

The Sentinel



Vol. 9, No. 4 – The Newsletter of the 6th Arkansas Infantry, Company A, C.S.A. – April, 2005
Living Historians
<http://www.geocities.com/capitalguards>

“The Fight’s On!” at Marks’ Mills...

The Capitol Guards & friends will be donning the “Army blue” (again) and joining forces with the 37th Illinois and a few other friends for the second attempt at reenacting the April, 1864 Battle of Marks’ Mill at and around the Marks’ Mill Battlefield State Park on the weekend of April 23-24, 2005.

Marks’ Mill Battlefield State Park is about 8 miles east of Fordyce on Arkansas Highway 8. From Little Rock, take I-530 south to Exit #10, and bear right on US 167 through Sheridan. Keep going south to Fordyce. When you arrive in Fordyce, cross US 79 and proceed to the junction with Hwy 8. Turn left on Highway 8 and proceed approximately 7 miles to the site.

An alternative route is to head down to Pine Bluff and take Highway 79 south through Rison to Fordyce. Turn east on Highway 8 and go out to the site. This way is a little closer for me, so I’ll probably go down and back through there. It also goes through the old Ashcraft family place down in Cleveland county, and not having been down there in a couple of years, I’ll stop off in Pansy on the way home and visit my Confederate ancestry.

The park is a teeny-weeny little place... a parking lot, a fenced-in area, and an interpretive pavilion. Across from the north side of the park is a dirt road leading back into the Marks community and the actual battlefield. We’ll be camping back in this area, on either side of the road. I am unsure about separation or division of the camps between Union/Confederate/civilian or whatever, but us bluebellies will probably be clustered up together, camping light. The 6th Arkansas and 37th Illinois will be falling in together as a consolidated company, along with a few strays, so we ought to have a pretty good little group.

The Marks’ Mill reenactment is tied together with the “Fordyce on the Cotton Belt” festival, a local “hometown hootenanny” in downtown Fordyce. This is the reason for some of the weirdness of the event schedule, such as the optional parade in downtown Fordyce, and the delay of the Saturday battle until 5 p.m. ... lots of folks and stuff will be shuttling between Fordyce (where the hootenanny and the spectator parking is) and the reenactment site, which is way out in the piney woods close to nothing else. (If you

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The Capitol Guards at Port Hudson: Steve Shore, W.J. Monagle, Ken Nations, Corey Platt, and Tom Ezell take the Right of the Line with the Frontier Battalion contingent.

Bye bye, TMVI??

At the Pleasant Hill event on April 10, the Trans-Mississippi Volunteer Infantry (TMVI) Battalion held a battalion meeting, at which the companies present (12th, 15th, and 19th Texas, 3rd, 4th, 11th, 12th, and 19th Louisiana, and the 9th Arkansas) voted to withdraw from the Mississippi Valley Brigade. (The 1st and 6th Arkansas were not present at Pleasant Hill, and did not vote, nor were they consulted in the matter.)

According to Colonel Hunt, commander of the TMVI, there were a number of issues that the Texas and Louisiana companies, as well as the Battalion staff had with the direction in which the Brigade has been going. Chief among these was a general unwillingness to comply with the uniform standards for the Mississippi Valley Brigade and the First Confederate Division, which have been around for a little more than a year, but are now being enforced at Brigade and Division events.

The following letter was sent to the Mississippi Valley Brigade commander on April 14:

*To: General Mark Griffin
From: Trans-Mississippi Volunteer Infantry Battalion
Subject: Resignation from MVB*

Dear Sir

As of April 10th, 2005. We the TMVI, have elected to resign from the Mississippi Valley Brigade. The vote to go independent was voted on and now is final. The men and company commanders are in agreement, that this change is needed for the survival of our organization.

Our traditions are still first rate in the hearts and minds of the men.

As Colonel of the TMVI, I was elected by the rank and file, and I will do everything in my power to see that their needs are met.

General Griffin, you have always been most gracious to me and my men, as we have

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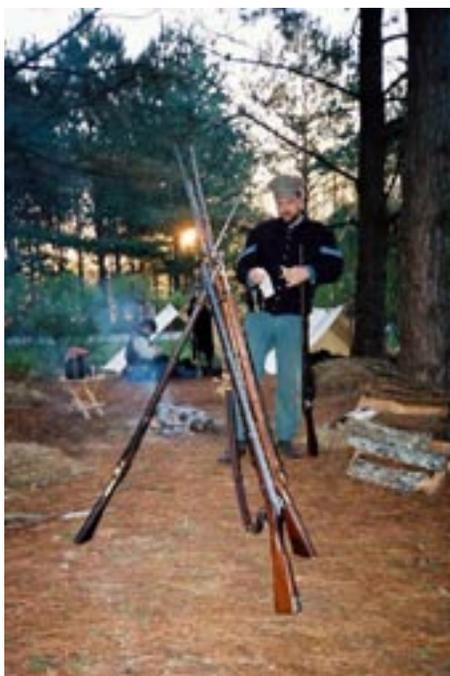
Port Hudson, LA Re-Enactment - April 1-3, 2005



Arriving just after dark, we pitched our camp at the end of the Federal lines, great setting, but also convenient to pert near everything. First order of business was coffee, somewhat scarce due to the long march.



Reveille Saturday morning, as W.J. and Corey get ready, Tom tends the coffee pot.



Weapons inspection and pre-combat checks as soon as it got light. W.J. cleans his musket as Tom works up the Morning Report.



Ken Nations waits patiently for the skirmishers to make contact during the morning tactical.



We came, we climbed, we charged... and the Rebs kicked our butts. Tom, W.J., and an unidentified pard dead on the field, their remains looted by the Rebs.



Ken Nations and Steve Shore

143rd Anniversary Shiloh Living History – April 9-10th, 2005



The camp of Co. I, 8th Illinois Infantry was set up across the road from the Shiloh NMP Visitors Center, and featured six Sibley tents full of snoring Yankees.



Company I on the color line, 54 rifles strong. Some reenacting battalions aren't that big...



On Guard! Bayonet drill is a fine way to celebrate the Sabbath day... Hey, and I only poked something like two guys in the arse cheeks, and one in the eye with that pointy thing on the end of the musket. Oh, and sorry about that buttstroke to the head, Charles...



Some distinctly shady characters were spotted among the KPs. Shiloh's menu featured Curried Green Slime with Beef. Be very afraid... "Can I have some more of that boiled cartridge box strap? Hey, he got a whole flap!"



Park Ranger Jim Minor led some of us on a Sunday morning tour of the sites where the 8th Illinois camped and fought at Shiloh. Here we are at the monument marking where the regiment held the line near the Hornet's Nest. Tom is standing, 6th man from the left. Ironically, they opposed Shaver's Confederate brigade here, including the 6th Arkansas.

Every year on the anniversary weekend of the Battle of Shiloh, the National Park Service hosts a living history program on the battlefield. Historically this has been pretty much a Confederate deal featuring Rambo's Brigade from Alabama. Earlier this year as we were putting the annual event list together and looking for an Eastern alternative to the perennial Pleasant Hill, I got an invitation through the WIG channels to participate in a new program at Shiloh... only this time they were trying to recreate a full-size company of Federals. I sent in my registration, and the result was a very refreshing experience – the first time a large scale Federal program has occurred at the Park in some time, as well as a gathering of some of the best living historians in the hobby. As one pard said, **"It ain't very often that we get to visit the Holy Land like this."** The park was ecstatic with our work, and as a kicker on Sunday morning, we presented the Park director with an \$807 donation to further preservation at Shiloh. Not bad for a bunch of "damnyankees"...

Marks' Mills Event Info (Continued from Page 1)

want to get away from it all, Marks' Mill is a good place to start.)

The event hosts will provide firewood, water, and straw for bedding, and there should be a fair amount of deadwood for campfires as well. Several sutlers are planned to be available as well. The event site is oriented more toward campaign camping than anything else; the original Federal units were on the march as guards for a wagon train at the time of the battle and were traveling light; given good weather most of us will likely be campaigning it, though we will have a number of tent flies available "in the wagons" in case bad weather happens. Shelter halves (dog tents) are ideal if you have one (being Federal issue items), if not, we'll have shelter available under the company flies.

The Capitol Guards commissary will be providing a period meal for our consolidated company on Saturday evening; otherwise you should bring appropriate rations for other meals from Friday evening until Sunday noon. I do not have any word as to whether there will be food vendors on the reenactment site, and the closest place to "forage a meal" will likely be 8 miles away in Fordyce. Please plan and pack your haversack appropriately! Hardtack, cornbread, pork or bacon, and coffee are good period foods appropriate to this event.

Schedule of Events

Friday, April 22

- Registration and Camps open
- School programs at Courthouse in Fordyce
- For the adventurous, Co. E, 3rd Arkansas will be holding a living history for the Camden school district at Poison Springs Battlefield State Park... a nice lead-in to Marks' Mills.

Saturday, April 23

- Formation and Safety Inspection 7:00am
- Early morning tactical
- Camps open to the public 9:00am
- Bus pick-up for Parade (optional) 10:00am
- Parade in town (optional) 11:00am
- Drill and demonstrations in the camp areas 9:00am - 4:00pm
- Formation and Safety Inspection 4:00pm
- Battle 5:00pm
- Camps close to Public 7:00pm

Sunday, April 27

- Camps open to the public 9:00am
- Period Worship Service 10:00am
- Drill and Demonstrations 9:00am - 12:00noon
- Formation and Safety Inspection 1:00pm

- Battle 2:00pm
- GO HOME 4:00pm (times subject to change)

The event flyer states that "Usual Battalion and Division regulations and standards will be enforced by appropriate staff officers. I have not seen the scenarios for the battles, but the woods down there are pretty thick. The battle demonstration field will be in the same place as the last time, an open pasture 1.5 miles west of the park on Highway 8. The rest of the area is heavily forested, with a few very small clearings.

It looks like we will be heavily outnumbered again, so come prepared and fired up to take on and whip the entire Southern Confederacy. In addition to the Rebs, our old friends the bushwhackers will be back – apparently with reinforcements. We will have our old bag of nasty tricks for the Johnnies, as well as a few new ones. It will behoove you to brush up on the School of the Skirmisher, as I do not plan to fight in the open, nor do I plan to "fight fair", either... at least to the point that means standing up somewhere and trading volleys with the Johnnies. There will be some pretty hot fighting, most of it in skirmish order, so I encourage you to bring lots of ammunition. Bring at least 40 rounds for each engagement; 100 rounds per man (50 per battle) may be a better estimate of what you'll be shooting. We will probably get a belly full of fighting this weekend. Expect no quarter from the damned Secesh... and be prepared to give none in return!

This event will also see us unfurling for the first time "Ol' Glory," the new U.S. National Color that we bought last month. If you haven't seen her yet, this will be pretty impressive in its own right, and makes a nice addition to our collection of various battle flags.

Western Federal Impression

At the January planning session, we agreed to pursue a Federal impression for this event. We will be deploying to Marks' Mill in Army Blue, and will portray Federal troops for the entire weekend. We will be located in the Federal Camp all weekend, so you can leave your camp at home. There was no Confederate infantry at this April, 1864 battle, but 2,500 of Fagan's Arkansas and Shelby's Missouri cavalry. This month's Sentinel includes Ed Bearss' retelling of the battle to set a little background for what we'd like to recreate at this event.

The Federal forces at Marks' Mill were the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Division, VII Corps, consisting of the 43rd Indiana Infantry, 36th Iowa Infantry, 77th Ohio Infantry, and a small contingent of the 1st Iowa Cavalry, escorting a large train of more than 200 wagons,

teamsters, and Union-sympathetic refugees. By the time of the ambush at Marks' Mill these men were veteran campaigners. For the wagon escort detail they were traveling light — each soldier carried only three days' rations, 60 rounds of ammunition, and a blanket.

A proper impression for the troops on the Camden Expedition in April, 1864 would thus be:

- Federal fatigue jacket (dark blue 4-button sack coat - lined or unlined). (NCOs are authorized and encouraged to wear the Federal dress, or frock coat),
- Sky-blue infantry issue trowsers
- Forage cap, Hardee hat, OR black or dark blue slouch hat. (Officers, too...)
- Infantry-issue brogans
- Civilian-pattern (cotton) or federal-issue domed flannel shirt.
- .58 caliber 3-band rifle musket, either P1853 Enfield or M1861 Springfield.
- M1855 pattern .58 caliber cartridge box (if you have the standard .58 cartridge box, this is the right one), cap box, Gaylord-pattern bayonet scabbard & bayonet. (no Enfield bayonet scabbards — these were mostly used by the Rebs, who got the leather along with the rifles)
- M1858 pattern federal smoothsided canteen
- tarred (black) haversack
- federal issue gray or light tan blanket, rolled into a bedroll.
- Rations: (two days')
 - 1.5 lbs salt pork or bacon
 - 18-20 hardtack crackers
 - 1/4 lb coffee
 - 1/4 lb brown sugar
 - foraged fruit/vegetables as seasonably available
 - pilfered poultry, ham, bacon, etc. seized from local smokehouses.

This is the basic, essential kit, what else you bring will depend on your style of camping for this event.

If you do not have your Federal gear yet, or are missing a particular item, please contact Steve or Tom and we will arrange to get you kitted out. The Company Loaner Box will be available at the event site with spare Federal uniforms and gear.

Guiding Impression: The 36th Iowa Infantry

The guiding impression for the Capitol Guards at Marks' Mill will be Company B, 36th Iowa Infantry. For some of us, this won't be the first time that we have crossed paths with the 36th Iowa, since we represented this regiment, along with Captain Edmund Joy of Company B at the re-opening of the Old State House Museum in July, 2000 as well as the Marks' Mill event in 2003. The 36th is typical of the western federal regiments that served in Ar-

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Marks' Mills Event Info *(Continued from Page 4)*

kansas, serving briefly in the early attempts to capture Vicksburg, then assigned to the Federal garrison at Helena, where it took part in the battle of Helena and the Little Rock Campaign in the summer of 1863. The 36th was involved in the capture and garrison of Pine Bluff following the fall of Little Rock, then returned to winter quarters near the Little Rock Arsenal. The 36th provided the guard detail for, and was present at the hanging of David O. Dodd on January 8, 1864, then marched out with Steele's expedition in March, fighting at Elkins' Ferry, Prairie D'Ane, and the occupation of Camden. Their being detailed to guard the wagon train would lead to a Significant Event in the regiment's history.

Bye Bye, TMVI *(Continued from Page 1)*

of you. I commend you on your service and the respect you have given us on the field. I truly appreciate it.

*Colonel Richard Hunt
Trans-Mississippi Volunteer Infantry Battalion,
Commanding.*

General Griffin's remarks to me were "I am profoundly saddened in the TMVI's decision. I was very proud of them because it appeared that they were making progressive changes. This disappointment is what hurts the most."

That being said, the Division uniform standards are word-for-word, line-for-line the same as the Mississippi Valley Brigade standards, and the Division will be enforcing these at the Corinth event in October. In preliminary discussions this week with Colonel Hunt it appeared that the TMVI would not field as a battalion at Corinth, since there was little interest in the event among the Texas/Louisiana companies, and less interest in meeting the uniform standards that would be enforced there. That stance has since softened somewhat as the TMVI looks to maintain its footing as an independent battalion under the umbrella of the 1st Confederate Division.

The move to withdraw the Battalion from the Brigade came quite suddenly and unexpectedly, and I was unaware of any such action until I was contacted by General Griffin Tuesday morning, asking what the absent Arkansas companies thought of the move.

The Sixth was a charter member of the TMVI some years ago, and while we would in all likelihood have gotten out-voted in this matter on an everybody-else-to-1 basis, you might think they'd at least ask our opinion or let us know that they were seriously thinking about something like this. If anything, I

personally consider this to be the biggest blow to our relationship with the TMVI Battalion. Communications is by far the biggest problem within the TMVI, and a significant failure by the battalion staff. Communicating and keeping in touch with the member companies, getting the word out about events, and generally making the companies feel like they're part of a bigger whole is the most important thing that a battalion staff can do. This sort of stuff is almost completely non-existent in the TMVI.

