

JOHN WOODFORD IS CAPTURED AT THE BATTLE OF BARDSTOWN

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By Leslie Korenko

In May, John T. Woodford, 3rd Ohio Cavalry, was so ill he was sent home with little hope of recuperation. By October he was back with his regiment. He was also part of an important skirmish. The Battle of Bardstown, Kentucky was fought on October 4th as Col. Zahm moved his men up the Salt River to Shephardsville. Unfortunately, this fight has been mostly forgotten, overshadowed by the larger Battle of Perryville just four days later. This letter came from Jacob Rush. Both men were from Kelleys Island.

Sergeant John T. Woodford was captured at Bardstown.



“The morning of the 4th we did not break up camp until about 10 a.m. when we were detailed as rear guard. But at 2 p.m., orders came from Gen. Wood for Cos. L & B to report at once to the front. We were then about six miles from the head of our Division. As we galloped along, the Division halted and the Infantry broke to the right and left giving us the way, but cursing us as we went, saying they were going ahead to pick a muss, then fall back and let them fight it out. There was more truth than poetry in the taunt, but this was not what they were vexed at. The dust was then about three or four inches deep and riding through their ranks left such a cloud of that element that one could hardly see the man before him. After riding a few miles we came across the Island boys who were in the 101st [and] getting permission from Capt. Flanagan we stopped to talk with them for a few minutes.

Saw Sergeant Simon Huntington, John Ward, Emmett Lincoln, Bradford Severy and others. Our conversation was cut short by firing in the front. Came up to the Co. just in time to find that we had been detailed to go with the advance which was in charge of Sergeant John T. Woodford. We had gone but a short distance when the Rebel picket came in sight. They did not see us at the time and we advanced on them rapidly and they surrendered to sergeant Woodford without firing a shot. Receiving from one a silver mounted shotgun and from the other two handsome revolvers; Capt. F. taking the shot gun. A short time afterwards it was the means of preventing his being either killed or captured.

We then advanced slowly and in a short time the enemy opened fire on our advance but with no effect. We were then within 30 or 40 rods of a fairground which was situate at the intersection of two roads. The enemy here showed considerable strength. We could see what we supposed to be about one company of men. We opened fire and kept it up until the rest of our Co. came up, when some of the men were ordered to dismount and advance on foot to throw down a couple of fences that were between us and the enemy. While doing this, the Rebels gave way, crossing the turnpike and going to the fairground. When we could see some our Co. then coming up, we were ordered to mount and the order to charge was given.

The men did not seem to go with the will they had heretofore done and the Rebels did not seem to give way as they ought. But still we went on and the Rebel force separated; part breaking into the woods and part going down the pike towards Bardstown which was only 1.2 mile distance. We went only a little ways before we found ourselves completely surrounded. Our Capt. gave orders to break to the left into a large cornfield where the enemy seemed to be the weakest. But the men becoming demoralized broke and ran in all directions, keeping in Company with Capt. F. [Flanagan], Sergeant Woodford, and others for a short time, we came to a large open ditch, ran along one side of it and the Rebels on the other, each singing out to the other to surrender. And both parties pointed empty revolvers at each other; we had shot off all of our loads and did not wish to stop to reload just then.

Finding that we must either cross the ditch or surrender, as there was quite a large force of Rebels in a piece of woods just ahead awaiting our approach, we gave our horses an extra touch with the spur and made the leap; but only a few of the horses were able to cross. Here

Sergeant Woodford, one or two other noncommissioned officers, and seven men were captured. Capt. F. wore a white duster and being a rather stylish looking man, one of the Rebel officers kept close in pursuit of him; coming so close as to reach out and take hold of his bridle rein. [Woodford was promoted to Sergeant in November 1861. He was captured on October 4, 1862 and later paroled.]

Capt. F., having discharged all his revolvers, thought of his shot-gun. Unstrapping it from his saddle, he fired the contents at the Rebel officer's face, which ended the pursuit. You might ask what was the writer of this article doing all this time? He was looking out for no one as the girth of his saddle broke when the horse jumped the ditch. Finding the saddle sliding back I pulled my carbine from its socket, leaped forward of the saddle and let it go. Before we had gone far the 26th Ohio again came to our rescue but this time a little too late.

The Rebels soon began to give way and the 2nd Ky. Cavalry charged upon their retreating columns. We were permitted to take part in this and were among the first to enter Bardstown, which was just in time to save the railroad depot, to which the Rebels had set fire, and which was filled with army stores. We supplied ourselves with the best in store and retired for the night. J. Rush”

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