

A Week of Winter Skirmishes

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Week 171 of the Civil War, January 12-18, 1864, saw an increase in skirmishes in every sector of fighting but no large scale battles. On the day before the week began, January 11, 1864, Senator John Henderson of Missouri proposed a joint resolution for the Senate abolishing slavery throughout the United States via the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. With the abolition of slavery in full swing, the end of war seemed only a short time away. Fighting ranged from Virginia, out west in Mexico, down to Georgia and over to Arkansas.

A three day raid in eastern Virginia, beginning on January 12, 1864, saw Union men of the 12th New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry recapture escaped Confederate prisoners, arrest Union deserters, liberate fugitive slaves, and destroy local wartime production. The Federal forces also burned salt works and tanneries. The result at the end of the three day raid left the Union soldiers with very few prisoners or deserters but with a large amount of supplies. Confederate rebels captured these men and horses from Union occupations at Accotink and Ellis' Ford, Virginia.

Continuing on in Northern Virginia, near Ely's Ford on January 13, a band of Confederate rebels captured a non-commissioned officer along with six Pennsylvania cavalymen on their way to Ely's Ford. Just days later on January 17, a sergeant and seven men were ambushed on their way back to Ellis' Ford that night after patrol and were captured by the rebels. While that was happening, on sergeant and eight men were fired on coming back from

patrol to Ely's Ford by rebels concealed in the woods on either side of the road. One man was killed, two wounded and two captured in this skirmish.

Also beginning on January 12, and lasting for two days, was fighting that occurred at Matamoros, Mexico. Two Mexican factions, French sympathizers and Juarez loyalists, started fighting in the streets of the town. In order to protect the U.S. Consul, Leonard Pierce, Federal troops removed him and escorted him to Texas.

In the Western theater of the war, Confederate leader James Longstreet was retreating to Morristown, Tennessee after engagements failed in December to gain Knoxville. A detachment of his forces intercepted and routed a Union brigade just north of Dandridge, Tennessee. The two day engagement cost both sides immense casualties and eventually led to the Union move toward Strawberry Plains.

A Union scout in Arkansas, Lieutenant McCarty, with twenty men came from Pine Bluff to Monticello January 13-14. They destroyed 200 bushels of Confederate corn, while capturing one captain and five men and finding out that the Confederate commander was at Warren. Federal scout, Lieutenant Couch, was sent to Jackson, Missouri on the 15th and came back with the report on Blunt's forces numbering around fifty with a possible other force under Todd of an unknown number of men. No further action was taken.