

THE GREAT RAILROAD RAID

by Edwin C. Bearss
Washington, D. C.

The following is the first portion of a two-part article which relates the story of a Union raid on Confederate railroad supply lines in the late summer of 1863. Iowa's 2d, 3d and 4th Cavalries played a significant role in the action.

Part II of "The Great Railroad Raid" will appear in the winter issue of the Annals. Sources will be given at that time.

Part I

Following his return to Big Black River from Jackson, Miss., in late July 1863, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman began looking for new ways to harass the battered Confederate forces in Mississippi. Meantime, reliable reports had reached the Union authorities at LaGrange, Tenn., that there were 60 locomotives and more than 350 cars at Water Valley. The same informants told the Union commander at LaGrange, Col. John K. Mizner, that the bridge across the Tallahatchie was standing and that the Mississippi Central Railroad between Grand Junction, Tenn., and Oxford, Miss., was passable. They informed the colonel that there were a number of breaks in the track between Oxford and Water Valley.

When he relayed this intelligence to his immediate superior, Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, Mizner asked permission to try to capture the rolling stock. To insure the success of the projected raid, Mizner asked Dodge to reinforce his cavalry striking force with 3,000 infantry and a regiment of engineers.

Dodge on July 28 forwarded the correspondence regarding the rolling stock to the commander of the XVI Corps, Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut, in Memphis. Dodge argued that it would be possible for him to send 2,000 cavalry to Water Valley and still have enough troopers left to protect the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. The cavalry would be followed by infantry and engineers.

Dodge believed that the Federals would have to act promptly. If Jackson had been evacuated by Sherman's army, Dodge reasoned, the Confederates would start moving the engines and cars south of the Yalobusha. Furthermore, if the Federals were to capture the rolling stock, they would have to strike secretly and swiftly, because it was reported that the Confederates had filled the cars with combustibles.

Before giving Dodge the go-ahead, Hurlbut decided to contact Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Hurlbut's communication reached Grant's Vicksburg headquarters on August 4. The energetic Grant decided to employ two raiding columns in an effort to bag this valuable prize.

Writing Hurlbut, Grant pointed out that the destruction of the railroads centering on Jackson by Sherman's forces would prevent the Southerners from transferring the badly needed engines and cars to other parts of the Confederacy. If the work involved in rebuilding the bridges on the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad between Memphis and Grenada wouldn't be too great, Grant thought that it might be profitable for the Federals to send out a force charged with their reconstruction. When the bridges had been rebuilt, the rolling stock could be taken to Memphis.

Grant informed Hurlbut that he would send a raiding column from Vicksburg to collect "all rolling-stock and take it as far north as the road is in running order." Hurlbut was to send troops from Memphis to meet the Vicksburg cavalrymen and cover the working parties charged with rebuilding the bridges on the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad. The Memphis column was to move out "as early as possible."

At the same time, Grant addressed a note to Sherman. Grant informed Sherman of the scheme which he had outlined to Hurlbut. Sherman was to cooperate in the undertaking. A fast-moving cavalry column (about 1,000 strong) would leave the Vicksburg perimeter and march on Grenada.

Acknowledging Grant's communication, Sherman suggested that a tin-clad and a transport loaded with supplies be sent to Yazoo City. While en route to Grenada, the cavalrymen would rendezvous with the naval force and draw additional rations and forage. At Grenada, the troopers would

burn the bridges across the Yalobusha, "so that the locomotives and cars can alone be taken northward."

When Grant examined Sherman's communication, he was shocked to see the reference to the destruction of the Grenada bridges. Grant realized that if the bridges across the Yalobusha were burned as soon as the Vicksburg column reached Grenada, it would be impossible to transfer the rolling stock from the tracks of the Mississippi Central to the Mississippi and Tennessee. Cautioning Sherman against a premature destruction of the bridges, Grant pointed out that if the cavalry started within the next 48 to 72 hours, it would be soon enough.

Replying to Grant's note, Sherman observed that he didn't plan for his cavalry to burn the Grenada bridges until all the engines and cars had been shuttled to the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad. Sherman also informed Grant that he had alerted his cavalry to be ready to ride on short notice.

