



**THE GENERAL'S TOUR**

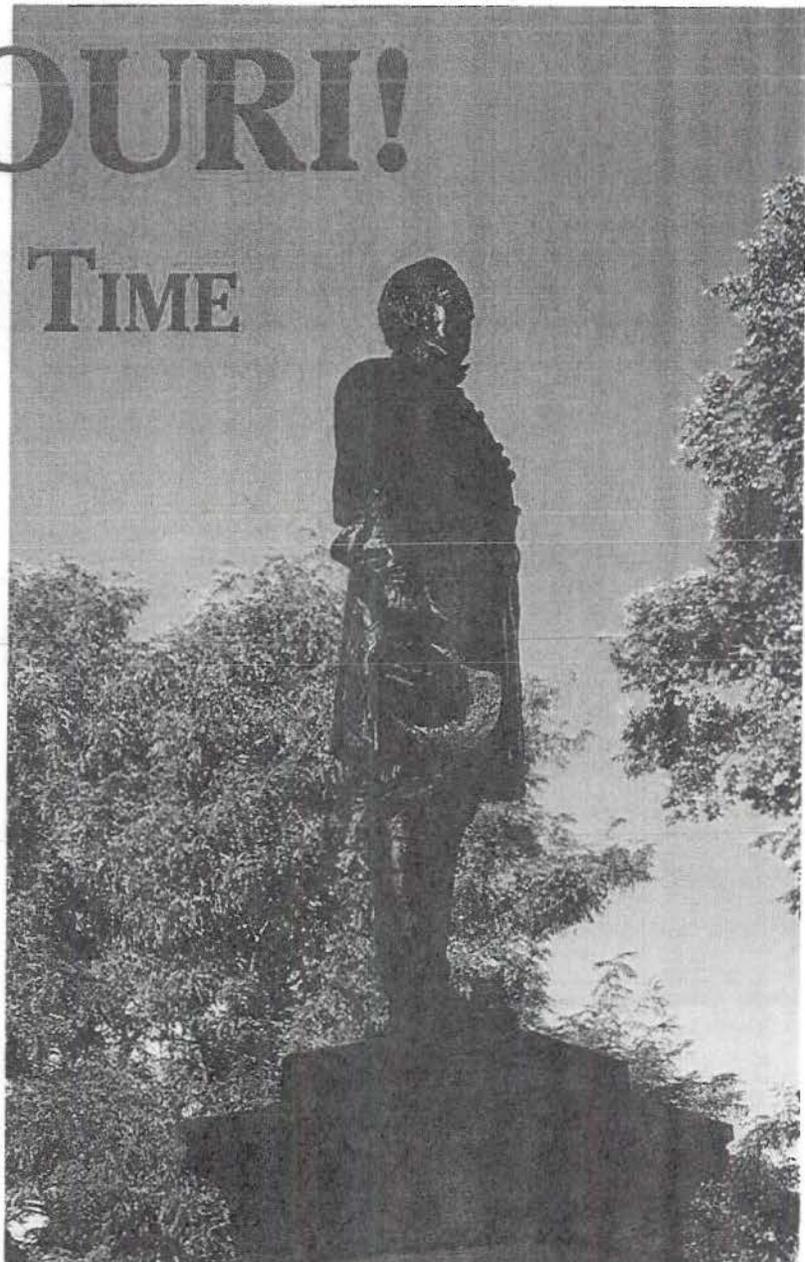
# MISSOURI!

## ONE LAST TIME

**Sterling  
Price's  
1864  
Missouri  
Expedition**

**'A Just and  
Holy Cause'**

*by  
Scott E. Sallee*



Statue of General Sterling Price, CSA, in his hometown of Keytesville, Missouri.  
(Photo by Dave Roth of B&G)

## INTRODUCTION

Maj. Gen. Sterling Price's 1864 Missouri Expedition was the last major campaign west of the Mississippi during the Civil War. It was the longest cavalry action of the war, lasting over three months and encompassing over 1,500 miles. It was born of politics, plagued throughout by political considerations on both sides, and ended on the day Lincoln's reelection swept politics out of the war. The results of the campaign were so disastrous to the Confederacy that relative peace prevailed on the Trans-Mississippi front until the end of the war.

Sterling Price was one of the leading politicians of antebellum Missouri, and throughout the Civil War he remained the truly representative figurehead of the Confederate element of the state. Price was born in Virginia in 1809, and as a young man he moved with his family to Missouri where they settled at Keytesville, on the Missouri River. He soon became a prosperous tobacco planter and slaveowner, and in 1840 he was elected to the state legislature. In 1842 he became Speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives, and two years later secured a seat in the U.S. Congress. He was not renominated, however, and when the Mexican War broke out he resigned his congressional seat to command a cavalry regiment. At the end of the Mexican War Price returned to Missouri with the brevet rank of brigadier general and a greatly enhanced reputation.

In 1852 Price ran for governor on Missouri's pro-slavery faction of the Democratic party and won by a substantial majority. His war record, plus his personal charm and impressive physique made him, according to one supporter, "unquestionably the most popular man in Missouri." Price occupied the governorship during the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and though he refrained from aiding the Missouri "Border Ruffians" in their efforts to force slavery into Kansas, he did nothing to restrain them.

Though Price was pro-slavery he was not a secessionist. He was a Southern moderate who opposed secession except as a last resort for the South to protect itself against "Northern aggression." As war approached, Price hoped the Union would be preserved, but Northern attempts to coerce Missouri to remain loyal forced Price into the Southern camp. He immediately took command of the state's secessionist force, the Missouri State Guard, and led it to early victories at Wilson's Creek and Lexington. He then

accepted a commission as a major general for the Confederate government and urged his men to volunteer for Confederate service.

In 1862, after the Federal victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, Price and his division of Missouri volunteers were transferred to Mississippi where they fought in the battles of Corinth and Iuka. Price was transferred back to Arkansas in 1863, and



Sterling Price, CSA

participated in the attack on Helena, the defense of Little Rock, and in the Red River Campaign. He was as successful as any other field commander in the Trans-Mississippi, and the small degree of success the Confederacy had gained in these operations was usually due to his leadership. His concern for the welfare of his troops caused them to idolize him, and the Missourians gave him the affectionate nickname of "Old Pap."

But if Sterling Price was a military hero in the popular mind, he wasn't with his superiors. He had been involved in controversies with every general he had served with or under, and harbored resentment toward all of his civilian superiors, up to and including President Davis. Price was a politician whose military outlook was completely colored by his political aspirations. Throughout the war Price's main objective was to free Missouri from Federal rule. This set him at odds with his superiors, who looked upon

the Trans-Mississippi's role as a supporting one.

On March 16, 1864, Price was assigned to command the District of Arkansas, with headquarters at Camden. He accepted the assignment even though he preferred to remain "footloose" to command an expedition that he hoped would throw the yoke of oppression off Missouri, and bring the state into the Confederacy. Finally, in the fall of 1864, he was given his chance. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, commander of the South's Trans-Mississippi Department, made the decision to send Price into Missouri.

Smith was born in Florida to New England parents and was an 1845 graduate of West Point and veteran of the Mexican War. His performance in Virginia and Kentucky early in the Civil War led to his rapid promotion to lieutenant general and command of all the Confederacy west of the Mississippi River. From his headquarters in Shreveport, Louisiana, Smith commanded a vast area that was far removed from the war's major area of operations, and the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863, further isolated him from the rest of the Confederacy. Because of his tremendous responsibilities he was elevated to full general in February 1864.

After repulsing Federal forces in the Red River Campaign in May 1864, Smith began contemplating his next operation. Because Federal naval power made a move against New Orleans impractical, he proposed to destroy the Union outposts in northern Arkansas, then invade Missouri. Accordingly he sent Brig. Gen. Jo Shelby into northeastern Arkansas to attack the Federal supply line between Little Rock and Devall's Bluff, and to recruit for the coming campaign.

Smith directed Price to gather supplies and intelligence in preparation for a northern offensive. But despite these instructions Smith had no intention of allowing Price to lead the campaign. Of all Price's superiors, Smith was especially contemptuous of him. Smith considered Price "castoff material," incapable of "organizing, disciplining, nor operating an army." Smith had given Price command of the District of Arkansas with great reluctance, and hoped it would be only temporary.

Smith hoped to launch the expedition about mid-August, when the troops, horses and equipment used in the Red River Campaign would be rested and refitted. His choice as commander had been Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor, whom he regarded as the best general in his department. Though Taylor accepted the assignment and began outlining a plan of

operations, after quarreling with Smith over the conduct of the Red River Campaign, Taylor requested a transfer east. Smith did not immediately find a replacement for Taylor, but he continued making preparations.

Meanwhile top ranking Missouri officials in favor of secession, both political and military leaders, were growing concerned that the year would end without an attempt to expel Union forces from their state. For the past two years the Trans-Mississippi Confederates had conducted several strategic cavalry raids into the state from bases in Arkansas, each with varying degrees of success. Fear that the pro-Southern element in Missouri would lose hope and reconcile themselves to Union military rule, caused them to advocate another such movement more strongly as the summer of 1864 wore on.

On July 18, 1864, Thomas C. Reynolds, Missouri's Confederate governor-in-exile, wrote to Price and suggested a raid into Missouri. Reynolds felt a small scale raid would be a favorable alternative in the absence of a larger invasion. President Davis, Reynolds claimed, was "impatient for an advance into Missouri" which, even if unsuccessful, would compel the Union to pull forces away from threatened points in Virginia and Georgia. Also, the expedition would be aided by recruiting. Reynolds then asked Price if he would be willing to take command of the raid.

Naturally Price concurred wholeheartedly with Reynolds' suggestion. On July 23, Price sent a similar proposal to Kirby Smith. Price, who believed from his numerous intelligence sources that pro-Southern sentiment in Missouri was strong, told Smith he was "assured that the Confederate flag floats over nearly all the principal towns of North Missouri, and large guerrilla parties are formed and operating in the southern portion of the state." Price believed that at least 30,000 men could be recruited. Two days later Reynolds also wrote to Smith calling for a cavalry raid into Missouri.

Meanwhile the eastern Confederacy was falling into a desperate state of affairs. The summer of 1864 found Lee's Army of Northern Virginia locked in the trenches at Petersburg and Joe Johnston's Army of Tennessee retreating toward Atlanta. As a result the Confederate high command began looking toward the Trans-Mississippi to remedy, or at least relieve the critical situation in the East. On July 22, Gen. Braxton Bragg, military advisor to Jefferson Davis, was in Columbus, Georgia, evaluating the recent Confederate defeats around Atlanta (where John Bell Hood had replaced Johnston). Bragg, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, sent a dispatch to Kirby Smith ordering him to send Gen. Taylor's Infantry east, with other infantry that could be spared to follow later.

The execution of this order was nearly impossible. It failed to consider the individualistic nature of the rugged Trans-

Mississippi Confederate soldier. He possessed little sense of national loyalty to the Confederacy and preferred to fight in his own section of the country where he could be close to "Sarah and the children," as one officer put it.

Also, political leaders in Arkansas took a firm stand against the movement. Governor Harris Flanigan complained bitterly to President Davis, and Senator Augustus Garland told Secretary of War James A. Seddon that the Arkansans would "throw down their arms" before obeying such an order. The men had not been paid in nearly a year, resulting in low morale and increasing desertions. But above all the order failed to recognize the difficulties of moving troops across the Mississippi River, which was constantly patrolled by Union gunboats.



John S. Marmaduke, CSA

Since Smith was unable to send his infantry east, the Missouri Expedition was his only alternative contribution to the war effort, and around the last of July he decided to get it started. Smith was encouraged by Price's favorable predictions and by the fact that nearly all of the Union volunteer regiments that had been raised in Missouri had been sent east, which left only inexperienced militia units scattered across the state. Also, guerrilla activity was so rampant that it appeared Missouri seethed with revolt and was ready to join any major Confederate invasion.

#### THE PLAN

During the first four days of August 1864, Gens. Smith and Price, and Governor Reynolds and other political leaders, met in Shreveport to work out the details of the expedition. Then, on August 4, Smith placed Price in command. The choice was due in all probability to

the supposed influence Price had in Missouri, in addition to the fact that he was the only officer of high enough rank who wanted it, and that Smith was afraid not to name him in view of the trouble that might have resulted. But on the other side of the coin, Smith would get a new district commander and be rid of Price, if only for a while; Price, as commander of the expedition, was forced to relinquish command of the District of Arkansas. He was immediately replaced by Maj. Gen. John Bankhead Magruder, and Price was reassigned to command only the cavalry of the district.

Despite Smith's decision to invade Missouri, he still ordered Taylor to attempt to move his infantry east of the Mississippi. Smith's abandonment of a potentially major offensive by sending his infantry to attempt a crossing that he knew was impossible, instead of sending them into northern Arkansas to support Price's movements in Missouri, was indicative of the lack of confidence he had in Price's ability.

Smith ordered Price to conduct the invasion with only the cavalry of the District of Arkansas, organized in three divisions commanded by Maj. Gen. James F. Fagan and brigadiers John S. Marmaduke and Jo Shelby. St. Louis, with its supplies and military stores, was the primary objective, since acquiring it would "do more to rallying Missouri, than the possession of any other point." If forced to retreat, Price was to move through Kansas and Indian Territory and sweep the country of livestock and military supplies, while bringing back as many recruits as possible. He was additionally instructed to "scrupulously avoid all acts of wanton destruction and devastation," and to impress upon his men that "their aim should be to secure success in a just and holy cause and not to gratify personal feelings and revenge."

Price personally added a political objective—that of gaining control of enough Missouri territory, at least temporarily, to hold an election for a new governor and legislature. This would not only allow Missouri Confederates to keep alive their claim to the state, but also remove Reynolds, a man Price had never been fond of, Reynolds, legitimately fearing his own civil authority might be superseded by military authority under Price, decided to accompany the expedition to keep an eye on events.

