



MORGANTON



Burke County Courthouse



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, N.C.

During the Civil War, Confederate recruits mustered here on the grounds of the old Burke County Courthouse. The first unit—the Burke Rifles (Co. G, 1st North Carolina Infantry)—was enrolled for active duty on April 18, 1861, and mustered into state service in Raleigh on May 13.



In 1837, builder James Binnie completed this stone courthouse to replace the first Burke County Courthouse, a wooden structure. From 1847 to 1862, this was the only courthouse outside Raleigh in which the North Carolina Supreme Court convened, to escape the summer heat. The exterior was stuccoed in 1885, and in 1903 architect Frank Milburn raised the porticoes and replaced the simple cupola depicted here with one in the Baroque style. In 1976, the county completed a new courthouse and moved from this building. The Old Burke County Courthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

Burke County Courthouse, ca. 1885 – Courtesy Picture Burke, North Carolina Room, Burke County Library

While many of the young Burke County men went off to war early, the conflict did not come to the county until April 1865, when Stoneman's raiders passed through. Union Gen. Alvan C. Gillem led two cavalry brigades to Asheville through Burke County and Morganton while Gen. George Stoneman escorted

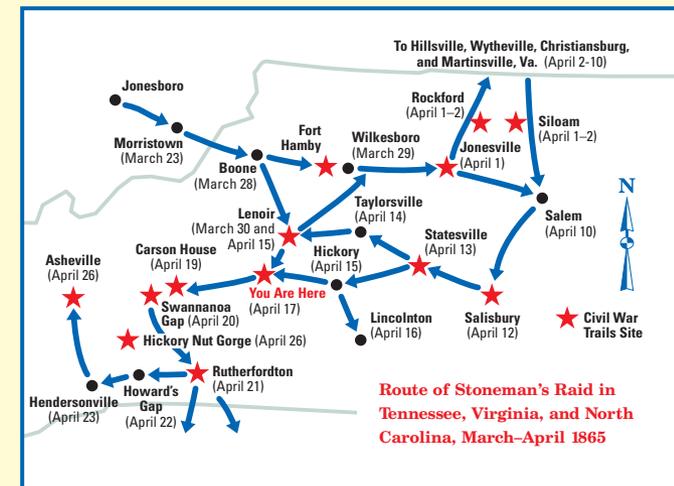


Gen. Alvan C. Gillem
Courtesy Library of Congress

most of his command to Tennessee from Lenoir, North Carolina. On April 17, Gillem encountered the Home Guard under Gen. John P. McCown at Rocky Ford on the Catawba River nearby. After a brisk engagement, the Confederates withdrew,

and Gillem entered Morganton, where "large supplies of corn and bacon were found," he reported.

Some of Gillem's troopers destroyed courthouse records, while others plundered private property. Slaves assisted the cavalrymen, numbers of whom were "home Yankees" (native Unionists) who exacted revenge against Confederate sympathizers. Almost as quickly as they appeared, however, Gillem and his men vanished, riding west on April 19, ultimately to Asheville.





MORGANTON



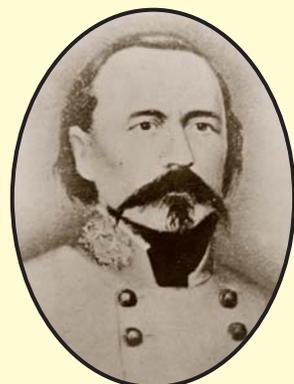
Rocky Ford Engagement



STONEMAN'S RAID

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Union Gen. Alvan C. Gillem led two cavalry brigades to Asheville through Burke County and Morganton while Gen. George Stoneman escorted most of his command to Tennessee from Lenoir, North Carolina, on April 17, 1865. Two



Gen. John P. McCown
Courtesy Library of Congress



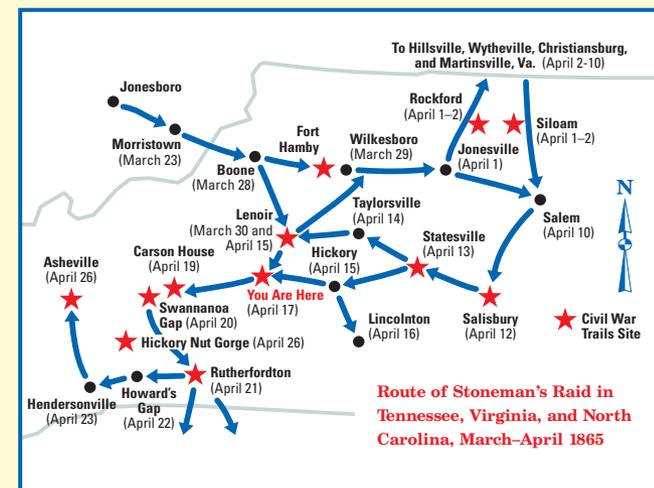
Gen. Alvan C. Gillem
Courtesy Library of Congress

and a half miles east of here, at the Catawba River bridge, the Federals encountered Confederate Gen. John P. McCown on leave, Col. Samuel McDowell Tate recuperating from a wound, and Col. Thomas Walton and 80 members of the Home Guard. According to Gillem, "about 300 men and one piece of artillery" had torn up the bridge and held Rocky Ford. Gillem sent one battalion of the 8th Tennessee Cavalry upriver to flank the Confederates, but soon the other battalion dismounted and charged across the bridge after Federal artillery had knocked out the Confederate piece, killing or capturing more than 50 guardsmen as well as the cannon.

The Confederate account differs. Walton's men occupied small earthworks or rifle pits until word arrived that the Federal detachment had crossed the river at Fleming's Ford. Walton signaled a retreat by firing the cannon four times. The Home Guard reported no casualties but saw dead Union cavalymen in the river and the woods.

"At Morganton large supplies of corn and

bacon were found," Gillem reported blandly, but local residents charged that the Federals plundered private property in retaliation for the Home Guard's resistance. Selina L. Norwood wrote, "They tore everything to pieces at Uncle Avery's, held pistols to the ladies' heads, drove them out of the house and took what they liked." Many of the Federals were said to be Tennessee Unionists taking revenge for depredations on their homes by Confederate supporters.



Route of Stoneman's Raid in Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina, March-April 1865