



PATTERSON MILL



Struck by Stoneman's Raiders



STONEMAN'S RAID

On March 24, 1865, Union Gen. George Stoneman led 6,000 cavalrymen from Tennessee into southwestern Virginia and western North Carolina to disrupt the Confederate supply line by destroying sections of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, the North Carolina Railroad, and the Piedmont Railroad. He struck at Boone on March 28, headed into Virginia on April 2, and returned to North Carolina a week later. Stoneman's Raid ended at Asheville on April 26, the day that Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston surrendered to Union Gen. William T. Sherman near Durham.

Union Gen. George Stoneman's raiders destroyed Samuel F. Patterson's cotton mill or "factory," which stood by the river half a mile to your left on March 30, 1865. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem, Stoneman's second in command, led two brigades of the Federal cavalrymen here into Caldwell County, and ordered the mill burned because it was a source



Gen. George Stoneman
Library of Congress

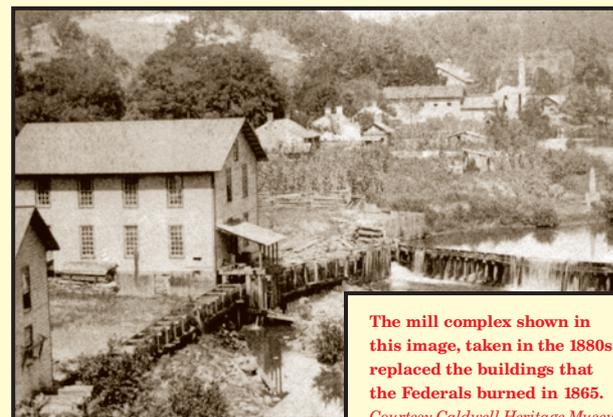


Gen. Alvan C. Gillem
Library of Congress

Rufus Lenoir Patterson (1830-1879), the oldest son of Samuel Finley Patterson (1799-1874) and Phoebe Caroline Jones (1806-1869), was a politician, banker, and railroad president. In the 1850s, Patterson established a cotton, flour, and paper mill in Salem, where he also served as mayor. Although pro-Union, he signed North Carolina's ordinance of secession. He sold his Salem mills in 1862 and managed his father's cotton factory (operating since 1848) in Caldwell County until Stoneman's troops burned it. He returned to Salem, where by the time he died he was part owner of several cotton and paper mills and a general merchandising firm.

of material for uniforms and other goods that aided the Confederate war effort. The Federal columns then rode on to Wilkesboro. Gillem later wrote in his report on the raid, "The order was executed." This was the only major damage inflicted in the county by the raiders. The mill was rebuilt after the war. According to local tradition, Clem Osborne, an itinerant peddler whose wares local women purchased for the use of Confederate soldiers, was hiding in the mill building when the soldiers set it afire. When the smoke and flames drove him out, he gave the Masonic distress signal and fellow Masons among the Federals saw to it that he was protected from harm.

Stoneman reportedly was not pleased that the mill had been burned. Rufus L. Patterson, who had been managing the mill for his father, Samuel F. Patterson, had also supplied cloth to Union troops in eastern North Carolina.



The mill complex shown in this image, taken in the 1880s, replaced the buildings that the Federals burned in 1865.
Courtesy Caldwell Heritage Museum

