

Fifth in a series — Civil War Weekend Sept. 10 & 11, 2011 at Carnifex Ferry State Park

The Battle of Carnifex Ferry

**By James Connell
Nicholas Chronicle Summer
Intern**

The battle for Carnifex Ferry was now underway as the forces of Union General W.S. Rosecrans clashed with the defenses of Confederate General John Floyd. The time of initiation was around 3:15 in the afternoon on September 10th, 1861. General Benham, overseeing the First Brigade of Rosecrans' three brigades, had sent for more men that were stationed to the east of Keslers Cross Lanes. Colonel Lytle and the 10th Ohio Infantry arrived at the battle and attempted to flank the Confederate

troops. While doing so, Colonel Lytle suffered a gunshot to his leg and the same shot mortally wounded his horse. He was then taken to the Patteson House near the battle where, despite the house being pelted with fire from both sides, he managed to recover and eventually even became a Brigadier-General.

Colonel Lytle's 10th Ohio was one of the most critically hit Union companies in the battle. John Fitzgibbons, the state color-bearer, got his right hand shot off in Lytle's flanking attempt. After the wounding, he said "Never mind me, boys; save the flag.", and then fell mortally wounded. National color-

bearer Sergeant Luke O'Connor carried the flag from then on, until he was also mortally wounded. The flag eventually ended up in the hands of Captain Stephen McGroaty. In the end, the 10th Ohio lost nine men and fifty others were wounded.

The first couple hours of the battle consisted mainly of a lack of Union organization and order aside from the 10th Ohio's assault. Inaccurate artillery and infantry fire from both sides rendered little results. After the 10th Ohio's flanking attempt, a brigade lead by Colonel W.S. Smith and consisting of members of the 28th, 13th 23rd, and 12th Ohio infantries began a

flanking assault to the right of the Confederate defenses. The assault was not as effective as it could have been, as the official orders to engage the enemy did not come until dusk, when visibility was very low. Their artillery units did manage to do some damage on the Confederate defense structures. Colonel Lowe also led some of the 12th Ohio in a flanking attempt to the left of the Confederate defenses. Before the assault could even begin, Lowe suffered a gunshot to the forehead and was dead within minutes.

General Rosecrans now lead the remaining men that he had control of in a general assault, but

with the news of Lowe's death, Lytle's injury, and the many men that were left without order in the surrounding woods, Rosecrans' men were uneasy. The many wounded that were being brought back did not help calm them either. Some of the men managed an assault on Confederate defenses and made it up to their barriers, but eventually retreated and lost two men with eight others wounded. Meanwhile, Colonel Smith's brigade managed to penetrate Confederate lines, but lost two men with twenty-nine others wounded.

By nightfall, gunfire had ceased for the most part. It was so dark that there was little to no visibility.

Out of confusion, the 13th and 28th Ohio infantries actually fired on each other for a short period of time. Eventually, General Rosecrans regained order of his men and they retreated back to their camp. In the end, the Union suffered 17 casualties with 141 wounded, while the Confederates lost only a few men with 30 wounded.

Information from this article was obtained from George A. Hall's *Civilian War in West Virginia: The Moccasin Rangers* — available for purchase at the Nicholas Chronicle office in Summersville for \$18.61.