Wilson did not feel that Pritchard was entirely blameless for the unfortunate incident but rather considered it an oversight on the part of the overzealous Michigan colonel as seen in his whole account of the events leading up to the capture:

> Meanwhile, Pritchard continued his march by the river road to the left for several miles, when he met a negro, from whom he obtained information confirmatory of the information that Harnden had given him an hour before. It removed all doubt that the party Harnden had been pursuing was really that of the Confederate President, and that it was also his duty to join in the pursuit. In this he was clearly right, and had he acted otherwise he would have been censurable for negligence and want of enterprise. It should not be forgotten that he and Harnden were lieutenant colonels of different regiments from different states belonging to different brigades and different divisions. They had probably never met before, and were, therefore, comparative strangers. Had they continued together it would have been necessary to compare commissions in order that the senior might properly assume command of the joint forces. But as they were acting under separate and distinct orders, they parted with the understanding that Harnden would continue the pursuit on the direct route while Pritchard would follow the river indefinitely

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[23] O.R., XLIX, Pt. 1, 529.

> or till he found something further to justify his leaving it. This was the condition when the latter got the negro's later information which caused him to change his plan, and the only mistake he made after that was that having decided to join in the pursuit he should have sent a courier to notify Harnden and especially to caution him to look out for the Michigan men on the first road farther south running toward Irwinville. For some reason never clearly explained he failed to take this precaution, and although it will appear later that the consequences were unfortunate and directly due to this failure, I have never thought that Pritchard's conduct was censurable for the reason that it was probably an oversight which might have occurred to any vigorous and zealous officer in the heat and anxiety of the hour.[24]

At the height of this battle, the adjutant of the Fourth, Lieutenant Julian Dickinson, was in camp organizing the searching of the tents when he noticed three women leaving one of the tents and moving toward the woods. He ordered them to stop but they continued on their way until their path was blocked by three mounted men of the Fourth who, under direction of Corporal George Munger, demanded that they stop. Davis was recognized and placed under arrest. As to the actual seizure, many different accounts give the reader a bewildering number of choices. The first I use is that of Davis himself.

> My horse and arms were near the road on which I expected to leave, and down which the [Federal] cavalry approached; it was therefore impracticable to reach them. I was compelled to start in the opposite direction. As it was quite dark in the tent, I picked up what was supposed to be my "raglan", a water-proof, light overcoat, without sleeves; it was subsequently found to be my wife's, so very like my

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[24]Wilson, Under the Old Flag, II, 325-26.

own as to be mistaken for it; as I started, my wife thoughtfully threw over my head and shoulders a shawl.

I had gone perhaps fifteen or twenty yards when a trooper galloped up and ordered me to halt and surrender to which I gave a defiant answer, and dropping the shawl and raglan from my shoulders, advanced toward him; leveled his carbine at me, but I expected, if he fired, he would miss me, and my intention was in that event to put my hand under his foot, tumble him off on the other side, spring into the saddle, and attempt to escape. My wife, who had been watching, ran forward and threw her arms around me. Success depended on instantaneous action, and, recognising that the opportunity had been lost, I turned back, and, the morning being damp and chilly, passed on to a fire beyond the tent.[25]

Then the story as told by Andrew Bee, a private in the Fourth Michigan, a Scandinavian lumberjack.

We started south and on the evening of the 9th came up with the Ninth [apparently meaning the First] Wisconsin, Colonel Harnden commanding. The officers held a consultation and, finding they were on the same mission, concluded to each take a number of picked men and proceed by different routes. . . . Col. Harnden took 44 men from the First Wisconsin, and then we rode off some odder ways. . . . It was about 1 o'clock in the morning that we came in sight of their tents. . . . Col. Pritchard gave orders to surround the camp and not to disturb the sleepers. . . . I knew him from his pictures. He had on a military suit, cavalry boots and all, and a grey flannel blouse. As he stepped out he was pulling on an ulster without sleeves. Mrs. Davis followed him and threw his travelling shawl over his shoulders. You know all men who went about a good deal used to have them. . . . So that's all there is to that story. He started towards his horse when I lifted my carbine and pointed it at him, saying out loud: "Sherff. Davis, you stay dare". . . . Anybody who thinks Sheff. Davis a coward to run away mit woman's clothes should have seen him then. He turned right square around and came towards me fast. He had no show, and he knew I would shoot if he try to get away on his own horse, so he come up to me. He say afterwards he been going

