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Fort Hamby [1]

Fort Hamby

by Charles C. Davis, 2006

Fort Hamby [2] in Caldwell County [3], actually a well-fortified, sturdy house, was located in an isolated region and near the end of the Civil War [4] served as a home for outlaws from both theConfederate [5] and Union [4] armies. Bands of these men roamed Caldwell [3], Alexander [6], and Wilkes [7] Counties. A man identified only as Wade, allegedly a former officer in Maj. Gen. George H. Stoneman [8]'s cavalry, situated his band on theYadkin River [9] in Caldwell County.

In need of a base from which to operate, Wade and his men forced themselves on the occupants of a small farm near the road from Wilkesboro to Lenoir. The two-story house of oak logs was perfectly constructed for Wade's criminal purposes. The outlaws converted the cellar into a magazine and vault where they could store munitions and plunder, fortified the first floor, and carved gun ports in the walls upstairs. Wade's men dubbed the farmhouse "Fort Hamby," a reference to the surname of the women who had lived there.

Alternately masquerading in Confederate or Federal uniforms, these outlaws stole articles of every kind, attacked homes and travelers, and indulged in murder at random. After a failed murder attempt, a small contingent of local men, veterans, and boys of the Junior Reserves [10] attacked Fort Hamby. At least two of them were killed, and the others scattered into the woods. Realizing that the "fort" could not be taken with such a small force, they withdrew. But by 14 May 1865, several hundred men from as far away as Salisbury made a second attempt. The fighting continued through the night until, under cover of the early morning darkness and fog, the attackers set one of the outbuildings on fire. The flames quickly spread to the fort, and Wade called out for terms, which he was denied. Eventually the attackers rushed the fort, capturing four men. Wade and some others managed to escape.

Fort Hamby and the majority of its contents burned to the ground, and the four prisoners were executed by firing squad. During the following months Wade was sighted many times, always claiming to be a Federal soldier but never again causing trouble.

Reference:

Walter Clark, ed., *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865*, vols. 4-5 (1901).

Additional Resources:

Fort Hamby, NC Highway Historical Marker M-10:https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=search&k=Markers&sv=M-10 [8]

Subjects:
Civil War (1861-1865) [11]
Military [12]
Places [13]
War [14]
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[1] https://www.ncpedia.org/fort-hamby [2] https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=M-31%20-%20%27FORT%20HAMBY%27 [3] https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/caldwell [4] https://www.ncpedia.org/history/cw-1900/civil-war [5] https://www.ncpedia.org/confederate-party [6] https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/alexander [7] https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/wilkes [8] https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=search&k=Markers&sv=M-10 [9] http://yadkinriverstory.org/ [10] http://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/collateral/articles/S11.junior_reserves.pdf [11] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/civil-war [12] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/military [13] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/places [14] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/war [15] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/davis-charles-c [16] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountai-18 [17] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/encyclopedia-