Because of a delay in obtaining ordnance stores, Price did not leave Camden until August 28. The following day he arrived in Princeton, Arkansas, and assumed command of Fagan's and Marmaduke's divisions. Price had previously ordered Shelby, who was still in northeastern Arkansas, to attack Devall's Bluff and the railroad between Little Rock and the White River to divert the Federals' attention from his own movements. In an exploit that Price called "one of the most brilliant of the war," Shelby captured six

forts and 400 prisoners, inflicted 300 casualties and destroyed ten miles of track. Though not part of Price's instructions, the forays of Brig. Gen. Stand Watie's Indian Brigade into southern Kansas also helped divert the Federals' attention.

Price, Fagan and Marmaduke marched northward from Princeton on the morning of the 30th. Fearful that his delay in starting had alerted the Federals of his intended route, Price decided to cross the Arkansas River above Little Rock rather than below. After sending a feinting column across the Saline River he turned the main column toward Dardanelle where it arrived on September 6. The men waded the Arkansas the following day, the river being so low that pontoons brought from Camden were not needed. By raising the supplies on the wagons high enough the whole command was able to ford the river.

Once across the Arkansas River, Price had overcome his first major obstacle—breaking through the thin line of Federal outposts along the river, under the command of Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele. Price then moved northeast toward Batesville, Arkansas, with the two divisions in separate columns. After minor skirmishing they reached the White River, 18 miles above Batesville, on September 12, where Price learned that Gen. Shelby was at Powhatan, about 60 miles northeast of Batesville on the route into Missouri. Price then decided on the town of Pocahontas as a rendezvous point, and went to find Shelby.

Despite the fact that northeast Arkansas abounded in slackers, deserters and bandits, Shelby had enrolled about 8,000 men into Confederate service, recruiting those who wished to volunteer and conscripting those who did not. He then

placed them in camps of instruction and organized them into regiments and brigades. After meeting Price near Batesville on the 13th, Shelby ordered his command and the newly-formed units to report to Pocahontas the next day. Price then began organizing his invasion force, which he named the "Army of Missouri."

Maj. Gen. Fagan's Division, the largest in the army, consisted of four brigades of Arkansans. James Fleming Fagan, a native of Clark County, Kentucky, had served in the Mexican War and in the Arkansas legislature. After Arkansas seceded he was commissioned colonel of the 1st Arkansas Infantry, and his distinguished conduct at Shiloh won him a promotion to brigadier general. He was then sent back to the Trans-Mississippi where he took part in the battles of Prairie Grove, Helena and Little Rock. Though he proved to be of average military ability, he was nevertheless promoted to major general prior to the Red River Campaign.

The most formidable brigade in Fagan's Division was that of Virginia-born Brig. Gen. William L. Cabell, whose nickname "Old Tige" (short for "Tiger") reflected his nature. Cabell's Brigade was the largest brigade in the Army of Missouri, consisting of 2,800 "number one" veterans who were well mounted and armed mostly with Enfield rifles, with only a small portion unarmed. Col. William Slemons' Brigade also consisted of veteran troops, but Fagan's other two brigades, those of Cols. Archibald S. Dobbin and Thomas H. McCray, consisted of regiments that had recently been recruited by Shelby.

Another of Price's divisions was commanded by John Sappington Marmaduke, a member of one of Missouri's old aristocratic families. His father, once governor of the state, sent him to Harvard and Yale before securing him an appointment to West Point. Marmaduke graduated from West Point in 1857, and was serving on the frontier when the war began. Marmaduke immediately resigned his second lieutenant's commission, and after serving briefly with the Missouri State Guard he accepted a commission from the Confederacy. His distinguished action as colonel of the 3rd Arkansas Infantry at Shiloh secured him a brigadier's commission, and subsequent battles and raids in Missouri and Arkansas earned him a reputation as a hard fighter.

The backbone of Marmaduke's Division was his old brigade, now commanded by Brig. Gen. John B. Clark, Jr. Clark's father had served under Price as a division commander in the Missouri State Guard in 1861, and he was later a Missouri representative in the Confederate Congress. Aably commanded, Clark's Brigade consisted of 1,200 men whose equipment was fair and horses in "moderate" condition. Marmaduke's other brigade, that of Col. Thomas Freeman, consisted of Arkansans conscripted by Shelby.

Joseph Orville "Jo" Shelby, commander of Price's third division, was a native of

Jo Shelby, CSA (previously unpublished photo, courtesy of Jackson County Historical Society, with special acknowledgment to Craig Higginbotham)



Lexington, Kentucky, and a relative of Revolutionary War hero and first governor of Kentucky, Isaac Shelby. As a young man Jo moved to Waverly, Missouri, where his rope manufacturing business made him one of the wealthiest men in the state. He participated in the Kansas-Missouri border forays of the late 1850s, and in 1861 he entered the Guard as a captain of cavalry, fighting at Wilson's Creek, Lexington and Pea Ridge. In the summer of 1862 he recruited his famous "Iron Brigade" of Missouri cavalrymen and led them through battles in Arkansas. He was promoted to brigadier general for his dashing raid into Missouri in the fall of 1863, and his recent campaign in northeast Arkansas had further enhanced his reputation.

Consequently the Iron Brigade, now commanded by Col. David Shanks, was the best outfit in the Army of Missouri. It was made up of 1,500 tough, battle-hardened Missourians, most of whom carried a revolver or two in addition to a rifle or carbine. Though lax in discipline, they were reliable in battle and would prove the mainstay of the army throughout the campaign. Shelby's other brigade, Col. Sidney D. Jackman's, consisted of 1,600 men recently recruited in Missouri, three-fourths of whom were unarmed.

Though the Army of Missouri was a mounted force, the Iron Brigade was the only real cavalry unit. The other units would serve as mounted infantry. All told, Price had a force of 12,000 troops; however, the Army of Missouri was marred by a number of serious problems. About 4,000 troops were unarmed and 1,000 lacked mounts. Its arms, some of which were issued, others captured or brought from home, were a hodge-podge of calibers, which would make ammunition resupply difficult.

The army had 14 pieces of artillery, but they were all small calibers and mostly smoothbores. The major exception was a four-gun battery of Parrotts in Shelby's Division under the command of Capt. Dick Collins, a hard-fighting artillery officer who believed in engaging his guns alongside the cavalrymen, if not ahead of them. The baggage train, which consisted of about 300 "wheezy" and rickety wagons and ambulances, was indispensable for carrying supplies through a barren country, but a serious impediment to a cavalry column. The brigade of Col. Charles Tyler, which consisted of the unarmed men, assisted teamsters with the wagon train. Discipline was loose, and the newly-formed Arkansas brigades—composed largely of conscripts whose main desire was to go home to "Nancy and the baby"—would shortly prove problematical.

The Army of Missouri spent four days at Pochontas organizing, shoeing mules and horses, distributing ammunition and making other necessary preparations. Speeches were made, reminding the soldiers of the true purpose of the expedition and their expected conduct during

it. On the morning of September 19, 1864, the army marched northward in three columns—Shelby on the left, Price and Fagan with the baggage train in the center, and Marmaduke on the right—with ten to 30 miles between each column to maximize the use of roads and availability of forage. That same day, all three columns crossed into Missouri and headed for Fredericktown, where they were to rendezvous before moving on St. Louis. After minor skirmishing by flanking columns, the army reassembled at Fredericktown on the 25th. Price, for the first time in over two years, was back in Missouri. He was not unexpected.



William S. Rosecrans, USA

It was said that in Missouri during the Civil War there were five seasons: "spring, summer, fall, Price's Raid, and winter." Since 1861, Price or other Missourians had intermittently raided into the state. These raids usually, but not always, occurred in the late summer and fall. Since early spring Price's intentions to invade Missouri had been known through the lodges of the Order of the American Knights, a Copperhead organization in the state. Rumors to this effect became stronger as fall approached, and the ripening of corn added weight to its probability.

Also, the fact that guerrilla bands in Missouri were increasing in size and ferocity helped support the belief that a major Confederate invasion was imminent. Price was known to utilize guerrillas in his operations, and after taking command of the expedition he had sent the guerrillas an order (actually a request) to "make North Missouri as hot as...[they] could for the militia." This, Price hoped, would keep the Union militia's attention away from southern Missouri and St. Louis. The guerrillas,

principally those under "Bloody Bill" Anderson, immediately moved north of the Missouri River and began a campaign of ambush and robbery that placed the area under a reign of terror and paralyzed rail transportation.

#### DISASTER AT PILOT KNOB

Maj. Gen. William Starke Rosecrans, who had been transferred to Missouri the preceding fall after his defeat at Chickamauga, commanded the Federal Department of Missouri, with headquarters at St. Louis. Through intelligence reports and pure common sense he had reason to believe an invasion of his department was looming, but he did not know when and where it would come. To meet the expected emergency Rosecrans had managed to raise five complete and as many more incomplete regiments of 12-month volunteers, and was promised the loan of several One Hundred Day regiments from Illinois.

Then, on September 3, 1864, after learning that Shelby was at Batesville waiting to be joined by Price, Rosecrans requested of Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, the army's Chief of Staff in Washington, that the XVI Corps be sent to his aid. Maj. Gen. Andrew J. Smith's division, which was moving up the Mississippi from Vicksburg to join Sherman in Georgia, was stopped at Cairo, Illinois, and ordered to St. Louis. Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Mower's division, which had been sent to Little Rock in early September to protect that city against Price, moved overland in pursuit on September 18.

After learning that Price had crossed the Arkansas River, but still unsure of his exact route, Rosecrans ordered his district commanders at the Missouri posts of Springfield, Sedalia, Jefferson City and Rolla to concentrate their militia forces. On September 24, Rosecrans received word that Shelby was in the vicinity of Farmington, Missouri, near Fredericktown. Alarmed, Rosecrans ordered Brig. Gen. Thomas Ewing, Jr., commander of the Southeast District, to concentrate his forces at Pilot Knob and Cape Girardeau.

That day, Ewing took one brigade of Smith's infantry and moved south from St. Louis on the Iron Mountain Railroad towards its southern terminus at Pilot Knob, patrolling and strengthening the garrisons at the bridges as they went. Ewing set up temporary headquarters at Mineral Point where he learned that Price was at Fredericktown with a large force. On the 25th, Ewing took one regiment and moved by rail to Pilot Knob where Maj. James Wilson had collected all the available troops in the area. These two forces gave Ewing an aggregate of about a thousand men.

Fort Davidson, a hexagonal shaped earthwork, was the main defensive position at Pilot Knob. It consisted of a nine-foot dirt parapet topped with sandbags,

with its six sides surrounded by a moat ten feet wide and over six feet deep, partially filled with rain water. Two rifle pits ran several hundred yards from the fort to the southwest and north. The fort mounted four 32-pound siege guns, three 24-pound howitzers, three 12-inch mortars, and was bolstered by six field guns. A level plain, broken only by a dry creekbed about 150 yards to the south and east, extended from the fort for about a thousand yards in all directions.

Though the fort was seemingly impregnable to an infantry assault, it was commanded on three sides by mountains, the most prominent of which were Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountain. Both were located about a thousand yards south of the fort, with a narrow pass separating them, and accurate sniper and artillery fire from these heights could soon render the fort untenable. Ewing had chosen the site because a better one could not be found. He had the trails leading up the mountains obstructed and the hillsides facing the fort cleared of timber. His instructions from Rosecrans were to hold the fort against any detachment of the enemy, but to evacuate if the main force moved against him.

That same Tuesday, September 25, Price conferred with his division commanders as to the expedition's future course of action. He had received word that St. Louis was heavily defended and of Ewing's presence at Pilot Knob. Shelby, the junior division commander, wanted to push immediately to St. Louis. His scouts had reconnoitered Pilot Knob, and he did not believe it would justify the cost of an assault. Marmaduke and Fagan, however, urged that Ewing be disposed of before advancing on St. Louis. Price decided on the latter course, ostensibly because he did not want to leave a garrison in his rear; but in all likelihood he concluded that it would be impossible to take St. Louis. An easy victory over Ewing, Price reasoned, would lift his troops' morale and raise the spirits of Confederate sympathizers in the state.

The next morning Price sent Shelby's Division galloping northward to destroy the track and bridges of the Iron Mountain Railroad behind Ewing to prevent him from being reinforced. Price then moved with Fagan's and Marmaduke's divisions west from Fredericktown toward Arcadia. Late in the afternoon Fagan's advance troops ran into Maj. Wilson's pickets at a strategic mountain

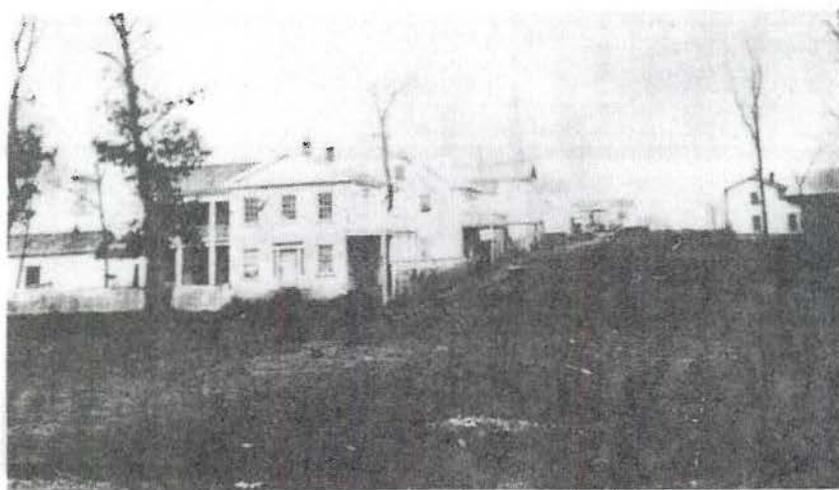


This monument in Ironton, Missouri marks the spot in present-day Emerson Park where Col. Ulysses S. Grant received his commission as a brigadier general in 1861. Erected in 1886 by the survivors of the 21st Illinois Infantry, the inscription reads, "Let us have peace." (Photo by Dave Roth of B&G)

pass called Shut-In Gap, several miles east of Arcadia. After heavy skirmishing the Confederates seized the gap and pressed toward Arcadia with the further intention of moving northward through Ironton to Pilot Knob. Ewing, however, reinforced a detachment he had placed at Ironton and put Wilson in command; this force drove the Confederates back to Shut-In Gap. Then Fagan, closely supported by Marmaduke, drove the Federals back to Arcadia where rain and darkness ended the fighting.

