

Battle of Slate Ripple Hill

By Jerry Long
c.2024



Slate Ripple is a steep hill along the north bank of Rough Creek about 1.3 miles west of Dundee (formerly called Hines Mill) which is on Highway 69 in Ohio County, KY. Slate Ripple is plotted on the above “Map of Ohio County, Kentucky”, published in 1886 by Jno. J. McHenry, Hartford, KY. The community was also frequently spelled as “Slate Riffle”. For this report I used the spelling of “Slate Ripple.” Slate Ripple Hill during the Civil War was the site of an engagement on 14 July 1864 between a band of Confederate guerillas and a local Union Home Guards unit. Sources reported that four Union soldiers and two Confederate soldiers died in the battle.



Owensboro Monitor, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 20 July 1864, p.3:

Fight at the Falls of Rough Creek

A fight took place at the falls of Rough creek, in Ohio county last Thursday, between some Daviess county Home Guards under Captain Jim Wilson and sixteen guerrillas under the leadership of the notorious Dick Yates. The Home Guards were ambushed and four of their number killed and one badly wounded — an old gentleman named Wooten, Stinson Stout, John N. Hinton, and John Cecill were the names of the ones killed and William Karns wounded— all of this county. Yates the leader of the band is thought to be killed, as his horse was captured and a valise containing clothes with his name marked thereon. After firing one round from their in closure the guerrillas decamped, since which time nothing has been heard from them.



Louisville Daily Journal, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 21 July 1864, p.3:

A Gallant Fight – Capture and Murder of Union Prisoners – The Cry For Vengeance – Several days, ago Captain Wilson, in command of a detachment of Federal troops numbering thirty-four men, made a scout through Ohio county. At Slate Riffle Hill, one mile below Hine’s Mills on the Rough Creek, twelve miles north of Hartford, the Captain came upon a band of guerillas, said to number seventy-three men. The Federal formed in line and made a fierce attack upon the guerillas. A spirited fight was the result, and the guerillas were routed. Their Captain, a notorious outlaw named Yates, was shot dead, and many of the band killed and wounded. Two bodies were found on the hill where the fight took place by the citizens residing in the neighborhood. It is presumed that some ten or twelve dead men were carried off by the guerillas in their retreat. Eleven horses and a number of arms were captured by the Union scouts. Capt. Wilson had three men wounded, and four taken prisoners. It is stated that the four captives were deprived of their arms by the guerillas, and then shot down in cold blood by the cowardly fiends. We hope that there is some mistake in regard to this deed of blood, but fear it is only too true. Such atrocities make the blood run cold, and the thrill the frame with a fearful shudder. Men must indeed be lost to honor, principle, and feeling, when they can this, without cause, murder, in the most cowardly manner, unarmed prisoners. When Capt. Wilson made the attack upon the guerillas, the band was retreating from the neighborhood, loaded with plunder, and mounted on horses stolen from the citizens. The Union scouts after the fight was reinforced by a company of the Adams Fork Home Guards, and both detachments, under the command of Wilson, were closely pursued it the guerillas. It is to be hoped that they my meet with success. The gang of horse-thieves, by their deeds of blood, proved themselves cowardly assassins, sailing under the terrible black flag, giving no quarter and of course, expecting none. Let them be hunted down with the greatest vigilance. Let them be pursued into their secret haunts. Let every man be captured and visited with the punishment due his fiendish crime. Let them be shot and gibbeted. No quarter is the pay. Vengeance, terrible, swift vengeance, the blood of the murdered, unarmed prisoners demands.



Louisville Daily Journal, Louisville, KY, Saturday, 23 July 1864, p.3:

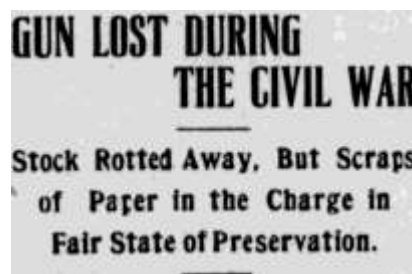
Calhoun, Ky., July 18, 1864

I notice in the Democrat of the 16th inst, that Capt. James Wilson, of this county was killed by guerillas on last Thursday. I am glad to say that the Captain is still living and doing well, and the guerillas may look out, for he will be after them again. - He was wounded slightly by a buckshot

in what the Democrat calls the Owensboro fight. Wilson captured three men and wounded one. Wilson had thirty-five men, the guerillas had forty-six, and they were lying in ambush. Wilson did not lose a man, but his men got separated and he supposed he had lost three men. Wilson and his seven men and twenty-eight Home Guards followed the rebels to Slaty Ford on Rough and Ready Creek, near Hine's Mill, Ohio county, where he came upon them again in ambush. They had a severe fight. We lost four Home Guards killed and three wounded. The four men that were killed were shot by the guerillas after they had surrendered. Wilson lost none of his men, but killed the notorious guerilla chief Capt. Yates and ten his command. The rest of the rebs ran as usual. We captured seventeen horses, twenty-one guns, and seven pistols.



Hartford Republican, Hartford, KY, 21 June 1907, p.3:



Diamond Miller the little son of J. H. Miller, of Magan, Ohio county while hunting on Slate Riffle hill, near that place, found a gun which it is thought was lost there at sometime during the civil war. It is a double barrel shotgun and both barrels were loaded, and the load consisted of nine bullets and seven buck shot The gun is a muzzle loader, and bits of newspaper were used for ramming the charge. The paper is discolored by rust, but a few of the words are intelligible, and confirms the belief that the gun was loaded at some some time during the war between the states. Some of the words are: "Captain," "Company, 19" "sergeant," "commander."

The boy who made the find is very proud of it, and values it highly as a relic of the days of the greatest civil strife in the history of the world.



Hartford Republican, Hartford, KY, 1 May 1908, p.4 & 15 May 1908, p.7:

Battle of Slate "Riffle."

Editor of the Hartford Republican — There are lots of men and women up to the years of maturity that never knew that there was a battle fought in Ohio County during the war of the rebellion.

On the memorable day of July 12, 1863 [ed. note - should be 1864], Captain Wilson commanding the union forces and Captain Yates.

