

## **Whitehall, Battle of** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Whitehall, Battle of**

by L. George Williams, 2006

See: More on [Civil War Battles](#) <sup>[2]</sup> from the Encyclopedia of North Carolina | More on [Civil War Battles](#) <sup>[3]</sup>



Battle of Whitehall. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives & History.

<sup>[4]</sup>The [Civil War](#) <sup>[5]</sup> battle of Whitehall occurred on 15-16 Dec. 1862 at present Seven Springs in [Wayne County](#) <sup>[6]</sup> when the Confederacy's Brig. Gen. B. H. Robertson and the Union's Maj. Gen. [John G. Foster](#) clashed during Foster's attempt to capture the railroad junction at Goldsboro. Late on 15 Dec. 1862 Union cavalry scouts reached Whitehall shortly after [Confederate](#) <sup>[7]</sup> troops crossed north over the bridge spanning the [Neuse River](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, set it on fire, and took up defensive positions. Foster's cavalry rolled hundreds of barrels of pitch to the riverbank and set them on fire to light the Confederate positions. Union artillery attempted to destroy the frame of the Confederate [ironclad](#) <sup>[9]</sup> [Neuse](#) <sup>[10]</sup> that was under construction while the cavalymen exchanged fire with Robertson's pickets. After several hours of futile conflict, the infuriated cavalymen burned the village and returned to camp.

The next day Foster arrived at Whitehall and engaged the enemy, attempting to make the Confederates believe that his men intended to cross the river. Foster thought that he could then slip the rest of his army past Whitehall to attack a railroad trestle four miles south of Goldsboro. But the Confederates were not fooled and the battle lasted until sunset. By nightfall on 16 December, most of Foster's army had marched west, leaving a small force at Whitehall to remove the wounded and bury the dead.

On 18 December Foster withdrew back through Whitehall and retired to New Bern. After his withdrawal, a Confederate patrol made an alarming discovery. One hundred Union troops had been left unburied on the field, and a 100-yard-long pit was filled with dead soldiers. Despite promotions for Foster and his men, many northern newspapers rated the expedition a disaster because of the extensive Union losses and the fact that Foster failed to capture the crucial railroad junction at Goldsboro.

#### **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* vol. 5 (1901).

Frank Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events* (1862).

#### **Image Credit:**

NC Marker F-44: Battle of Whitehall. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives & History. Available from <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=F-44> <sup>[11]</sup> (accessed May 16, 2012).

#### **Additional Resources:**

Harper's Weekly, Son of the South: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1863/january/battle-whitehall->

[goldsborough.htm](#) [12]

## References:

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

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## Additional Resources:

Harper's Weekly, Son of the South: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1863/january/battle-whitehall-goldsborough.htm> [12]

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## Authors:

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## Origin - location:

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