At daylight on the 27th the Confederates attacked and pushed Wilson's men back through Arcadia and Ironton.

Main Street in Ironton, photographed in the early 1860s. This road led north to Fort Davidson. (Photo courtesy of the Ironton Historical Society)



Though the Federals fought desperately to hold the gap between Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountain, they were forced back within the walls of Fort Davidson where the rest of the garrison was preparing for the anticipated attack.

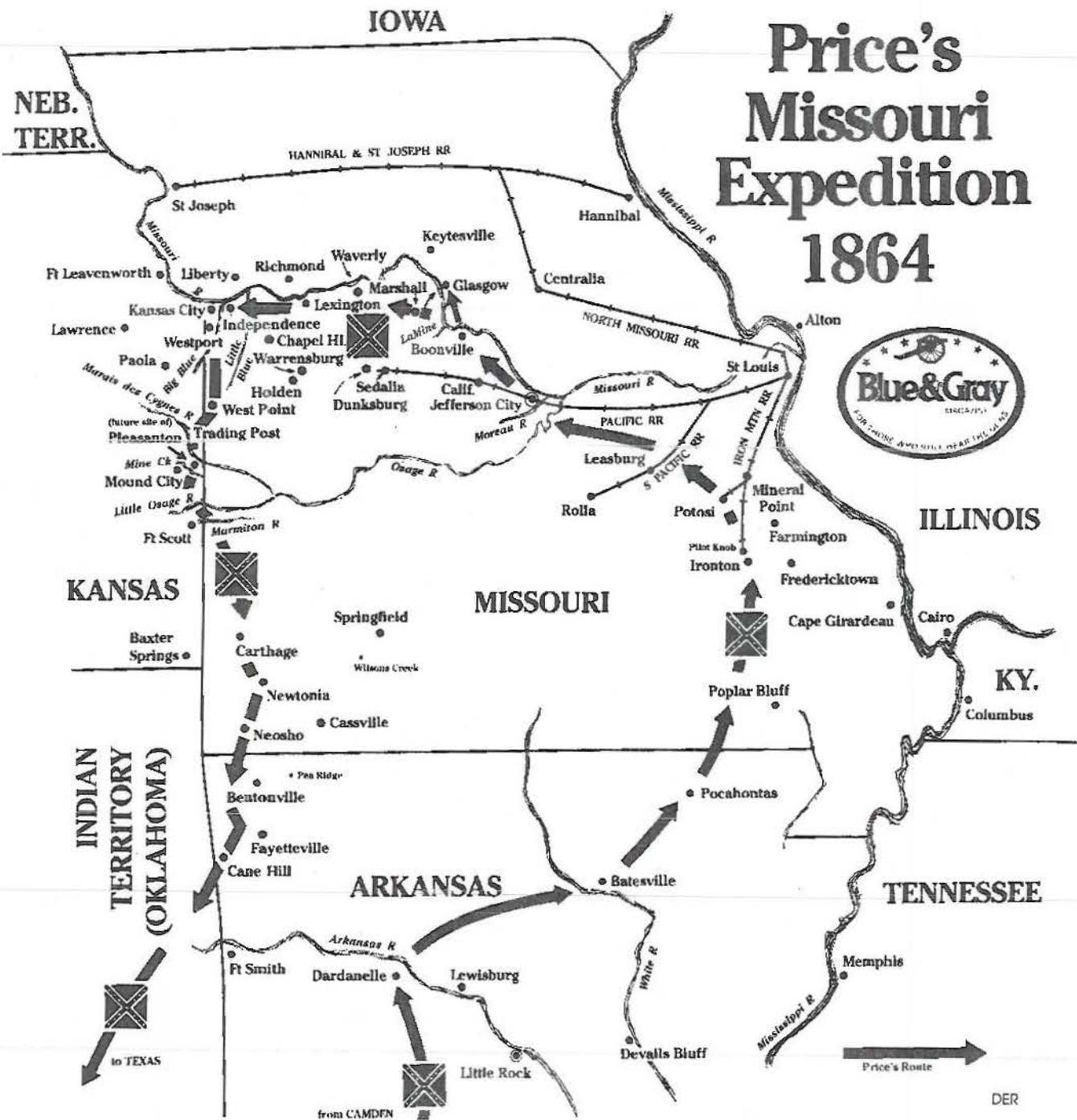
On the advice of his chief engineer, Capt. T. J. Mackey, Price planned to shell the fort. But shortly after opening the bombardment from atop Shepherd's Mountain some local citizens asked him not to shell it, claiming it would endanger the lives of Southern adherents held prisoner inside. This information, which Price apparently did not confirm, undoubtedly led him to agree with Fagan and Marmaduke, who had advocated a direct assault. Price ordered the two division commanders to prepare for an attack.

Marmaduke deployed his division on the north slope of Shepherd's Mountain and Fagan took a position to his right. Cabell's Brigade occupied the gap between the two mountains, with McCray's and Slemons' brigades at the base of Pilot Knob. Dobbin's Brigade was positioned north of the fort to block Potosi Road, the fort's only practical escape route. Drawing on his past experiences, Price personally emphasized to Marmaduke's and Fagan's officers the need for coordination, stressing that both divisions must assault simultaneously and in line.

Before ordering the attack, Price called on Ewing twice to surrender. Ewing refused, believing he could hold out. He also had strong personal reasons for not wanting to be captured. While commanding the District of the Border in 1863, he had issued the infamous Order No. 11 from his headquarters in Kansas City. This order, issued in the wake of William Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Kansas, required the mass eviction of citizens from four border counties in western Missouri, which caused great suffering among the populace. Many of those affected were now serving in, or had relatives in Price's army. Ewing knew that if he were captured he would likely be killed.

His fears were certainly justified. Earlier that day the Confederates had captured Maj. James Wilson—the stalwart defender of Shut-in Gap—whom they held responsible for outrages against Southerners in the Pilot Knob vicinity; Wilson was executed a short time later along with six privates. Furthermore, Ewing's second-in-command was Col. Thomas Fletcher,

# Price's Missouri Expedition 1864



the Republican candidate for governor of Missouri. Ewing, who was the brother-in-law of Gen. William T. Sherman, and Fletcher would have been prize prisoners, and it is possible that their capture was one of Price's ulterior motives in ordering the assault on Fort Davidson.

Around three o'clock on Thursday afternoon, September 27, two cannons on Shepherd's Mountain signaled the advance and Fagan's and Marmaduke's Confederates moved forward on foot. Despite Price's warning the divisions did not keep in line. Marmaduke's men encountered rough terrain while moving down Shepherd's Mountain. Therefore, Fagan's men debouched on the plain first,

where they immediately faced a hailstorm of shot and shell. Fagan's entire right wing, Slemons and McCray, broke before they had advanced 100 yards. Only Cabell's veterans continued charging, moving at the double-quick and stopping occasionally to fire and reload. Though gaps were knocked in their ranks at every step they kept going until they reached the moat, which they found too deep to be scaled without ladders. Then, Gen. Cabell, after having his horse shot from under him, and realizing he wasn't being supported, ordered his men to fall back.

Meanwhile Marmaduke's Division had reached and begun crossing the plain, suffering only slight losses. Then the

Federals, having turned back Cabell, trained their fire against Marmaduke. At the dry creek bed the left portion of Marmaduke's line dived for cover, and even though staff officers cursed and implored, they could not get them moving. Clark's Brigade, taking heavy casualties, kept going and part of them made it to the moat. But lacking support they fled back to the creek bed where they joined Col. Freeman in seeking shelter from the fire of Fort Davidson.

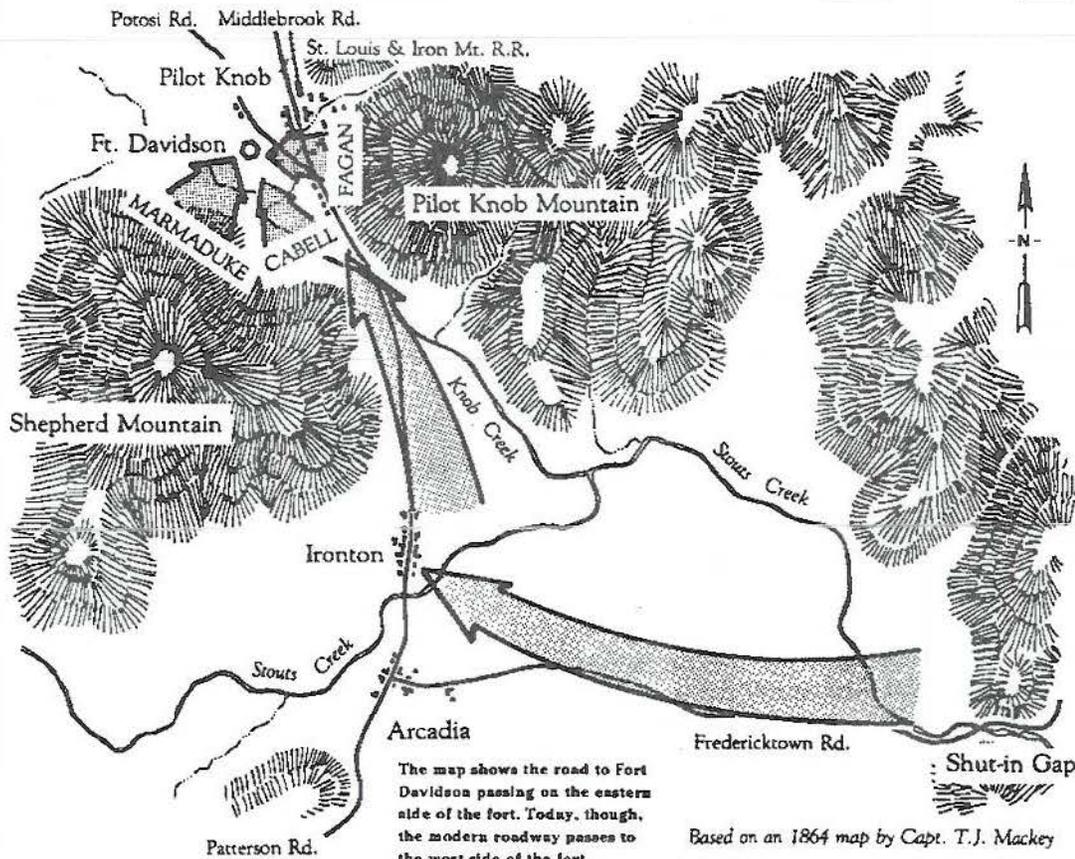
In the meantime, Price had attempted to rally Fagan's troops, who eventually reformed their ranks. Fagan, angered and humiliated by his troops' poor conduct, pleaded with Price for another attack.

# Battle of Pilot Knob

Sept. 26-27  
1864

FORT DAVIDSON STATE HISTORIC SITE

Courtesy of MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



The map shows the road to Fort Davidson passing on the eastern side of the fort. Today, though, the modern roadway passes to the west side of the fort.

Based on an 1864 map by Capt. T.J. Mackey

Price refused. Gen. Cabell, who had argued against attacking from the start, told Price he had made a "damned wise decision" by ending the assault.

After dark, Marmaduke's Division withdrew from the creek bed and the disgruntled Confederates bivouacked for the night. Price, determined to attack the fort the next day, ordered Capt. Mackey's engineers to make scaling ladders and sent Shelby an order to hasten back to Pilot Knob. Shelby did not receive the order, nor a dispatch sent the previous day instructing him to rejoin the main army. Unaware that Price needed him, Shelby continued with his mission on the Iron Mountain Railroad, destroying three bridges and many miles of track. After skirmishing with Union infantry at Mineral Point, Shelby fell back and bivouacked at Potosi, 25 miles northwest of Pilot Knob.

Ewing had won a stunning victory. With fewer than a thousand men—but with strong artillery support—he had repulsed two-thirds of Price's army and inflicted around 1,200 casualties. But his position was perilous. Though he had lost only 73 men in the defense of Fort Davidson, the two days of fighting had reduced his command considerably, and he knew it would be impossible to hold out against the well-coordinated assault he believed Price was

planning. After consulting with his officers, Ewing decided to evacuate the fort and retreat northward by way of Potosi to Mineral Point. Around two o'clock that morning (September 28), Col. Fletcher led the infantry out of the fort and through the trench on the north side to Potosi Road. After covering the drawbridge over the moat with tents and straw to muffle noise, the cavalry and six field guns moved out and joined the infantry.

Although a huge pile of burning charcoal at the north base of Pilot Knob (that had been ignited by exploding shells) made the valley "as light as noonday," the Federals moved out unchallenged. Dobbin's Confederates, who were camped along both sides of the road, made no attempt to stop them. In Col. Fletcher's opinion the Confederates must have seen the column, but probably mistook them for a body of their own troops shifting positions. A detail left behind in the fort blew up the powder and ammunition in the magazine. The explosion shook the valley and hills for miles around, but the Confederates believed it was an accident and did nothing.

Price, who was staying at a house in Arcadia, did not learn until daylight that Ewing's troops had escaped. Infuriated, he ordered Marmaduke to pursue the Unionists. Shelby, even though he had

received neither of Price's two orders, but his railroad mission now completed, had left Potosi and was moving south toward Pilot Knob. Meanwhile Ewing reached Caledonia where he captured some of Shelby's scouts and learned that troops at Mineral Point had retreated. With this new information Ewing moved west toward Rolla. Several hours later Shelby and Marmaduke joined forces and pursued. Although Ewing was on foot and being slowed by refugees that had joined his column, steep cliffs on both sides of the road prevented the mounted Confederates from flanking him, and strong rearguard actions fought by Ewing's artillery prevented the Confederates from charging up the road.