At the January business meeting, we discussed the battalion situation and decided to sit tight for awhile to let things sort themselves out. Over the past couple months, the Battalion has continued to show little or no effort to keep in touch with the Arkansas companies, and I am personally very disappointed in their action this past weekend.

I'm still very much of mixed feelings on the battalion situation. I don't think we're getting a square deal from the TMVI, but on the other hand we've been a pretty faithful member of that group for many years and we still have a lot of friends there. One of the key things that make re-enacting fun is going out and doing it with your friends, and I'm a little uncomfortable for the most part about falling in with strangers unless we already know a number of folks in that group.

Maybe I'm a little too steeped in the hardcore end of things to really appreciate where those guys are coming from. I've asked for feedback from the members of the company (and it's starting to come in) to see just how much I'm out of tune with common opinions or out of bounds. The basic thing that I'd like to see is that we all sit down under a tree somewhere at Marks' Mills and talk things over, and work the problem out as a company. The question to the members of the Capitol Guards will be, "what do you want to do, and where do you want to go from here?"

First of all, we as a Company have not yet resigned from the TMVI Battalion. We are for the time being still a loyal (though a rowdy and deeply disgruntled) member of that organization. At the Company meeting at Marks' Mills on Saturday afternoon, we will seriously consider whether or not we want to maintain that relationship.

As for the Capitol Guards themselves, we will primarily be affected in our status as Division-level events. Membership in the First Confederate Division is established at battalion level, and if we decide to withdraw from the TMVI, we lose our membership in the 1st Confederate Division until we formally affiliate ourselves with another 1st Confederate Division battalion. Beginning with the event at Corinth, only regular member units of the 1st Confederate Division may register and participate as Confederates.

In spite of being an independent company, we would still have several good options for going to Corinth as Confederates. I've been in contact with the Brigade staff with respect to keeping our membership under the MVB, and have been assured they'll take care of us should we decide to stay under the wings of the MVB. It's a little extensive to cover in a newsletter that's already gone way long, but if you have any questions, please give me a call or an e-mail, and I'll be glad to share.

Port Hudson AAR

The Capitol Guards were off on their first campaign event and road of the season as April Fool's Day featured the annual battle reenactments at Port Hudson State Historic Site down near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The distance proved to be a challenge, so we carpooled and convoyed our little band down the lower Mississippi Valley. Still musing on the Mexican War, I think that General Taylor probably invaded Mexico with less planning than it took to get to Louisiana.

The Old State House was our starting point as we hit the road shortly before noon on Friday, heading down through Pine Bluff and Lake Village. We had five rifles, Tom Ezell, Steve Shore, Ken Nations, W.J. Monagle, and Corey Platt in our little band of brothers. For those who remember the 1999 road trip to Ditch Bayou, the little restaurant with the larger-than-life-size murals of Jesus (Cricket's) has transformed itself to a Mexican restaurant, and probably switched to Catholicism as well. Seeing road signs advertising "Jehovah Java" we surmised that the former operators of Cricket's had gone South and into the coffee business. Shortly after crossing over into Louisiana we jumped over the Mississippi to Vicksburg, and through the battlefields at Grand Gulf and Jefferson Davis' plantation, Brierfield. We stopped for a break at Port Gibson, noted by General Grant as "the town too pretty to burn," then pushed on south to Natchez and finally back into Louisiana near St. Francisville. By now it was late, and we were looking for a place to feed the horses and the troops as well. There was a distinct dearth of roadside inns on this trail, and we finally wound up at the St. Francisville McDonalds – the Captain muttering bitterly about driving all the way to Louisiana for Cajun cuisine, only to wind up at McDonalds. He got a lot madder when we left town, passing five nice Louisiana joints in the couple of miles after pulling out of McDonalds.

Just after dark, we pulled into the Port Hudson site, registered, and set off in search

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THE FEDERALS MEET DISASTER AT MARKS' MILLS

by Edwin C. Bearss

Chapter 3 of "Steele's Retreat From Camden and the Battle of Jenkins' Ferry"

When the first survivors of the Poison Spring debacle straggled into the Camden perimeter, news of what had happened spread like wild-fire through the Union camps. Steele's soldiers were shocked to learn that an important train had been sent out protected by a small force. The loss of the train made the already critical supply situation worse. Meat was still being issued, but supplies of "hardtack grew more rare and valuable, with each succeeding day."¹

Vigorous activity by mounted Confederate patrols compelled the recall, under the cover of darkness on April 18, of the detachment sent to operate the steam mill at Britton's. Henceforth, a small, steam mill in Camden and ten portable iron hand mills were kept operating round-the-clock, grinding corn meal for the army. A soldier in the 33rd Iowa reported that when the situation was at its worst, each man in his regiment received as his day's ration only four ears of corn.²

If the troops were bad off, the expedition's livestock was worse. On the 19th, the day following the battle, Captain Charles A. Henry addressed an urgent memorandum to General Steele. The chief quartermaster notified his general that within the Camden perimeter there was stockpiled only sufficient forage to provide the command's animals with one day's ration. Moreover, he wrote, very little forage could be found in the valley of the Ouachita. He recommended that all broken-down animals be collected and turned out to graze in the canebrakes. Armed guards would be posted to watch the animals and keep Confederate raiding parties from running them away. If Steele adopted his suggestion, Henry believed that over 2,000 worthless horses and mules could be winnowed out. The Quartermaster Department would be thus relieved of the necessity of procuring forage for broken-down animals.³

The *Official Records* contain no information regarding Steele's reply to Henry's proposal.

Steele during the day received some good news. He learned that the large supply train which was en route from Pine Bluff was approaching Camden via the Mount Elbaroad. A strong column led by Colonel Thomas H. Benton of the 29th Iowa was sent out to meet the train and escort it into the Camden perimeter.⁴ It was the next day (the 20th) before the train, consisting of 150 wagons, arrived. The wagons were heavily loaded with commissary, ordnance, and

quartermaster's stores. All told, the train carried ten days' half-rations of hardtack, bacon, coffee, and salt.⁵

Of equal importance to the morale of the soldiers was the mail. Writing of the Camden Expedition in 1866, a veteran recalled:

It was the first word we had heard from home or civilization since the march began. Little could the writers of these letters imagine, how eagerly the envelopes were torn open, or how dear and precious the words of love and hope, from home, seemed to us, there in the enemy's country, and so long cut off from even the comfort's of a camp. Welcomed and prized as letters always were, they had never been so much so as now; and few of us can look back to those old clays, without remembering 'the good old mail we got at Camden.'⁶

In addition to the disaster at Poison Spring and the shortage of supplies, Steele was confronted by another vexing problem. This concerned his future course of action. Whether Steele realized it or not, he had let the initiative slip from his hands, when the need for supplies had compelled him to turn his back on the Confederates near Washington and strike for Camden. For the past several days, rumors had been reaching Steele's headquarters that Major General Nathaniel P. Banks' army which was supposed to be closing in on Shreveport, Louisiana, had been repulsed. When questioned, the local people replied that Banks had been assailed near Natchitoches and had fallen back. Confederate dispatches found in the Camden telegraph office corroborated these statements. Steele, to try to get some definite information regarding Banks' activities, had sent out a number of spies. It was the 17th before one of these spies reached Camden. When he did, he confirmed the bad news, Banks was falling back.⁷

The next day (the 18th) one of Steele's couriers rode into Camden. He had left Banks on the 13th, but he carried no written communication from the Massachusetts general. He reported that General Banks had directed him to say that he had "fought the enemy on the 8th and 9th of April, at or near Pleasant Hill, about 30 miles above Natchitoches, and defeated him, but was compelled to fall back to Grand Ecore for supplies." One of Brigadier General Albert L. Lee's staff-officers had told the messenger that in the first day's fighting, the Confederates had captured 22 pieces of artillery and all of

Lee's train. But, he continued, all the artillery except eight guns had been recaptured the next day. In addition, the messenger learned that the stage of the Red River was very low and some of the gunboats were aground.⁸

Writing Major General William T. Sherman on April 22, Steele expressed the opinion, "There seems to be no doubt that Banks has fallen back to Alexandria." Steele was unable to understand why Banks, if he had left Alexandria prepared to go to Shreveport, had run out of supplies and had been compelled to retire on Grand Ecore. He and Banks were encountering a great deal of difficulty communicating across miles of unfriendly territory. So far, only one messenger had been able to get through, consequently, the only news Steele had received regarding Banks' movements was from spies and local people.⁹

If Banks had decided to give up his Red River Expedition, Steele warned Sherman, General Edmund Kirby Smith could be expected to rush heavy reinforcements from the Louisiana theatre of operations into southwestern Arkansas. With these troops, Major General Sterling Price would launch an offensive aimed at recovering Camden. Steele, at the moment, felt confident that his army could "beat Price." But he did not think he could defeat "the whole force which Kirby Smith could sent against me, if Banks should let him go."

Camden, Steele reported, "is a strong place." If he could get the navy to rush a convoy up the Ouachita, he believed that he would be able to hold the heavily fortified town indefinitely. Until the navy was able to do this, "the Arkansas must be our base of supplies."

Commenting on the Poison Spring debacle, Steele pointed out that Price's large mounted force made it necessary to detail a strong escort to guard all trains leaving the Camden perimeter. "It is useless to talk of obtaining supplies in this country for my command," because the surrounding area "is well-nigh exhausted and the people are threatened with starvation."

Steele informed Sherman that he had received a report that 8,000 infantry from Shreveport had joined Price on the 21st. At this very minute, he noted, Confederate artillery was shelling his outposts.¹⁰

Before Steele was able to dispatch his letter to Sherman, Captain Robert T. Dunham reached Camden with communications from

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Disaster at Marks' Mills (Continued from Page 6)

General Banks. It had taken the captain seven days to make the long, hard ride from Grand Ecore to Steele's headquarters. When Steele glanced at the message, his heart sank.

Banks had written Steele that he had encountered a larger Confederate force than he had anticipated; the Rebels seemed determined to make a bitter fight for Shreveport, an action that had not been "anticipated by many of our officers." To make matters even more ticklish, the Confederates were operating on interior lines. It was impossible for their widely separated columns to co-operate effectively, so Banks urged Steele to bring his army to Red River and join the Army of the Gulf operating on that line.¹¹

Steele was shocked by the rashness of Banks' proposal. To suppose that an army of 12,000 men, without supplies, could cross a region stripped of forage made Steele shake his head. In addition, this advance would have to be made in face of a Confederate army made jubilant by recent successes scored at the Federals' expense. Even if his soldiers were able to avoid defeat at the hands of the Rebels, Red River would have to be forded before a junction with Banks could be effected. Steele's chief engineer, Captain Junius B. Wheeler, characterized Banks request as "so absurd" that it was not entertained for a moment.¹²

Steele drafted his reply to Banks on the 23rd. Like Sherman, Banks was told of the rumors circulating through the Union camps that Price had been reinforced by 8,000 infantry. While he would not hazard a guess at the number of troops that had reached Price, he was certain of one thing: "Old Pap" had been reinforced. According to the latest information picked up by his spies and scouts, Steele reported, Price (prior to the arrival of these reinforcements had from 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers, most of whom were cavalry or mounted infantry.

Within the past 24 hours, the Confederates had stepped up their activity. The Southerners were now employing artillery against his outposts. Steele warned that these bombardments might be designed

to soften up Union defenses as a prelude to an all-out attack on the fortifications guarding the approaches to Camden. "The Rebels," he observed, "are said to be very much encouraged by an order of General E. K. Smith, detailing his successes against your command."

Banks was cautioned that the way things were developing in southwestern Arkansas, Steele was afraid he would have his hands full coping with Price. He had forwarded an urgent request to Little Rock for Brigadier General Nathan Kimball to send him all the troops he could spare. (Kimball had been left in charge at Little Rock, when Steele had taken the field with his expeditionary force.) As soon as these reinforcements arrived, he promised to test Price's mettle.

His great problem, Steele wrote, was supplies. Taking up the subject which he had broached in his letter of the previous day to Sherman, Steele inquired, "Can army gunboats be diverted from the Red to the Ouachita?" Since the Ouachita was navigable at this season for big boats to Camden, Steele believed that the tin-clads would be invaluable in establishing an all-water supply route for the support of his army. It would be impossible for him to shift his command to the Red by way of the Ouachita, because it would leave Arkansas and Missouri open to invasion by the Confederates.

If he were to move from Camden, Steele wrote, "we must have supplies; those of the country are nearly exhausted." Supplies or no supplies, he pledged that he would keep Price's army under close observation. Under no circumstances would Price be allowed to slip away to Shreveport and join Smith in an attack on Banks.

Captain Dunham, to whom the general

entrusted this message, was to inform Banks that it was impossible for him to say definitely that he would join the Army of the Gulf "at any point on the Red River within a given time."¹³

Steele's letter to Banks indicates the uncertainty and indecision that had enveloped the general's headquarters since his column had reached Camden. The Federals had yielded the initiative; the next move would be up to the Confederates.

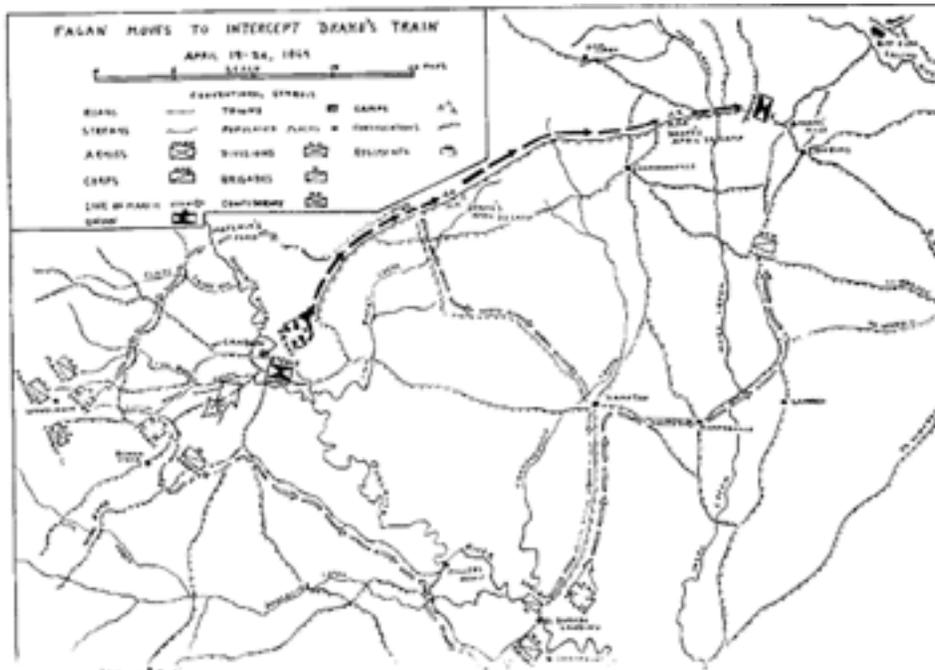
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Meanwhile, with Banks' army retreating, General Kirby Smith decided to take personal command of the Arkansas Campaign. He would leave Major General Richard Taylor in nominal charge at Shreveport, with instructions to rejoin his troops in front of Natchitoches should he see fit. Before leaving for Arkansas on April 16, Smith wrote President Jefferson Davis of his plans.

The President was notified that Smith was leaving Shreveport for Arkansas with a portion of Taylor's army. His object was to engage Steele's army which, according to latest report reaching Shreveport, was operating in and around Camden. In event of any "contingency arising whereby the command of the Trans-Mississippi Department might devolve on another," Smith informed the President, he had issued a special order elevating Taylor to the rank of lieutenant general. This seemed necessary because other major generals currently serving in the department, John B. Magruder and Sterling Price, ranked Taylor. Taylor, in Smith's opinion, was the only one of the three "suited to take charge of the affairs of the department."