The writer knew Captain Wilson in person. I have seen him in battle before the battle of Slate Riffle Hill was fought.

He was brave as a lion and when in a battle he had no quitting sense. When he heard what Mrs. Sutton said he dismounted and told Capt. Little to send 20 men with him and hold the rest of

his men in readiness. He then dismounted and advanced up the hill. It will be remembered that he did not wait to see how many men that he had. He said come on boys and up into the woods he went with his men all stringing on behind and some of them never did over-take him. The first man that Wilson saw was a well dressed man holding a fine large black horse. Wilson raised his 16 shooter and drew a bead on his white shirt bosom and was pressing the trigger, when he made a little movement to one side and a large tree covered his body from his sight. Wilson discovered another man sitting on a rock with gun in hand apparently as commanding the Confederates forces men. The rebels come up the Owensboro road when they arrived in the neighborhood of Slate Riffle Hill, there arrested a well-known citizen by the name of Conn Sutton and took him prisoner.

From Sutton's farm they marched in the direction of Hines Mill, which is now Dundee. When they arrived at the farm of widow C. Midkiff there they stopped and turned square to the left and went up on Slate Riffle Hill, dismounted there to rest a while we would suppose.

Captain Wilson and Captain Little who had been giving chase to the rebels came up and when they arrived at the widow C. Midkiff's they were informed that the rebels turned and went up the hill, and Conn Sutton's wife followed on to see what had become of her husband. She informed Captain Wilson that the rebels had carried her husband off prisoner, and told Wilson not to hurt her husband, though he was on guard. Wilson leveled his gun upon him and fired. The rebel fell over forward dead.

This was the first shot of that battle. That released Conn Sutton, as this man was his guard. So Conn Sutton mounted his big black horse and went down the hill like a thunderbolt. Wilson moved on up the hill. That shot alarmed the rebels. Captain Yates, the rebel commander, advanced in the direction of where the shot was fired. He saw Captain Wilson advancing. Yates stepped behind a tree and waited until Wilson came up within three feet and then stepped out and threw a revolver down in Wilson's face, and said you are my prisoner. Here the two commanders stood face to face, Wilson with his heavy rifle in hand. Yates with a heavy revolver in hand.

We left the two commanders standing face to face. Captain Eates [sic – should be Yates] had leveled his revolver on Capt. Wilson and says, "You are my prisoner." Wilson stepped one step back and said, "Prisoner is my name," but keeping his eye on Capt. Eates. Capt. Yates turned his head in the direction of his men and shouted out in a loud voice forward up men which was the last command he ever gave in life. Wilson being not disarmed yet he saw Eates turn his head and Wilson threw his rifle to his face and fired. Eates fell a quivering corpse on the ground at the feet of the brave union commander.

Here is where Capt. Eates lost out by not disarming his prisoner before he took his eye off of him. Capt. Wilson had sent a man back to tell Capt. Little to move up to his support.

It will be remembered that this battle never was put in history. It never was reported to the Adjutant General of Kentucky, so there are two stories about this little fight. It is held by those that were in the battle there is only one survivor that is in my knowing that is Bill Rowers [Powers?], near Dundee, Kentucky. Now we will go back to see what has become of Capt. Little. Willson had ordered him up to his support and as he arrived near the summit of the hill he ran into the enemy. It will be remembered Capt. Willson had ordered twenty men to dismount and follow him. This divided the union forces and when Little struck the enemy only eleven men of the twenty had reached Capt. Willson at this time. The battle was at its hottest. Wilson was engaged front, rear and upon both flanks. He told his men to take trees and hold their position at all hazards, that Little would soon be up with reinforcement and little it was for Little never came. When Little struck the enemy it was somewhat unexpected to him. The enemy opened fire on him from unexpected quarter which threw his men into commotion. Firing seemed to be in every direction. Capt. Little

supposed that he was surrounded. He immediately ordered retreat down the hill pell mell and left Capt. Willson and his eleven men to their fate.



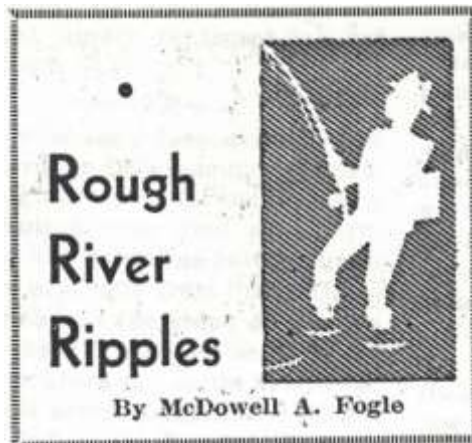
Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 23 August 1931, p.5B:

**Daviess County In War Between States
By. C. W. Bransford**

It is not generally known that one of the decisive battles of the war was fought in this region of Kentucky. But everybody knows how intolerant and despicable the Home Guards made themselves, and they were especially active in and around Whitesville in this county. Well, a battle in the summer of 1864, between a company of Confederates under Capt. Yates and a company of Home Guards under Capt. Jim Wilson was decisive enough to squelch the Home Guards for the rest of the war. The engagement was brought about by Mrs. Con Sutton, who informed Capt. Wilson of the whereabouts of Capt. Yates, and they joined issue at Slate Riffle on Rough Creek in Ohio county, and a complete rout of the Home Guards resulted. In September 1864 Wilson's commission as Captain was cancelled, along with others in command of Home Guards, and the companies were all disbanded. Those killed in this battle were: John Cissel, John Hinton, Wm. Wooten and Tinson Stout. This ended the Home Guard organization in this part of Kentucky.



**Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, "Rough River Ripples",
by McDowell Fogle, 14 June 1940, p.2:**



Marker Asked For Slate Ripple Battle

Dear Old Friends and Neighbors:

I have come, asking a little favor of you, hoping you won't mind granting it.

On our old homestead at Slate Ripple Hill we have a little home graveyard which contains an uncle, aunt, brother and cousin who are sleeping under a cedar tree at the foot of a steep hill about 200 yards around the hill from the house. In all of my born days I never knew of them being

taken care of, only once when Dad would fill up a grave when it would be sunk enough to hide a common-sized dog in and most of the time he saw to rocks being kept at their head and feet.

