2/29/12

History of The Thirty-first Alabama

It was composed of the following companies.

Company A, from Cherokee county, Captain Isaac Morange.

Company B, Cherokee, Captain Marshall F. Alexander.

Company C, Shelby, Captain J. L. Reeves.

Company D, Calhoun, Captain C. Thompson.

Company E, Shelby, James Cobb.

Company F, Talladega, Captain A. Carter. Wm. F. Coker

Company G, Randolph, Captain Augustus A. West.

Company H, Talladega, Captain Robert McKibben.

Company I, Talladega, Captain Wm H. Chapman.

Company K, Montgomery, Captain John M. Shields.

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This regiment was organized at Talladega, on April 16th, 1862, (Perry & Smith's County Directory, 1866) by the election of Daniel R. Hundley, of Madison county, Ala., as Colonel

Thomas M. Arrington of Montgomery as Lieutenant-Colonel.

George W. Mattiesen of Shelby as Major.

Joseph F. Nix of Talladega was made Adjutant.

It soon reported to General Ledbetter at Chattanooga.

Brewer's Alabama, page 639, Confederate Military History page 154. It did not go to Chattanooga, but Knoxville

On the 31st of May, 1862, the Thirty-first Alabama, under Colonel D.R. Hundley is in East Tennessee, under the general command of Major-General E. Kirby Smith, but the regiment had not then been attached to any brigade. [2]

ALA. DEPT. ARCHIVES & HISTORY MRD

The regiment soon after arriving in East Tennessee passed through that period of sickness from measels, mumps and other diseases to which all new troops are subject. During this time General Ledbetter at Chattanooga asked for more troops from General Smith, and he replies that if he really needs them telegraph again and Colonel Hundley's regiment will be sent; and that it is 415 numerically strong. This was on June 3d, 1862. On the same date General Ledbetter asked that they be sent. [2] They were ~~not~~ sent; and on June 22d, General Smith directs General Ledbetter to return them to Knoxville. [3]

[2] Serial 11, pages 573, and 581

[3] Serial 23, page 697.

On June 30th the regiment was again ~~at~~ in East Tennessee and still like several other regiments from Florida, North Carolina and Tennessee unattached. But on July 3d better organization had been effected, and the army was in brigades and divisions.

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First Division.
Brig. Gen. C. L. Stevenson.
Third Brigade.
Brig. Gen. S. R. Barton.
30th Alabama, Col. C. M. Shelley.
31st Alabama, Col. D. R. Hundley.
40th Georgia, Col. A. Johnson.
52d Georgia, Col. W. Boyd.
9th Georgia Battalion, Maj. J. J. Smith.
Anderson's Battery, Captain J. W. Anderson. [4]

From this time about to July 28th the 31st with the division of General Stevenson was about Blain's Cross Roads and vicinity. About this date reports declaring the Fed-

[4] Serial 23, pages 716 and 719.

erals were preparing for an attack on Knoxville in force, General Stevenson's division was pushed up toward Clinch River to head off the force said to be moving down Powell's Valley to form junction with other forces. If there was such a force the advance of Stevenson's division turned them back, for there was no engagement, and in a few days was back in camp. ~~Nothing~~ Nothing of special interest occurred then until about the 4th or 5th of August, when General Stevenson pushed up to Tazewell to meet a strong force reported in that vicinty. It proved to be a foraging party of a strong brigade and artillery. On the morning of the 6th of August Stevenson attacked on a range of hills south of Tazewell something like a mile, and by a well directed charge drove the enemy from his position and across an intervening valley to the range of hills upon which Tazewell stands. Why the pursuit was not continued is not known, and it was a disappointment to the troops, for

O.W.R., Serial 23, page 738.

ARCHIVES HISTORY ALA. DEPT. MRD

they felt they could crush or capture them as they were much superior to the enemy in numbers. The enemy were pursued to a dense thicket bordering the stream between the two hills. Here the line halted, and skirmishers were pushed into the thicket. A scattering fire was kept up until late in the afternoon when the confederates went back to the camp of the night before, and then back to the former position.