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[25]Varina Jefferson Davis, Jefferson Davis (New York, 1890), II, 638-39.

> to knock me off my horse and get my carbine. There'd been a fight pretty quick, but his wife got between us and say, "For God's sake don't shoot! He won't try to get away". . . . Sheff he laughed kind of bitter, and walked back to the tent mit his arm around his wife. He stood by the fire, head down, thinking. Pretty soon Mrs. Davis gave him a tin bucket to get some water and he started off, but I covered him and again I say, "Sheff. Davis, you stay dare", and I walk up to der tent. Then he put his hand on his sword and got mad. Haven't you any better manners, you ----- Yankee, than to come into a lady's bedroom?" That made me feel pretty bad, because I got pretty good manners. . . . He shust stayed there quiet until Col. Pritchard came up and took him prisoner.[26]

A letter relating a talk with Pritchard many years after the war revealed that the colonel referred to Davis as the Archtraitor and rebel, and was forced to warn him when he became abusive. The colonel said, "his soldiers at the capture of Davis were desirous of avenging the tens of thousands slain on battlefields and starved in prison dens, through his agencies, by him controlled, and if permitted would have shot him, but that he dissuaded them from their course, on the ground that Davis was a prisoner and the government of the United States would see him duly punished. Pritchard added with some warmth, that if he had then supposed Davis would have gone unpunished for his crimes he would not have interferred with the desires of his men."[27]

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[26]Robert McElroy, Jefferson Davis: the Unreal and the Real (New York, 1937), vol. II, 510-11.

[27]Letter to unknown addressee (no date) from Moses Taggart in the Taggart Family Papers in the Historical Collection of the University of Michigan.

Harnden, in a newspaper article, said that no one realized that Davis had been caught until he rode into the Davis camp with Pritchard after the fight between the two northern cavalry regiments. He then described the camp after the prisoners were known to all. "While conversing with Davis I saw a cask of brandy thrown out of an ambulance; the head was soon knowcked in and the soldiers were running from all parts, with cups and canteens. I called Col. Pritchard's attention to it, and said it ought to be stopped, as there might soon be trouble over it. The Colonel went over and tried to stop it, but with poor success, I suspect, judging from the condition of some of the soldiers."[28]

Another incident in the capture occurred when a private from Company A took Davis' horse, saying he would not need it any more. This fine horse had a beautiful saddle on it and two carefully-worked saddle holsters with hand-made pistols. One member of the captured party, ex-Governor Lubbock of Texas, said, "I would die before I would see my president so insulted." "President," said the private, "Hell! What's he president of?" This private then took a valice belonging to Mrs. Davis and disappeared on Davis' horse for six days. He finally rejoined the regiment in Macon, minus the beautiful thoroughbred, saying it broke

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[28] National Tribune, November 3, 1904 (Washington, D.C.).

its leg in the woods and he had to shoot it.[29]

Following the capture, the Davis party was allowed to dress and prepare breakfast before the women were placed in one wagon, the wounded in another, and the two dead men in still another. Then the strange gathering began the slow ride to Macon to report the success of the search. The First Wisconsin rode on ahead. Pritchard recalled the part of the regiment that did not participate in the capture and then buried the two dead troopers. That same day, May 11, Pritchard sent a detail of couriers in advance to ride quickly on to Macon. Later that day, the Fourth met the rest of the brigade and discovered the declaration of a $100,000 reward for the capture of Davis and his alleged complicity in the assassination of Lincoln a month earlier. Pritchard handed a copy of the proclamation to Davis "who read it with a composure unruffled by any feeling other than scorn."[30] This was the first the regiment knew of the reward and Wilson acknowledged this fact in a letter to Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War.[31]

The column arrived in Macon in the afternoon of May 13, having covered over 200 miles in less than six days. There Pritchard received orders to put together a special

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[29]Anonymous Newark, New Jersey, newspaper, no date or page number found.

