



# **"To Prepare for Sherman's Coming": The Battle of Wise's Forks, March 1865**

*Mark Smith, Wade Sokolosky*

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History has relegated the Battle of Wise's (Wyse) Forks, March 7–11, to little more than an insignificant skirmish during the final days of the Civil War. Indeed, most histories mention it not at all. Mark A. Smith's and Wade Sokolosky's "To Prepare for Sherman's Coming": The Battle of Wise's Forks, March 1865 erases this misconception and elevates this battle and its related operations to the historical status it deserves.

By March 1865, the Confederacy was on its last legs. Its armies were depleted, food and resources were scarce, and morale was low. Gen. Robert E. Lee was barely holding on to his extended lines around Richmond and Petersburg, and Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman was operating with nearly complete freedom in North Carolina on his way north to form a junction with Union forces in Virginia. As the authors demonstrate, the fighting that is the subject of this book came about when Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant initiated a broad military operation to assist Sherman.

The responsibility for ensuring a functioning railroad from New Bern to Goldsboro rested with Maj. Gen. Jacob D. Cox. On March 2, 1865, Cox ordered his hastily assembled Provisional Corps to march toward Goldsboro. In response to Cox's movement, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston executed a bold but risky plan to divert troops away from Sherman by turning back Cox's advance. Under the command of the aggressive but controversial Gen. Braxton Bragg, the Confederates stood for four days and successfully halted Cox at Wise's Forks. This delay provided Johnston with the precious time he needed to concentrate his forces and fight the large and important Battle of Bentonville.

"To Prepare for Sherman's Coming" is the result of years of careful research in a wide variety of archival sources, and relies upon official reports, diaries, newspapers, and letter collections, all tied to a keen understanding of the terrain. Sokolosky and Smith, both career army officers, have used their expertise in military affairs to produce what is not only a valuable book on Wise's Forks, but what surely must be the definitive study of one of the Civil War's overlooked yet significant battles. Outstanding original maps by George Skoch coupled with period photographs reinforce the quality of this account and the authors' commitment to excellence.

## REVIEWS

"The March 8-10, 1865 Battle of Wise's Forks has been neglected by Civil War historians for too long?even though it was one of the largest battles in North Carolina's history. Fought near Kinston, it was the Confederates' first major attempt to defeat General Sherman's forces in the Tar Heel State. Authors Wade Sokolosky and Mark A. Smith have crafted a deeply researched and engagingly written study that at last places the Wise's Forks in its proper strategic and operational context. 'To Prepare for Sherman's Coming' will remain the definitive work on the battle for many years to come."

? Mark L. Bradley, author of Last Stand in the Carolinas: The Battle of Bentonville

"The March 8-10, 1865 combat at Wise's Forks was one of the major engagements of Sherman's Carolinas'

Campaign, and until now, has been completely ignored. A Confederate victory there would have cut Sherman's main line of supply and directly impacted his ability to march across North Carolina. 'To Prepare for Sherman's Coming' rectifies this glaring oversight in a detailed tactical study by retired career Army officers Wade Sokolosky and Mark Smith. For the first time, this small but important battle gets the attention and treatment it has long deserved. The clear and crisp writing, supplemented with original maps, photos, and wonderful research, means this book deserves a place on the bookshelf of any student of the Carolinas Campaign."

? Eric J. Wittenberg, award-winning Civil War historian and author of *The Battle of Monroe's Crossroads* and *the Civil War's Final Campaign*

"Civil War battle study advocates in general, and enthusiasts of the Carolinas Campaign in particular, will be more than pleased with Sokolosky's and Smith's new book on the battle of Wise's Forks. It is everything readers of this genre enjoy: good research, good writing, helpful original maps, and plentiful photos and illustrations. Now, finally, this small but important battle during the war's final full month in North Carolina gets the due it rightfully deserves."

? Chris Mackowski, Emerging Civil War Series editor and author of *Chancellorsville's Forgotten Front* and *Grant's Last Battle: The Story Behind the Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*

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#### **Kevin Lemon:**

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#### **Alan Archuleta:**

As a pupil exactly feel bored to help reading. If their teacher inquired them to go to the library or even make summary for some book, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's heart and soul or real their leisure activity. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to go to the library. They go to at this time there but nothing reading seriously. Any students feel that studying is not important, boring in addition to can't see colorful photographs on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for yourself. As we know that on this time, many ways to get whatever we want. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore , this "To Prepare for Sherman's Coming": The Battle of Wise's Forks, March 1865 can make you truly feel more interested to read.

#### **Allison Larson:**

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