Smith trusted that his action in regard to this matter would "meet with the approbation and sanction of Your Excellency."¹⁴

The three infantry divisions Smith proposed to take with him into southwestern Arkansas had marched through Shreveport on the 16th. Smith, realizing that the economy of the region between Shreveport and Camden had been hard hit by the war, assigned each division a different



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line of march. In this way, Smith hoped to make the task of securing forage for the soldiers easier on both his commissary and quartermaster officers and the civilians. Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill's division took the westernmost route —the Wire road. His line of march paralleled Red River for a considerable distance. After leaving the valley of the Red, Churchill's Arkansans would pass through Magnolia. Brigadier General Mosby M. Parsons' Missourians traveled the Middle road via Benton, Rocky Mount and Calhoun. The Wire and Middle roads converged at Magnolia. The Texas Division commanded by Major General John G. Walker swung to the northeast toward Minden.¹⁵ Hastening ahead, General Smith reached Calhoun, Arkansas, on the 17th. The general stopped at Dr. Harris' house. (Calhoun was within a few hours' ride of Price's Woodlawn command post.) "There was a telegraph line linking Calhoun with Shreveport, so Smith decided to establish his headquarters there for the time being.

Smith now learned that Steele's army was encamped behind the Camden fortifications. The Confederates having laid out these works, Smith was aware of their strength. If he were to operate successfully with his infantry against the Federals, Smith would have to bypass Camden and throw his men across the Ouachita River either above or below the city. He knew that it would be several days before his pontoon train, then en route from Shreveport, overtook him, consequently, he determined to halt at Minden one of the three infantry divisions ordered to Price's support. A staff officer galloped off with orders for Walker to halt his division.

From Minden, Walker's combat-ready Texans would be in position to move on to Camden, return to Shreveport, or turn toward Campti. A message from Taylor had led Smith to conclude that Banks was preparing to throw a pontoon bridge across Red River at Grand Ecore. If true, this indicated that Banks and Steele were still planning to join forces for a drive on Shreveport. Not intending to attack Steele in the Camden fortifications, Kirby Smith thought of returning Walker's Texas Division to Taylor.¹⁶

Smith's order for Walker to halt his division reached the general on the 18th, shortly after he had passed through Minden. The first suitable camp site Walker spotted was 12 miles beyond the town. Here Walker halted his Texans. Since the men and animals were "thoroughly fagged out" by the month's hard marches and fighting, the troops welcomed the break. By the morning of April 20, Walker's staff had located a better bivouac area on Walnut Creek, six miles away. The division accordingly shifted its camp.¹⁷

When Price learned that Kirby Smith

had reached Dr. Harris', he sent a staff officer to brief his superior about a projected attack on a large Union forage train operating along the upper Washington road. Smith liked what he heard; Price was given the word to go ahead.¹⁸

The battle of Poison Spring resulted. Encouraged by this success, Smith, on the evening of the 18th, wrote his wife that he had strong hopes of destroying Steele's army.¹⁹

On April 19 Smith visited Price's Woodlawn headquarters. Upon conferring with "Old Pap," Smith was disturbed to discover that Price had made no effort to carry out several of his pet projects. Two days before he had left Shreveport, Smith had telegraphed, if Price were unable to keep Steele out of Camden, he was to dispatch a strong force of cavalry across the Ouachita. This cavalry column would be given a twofold mission. It was to keep the Federals from foraging east of the river, while breaking Steele's communications with Little Rock and Pine Bluff.²⁰

Urged by Smith, Price saw that a cavalry expedition was organized. Brigadier General James F. Fagan would command the raiding column composed of 4,000 picked troopers. After crossing the Ouachita, Fagan was to attack Steele's supply lines and magazines at Little Rock, Pine Bluff, and DeVall's Bluff. He would then throw his force between Steele and Little Rock. Effective execution of these orders would threaten Steele with disaster, because Smith was convinced, "Neither man nor beast could be sustained in the exhausted country between the Ouachita and White Rivers."²¹

One of the brigades (Brigadier General Joseph O. Shelby's) assigned to Fagan's column took the field immediately, heading for El Dorado Landing on the Ouachita, 26 miles below Camden. Shelby on reaching his goal was to guard the floating bridge. Several days' rest had worked wonders for Shelby's command. Riding out of Woodlawn on the 19th, Shelby's hell-for-leather Missourians forded the Ouachita above Camden, and swept southward driving in Union pickets, posted east of the Ouachita. Emboldened by this success, Captain Washington McDaniel placed himself at the head of 100 picked men of the 1st Missouri Cavalry Battalion. With this force, he assailed the strong detachment guarding the bridge across Two Bayou. Instead of falling back, the Federals held their ground. A brisk skirmish developed. It was not long before the Camden garrison took cognizance of the firing. Reinforcements crossed the Ouachita River and hurried to their comrades' assistance. Seeing that he had stirred up a hornet's nest, Captain McDaniel broke off the attack, and quickly withdrawing his detachment, the captain rejoined Shelby. The

remainder of the march to El Dorado Landing was uneventful.²²

It was the morning of April 22 before Fagan moved out with his remaining three brigades. For ease in handling, Fagan resolved to organize the four brigades assigned his task force into two divisions. Brigadier General William L. Cabell would be in charge of a division composed of his own and Brigadier General Thomas P. Dockery's brigade. Shelby's and William A. Crawford's brigades would be attached to the division commanded by Shelby. To free his hands from petty administrative details, Shelby placed his ranking regimental commander, Colonel David Shanks, in charge of the "Iron Brigade."²³

Riding out of their camps on the middle Camden road, the greyclad horsemen turned into a road paralleling the west bank of the Ouachita. The next day Fagan's command rendezvoused with Shelby's brigade at El Dorado Landing.²⁴

Soon after he had reached the landing on the 21st, Shelby received a message signed by General Price. Shelby was to hold the Iron Brigade ready to co-operate with Fagan in a sweep across the Ouachita. While waiting for Fagan to show up, Shelby's scouts reconnoitered the countryside east of the river. When Fagan reached El Dorado Landing on April 23, Shelby informed him that a large, heavily guarded train had left Camden and was en route to Pine Bluff. The destruction of this train would be just the type of business Kirby Smith had planned for Fagan.²⁵

Taking cognizance of the late hour, Fagan decided to let his men camp for the night. An early start would be made in the morning, for Fagan realized that if he were to overtake the Federals before they crossed Saline River, his column would have to travel light and fast. The only vehicles that were to be taken across the Ouachita would be ordnance wagons and ambulances. Throughout the remainder of the 23rd, the Confederate horsemen kept busy drawing rations and ammunition. Inspections were held. Officers and men who showed signs of being unable to hold up on the hard marches Fagan knew were in the offing, and broken down mounts were weeded out. Colonel Crawford was quite ill, so his senior regimental commander, Colonel John C. Wright, would command his brigade. As soon as his subordinates reported that their men had their equipment squared away and were ready to move at a moment's notice, Fagan permitted them to bivouac.²⁶

Following Shelby's departure from Woodlawn, Brigadier General John S. Marmaduke was left with only one brigade, Colonel Colton Greene's. Kirby Smith's decision to send Fagan with four mounted brigades to raid Steele's communication lines

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could be expected to increase Greene's work. Greene's Missourians would now have to man the entire line of outposts covering the approaches to the Camden perimeter. To do this, Marmaduke on the 19th posted Greene's brigade on the Wire road.

Establishing his base camp at Mrs. Walker's (12 miles from Camden) Greene had his troopers picket the roads leading into Camden from the south and west. On April 21 a detachment of Steele's cavalry assailed Greene's outposts on the Wire road. Shots were exchanged, and the Confederates fell back on their supports. Because they were looking for information, not a fight, the blue-coated troopers broke off the contest and retired toward Camden. Beyond reoccupying their advance picket line, the Southerners made no effort to follow the Union horsemen.²⁷

Greene's scouts watched the supply train that entered Camden on the 20th, and immediately notified General Smith of this development. This undoubtedly made Smith wince, because he felt that if Price had carried out his instructions and had thrown a strong force across the Ouachita, this train would have never gotten through. Nevertheless, Smith realized that it would be unwise to send Fagan dashing off before Churchill's and Parsons' infantry divisions reached the area, because Steele might utilize these supplies to breakout of the Camden perimeter and strike for Shreveport. Fagan accordingly had not been allowed to start for El Dorado Landing till the infantry showed up.²⁸

By nightfall on the 20th, the lead division, General Parsons', reached Calhoun. Churchill's Arkansas division, which was about a day's march behind Parsons' Missourians, had left Magnolia that morning. It was the 22nd before the two infantry divisions reached Woodlawn.²⁹

To divert Steele's attention from Fagan's crossing of the Ouachita, Smith told Price to have the infantry make a feint against the Camden perimeter. By the morning of April 23, Churchill's and Parsons' foot soldiers were in position on the Wire road. Screened by Greene's troopers, the infantry pushed forward. As his vanguard approached the bridge across Two Bayou, Greene threw out skirmishers and formed his brigade into battle line.

The rugged Confederates forged steadily ahead, forcing the Union pickets to withdraw to the east side of the stream. Since only a demonstration was planned, Price decided not to send his troops across Two Bayou, which was within a mile of Camden. Greene halted his brigade, while Churchill's and Parsons' troops were deployed on either side of the Wire road. When Price gave the word, Captain Alexander A. Lesueur had his artillerists unlimber their four guns. The Missouri

artillerists hammered the woods on the east side of the stream with shot and shell.³⁰

As soon as the Confederate artillery had roared into action, the Union officers ordered their troops to fall out under arms. While some of the men were detailed to pack the gear, the rest of the soldiers filed into the fortifications. The bombardment now ceased. Within a few minutes, the Union regiments were marched back to their camps and dismissed.³¹

After having caused the Federals to beat the "long roll," Price withdrew his infantry. Greene's troopers covered the infantry as it fell back. Both infantry and cavalry by nightfall had retired to their camps, and Price reported that the feint against the Camden perimeter had cost him no casualties. At the same time, he listed Union losses as several killed and 23 wounded.³²

* * *

The supply train that had entered Camden on the afternoon of the 20th was quickly unloaded. Within 48 hours the teams and wagoners had caught their second wind. Orders were issued for the train to return to Pine Bluff and pick up additional supplies. Since there were a number of surplus government wagons parked in the Camden perimeter, Captain Henry earmarked 61 of these to accompany the train on its trip to Pine Bluff. Altogether, there would be 211 government wagons in the train.³³

By this time, Steele had been alerted that Shelby's Iron Brigade had crossed the Ouachita and was supposedly operating along the Pine Bluff road. Recent rains had played hob with the road, and word had reached Steele that the Moro Bottom was almost impassable. Nevertheless, Steele, after a meeting with his general officers, determined to push ahead with the project.³⁴

While Captain Henry was getting the train organized, General Steele called upon one of his two infantry division commanders, Brigadier General Frederick Salomon, for an infantry brigade and four guns to escort the wagons. Salomon decided to give this assignment to his dependable 2nd Brigade. Colonel William E. McLean, the brigade commander, as well as his two senior regimental commanders, was sick, consequently, the command of the 2nd Brigade had devolved on Lieutenant Colonel Francis M. Drake of the 36th Iowa Infantry. While his officers were forming and mustering their units, Drake reported to Steele's headquarters. The general told Drake that he would escort to Pine Bluff the train currently parked on the east side of the Ouachita. As soon as the wagons could be reloaded, the brigade was to accompany them on their return trip to Camden. Steele told the colonel that he was to have his command on

the road at an early hour on the 23rd.³⁵

Before dismissing Drake, Steele warned him that the road across Moro Bottom was very bad. Under no circumstances was Drake to cross the bottom "in the evening." He was also advised that the veteran portion of the 1st Iowa Cavalry, numbering 520 officers and men, had been relieved from duty with the army and was going home on furlough. These Iowans, Steele observed, would not be ready to start as soon as the train. But, he added, they would overtake Drake before he reached the Moro.³⁶

Accompanied by the guide assigned to the train, Drake returned to his billet, where he found that during his absence his subordinates had prepared their troops for the forthcoming hard marches. The brigade crossed the Ouachita during the evening, camping near the wagon park. After listening to the reports of his regimental commanders, Drake found that he would take the field in the morning with about 1,200 blueclad footsoldiers. Two sections (the 1st and 3rd) of Battery E, 2nd Missouri Light Artillery were to march with Drake's infantry.³⁷

Long before daybreak, reveille sounded in the Union camp in the cane patch, one mile east of the Ouachita. As soon as the Yanks had bolted their breakfasts, the order to fall in was given. Just as it started to get light, Major Mark McCauley of the 1st Indiana Cavalry crossed the pontoon bridge at the head of a picked detachment of 240 mounted troopers from his own regiment and the 7th Missouri Cavalry. McCauley informed Colonel Drake that he had been assigned to help escort the train.³⁸

By 5 a.m. the teamsters had their teams harnessed and hitched to the wagons. When the wagonmaster gave the word, whips popped, and the train and its escort moved out. Major McCauley's troopers, who took the lead, turned into the Mount Elba road. As he rode back and forth beside the slow-moving column, Colonel Drake was surprised to discover that between 50 and 75 wagons belonging to sutlers and private individuals had joined the train. In addition, a large number of citizens, cotton speculators, refugees, sutlers, camp followers, and about 300 Negroes had attached themselves to his command.³⁹

Before the train had proceeded many miles, Colonel Drake discovered that the road had been badly rutted by the passage of the wagons on their way out to Camden. To make matters even worse, the road had been washed out in a number of places by the heavy rains which had pelted the area during the past fortnight. Drake organized "contrabands and refugees" into a 75-man pioneer corps, which was put to work filling ruts and repairing washouts.⁴⁰

About 12 miles east of Camden, Union

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scouts found signs of a recently abandoned cavalry encampment. When he questioned his guide, Drake learned that about two miles beyond the road was flanked by a thick growth of blackjack. Drake smelled ambush. Calling for Major McCauley, the colonel told him to take the lead. In case of trouble, Drake would support him with the 36th Iowa. Drawing their sabers, the cavalymen let go a shout and charged into the timber to the right of the road. They quickly discovered that Drake's suspicions were correct. After a brisk clash, the Union horsemen compelled the Confederates, who belonged to a patrol sent out by Shelby, to scatter.⁴¹

Having compelled McCauley's bluecoats to deploy, the Confederates scattered. Throughout the remainder of the day, the butternuts continued to harass Drake's vanguard and flankers. Except for several men who wandered off and were presumed captured, the Federals suffered no casualties in this hit and run warfare.

The day had been cold with frequent showers. While the country, a diarist wrote:

is poor low & flat, mostly covered with a pine & cyprees [sic] the ground is verry [sic] sandy . . . & no improvements to amount to any thing; & nearly all the women claim to be widows a fiew [sic] acknowledge their husbands are in the rebel army, & when their Negroes want to follow our train they sometimes cry aloud & say that if they go away, that them & their children will be left to starve but their tears & intreatys [sic] have but little impression on the Negroes, they seem to have a thirst for freedom. . . .

Nightfall on the 23rd found the train parked alongside the road 18 miles east of Camden.⁴²

The train again made an early start on April 24. Drake's pioneers were hard-pressed to keep the wagons rolling. A veteran reported that since crossing the Ouachita, the land had been "poor," while "the improvements gave no evidence of enterprize [sic] buildings almost intirely [sic] of logs with stick & mud chimneys & not a building in 50 in this country painted. . . ." By dark the Federals had reached the western edge of Moro Bottom. While the rest of the command rested, the pioneer corps continued to work. Besides corduroying the road across the swamp, the pioneers bridged Moro Creek.⁴³

As soon as the column had halted, Colonel Drake called for a staff officer, Lieutenant James B. Schrom. The lieutenant, who was bearing important dispatches, was told to take an ambulance, cross the Moro Bottom, and proceed to Pine Bluff. Upon his arrival at Pine Bluff, Schrom was to contact the commander of the post (Colonel Powell Clayton) and tell him of the train's whereabouts. Schrom, however, failed to get through. After having

traveled less than a mile, the ambulance became hopelessly mired. Schrom notified Drake of his difficulty and sent for a guard to help protect the dispatches he carried. It was the next morning before the ambulance was pulled out of the mud hole into which it had settled.⁴⁴

Major McCauley's troopers spent hours in the saddle on the 24th. Even so; the wide-ranging horse soldiers were unable to spot any Confederate patrols. This troubled Colonel Drake. He wondered what had happened to the butternuts who had clashed so frequently with McCauley's men on the previous afternoon.

