

**MILITARY PERSPECTIVES
ON THE INVASION OF HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA,
APRIL 11, 1862**

Reports of Brigadier General Ormsby M. Mitchel, Commander of the Third Division of the Army of the Ohio.

HEADQUARTERS THIRD
DIVISION
Huntsville, Ala., April 11, 1862

SIR: After a forced march of incredible difficulty, leaving Fayetteville yesterday at 12 m., my advanced guard, consisting of Turchin's brigade, Kennett's cavalry, and Simonson's battery, entered Huntsville this morning at 6 o'clock.

The city was taken completely by surprise, no one having considered the march practicable in the time. We have captured about 200 prisoners, 15 locomotives, a large amount of passenger, box, and platform cars, the telegraphic apparatus and offices, and two Southern mails. We have at length succeeded in cutting the great artery of railway intercommunication between the Southern States.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. M. MITCHEL,
Brigadier-General, Commanding

Capt. J. B. FRY,
Assistant Adjutant-General



HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION,
Huntsville, April 11, 1862.

The work so happily commenced on yesterday has been completed to-day upon a train of cars captured from the enemy at Huntsville. A heavy force of the Ninth Brigade, under command of Sill, was ordered to drive the enemy from Stevenson in the east, while an equal force from the Eighth Brigade, upon captured cars, was directed to seize Decatur upon the west. Both expeditions proved eminently successful. I accompanied the most difficult one to Stevenson in person, from which place 2,000 of the enemy fled as usual at our approach without firing a gun, leaving behind five locomotives and a large amount of rolling stock.

To prevent the enemy from penetrating toward Nashville, I ordered the destruction of a small bridge between Stevenson and Bridgeport, which we can replace, if necessary, in a single day. The expedition from the Eighth Brigade, under the immediate command of Colonel Turchin, proved eminently successful. To arrest his advance the enemy fired a bridge on the farther side of the Tennessee River, but our troops reached it in time to extinguish the flames. A small force of the enemy fled from the town, leaving their tents standing and their camp equipage behind them.

Thus in a single day we have taken and now hold a hundred miles of the great railway line of the rebel Confederacy. We have nothing more to do in this region, having fully accomplished all that was ordered. We have saved the great bridge across the Tennessee, and are ready to strike the enemy, if so directed, upon his right flank and rear at Corinth.

Respectfully,

O. M. MITCHEL,
Brigadier-General.

General BUELL.



Abstract from "Record of Events," Third Division, Army of the Ohio. (From division return for month of April, 1862.)

The Eighth Brigade left Murfreesborough, Tenn., on April 5, at 6 a.m., and marched to Huntsville, Ala., arriving there at 7:30 a.m., on the 11th.

At 6 p.m., April 11, the Twenty-fourth Illinois were moved on cars for Decatur, arriving opposite Decatur on the morning of the 12th, driving the enemy's troops from the fortifications at Decatur, and saving the bridge over the Tennessee River that the rebels had fired on their retreat, occupying the town on the 13th. The rest of the brigade were moved by cars to Decatur, arriving there the same day at 8 p.m.

April 15, the brigade, except guard for baggage train, was moved to Tuscumbia, Ala., arriving there April 16, at 11 p.m.

At 12 noon, April 24, the brigade fell back from Tuscumbia to Decatur, arriving there at 8 p.m. April 26.

April 26 and 27, the brigade, except the Eighteenth Ohio, fell back to Huntsville, Ala., the Eighteenth Ohio going to Athens.

The Ninth Brigade left Murfreesborough, Tenn., April 4, and marched thence, via Shelbyville and Fayetteville, to Camp Taylor, Huntsville, Ala., arriving April 11; since which time the brigade has been divided and sent in different directions on the line of the railroad. The Eighteenth Wisconsin Regiment now being at Bellefonte, the Second Ohio on provost duty at Huntsville, the Twenty-first Ohio at Athens, and two companies of the Thirty-third Ohio now in camp, the balance guarding the water-tanks, bridges, &c., on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.