I visited their graves last fall. You can still tell where they are by the rocks. Now the favor is, I would like to some day claim their graves so probably we can fill them up and put a fence around them. I hope some day we will be allowed to have a marker from Congress to put at Uncle Charlie's grave as he was a soldier – fought and was slain on the battlefield at Slate Ripple Hill in the War Between The States, in the war your fathers fought in. If I knew just how to go about it I would consult Congress at present, but I am under a doctor's care and although they say I am convalescing, I won't be well for several weeks yet.

You folks study the matter over and let me know what you think about it. I Only know of one surviving person that really knows about the battle that was fought at Slate Ripple Hill. That is a Mr. Sutton, who lives in Owensboro, and says he is a nephew of Con Sutton, who joined farms to my grandfather's farm at Slate Ripple Hill. Willie has been employed at Tapscott's greenhouse for several years until a few months ago. He has set out quite a bit of flowers and shrubbery for Mr. Sutton. Says he talks quite a bit about the battle that was fought at Slate Ripple Hill. I have never conversed with him on the subject yet. But hope to when I get stronger.

I feel it we could get a clearer statement to Congress it would give all of our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren in Slate Ripple community a better idea how to stand for all that is coming to them when probably they should deserve higher credits when competing on that subject with others who have no better points only the claim from Congress. A little incident happened at Daviess county high school a few weeks ago. Miss Cements, who teaches English, asked all in James Guido's class to bring a report on the War Between The States and tell all they could about it. With my help the boy thought he had a splendid report.

I told him of his great-grandfather, Leo Wimsatt, coming from Nelson county about 100 years ago, settling on the Slate Ripple farm, then almost a perfect wilderness, gave the names of all the eleven children, that James, his grandfather was born, reared and died on the same farm and was two years old before the War Between The States was declared. That Charlie, great-grandfather Leo's oldest son, was killed right after the battle was over from the jar of a cannon and several others wounded in the battle at Slate Ripple Hill.

His teacher said his was a good report, but as she had no exact proof from Congress, she would have to give the credits to a boy from Sutherland, as Congress had given the Sutherland community the claim of Sutherland Hill being their battlefield in the War Between the States.

Let me hear from you soon.

Yours truly,

Annie Wimsatt French. R. 2, Box 39, Owensboro, Ky.

Editors' Note:

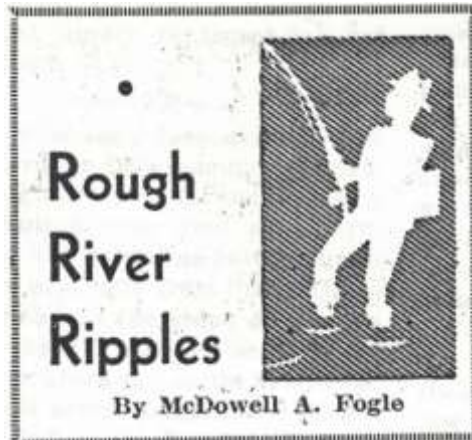
The above letter was directed to Judge and Mrs. G. A. Ralph and brought to The News office by the former for publication, if deemed of sufficient interest. In our opinion, Mrs. French has broached a worthy and worthwhile enterprise—the fitting marking by Congressional action of the Slate Ripple Hill battlefield, which is a part of the farm now owned by Judge Ralph.

[Note by Jerry Long: The preceding letter was written by Annie Docia (Wimsatt) French, who was born 25 September 1887 in Ohio County, KY and died 15 August 1975 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, where she was buried in the Mater Dolorosa Cemetery. She married William Andrew French, 16 January 1923 Owensboro, KY. She was the daughter of James Andrew Sutton & Sarah Ellen Cooper and granddaughter of Leo Wimsatt & Theodocia Brown. Her grandfather,

Leo Wimsatt, owned property that adjoined the farm where the battle of Slate Ripple was fought; his will written in 1882 stated he was "living on the waters of Rough Creek near Slate Riffle."]



**Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, "Rough River Ripples",
by McDowell Fogle, 1 November 1940, p.2:**



I have heard of at least two encounters between the Blue and the Gray which occurred in Ohio County during the 1861-65 struggle (Will my older and better informed readers please correct me, if I am wrong). Certainly it is an authentic fact that one engagement occurred in this county, the scene of which was "Slate Ripple Hill" on Rough River, some two or three miles west of Dundee.

I know that there have been suggestions of the propriety of erecting a commemorative marker on this battlefield. I believe tentative contact has been made with the Federal government looking toward obtaining its cooperation in the movement. The Ohio County Historical Society, and the Fort Hartford chapter, D. A. R. are interested. Both the write and The News hope that the Daviess county spirit of historical appreciation will be emulated here. We will be glad to help.

The most authoritative account of the battle of Slate Ripple Hill which has come to my notice is contained in an affidavit made by Mrs. Margaret E. Townsend, who, with her parents were eye-witnesses to many events before, during and after the battle. This account, reduced to writing some nine years ago, was read by Mrs. Minnie R. Wedding, niece of Mrs. Townsend, at a recent meeting of the local historical society and kindly furnished me for publication.

Mrs. Townsend recounts that she "was born in Ohio County in 1853, the daughter of I.C. and Caroline Smith Sutton, who lived on a farm of about 600 acres one-half or three-quarters of a mile from Slate Ripple Hill which was the scene of a battle in July 1864". She states that she well remembers the battle and in describing it says: "I remember the afternoon before the battle a company of Confederate soldiers passed my home. My father then saddled his young black stallion, Raven, and started down the lane. These soldiers came running after him and called to him twice to halt and the third time they called, he got his horse stopped. They took him prisoner and soon after he was gone my mother got news of the illness of my sister, Mrs. Edward, C. Renfrow, who lived across Rough River from our house. She went over to my sister's, leaving the children with the slaves. She was gone all night and the next morning, about sunup, she started home. When she was about half a mile from Rough River she saw two men standing in the road

and they told her to go back, that they were expecting a fight down there. She then turned and started back and, after going a short distance, met some men, Federal officers, who asked her if she had seen anyone. She told them she had and turned her back. The Federal men then circled up the hill and the Southern men went the other way and they met on top of the hill and the battle occurred about sun-up."

