



## First Skirmish at West Point

Louisville Home Guard & Confederate Cavalry Incident, September 9, 1861

Taken from: [The Saga of Fort Duffield, West Point, Kentucky's Civil War Treasure](#)

By Richard A. Briggs

"Already the idea of a fortress at West Point at the confluence of the Salt and Ohio Rivers was in the planning stages. To select a site for the fort, General Robert Anderson dispatched a patrol to go to West Point and select a site for a fortification. Selected to lead the expedition was Captain T. W. Gibson and the cavalry squad known as the Louisville Legion.

On September 9, 1861, shortly after day-break, the early risers saw a cloud of dust, in the direction of the Louisville-Nasville Turnpike, in the west end of town, near present day 10th Street. Looking closer it was discerned that a large group of mounted men were coming up the street. They appeared to be in the uniforms of gray, the colors of the army of the Confederate States of America. This was a company of southern soldiers under the command of Captain Mitchell Lapaille, a Louisvillian, who was reconnoitering the area for General Simon Boliver Buckner's forces. The C.S.A. Cavalry came to West Point in an attempt to seize several store boats owned by Venne P. Armstrong. However the boats had left for down-river points a day or two earlier.

Unknown to the approaching rebels, a company of Home Guards from Louisville, under the command of Captain T. W. Gibson, had camped the night before on the point of the Salt and Ohio River confluence, across from West Point. They were just starting to ferry across the river to West Point when the cavalrymen rode into view. The Home Guard unit was split, with half of the men on each side of the river. Captain Gibson was in the dining room at Young's Inn, then operated by Mrs. Ann Lewis, when the alarm sounded.

Immediately a skirmish took place between the two armed groups. The rebels far outnumbered the Home Guard, especially since they were split into two groups, but there was one thing for certain --- not knowing who or what numbers their opponents were, neither side was very anxious for a fight. After a brief firefight, both units withdrew, the Confederates going back southward to Bloomington (near present day Radcliff) and the very frightened Union unit heading back across the ferry toward Louisville. After their baptism of fire and a brief siege of combat, the Home Guard troops had gone just as far into Dixie as they cared to go. No doubt the ferry keeper was a busy man the rest of the morning shuttling the Home Guards back across the river."