To be on the safe side, Drake posted a cavalry patrol (one officer and 25 men) at the junction of the Chambersville and Camden roads. This was two and one-half miles west of camp. At daybreak the officer in charge of this outpost was directed to have patrols reconnoiter both roads to a distance of five miles. Another outpost at the same time was stationed two miles east of the wagon park, at a point where the Princeton road intersected the Camden-Mount Elba road. This 10-man detail at dawn was to scout the Princeton road.

Before retiring for the night, Drake discussed the situation with Major McCauley. The cavalry leader was instructed to organize a 75-man patrol led by a reliable officer. As soon as it started to get light, this detachment was to advance across Moro Bottom to where the Warren road bounced off from Mount Elba road. (This was about six miles east of where the train was parked.) Here the main body would take position, while patrols went down the Warren road. McCauley was to take the remainder of his command and proceed at daybreak to the junction of the Chambersville and Camden roads. He would remain there until the patrols sent to reconnoiter the other roads returned.⁴⁵

At the designated hour on April 25, the cavalry detachments rode to carry out their assignments. The pioneer corps also moved out. Shortly thereafter, Major Wesley W. Norris of the 43rd Indiana called for his regiment to fall in. The major was in a bad humor, because during the night he had had words with Colonel Drake. He had been awakened by the officer of the day, who reported that "something unusual was going on in front." Getting up, Norris had gone to Drake's tent and had awakened him, reporting the sounds, and asked for orders.

Drake in a positive voice replied, "Major, there is no enemy in front; you get scared too easily. Go back and go to bed!"

Upon returning to his regiment, Norris cautioned his sentries to be vigilant.

Accompanied by the 3rd section of Battery E, 2nd Missouri Light Artillery, the 43rd Indiana moved out at sun-up. Major

Norris was to march his command to the junction of the Mount Elba and Warren roads. Here he would halt. If the cavalry patrols reconnoitering the Warren road reported encountering any Confederates, he was to throw out a line of skirmishers.⁴⁶

As soon as the Indianians had taken up the march, the wagonmaster started the train. The train rolled slowly and with great difficulty through the swamp. Colonel Drake recalled, many of the wagons became "mired down as the mules floundered in the seemingly bottomless slush holes, some scarcely visible except their ears."

When the last wagon left the park and pulled out into the road, Colonel Drake called for Major Augustus H. Hamilton of the 36th Iowa. It was now time for the Iowans to hit the road. Hamilton's regiment was to march on the right of the train, holding its position on the flank as far as the turn off into the Warren road. The 77th Ohio, supported by the 1st section of Battery E, would bring up the rear. After telling the Ohioans' leader, Captain Andrew J. McCormick, what he was to do in case of attack, Colonel Drake started for the head of the train. At the time that Drake trotted off, the Ohio regiment was resting on its arms.⁴⁷

It was 8 a.m. before anything out of the ordinary occurred, and Colonel Drake, who was riding with the 36th Iowa, was within two miles of Marks' Mills. (The mills and several farm houses were on a ridge known as the Red Lands, near the junction of the Mount Elba and Warren roads.) Here the colonel was hailed by an excited courier on a sweat-lathered horse, who reported that the 43rd Indiana was in contact with the foe at Marks' Mills. Before riding to the point of danger, Drake ordered Major Hamilton to rush his regiment to the front and reinforce the Indianians. An orderly was sent to get in touch with Lieutenant Schrom. (Following his failure to cross the swamp, the lieutenant had been placed in charge of the head of the train.) Schrom was to see that the wagons were parked in a field north of the road as fast as they emerged from the Moro Bottom. Wagons which were bogged down were to be abandoned, as soon as their teams could be cut loose from the traces.⁴⁸

Arriving at Marks' Mills, Drake found the 43rd Indiana and a number of cavalymen whom he failed to recognize. (These newcomers belonged to a detachment of cavalry led by Major Henry P. Spellman of the 7th Missouri.)⁴⁹

When Colonel Clayton at Pine Bluff learned that the train was returning from Camden, he ordered a "flying column" to meet it. This force consisted of a 350-man detachment from the 5th Kansas and the 7th Missouri Cavalry Regiments and the 18th Illinois Infantry. The "flying column" spent

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the night of the 24th camped east of the Saline at the Mount Elba crossing. At daybreak Spellman crossed the river with his troopers. He planned to contact the train and learn when it would reach the ford. The infantry regiment remained on the east side of the river; its mission was to guard the crossing. As he neared Marks' Mills, Spellman heard shots, so he quickened the pace. Reaching the junction of the Mount Elba and Warren roads, the cavalrymen joined the Indianians.⁵⁰

As the vanguard approached Marks' Mills, Major Norris was warned by his scouts that a strong force of Rebels was to his front. Although not a shot had been fired, the major halted his regiment and put his Indianians to work throwing up fence rail barricades, while the artillerymen parked their two James rifles. Within a few minutes, Colonel Drake rode up. As he did, Drake cursed Norris and inquired, "Why have you halted!"

Norris replied testily, "There are Rebels to my front!"

"There is no enemy in front!"

"Yes, there is," Norris countered, "for I have seen them... and you ought to order up the 36th Iowa and the 77th Ohio and take position on my right and left."

"Major Norris, I order you to advance your line and feel of the enemy if there is any in the front."

Saluting, Norris said, "All right, Colonel."

Dismounting, Norris turned his horse over to his orderly and called for his line to advance.

The Indianians had not proceeded 300 feet before they were fired on by Confederate skirmishers.

Within a few moments of his arrival at the mills, Colonel Duke saw that this time the fighting was for keeps. It was more than a roving patrol that his advance had encountered. To keep from being flanked, Drake shouted for Major Norris to extend his skirmish line. Norris deployed and threw out two more companies to reinforce the three already engaged. Majors McCauley and Spellman were told to dismount all their troopers except 50 men each. The dismounted cavalrymen took position alongside the Indianians. McCauley with his 50 horsemen was posted on commanding ground to the right of the infantry, while Spellman's detachment was stationed on the footsoldiers' left.⁵¹

Staff officers were sent racing for the rear with instructions for the 36th Iowa and the 77th Ohio to come up on the double. The Iowans, who were already approaching Marks' Mills, soon arrived on the field. It would be sometime, however, before the Ohioans put in an appearance, because they were marching behind the train.

The aide who contacted Captain

McCormick of the Ohio regiment warned him that he might encounter a Rebel force as he crossed Moro Bottom. If he did, he would have his Ohioans fix bayonets and cut their way through.⁵²

Meanwhile, the tempo of the firing on the skirmish line increased. As soon as the panting Iowans came into view, Drake had Norris reinforce his skirmish line with his five remaining companies. For the time being, the 36th Iowa would constitute a strategic reserve.⁵³

* * *

Accompanied by his two divisions, General Fagan crossed the Ouachita before daybreak on the 24th, and taking the Chambersville road, the fast-moving Confederate column drove ahead. Although Fagan knew that the heavily guarded train had a day's start, he felt confident of intercepting the Federals before they crossed the Saline. Throughout the day, the Rebel horsemen pressed forward. Except for several brief pauses, Fagan kept his men in the saddle until midnight. Having covered 45 long, hard miles since leaving El Dorado Landing, Fagan halted his column southwest of Edinburg, where the men and their mounts were permitted to take a well-deserved rest.

This forced march enabled Fagan to gain the Warren road. It was only eight miles from the Confederate campground to Marks' Mills. Unless the Federals had made unexpected progress, Fagan had stolen a march on them.

Before daybreak Fagan was able to learn the location of the Yankees' bivouac. A detachment of picked scouts from the 5th Missouri led by Lieutenant W. H. Farrell returned with the news that the bluecoats were camped on Moro Creek. Fagan was understandably elated by this information. Since the Federals had not yet reached Marks' Mills, he proposed to intercept and attack the train at that point.⁵⁴

After having secured a few hours' rest, the command was turned out. As soon as the troopers had eaten, the officers formed their units. The first streaks of dawn were visible in the east as the cavalrymen swung into their saddles. When the head of the column moved off, it turned into the Marks' Mills road. Shelby's division had the lead.⁵⁵

Approaching Marks' Mills, Fagan's scouts clashed with Union pickets covering the junction of the Warren and Mount Elba roads. Fagan called for Shelby to take his division, turn to the right, and move cross-country. After detouring a considerable distance to the east, Shelby was to cut across to the Mount Elba-Camden road, and advance westward along that road. By this maneuver, Fagan proposed to cut the Federals off from the Mount Elba crossing. In addition, he would

catch the Yankees between the jaws of his converging columns. Since time was of the essence, Shelby was urged to hurry.⁵⁶

A local man serving in Dockery's brigade, William D. Marks, was given the task of showing Shelby the way. Since Marks' father owned the mills, he knew every road in this section of Bradley County.⁵⁷

To keep the Federals pinned down while Shelby was getting into position, Fagan would rely on Cabell's two combat-ready brigades. As soon as Shelby's butternuts were out of the way, Cabell advanced his brigade up the road toward Marks' Mills. Fagan shouted for Cabell to form his line of battle parallel to the Mount Elba road. Cabell planned to deploy his brigade to the right and Dockery's to the left. Since Dockery's horse soldiers were not yet in sight, Cabell called for Colonel John F. Hill of the 7th Arkansas, and told him to take his regiment and one company of the 1st Arkansas and reconnoiter the ground west of the road. Hill was to guard the brigade's left flank pending Dockery's arrival.⁵⁸

A mounted Union patrol had already opened fire on Cabell's vanguard. Moments later, General Cabell topped a ridge and caught his first glimpse of a large wagon train "moving rapidly toward Mount Elba."⁵⁹

Cabell reacted with his characteristic alacrity. Colonel James C. Monroe was to dismount and form his regiment, the 1st Arkansas Cavalry, into line of battle. Swinging off their mounts, the Arkansans formed on the right of the Warren road, while Cabell bellowed for Monroe to throw out two companies as skirmishers. Leaving a fifth of his men behind to hold the mounts, Monroe led his troopers forward on the double. Before the regiment had covered a hundred yards, the dismounted troopers were hotly engaged with bluecoated skirmishers. Pressing ahead, Monroe's grim Arkansans forced the Yankees to fall back on Marks' Mills.⁶⁰

Screened by Monroe's advance, Cabell brought up the remainder of his brigade. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gunter's command (the colonel's own battalion and Colonel Allen T. Pettus' battalion of Arkansas State Troops) was ordered into position on Monroe's right. Colonel Thomas J. Morgan's 2nd Arkansas Cavalry was deployed west of the road. Morgan's troops were told to dress their line on Monroe's left. The cannoneers of Hughey's Arkansas Battery unlimbered their four guns so they could sweep the Mount Elba road with shot and shell. Colonel A. Gordon's 4th Arkansas was posted in support of the guns. As they moved into position, the unit commanders dismounted their men, covering their fronts with a strong force of skirmishers.⁶¹

While he was busy forming his brigade, Cabell sent a member of his staff to hurry up Dockery's column. Fagan, however, halted

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the aide and told him to tell Cabell that he would tend to Dockery. Cabell in the meantime would be in charge of operations at the front.⁶²

While en route to Marks' Mills, Dockery had spotted a large quantity of forage stored on a nearby farm. It has been hours since his command's jaded mounts had had anything to eat, so Dockery halted his brigade and ordered his men to forage their animals. Recalling the incident, one of Dockery's brother officers observed, "Neither orders nor cannon-shots seemed to disturb that equanimity which he always carried with him into battle. Jolly, energetic, yet absolutely devoid of nervous sensibility, he appeared to have perfect immunity from both fear and anxiety."⁶³

By this time, Cabell had completed his deployment, and his skirmishers had driven in the Union outposts. Cabell did not deem it "prudent" to close with the bluecoats' main line of resistance till he heard from Dockery. An aide was sent to inform Fagan that the brigade was astride the Warren road and facing the Mount Elba road along which wagons were moving. Replying, Fagan directed Label] to "move rapidly forward and attack the train." Cabell communicated this order to his subordinates.⁶⁴

Covered by a strong line of skirmishers, Cabell's brigade swept toward the train. On the right, Major Gunter's greyclads easily brushed Union cavalrymen of Major Spellman's command aside and reached the road. A number of wagons were captured by the butternuts.⁶⁵

The skirmishers from Colonel Morgan's 2nd Arkansas also found it very easy going. Breaking into a clearing, they sighted a number of wagons. Colonel Morgan bellowed, "Charge!" Led by their rugged colonel, the Arkansans reached the portion of the train on the road to their front. During the fight which ensued, the teamsters and a number of Union cavalrymen took to their heels. Morgan had his men kill mules used to pull the wagons, because he wanted to make certain the train would be stalled long enough to allow Shelby and Dockery to bring up their troopers.⁶⁶

Unlike Gunter and Morgan, Monroe found the going difficult as he sought to reach the train. Monroe's skirmishers were soon in close contact with rugged infantrymen of the 43rd Indiana. At first, Monroe's Arkansans only engaged Major Norris' skirmishers, but when Colonel Drake gave the word, Norris threw forward the remainder of his regiment. Letting go a mighty shout, the Indianians launched a counterstroke. In the savage fighting which ensued, the Federals gained the upper hand. Disputing "every foot of ground," the 1st Arkansas grudgingly recoiled.⁶⁷

Colonel Drake was delighted to see the way Norris' Indianians were pushing back the

Confederates, consequently, he ordered Major Hamilton to take the left battalion and support Norris' counterattack. As Hamilton started forward followed by his cheering Iowans, the greyclads who had reached the Mount Elba road to the right and left of the Union position at Marks' Mills changed front and converged on the 43rd Indiana. Drake altered his tactics. The Indianians were pulled back and took position at the junction. As he did, Major Norris formed his soldiers to the left and right of several log houses (Marks' Mills).

Lieutenant Charles Peetz had the cannoneers of the 3rd section, Battery E, 2nd Missouri Light Artillery unlimber their two guns in front of the buildings. Drake told Peetz to hold his fire until the Rebels had closed on his guns and then rake them with canister. The left battalion of the 36th Iowa was posted in support of Peetz's cannons. Major Hamilton had his men lie down. Pending the arrival of the 77th Ohio, the right battalion of the Iowa regiment would constitute Colonel Drake's reserve. Drake's main line of resistance was in an open wood along the Red Lands.⁶⁸

General Cabell had accompanied Gunter's command during the advance, but his elation at having gained the Mount Elba road and capturing a number of wagons was short-lived. While he was helping Major Gunter re-group his command, the general heard heavy firing to his left and rear. This could mean only one thing—Colonel Monroe's regiment was not having an easy time of it. The woods kept Cabell from seeing what was happening on Monroe's front, so he ordered Gunter to face his men about and hasten to his comrades' assistance. When they came into position, Gunter's Arkansans found that they were on the left of Monroe's 1st Arkansas.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Colonel Morgan discovered that Monroe was in trouble. While his men were blocking the Mount Elba road by shooting mules and breaking down wagons, Morgan heard heavy volleys to his right and rear. After listening a few moments, he realized that the sounds were receding. (During the advance on the train, Morgan's troopers had lost contact with Colonel Monroe's regiment on their right.) If battle sounds were any indication of what was happening, Morgan knew that Monroe was in trouble.