[30]McElroy, vol. II, 521.

[31]O.R., XLIX, Pt. 2, 782.

detail of three officers and twenty men as an escort for the Davis party on the way to Washington. That evening, a train left Macon with the prisoners captured near Irwinville and also Clement Clay and his wife (who had surrendered to Federal authorities on May 10). This train arrived in Atlanta the next morning and the personnel quickly and quietly transferred to another train for the journey to Augusta. One train armed with Union troops preceded this one and one followed to minimize any possibility of escape. That evening the group reached Augusta and there hurried into waiting carriages for a quick trip to a waiting river steamer. There the party was joined by former Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens. Since Stephens and Davis disliked each other intensely they were kept on separate parts of the ship at Stephens' request. Another passenger taken on at Augusta was Major General Wheeler. Several changes in ships were made before the group boarded the steamer Clyde at Hilton Head on the coast. No detail was left unattended and the group arrived off Fortress Monroe at noon on May 19. The prisoners were not taken into the fort until the 22nd when they were turned over to General Nelson Miles. The next day Pritchard received orders to produce the disguise Davis wore and the colonel turned the "water-proof" and the shawl over to the Secretary of War.

The Michigan detachment remained under Miles' command for several days more and then journeyed to Nashville

to meet the remainder of the regiment. There, they met the paymaster and the men finished the last of their war days in camp happily thinking of the rough times they had experienced. They were mustered out of the service of the United States on July 1, 1865, as they were no longer needed in Georgia for all active resistance there had been crushed. The extended campaigns in north Georgia, the battles around Atlanta, Sherman's devastation on his way to Savannah, and finally Wilson's raid, so ravaged the land that the populace was all but starved into submission. The men thus mustered out were transported to Detroit by train where they were accorded a Hero's welcome.

The Fourth Michigan had carried out the prophecy of the Detroit Free Press in the summer of 1862 and returned having served admirably in almost every battle and skirmish in which it was engaged. Wilson saw the merit of the Fourth, saying: "Long before the close of the war his [Minty's] regiment had justly come to be regarded as one of the very best in the army."[32] Its actions at Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Selma, and the pursuit and capture of Jefferson Davis are but the highlights of a glorious career as a volunteer cavalry regiment.

The Fourth did not receive the $100,000 reward immediately, for Harnden complained, saying his regiment was

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[32]Wilson, Under the Old Flag, II, 171.

also entitled to a share. The question went to Congress, who awarded $5,000 each to Wilson, Harnden, Pritchard, and Lieutenant Joseph Yeoman of an Iowa cavalry regiment which followed the Davis party in its flight and for a time rode with it but could not get close enough to capture him. The balance of the $100,000 was equally divided among the men of the three detachments participating in this final scene of the war: the Fourth Michigan, the First Wisconsin, and the Fourth Iowa.

The men returned to their homes and resumed the lives they had left three years previously. Veterans of the Civil War were proud to tell their children and grandchildren of the role they played in that great struggle. In time the stories were embellished with details sometimes not wholly true but which the veterans felt necessary to hold the interest of their audience exposed only to literature decidedly pro-Northern in its outlook. Memories faded as the soldiers aged. Allegan, the home of Pritchard, was also the hometown of many of the soldiers he recruited for Company L. Pritchard, a successful banker near the turn of the century, was sometimes disturbed by a small group of rough men who would push their way into his bank office asking him to settle an argument concerning a particular battle. He would gather them up, march them down to the nearest tavern, buy a round of beer, and then gleefully begin describing the battle.