Continuing Mrs. Townsend says: "After the battle they left the dead on the field and neighbors took up their bodies. They took these two Southern men, one of whom was Capt. Yates, of Missouri, across the river near Ambrose Ford and dug a hole in the ground to put them in, right near the water's edge. The four Federal officers were buried in the Crowe cemetery. Then, after the war was over, they took the Southern men to the Crowe cemetery and buried them in caskets and two years after that Capt. Yates' brother came from Missouri and took up his remains and transferred them to his home."

"While my father was a prisoner," Mrs. Townsend relates, "he and the Texas Ringer who was guarding him were standing near each other when my father saw one of the enemy pointing a gun at him. He stepped behind a tree and the man turned the gun on the guard and killed him. After the battle and as soon as his guard was killed my father got on his horse and came home."

Mrs. Townsend's statement was notarized by the late Mrs. Gilmore Keown.

The following addendum by Mrs. Wedding accompanies her aunt's graphic and interesting story: "The late John Sutton, of color, long a resident of Hartford, was one of I. C. Sutton's slaves and he said he was present when the bodies of Capt. Yates and others were disinterred."

[**Note by Jerry Long:** The preceding account was related by Margaret Elizabeth Sutton, daughter of Ishmael Conrad Sutton & Caroline Smith. She was born 2 January 1853 in Ohio County, KY. She married William Eli Townsend, 10 September 1874 Ohio County, KY. She died 3 November 1940 Evansville, Vanderburgh County, IN and was buried Cobden Cemetery, Cobden, Union County, IL].



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday 25 October 1961, p.2B:

Daughters Of Confederacy Told Of Civil War Battle

The John C. Breckinridge Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, met Saturday afternoon at the home of Miss Milton Boulware, 205 E. 23rd St., hostess...

... Mrs. James T. Duncan gave a report of the "Battle of Slate Riffle Hill," from the original account written by C. T. Sutton, from his childhood memories and as related to him by his mother.

This skirmish occurred in Ohio County between the Home Guards from around the Boston precinct (in Daviess County, between Whitesville and Philpot) and a group of Confederate soldiers.

The determination of Mrs. Caroline Sutton to get home to a sick daughter after leaving the bedside of another daughter spread the alarm of an ambush that might have ended in a slaughter of the Home Guards. As it turned out the rebels lost their commander, Captain Yates, and a private. The Home Guards lost five dead and one wounded.

As Mr. Sutton tells it, "After the fight the bodies of the slain Home Guards were loaded into two ox wagons, bedded with straw and covered with branches cut from the bushes, arriving in Boston the next day.

News of the battle and of the returning dead brought a vast crowd into the little town. The bodies were uncovered for a last view, and I, a curious kid, was one of the first to mount a wagon hub. I can recall the names of only three of the five, a Mr. Hinton, a Mr. Cecil, and "Billy" Wootton, (pronounced "Wooden"), all neighbors and friends.

"It was a tragic day for Boston and its surroundings. The five dead were all good citizens, and, with the exception of Wootton, were all members of pioneer families. The village never had a finer and more sorrowful funeral. The wounded Home Guard, Billy Shively, recovered from his injury, lived a long and useful life and died recently, shortly after celebrating his 100th birthday. (Mr. Sutton himself has been dead now for a number of years.)

"In September, 1866, the body of Captain Yates, the Confederate Commander, was removed to Morganfield, Ky., and reinterred, along with that of the unknown private soldier, who died with him."



The Kentucky Explorer, February 1996, pp.46-47:



By C. T. Sutton - Ca. 1945

A story of events that occurred more than three-quarters of a century ago, based on childhood memories in part and fireside stories for the remainder, without dates or reference, which probably never existed, can have no historical value. Under these circumstances I am asked to recall from the deepening shadows of the past such account of the battle of Slate Riffle Hill, as I may be able to give.

At the date of this diminutive struggle I lived with my father and mother in Boston, Daviess County, a village long vanished, that contained a general store, operated by my father; a hotel, the Thirteen Mile House, William Johnson, proprietor; a grocery and saloon, a blacksmith shop and a tobacco warehouse.

Boston had the only post office in Daviess County east of Owensboro, but not under its own name, since there was an older Boston in Kentucky. The name of Burtonsville was given to it in honor of one of the oldest and most conspicuous families of the vicinity

Insignificant as it was, there were few dull days in Boston. Guerilla raids, Federal and Confederate recruiting parties, armed supervision of elections, public speakings and other gatherings, horse stealing and such revented the slightest symptoms of boredom. Besides these things it was the general headquarters of the only Federal Home Guard organization in the county.

When there were not guerillas or Rebs in the offing, according to the "Southern Sympathizers," the Guards were always in evidence, but they had never been in combat.

Finally, in the last days of July 1864, when they had a new commander, Capt. Wilson, who had military experience, news came that a Confederate band under a Capt. Yates, was raiding the eastern border of the county, seeking recruits and "trading worn out horses for fresh ones on even basis." Capt. Wilson summoned the members of the Guard. They came in the afternoon, and after an hour or so of instruction they were dismissed with orders to be on hand the next morning at 8 o'clock, "armed and equipped as the law directs." Morning came but not all the Home Guards. There were some cases of illness and urgent business elsewhere, according to the notorious and despicable Southern Sympathizers, among whom were many excellent men.

Those who came, some thirty in all, gathered on Boston Hill, and were directed to form a line of march in the flat just east of the town. The Rebels were in Whitesville for an hour at about the same time that the Home Guards had their first meeting in Boston. They left by the road leading to the Catholic Chapel, St. Mary's-of-the-Woods, and took the road to Slate Riffle. The Home Guards followed cautiously and both forces spent the night on the road and within a few miles of each other. When within two miles of Slate Riffle, on Rough River, they learned that the Home Guards were trailing them, and when they reached Slate Riffle Hill they prepared an ambush by getting on the hillside forming a line of battle, with the twenty-odd men they were said to have well concealed in the timber. A sentry was placed at a point giving a full view of the road in both directions, himself hidden in a clump of scrubby bushes, and but for an unexpected encounter that he had, there might have been a disastrous slaughter of the Federal forces.