Morgan shouted for his regiment to about face. Guided through the woods by the crashing volleys, Morgan's Arkansans, after going about 300 yards, sighted the Union battle line. The bluecoats were posted along the Red Lands, a section of artillery in position.⁷⁰

As soon as Gunter's and Morgan's units had been redeployed, Cabell ordered his brigade to press forward. With the help of Gunter and Morgan, Monroe's Arkansans compelled Norris' Indianians to fall back on

the battery. Peetz's gunners waited until the Rebels had driven to within 75 yards of their pieces before they pulled the lanyards, and the guns roared and the area in front of the two pieces was swept by a deadly hail of canister. Major Hamilton of the 36th Iowa called for his left battalion, which was lying behind the battery, "to rise up and fire." This caused the Johnnies to recoil. Taking cover behind trees and in the dense underbrush, the greyclads returned the Yanks' volleys.⁷¹

A savage contest "ragged with unabated fury" for the better part of the next hour and one-half. To knock out the guns of Battery E, Cabell sent for artillery. Captain W. M. Hughey's cannoneers manhandled their four pieces forward, emplaced there within 400 yards of the Federal position, and raked the Union artillerists with round after round of canister. A number of Battery E's horses were killed and several of the cannoneers cut down. Lieutenant Peetz, however, kept his men at their guns.⁷²

Cabell's Arkansans and the soldiers of the 43rd Indiana and the left battalion 36th Iowa expended thousands of rounds as they blazed away. After about one hour of this desperate fighting, a number of Colonel Monroe's officers approached him. They reported their men were running short of ammunition. Monroe passed the word for his men to hold down their fire, while he sent to the rear for his ordnance wagon. As soon as the men had been issued a fresh supply of cartridges, they were again able to fire at will.⁷³

To Monroe's left, Gunter's command—its right flank anchored on the Warren road—inch ed its way ahead. Gunter directed his men toward a log cabin on the Red Lands in which a number of blueclad sharpshooters had taken cover. Fighting Indian-fashion, Gunter's Arkansans dashed from tree to tree.

Morgan's 2nd Arkansas, which was deployed on Gunter's left, found itself raked by Peetz's guns. The regiment suffered a number of casualties as it closed in on the union position.⁷⁴

Dockery's brigade now put in a belated appearance. When Dockery came riding up, General Fagan instructed him to dismount and deploy his troopers on Cabell's left. Now that he was on the field, Dockery moved promptly. The arrival of Dockery enabled Fagan to redeploy Colonel Hill's 7th Arkansas, which up to this hour had been guarding Cabell's left. Supported by the 7th Arkansas, Dockery led his cheering Arkansans into action.⁷⁵

Colonel Drake's outnumbered bluecoats had held firm in face of Cabell's attack. About the time that Dockery advanced to Cabell's assistance, several of Drake's scouts galloped up, and informed their colonel that a strong

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Confederate column (Shelby's division) was approaching from the east along the Mount Elba road. Since Cabell's attack had been delivered up the Warren road, Drake's main line of resistance faced south. Unless Drake could do something, and do it fast, the Rebel force sweeping forward via the Mount Elba road would strike his left and rear. Drake called up his reserve, the 36th Iowa's right battalion. The Iowans were to hold themselves ready to charge the newcomers' right.⁷⁶

At the same time, Colonel Drake sent an orderly to tell Major McCauley that he was to charge the oncoming Rebel horsemen with his 60 troopers who had remained in the saddle. The messenger soon returned and reported that he was unable to contact McCauley. Since Drake considered it "absolutely necessary" to get in touch with the cavalryman, he decided to go himself. Accompanied by Captain William E. Whitridge of the 43rd Indiana, Drake galloped off. While en route to McCauley's command post, the colonel was severely wounded when a minie ball struck him in the left hip. Gritting his teeth, the rugged colonel rode on.

When he reached McCauley, he told the major to have his command "charge with drawn sabres and a yell and make a letter S through that Rebel line and break it to pieces." If at all possible, the cavalry leader was to try and reopen communications with the 77th Ohio. (The Ohioans at this time were pushing forward in an effort to join their comrades at Marks' Mills.) Drake promised to support the cavalry's attack with three companies of the 36th Iowa commanded by Captain Joseph B. Gedney.

McCauley, shaking his head, answered, "We will obey orders, but there will be none of us left to report."

"You will go through them so rapidly that, in our opinion you will suffer but slight loss," Drake retorted.

Observing the blood dripping from the colonel's boot, McCauley inquired, "Are you severely wounded?"

"Yes," snapped Drake,

"but we will support your charge with infantry."

Swinging his horse around, Drake prepared to return to his command post and alert Captain Gedney to have his Iowans follow up McCauley's charge. Before he saw Gedney, the colonel collapsed, but before passing out, he spotted Captain William S. Magill. Drake told the captain to turn the command over to the next ranking officer, Major Spellman. For some unexplained reason, Magill did not do this, and throughout the remainder of the engagement, the Federals operated without an overall superior. As a result of this breakdown in command, each unit commander fought his own organization as he thought best.⁷⁷

* * *

General Shelby's division reached the Mount Elba road about five miles east of Marks' Mills. The general was elated when his scouts, after examining the road, reported no Federal train had yet passed going toward the Saline. Before starting for Marks' Mills, Shelby detached Major Benjamin Elliott with his 1st Missouri Cavalry Battalion. Elliott's mission was to seize and hold the Mount Elba crossing. Besides preventing any wagons from escaping across the Saline, Elliott was to keep a sharp lookout for troops which the Pine Bluff commander, Colonel Clayton, might rush out to help the train.⁷⁸

As he approached the Mount Elba crossing, Elliott sighted a number of mounted Federals, on the west side of the Saline. Elliott

at the head of his crack battalion charged the Yanks. Taken by surprise, the Federals scattered. Since the Mount Elba raft-bridge was narrow and the Confederates were hard on their heels, not all of the Northerners were able to get away. These men grounded their arms and surrendered. Elliott's Missourians were unable to cross the river, because the 18th Illinois was posted behind breastworks on the east bank of the Saline. Throughout the remainder of the day, Elliott's Missourians and the foot soldiers sniped at each other from opposite sides of the river.⁷⁹

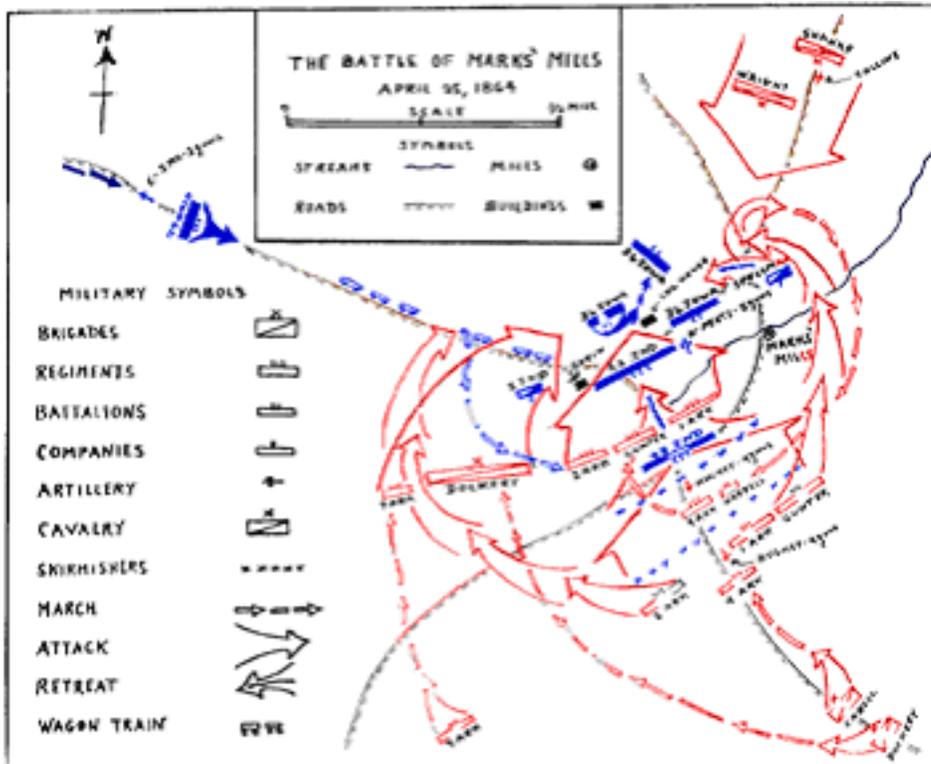
After detaching Elliott's battalion, Shelby led his division westward at a trot. Shelby had not traveled more than a mile before he began to encounter stragglers and wagons making their way rapidly toward the Mount Elba crossing. The sound of heavy firing, both artillery and small-arms, could be heard in the direction of Marks' Mills. Shelby "determined to charge them first, last, and all the time."

A brief halt was made while the general formed his division into column by fours. Colonel Wright was told to mass his brigade on the right of the Camden-Mount Elba road. Two of Colonel Shanks' Missouri regiments (the 5th and 12th) would follow Wright's brigade. The rest of the Iron Brigade would constitute a reserve and report directly to Shelby.⁸⁰

Having completed his dispositions, Shelby resumed the advance. Thundering ahead, the Rebel horsemen charged the stragglers and teamsters. When they saw Shelby's column bearing down on them, many of the "Summer Soldiers"

panicked. Some of the teamsters tried to turn their wagons around, others, in hopes of using the animals to speed their flight, sought to cut their mules from the traces. The stragglers, who had already deserted their comrades, either threw down their arms or fled into the surrounding woods.

Riding upon this scene of hopeless confusion, Shelby paused briefly to detail a small force to secure the wagons and mop up stragglers. Shelby then pushed on. All this time the roar of battle continued to roll in from the west. As he approached Marks'



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Mills, Shelby sent for Captain Richard A. Collins. The artilleryist was directed to throw a section of his guns into battery and fire two blank cartridges. This was to let Fagan know that Shelby's division had reached the field and was about to charge. While the cannoners were unlimbering their pieces, Shelby deployed his division into line of battle. Spearheaded by a detachment from the 11th Missouri, Shelby had called up from the reserve, the division swept down on the Federals' left flank and rear.⁸¹

General Cabell, hearing the roar of Collins' signal shots, correctly interpreted their significance: Shelby had reached the field and was on the bluecoats' flank and rear. Cabell called, "Charge!"

Cabell's three commands (Gunter's, Monroe's, and Morgan's) which had heretofore borne the brunt of the battle also heard Shelby's signal guns. Leaping to their feet, the dismounted troopers swept forward. Monroe's and Morgan's Arkansans converged on Peetz's two James rifles, which had cut down so many of their friends. Deserting their guns, the cannoners, along with a number of infantry, took cover in and under a large log house. The house was surrounded by the Rebels. After Monroe's and Morgan's men had fired several volleys into the building, scraps of white cloth attached to ramrods appeared at the doors and windows. As soon as the Southerners ceased shooting, between 40 and 50 bluecoats emerged from the house and threw down their arms. Colonel Drake, who was still unconscious, was carried from the building on an improvised stretcher.⁸²

As soon as the bluecoats had fallen in, a guard was placed over them and they were started for the rear.

When Colonel Drake came to, he found himself in the presence of General Fagan. The Rebel leader announced, "I am General Fagan, commanding the Confederate forces, about eight thousand. I understand that you are Colonel Drake, the commanding officer of the Federal forces." After complimenting Drake on the stubborn resistance offered by his brigade, Fagan inquired, "Can you not arrange for their surrender?" Drake replied, "I am no longer in command."

A sudden and unexpected counterattack was now launched on Monroe's and Morgan's butternuts by a 100-man Union detachment. This sortie caught the Confederates at the worst possible moment, because the two regiments were "very much disorganized or scattered." Taken by surprise, the Arkansans retreated a few steps, before their colonels rallied them. Opening a galling fire on the Yanks, the Southerners compelled them to surrender. Monroe and Morgan before pressing on re-formed their commands.⁸³

Major Gunter's command in the

meantime had closed in on a cabin in which a number of sharpshooters had taken cover. After they had encircled the stronghold, the Confederates called for the Federals to give up. The door opened, a white flag appeared, and 17 Yanks emerged from the building. As soon as the soldiers were disarmed, Major Gunter turned them over to one of his lieutenants.⁸⁴

Following the collapse of the pocket of resistance, centering on Marks' Mills, Cabell's troopers found themselves in possession of over 200 prisoners, two James rifles, and a large number of wagons. Victory was not yet complete, however. Only one infantry regiment, the 43rd Indiana, and the left battalion of the 36th Iowa had been accounted for by Cabell's greyclads. At this very moment, however, disaster overtook the Iowa regiment's right battalion. Shelby's division swept down on the Iowans and McCauley's cavalry detachment as they sought to reopen communications with the 77th Ohio. The greatly outnumbered Federals gave way before the charging Confederate horsemen.⁸⁵

The only organized Union command left on the field was the 77th Ohio. As a result of a confusion in orders, the Ohio regiment did not attempt to effect a junction with the main column until it was too late. By the time the Ohioans, who had been serving as the rear guard, reached the Marks' Mills area, the two other infantry units had been overwhelmed. Even so, the arrival of the 77th Ohio on the field caused the Confederates some embarrassment.

Sighting the Rebels, Captain McCormick deployed his regiment. Reinforced by a number of soldiers who had survived the disaster which had engulfed the 43rd Indiana and the 36th Iowa, McCormick prepared to attack, drive off the Southerners, and recapture the train. Supported by the fire of the section of Battery E which had accompanied them, the Ohioans moved forward on the double, their bayonets flashing. The Mount Elba road served as the line of advance.⁸⁶

This thrust came at the worst possible moment for Cabell's command. The units (Gunter's, Monroe's, and Morgan's) which had done most of the fighting had not been reformed, but fortunately for the Confederates, Shelby's division was on the field. While Cabell was regrouping his Arkansans and deploying them into line of battle, Shelby's mounted troopers engaged the Ohio infantrymen.

As soon as he had completed his dispositions, Cabell rushed his brigade to Shelby's support. With two of Shelby's mounted regiments (the 6th and 12th Missouri) on their right and Dockery's dismounted troopers on the left, Cabell's butternuts advanced against the 77th Ohio.⁸⁷

Major J. H. Harrell's battalion of Arkansas State Troops had been on outpost duty. Just before the engagement reached its climax, General Fagan recalled the battalion and sent it to support Captain Hughey's battery. When Cabell's brigade carried the Union position centering on Marks' Mills, Fagan had Harrell deploy his men as skirmishers and post them on the extreme right. Entering the woods north of the Mount Elba road, Harrell's greyclads discovered many sutlers' wagons hastily parked and abandoned. A short distance beyond the wagons, Harrell sighted a strong Union infantry column (the 77th Ohio) marching eastward toward Marks' Mills. Harrell's battalion drove forward, striking the Union column in the rear, while Cabell's dismounted troopers and Shelby's horsemen assailed the bluecoats from the flank and front.⁸⁸

Realizing that their position was hopeless, the Ohio regiment put up an indifferent fight. Engulfed by a tide of cheering Confederates, most of the Ohioans surrendered. Shelby's Missourians reached the two James rifles first, claiming them as prizes. One of the participants recalled, "Only ten of its [the battery's] heroic defenders escaped—one of them an old French driver, unable to speak a word of English, sat upon the rear gun composed, indifferent, only giving a quiet shrug of the shoulders when the battery changed hands."⁸⁹

As soon as the soldiers of the 77th Ohio had grounded their arms, Cabell halted his dismounted men. After seeing that the prisoners were rounded up, the unit commanders put their troopers to work policing the battlefield. One of Shelby's mounted regiments raced ahead; its mission was to run down and make prisoners of the large number of Federals who had escaped the debacle and were fleeing toward Camden. A large number of stragglers were overtaken and brought in by this regiment.⁹⁰

During mopping up operations, a dispute broke out between Cabell's and Dockery's commands. The bone of contention was the two James rifles captured by Monroe's and Morgan's regiments near the "large double house." When these two units moved against the 77th Ohio, several men from Monroe's 1st Arkansas and a detachment belonging to Colonel Gordon's 4th Arkansas were left to guard the guns. Before their parent units could return, General Dockery rode up at the head of his brigade. The general claimed the guns. When the guards protested, Dockery placed them under arrest. Unfortunately, the Official Records fail to tell us how General Fagan solved this misunderstanding between his subordinates.⁹¹

Late in the afternoon, Shelby's patrols which were patrolling the area west of Marks' Mills sighted a strong infantry column headed

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their way. It was the crack 1st Iowa Cavalry.⁹²

Five hundred and twenty officers and men of the 1st Iowa Cavalry, slated to go home on veteran furlough, left Camden on the morning of April 24. This was one day later than Steele had intended. Before starting for Iowa, the veterans sold their horses to the government. In accordance with a request by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph W. Caldwell, the leader of the Iowans, two companies of the 3rd Missouri Cavalry were ordered to escort the veterans. Night fall on the 24th found the Iowans camped in the pines, 19 miles east of Camden.