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Primary Sources:

The United States War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1887), 130 vols.

This is the most comprehensive and useful source available. This series of letters, orders, reports, and other incidental memoranda is a very reliable source of information for not only the Fourth Michigan but also the background so necessary for the study of the cavalry regiment.

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To gain an insight into the life of an actual combatant, a series of letters located in the Michigan State University Museum was used. Othniel Gooding, who by the end of the war was First Sergeant of "A" Company in the Fourth Michigan, had views on the conduct of the war and the treatment of soldiers not found in the official reports. His letters are humorous at times yet in the main contain a deep insight not usually attributed to a non-commissioned officer.

"The Fourth Michigan Cavalry," Records of the Michigan Military Establishment, Record Group 59-14 in the Michigan Historical Commission Archives.

This source, containing the monthly and quarterly returns of the regiment indicating strength, causes of death, quantity of supplies and letters to and from the State Adjutant-General's office, gave the author hints to further references and that part of the regiment's history not found in textbooks.

John Robertson, Michigan in the War (Lansing, 1880).

The author and compiler of this book was the Adjutant-General of Michigan during the Civil War and for twenty years after the war. This must be read carefully for subjective opinions appear as fact in several instances.

Detroit Free Press, July-August, 1862, September, 1863.

During the course of the war this paper was concerned with the progress of the state's military units and printed the news it could get hold of. Since the Fourth Michigan was almost constantly an integral part of Minty's Brigade, it was only mentioned in the newspaper infrequently.

Taggart Family Papers, Historical Collection of the University of Michigan.

This collection is not in the main concerned with the Civil War and only one letter connected with the Fourth Michigan.

Secondary Sources:

Many secondary sources were consulted but few were actually used as the majority of them pertained to a larger unit of military organization than the Fourth Michigan and thus were useful in setting up the matrix on which the author could place the Fourth.

Joseph Vale, Minty and the Cavalry (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1886).

This book was the exception to the general statement made about the use of secondary sources. In this very biased account of Minty's Brigade, Vale, as Brigade Inspector, saw much that the average soldier or even officer would never observe, but his partiality must be recalled in any description he presents and the reader must beware of the facts given him.

Charles Belknap, History of the Michigan Organisations at Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and Missionary Ridge (Lansing, 1897).

This book was written to commemorate the monuments placed at the newly-organized national war memorial at Chickamauga. This work, as were most of the books and monographs written from the time of the Civil War to slightly beyond the turn of the Twentieth Century, is highly colored.

Glenn Tucker, Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West (New York, 1961).

This modern description of this battle makes great use of the Official Records and is found to be quite accurate with a chapter on the action of Minty and Wilder at Reed's and Alexander's bridges.

William Fox, Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (Albany, 1889).

This careful gathering of statistics of three hundred regiments gave the author a more realistic depiction of the casualties and the bloodiness of some of the battles.

Marshall Thatcher, A Hundred Battles in the West (Detroit, 1884).

Another somewhat biased report, which although not directly concerned with the Fourth Michigan, embroils itself in a polemic with the command of the Army of the Cumberland at Chickamauga and especially with Crittenden.

J. O. Buckeridge, Lincoln's Choice (Harrisburg, 1956).
This excellent monograph on the Spencer rifle and carbine mentioned the Fourth Michigan and especially Minty.

James H. Wilson, Under the Old Flag (New York, 1912), 2 volumes.
A book with much information on the raid Wilson led the closing days of the war and the capture of Jefferson Davis.

Varina Jefferson Davis, Jefferson Davis (New York, 1890), 2 volumes.
This biased biography of her famous husband shows much of the bitterness exhibited by Mrs. Davis after the capture of the President of the Confederacy by the Fourth Michigan.

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