Two days later, on the 6th, Grant addressed another message to Sherman regarding the projected railroad raid. Sherman was told to have his cavalry column ready to take the field on the 10th. All rolling stock found on the Mississippi Central was to be collected and moved northward. The troopers were to push on until they encountered the Memphis bluecoats.

Following receipt of this dispatch, Sherman issued a Special Order placing hard-hitting Col. Edward F. Winslow in charge of the raiding force. Winslow's command was to consist of the 3d and 4th Iowa, and the 5th Illinois Cavalry Regiments. Before leaving their camp on Big Black, the cavalry officers were to see that their men were provided with four days' rations.

On August 8 Sherman forwarded a detailed set of instructions to Winslow. The colonel was to have his recently organized brigade ready to ride at daybreak on the 10th. The Union troopers were to head for the Benton road. On the other side of Mechanicsburg, the raiders were to turn off the Benton road and make for Yazoo City. They were to

rendezvous at Yazoo City with a gunboat loaded with supplies. As soon as his men had rested and drawn provisions, Winslow was to proceed to Lexington. The raiders were to push eastward from Lexington and strike the Mississippi Central Railroad. Before advancing on Grenada, Winslow was to throw out scouting parties to make sure that the engines and rolling stock were still spotted on the section of the railroad north of the Yalobusha. If there were any trains south of Grenada, they were to be captured.

At Grenada, Winslow could expect to meet the Union raiding column sent south by Hurlbut. Winslow was to communicate with this force. Between them, the Union officers were "to use all possible efforts to get these cars and locomotives into Memphis."

Sherman felt confident that the Memphis column would have already repaired the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad. He therefore believed that Winslow would encounter no difficulty in running the captured trains into Memphis. In case the engineers and conductors refused to work for the Yankees, Winslow was authorized to "use force to compel them to work their engines and trains."

Following the fall of Vicksburg and the Confederate retreat from Gettysburg, the Washington government had changed its policy. For the time being, efforts were to be made to conciliate the people of the South wherever they might come within reach of Union armies. Sherman accordingly directed Winslow to "carry money," since "it is now to the interest of our Government that all plundering and pillaging should cease." Union men and small farmers along the line of march were to be paid for their corn, bacon, beef and vegetables. Large planters were to be given a receipt, signed by either Winslow's chief quartermaster or commissary. Whenever one of his men's horses broke down, Winslow was authorized to confiscate a remount, exchange the broken down animal and give a certificate of the transaction fixing the difference in value.

If, on reaching Grenada, Winslow found the Memphis column strong enough to take care of the rolling stock, his brigade was to return to the Vicksburg area by way of Yazoo City. But, if there was any doubt, Winslow's troopers were to

continue to Memphis, and return to Vicksburg by boat.

Grant's letter of August 4 reached Memphis on the 8th. Replying immediately, Hurlbut announced that a force would be sent down the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad to cooperate with the Vicksburg column.

According to the latest information reaching Memphis, Hurlbut commented, the engines and cars were guarded by a small detachment of Confederates. These men were said to have orders to destroy the rolling stock at the first sign of a Union advance.

Hurlbut was afraid that the cost of repairing the railroad would exceed the value of the stock. It was his opinion that the rolling stock would have to be destroyed. If, however, the engines and cars were still at Water Valley, Hurlbut continued, it would be less expensive to try to bring them to Grand Junction over the Mississippi Central.

Two days later, news reached Hurlbut confirming that the locomotives and cars were still at Water Valley. According to the latest reports, the Confederate authorities were repairing the railroads in the Jackson area in an effort to remove the desperately needed rolling stock to other sections of the Confederacy. At this very moment, Hurlbut notified Grant, an expedition was being organized at LaGrange. This force would try to capture the trains, and, if practicable, escort them to Grand Junction. Hurlbut felt certain that the Rebels would destroy the rolling stock before the bluecoats could reach it.

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Hurlbut was confronted with problems in organizing a force strong enough to insure the operation's success. To protect the Memphis and Charleston Railroad against Rebel raiders, the Union officers had been compelled to disperse their cavalry. A concentration of the mounted units slated to participate in the "great railroad raid" would have to be effected. After studying his maps, Hurlbut decided to employ three columns. These units were to advance out of the Union bases at LaGrange, Collierville and Pocahontas. Pushing southward into north Mississippi, the columns were to rendezvous at Oxford, 18 miles north of Water Valley.

