

From "My Story" by Emma Frew London (Mrs. Fred H.) who was born July 30, 1858 and died July 10, 1937.

Her father referred to in the paragraph died June 21, 1863; he was William Michael Frew of Charlotte.

Her mother was Sara Ann Keesler Frew who decided to move to Rock Hill when she was a widow because her brother, Samuel Golden Keesler, was living here.

"So my mother packed her few belongings and with her many children started to Rock Hill, but the Yankees had been before her and burned the bridge over the Catawba River. We crossed on a pontoon bridge; I remember holding to a rope with one hand and carrying my little yellow dog, Penny, under my arm as I watched the muddy Catawba swirling beneath me."

Ferale: Nov 13, 1961

York County's lone battle was fought in dying hours of the Confederacy

By SAM MENDENHALL

Note: Starting today, the York County Historical Society will sponsor this column, the purpose of which is to stimulate interest in local history.

The centennial celebration of the Confederate War has created a great deal of interest in the various battles fought during the period 1861-1865. York County had only one battle, one fought in the final hours of the Confederacy. Since this is the centennial year, it seems only proper that the first of these series should be devoted to that battle.

It's early morning, April 19, 1865, at Nation Ford, where the 1,127-foot bridge of the Charlotte & South Carolina Railroad cross-

es the Catawba River. A garrison of 60 Confederates defend the place. Before the sun sets on this day the bridge will be smouldering ruin and a defender dead.

What were the events which lead up to this battle? Briefly, they are as follows:

Gen. Lee surrendered on April 9. Sherman's men had already passed through York County, and were near Raleigh. President Jefferson Davis and the remnants of the Confederate government were in Charlotte. Maj. Gen. George Stoneman, the Union officer, who had been raiding in Virginia and North Carolina, had returned to Tennessee, leaving Col. William J. Palmer in command at Lintcolnton, N.C.

Realizing the value of the railroad bridge to the crumbling Confederacy, Col. Palmer was determined to destroy it. To accomplish this he sent Maj. E. C. Moderwell with 250 men of the 12th Ohio Cavalry on a raid.

Due to the large number of Confederates in the vicinity, it was necessary to move with great caution. At Dallas, N.C., a skirmish occurred; but Moderwell evaded a battle. At day break on the morning of April 19, they arrived at the bridge defended by 60 men who had two pieces of artillery. The Yankees captured the picket and surprised the guard. They then set fire to the bridge, one account says by pouring lamp oil and gun powder on it. In less than 30 minutes it had burned

from end to end.

Aunt Rhoda, one of Alexander Fewell's slaves, had this to say about the burning: "At fust we thought God had sent de sun on top o' dat bridge; but twan't long fo' we found out dat it be nothin' but de deviltry of dem Yankees ablazing dat bridge".

Back in Charlotte, rumors had reached that city that the Yankees were going for the bridge; so a force of cavalry was sent to protect it. However, they arrived too late to save the bridge, for it was a mass of flames; but the Yankees were still present. A spirited engagement took place, the Confederates on the north side, the Yankees on the south. The Yankees mounted the captured cannon on a hill overlooking the river. The fray lasted about two hours; then the Yankees withdrew, and, by marching all night, rejoined the brigade at Dallas the next morning.

After the departure of the Yankees, the Confederates began crossing the river to pursue them; but when about half had crossed and the other half were in the process of crossing, a locomotive from Charlotte came down to the river bearing an officer with a white flag who told them that an armistice had been declared.

One account states that a mes-

senger was sent after the Yankees and reached them just in time to save Yorkville. However, investigation proves that this was not true. Perhaps this rumor did persist at that time; but all other records show that the Yankees returned to Dallas whence they had come.

One Southerner was killed during the action. He was carried to the old Hutchison home and laid on the porch where he died. His blood stains were visible for many years afterwards.

The Yankees returned to Dallas with 325 prisoners, it is said. Presumably, some of these were captured on the way. Maj. Moderwell was recommended for a promotion for his conduct in leading the raid, and for successfully withdrawing in the face of a superior enemy.

A company of Confederate cavalry camped at Nation Ford, and an engineer was sent from Chester to build a pontoon bridge. This was the pontoon on which President Jefferson Davis crossed a week later on April 27, in his flight to reach the Trans-Mississippi department and there re-establish the Confederacy.

On May 8, the last Confederate troops pulled out, and the recently constructed pontoon bridge was left to the conquering Yankees.