A reconnaissance up White Oak River N.C.
1863

On the 13th of July the 23rd Mass. Vols. With other troops under command of Brig. Gen. C. A. Heckman took cars to Newport Barracks and thence marched to Cedar Point on the White Oak River opposite Swansboro N.C.

From this point on the 15th Capt. Harris of the 9th N.J. was sent with a platoon of Co. B. of the 9th in two boats, up White Oak river to find a fording place for cavalry. Being at the General’s H.Q. I was sent along to make a sketch-map of the river and river [?] soundings [?]. As we passed Swansboro we saw men on the roofs of houses watching us, and some men in a covered carriage drove furiously away from the town into the country.

Crossing a wide space in front [?] we noticed a great cloud of dust back of the town, which we thought to be a section of artillery coming toward to river at full speed. As we would have made a fine target, we accelerated our speed for the lea of Jones’ Island, but before reaching it we ran a ground and the men had to jump over and shove the boat off. Changing our direction a little we soon found ourselves behind the Island and a man who was put ashore to reconnoitre discovered that the section of artillery (as we thought it [)]) was a squad of rebel cavalry.

We kept on up the river the enemy keeping abreast of us on the bank. We were too distant for their carbines, but they were evidently bent on preventing our landing on their side. Most of the time they were hidden by the woods but we could see them dash out into the openings and watch us, as we swept by, then dart into the woods again, making for the next clearing.

All the way along we sounded for hard bottom and I kept the record and outlined the course of the shores. We went as far as Bell’s plantation at the mouth of Hadicot’s [?] Creek, 5 miles from Swansboro.

This point was the limit of our Expedition, and landing here we took a short rest and then started back down the river.

We stopped at Jones’ Island and picked some corn for our "Commissariat" and then pulled on, reaching Headquarters at 4 o’clock P.M.—having to report that we had formed no fording-place the bottom being miry. The sketch-map was sent up to Department H.Q.

H. E. Valentine.