On August 11 Hurlbut telegraphed Mizner: "You will dispatch as soon as practicable a force of cavalry and mounted infantry, not less than 1,000 men . . . to proceed as rapidly as possible to the neighborhood of Water Valley." This force was to try to capture and bring in the rolling stock reportedly operating on the Mississippi Central Railroad. To operate the trains, the column would be accompanied by 50 men from Bissell's Engineer Regiment of the West. If the expedition were unable to bring out the engines and cars, they were to be destroyed, especially the wheels and trucks. Information had filtered through to Hurlbut that the Confederacy was having a difficult time manufacturing wheels and axles.

The troopers from Mizner's command were to watch for Winslow's column, which had reportedly left the Vicksburg area on the 8th. So far as possible, the raiders were to refrain from wrecking havoc on anything but the railroads; Hurlbut calculated that the Federals might need the crops of north Mississippi to supplement their commissary. On their return march, the Federals were to bring in all able-bodied Negroes, who expressed a willingness to enlist in the Union army.

In accordance with Hurlbut's directive, Mizner called for Maj. Datus E. Coon of the 2d Iowa Cavalry. Coon was handed a copy of Hurlbut's telegram and told to have 200 picked men of his regiment ready to take the field at 5 a.m. on August 13. After crossing Wolf River, Coon's column was to bear toward the southeast. If all went according to schedule, Coon troopers would rendezvous with a second column at Salem or Hickory Flats.

Col. August Mersy, at Pocahontas, was alerted on August 11 to get the 9th Illinois Mounted Infantry ready to take the field. Mersy on the morning of the 12th issued instructions for Lt. Col. Jesse J. Phillips to see that his men were issued six days' rations and were ready to take the field by noon. As so often happens in warfare, the troopers had drawn their rations and ammunition by the stipulated time only to find that there would be a delay. Phillips would have to wait for the 50 engineers who were to accompany the expedition. It was the afternoon of the 13th before all the engineers could be supplied with mules.

It was starting to get dark on August 13, when a courier rode up to Phillips' Pocahontas command post with a second message. Unfolding the scrap of paper, Phillips found that he was to move out immediately, taking the road to Ripley and Oxford. At Oxford, Phillips' regiment would rendezvous with Coon's column.

Just as "Boots and Saddles" sounded, another staff officer came pounding up with a telegram which Mersy had just received from Mizner. Mizner wanted the Pocahontas Federals to know that Coon's command had moved out at daybreak. Consequently, Phillips' regiment was to bear well to the west so as to join Coon's column, "southwest of Salem or near Hickory Flats."

Coon's Iowans had marched from LaGrange as scheduled. At the crossing of the Wolf, Coon was reinforced by 200 men of the 3d Michigan and 100 men of the 11th Illinois Cavalry. This gave the major a striking force of "500 well-mounted men." From the Wolf, the column marched to Ripley, where Coon expected to rendezvous with Phillip's regiment. Although Coon didn't know it, Phillips' column was still at Pocahontas.

After waiting several hours, Coon decided to push on. It was late in the afternoon when the head of the column reached the Tippah River, which recent rains had caused to boom. While the troopers were able to cross without too much difficulty, the wagons and ambulances posed a problem. To get them over the surging river, it was necessary to unload them and place the contents on an old scow which was found moored to the bank. Considerable time was lost by this operation. It was getting dark by the time the vehicles had been ferried over the stream and had been reloaded. The troopers spent the night of the 13th about two miles south of the ford.

At daylight, the blueclads pushed on to Hickory Flats, where they arrived at 9 a.m. The inhabitants, when questioned by Coon, reported that nothing had been seen or heard of Phillips' column. Coon was puzzled. He wondered what could have happened to the 9th Illinois Mounted Infantry. After discussing the situation with his officers, Coon determined to push on. Six hours later, the column rode up to Rocky Ford. Two hours were lost in getting the troopers and their supply

wagons and ambulances across the Tallahatchie. Since time was becoming increasingly important, Coon determined to keep his men in the saddle until 7 p.m. The troopers spent the night of August 14 at Pegee's plantation, five miles southwest of Rocky Ford.

Coon saw that reveille was sounded in time for the cavalrymen to make their toilet, eat their breakfasts and be on their horses by daylight. At 10 a.m. the column entered Oxford.