ARCHIVES & HISTORY ALA. DEPT. MRD

In O.W.R., Serial 23, page 747, on Aug. 8th, General Smith congratulates General Stevenson on the Tazewell affair in the following language: "The major-general commanding congratulates you and your command upon your success in the engagement with the enemy on the 6th instant, and instructs me to say that the good conduct displayed on that occasion was only what he had reason to expect from troops in the state of discipline to which you had brought them."

On page 341

James B. Fry, Federal, in communication to General Nelson, Aug. 15th 1862, says:

"Rebel accounts of affair at Tazewell are false. The facts are as follows; Morgan sent De Courcey's brigade to Tazewell to reconnoiter and get forage; they procured 200 loads, and had a slight skirmish on 5th; on morning of 6th, as he was returning, De Courcey was attacked, not vigorously, considering vastly superior force of enemy. Our object was accomplished and the affair a success. Loss not serious."

ARCHIVES & HISTORY ALA. DEPT. MRD

The loss from neither side is found in reports. It was not heavy, but more on the federal than confederate side, as known by confederates in the engagement.

Soon after this, General Stevenson invested Cumberland Gap on the south or Tennessee side, for in Serial 23, page 752, General Smith says on Aug. 11th that he was there. There was no attempt to storm the place for it was naturally and artificially very strong. The purpose was to shut General Morgan, commanding, out of Tennessee, and when General Kirby Smith began his invasion of Kentucky which was

to begin about the same time, he could inclose him on the Kentucky side, and force him to capitulate or evacuate. There was some light skirmishing among pickets and some cannonading, but few casualties.

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On the 15th of August General Smith had Morgan's rear closed at Cumberland Ford, and had taken possession of Barbourville, Kentucky, as shown by page 768. He made a grand success of his campaign, winning one of the most brilliant and profitable victories of the war at Richmond, Ky.; pressing on taking Lexington, Frankfort, Parris, Georgetown, and moved with part of his forces to Covington near the Ohio River. General Morgan evacuated Cumberland Gap on the night of September 17th, and on the 18th (the 31st, with Stevenson,) entered, and on the 19th followed General Smith into Kentucky, reaching Versailles, near Lexington. The march was made rapidly, and, while crossing Big Hill, for about three days the men suffered much for food and water, and the dust was very bad, stirred up by the passing troops

and trains. The 31st shared in all the pleasures and sufferings of this movement. [7]

KY. DEPT. ARCHIVES & HISTORY MRD

General Stevenson reached Versailles Oct. 5th remaining until the 7th when he went to Salt River, remaining there until the 8th when he was ordered to be at Harrodsburg by the 10th. In the meantime on the 8th the battle of Perryville was fought — Bragg's army fell back to Harrodsburg; and his rear was just leaving Harrodsburg as the head of Smith's column was coming in, on the 10th. General Smith begged General Bragg to bring back his army, and the two to jointly give battle to General Buell, General Smith expressing confidence in their ability to beat him, as their combined force exceeded Buell's. Bragg agreed to do so, but, after leaving, sent word back to Smith that he had declined to fight. [8]

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[7] O. W. R., Serial 23, pages 847, 870, 873, 875-883 891, 898, 899, 915

[8] 23, pages 921, 925-8, "General Kirby Smith," pages 217-19

The retreat then began in earnest. On Oct. 11th Stevenson's command was left to defend the crossings of the Dicks River at King's and Baker's mills. After leaving there he had a slight skirmish with the enemy at Lancaster, as he had at Harrodsburg, but the casualties were light. On the 15th a mass of the army wagon trains were gathered at the foot of Big Hill, and General Smith feared they would have to be destroyed to prevent falling into the hands of the enemy, and many of them were parked for the purpose, and some officers from each command sent ahead to save needed papers before the burning. It was ~~finally~~ decided to try to save them. By the aid of the soldiers they were finally gotten up the Big Hill, and by such continued aid they were all ~~finally~~ saved and entered Tennessee. 9