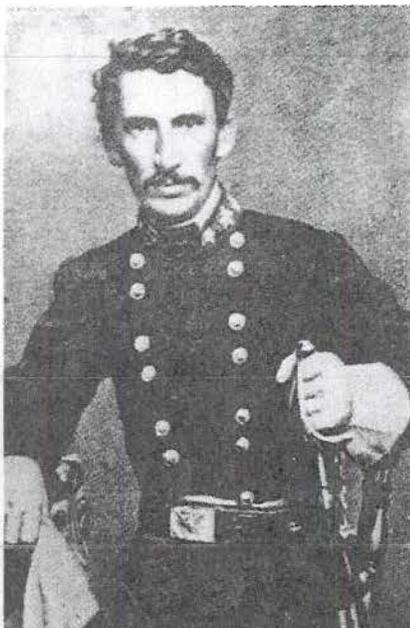
The pursuit continued throughout that day, night, and into the next day. Marmaduke's men dropped back from exhaustion but Shelby pressed ahead. On the evening of Thursday, September 29, Ewing went into a defensive position at Leasburg, and even though Shelby made a heavy attack in the darkness, the Confederates were repulsed. Next morning Shelby and Marmaduke surveyed Ewing's position and decided not to attack. The Confederates then headed for Sullivan's Station to rejoin Price, and Ewing moved to Rolla to help in the defense of that important supply base.

## DEEPER INTO MISSOURI

Price remained in the vicinity of Pilot Knob until September 29. Having abandoned hope of capturing St. Louis, he headed for the Missouri capital, Jefferson City, where he hoped to achieve his political goals. During the first week in October, the Army of Missouri wound its way leisurely across the central part of the state. Rampaging far and wide, they captured countless small and isolated militia garrisons, "liberated" dozens of towns, tore up track and burned bridges of the Pacific Railroad, and "exchanged" worn out horses for fresh ones.

They also looted. Price had issued strict orders against looting before the army left Pochahontas, but the practice began in the vicinity of Pilot Knob, where Price appointed Lt. Col. John P. Bull as provost marshal of the army. Bull organized a 50-man provost guard for each brigade to prevent straggling and plundering, but lawlessness continued. The army's wide dispersion, with its main column stretched out for five or six miles, made it difficult for the guards to maintain control.

Slow movement of the cumbersome wagon train gave the soldiers ample time to roam about and forage. The train, which originally consisted of about 300 wagons, soon grew to over 500 wagons, many of which were being used to carry the "fruits" of the expedition. Accompanying the train



M. Jeff Thompson, CSA

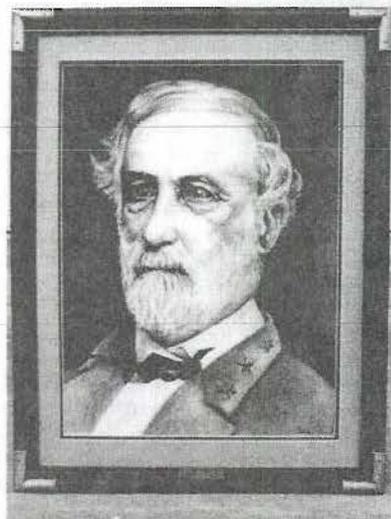
were many stragglers, described by one observer as "a rabble of deadheads." The incompetence and indifference of many of the line officers, and the fact that much of the army consisted of unwilling conscripts, added to the slow rate of march and lack of discipline. As time went on, the more seasoned veterans began to

fear that "the odious train would occasion disaster to the army."

On October 6, Shelby forced a crossing of the Osage River six miles below Jefferson City (see the color photo on Pg. 49). During the fighting, Col. David Shanks, commander of the Iron Brigade, fell mortally wounded. Shelby replaced him with Col. Moses Smith of the 11th Missouri Cavalry, but the following day Price ordered Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson of the Missouri State Guard to command his star unit. Thompson, who early in the war had earned the reputation as the "Swamp Fox" of southeastern Missouri, had joined the expedition at Pilot Knob without an assignment, having been only recently exchanged as a prisoner. (Thompson's rank of brigadier general was a Missouri State Guard appointment, not an official Confederate commission.)

Meanwhile Union Gen. Rosecrans had been keeping A. J. Smith's infantry division positioned between Price and St. Louis. But after Rosecrans determined that the Confederates were moving west, he ordered Smith's men to follow. Gen. Mower's division of the XVI Corps, which had moved overland from Little Rock to Cape Girardeau, moved to St. Louis by river transport. Once rested and refitted Mower's men were sent by water to Jefferson City.

CONTINUED on Page 48



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Rosecrans had placed Brig. Gen. Clinton Fisk, commander of the Union District of North Missouri, in charge of the defenses of Jefferson City, and by October 7, the city was ringed with formidable entrenchments. Fisk, knowing he did not have enough men to operate offensively against Price, placed all of his cavalry under Col. John F. Phillips and sent them to the Osage River with orders to vigorously contest Price's passage, then withdraw to the city. But after retreating from the Osage on the 6th, Phillips took up a new position behind the Moreau River where he was joined by Brig. Gens. John Sanborn and John McNeil and their cavalry from Springfield and Rolla.

On the morning of the 7th, Fagan assumed the Confederate advance and pushed toward the capital city. At the Moreau River he met stiff resistance, but gradually pushed the Federal cavalry back to the city's defenses. The Confederates then occupied the heights in full view of the city, the capitol, and the fortifications. But after reconnoitering and exchanging a few shots, Price pulled back two miles to the south and bivouacked. He had received information that 15,000 troops were defending Jefferson City, and was undoubtedly fearful of a repeat of the Pilot Knob disaster. After consulting with his division commanders, Gen. Price decided to move toward the Missouri-Kansas border, hoping to recruit as many men as possible from the strongly pro-Confederate hemp and tobacco counties along the Missouri River. That night Price ordered Shelby to move west immediately, and the next day the main army made a demonstration before the capital city's fortifications, then the Army of Missouri pulled back and moved west.

That same day, October 8, Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton arrived in Jefferson City and assumed command of all the mounted forces in that area. Pleasonton had commanded the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac, but was such an opportunist and glory-seeker—not to mention his habitual lying—that he ran afoul of Gens. George G. Meade and U.S. Grant, who had transferred him to Missouri. Though Pleasonton was still smarting from the order that had shelved him in an obscure theater, he was eager to fight and redeem himself. He immediately sent Gen. Sanborn and all of the cavalry after the Confederates with orders to harass them but not to push them too hard. Pleasonton remained in Jefferson City to finalize plans

with Rosecrans, who had ordered Smith's and Mower's infantry divisions to that point.

On the afternoon of the 9th, Shelby, far in the Confederate advance, overwhelmed a small militia force at Boonville. Price and the main column reached that place on the 10th, where the city's pro-Southern element turned out and gave the ragged troopers an enthusiastic welcome. About 1,200 recruits joined the army during its stay in Boonville, but most of them were unarmed.



**Alfred Pleasonton, USA**—As a result of his successful efforts against Price's army in 1864, the town of Pleasonton in eastern Kansas was named for him. It always bothered Pleasonton that the well meaning Kansans misspelled his name.

Additionally, about a hundred guerrillas under Capt. William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson reported to Price at Boonville. On September 27, the same day Price attacked at Pilot Knob, Anderson and his gang had stopped a train at Centralia and executed 22 unarmed Union soldiers found on board, and later that day they ambushed and killed, almost to a man, a 150-man militia force that was pursuing them. Anderson, whose one sister had been killed and another permanently crippled in the collapse of a Kansas City prison where Union authorities were holding them, was a psychopathic killer, as were many of his men; Anderson and

several of his cutthroats had Union soldiers' scalps decorating their bridles. Price, though disapproving of these ghastly trophies, nevertheless took advantage of the extra manpower and immediately ordered Anderson to operate against the North Missouri Railroad, and sent orders to other guerrillas to destroy the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad.\*

On the 11th, Sanborn attacked the Confederates east of Boonville, but Fagan and Marmaduke drove him back several miles. Next day, the Army of Missouri left Boonville, its citizens probably as glad to see them leave as they had been to see them arrive. The troops had continued their looting and, according to Governor Reynolds, "the wholesale pillage in [Boonville] made it impossible to obtain anything by purchase"; stragglers even robbed families of Confederate soldiers.

Having learned there was a large number of arms stored at Glasgow, Missouri, Price ordered Gen. Clark to take his and Col. Jackman's brigades across the Missouri River and assault the town at dawn on the 15th, while Shelby supported them from the west bank with sharpshooters and a section of Collins' Battery. Clark and Jackman crossed the river by raft at Arrow Rock on the 14th, but due to delays in crossing were about an hour late in attacking. Therefore, Shelby's opening up with his guns on time gave the Federal garrison, which consisted of 800 men under Col. Chester Harding, plenty of time to prepare.

Clark and Jackman met Harding east of Glasgow and quickly pushed him back to his main works in the center of town, then the Confederates advanced under the cover of houses and fences. (See the Map on Pg. 51.) Harding surrendered when the Confederates got to within 50 yards of his earthworks. He and his men were paroled and escorted to Boonville to prevent their being killed by guerrillas. Harding had burned all of the military supplies that he could before surrendering, but Clark still captured 1,200 muskets and overcoats, 150 horses, and a steamboat used for ferrying recruits across the river.

Simultaneously, Price ordered Jeff Thompson and the Iron Brigade to attack the Federal garrison at Sedalia. On the 14th they moved to Longwood, where they were joined by a battalion of recruits under Lt. Col. Alonzo Slayback and learned that Sanborn's Union cavalry had passed between Longwood and Sedalia that day. On October 15, Thompson learned that Smith's Federal infantry was not far away

\*See the article on Bloody Bill Anderson that begins on Pg. 32 of this issue.



Samuel R. Curtis, USA

on the LaMine River. Believing he could operate between these two bodies of enemy troops and escape, Thompson headed for Sedalia. The Iron Brigade hit Federal pickets on the main road into town, drove them into their earthworks, and opened on them with a section of Collins' Battery. The Federals evacuated the earthworks and fled Sedalia. Thompson captured a few hundred muskets and pistols along with several wagonloads of military supplies. The prisoners were then paroled, and after dark the Iron Brigade moved back to find the main army.

While the side expeditions to Glasgow and Sedalia were in progress, Price halted his main force west of Marshall for two days. Many of Shelby's and Clark's men were from this area and they took unofficial leave to visit their families. But if the Missourians enjoyed a holiday, the Arkansas troops suffered from hunger and sickness. Gen. Fagan was unfamiliar with the country and unable to make adequate arrangements to supply his command with food, clothing and blankets. As a result, "catarrh, bronchitis, pneumonia, rheumatic affections and glandular swellings" ran rampant in the Arkansas division.

#### ON TO KANSAS CITY

After Clark and Thompson rejoined the army, Price moved to Waverly where he camped on the night of October 18. The following morning he marched toward Lexington, the scene of his great victory in 1861. But time was running out for Old Pap. His delays and slow rate of march since leaving Jefferson City gave

the Federals time to mobilize their forces. North of Price was a bridgeless Missouri River. Behind him was Gen. Rosecrans with 9,000 infantrymen under A. J. Smith and 7,000 cavalrymen under Alfred Pleasonton. And waiting for him around Kansas City with a force of 20,000 was Maj. Gen. Sam Curtis.

Fifty-nine year old Samuel Ryan Curtis, the son of a Revolutionary War veteran, was an 1831 graduate of West Point. After serving in the army one year, he resigned his commission and went into civil engineering in Ohio and studied law. He served in the Mexican War, then moved to Iowa where he was elected to Congress in 1856. Curtis was serving his third successive term when the war broke out and he resigned his seat to accept a commission. In 1862 he led the Federal force that defeated Price and Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn at the battle of Pea Ridge, and Curtis was then given the command of the Department of Missouri. His meddling in Missouri's volatile political situation caused his removal by President Lincoln, and Curtis was reassigned to the Department of Kansas. There his districts included Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, and upper Arkansas.

Curtis had first learned of Price's movements in Missouri on September 17,

after returning to his headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, from an extended operation on the plains against hostile Indians. With most of the 7,000 troops in his department scattered in remote places, he began concentrating those immediately available. Five cavalry regiments were stationed along the Kansas-Missouri border, and a force under Maj. Gen. James G. Blunt, still chasing Indians west of Fort Larned, was recalled to Fort Leavenworth. Needing more troops, Curtis knew he must call on the Kansas State Militia. On the 20th he requested of Kansas Governor Thomas Carney that the militia "be ready to cooperate against the foe." Carney replied that he would have the militia stand by, but expressed reluctance for them to serve in the field. Curtis then assured Carney that he hoped to use the Kansas militiamen for garrison duty only.

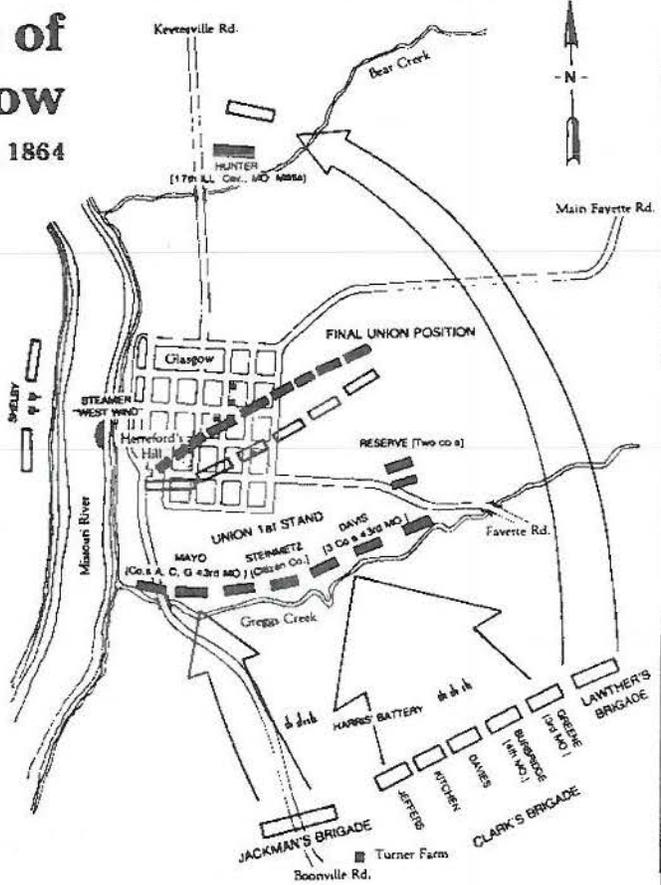
Governor Carney's lack of alarm over an impending Confederate thrust into Kansas was due to several reasons. First, Price's exact movements and intentions were not known. Second, the people of Kansas felt more secure than they had since the war began, the Confederacy's main Trans-Mississippi forces being far south in Arkansas and Texas. Closer to home, Gen. Ewing's Order No. 11 had

## Battle of Glasgow

October 15, 1864

The Battle of Glasgow is periodically commemorated by a reenactment, on the actual battlefield.