Early the next morning the escort returned to Camden, while the veterans resumed their march toward Pine Bluff. Colonel Caldwell, hoping to overtake Drake's command, pushed his men hard. About noon "the booming of artillery was heard" rolling in from the east. Believing that the train had been attacked, Caldwell quickened the march. A brief stop was made at the bridge across Moro Creek. As one of the participants recalled, "The halt had scarcely been made, when a most demoralized crowd of cotton speculators, sutlers, refugees, teamsters, etc., mounted on mules and horses, dashed past at the 'best gait' the animal possessed for Camden, followed immediately by a volley from the enemy."⁹³

Caldwell formed his men into line of battle covering the bridge. The wagons were turned around in an "incredibly short time" and sent to the rear.

When General Shelby learned that a Union force was approaching, he sent for Colonel DeWitt C. Hunter. The colonel was told to take his regiment and engage the newcomers.⁹⁴

As soon as Hunter's vanguard came into view, the Iowans concentrated a heavy fire on the bridge. Colonel Hunter, who was riding at the head of his regiment, was shot from his horse, badly wounded. This took much of the fight out of the Confederates. One of the Iowans, Lieutenant Silas R. Nugen, was captured by the greyclads, and when asked by Rebel officers what force was to their front, he replied "it was the advance of General Steele's army." This curbed their enthusiasm for closing with the bluecoats. One of the veterans felt that the extreme caution displayed by the Confederates following the fall of Hunter and the capture of Nugen "saved us from disaster." Forming successive lines to cover their rear, the Iowans fell back toward Camden.⁹⁵

Colonel Caldwell, as expected, sent a rider pounding for Camden with a call for help. Private William Potts of M Company, "having a fleet blooded horse," was chosen as the messenger. Potts covered the 38 miles to Camden in record time. As soon as Steele learned of the trouble, he ordered out the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, Colonel Daniel Anderson

commanding.

The retreat had continued. Writing of the regiment's war service, Surgeon Charles H. Lothrop observed:

This was a most fatiguing march, especially for cavalymen. The countermarch was a greater distance than that marched during the day, making a distance of more than fifty miles. The men were terribly exhausted, and the wagons were used to transport them. An ox team belonging to a rebel farmer was impressed into the service for that purpose also. As many of the men as could ride on the wagons were permitted to do so for a time, and then as others became exhausted they occupied their places. By thus changing from time to time, no men were left behind. Many dropped by the wayside, saying they could go no further, but being encouraged, and after partaking of a liberal dose of spiritus frumenti, they would resume the march with renewed spirits. Some time after midnight we halted and bivouacked for the night.⁹⁶

At daybreak the next morning (the 26th) Colonel Anderson's brigade reached the Iowans' camp. It was about 8 a.m. before the march was resumed. Six hours later, the veterans and their escort were back at Camden. When he reported to Steele, Caldwell listed his losses as two wounded and two missing and presumed captured.⁹⁷

From beginning to end, the battle of Marks' Mills had lasted five hours. Counting Major Spellman's detachment of cavalry which reached the field from Pine Bluff just before the action started, Colonel Drake had employed about 1,600 effectives. This figure does not include the 1st Iowa Cavalry. Union casualties were never fully reported, but they could not have been less than 1,300, most of whom were captured. Colonel Drake also reported that he was informed that "a large number" of Negroes and pro-Union Arkansans "were inhumanly butchered by the enemy."⁹⁸

West of the Mississippi, the war was waged with a savagery unheard of in the East. A diarist in the 36th Iowa reported:

The rebs robbed nearly every man of us even to our Chaplain & many of our dead they striped [sic] of every stitch of clothes even their shirts & socks & left them unburied [sic] & the woods on fire & many of the wounded they jurked of [sic] their boots, blouses, pants & hats, & as they would plead [sic] to have their garments left they would damn them for abolitionests [sic] or niger [sic] thieves, & they also took from many of the prisoners some of the garments they had on some they took their boots, some blouses, some pants & some hats & they had no respect for persons rank or age, Old Capt. [Charles W.] Moss of the 43rd Indiana Infantry they took his hat, & marched him bareheaded with his bald head & white locks & beard in the burning sun...⁹⁹

The effective force Fagan carried into the battle was reduced by the need to detail one-fifth of Cabell's and Dockery's men to hold mounts. Furthermore, Shelby had detached one of his units, Elliott's battalion, sending it to watch the Mount Elba crossing. These detachments reduced the number of greyclads brought into action to about 2,500. Confederate casualties were only partially reported, but they could not have been under 500, if we count the slightly wounded. The entire train of over 300 wagons, part of which was burnt during the engagement, fell into Confederate hands. A large number of ambulances, four stands of colors, four rifled guns, hundreds of small-arms, 150 Negroes, and a mail containing valuable official documents and returns concerning the strength of Steele's army were prizes, other than military prisoners, collected from the field by Fagan's cavalymen.¹⁰⁰

Normally, the area where the battle of Marks' Mills took place was "lonely and undisturbed by any sound ruder than the winds" whistling through the pine forest. On April 25, 1864, the solitude had been suddenly and rudely shattered by the "jar of artillery and the crash of small-arms for five hours." Even when the firing ceased, all was not quiet. There was the cry and moans of the wounded, the orders of the officers as they re-formed their units, the voices of the soldiers as they discussed in excited tones the engagement which had just ended.¹⁰¹

With the fighting over, there was much that had to be done before the area could be secured. Large numbers of men had to be detailed to take charge of prisoners, wagons, ambulances, loose horses and mules. The hospital corps searched the field, gathering in the dead and wounded. The Union dead were buried on Marks' Plantation. At the end of the war many of the bodies of the bluecoats were disinterred and sent to their homes in Northern states for burial. Apparently, the Confederate and Federal wounded were confined in separate hospitals. Colonel Drake reported that the Union doctors exhibited great "energy and industry" in taking care of the wounded.¹⁰²

When Confederate surgeons examined Colonel Drake's wound, they pronounced it mortal. Drake was placed in an ambulance and taken to the field hospital established in the house of Warren Crain. In accordance with Drake's request, Fagan notified Dr. C. G. Strong, one of the Union surgeons, who soon reported and took charge of the colonel's case.¹⁰³

Writing of the battle's aftermath, Major Harrell caustically commented, "The prisoners, officers and soldiers, 'refugees,' men who had proclaimed their 'loyalty' when Steele entered Camden, and were now running away with fear that he would be driven out;

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cotton-buyers, negroes and army vultures were collected and guarded." With the exception of the Negroes, who were considered property, all noncombatants were released within a few days of the battle.¹⁰⁴

Fagan feared Steele might send a mounted striking force to free the military prisoners and recover the valuable public property which had fallen into the Confederates' hands. He therefore determined to detail a strong force to guard the prisoners and captured train. Not until this column had crossed the Ouachita would Fagan breathe freely. Colonel Hill's 7th Arkansas was given the task of escorting the healthy Federals on their long trek to the prison camp at Tyler, Texas.

It was after dark before the prisoners and their escort started for the Ouachita. The wagons still able to roll followed behind, driven by men who had been detailed to the quartermaster. Colonel Drake and the more seriously wounded were paroled. Subsequently, a flag of truce party was sent from Pine Bluff and evacuated Colonel Drake and the other hospitalized Union soldiers.¹⁰⁵

Despite there being a bone of contention, the four James rifles were assigned by Fagan to the Confederate batteries—two to Hugh-ey's and two to Collins'.

Fagan's command spent the night of the 25th bivouacked on the field. Within the Confederate camps, one of the soldiers recalled, "There were rumors of 'great hauls' of greenbacks from the headquarters wagons stopped by Shelby, and of cotton-buyers who were made to distribute their 'rolls'." Unfortunately for the greyclads, none of these tales seems to have had any foundation.¹⁰⁶

On the night after the battle, the Confederates "were treated to a sumptuous meal prepared from rations taken from the captured wagons." This food had been collected along the road from Camden from homes of many of the boys who had been in the battle. When they inspected the wagons, the greyclads found many prized family possessions "quilts, bedding, and jewelry" the Federals had carried off. These were taken into John Marks' house and held there, to be restored to their owners. "Women all along the road for miles back toward Camden came on horseback to identify their belongings."¹⁰⁷

Fagan had his reduced command on the road early on the 26th. Having heard reports that another Union train was en route from Princeton to Little Rock, Fagan, in hopes of intercepting, led his column up the west bank of the Saline."

Though the battle of Marks' Mills was a sweeping Confederate success, their losses were disproportionately large. Fagan's tactics were not good. He committed his command piecemeal. Cabell attacked first, after a considerable lapse Dockery was thrown in,

and finally Shelby. Poor march discipline was responsible for Dockery's delay, for which Fagan, as commanding officer, must shoulder the blame.

In retrospect, it is difficult to see how Fagan could have employed Cabell's and Shelby's commands in any other fashion than he did. If Cabell had not attacked immediately, the Federals would have passed beyond his front. In this heavily wooded area, there were few roads or trails. Once the train had passed, it is doubtful whether Cabell could have found another road for his command to follow in moving against the flank of the Union column as it pushed rapidly toward Mount Elba crossing. Cabell therefore had to attack immediately, if he were to pin the Yanks in position long enough to enable Shelby to interpose his division between the train and the Saline. The only way for Fagan to have coordinated the movements of Cabell's and Shelby's columns would have been for him to have kept his cavalymen in the saddle all night. If he had, it is unlikely that his exhausted command would have done as well.

The destruction of Drake's command, however, was the salvation of Steele's army. Fagan in attacking the train did so in violation of his orders, which were to get between Little Rock and Camden, and cut Steele's line of retreat by felling trees across the roads. Had these instructions been obeyed, Steele's column would have been destroyed at Jenkins' Ferry. As it was, Steele, upon learning of the disaster at Marks' Mills, proceeded to evacuate Camden and started on a forced march for Little Rock.

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Andrew F. Sperry, *History of the 33rd Iowa Infantry Volunteer Regiment* (Des Moines, 1866), 81; Ludwell H. Johnson, *Red River Campaign—Politics and Cotton in the Civil War* (Baltimore, 1958), 187-188. It was several days before the last of the dazed survivors of the Poison Spring disaster straggled into Camden.
2. Sperry, 33rd Iowa, 81; F. M. Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents, as Related by Companions of the Iowa Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Des Moines, 1893), I, 64-65.
3. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 682. (Cited hereinafter as *O.R.*)
4. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. III, 225. Three infantry regiments (the 43rd Illinois, the 50th Indiana, and the 29th Iowa), the pioneer corps, and a section of artillery was the force designated to insure that the train arrived in safety.
5. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 668, 676, 680; Benjamin F. Pearson, "War Diary," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6 (Des Moines, 1926), 438-439. The escort met the train 17 miles east of Camden.
6. Sperry, *33rd Iowa*, 82. Colonel Cyrus H. Mackey of the 33rd Iowa was in charge of the train.
7. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 661.

8. *Ibid.*, 662. General Albert Lee commanded a cavalry division in Banks' army. In the battle of Mansfield fought on April 8, the Confederates captured 20 pieces of artillery. At Pleasant Hill, the next day, the Federals took three Confederate guns. *Ibid.*, 449-452; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 141, 169.

9. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 663. At this stage of the conflict, Sherman commanded the Military Division of the Mississippi. The Department of Arkansas was a part of Sherman's vast administrative command.

10. *Ibid.* Steele knew Sherman well, having led in the Vicksburg Campaign one of the three divisions into which Sherman's XV Corps was organized.

11. *Ibid.*, 662, 668; *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. III, 161-162.

12. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 676.

13. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. III, 267-268. Steele also informed Banks of the defeat and capture of his forage train at Poison Spring.

14. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 476; Joseph H. Parks, General Edmund Kirby Smith, CSA (Baton Rouge, 1954), 397. Magruder at this time commanded the District of Texas, with headquarters at Houston.

15. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. III, 768-771. The three infantry divisions had participated in the battle of Mansfield on April 8 and the battle of Pleasant Hill the following day.

16. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 481, 534; Parks, Edmund Kirby Smith, 397. Dr. Harris' was 24 miles southwest of Camden, at the junction of the Wire and Calhoun roads. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 534. From Minden it was 66 miles to Camden, 48 miles to Shreveport, and 115 miles to Natchitoches.

17. Joseph P. Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division, by a Private Soldier* (New York, 1875), 243-244.

18. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 481.

19. Kirby Smith to wife, April 18, 1864, Kirby Smith Papers.

20. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. III, 766; *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 481.

21. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 481.

22. *Ibid.*; John N. Edwards, *Shelby and His Men; or The War in the West* (Kansas City, 1897), 223.

23. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 788, 793, 835.

24. *Ibid.*, 788, 793; John M. Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas* (Atlanta, 1899), 253. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 825; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 223.

26. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 788, 793, 835.

27. *Ibid.*, 826, 834.

28. *Ibid.*, 481, 676, 680. In his "After Action Report," Smith stated that the supply train reached Camden on the 18th. According to the reports filed by the Union officers, the train entered the Camden perimeter late in the afternoon of the 20th.

29. *Ibid.*, 534, 788.

36. *Ibid.*, 781, 834.

31. Sperry, *33rd Iowa*, 83.

32. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 781, 834.

33. *Ibid.*, 668, 676, 680; Pearson, "War Dairy," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6, p. 439.

34. Drake, "Campaign of General Steele,"

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Disaster at Marks' Mills (Continued from Page 16)

War Sketches and Incidents, I, 65-66.

35. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 688, 712. The two regimental commanders currently confined in the Camden military hospital were: Colonel Charles W. Kittredge of the 36th Iowa and Colonel William B. Mason of the 77th Ohio.

William McLean of Terre Haute had entered service on September 11, 1861, as lieutenant colonel of the 43rd Indiana. Following Colonel George G. Steele's resignation on January 16, 1862, McLean had been named colonel of the regiment. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1865), Vol. II, 420.

36. Charles H. Lothrop, *A History of the First Regiment Iowa Cavalry Veteran Volunteers, From Its Organization in 1861 to Its Muster Out of the United States Service in 1866* (Lyons, Iowa, 1890), 162; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 66.

37. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 712, 716-717. The 43rd Indiana, Major Wesley W. Norris commanding, numbered about 300 strong; the 36th Iowa which was led by Major Augustus H. Hamilton mustered about 500 officers and men: while Captain Andrew J. McCormick of the 77th Ohio reported that he would take the field with approximately 400 soldiers. *Ibid.*, 712.

38. *Ibid.*, 712; Pearson, "War Diary," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6, p. 439. Three officers reported to Drake at this time. They were: Lieutenant James B. Schrom of Salomon's staff, Captain James M. Sprague of General Carr's staff, and Captain Mandeville G. Townsend of General Rice's staff.

Mark McCauley of New Harmony was commissioned 2nd lieutenant in Company C, 1st Indiana Cavalry on November 12, 1861. Two months later, he was promoted 1st lieutenant. On September 7, 1862, McCauley was made captain of Company A, and ten months later he was advanced to the rank of major.