Mrs. Caroline Sutton had spent the night with a daughter, Mrs. Ed Renfrow, and before the dawn she was the grandmother of a bouncing boy. Having left an ailing daughter at home, she crossed Rough River, urging her spirited young saddle horse with an occasional light stroke of a cowhide riding whip. Suddenly a man stepped from the bushes and took his place in the middle of the road, displaying his gun.

He called her to halt. She pretended not to understand. Holding his gun in both hands across his breast he said, "Stop, lady! You can't pass here." She drew near him and told her story. "Can't help it lady, you must turn back."

Poising herself in her saddle, she lashed her horse's flank with a burning blow of the cowhide. He jumped his full length, striking the butt of the gun, throwing the sentry flat on his back with his gun quite out of reach. With another and a lighter stroke the horse flew around a curve, and that episode ended.

A mile nearer home she met with the Home Guards. She stopped them and begged them to go back, assuring them that death awaited them on Slate Riffle Hill. Confusion followed until a young man, Midkiff by name, told the commanding officer that he knew a way to give the Rebels just what they were fixing to give him and his men. He told the officer that there was a road that would get them in behind the enemy for a surprise attack, and his service was accepted.

Quietly the guide turned to the left, taking a road that led to the Leo Wimsatt farm, a mile away. Half a mile up the road the guide turned right, riding through the open woods. Dismounting and still following the guide to the hilltop, they discovered the enemy and opened fire. What happened took place quickly. The Rebels returned the fire and after one more round, the Home Guards fell back, carrying with them five dead and one wounded. The Confederates, lost their commander, a Captain Yates, and one private. When the Rebels saw their enemies in retreat they instantly mounted their horses, crossed the ford at Slate Riffle and were heard of no more. They left a wounded man with Virgil Renfrow, just after crossing the river.

After the fight the bodies of the slain Home Guards were loaded into two ox wagons, bedded with straw and covered with branches cut from bushes, arriving in Boston the next day. News of the battle and of the returning dead brought a vast crowd into the little town. The bodies were uncovered for a last view, and I, a curious kid, was one of the first to mount a wagon hub. I can recall the names of only three of the five, a Mr. Hinton, a Mr. Cecil and "Billy" Wootton, (pronounced "Wooden"), all neighbors and friends.

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In September, 1866, the body of Capt. Yates, the Confederate commander, was removed to Morganfield, Kentucky and reinterred, along with that of the unknown private soldier who died with him.

[**Note by Jerry Long:** Cicero Truman Sutton is the C. T. Sutton, who gave his recollections about the Slate Ripple Hill Battle in the preceding 1961 article published in the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer and the 1996 article in the Kentucky Explorer. He was born 5 August 1859 at Boston in Daviess County, KY and was the son of Elijah Thomas Sutton & Almarinda D. Truman. He died 15 April 1942 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY and was buried Rose Hill Cemetery, Owensboro, KY. He had worked on the editorial staff of several western Kentucky Newspapers – Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY; Breckinridge News, Cloverport, KY, Princeton Banner, Princeton, KY, Owensboro Messenger & Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY. C. T. Sutton (1859-1942) was 4-years-old at the time of the Slate Ripple Hill Battle. C. T. Sutton was a nephew of Ishmael Conrad ('Con') Sutton and his wife, Caroline (Smith) Sutton, who lived at Slate Ripple and who are named in several accounts about the battle.]



**Torn Asunder: Civil War in Ohio County and the Green River Country,
Beth Chinn Harp, Georgetown, KY, Kinnersley Press, 2003, pp.87-89:**

[Ed. note: The following account, down to the name of Ellis Ford, appears to be from a newspaper article - the author provided no source]:

July 13, 1864, four men were killed at Hine's Mill (now Dundee) in Ohio County...

... July 25, 1864, Ohio County's own Civil War Battle with the headline being Point Pleasant.

Point Pleasant, Kentucky, July 25, 1864 "A few days ago, bullets were flying in anger on nearby Slate Riffle Hill as Daviess County Home Guards exchanged deadly fires with mounted partisan rangers from Union County. The raiders, under; a Captain (probably Bill) Yates had been raiding the eastern portions of Daviess County and exchanging broken down horses for the best available mounts in Daviess County. Needless to say, Captain Yates' party was well experienced in such one-sided bargaining. Years of ravaging their Unionist neighbors had taught them how to bargain with their neighbors at gunpoint to the best advantage. When the partisan rangers first entered Davis County on this foray, A Captain Wilson, with prior military service in one of the Kentucky volunteer regiments, assembled the local home guard outfit near Boston. The home guards were drilled and taught the basis of loading and firing their muskets for a couple hours and

permitted to return to their homes overnight with orders to reassemble on Old Boston Hill at 0800 hours the next morning. A note about their muskets may be in order here at this point. Kentucky Home Guard units were usually armed with smoothbore muskets which were notoriously ineffective at a range greater than 25 yards – some authorities say 25 feet. Some 30 members of the home guard unit arrived at the appointed place and hour under arms as the law dictated, but a greater number was conspicuously absent with "sudden sickness" or "urgent business" elsewhere. The cows had to be milked on time, or a sudden attack of the gout certainly was more important than running off into an adjacent neighborhood chasing rebels who might shoot back. After all, the business of the home guard was to guard the home, not to go chasing off after a bunch of rebels into the next county, which was far from home.

Captain Wilson received word the raiders were visiting Whitesville about the time his troops assembled on Old Boston Hill. His latest information indicated that the rebels had departed Whitesville past St. Mary's of the Woods Church and had taken the road toward Point Pleasant in Ohio County. Captain Wilson mounted column headed out to take up the same route with overtaking the enemy force as its main objective. Night overtook the opposing forces a few miles north of Slate Riffle Hill as the troops bedded down alongside the roadway with their campfires illuminating their immediate areas.

As the march was resumed the next morning, sympathizers in the area alerted Captain Yates that the Daviess County Home Guardsmen were following. He was apprised of the local geography and of the fact that Slate Riffle Hill offered an excellent ambushed site. The raiders hurried to Slate Riffle Hill to set the trap and quickly deployed the main force on line with a few skirmishers (security guards) left behind to provide early warning of the approaching pursuers.