Courtesy of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Missouri Civil War Reenactors Assn., Missouri River Society, and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources



helped push the guerrilla operations away from Kansas and into central Missouri. The only real menace to Kansas was the Indians, and their threat was limited to the far western settlements. Believing the war was over for them, most Kansans were more interested in the upcoming state election between Carney and another Republican, Samuel Crawford, who was being backed by Senator James Lane, a powerful political figure.

Governor Carney, like many members of his faction, believed it was unlikely that Price would invade Kansas. Moreover, Carney and his followers regarded Gen. Curtis as little more than a tool of Senator Lane. Furthermore, they suspected that Curtis' design in mobilizing the Kansas State Militia was simply a political trick to keep voters from the polls, either preventing the election or making it possible for the Lane faction to win it. Lane's past political career and his reputation as an unscrupulous character made it easy for his opponents to believe he was capable of such a scheme.

On October 8, Curtis had placed Maj. Gen. James Gillpatrick Blunt in command of the District of South Kansas and opposition to the mobilization intensified. The Carney faction regarded it as a scheme to put Blunt in command of the Kansas State Militia. Blunt, a native of Maine who had been strongly involved in the abolitionist politics of territorial Kansas, was a bitter enemy of Governor Carney, and Blunt was considered to be Lane's political and military henchman.

Blunt's entry into the Civil War was simply an extension of his Jayhawking career, but he quickly proved himself an aggressive fighter, distinguishing himself in the campaign to take northwestern Arkansas. But in October 1863, along with 100 members of his escort, he was ambushed by William Quantrill's guerrillas at Baxter Springs, Kansas. Nearly all of Blunt's men were slaughtered and the general himself only barely escaped. Since that time Blunt had been under censure, and the force he was leading near Fort Larned consisted of only a battalion. He was now more than eager to restore his reputation.

On October 9, Curtis received word from Rosecrans that Price had left Jefferson City and was moving west toward the Kansas border. Carney then had no choice but to call out the Kansas Militia, which he placed under the command of Brig. Gen. George W. Deltzler. The following day Curtis declared martial law to bolster the proclamation and began organizing the Army of the Border. Businesses closed and harvesting stopped as men poured into rendezvous points. By the 15th, 15,000 men were assembled along

the state line. But there was still distrust among the leaders, which was a forecast of future troubles.

Blunt established headquarters at Paola, Kansas, but on the 14th moved to Hickman Mills, Missouri, where he organized the Provisional Cavalry Division of the Army of the Border. Col. Charles R. "Doc" Jennison of "Kansas Redlegs" fame and Col. Thomas Moonlight commanded the First and Second brigades, respectively, both of which consisted of volunteers. Col. Charles Blair, commander of



James G. Blunt, USA

the Fort Scott garrison, commanded the Third Brigade, which consisted of militia and a few volunteers. The militia was under the direct control of Brig. Gen. William Fishback and Col. James Snoddy. A few days later, Fishback and Snoddy, who thought the whole Price scare was a hoax, attempted to take the militia back to Kansas, but they were overtaken by Blunt, placed under arrest, and the militiamen were marched back to Hickman Mills where they elected new officers.

Curtis planned to defend first at the Big Blue River, and if forced to retreat, to fall back to the entrenchments at Kansas City. He had been strengthening the earthworks around Kansas City ever since he learned of Price's presence, and now he ordered Col. Blair and the Third Brigade to the Big Blue where they aided the engineers in felling trees and constructing abatis, breastworks and rifle pits. All the while, the Carney faction insisted that the Kansas State Militia not be moved east of the Big Blue.

After dark on the 16th, Blunt moved the First and Second brigades to Pleasant Hill in an effort to locate Price. The following morning Blunt moved to Holden where he was joined by a band of militia from Warrensburg which reported that Shelby's Confederates had captured Sedalia and were now entering Warrensburg. Hoping to verify this information, Blunt sent a detachment of militia back to Warrensburg while he rested his command. After dark Blunt learned by telegraph that Price was below Waverly, that Union Gen. A. J. Smith was at California, Missouri, and that Pleasanton was 12 miles northwest of Sedalia.

Blunt, hoping to unite with these forces and destroy Price, sent Curtis a request for additional troops to be sent to Lexington, and then headed there himself. Blunt arrived at Lexington the following day, October 18, and received definite word that Price was at Waverly, 20 miles east. The following morning Blunt received word from Curtis that no troops could be sent to Lexington because of the uncertain situation with the Kansas State Militia. Blunt then deployed his forces on an open plain east and south of Lexington, hoping to resist Price's advance long enough to develop the enemy's strength and intentions.

Meanwhile Price had received word of Blunt's seizure of Lexington, and on the morning of the 19th the Army of Missouri moved west from Waverly toward Lexington in three columns. Around two o'clock that afternoon Shelby's Division, in the middle, struck Blunt's pickets about a mile east of Lexington. Though the Federals resisted stubbornly, they

eventually fell back as Fagan and Marmaduke moved more troops to Shelby's assistance. Gen. Blunt, realizing his flanks were in danger, ordered a withdrawal down the Independence Road, with Col. Moonlight's Second Brigade covering the rear. Shelby's men followed, pursuing the Federals well after nightfall.

Blunt continued his retreat throughout the night, and next morning, the 20th, he reached the Little Blue River, nine miles east of Independence. After finding the west side of the stream suitable for a defense, Blunt positioned his men and artillery and sent a request to Curtis that food and the remainder of the volunteer troops be sent forward. But Curtis, in turn, instructed Blunt to leave two or three squadrons at the Little Blue and to fall back to Independence.

Blunt, however, left Col. Moonlight's entire brigade behind with instructions to report any contact with Price and to resist his advance as long as possible. At Independence, where Governor Carney

and his political staff were trying to induce disaffection in the ranks of the Kansas militiamen, Blunt argued with Curtis over the importance of defending at the Little Blue. Blunt pointed out that if Confederate cavalry crossed that stream they would be in open country and able to fan out and flank to the south of the fortifications on the Big Blue; the situation with the Kansas militia, however, made it necessary for Curtis to defend farther west at the Big Blue. (See color photo, Pg. 55.)

### THE BATTLE OF WESTPORT

Price's Army of Missouri spent the night of October 19 at Lexington, and the following day moved west to Fire Prairie Creek. At dawn of October 21, they continued westward, with Clark's Brigade of Marmaduke's Division in the advance. Around seven o'clock that morning, Clark's skirmishers ran into Moonlight's pickets about a mile east of the Little Blue. The Federals quickly fell back across the river and pushed a wagonload of burning hay onto the bridge, forcing Clark to cross at a ford a half-mile below. Clark ordered his regiments into line as quickly as they got across, and Freeman's Brigade followed. Moonlight's Federals began falling back, utilizing stone fences, trees and ravines for cover. Much of the fighting was at close range, with Gen. Marmaduke having three horses shot from under him in the running fight.

That morning Curtis changed his mind and decided to delay Price as long as possible at the Little Blue. As Gen. Blunt was leaving Independence with the First Brigade and his newly-formed Fourth Brigade under Col. James H. Ford, Blunt received word from Moonlight that Price was attacking in force. Blunt pushed rapidly for the Little Blue and arrived just as Moonlight's Second Brigade had been driven back to the crest of the bluegrass ridges a mile west of the river. Federal cavalry quickly deployed and began forcing Marmaduke back.

Price then called on Shelby, who was in the rear behind Fagan. The men of the Iron Brigade shouted insults and catcalls at the Arkansans as they galloped forward to clear the way. Shelby deployed on Marmaduke's right, giving the Confederates the advantage in numbers. Though Blunt had superiority in position and firepower (repeating weapons), he soon found his flanks in danger and ordered a withdrawal. Shelby pressed the retreating Federals all the way to Independence, where skirmishing in the streets and sniping from the houses continued until darkness ended the fighting on the west side of town. According to Shelby (who had not been at Pilot Knob), the campaign up to this time had been a "walk-over," but at the Little Blue this ceased to be the case.

That evening Blunt joined Curtis west of the Big Blue. Though Curtis' defensive

line ran from the mouth of the Big Blue on the Missouri River, 15 miles south to Russell's Ford, he had concentrated most of his forces at the main ford on the Independence Road. Curtis believed that since this was the most direct route into Kansas City it was the one Price would take. But Blunt argued that Price would try to flank them at one of the smaller fords upriver. After failing to convince Curtis, Blunt sent Moonlight and Jennison with their brigades to guard Simmons' and Byram's fords, where secondary roads running from Independence to Westport crossed the Big Blue. Farther south, at Russell's Ford, a force of 1,200 militiamen waited under Brig. Gen. M. S. Grant. (Grant's rank was a state commission in the militia service.)

With Curtis in position it was imperative that Rosecrans move quickly on Price's rear. But Curtis and Rosecrans had lost telegraph communication with one another due to the fact that the Confederates were now between them. Therefore, Curtis sent a scout, Dan Boutwell of the Kansas State Militia, through the Confederate army with a request that Rosecrans hurry forward. After a night of hairbreadth escapes Boutwell found Gen. Pleasonton and gave him Curtis' request.

Gen. Pleasonton had caught up with the cavalry at Dunksburg, Missouri, on the 19th, and immediately organized the Provisional Cavalry Division of the Department of Missouri. The First, Second and Third brigades consisted of Missouri State Militia and were under the commands of Brig. Gens. Egbert Brown, John McNeil and John B. Sanborn. The Fourth Brigade, under Col. Edward F. Winslow,

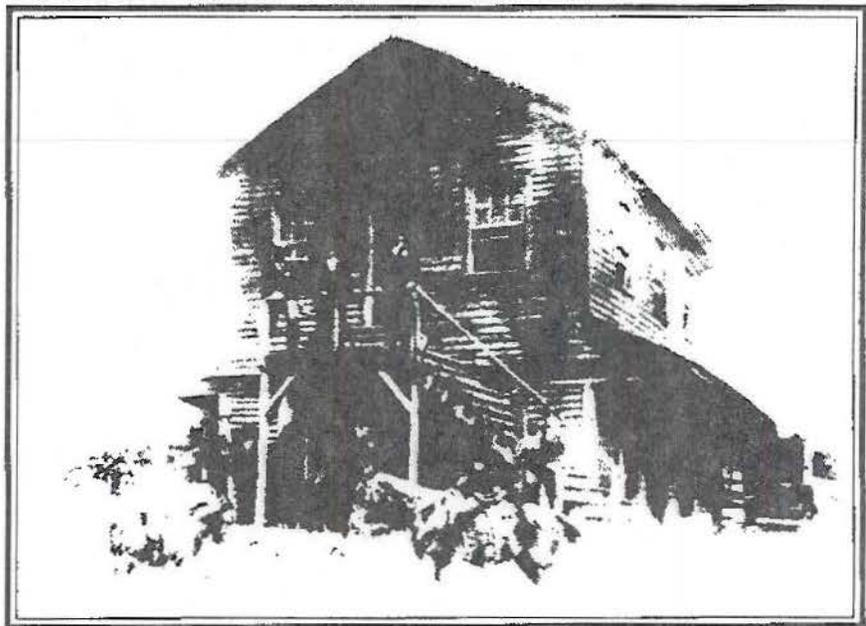
consisted of the cavalry from Gen. Mower's division. All told, Pleasonton had a force of 7,000. From Dunksburg, Pleasonton had moved west and was camped on the east bank of the Little Blue when Boutwell found him on the morning of the 22nd. Pleasonton then crossed the Little Blue and pushed rapidly toward Independence.

That same morning, October 22, Price's Army of Missouri moved toward Kansas City with Shelby in the advance and Marmaduke and Fagan protecting the wagon train. Shelby ordered Col. Jackman's brigade to make a feint at the main ford, and then Shelby moved with Jeff Thompson and the Iron Brigade to Byram's Ford.

As the Confederates attempted to cross at the ford they met stiff resistance from Jennison, who was in a strong position on the west bank. Shelby then sent flanking forces up and downstream and they quickly dislodged Jennison. After crossing to the west bank, Thompson detached Col. Frank B. Gordon's 5th Missouri Cavalry to guard the left flank of the wagon train, and then pressed after Jennison. Jackman, having completed his mission at the main ford, moved south and joined Shelby.

When Curtis realized the Confederates were flanking him, he immediately alerted Gen. Blunt and Kansas State Militia Gen. Grant. Blunt, upon hearing the firing at Byram's Ford, ordered Col. Moonlight to help Jennison. Moonlight arrived too late, but comprehending what had happened he moved toward Westport, where he hoped to unite with Jennison and prevent Shelby from entering Kansas.

Westport city hall, built sometime before 1850, pictured here about 1890. At the time of the Civil War, Westport rivaled Kansas City as an important city on the trails of western expansion. Now Westport has been absorbed into greater Kansas City. (Photo courtesy of the Westport Historical Society, Harris-Kearney House)



Grant, with his militiamen on the south end of the Federal line, sent large scouting parties in all directions when he heard the Confederates were flanking them. About 300 of Grant's state troops, under the command of Col. George Veale of the 2nd Kansas State Militia, were falling back to join Jennison when they ran headlong into Gordon's 5th Missouri at the Mockbee farm. Knowing they could not outrun the Confederate cavalry, the militiamen formed a battle line and opened fire with their rifles and howltzer. After two unsuccessful charges against the Kansans, Gordon called to Shelby for help. Shelby sent Jackman and the reinforced Confederates charged straight through the Kansans' ranks, killing and capturing over 200 of them and scattering the rest.

