

Boon's Mill, Battle of ^[1]

Boon's Mill, Battle of

by Fred W. Kiger, 2006


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Located in [Northampton County](#) ^[4], Boon's (or Boone's)


BATTLE OF JACKSON

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Caught Bathing at Boone's Mill




On July 28, 1863, Union Col. Samuel P. Spear's cavalrymen came thundering through Jackson from Federal-occupied Winton to destroy the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad Bridge over the Roanoke River at Weldon. Confederate Gen. Matt W. Ransom and his staff raced just ahead of them in a running shootout, having been surprised half a mile from town. As Ransom galloped across the mill tail bridge shouting orders, a few of his men, bathing in the millpond, were likewise surprised when bullets began splashing the water around them, and they started scrambling for their weapons.

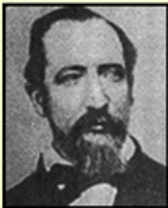


Occupation of Jackson, North Carolina, by Col. Spear's Cavalry.





Gen. Matt W. Ransom
— Courtesy of Library of Congress



Col. Samuel P. Spear

Not all the Confederates were caught with their clothes off, however. Four companies of the 24th North Carolina Infantry were entrenched near the millpond, while Ransom had eight companies of the 49th North Carolina in reserve. The Confederates also had two Macon Light Artillery guns. Skirmishers advanced against the Federals, but the 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry and two guns from Stewart's Mounted Battery soon pushed them back. As the Pennsylvanians formed for a mounted attack, Spear arrived with the 10th New York Mounted Rifles. The other seven guns of the Federal battery joined the shelling of the earthworks. After the artillery barrage,

Spear's flanking attempts failed on the Confederate left and right. Since it was late in the day and his force was in an isolated position, Spear withdrew with three dead and a few wounded through Jackson to Deloatch's Mill at present-day Creeksville. The next day he returned to Murfreesboro and then to Winton, which the Federals evacuated the day after. Ransom had one man killed. The Boone's Mill fight saved the Weldon Railroad Bridge, allowing much-needed supplies to continue on to Richmond.

Caught Bathing at Boone's Mill." Civil War Trails, Inc. CivilWarTraveler.com. Mill was the site of a [Civil War](#) ^[5] Federal repulse by [Confederate](#) ^[6] forces under [Brig. Gen. Matt W. Ransom](#) ^[7] on 28 July 1863. Boon's Mill was situated on the main road from Jackson, the county seat, to Garysburg and Weldon, where the vitally important [Wilmington & Weldon Railroad](#) ^[8] ran north to Petersburg, Va. It was by this road that the Federal force hoped to capture and burn the Weldon Bridge, thus disrupting the flow of supplies from [Wilmington](#) ^[9] to Petersburg, Richmond, and the Army of Northern Virginia.

On 26 July Federal ships off Winton unloaded regiments from Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island commanded by Maj. Gen. John G. Foster to support Col. Samuel P. Spear and a brigade of cavalry expected hourly from Virginia. This combined Union force totaled approximately 5,000 men.

Spear's arrival on 27 July, as well as Foster's the day before, was quickly discovered by Confederate intelligence. Orders were then passed to recently promoted Brig. Gen. Matt W. Ransom to move his brigade southward from its camp near Petersburg, where it had been helping to defend Richmond from Federal forces that occupied Williamsburg.

Ransom's brigade, consisting of elements of the 24th, 35th, and 49th North Carolina Regiments and two guns of Georgia Artillery, reached Garysburg around daybreak of 28 July. Ransom ordered his force of about 200 men to Boon's Mill, choosing this site because it was located on the main road running through Gumberry Swamp. The pond and swamp made it an excellent defensive position. Ransom and his staff left the men and rode to Jackson in an attempt to gather information about Spear's Federal force. On their return, one-half mile from Jackson, Union cavalry exploded from the county seat to give chase. With the Federals not more than 250 yards behind, it was literally a horse race back to the mill for Ransom and his staff, who were fired upon the entire way. Dashing across the bridge at Boon's Mill, Ransom ordered his men to take up the planks and to form ranks.

Spear brought up his artillery and shelled the Confederate position for over an hour. Then he ordered his dismounted cavalrymen to attack down the road toward the mill; however, concentrated Confederate fire broke this initial advance. Next Spear attempted flanking movements to the left and right, hoping that the dense undergrowth of the swamp would offer cover. But Ransom moved his guns forward and swept the woods with grape and canister. This maneuver, along with Confederate infantry fire, forced Spear to call off his assault after five hours of fighting. Convinced that he could not break through and aware that the entire area was aware of his presence, Spear retreated back to Jackson under the

cover of darkness.

Federal casualties from the fight at Boon's Mill were listed at 11 dead, buried on the field. Confederate losses were reported as 1 soldier from the 49th Regiment killed and 3 from the 24th Regiment wounded.

References:

John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (1963).

Walter Clark, ed., *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865* vols. 2-4 (1901).

Additional Resources:

"Boones Mill Pond Dam." Visit Northampton NC!: <http://visitnorthamptonnc.com/things-to-do/heritage-tourism/301-boones-m...> ^[10] (accessed April 23, 2014).

"Boon's Mill." N.C. Highway Historical Marker E-64, N.C. Office of Archives & History. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=E-64> ^[11] (accessed April 23, 2014).

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