The "excessive heat" had exhausted the men and their mounts. Upon occupying the town, Coon called a halt. Except for the men detailed to raid the corn cribs in the area, the rest of the brigade was allowed to rest.

Early in the afternoon, the outposts on the Rocky Ford road sighted an approaching column. The alarm was sounded. Within a few minutes, the newcomers identified themselves as Phillips' command.

Darkness had enveloped the area on August 13, when the 330 troopers of the 9th Illinois Mounted Infantry rode out of their Pocahontas encampment. Taking the Salem road, the bluecoats forded Tippah River at Buck's Springs. After passing through Hickory Flats, where Phillips learned that Coon's column was 24 hours ahead of him, the mounted infantry struck for the Tallahatchie, which they crossed on the night of the 14th. As soon as the last man had forded the river, Phillips called a halt. The men and their mounts were allowed to take a well deserved break. Phillips was troubled by his failure to overtake Coon's column.

At 4 a.m. on August 15, Phillips and his officers aroused the men. The march was resumed. As the troopers pushed on toward Oxford, scouts were sent out to see if they could locate Coon's troopers.

Phillips and his officers found Coon anxiously awaiting their arrival. Until Coon showed him a copy of Hurlbut's August 11 wire to Mizner, Phillips had no idea of the "object of the expedition." Since he believed that the success of the raid depended on "rapidity of movement," Phillips announced that the combined force would strike immediately for Water Valley.

The bugles sounded at 2 p.m. As soon as the officers had formed their units, the bluecoated horsemen rode out of Oxford, taking the Water Valley road. Having learned from Coon that another column was *en route* to join the raiders, Phillips called an early halt. Camp was established on the night of August 15, six miles south of Oxford.

Lt. Col. Martin R. M. Wallace had been placed in command of the third column. According to the instructions received from Mizner, Wallace's command (picked men from the 3d, 4th, and 9th Illinois Cavalry) was to leave Collierville on August 13. Wallace was to take the most direct route from his base camp to the Abbeville crossing of the Tallachatchie.

Wallace lost no time in getting his command ready to ride. When the column took up the march, it numbered 720 hard-riding cavalymen. Besides several ambulances and a number of supply wagons, Wallace's force was accompanied by four 12-pounder mountain howitzers.

From Collierville, the troopers marched to Byhalia. As the vanguard thundered into the village, a squad of Confederate horsemen leaped into their saddles and fled. Troopers from the 9th Illinois raced in pursuit. Like many of the Union cavalry officers in the west, Wallace dressed his scouts in citizen's garb. While this aided the Federals in getting information from unwary civilians, it had its handicaps. One of Wallace's uniformed troopers gunned down a scout from the 9th Illinois. The Rebels, having a good head start, escaped their pursurers.

The brigade spent the night of August 13 camped on Withers' plantation. Before retiring, a number of the blue-clads slipped out of camp and raided the nearby planters' orchards and gardens. Peaches, apples and watermelons were found in abundance. Wallace had his men on the road at daybreak. Co M, 4th Illinois was assigned the advance. Ten miles southeast of Byhalia, the Yankee vanguard sighted a Confederate patrol. Shots were exchanged. Seeing that they were badly outnumbered, the Rebels beat a hasty retreat. One bluecoat was wounded in this clash.

About a mile north of Cox's Corners, the Union advance surprised and captured a Confederate courier. When he

searched the man, Capt. Joseph E. Hitt of Co M 4th Illinois found a note from Rebel Capt. W. G. Middleton addressed to Maj. Alexander Chalmers. The message told of the march of Wallace's command.

Passing through Waterford, Wallace's troopers reached the Tallahatchie at nightfall. Since the recent rains had caused a marked rise in the rivers of north Mississippi, the Yankees had a difficult time crossing the Tallahatchie. It was 11 a.m. the next morning, the 15th, before the last man had reached the south bank. The march was resumed. At Oxford, Wallace learned that the units with whom his brigade was to rendezvous had ridden southward several hours before. Observing that the pace of the march was beginning to take its toll, Wallace halted his troopers late on the afternoon of the 15th at Buckner's plantation, two and one-half miles south of Oxford. A patrol was sent racing ahead to notify Phillips and Coon that Wallace would join them in the morning.