Meanwhile Jennison and Moonlight had joined forces and were pushing Thompson back. At dusk Thompson broke contact and fell back to the Mockbee farm. After dark Jennison and Moonlight retired to Westport. Curtis, aware that Shelby had broken his line at Byram's Ford, ordered his forces at the main ford to fall back to the defenses of Kansas City.

That same afternoon Pleasonton closed on the rear of Price's army. After crossing the Little Blue, the Provisional Cavalry Division pressed toward Independence with McNeill in the advance. He struck Fagan's pickets east of town and pushed them back, while Sanborn charged into town from the northeast. Sanborn's lead regiment, the 1st Arkansas (Union) Cavalry, cut off and captured about 300 members of Cabell's Confederate brigade. Gen. Cabell narrowly missed capture, and escaped by jumping his horse over a cannon, galloping through the dogtrot of a cabin, then jumping over a backyard fence. Though the Confederates offered some resistance, most fled, throwing away equipment and abandoning two guns.

Pleasonton, with hope of intercepting the Confederate wagon train, ordered McNeill to move south to Little Santa Fe. Having heard nothing from Curtis, Pleasonton then requested that Smith's Infantry be sent to his aid. Rosecrans reluctantly ordered Smith, who was at Chapel Hill, to shift north to Independence. Meanwhile Gen. Brown and the First Brigade, who were pushing after the Confederates, exhausted their ammunition and had to fall back to Independence. Col. Winslow and the Fourth Brigade then assumed the advance and attacked recklessly in the dark. Clark's Brigade was now the Confederate rearguard, and although they resisted fiercely, they steadily retreated down Byram's Ford Road. At ten-thirty that night Pleasonton called off the pursuit and ordered Brown to move forward to relieve Winslow, and to resume the attack by daylight.

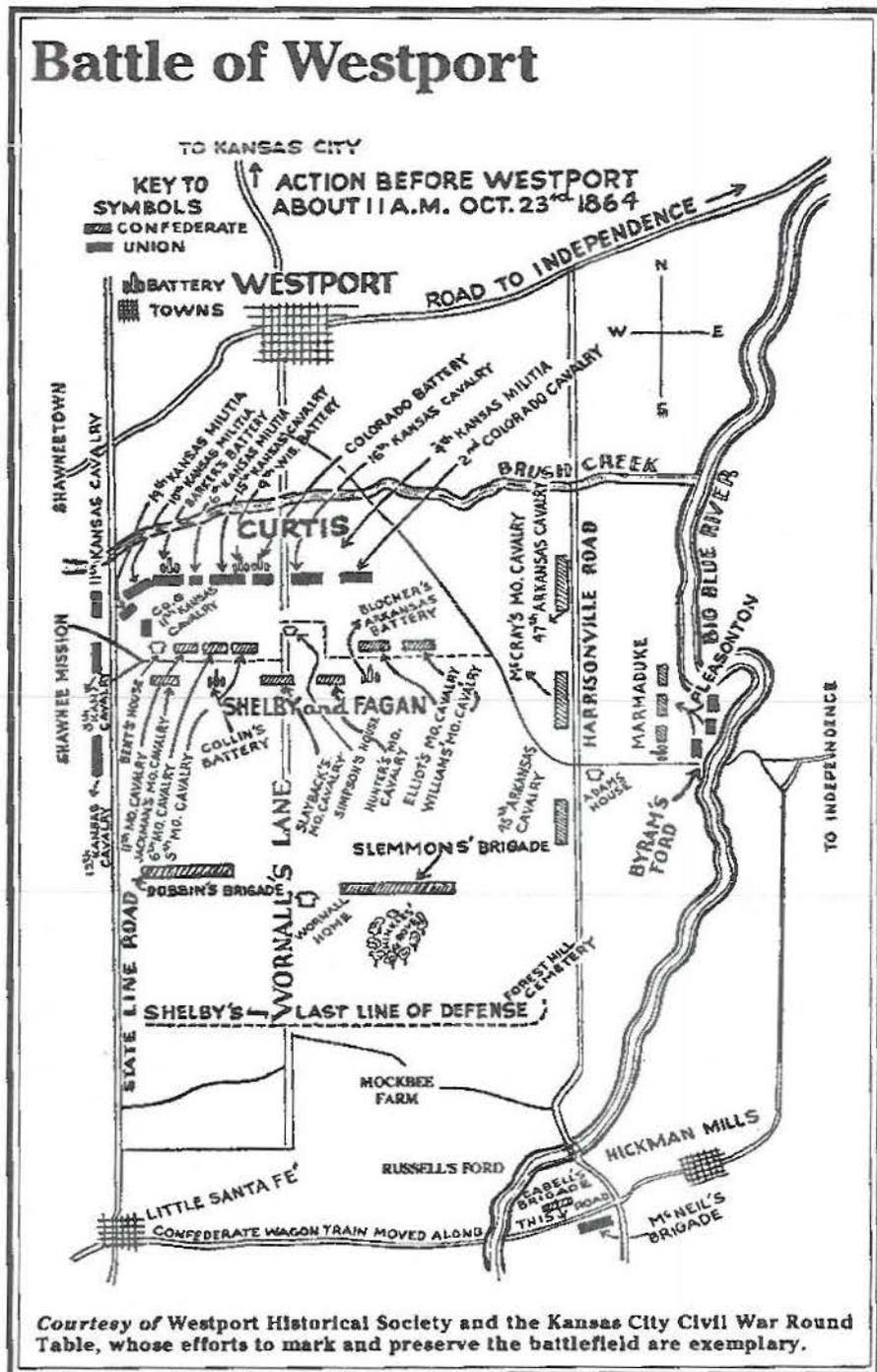
Price's main objective that night was getting his train to safety, but he still had hopes of defeating Curtis before confronting Pleasonton. The wagon train and recruits were sent south on the

Harrisonville Road toward Little Santa Fe, with the remnant of Cabell's Brigade to protect them. Price ordered Shelby and Fagan to move toward Westport at dawn and to attack Curtis, and he posted Marmaduke on the west bank of Byram's Ford with instructions to resist Pleasonton's advance.

Curtis also decided to take the offensive at dawn. He ordered Gen. Blunt to position his division along Brush Creek, two miles south of Westport. Blunt deployed Jennison's and Ford's brigades in the timber along the north bank of the

creek, and positioned Moonlight where he could strike the Confederate left flank or move in behind and support Ford and Jennison. As more militiamen became available, Curtis ordered them south to support Blunt.

At dawn of Sunday, October 23, Shelby moved northward with two of Fagan's brigades in support. Simultaneously Blunt ordered the Union advance, and Ford and Jennison moved across Brush Creek through a stand of timber and over the heights to the prairie. When the two sides clashed in the morning mists the Federals



fell back to the timber where they were able to stop the Confederates. But after an hour the Union cavalrymen retreated across Brush Creek.

Shelby did not press his advantage. He had to wait for ammunition to be brought up, and even though it reached him within an hour the Confederate initiative had been lost. Meanwhile Gen. Curtis arrived at Westport and took charge. He ordered Blunt to reconnoiter the front and adjust the line to accommodate the militia that was coming down from Kansas City. All the while, the opponents continued skirmishing and cannonading, with little damage to either side.

When Col. Blair's brigade reached its position Curtis ordered the line forward. About that time a German farmer, George Thoman, who was out looking for his mare that had been stolen by Confederates the previous night, offered to show Curtis a defile that led to the prairie south of the heights. Curtis accepted, and followed Thoman up a narrow gulch that brought them over the heights to a position squarely on Shelby's left flank. Curtis immediately ordered the 9th Wisconsin Battery forward and into action.

Shelby's men, totally surprised by the flanking artillery fire, fell back across a small valley. There they held as Collins brought his battery into position to engage the Wisconsin guns. Meanwhile the Confederate retreat allowed Blunt to advance over the heights to the stone fences the Confederates had just evacuated. The



George Thoman—the farmer who acted as Curtis' guide. (Photo courtesy of the Westport Historical Society.)

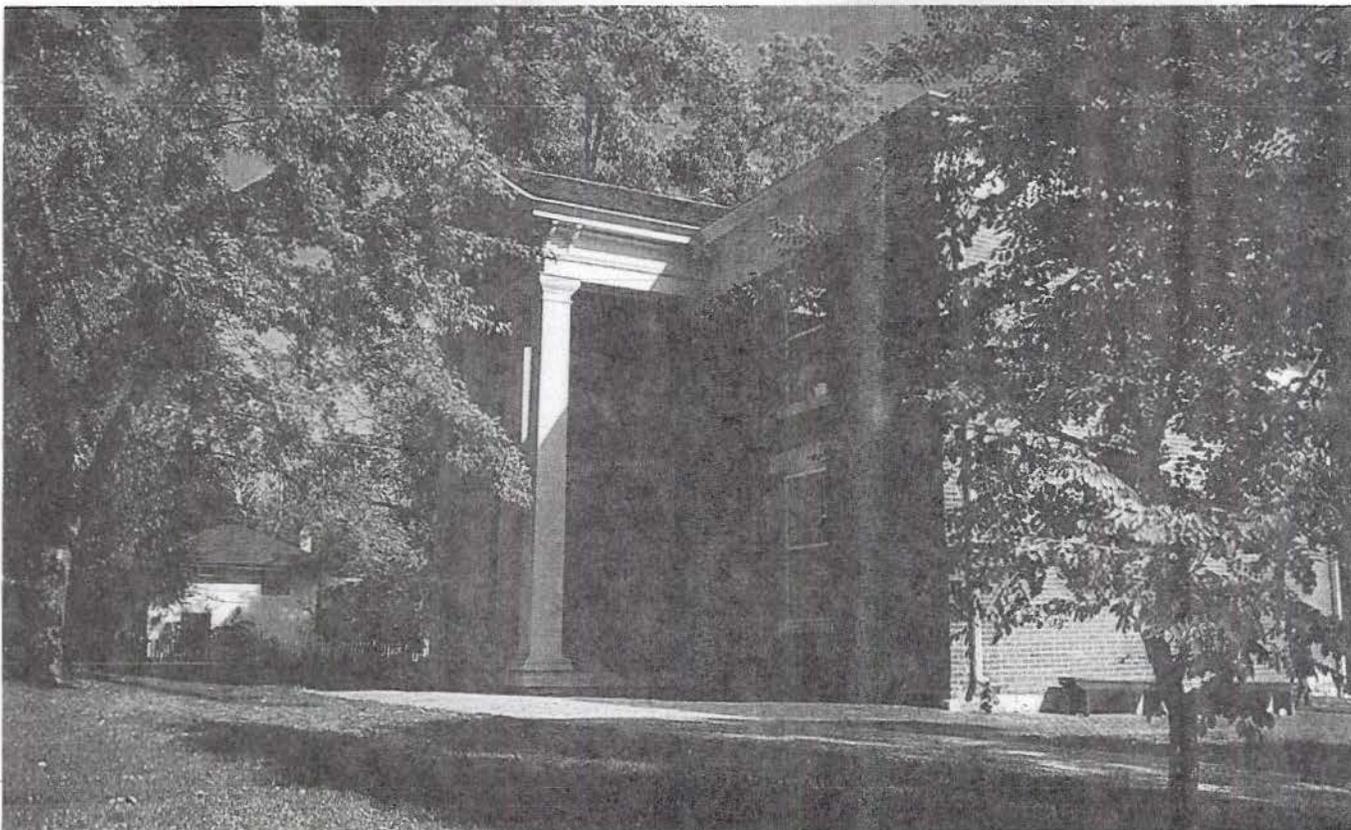
Federals halted briefly to adjust their lines, then for the next two hours the rolling prairie south of the heights of Brush Creek became the scene of cavalry charges and counter-charges, hand-to-hand combat on horseback, and close range artillery duels. The Confederates were pushed slowly southward.

As the lines moved so did the artillery. One of Collins' guns burst at the first fire, but he fought on with the remaining three. Curtis had more than 30 guns which took

a devastating toll on the Confederates. At one point Confederate Col. James McGhee, commander of an Arkansas cavalry regiment in Dobbin's Brigade, led his men in a close-order charge down Wornall's lane in an effort to take one of the Federal batteries. Union Capt. Curtis Johnson, Company E, 15th Kansas Cavalry of Jennison's brigade, led a counter-charge into the flank of the Arkansans. During the melee that ensued when the two masses of horsemen collided at full speed, Johnson and McGhee fought a personal duel on horseback with revolvers; both were badly wounded. Additional Federal cavalry charged into the fray and the Arkansans retreated.

Throughout the morning Gen. Price watched the fight between Shelby and Curtis, but when Price received word that his wagon train was in danger he sent Shelby and Marmaduke instructions to fall back as soon as they could safely do so, then Price went to find the train. Shelby, meanwhile, had fallen back to a row of stone fences just north of the Wornall house, and Fagan was with part of his division on the Harrisonville Road, ready to support Marmaduke. Then, after hearing that Marmaduke was falling back from Byram's Ford, Shelby ordered Jackman to find the wagon train. Jackman had not gotten far when he met a courier from Fagan requesting his help "at a gallop," because the prairie between the Harrisonville Road and Byram's Ford "was dark with Federals."

The Wornall house (1858) on the Westport battlefield. It is open to the public for a paid admission, and is operated by the Jackson County Historical Society. The Wornalls were among those Missourians uprooted in 1863 by Gen. Ewing's notorious Order No. 11, which virtually cleared four western Missouri counties of inhabitants in an ill-advised attempt to curtail bushwhacking. The Wornall family had scarcely reoccupied their home in 1864 when the armies came. (Photo by Dave Roth)



East of the Big Blue it was eight o'clock in the morning before Pleasonton launched his attack. Impatient at not hearing the sounds of battle, he had ridden to the front, where he found Gen. Egbert Brown's First Brigade strung out along the road in no condition to attack. Infuriated, Pleasonton relieved Brown of command, replaced him with Col. John F. Phillips of the 1st Missouri State Militia Cavalry, and ordered Phillips to attack across the ford in conjunction with Winslow's Fourth Brigade.