But the best laid plans of mice and men go astray. As Dame Fortune dealt the cards for that hand, a Mrs. Caroline Sutton was heading northward to her home after spending the previous evening assisting her daughter who had given birth to a baby boy. The new grandmother was in a hurry to return home to care for another daughter that was sick and urgently required her presence.

Crossing Rough River at a trot, Mrs. Sutton was challenged to halt by a sentry who suddenly appeared from his concealment alongside the road. Holding his rifle at the port, the sentry informed Mrs. Sutton that she could not proceed and that she must return from whence she had come. While explaining her plight to the sentry, she edged closer; but he still demanded she turn around for points south of Rough River.

Nothing equals the fury and resolution of a determined woman! Mrs. Sutton feigned her misunderstanding while she sidled her spirited mount closer to the guard. At the proper instant she stung her horse sharply on the flank causing the horse to bolt suddenly forward and catching the sentry off guard. The unprepared sentry was knocked to the ground with his rifle out of arm's reach by the horse as it bolted out at the speed of a thoroughbred. Mrs. Sutton raced through the flatland without a pursuit being mounted.

She race up the roadway at top speed mile or so until she encountered Captain Wilson's Home Guard column. Checking her flight, she informed Captain Wilson of the rebel trap on Slate Riffle Hill and cautioned him that death awaited, that he should turn back. Among those assembled around Captain Wilson and Mrs. Sutton was a local Unionist name Midkiff, who knew the local area like the palm of his hand, informed the captain of route passing by the Leo Wimsatt farm that offered total concealment and that would allow them to get behind the ambushade to give the rebels a taste of their own medicine. Midkiff led them back up the road a piece to turn off on another old gravel roadway. After awhile, he led them into the woods and along a path until they approached a big hill. The home guards stealthily climbed to the top of the hill and saw the rebel line stretched out in plain view

The inexperienced guardsmen were anxious to clean up the grisly task at hand and opened a premature fire with their notoriously ineffective muskets. The rebels turned to answer the fire in kind as both lines suffered a number of casualties. The affair ended almost as abruptly as it had begun with a couple exchanges of fire. The known Union dead included men named Cecil, Hinton, Wooten, and two others. Among the Confederate casualties were Captain Yates and an unidentified enlisted man. Another partisan ranger; seriously wounded, was left for treatment at the Virgil Renfrow home as the rangers packed up. Captain Yates and the dead private were buried on site until August of 1866 when their bodies were exhumed and returned to Union County for proper burials. The five home guardsmen killed in the action were taken back to Boston in a straw-filled wagon for burials. As soon as the Confederate force determined that the home guards had left the area of Slate Riffle Hill, they mounted up and rode away. Thus, the Battle of Slate Riffle Hill ended almost as abruptly as it had erupted."

Ellis Ford Hartford writing in *Green River Gravel* remembered his grandmother relating the following about the Battle of Slateriffle (notice the difference in the spelling of the place), July 14, 1864:

Grandmother told me about hearing battle of Slateriffle. Much excitement as people heard of the approach of rebel forces and knew the Home Guards would be trying to catch them. Later, after the "battle" (which was really no more than a skirmish in the history books, certainly a very minor and insignificant engagement), the people saw the dead and heard the wounded who were carried to nearby houses for whatever aid could be provided, got a different view and concept of what war was and what it meant to the active participants. The whole Ralph Settlement, Magans, Beech Valley, and Sunnydale neighborhoods and others were deeply impressed.

One force crossed Rough at Ambros 'Ferry (or was it Green?). I remember my Grandmother telling that the South lost 2 men killed but the Yankees lost 6 but I am very hazy about the whole account. She named a Confederate captain—dimly recall the name of Yates, but can't be sure. Also, have some intimation that he was killed or wounded and died in this affray."



“Family of Benjamin Midkiff & Elizabeth Robinson”, by Jerry Long Owensboro, KY, 2022, Internet site – West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, p.166:

Samuel Linsey Midkiff was born February 1835 Ohio County, KY. He first appears in the Ohio County tax records in 1857. He is listed in the censuses of Ohio County, KY in 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880. He was a farmer. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He enrolled in Company I of the 17th KY Volunteer Infantry on 25 October 1861; he was mustered in on 4 January 1862 at Calhoun, KY and was mustered out on 23 January 1865 at Louisville, KY. While he was away from home during the war his family resided near Slate Riffle Hill in Ohio County, KY about a mile west of Hines Mill (now Dundee). The Battle of Slate Riffle took place there on 14 July 1864 (Owensboro Monitor, Owensboro, KY, 20 July 1864 p3; Hartford Republican, Hartford, KY, 1 May 1908 p4 & 15 May 1908 p7). This was one of two skirmishes between the

Blue & Gray that took place in Ohio County during the Civil War. A Confederate band stopped at the home of Mrs. C. Midkiff shortly before engaging some Union home guards near her home.



Notes on veterans of the Battle of Slate Ripple Hill

By Jerry Long



Captain Dick Yates, who was in command of the Confederate forces in the battle of Slate Ripple was Richard W. Yates, who was born c1837 in England. He was the son of William Yates & Sarah Longworth Wilding. His parents were married on 31 August 1825 in Preston, Lancashire County, England. Richard Yates, age 3, appears in the 1841 census of Preston, Lancashire County, England. The following year the family immigrated to the United States. In 1843 his father applied in Vanderburgh County, IN for US citizenship. Richard W. Yates, age 12, born England, is listed with his parents in the 1850 census of Henderson County, KY. In the 1860 census of Henderson County, KY he is recorded as Richard W. Yates, age 21, born England. During 1864 he was commanding a force of Confederate guerillas who were a scourge in Western Kentucky and Southern Indiana. He was killed on 14 July 1864 in an engagement with Federals on Slate Ripple Hill. He was initially buried in the Slate Ripple neighborhood but in 1866 his body was removed by relatives and taken to his former home for interment.