Since Wallace was his junior, Phillips would be in charge of the expedition. Phillips was shocked to discover that Wallace, prior to his departure from Collierville, had been given no instructions beyond those entrusted to Coon.

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Shortly after daybreak on August 10, Winslow's cavalry officers had mustered and inspected their troopers. The 800 cavalymen of the 3d and 4th Iowa, and the 5th Illinois swung onto their mounts. By 5 a.m., the column was under way.

The officers and men who were left behind cheered and shouted encouragement to their comrades as they rode out of the cavalry encampment on Big Black River. After leaving the Flowers' plantation cantonment area, Winslow turned the head of his column into the Bridgeport road. Leaving the Bridgeport road at Tiffintown and following a farm road, the raiders headed for Neeley's plantation, where they entered the Benton road. Many of the cavalymen were familiar with the Benton road. During the recent Vicksburg campaign, they had started up this road several times — their object, the railroad bridge across the Big Black at Way's Bluff. Each time, the blueclads had been turned back by the Confederates.

Since the brigade would be called on to make long, hard marches, Winslow had carefully culled his command before it left Flowers' plantation. Only the best conditioned men and horses were taken. Most of the raiders were armed with hard-hitting Sharp's or Union carbines. A number of the men, however, were still equipped with "a variety of cavalry guns, inferior in range and poor in construction." The troopers who were armed with these sub-standard weapons swore that they had never been examined or tested by the War Department.

In accordance with Sherman's instructions, the cavalrymen carried only four days' rations. Winslow expected to draw additional supplies from the navy at Yazoo City. Realizing that the success of the operation would depend on mobility, Winslow had seen that all excess gear was left on Big Black. Never was there "a lighter column. There was no train, not a wagon, not even an ambulance or a pack mule."

To conserve the strength of the men and horses for the hard marches which he knew were in the offing, Winslow halted his brigade at 1 p.m. The cavalrymen camped on either side of the Benton road, eight miles southwest of Mechanicsburg. Sunrise on the 11th found the raiders again on the road. A short distance beyond the fire-gutted ruins of Mechanicsburg, the blueclads turned into the Yazoo City road. Noon found the brigade at Roach's plantation, which was within nine miles of Yazoo City. Winslow decided against pushing on. Another early camp was made.

When the head of the column entered Yazoo City at 8 a.m. on August 12, Winslow was shocked to see no sign of the Union Navy. Questioning the inhabitants, the colonel was disgusted to learn that a gunboat, several transports and a number of troops had been at Yazoo City. These troops, the people stated, had reboarded the steamboats at an early hour on the previous day. The gunboat and transports had then started down river. No one was able to tell Winslow whether or not the Navy planned an early return to Yazoo City.

This unexpected turn of events presented Winslow with a serious problem. He had no rations for the men or forage for the horses. To make matters worse, the corn was not yet ready to be harvested. A march to Grenada and, perhaps, to

Memphis would take the brigade into an area of which the colonel had little knowledge.

Winslow called a staff meeting; all of the commissioned officers attended. After reading Sherman's letter of instructions to the group, Winslow requested their advice. Next, the colonel asked the officers to express themselves on the question, "whether to go forward or to return if no supplies should arrive." As was customary, the lowest ranking officer spoke first; he advised a return to their base. Each of the other officers in his turn recommended the same course of action. Winslow did not express an opinion at this time.

As soon as he had dismissed his officers, Winslow called for his most experienced scout. The man was told to take a strong mule and ride down the Valley road. He was to see if he could contact the naval force which had left Yazoo City the previous morning. Whether he located the boats or not, the scout was admonished to be back at Yazoo City by 4 a.m. on the 14th. The scout went as far as Satartia and was back at Yazoo City by the designated hour. Reporting to Winslow, he stated that "he had seen neither steamboat nor troops, but had learned that they had passed below Satartia, presumably on their return to Vicksburg."

Despite his subordinates' opinion that the column ought to retrace its steps, Winslow decided to press on. Questioning the inhabitants, Winslow learned that a strong force of Confederate cavalry (Whitfield's Texas Brigade) was stationed at Canton. Winslow believed that if his brigade moved rapidly, it could steal a day's march on the Texans. Once his column had gained such a lead, the colonel felt that the Confederates would be unable to overtake it. Orders were issued for the regimental commanders to have their units ready to march at a moment's notice.