Winslow immediately had his artillery open fire on the Confederate position across the river and sent a battalion of the 4th Iowa Cavalry down a ravine along the right side of the road. Phillips led his men dismounted along the left side of the road where they took heavy fire as they rushed toward the ford. But the Iowans were able to cross unobserved, and created a diversion that allowed Phillips to cross. Winslow then moved the rest of his brigade forward.

Marmaduke's main line was on a ridge about a thousand yards from the ford. Between the Confederates and the ford was a rock ledge that dropped off 15-20 feet, providing a natural barrier to an attacker. Finding the boulders too high to be scaled on horseback, Phillips ordered a mounted attack up the road, but two charges were thrown back. With Winslow now in position the Federals dismounted and scrambled up the rock ledge. As they formed at the top, Confederate fire intensified and Col. Winslow was wounded in the leg and forced to turn the brigade over to Lt. Col. Frederick W. Benteen of the 10th Missouri Cavalry—a man destined for greater fame in postwar action against the Indians as part of George Custer's 7th Cavalry. The blue line then pushed up the ridge and into the Confederate position. After a stubborn resistance, Marmaduke's men fell back and fled across the prairie.

As the First and Fourth brigades reformed, Pleasonton arrived with Sanborn's Third Brigade and pursued the Confederates westward. At the Harrisonville Road, Jackman hastily threw his brigade into line with Fagan's troops, had his men dismount, and allowed Sanborn to come within 100 yards before opening fire. Sanborn reeled back and the Confederates counter-charged. But then Benteen and Phillips charged into the fight and Fagan's men scattered to the south, with Jackman holding the rearguard.

Jackman's departure left Shelby with only the Iron Brigade to hold the Federal Army of the Border. Then Curtis, hearing the noise of Pleasonton's attack, ordered a charge all along his front. Though the

Iron Brigade counter-charged, flanking artillery fire from one of Pleasonton's advance batteries caused Shelby's men to flee southward. They retreated until they reached a row of stone fences where the troopers rallied and fought off the combined attacks of Curtis and Pleasonton. After buying time for the wagon train and Marmaduke's and Fagan's men to escape, Shelby withdrew and became the rearguard of the retreating Army of Missouri.

On the Union far left things did not go so well. Gen. John McNeil was slow in moving from Independence and at daylight he was far from Little Santa Fe, where

when A. J. Smith's Federal infantry division was ordered from Chapel Hill to Independence. Had it continued marching westward it could have easily blocked the Confederate retreat; but that afternoon found them at Byram's Ford where they did little more than assist with the casualties.)

The exact number of killed, wounded and missing in the three days of fighting (October 21-23) from the Little Blue to Westport is unknown. The fast movement across 30 miles of western Missouri left no time for gathering statistics. Also, the absence of reports from several of the Confederate leaders, inaccuracies in some reporting, and the fact that reports often listed casualties for the entire campaign, make obtaining a precise casualty count impossible. Everything considered, 3,500 killed and wounded, with 1,500 of those occurring on the 23rd, is a conservative estimate.

The battle of Westport is sometimes called the "Gettysburg of the West" because in some ways it resembled the great battle in Pennsylvania. The three-day battle in Missouri was the largest conflict (in terms of numbers engaged) west of the Mississippi, the termination of a Confederate invasion that threatened principal cities, and the South's last attempt to carry the war northward in that region. Unlike Gen. George G. Meade, however, who allowed Robert E. Lee to retreat from Gettysburg largely unmolested, Gen. Curtis decided that "a vigorous pursuit was necessary."

Late on the afternoon of October 23, Curtis, Pleasonton, Blunt and Deitzler, with Governor Carney and Senator Lane in attendance, met on Indian Creek near the state line to discuss the pursuit of the Confederate army. Pleasonton, his men and mounts exhausted, wanted the Missourians to return to their home stations for the election and for the Kansas forces to conduct the pursuit. But Deitzler and Carney argued that the militiamen be relieved because of their inferior equipment and the need for them to return to their civilian occupations. Blunt and Curtis agreed. Curtis then released the militia of northern Kansas and ordered Blunt's and Pleasonton's troopers to Little Santa Fe where they were to start the pursuit at daylight.

At Little Santa Fe, Blunt argued with Curtis. Blunt favored an immediate pursuit of Price, but Curtis would not move until the men had been rested for the night. At sunrise Blunt took the lead with Pleasonton following. Smith's infantry was sent marching south to be used if the cavalry suffered a reversal, but at Harrisonville, Smith's troops were



James F. Fagan, CSA

Pleasonton had ordered him in the hope of trapping Price's wagon train. At a point near Hickman Mills, McNeil came upon the Confederates' wagon train and believed he was facing "the entire force of the enemy." All morning he skirmished at long range with the Confederates. That afternoon he ordered a cautious advance, which fell back after Gen. Cabell sent out a heavy line of skirmishers to fire the prairie grass. Afterward McNeil kept his distance and allowed Price's wagon train to escape.

Though Price had been defeated his army was intact. McNeil's blunder in not causing severe damage to the Confederate train was the second lost opportunity for total Union victory. (The first occurred

ordered to report to Rosecrans at Warrensburg. Col. Moonlight's Second Brigade had been previously detached from the main body and was moving on the Confederates' right flank.

### PRICE ON THE RUN

After retreating from Westport, Price moved 22 miles down the state line on the military road and camped on the Middle Fork of the Grand River. The following day, after spending the entire morning getting the wagon train in travelling order, he moved 33 miles to the town of Trading Post, Kansas, on the Marais des Cygnes River. This slow pace was clearly not the capability of a cavalry column in the face of disaster. The wagon train was slowing them down, and allowing the Federals to catch up.\*

The Confederate trail was not hard to follow. Discarded equipment, broken down horses, and sick, wounded and exhausted men merely waiting to be captured marked their route. At dusk the Federals reached West Point, having marched 50 miles. The Confederate retreat had been through Missouri until West Point, where the military road had veered westward into Kansas. From that point the fury of the retreating Confederates became readily apparent.

According to one Federal, "a perfect saturnalia of destruction seemed to have reigned." As defined in *Webster's*, a "saturnalia" is "an unrestrained often licentious celebration." The soldier's use of the term was fitting, for houses were sacked by the Confederates and crops, haystacks and barns burned. Nearly every house was robbed of its valuables with all else broken. Women and children ran frantically about, crazed with terror and grief. Several elderly men were murdered and many other citizens shot at.

According to Jo Shelby's adjutant, Maj. John Newman Edwards, the Confederates were "soothing the wounds of Missouri by stabbing the breast of Kansas." From Little Santa Fe until crossing into Kansas the Confederates had marched through an area laid waste earlier by Kansas partisans. All that was seen were the charred remains of houses, lines of ashes where fences once stood, and once cultivated fields now full of weeds. The Confederates were now on Kansas soil retaliating with similar acts. Indeed, the Civil War on the Kansas-Missouri border was a brutal affair with atrocity answered by atrocity.

The Federals spent two hours at West Point eating and resting, then Curtis ordered Pleasonton to take the advance and resume the pursuit. Pleasonton was ill so he turned command of the division over to Gen. Sanborn, who then moved cautiously in the darkness and rain.

Price had gone into camp on the north side of the Marais des Cygnes River. To delay any pursuers he posted Cabell's

and Slemmons' brigades on two mounds north of the main camp. Each mound was about 140 feet high and one-half mile in length, and about 300 yards apart. Cabell was on the east mound, Slemmons on the west.

Around eight o'clock on the evening of October 24, an advance squadron that Gen. Blunt had sent out made contact with the Confederate pickets at the mounds, then withdrew. Gen. Sanborn reached the mounds around midnight and reported to Curtis that the Confederates were there in force. Curtis, because of the darkness, rain and mud, ordered Sanborn not to attack until dawn of the 25th.

Meanwhile Price received false information that the enemy was on his front. At dawn he began moving south with



John Newman Edwards, CSA

Shelby in the advance. Cabell and Slemmons were ordered to fall back, with Marmaduke becoming the rearguard. Therefore, Sanborn's men assaulted the mounds on October 25, only to find the Confederates gone, but Sanborn got there in time to see them retreating across the river. The Federals then pushed through the hastily deserted camp, scattered a group of Confederates who attempted to defend the ford, crossed the river, and moved cautiously forward.

Clark's Brigade was the Confederate rearguard and although Clark's men occasionally halted they made no effort to bring the Federals to battle. Then, with the Federals about 600 yards in their rear, Clark's men came upon the wagon train as it was crossing Mine Creek, a tributary of the Osage River. The ford of the steep-banked stream was jammed with stragglers and an overturned wagon, and previous crossings had made the south exit muddy and slippery.

Marmaduke quickly put Freeman's Brigade into line covering the ford and then threw Clark in on Freeman's right. Cabell, whose brigade had not yet crossed the creek, deployed on Marmaduke's left, overlapping Freeman. Marmaduke called on Fagan for assistance, and Slemmons' and Dobbin's brigades came back to the north side of the creek to Cabell's left. The Confederates had approximately 6,300 men and eight pieces of artillery but they were in a poor position. With their backs to the steep banks of Mine Creek they had no reserves available to stop a breakthrough. Further, they had no time to dismount and send their horses to the rear; worse yet, units had mingled, causing a loss of command and control.

Now over his bout with illness, Pleasonton resumed command of his cavalry division and allowed Sanborn to stop to feed his men and horses; Benteen and Phillips were now in the advance, with Benteen to the east of the Fort Scott Road and Phillips to its west. As the Federals came into view enemy artillery opened fire, but most of the Confederate troops were paralyzed with fear. One soldier believed he was facing a Union force of 50,000-60,000, and Gen. Clark, though not hardly as pessimistic, still estimated Federal strength at 6,000-7,000.

Actually Benteen and Phillips had only 2,700 men, and there was no communication between their units. But when Benteen ordered his brigade to charge, Phillips followed. Unfortunately Benteen's lead regiment, his old 10th Missouri, covered less than 100 yards before the men froze in their tracks. This caused the rest of the brigade to stop, and Phillips' brigade did likewise. Benteen was livid. He rode out and screamed at his men with "untold profanity," to no avail. With only 300 yards between them and the Confederates, an enemy counter-charge could have devastated the Federals, but none came. Though both sides exchanged small arms fire, for the most part they just stood glaring at each other.

Finally Maj. Abial R. Pierce, commander of the 4th Iowa Cavalry in Benteen's brigade, led his regiment out from behind the 10th Missouri and charged forward in a two-company front at full speed. The Iowans crashed into the right of the Confederate line and went completely through it. Phillips and the rest of Benteen's brigade followed.

Freeman's Brigade, at the center of the Confederate line, broke before the charge even hit. Within ten or 15 minutes all but the extreme left of the Confederate line had crumbled. The blue cavalrymen pushed through to Mine Creek where

\*The Trading Post, Kansas area was the locale of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre in 1858, when some 30 pro-slavers rounded up 11 free-staters and gunned them down in a ravine a few miles outside of town. Five of the victims died, five others were wounded and one was missed altogether and survived by feigning death.

panic-stricken Confederates, many who had thrown away their rifles, were trying to scramble up the steep south bank. Although there were some pockets of resistance, the Confederates were routed. The Confederate left, under Col. Dobbin and Slemmons, then quickly melted away.

In this fight on October 25, the Confederates lost all eight pieces of artillery, about 500 killed and wounded, and as many more taken prisoner. Among the prisoners were Gens. Marmaduke and Cabell, and Col. Slemmons. In sharp contrast, Union casualties were light—eight killed and 56 wounded.

As Phillips and Benteen gathered up prisoners they found that several of them were wearing Federal uniforms; they were executed on the spot. After Sanborn moved up, the three brigades moved south toward the Little Osage River, four miles distant. Gens. Curtis and Pleasonton moved with them, with McNeil and Gen. Blunt's Kansans following.

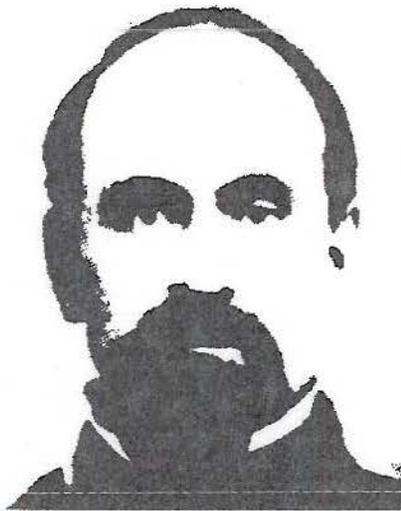
Meanwhile Gen. Price, who was at the head of the wagon train, received word that the rear of the train was in danger. He sent a dispatch to Shelby—who was already south of the Little Osage, moving toward Fort Scott—to come back to help the rear. Price then rode north where he soon ran into Fagan's and Marmaduke's panic-stricken troops retreating, many of them without arms and "deaf to all entreaties or commands." Shelby, upon receiving Price's message, also headed back north. According to one of his officers, Shelby was so angry "he had nothing to do all the way to the rear but stand up in his stirrups and swear with every step of his horse." After reaching the south bank of the Little Osage, Shelby deployed the Iron Brigade mounted in three lines.

As the Federals moved forward they met no major resistance, but their horses were so worn out they could move no faster than a walk. At the Little Osage, McNeil took the advance, crossed the stream and attempted to charge. Shelby's first line witnessed McNeil's advance, fired one volley, then had to retreat because their horses became excited. The second line fired its only volley and broke before the first line had safely moved back through their ranks. The third line had the advantage of a ditch and was able to check the Federals long enough for the others to fall back safely. As the Confederates withdrew to the south they made several more brief stands, setting fire to haystacks, cornfields and the tall prairie grass to impede Federal pursuit.

Price's wagon train was now crossing the Marmiton River at a point six miles east of Fort Scott, and like at Mine Creek the crossing became bottlenecked. Fagan had succeeded in rallying a portion of his division, and Clark commanded what was left of Marmaduke's men. Shelby then took charge of the defense and put the men in line with Jackman's Brigade. He also put Col. Charles Tyler's unarmed

recruits in behind them. McNeil's and Benteen's Union troopers then came on the scene, but their horses were almost too exhausted to move. Confederate charges by Jackman on the left and by Tyler's unarmed men on the right held the Federals in check. Darkness put an end to the skirmishing.