ARCHIVES & HISTORY ALA. DEPT. MRD

On October 19th, 1862, near Big Laurel, General Smith, in correspondence with Gen-

9 O.W.R., Serial 23, pages 932, 941, 949, 967, and statement of Capt. Brewer.

eral Polk, says: "This is the worst road I have ever traveled; and in some places impassable, so that a new one has to be made. My command, from exhaustion in drawing the wagons and artillery up the hills and not having had sleep for some nights, are very much scattered along the road. I have instructed General Stevenson to destroy such of the wagons as impede his march. I fear many must be abandoned and destroyed." page 967.

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On page 960, Oct. 17th, 1862, from Rockcastle River, Ky., to General Polk, General Smith says: "General Stevenson's command has just arrived on the opposite side of the river, having marched 30 miles since last evening, besides aiding their artillery and ordinance trains up Big Hill."

On page 959, Oct. 17th, he says to General Polk: "Instead of regarding my flanks as well covered I feel that the position of my army is extremely critical. Heth's division is now arriving. Stevenson should be at Big

Hill. Both have marched all night. Stevenson has 16 miles to make before reaching this point. Their commands are scattered along the route, are broken down and exhausted, having been taxed by six days' and nights' forced marches and hard work. I have received [?] General Bragg's army. To East Tennessee. He gives up the Wild Cat Pass, exposes my flank, and leaves the enemy only 9 miles to march to reach my front, 3 miles from London, my column at the time being far in the rear; General Stevenson at Gum Springs, 43 miles distant. I have marched by a circuitous route, while he has taken the direct one. His trains have been turned off on my line, delaying me two days, my command working day and night pulling them up the Big Hill. I gave his wagons the preference, when I would have secured the safety of my columns had I not been encumbered with them and might have done it by moving on with my train alone. My train is now turned off by a circuitous route and one that is almost impassable, and on which they must be delayed a long time, if not abandoned. Should his army move off, as di-

ARCHIVES & HISTORY ALA. DEPT. MRD

rected by his order, the enemy will have a good and direct route from London, by which they can anticipate me two days with their force, compelling me to fight superior numbers under great disadvantages."

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The column reached London safely without loosing any of their train, and part of Taylor's brigade was left at London for a day and night as a reserve for the cavalry until those who had straggled from weariness and under detail should pass into the safe road to Cumberland Ford and Gap.

The following is from General Smith to General Bragg on the 22d of October, 1862, O. W. R., Serial 23, page 975, from Cumberland Gap: (* insert 12½ here)

* insert on page 12

~~O. W. R. Serial 23, page 975, on October 22d, 1862 General Smith says to General Bragg from Cumberland Gap:~~ "The head of my command has just arrived here. My men have suffered on this march everything excepting actual starvation. There must be no less than 10,000 of them scattered through the country trying to find something upon which to live. Of the provisions left for me at Cumberland Ford all were taken by General Cheatham's command excepting 40 barrels, and all along my route reports reach me of the provisions left for my men being seized by the Army of the Mississippi. Unless some provision is made for me ahead the remaing 6,000 men now left in ranks will also have to scatter through the country to pick up something to eat. I shall station Generals Heath and Stevenson along the line of the Clinch Mountain. I am obliged to take them there to subsist for the present."

ALA. DEPT. ARCHIVES & HISTORY MRD

In O. W. R., Serial 23, page 970, the following instruction is given from Headquarters at Knoxville, Tenn., on Oct. 20th, 1862, to Colonel D. R. Hundley, commanding 31st Alabama: "The major-general commanding directs you, in obedience to Special Orders No. 27, Headquarters Department of East Tennessee, Oct. 19, 1862, to proceed at once to Newport. You will thoroughly scour the country in that vicinity and break up and destroy all parties banded together in opposition to the laws of the Confederate Government, and in defiance of its authority. You are also directed by the commanding general to see that no depredations are committed upon the property of any persons within the limits of your command. All quartermaster's and commissary stores needed for the use of your troops will be purchased and paid for at a reasonable rate. Should any one having such supplies refuse to sell at fair prices or to receive Confederate money in payment you will if necessary impress. In all cases of impressment receipts at fair valuation will be given and full reports will be made immediately in writing to these headquarters. You will not permit impressment to be made under any circumstances without your written authority to the officer making the impressment.

