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Civil War Stories & Battles in Alleghany

The Battle of Caudill Hill

For the U.D.C. Chapter of Alleghany County, N.C., I have been requested to write a short history of this battle. I will try to give a true statement of what I saw in this battle, and will first tell what was the cause of this trouble, and who the parties were that engaged in it.

One party was made up of Tories and Deserters from the Confederate Army, who were defying the law and committing depredations on the country robbing the people, and committing murders in various places.

The other party was composed of the Home Guards and Confederate Soldiers who happened to home on furloughs, and who joined the Home Guards to help enforce the law.

The Tories had become so strong that they were resisting the officers of the law, and Jesse Reeves and his son, Felix, and Lt. Wiley P. Maxwell were waylaid and shot to death by the Tories just west of where Sparta is, at what is called Killian's Mill. This caused the people to rise in indignation against their open enemy. The militia was called out, and ordered to assemble at Laurelsprings and organize in one body to capture, or drive the enemy out of the country. The Militia met promptly at Laurelsprings and formed a company of volunteers and organized by electing John Ross, Captain, W.B. Halsey, First Lt., and Wm Long, 2nd Lt., and J.H. Doughton Chief Commander. I was chosen to command the skirmish line, and serve as Orderly Sergeant. I went to the store and got some paper and formed the men in line, and took their names, and selected a skirmish line right here. We were joined by a platoon of the first N.C. Calvary and the command of Captain Nathaniel Price rendered valuable service with this outfit.

We left Laurelsprings, and skirmished the country, driving the enemy before us, capturing some as we went. They kept running until they got into Wilkes County, where the battle was fought. They had chosen their ground right on top of a high cliff of rocks, surrounded on three sides by Laurel thickets. This was on the land of Johnson Caudill, who seemed to be the leader, assisted by Jake Absher and King Shumate. Here we made the attack on their position, which was a formidable one, and moved on then with the center, and prepared to meet the charge, but they did not come and I held my position, but could not do much as they were protected by the cliff of rocks, but Capt. Ross findly left

the company and came to me in a run. He said to me "What shall we do?" and said we can not fight those men to any advantage from here, and all the chance he saw to get at them was to move around their right flank and get behind them. Capt. Ross said that was the very thing to do, for me to take my men and lead the way and he would bring up the company at once.

I formed my 16 men in a single file, and moved at quick time around their right flank, and came in their rear, right behind them without being seen. My men were well armed with double barrel shot guns loaded with buck shot and heavy pistols. The first thing they knew of us was a volley from our guns right at their backs, and the "Rebel Yell" and a charge followed firing our pistols as we ran on them, but when we got to their line there was no line. They had fled in every direction, and some hid in the thick laurel. There were a few men that stood their ground - mostly old men. They refused to surrender and fell with their guns in their hands. They were fighting under a black flag which indicates no quarters. I think that was the reason they refused to surrender. I do not know what went with the flag. It may be in the museum at Raleigh.

I can't tell the result of the battle. The enemy must have suffered heavy loss, but I doubt if it has ever been known what the loss was, as many of the wounded hid in the thickets and were never found. I saw several dead on the battle ground.

Our men went through the battle without the loss of a man, or a drop of blood. We were outnumbered about three to one.

This battle settled the trouble with the Tories and Deserters the rest of the war in this section.

This battle was on the 27th of November 1864, and demonstrates the patriotism, courage and determination of these brave and loyal citizens and soldiers - most of them having passed over the river and now rest under the shade of the trees.

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