Two days before the battle of Slate Ripple Hill two of Captain Yates, guerilla force, Charles W. Thompson and Pierman Powell were captured in Henderson County, KY. They were executed in the City of Henderson, KY on 22 July 1864 by order of General Stephen Gano Burbridge, USA. The two young men were shot in retaliation for a crime committed by an unauthorized band of guerillas. The two soldiers were taken to the river bank, placed in chairs with hands bound to a fence and eyes covered with handkerchiefs, and were faced by two firing squads. After the execution, their bodies were returned to their families in Daviess County, KY, where they were buried at the St Alphonsus Catholic Church Cemetery. A prominent monument honoring them was erected in the cemetery.

History of Henderson County, Kentucky,
Edmund L. Starling, Henderson, KY, 1887, pp.215-216:

“Captain Dick Yates.”

On Saturday, July 7, [1864], Captain Dick Yates, with a rebel force, paid a visit to the farm of Esq. John E. McCallister, six and one-half miles from the city, and demanded three of his horses, one being a fine favorite stallion. Mr. McCallister declined giving up his property, and seized his double-barrel shotgun. Two of the party threw themselves upon him in order to wrench the gun from his hands. In the scuffle Mr. McCallister was thrown violently, his body striking on the stock of his gun breaking two of his ribs.

“They then tied him in bed where he remained until the arrival of his sister, Mrs. Ben Talbott, in the night, when at the peril of her own life, she untied the ropes which bound her brother.”

[Note: The preceding atrocity was committed one week before Captain Yates' death.]

Daily Journal, Evansville, IN, Monday, 18 July 1864, p.3:

Capt. Yates Reported Killed – We are informed that a fight occurred a few days ago, somewhere back of Owensboro, Ky., between a small force of Federals and a band of guerrillas under the notorious guerrilla leader, Dick Yates, in which Yates and two of his men were killed and a number were wounded,. Five of the Federals are reported wounded. If this is true it will free that region from one of its worst pests.



Captain Jim Wilson, who was in command of the Union forces in the battle of Slate Ripple Hill was James M. Wilson from Rumsey in McLean County, KY. He was born c1824. He married Margaret Croxton, 31 December 1844 in Jefferson County, KY. He is listed in the 1850 census of Muhlenberg County, KY and 1860 census of McLean County, KY. He served as captain of company M of the 12th KY Cavalry of the Union army during the Civil War. He was one of several who were appointed by Kentucky Governor Thomas Bramlette to command “independent units”, who were given authority to recruit companies for the purpose of dealing with Confederate guerilla bands in Western Kentucky. In September 1864 Captain Wilson was tried for abusing his authority and was discharged from the service (see Owensboro Monitor, 21 September 1864, p.3 and Louisville Daily Journal, 12 October 1864, p.1). He died about 1868. In McLean County, KY on 2 January 1869 Margaret Wilson requested that Reuben Stroud be appointed administrator of the estate of her late husband. His widow, Margaret, married George Thornton Kirtley in McLean County, KY in 1872.

Louisville Daily Journal, Louisville, KY, Thursday, 28 October 1862, p.3 (two items):

Marksmen, Attention ! – Captain James Wilson, of Rumsey, is raising a company to be attached to the 12th Kentucky cavalry, and desires a few more good, sober young men, who are good shots, as the company will be armed with the Henry rifle. Recruits can report to the regiment at Owensboro.

Capt. James Wilson, of Rumsey, who has been so successful in his guerilla fights, desires to raise a company of picked men for Col. Shanks's 12th Kentucky Cavalry. They are to be supplied with the Henry rifle and well mounted. This will be an agreeable and exciting employment for bold spirits, and we have no doubt Capt. Wilson will rapidly recruit his company from the vicinity of Calhoun and Owensboro with the finest marksmen of the State.

The following casualties of the Home Guards of Daviess County were suffered at the Battle of Slate Ripple Hill – four were fatalities (John Cecil, John Napoleon Henton, Stinson Stout & William Henry Wootton) and two were wounded (William H. Karn & William Henry Shively):

John Cecil was born c1826 KY. He was the son of Sylvester Cissell & Elizabeth Flanagan. He was living in Marion County, KY at the time of the 1850 census and in Daviess County, KY at the time of the 1860 census. He was serving in the Home Guards of the Union army when he was killed in the Slate Ripple Hill Battle in Ohio County, KY on 14 July 1864. He is probably the John Cecil, who died in 1864 and has a gravestone at the St. Mary of the Woods Catholic Church Cemetery in Daviess County, KY. He was not married.

John Napoleon Henton was born 22 January 1819 KY. He was the son of George B. Henton & Elizabeth Buckley. He married Nancy Jackson, 6 February 1842 Daviess County, KY. He was serving in the Home Guards of the Union Army when he was killed in the Slate Ripple Hill Battle in Ohio County, KY on 14 July 1864. His body was returned to his home in Daviess County, where he was buried in the Karns Grove Baptist Church Cemetery. On his monument it was engraved “I died in defense of my country.” His wife, Nancy, was a daughter of George Jackson & Sarah Crawford; she was born 16 November 1825 Daviess County, KY and died 31 March 1916 Daviess County, KY, where she was buried at the Karns Grove Baptist Church Cemetery. Members of the family also spelled their name as “Hinton”. John N. & Nancy’s children were – George, Margaret, John J. Crittenden, Guy Buckley, Mary Ann, Mariah Louisa, Francis Marion, Richard Fillmore, John Samuel Jackson and Nannie Napoleon, who was born two months after the death of her father.



Grave of John N. & Nancy Henton
Karns Grove Baptist Church Cemetery

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 21 September 1930, p.3:

John J. C. Hinton

Paducah, Ky., Sept. 20. – John J. C. Hinton, a well known veteran of the War Between the States, died at his home on the Benton road Thursday afternoon. He was 84 years old. Death followed an illness of several weeks.

Mr. Hinton is survived by his widow and three sons: Stephen Hinton, of Whitesville, John Hinton, of Calhoun, and Gorda L. Hinton, of Paducah; by seven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and two sisters, Mrs. Lou Johnson, of Owensboro, and Mrs. Mollie Wiles, of Centralia, Ill. Three brothers also survive: Frank Hinton, of Livermore, Ky., Guy Hinton, of Birmingham, Ala., and James Hinton, of Amarillo, Texas.