ALA. DEPT. ARCHIVES & HISTORY MRD

Page 963-4, the statement of Polk to Bragg shows that the reason of scarcity of food to Stevenson's division was separation from their trains, and supplies left for Smith's army were taken by the others in passing.

ARCHIVES & HISTORY ALA. DEPT. MRD

From page 973, date October 20, from Flat Lick, Ky., General Stevenson was ordered to go to Blain's Cross Roads by Tazewell and Clinch River. It was some days after this before Cumberland Gap was reached, perhaps the 24th or later. Page 978 shows that General Stevenson himself had reached Blain's Cross Roads on the 25th of October. It was in the last days of October that the infantry got fairly into a safe country, and camped the first night near Powder Springs; and that night had full good rations, and since a day or two before reaching Big Hill in the retreat. That night a heavy snow fell, and the army remained in camp for a few days of rest. It then went to Lenoir's Station. Here a partial reorganization was effected. General Tra-

cey who had been recommended by General Kirby Smith, on July 22d, 1862, for promotion from colonel, by had been made a brigadier-general, and assigned to the command of a brigade of which the 31st became a member after ~~October 31st~~ November 20th, for at that date it was still in Barton's brigade. ~~See page 984.~~ O. W. R., Serial 30, page 413.

ALA. DEPT. ARCHIVES & HISTORY MRD

Sometime between that date and December 18th both the 30th and 31st Alabama Regiments had been added to General Tracy's brigade, and the two Georgia regiments had been transferred from it. On that date, by Special Orders No. 66, Stevenson's division was ordered to Vicksburg, Miss., to report to General Pemberton, commanding there. See page 443. The order was issued from Murfreesboro, Tenn. and the division was in that vicinity, for on the 9th of November it was ordered to Winchester. From page 462 it is learned that it had been sent on the 26th of December, and from page 463 they had

passed or were passing Chattanooga on the 27th.

See O. W. R., Serial 25, page 814.

On the 31st of December, 1863 there is a notice of General Stevenson's presence at Vicksburg, but Tracey's brigade did not reach there until about Jany. 2d, 1864, and the 46th Ala. did not get there until as late as the 4th of Jany. On page 821, Jany. 21, 1864 Tracey's brigade is said to be on the left of Stevenson's line on Chickasaw Bayou; and its estimated strength is 1,850 as shown on page 824. But on page 825 it is shown that on the 3d of January 1864 there were only 8 companies of the 31st present with 260 men who had reached there; only two companies of the 23d, and none of the 46th. From page 826, on Jany. 3d, General Stevenson asks that his men, except a picket, be relieved from the trenches on account of the rain and mud, and he feels sure the enemy are gone from his front. The request was most probably complied with, as from some unpublished sketches the men were permitted to

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to shelter in some negro houses about this time. From page 826 it is learned that a part of Stevenson's division were at Jackson, Miss. on the 3d and were ordered to Vicksburg. From pages 829-30 Stevenson urges strengthening and extending the works about Vicksburg immediately and by a heavy force of negroes; and that good entrenchments should surround the city; and the collection of forage for animals; the packing of beef for subsistence; and the collection of corn in the city. He also calls attention to needed improvement in defences against the enemy's landing at Warrenton and below, as the facilities for landing were favorable. He also recommended the purchase of pork and salt bacon; saying there ought to be on hand sixty days' rations.

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On page 831, on January 10th, 1863, he reports the strength of Tracy's brigade as 1,945; the strength of regiments not given. His division was 7,693

The history of the regiment will have to be gathered largely from that of the brigade