A call was made on June 10, 1861, by Governor Oliver P. Morton for the organization of a regiment of cavalry in the Indiana counties bordering on the Ohio River. Eight companies were mustered into Federal service at Evansville on August 20, 1861, as the 1st Indiana Cavalry Regiment. The regiment left Evansville the next morning and proceeded to St. Louis. On arriving at that point, the 1st Indiana Cavalry was ordered to Ironton, Missouri, where on September 12 three companies clashed with a party of Rebels on Black River.

The 1st Indiana Cavalry spent the first autumn and winter of the war on duty in and around Pilot Knob. While campaigning in this region, the Indiana horse soldiers participated in the battle of Fredericktown, October 21. In the spring of 1862 the regiment marched into Arkansas, and on July 7 fought in the battle of Round Hill. On reaching Helena, the 1st Indiana was assigned to the 1st Brigade, Second Cavalry Division, XIII Army Corps, and, with the exception of Company C, remained on duty in Arkansas for the duration. For over a year the regiment was posted at Helena, engaging in a number of expeditions and in the battle of Helena. After participating in the campaign which ended in the fall of Little Rock, the 1st Indiana in October, 1863, was ordered to Pine Bluff, where it was headquartered at the time of Steele's march to Camden. *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana*, II, 270, 271, 273, 278.

39. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 712;

Pearson, "War Diary," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6, p. 439.

40. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 68.

41. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713, 717; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 66.

42. *Ibid.*; Pearson, "War Diary," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6, pp. 439-440.

43. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713; Pearson, "War Diary," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6, p. 440.

44. Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 67-68.

45. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713; William E. McLean, *The Forty-Third Regiment of Indiana Volunteers...* (Terre Haute, 1903), 42.

46. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713, 717. A resident of Hartford in Vigo County, Norris on September 18, 1861, had been commissioned captain of Company D, 43rd Indiana. He was advanced to the rank of major on March 7, 1862.

The 43rd Indiana was organized at Terre Haute on September 27, 1861. Companies constituting the 43rd were drawn from Vigo, Sullivan, Greene, Vermillion, Putnam, Clay, and Parke Counties. Soon after its muster into Federal service, the regiment was transferred to Spottsville, Kentucky, and from there to Calhoun, where it remained in camp till mid-February, 1862. The regiment was then transferred to Missouri and assigned to Brigadier General John Pope's Army of the Missouri. After participating in the operations that led to the fall of New Madrid and Island No. 10, the 43rd Indiana served with the gunboat flotilla at Fort Pillow. The 43rd Indiana was the first Union regiment to land in Memphis on June 6, 1862, and with the 46th Indiana garrisoned the city for the next several weeks.

In July, 1862, the 43rd was ordered up White River and subsequently to Helena, Arkansas. In late November, the regiment accompanied the column Brigadier General Alvin P. Hovey led across the Delta, to the mouth of the Coldwater. The late winter found the 43rd Indiana participating in the Yazoo Pass Expedition. At the battle of Helena, fought on July 4, the regiment distinguished itself. It took part in General Steele's campaign resulting in the capture of Little Rock. On January 1, 1864, the regiment re-enlisted at Little Rock, the veterans re-mustering numbering about 400. *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana*, II, 422-424, 429.

47. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713, 717; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 68.

48. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, 713, 772.

51. *Ibid.*, 713-714; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 69; McLean, *History of the 43rd Indiana*, 42-43.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 713-714, 717.

54. *Ibid.*, 788, 793, 835; Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 253; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 228.

55. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 788, 793, 835; Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 253-254.

56. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 788,

835.

57. J. H. Atkinson, "The Battle of Marks' Mills," *Arkansas Democrat*, March 12, 1961.

58. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 788-789, 793.

59. *Ibid.*, 793.

60. *Ibid.*, 793, 796.

61. *Ibid.*, 793, 797-798.

62. *Ibid.*, 793.

63. Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 254.

64. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 793.

65. *Ibid.*, 798.

66. *Ibid.*, 797.

67. *Ibid.*, 714, 796.

68. *Ibid.*, 714.

69. *Ibid.*, 793, 798.

70. *Ibid.*, 797.

71. *Ibid.*, 714, 717, 794, 796-798.

72. *Ibid.*, 714, 717, 794.

73. *Ibid.*, 714, 796.

74. *Ibid.*, 797-798.

75. *Ibid.*, 794; Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 254.

76. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 714.

77. *Ibid.*; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 70. The badly wounded colonel was carried into a "large double house" by his aides. William Whitridge of Greencastle had been named captain of Company H on July 6, 1863. *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana*, II, 426.

78. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 835; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 230.

79. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 772, 835.

80. *Ibid.*, 835-836. The 12th Missouri would follow Wright's brigade.

81. *Ibid.*; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 229-230.

82. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 794, 796-797.

83. *Ibid.*, 796-797; Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 70.

84. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 798.

85. *Ibid.*, 714-716, 794, 836; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 229.

86. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 714, 717, 794, 796.

87. *Ibid.*, 714, 717, 794-798.

88. Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 255.

89. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 714, 717, 794, 796-798; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 230-231.

90. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 794.

91. *Ibid.*, 796-798

92. *Ibid.*, 668; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 231-232.

93. Lothrop, *History of the 1st Iowa Cavalry*, 163.

94. *Ibid.*, ; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 231-232.

95. Lothrop, *History of the 1st Iowa Cavalry*, 163-164; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 231-232.

96. Lothrop, *History of the 1st Iowa Cavalry*, 164-165.

97. *Ibid.*, 164-165.

98. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 712-713, 715; Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*, 231.

Drake announced that Dr. Milton B. Cockran of the 1st Iowa Cavalry informed him that the killed and

Continued on Page 9...

Sarge Sez...

A Day at the Range

by 1st Sergt. Steve Shore

Saturday, April 9th, 2005, at the AMRA Range in Hattiesville was the scene of another 6th Arkansas musket practice. The morning started out foggy and by 0900, Ken Nations and W.J. Monagle had arrived to test their P-1853 Enfield muskets. I had brought mine also to experiment with the newly produced .577 minie balls. The sun slowly began to show itself by 0930 and we were ready to see what we could do.

Our first order of business was to snap caps and burn out oil residue in the breech and barrel of our muskets. Once completed we posted targets at fifty yards and then loaded the muskets with 60 grains of 2ffg black powder and a new .577 minie ball. It was on to the shooting bench and individual sighting in.



We loaded muskets and came to the READY. Once the command FIRE was given, we fired and began loading and firing at will. The clock was also started with this command of FIRE. I noticed right off the bat that when I ripped open a cartridge and poured in the powder... the bullet became slippery and on one occasion I dropped on the ground. So, I will carry one or two extras in my jacket pocket just in case. **NOTE: Anything dropped on the firing line is lost during competition for safety reasons.** The next thing we noticed was how quickly the time passed. Each of us had started with ten cartridges. In our first three minute practice, W.J. had fired five rounds, Kenny fired five and I expended six. We knew the .575 was not accurate, but it was depressing to know our total points was only NINE hits of sixteen cartridges expended.



W.J. was using a .575 instead of the .577 because the .577 would not fit in his bore... at first.



Kenny was using the .577.



The .575 went everywhere. W.J. then switched to the .577 for two hits in the 9-10 ring.



Kenny has had his musket for ten years and this was the first time real ammo had been fired. He's ready for Berryville!



W.J. had two key holes and one at the six o'clock between the 8-9 ring. Kenny had three across the bottom and my three were scattered. As with the competition... anything in the black is a point. If the other team ties in the number of hits, the tie breaker will be the team having more hits inside the nine-ten rings.

After practicing for awhile we decided there was no real difference between the 2ffg and the 3ffg powders as far as getting a tighter group. We did find that W.J. was missing part of his rear sight, but he used "Kentucky windage" with great results. Due to the POOR results of the .575 bullet, I am going to be remold them into the .577 minie balls. They will have 30% beeswax & 70% lard ring lube. Since I now have four pounds of 2ffg black powder... I will be adding it in the cartridges and be ready for the next practice day.

We felt pretty confident with our sighting in, so we posted new targets and loaded the cartridge boxes with rolled cartridges from the ammo box. The most I had loaded on hand was the haywire .575 minie balls with 65 grains of 2ffg black powder. Aaron was our official time keeper for this three minute practice competition. At Berryville, we will have four shooters in a team and a five minute time limit. Remember a good soldier can load and fire three aimed shots in one minute! ... HA!



A Day at the Range...

We all learned that by firing rapidly, you also get powder and grease all over you. Remember to carry a canteen and a rag to clean up with afterwards. Other items to remember is your ear plugs and plenty of musket caps. Kenny observed and shared with us... those silly pictures in the musket manual are there for a purpose! The soldier standing in the strange manner is there for a reason. By standing with your feet in a "T" shape and your left arm against your waist, it prevents you from wobbling in your stance. Try it! It really helped.

Overall, we all had a great time and had the wagons loaded to come home before noon. We are planning another practice shoot for **Saturday, April 30, from 0830 til 1200 hrs.** This will probably be our last chance to practice before Berryville!

W.J. and Kenny are serious now...WHOORAWH!



Port Hudson AAR (Continued from Page 5)

of camp. The Mississippi Valley Brigade had elected to go Federal for this event, so we were in blue for the weekend. Circling down a few back trails, we found a sign with our unit on it and dismounted to look for a campsite.

We found the Brigade headquarters almost immediately, then a clean, nicely shaded area at the end of the lane along the pond with easy access to just about anything or anywhere else. We pulled the wagons around, and set up a neat line of dog tents under the pines.

The Captain was still having a hard time. On unloading the truck, he was unable to find the box he had placed his uniforms in... So he had his kepi, musket, and accoutrements, but the blue suit was apparently back in Ashley's Mills, Arkansas, 7 hours back up the road. Expressing himself in the language familiar to an old frontier regular officer, he stomped off to the sutlers and got a sack coat and pair of pants, and returned in slightly better humor – noting that your Captain is really and even bigger fool than he pretends to be.

We took a quick turn through the area to locate the key amenities, then turned in for what was a chilly April evening – the Captain muttering again about the folly of re-enacting July battles on what was still the cusp of winter to him.

Reveille came early, and we scabbled around, got the coffee going, weapons checks completed, and the associated paperwork turned in before falling in for breakfast. Just as the Captain drew rations, it was time for Officer's Call, then formation as we fell in

with the ad hoc battalion of regular Federals formed around the units of 1st Battalion, Frontier Brigade, and a few other stray cats like us.

The Federal brigade then marched over to the Visitor's Center for morning Colors and dress parade, followed by the Park's weapons inspection. Next we moved out for the morning tactical, a series of unscripted engagements among the thickly wooded ravines surrounding the Confederate works.

We marched out just a little over a mile, then formed line of battle along a ridge top. A platoon of skirmishers was detached from each battalion to go forward and feel for the Confederates, and as they moved forward, the remainder of the battalion followed one ridge behind to provide support and a rally point. Sporadic fire sounded from time to time, until it became regular – the skirmishers had found the main Confederate line, and started to try and drive in the Rebel pickets.

We brought our 2nd Battalion on line, and started to push forward up the hill to the Rebel lines. Several attempts were driven back, but we were eventually able to creep up under cover of the slope, and rush them, taking possession of that little scarp. The Rebs quickly counterattacked in company strength and were driven back, but came back again in battalion strength and swept us off the hill with heavy losses.

The defeat of the Federal assault signaled the end of the tactical, and we formed back up, accounted for everyone, and marched back to the camps. For me, it was a whole lot like last year's event at Pickett's Mill, Ga., though the hills weren't as high or as steep, and there was a great deal less humidity. As a tactical gors, it was a lot of fun, and gave a clear idea of the trouble the Yankees went through in besieging Port Hudson – as well as a clear lesson in why Port Hudson was never taken by storm or firepower; the garrison was eventually starved out and surrendered only after the fall of Vicksburg made their sacrifices fruitless.

On arriving back in camp we cleaned weapons and refitted ourselves for the afternoon fight in front of the spectators. Lunch was a throwback to the real Army of the 1800s: soup! The Captain polished off his cold oatmeal from breakfast and then a cup of soup, and it was time to form up again and go fight. Having toted an Enfield in the morning tactical, he was promoted to captain and detached to go command a newly formed company made up of late arrivals, the rest of the Guards staying with our "old" company from the 1st U.S. Infantry. A stout-hearted band of Irishmen they turned out to be, and it was a pleasure to work with them.

We marched out again and took up our places in an assembly area short of where we were supposed to attack one of the Confederate

workthrough an open field. Several things conspired against us at this point... first, we had marched out in column "left in front" e.g. in inverted order, and many of the fellows were not used to doing the familiar "by company into line" in reverse when we formed column of companies to deploy into line. Second, on reaching the open field and starting to deploy the line, we unexpectedly found ourselves in soupy, sticky, calf-deep mud of the consistency of our recent lunch.

Under intense fire from the Rebel skirmishers, we got the line sorted out after a manner, and drove forward with the battle cry, "Take the Dry Ground!" We drove the rebs away from their first line behind a snake-rail fence at the point of the bayonet, then crossed the fence, re-formed the line, gave them a battalion volley, and pushed forward. We were continually entangled by trees cut and felled by the Rebs as abatis, but kept going forward. Our charge was broken several times by the rebel fire, but we re-formed the survivors and pushed forward. The Captain found himself on the left wing after the companies shuffled in the muddy deployment into line, but we surged forward and were on the verge of planting the colors on the Rebel works when he and was cut down by a Rebel Enfield and dropped in a heap. Decimated, the battalion finally withdrew, leaving the majority of its men dead or wounded on the field.

All in all, it was noted by the park rangers as one of the better recreations of the Federal attacks on the fort, this time the Confederates actually beat the Yankees back handily.

The rest of the afternoon was devoted to cleaning weapons and checking the offerings on Sutler Row, as well as a tour of the Park museum and visitors center. If you haven't been to Port Hudson, it's well worth a visit just to see the old works and the excellent collection of artifacts in the museum.

Supper was boiled beef and gravy from the Yankee Army, and jambalaya & iced tea from the Park. Uncle Sam's soup didn't do much of a job of sticking to the ribs of the hungry Guardsmen, so we took advantage of the situation and drew both rations. The Captain took supper at the General's Mess, where the provost dosed him with a particularly potent German schnapps, and returned sometime later in a slightly altered state.

Steve, Ken, and Corey went off on a "ghost tour" hosted by the Park, and returned enthused. In later pictures it appears that they actually caught one on film. After the Captain regained full & coordinated use of his legs, he went visiting around the camps, and we all turned in at Taps, thinking of of long drive home tomorrow.

Saturday evening was even colder than Friday, so we went through a lot of wood



The Captain's Tent

by Tom Ezell

BLUE APRIL

In a month that we have always treasured, not only for its return to the fields of battle with our friends and pard, but as "Confederate History Month, I looked back in my little black book and realized that in all of Confederate History Month, the last time I had my grey uniform out of the closet was for the Cleburne service back about a month ago – the three events on my calendar this Bloody April have all featured Federal impressions: Port Hudson, where the brigade went blue in order to showcase the Red River Battalion's new & fancy clown suits; Shiloh, which was one of those hardcore get-togethers in a federal outfit, and the upcoming event at Marks' Mills, where we will reprise our debut in blue from two years ago and seek once again to whip the entire Southern Confederacy.

For a dyed-in-the-jean-wool Southerner, it's an odd feeling to sit up and realize that you've just done a big chunk of your Confederate history from the other side of the fence, so to say.

Which is not that bad a thing once you think about it. First and foremost, the measure of the Confederate soldier was judged by his successes against an equally determined and often a better equipped, better supplied foe. And on a more personal level, the events of 9/11/2001 brought the country back to a war footing, and my little personal immersion event made me re-visit a few things in my own opinions. Having served for many years as an Army officer, it dawned on me that the blue sack coat and pants was little different from the dress blue uniform that has hung in my closet for so many years.