Mr. Hinton was born and reared near Owensboro. He married Miss Ellen Evans, who was the mother of his children. After her death, he was married to Miss Fannie Crute, of Marshall county, who survives him.

Mr. Hinton was one of the best known veterans of the War Between the States in this section. His father was killed at the battle of Slate Riffle, in Kentucky, during the war.

Funeral services were held Friday afternoon at Bethlehem church. Burial was in the church cemetery.

William H. Karn was the son of Christopher Karn & Leah Boone; he was born 8 April 1820 Daviess County, KY. His mother was a second cousin twice removed of Daniel Boone. He was a resident of Daviess County, KY. He married Sarah Jackson, 9 February 1842 Daviess County, KY. Sarah daughter of George Jackson & Sarah Crawford, was born 28 March 1823 Daviess County, KY. He was serving in the Home Guards of the Union army when he was wounded in the battle of Slate Ripple Hill on 14 July 1864. He died in Daviess County, KY on 9 April 1882. He was buried at the Karns Grove Baptist Church Cemetery near Philpot in Daviess County, KY.

History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing, Co.,
Chicago, IL, Boston Precinct, 1883, p.540:

WILLIAM H. KARN (deceased), born April 8, 1820, in Daviess County, was a son of Christopher and Leah (Boone) Karn. He was reared to manhood on the place, and was married Feb. 9, 1842, to Sallie Jackson. Mrs. Karn is a daughter of George Jackson, and was born in this county, and reared within five miles from where she now lives. After his marriage, by request of his father, William remained with him on the place till his death, which occurred in September, 1841. The estate was divided among the heirs, and the homestead place was left to William. During the war he was Captain of the State Guards, and served almost through the entire war. He was appointed by the Government Captain of the company; was in several skirmishes, and was wounded during one of the engagements at Slate Riffle, on Rough Creek, in Ohio County. A ball entered his body just under his left shoulder blade and lodged there, where it ever afterward remained. In consequence of this he has always had poor health. He was a faithful man to his country, and never flinched from duty in the hour of peril. After the war closed he returned to his home

and carried on the duties of the farm till the time of his death. He died April 9, 1882, after having lived sixty-two years on the place where he was born. The place is now in the possession of his widow, who with her only daughter is living there. Mrs. Karn is the mother of seven children, five sons and two daughters – Almina, deceased wife of William Bristow, who died leaving two children; Nancy E., wife of Richard Lockett, and the mother of three children; Josiah, married Julia Massey; Granville, married Elizabeth Jackson; George, James and Thomas are single. William Karn was a highly respected citizen of the community, a strictly upright and honest man.



Grave of William H. Karn
Karns Grove Baptist Church Cemetery

William Henry Shively was born 6 May 1837 KY, son of John L. B. Shively & Sarah Cooper. He married Susan Ceralda Fuqua, 26 January 1860 Daviess County, KY and Mrs. Sarah Ellen (Westerfield) Burks, 4 January 1877 Daviess County, KY. He was a resident of Daviess County, KY. He served in the 12th Kentucky Calvary during the Civil War. He was serving in the Home Guards of the Union army when he was wounded in the Slate Ripple Hill Battle on 14 July 1864. He recovered from his wound. At the age of 61 he died on 21 November 1918 in Louisville, KY,. He was buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY. He was the father of – Capitola, Laura Frances, John William, James Louis and George Everett Shively.



Grave of William H. Shively
Elmwood Cemetery

Stinson Stout was born c1816 KY. He was living in Daviess County, KY at the time of the 1850 & 1860 censuses. He married Harriett Bristow, 6 July 1839 Daviess County, KY and Martha Sanders, 30 June 1844 Daviess County, KY. His second wife, Martha, was born c1816 VA and died on 2 February 1898 and was buried at the Panther Creek Baptist Church Cemetery in Ohio County, KY. He was serving in the Home Guards of the Union army when he was killed at the battle of Slate Ripple Hill in Ohio County, KY on 14 July 1864 .His children included – John J. ,William P., Mary E. and Ann E. Stout.

Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 4 February 1898, p.4:

Knottsville

Knottsville, Feb. 3. – Mrs. Tinson Stout died Wednesday morning, of old age, at her son-in-law's, Mr. Henry Day, two miles east of here. Her husband was killed at Slate Ripple, on Rough creek, and she has been drawing a pension nearly every since. She was about ninety years old. The burial will be at Panther creek church Thursday.

William Henry Wootton was born 22 March 1810 Nelson County, KY. He was the son of John Wootton & Jane Remey / Ramey. He married Rosalia Mae Coomes, 19 April 1836 Nelson County, KY and Mrs. Mary F. Gray, 26 October 1862 Daviess County, KY. He was a resident of Daviess County, KY. He was serving in the Home Guards of the Union army when he was killed at the battle of Slate Ripple Hill in Ohio County, KY on 14 July 1864. He was buried in the St. Lawrence Catholic Church Cemetery in Daviess County, KY.



Grave of William Wootton
St. Lawrence Cemetery

History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing, Co.,
Chicago, IL, Upper Town Precinct, 1883, p.827:

R. I. WOOTTEN, born in Spencer County, Ky., Feb. 17, 1839, was a son of William H. and Rosalia (Coomes) Wootten, both natives of Nelson County, Ky. His father was born March 25, 1811, and was killed by a guerilla near Slate Riffle, Ohio Co., Ky. His mother was born in 1815, and died in November, 1860. R.I. was the second of ten children. When quite young his parents moved to Nelson County, where he remained till 1859, when he came to Daviess County. He enlisted in Company B, Third Kentucky Cavalry, U.S.A., and served three years and ten months. After the war he worked at the printer's trade till 1880, when he was appointed Government Storekeeper. He was married March 28, 1864, to Jennie E. Higdon, a native of Owensboro, born in 1841. They have four children – Clara R., born Sept. 25, 1870; John T., born Oct. 1, 1873; Alfred C., born Aug. 1, 1876; Charles R., born Dec. 27, 1882. Mr. Wootten is a member of the Catholic church and of the Catholic Knights of America. He also belongs to No. 3, Department of Kentucky, G.A.R.