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The task of defending northwest Mississippi and the Mississippi Central Railroad had been given to Brig. Gen. James R. Chalmers' understrength command, numbering about 1,700 effectives. To carry out his mission, Chalmers deployed the 18th Mississippi Cavalry Battalion south of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. The 2d Regiment Mississippi State Cavalry was posted at Senatobia, while Chalmers'

main striking force, 682 strong, was massed at Panola. Two regiments of Mississippi State Cavalry were out arresting deserters and men who had fled their homes to avoid being conscripted. A battalion of cavalry, the 6th Mississippi, was camped near Carrollton.

Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, having received several sharp notes from President Jefferson Davis on the subject, finally began formulating plans to transfer the rolling stock from the Mississippi Central to the Southern Railroad of Mississippi east of Jackson. Johnston accordingly issued orders for Chalmers to see that the bridges and trestles on the railroad north of Jackson which had been destroyed in late July by the Federals were repaired. To facilitate this work and in order to confer with Johnston, Chalmers left Grenada on August 11 for Canton and Morton. Pending Chalmers' return, Col. W. F. Slemons would be in charge of the Confederate troops in northwest Mississippi.

When Chalmers reached Canton on the 12th, he found that Confederate Brig. Gen. William H. Jackson's cavalry division had recrossed the Pearl. Jackson and a large number of his men were in Canton. During the day news reached Canton that the Yankees — Winslow's column — had occupied Yazoo City. Slemons was notified of this possibly dangerous development. The commander of the 6th Mississippi Cavalry Battalion at Coila was alerted to watch the Yazoo City Yankees closely, and to rush his organized companies to Vaughan's Station to guard stores.

Two days later, on the 14th, Slemons began receiving alarming reports from his scouts in the area south of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Scout Givens had spotted Wallace's column as it thundered through Byhalia, the previous afternoon. Besides observing that the Yankees took the road to Wyatt, the scout had talked to several of the Federals. In addition to obtaining an accurate figure as to the strength of Wallace's column, Givens was able to report that the Federals had "eight ambulances, six wagons, with eight days' rations, a number of spades, shovels, picks and axes, and one pontoon bridge.

A second Confederate scout had sighted Coon's column as it struck southeastward from LaGrange toward Salem. Like

Givens, this man was able to converse with several of the bluecoats. When questioned, the Yanks said they were *en route* to Water Valley.

Upon receipt of this intelligence, Slemons sent several staff officers galloping with orders for Cols. W. C. Falkner and John McGuirk to collect their commands and report to him. If at all possible, Falkner was to get his regiment of Mississippi State Cavalry in position to keep Coon's column from crossing the Tallachatchie.

News reaching Slemons' headquarters on August 15 was all bad. First, he learned that on the previous day the Yazoo City Yankees, Winslow's brigade, had started for Lexington and Grenada. The Confederate commander at Carrollton was urged to have his scouts shadow this force. In addition, he would try to harass the Federals' advance by destroying bridges and bushwhacking. McGuirk, who had concentrated his regiment at Spring Dale, had plenty of information, all discouraging, for Slemons.

The first report Slemons received from McGuirk was that Coon's column had forded the Tallahatchie on the previous evening and was striking for Oxford. Several hours later, Scout Carmen rode into camp and reported that the Rocky Ford column (Coon's) and the Abbeville column (Wallace's) had occupied Oxford.

In view of these developments, Slemons issued marching orders to his command. The colonel, accompanied by his main striking force, left Panola for Grenada at 2 p.m. The next day, the 16th, Slemons' troopers rode into Grenada. There, the colonel was joined by McGuirk's regiment. Slemons was disappointed to discover that his other detached commands (the 6th and 18th Mississippi Cavalry Battalion, Falkner's regiment, and the 2d Regiment Mississippi State Cavalry) were missing. All told, he had a force of just a little over 700 effectives with which to fend off the Yankee columns which were rapidly converging on Grenada from the north and the south.

Slemons determined to use his understrength brigade to oppose the Federals who were driving down the Mississippi Central from Oxford, while Jackson's division handled the bluecoats who were pressing northward from Yazoo City.

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