Not everyone shares the same idea, for example the Mansfield/Pleasant Hill event last year where we came within a small red hair of starting a fistfight when we showed up to fight both days in captured Yankee uniforms. Never mind that the conventional wisdom has always been that the Trans-Mississippi Rebs took wide advantage of re-supplying themselves from Uncle Sam's depots, there's something about them blue coats that just inflames certain folks in the hobby.

Which is an altogether different thing when it comes to Yankee pants... As you may have read on the front page of this issue, the TMVI Battalion voted at the Pleasant Hill

event to leave the Mississippi Valley Brigade, primarily because of the enforcement of uniform standards at Brigade and Division events. The uniform standards themselves are not "new," and at some point in time or other I am informed that our Battalion voted for and adopted these at either a Brigade or Division meeting. However, until the past year, no one really tried to enforce those standards, and they were ignored on a wholesale scale. The bottom line for what the TMVI wants is a return to the same old same old *laissez faire*, "anything goes" guidelines. On the other hand, too many general officers in the hobby have staked their positions out to enforce the standards or go down swinging.

It simply amazes me that folks who consider themselves to be thoroughly unreconstructed Rebels are so attached to their Yankee diapers. But, I respect that, and I respect the wishes of both those who like their cigarettes and coffee singles as well as those who seek out more immersive experiences in this hobby that we call reenacting. To force either side of this issue to adopt the position of the other is like fleas telling other fleas to stay off of their part of the dog. You know what? There's plenty of dog out there. By this I mean that there is room for the two sides of this hobby to cooperate and to respect each other.

However – in the same manner that arguments over authenticity have split units, I believe that complacency – allowing a unit to become stagnant – is every bit as sure a poison to that unit as any splits over who is "hardcore" and who is not. When we cease to try to improve ourselves, both as individual reenactors and as a group, when we become stagnant, then we cease to grow as a unit and as a band of comrades... brothers in arms. In the same manner in that you only improve in sports if you exercise yourself – if you seek to stretch your old limits each time you play – then if we don't stretch ourselves as a unit from time to time we won't grow... we won't improve, either.

The TMVI has made the decision that they don't want to grow, at least in the same direction as the rest of the brigade and the authentic side of the hobby. In doing so, they are looking to grow their membership by attracting other like-minded, change-resistant units, any judging from the photos I saw from the Pleasant Hill event, they're being successful in that goal.

I have a different vision that I hold out for our Company. A little over three years ago I explained that I would like to see us strive to be one of the best reenacting units in the Mid-South. And we've had a lot of success at that, too. This success we don't have to brag or talk shit about, because our results speak for themselves. *Facta, non verba* as the old

Romans would say. I'm proud of those results, and I hope that you are, too. I believe strongly in a continuing improvement process; that every time we do something we ought to strive to do it a little better than the last time, and always look for some way to do it a little better the next time we try.

Over the past year and a half or so it's become increasingly apparent that it is more and more difficult to carry out a continuing improvement program in a group environment that doesn't want to improve. In light of the direction that the Battalion has selected for itself, I believe that it will be mutually beneficial to both the Capitol Guards and the TMVI Battalion if we amicably part ways and seek our own, independent way forward from here. It saddens me that things have come to this, but it's time for us to go.

BLOODY APRIL 2005

Up until the past week, things had been going pretty well, hobby-wise. We had a fantastic road trip the first of the month, when Steve, W.J., Kenny, Corey and I went to south Louisiana to check out the event at Port Hudson. The travel was long, but the companionship shortened it substantially, and the event itself was a fresh and enjoyable experience on original ground where Arkansans fought. Granted, the Captain seemed to be "just slam eat up with the dumbass" a good bit of the time, but after a while it got to be funny, even to him. Road trips to Louisiana are almost always a refreshing experience, and the road to Port Hudson brought back lots of good memories, and created new ones. It's definitely on the list for a repeat trip one of these days.

The following weekend found us on the road to Tennessee, and Shiloh. This was one of those nasty old hardcore get-togethers (plus another trip in blue) so I found myself riding solo. So I put some road music in the CD player, cranked it up just short of the point where it made my eyes water, and headed east. Three and a half hours later I fetched up in Corinth, Mississippi, and the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center. Some of the boys were already in town and touring the sites before we went tactical for the weekend. I ran by the C&D Jarnagin store to check out their Mexican War offering, and came away with a haversack and an M1839 forage cap, as well as a leather canteen sling to meet the standards for the Shiloh event. We had come through here last October on the whirlwind tour after Franklin, but running the route backwards, things looked different, and I missed the turn to Highway 22 North, and wound up out at the Corinth re-enactment site for an impromptu tour. Fellers, this is going to be a good one!!

I kept bearing right until I ran back into Highway 22, and headed up the road the

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The Captain's Tent *(Continued from Page 2)*

Confederate marched 143 years ago. Shortly afterward we reached the Park, browsed through the bookstore, then headed over to help out with the detail to put up six Sibley tents as well as the headquarters and commissary area. Then back over to dress out and sort out my gear from the previous week, and the show was on. Several of us from the WIG went over to Haggy's Catfish Hotel for supper.

The Catfish Hotel is reached by taking the next paved road to the right after passing the Park entrance road, and going down a little wooded road which opens onto this beautiful clearing right on a bluff overlooking the Tennessee River. The restaurant is the only thing there other than a little old log cabin. The restaurant building is sort of on the order of a lodge with a front sitting porch and all glass front walls through which diners can look out over the beautiful grounds & Tennessee River. There is even a stairway one can go down to the very banks of the river. The setting was lovely, but the food was fabulous. Fellows, fried catfish, tasty, grease-free, damn hot, is destroying the hobby as we know it. The menu offered several varieties of catfish, other seafood, and a few varied poultry, beef, and barbecue selections (We were there for the catfish!!). Potatoes, hushpuppies, and especially the unique slaw were all just as delicious. Had the white chocolate banana custard pie (great) although it's a lemon chess type pie for which they are most famous. If anyone is ever touring Shiloh or traveling thru the area, I definitely recommend rounding out your experience with a trip down to the Catfish Hotel, which is still owned by descendants of the original 1938 founding family, with its current building dating from 1976. The place is included on the "TopTen" list of national catfish restaurants in rating by some national catfish institute.

We had a full-sized fifty-man company of early-war Federal infantry, the first time this has been done at Shiloh. Everyone looked good with the standardized forage caps and a mixture of Illinois shell jackets, frock coats, and a few sack coats. The camp was laid out according to regulation, with two wall tents for the captain and two lieutenants, three A-tents for the sergeants, and six full-size Sibley tents for the corporals and privates. This was also a first for this site, and the park people were very impressed.

Drills and living history demonstrations were ongoing all weekend. We got in several very good sessions of company, skirmish and bayonet drill, as well as weapon and knapsack inspections, and even a pay call. I was doing well until the captain described me as an exemplary soldier, but with a definite fondness for strong drink, and deducted \$9 from my pay for al ost knapsack. This was no sit-on-

Coming Events

April 23-24, 2005 – Battle of Marks' Mills Re-Enactment, Fordyce, Ark. Sponsored by the 1st Arkansas. Federal impression (36th Iowa)

April 30-May 1 — Jefferson, TX Homecoming & Civil War Weekned, Jefferson, TX. TMVI max effort event (6th Arkansas will not field a company).

April 30-May 1 — Battle of Chalk Bluff Re-enactment, near Piggott, AR.

May 13-15, 2005— State Muzzleloading Championship Shoot, Berryville, AR. Confederate impression. 6th Arkansas will field a musket team.

May 20, 2005 — Cabot Middle School (S) living history, Cabot, AR.

May 30, 2005 — Memorial Day observance, Minnesota Monument, Little Rock National Cemetery, Little Rock, AR.

June 18, 2005 – Old State House Living History, "Try Us: Arkansas in the War with Mexico" exhibit opening. Old State House Museum, Little Rock, AR. Mexican War volunteers impression.

June 25-26, 2005 – Vicksburg Siege Living History, Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, MS.

July 9-10, 2005 – Pea Ridge National Military Park Living History, Pea Ridge, AR. Sponsored by the Union Rifles.

July 16, 2005 – Company Drill, Reed's Bridge Battlefield Park, Jacksonville, AR.

August 6-7, 2005 – Battle of Athens Reenactment/Living History, Athens, MO. Hosted by the Western Independent Grays.

August 20, 2005 – Company Drill, Reed's Bridge Battlefield Park, Jacksonville, AR.

September 10-11, 2005 – Bloomfield, MO Picket Post. Confederate impression.

September 17-18, 2005 – Arkansas Post National Memorial living history. Federal impressions.

October 2-4, 2005 – Battle of Corinth Re-enactment, Corinth, MS. Sponsored by the North/South Alliance, N/SA maximum effort event. Confederate impression (Johnson's 15th Arkansas).

October 22-23, 2005 – "Battles Around Bentonville" reenactment, (The Event Formerly Known As Cane Hill) Bentonville, AR.

October 31, 2005 – Big Boo-Zeum Bash, MacArthur Museum, Little Rock, AR

November 5-7, 2005 – Civil War Weekend at Old Washington, Washington, AR. Confederate impression.

*Events marked in **bold type** are maximum effort events as voted upon by the Company, and your attendance is expected. If for some reason you will be unable to attend a max effort event, please contact Steve Shore or Tom Ezell (6th Arkansas) or W.J. Monagle (37th Illinois) beforehand.*

The 6th Regiment, Arkansas Volunteer Infantry, Co. A, the "Capitol Guards" is affiliated with the Arkansas Reenactors' Alliance, the Trans-Mississippi Volunteer Infantry Battalion, Mississippi Valley Brigade, and the 1st Confederate Division. We are dedicated to the faithful and historically accurate portrayal of a unit of Confederate infantry in the War Between the States in 1861-1865.

The *Sentinel* is published on a more-or-less monthly basis by the "Capitol Guards", 6th Arkansas Infantry reenactors. Subscriptions are included as part of Company dues; or are available separately for \$15.00 per year. Back issues are \$2.00 each (index available upon request). Send subscription requests, inquiries, and article submissions to the Captain below.

Captain
Tom Ezell
338 Johnson Road
Scott, AR 72142
(501) 961-1937
(501) 912-1047 (cell)

1st Sergeant
Steve Shore
68 Stonewall Drive
Jacksonville, AR 72076
(501) 985-0560

Visit us on the Internet at
<http://www.geocities.com/capitalguards/>

The 6th Arkansas is always in need of "a few good men" to fill the ranks in service of the Cause. If you are interested in Civil War Reenacting, please call the Captain as listed above.

The 6th Arkansas living historians are available for living history presentations to schools, public and private organizations, and community events. Please contact the Captain.

Disaster at Marks' Mills (Continued from Page 17)

wounded in his command numbered about 250. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 714. Fagan claimed that the Confederates captured "over 1,300" prisoners in the battle. *Ibid.*, 789.

99. Pearson, "War Diary," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XV, No. 6, pp. 440-441. Charles W. Moss of Ashboro had been commissioned captain of Company G, 43rd Indiana on September 20, 1861. *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana*, II, 426.

100. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 781, 789.

101. Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 260.

102. *Ibid.*; *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 715, 790; Atkinson, "The Battle of Marks' Mills," *Arkansas Democrat*, March 12, 1961.

103. Drake, "Campaign of General Steele," *War Sketches and Incidents*, I, 71.

104. Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 260.

105. *Ibid.*; *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 715-716, 790; McLean, *History of the 43rd Indiana*, 50. Colonel Drake recovered from his wound. On October 25, 1864 he returned to duty.

106. Harrell, *Confederate Military History of Arkansas*, 260.

107. Atkinson, "The Battle of Marks' Mills," *Arkansas Democrat*, March 12, 1961.

108. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XXXIV, pt. I, 790.

Port Hudson AAR (Continued from Page 19)

trying to ward off the chill. This was also the evening where that Yankee invention, Daylight Savings Time came into play, with the effect of losing an hour of shut-eye anyway.

At reveille, Ken and Steve wanted to reprise their evening's tour of "Fort Desperate" in the daylight, so we agreed to take the Park tour, break camp and load the wagons, and then start the long drive back home. On taking his knapsack and musket back to the wagon, the Captain found the missing box of uniforms, which had been hidden under the bale of straw we drew for bedding Friday night. A few more of those frontier words, and then he realized the even greater degree of his foolishness. At any rate, we now have an extra Yankee suit in the Company loaner box... and he took comfort in that he did get a really good deal price & quality-wise on the jacket and pants.

We took the Park's walking trail, and along the way stopped to visit old friends in the 1st Arkansas Battalion, who were camped in the woods along the start of the trail behind the Visitors Center. Steve and Kenny then took us along the tour the ranger had led them on last night, and "Fort Desperate" was a sight, even in the forest that has sprung up since the siege. Taking the place of the Confederate defenders, it was easy to see how the position was defended, but still a dangerous place. Another interesting point is that the TMVIBattalion has been scheduled to portray the 15th Arkansas at Corinth this fall, and that same regiment wound up a little less than a year later as the defenders of Fort Desperate. The regiment dissolved and was never reformed after the surrender of Port Hudson.

We retraced our steps back to camp, and began breaking down and loading the wagons - a light load since were pretty much in campaign mode. We took our leave at 11:00 and stopped for lunch at D'John's Restaurant just south of St. Francisville, where we did our best to do full justice to the Sunday lunch buffet.

On the road back home, we stopped to do a little touring in Natchez, then headed back up the Louisiana side of the river this time. This route turned out to be a little quicker, and we made it back in to Little Rock shortly before 6 Sunday evening.

This was the first trip down to Port Hudson for our little group, and our recon indicates that despite the distance (about 6 hours driving) it's well worth a return visit and future consideration on the calendar. Work with the Brigade staff as well as our old friends from the Frontier Brigade made it even more pleasurable. But best of all, was the companionship forged among the road trip crew!

The Captain's Tent (Continued from Page 21)

your-ass affair, they kept us hopping for the entire weekend. I especially enjoyed the way Cal Kinzer led us through the bayonet drill demos slowly, surely, and with good instruction for the troops and interpretation for the park visitors. No one was made to feel like an idiot, as the movements were easy to understand and perform, and visually impressive to the public to see 50+ men perform the deadly ballet.

These were seen by hundreds of spectators who flowed through the park in a steady stream all weekend - by the Park's count, 5,000 visitors on Saturday and 3,000 on Sunday; we were eyebrow-deep in spectators nearly all day each day. The park people reported that they received nothing but high praise for the program from the park visitors.

With the success at Shiloh, plans are underway for similar, future efforts. In July, groups from the Trans-Mississippi region will portray a company at Pea Ridge, then probably at Vicksburg, in June of 2006. After that, we plan to continue doing one each year, possibly rotating between Shiloh, Vicksburg, Fort Donelson, &c.

The evenings were downtime, and a good opportunity to sit down over coffee and swap notes with some of the real movers and shakers in the hobby these days. I got some good pointers.

Quite authentically, we could occasionally hear gunfire from the woods to the south, where it turns out that Rambo's Confederate brigade was doing a similar demonstration. We all met again that evening at the Catfish Hotel, but encountered an amazing phenomenon where no matter how good friends you are with somebody, when you put on that Blue Coat you are rendered invisible. Saw lots of the Confederate High Command there, but the invisibility coat worked against me.

Sunday morning after breakfast the Park rangers gave us a guided tour of the parts of the battlefield where the 8th Illinois was involved, from their camp site to their place in front of the Hornets Nest (where they faced off against the 6th Arkansas) and Grant's Last Line, to the now empty trench where they buried their dead after the battle. Definitely the cook's tour, here. Then it was back to demonstrations until we wrapped up the last program at 2:30.

An awesome event. But next year, plans are to take the Mississippi Valley Brigade en masse to Shiloh as Confederates, so that will be a high point on next April's calendar. I'll get us a reservation at the Catfish Hotel...

your pard,

Tom Ezell