With the wagon train now across the Marmiton, Price ordered the destruction of all unnecessary wagons and excess artillery ammunition, and the abandonment of all broken-down animals. The blazing sky and noise from bursting shells could be seen and heard for miles around, as the plunder that had been so gleefully gathered during the halcyon days of the expedition went up in flames.



John B. Sanborn, USA

At two o'clock on the morning of October 26, Price's army, now little more than a mob, began moving southward. By nightfall they marched 56 miles to Carthage, Missouri, and after resting briefly they marched on and went into camp at Newtonia on the 28th. Though most of the officers wished to keep retreating, Shelby argued otherwise: "It is better to lose an army in actual battle, than to starve the men and kill the horses." Because no enemy had been seen since the Marmiton, Price decided to rest and feed the army.

After the fight along the Marmiton River, Gen. Pleasonton took Phillips' and Benteen's brigades and headed for Fort Scott to get food and forage. Curtis saw the column move off and went after it. Upon catching up to Pleasonton, Curtis argued the necessity to stay on the field and send for supplies. But Pleasonton, believing Fort Scott was closer than it actually was, insisted on going there anyway. Though Curtis was senior in rank, Pleasonton was from the Department of the Missouri and subordinate to Rosecrans, not Curtis.

Upon arriving at Fort Scott, Pleasonton telegraphed Rosecrans and told him that because of ill health he would be unable to continue in command and recommended the pursuit be terminated as far as the Missourians were concerned. Rosecrans agreed, and Pleasonton moved with Phillips' brigade to Warrensburg with the prisoners and captured guns. Sanborn and McNeil were ordered to remain in the pursuit as far south as their district headquarters of Springfield and Rolla.

Pleasonton, however, may have had other reasons for wishing to discontinue chasing Price. Earlier that day Curtis had attempted to take charge of the prisoners and other spoils taken at Mine Creek. Captured Confederate Gens. Marmaduke and Cabell, fearful of being exhibited through Kansas as an "electioneering document," requested of Pleasonton that they be taken to Rosecrans' headquarters. Belief that Curtis would continue to try to take away the credit that rightfully belonged to the Missourians may have been the main reason Pleasonton wished to cease his role in the pursuit.

Gen. Blunt, after seeing Pleasonton moving toward Fort Scott and believing he was doing so under general orders, moved his command there also. McNeil's and Benteen's troopers spent the night on the prairie without provisions. At Fort Scott, Gen. Curtis released the remainder of the militia, and the chase continued next day with Blunt in the lead. For the next three days Blunt pushed forward rapidly, and on the afternoon of October 28, he found Price bivouacked on the south edge of Newtonia, 25 miles north of the Arkansas border. Blunt quickly attacked with only the First and Fourth brigades, having previously ordered the Second Brigade and McNeil's cavalry to move forward.

Again it was Jo Shelby who deployed to meet him. Blunt made effective use of his artillery, but the Confederates had superior numbers. At twilight Blunt found his left flank in danger from a heavy column of Confederates; he was saved by the timely arrival of Sanborn. Shelby continued fighting until he was nearly out of ammunition, then he withdrew under the cover of darkness. And as the last shots echoed across the prairie, the last battle of the Civil War in Missouri was over.

#### AFTERMATH

Curtis was confident he could destroy Price. But the next morning Rosecrans directed all of the Missourians to return to their districts and for Benteen to rejoin Smith. This prohibited further pursuit, since Gen. Blunt had fewer than 2,500 men. Disappointed, Curtis telegraphed the situation to Gen. Halleck in Washington, then moved to Neosho. There he received a dispatch from Halleck stating

that Gen. U. S. Grant (commander of all Federal forces), "desires that Price be pursued to the Arkansas River...."

This clearly overruled Rosecrans, and Curtis immediately recalled the Missouri troops. Benteen rejoined them near Newtonia on November 1. But Phillips, at Warrensburg, was too far away to return. Sanborn and McNeil were quickly reached near Springfield, and although they both eventually moved as far south as Cassville, they went no farther as the land was destitute of forage. After being joined by Benteen, Curtis resumed the chase. But the delay had been costly.

Price's ragged column, now fighting bad weather as well as exhaustion, staggered into Cane Hill, Arkansas, on November 1. There they obtained the first major food supply they had had in days. After learning that friendly forces were besieging nearby Fayetteville, Price granted Fagan permission to take his division with a detachment of Shelby's men to assist in its capture. They reached Fayetteville the next day where, despite the pleas and threats of their officers, Fagan's men refused to attack. Then word that Blunt was approaching caused them to lift the siege. The Army of Missouri had fought its last fight.

The stay at Cane Hill all but completed the disintegration of Price's army. The brigades of Arkansas conscripts had deserted entirely, and Price ordered Cols. Freeman, Dobbin and McCray to return to the places where they had raised their commands, "collect the absentees together," and to bring them back into Confederate lines. Jackman's Brigade and Slayback's Battalion were allowed to leave the army for "visiting their friends in Northern Arkansas."

After learning that the Federal garrison at Little Rock had been heavily reinforced, Price decided to recross the Arkansas River west of Fort Smith on the Arkansas border with Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). On November 4, what was left of the Army of Missouri headed for Indian Territory; two days later Curtis reached Cane Hill and pressed after them. On November 7, Price crossed the Arkansas River at Pheasants Ford, 30 miles west of Fort Smith. Curtis arrived there the following morning, fired a few parting shots at the Confederate rearguard, then ordered the Kansans back to Fort Scott and Benteen to St. Louis.

The Confederate retreat through Indian Territory was the crowning horror of the expedition. As Jeff Thompson remembered:

*The "pomp and circumstance of glorious war" were now ended; and before us lay the hardships and sufferings incident to a soldier's life. Moral courage and endurance now superseded chivalry and energy, and he who could suffer most, and complain least was now to be the champion.*

According to Maj. Edwards, Jo Shelby's adjutant, "Toll, agony, privation, sickness, death and starvation commenced," with the unacclimated recruits suffering most. Horses dropped out by the thousands and others were so worn out they could not move as fast as a man on foot. Smallpox swept through the ranks and straggling was commonplace. Only Shelby's old brigade maintained any semblance of discipline and organization.

On November 10, Price furloughed Cabell's and Slemmons' brigades and gave Shelby permission to rest and feed his command on the Canadian River. Price then headed for Texas with only Clark's Brigade and the recruits. Eighteen days



William L. "Old Tige" Cabell, CSA

and 200 miles later, during which time Shelby joined them, the remnants of the Army of Missouri reached Clarksville, Texas. Price received an order from Magruder to move to Laynesport on December 2. Slightly three months after it had begun, the Missouri Expedition was over.

Price claimed the expedition had been "of the most gratifying character." In his official report he wrote:

*I marched 1,434 miles; fought forty-three battles and skirmishes; captured and paroled over 3,000 Federal officers and men; captured 18 pieces of artillery, 3,000 stand of small arms, 16 stand of colors...at least 3,000 overcoats, large quantities of blankets, shoes, and ready-made clothing for soldiers, a great many wagons and teams, large numbers of horses, great quantities of subsistence and ordnance stores. I destroyed miles upon miles of railroad, burning the depots and bridges; and taking this into calculation, I do not think I go beyond the truth when I state that I destroyed...property to the amount of \$10,000,000 in value. On the other hand, I lost 10 pieces of artillery, 2 stand of colors, 1,000 small arms, while I*

*do not think I lost 1,000 prisoners, including the wounded left in their [the enemy's] hands....*

*I brought with me at least 5,000 recruits...[and] am satisfied that could I have remained in Missouri this winter the army would have been increased 50,000 men.*

In his report to the War Department, Kirby Smith stated that the expedition "accomplished all the objects for which it was inaugurated." He claimed that the troops drawn off from Sherman helped prevent the fall of Mobile, weakened George Thomas' army in his campaign against Hood, and enabled Nathan Bedford Forrest to raid in Tennessee. Neither Price's nor Smith's evaluations can be accepted as fully valid. Both generals had good reasons for presenting the expedition in the best possible light: Price because he led it, Smith because he ordered it, and both because it was the only war effort in the Trans-Mississippi Department in the critical last half of 1864.

The Missouri Expedition failed to capture either St. Louis or Jefferson City, did not cause a mass uprising of Southern sympathy in order to install a Confederate government in Missouri, and did no damage to any military installation in Kansas. In fact Price failed to accomplish any of his objectives, except obtaining an unarmed and untrained group of recruits. Furthermore, the addition of these raw recruits was offset by the heavy loss in veterans, and morale was now at an all-time low. Price's men were so ill, exhausted and demoralized that Gen. Magruder assessed them as "not in a fit condition to fight any body of men." The statistics about prisoners taken and property destroyed are also meaningless. Most of the prisoners were paroled on the spot and the railroads and bridges were rapidly repaired. Nor could captured weapons and equipment compensate for all that was worn out, lost or thrown away in panic. According to Magruder the Army of Missouri returned with fewer arms than it started with.

While the expedition did deprive Sherman of 9,000 infantrymen, it did not prevent him from taking Atlanta (which was already as good as lost even as the Missouri Expedition got underway) nor did it do more than merely postpone the fall of Mobile. Union Gen. A. J. Smith arrived in Nashville in time to help Thomas rout Hood's army on December 15-16. The rest of the Union forces that had opposed Price would have served in Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas anyway. All that Sterling Price and Kirby Smith gained in the expedition could not be offset by the practical destruction of the Trans-Mississippi's best cavalry forces.

From a strategic standpoint all that can properly be claimed for the invasion is that it employed troops that would have been otherwise idle, and that it severely alarmed and embarrassed the

Federals in Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. In connection with the latter it is interesting to note that none of the principal Federal leaders in the campaign benefitted from it. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant dismissed Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele for allowing Price to cross and recross the Arkansas River, and he fired Rosecrans for allowing Price to remain in Missouri as long as he did and then let him escape with his army intact; probably justified in his dismissal of Steele, Grant's decision in regard to Rosecrans was probably motivated by personal prejudice. Curtis was transferred to command a department in Wisconsin, and Blunt and Pleasonton received no immediate recognition or promotion.

The blame for the disastrous outcome of the Confederates' 1864 Missouri Expedition lies mainly with Sterling Price himself. Essentially an infantry commander, he was too old and lacked the experience and stamina to command a cavalry column, and therefore moved too slowly. His greatest mistake was assaulting Fort Davidson at Pilot Knob, and although he had received erroneous information on the size of the Jefferson City garrison, a quick march there instead of chasing Ewing would have found the city lightly defended. Finally, he should have turned south before he reached Lexington, and not fought at all at Westport. According to Maj. Edwards of Shelby's staff, "Westport was the turning point in the expedition. While up to this time nothing of consequence had been accomplished, after it were the horrors of defeat, hunger, and the pestilence."

Underlying these mistakes were the campaign's contradictory aims. While ordered to conduct a diversionary cavalry raid with the major objectives being recruiting and the destruction of Federal military facilities, it is evident that Price was primarily interested in establishing Confederate rule in Missouri. This political motive, which was at cross-purposes with the military goals, doomed the campaign from the start. In order to establish himself in Missouri, Price needed a large force, and for that reason he dragged along the troublesome Arkansas conscripts and the huge wagon train. This made the army incapable of the rapid movement needed to achieve its military objectives, yet it still lacked the strength to realize its leader's political hopes. Price's desire to stay in Missouri as long as possible kept him from leaving while it was practical to do so, and resulted in the disasters at Westport and Mine Creek. Wishful thinking led Price to over estimate pro-Southern sentiment in Missouri, but his being first a Missouri politician and then a Confederate general might explain his failures.

It would have been best if Shelby had conducted the invasion with only the veteran brigades of Shanks, Clark and Cabell, and as little artillery and extra supplies as possible. But its long range strategic effects are equally questionable. Nevertheless Shelby would most likely have avoided the disasters and inflicted the damage at less cost. But the fact is that prior to the expedition the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy was incapable of inflicting enough damage on the

North to affect the strategic outcome of the war. Following its failure, relative peace prevailed in the West while the war was decided in the East.

## EPILOGUE

Following the Missouri Expedition, Governor Thomas Reynolds published serious accusations against Gen. Price in a Marshall, Texas newspaper in which Reynolds charged him with gross misconduct during the raid. Wishing to clear himself of these charges Price asked for a court martial.

Instead, a court of inquiry was appointed to investigate his actions, but its work was unfinished when Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department in May 1865. Price took the court records, which he believed exonerated him, to Mexico where he lived on a colony established by Jo Shelby and veterans of the Iron Brigade. Two years later Price returned to St. Louis where he fell ill during a cholera epidemic and died on September 29, 1867. He is buried in St. Louis' Bellefontaine Cemetery.

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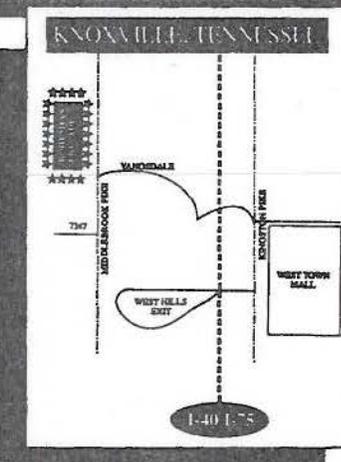
FOR FURTHER READING the author recommends: *The Battle of Mine Creek* by Lumir F. Buriak; *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* by Albert Castel, as well as Castel's article "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," which appeared in the Summer 1958 edition of *Kansas Historical Quarterly*; *Shelby and His Men* by John Newman Edwards; *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas...* by Richard J. Hinton; *The Battle of Westport* by Paul B. Jenkins; *Action Before Westport* by Howard N. Monnett; *Pilot Knob, Thermopylae of the West* by Cyrus A. Peterson and Joseph M. Hanson; and *The Story of A Cavalry Regiment [4th Iowa]...* by William F. Scott.

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