The Battle of Moore’s Mill

By spring 1862, most Confederate regulars were out of Missouri, now occupied by Union forces bent on controlling guerrillas. Former Missouri State Guard officer Joseph C. Porter came to Northeast Missouri to recruit and train cavalry and lead them back to Confederate lines. Porter first captured and paroled Union militia in Marion County on June 7. He was how they regarded Porter’s men. Porter fought numerous battles and skirmishes, trudging up to 2,000 men; few successfully made a stand.

Porter’s men executed at Kirksville and Macon; he said they were forced to execute them. They crossed the river at Portland (Callaway County) October 16 on a commandeered steamer. About three hundred and scattered Porter’s command. With a small well-trained troops and six artillery, McNeil crushed them.

Meanwhile, Guitar’s 269 men — including a section of the 5th Indiana artillery battery — bode south and west of the creek toward Moore’s Mill (Calhoun). Two dozen Illinois cavalrymen spurred ahead, shocked by gunfire from the left (east) flank by Porter’s men. The troopers scrambled backward, but Guitar belatedly, “Bring on them cannon!” which shortly arrived by gunfire from their left (east) flank by Porter’s men. Guitar ordered an attack that was repulsed; Porter counterattacked, the ‘rebels’ yelling alongside his line. The Rebels drove the Yankees about 100 yards and, with withering fire, captured the cannon. (Guitar’s report does not mention this but the killing of four cannoners seems to confirm it.)

Guitar rallied his men and counter-attacked but Porter held, charged and counter-charges resulted in no major change until Shaffer’s men arrived to reinforce Guitar. Porter withdrew his men halfway to his original position.