The Seventeenth Brigade left Murfreesborough April 3, arriving at Shelbyville April 4, and left for Fayetteville April 8, remained at that point until the 14th, and received orders to proceed to Huntsville, Ala. The brigade, with the exception of the Forty-second Indiana, which was left at Shelbyville, marched into camp on the 15th; remained there until the 18th; proceeded to Decatur with the Tenth and Third Ohio



Regiments, and remained until Sunday, the 27th, and, after destroying the bridge over the Tennessee River by fire, proceeded by railroad to Stevenson, Ala., and marched from there to Bridgeport, at which place it remained up to May. The Fifteenth Kentucky Volunteers was left at Fayetteville, as provost-guard, from April 9 to May 1.

SOURCE: The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies! Series 1, Volume X, part 1. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1884, pp. 641-644.

[Editor's Note: Because of his successful operations in the Tennessee Valley, Mitchel was promoted to the rank of Major General. After complaints were lodged against him because of the conduct of his troops and his handling of the cotton trade within the occupied area under his command, he was transferred to the Command of the Department of South Carolina and the Tenth Army Corps with headquarters at Hilton Head, South Carolina. Before he could organize the work to be done there, he was stricken with yellow fever and died at Beaufort on October 30, 1862.]

Report by Confederate Major-General E. Kirby Smith, Commander of the Department of East Tennessee, Headquarters at Knoxville, Tennessee.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF EAST
TENNESSEE,
Knoxville, Tenn., April 13, 1862.

MAJOR: On the 11th General Mitchel, with a Federal force, well ascertained to be about 8,000, with four batteries, entered Huntsville, capturing twenty-one engines and three trains of cars. They came from Murfreesborough via



Shelbyville and Fayetteville, and were followed by two additional regiments, making a force between 8,000 and 10,000 strong. Pushing their trains on beyond Stevenson, they destroyed the bridge over Widden's Creek, 4 miles west of Bridgeport, and secured their flank against any movement by rail from Chattanooga. I have two regiments at Bridgeport and two at Chattanooga, under the command of General Leadbetter; one of the latter, the Forty-third Georgia is awaiting the arrival of arms from Richmond.

General Maxey, with three regiments and a battalion, passed through Huntsville the day previous to its occupation by the enemy. The three armed regiments between Bridgeport and Chattanooga were to have completed the re-enforcements intended for General Beauregard. My own command not being large enough for offensive movements, and feeling that on the fate of the army at Corinth hung the fate of East Tennessee, I felt justified in ordering this force to General Beauregard even before being called upon by him for re-enforcements.

General Beauregard telegraphs that six regiments from Pemberton's command are enroute for Chattanooga. He suggests a movement from that point, taking the enemy in reverse at Huntsville. I could add four regiments, making a force of between 5,000 and 6,000 effective men, but the destruction of the road west from Bridgeport renders the operation of artillery on that line now impracticable. A demonstration of 5,000 infantry toward Huntsville might alarm Mitchel, but no decisive results could be reasonably anticipated. The advance of a force from Kingston by Sparta on Nashville is the strategic move, offering the greatest results and the most practicable in operation. I so telegraphed General Beauregard, notifying him of the destruction of the bridges on the Memphis road, and giving him an opportunity to countermand the order to the South Carolina regiments and to direct them to re-enforce him by [the] Montgomery and the Mobile and Ohio road.

The Eufaula Artillery, which was ordered here with its battery, is still without guns. The pieces, with ammunition, should be sent from Richmond as soon as practicable.



I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. KIRBY SMITH,
Major-General, Commanding.

Maj. T. A. WASHINGTON, A.A.G., Richmond, Va.

SOURCE: Same as above.

[Editor's Note: At the time he recorded this report, Major-General E. Kirby Smith was Commander of the Army of the Department of East Tennessee. He was later promoted to Lieutenant General and succeeded General T. H. Holmes to the command of the Department of the Trans Mississippi, which comprised all of the Confederate forces west of the Mississippi. In May of 1865, he surrendered his forces at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After the war, he returned to his chosen profession of teaching, and served as professor of mathematics at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, until his death in 1893.]



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