Major General Sterling Price's 1864 Missouri Expedition

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MAJOR GENERAL STERLING PRICE'S 1864
MISSOURI EXPEDITION

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by
Scott Sallee
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MISSOURI EXPEDITION

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Early in the Civil War, the Union Army drove pro-
southern Missouri leaders and their followers into Arkansas,
and the state fell under Federal occupation. However, many
people of southern sympathies remained in Missouri, and
between 1862 and 1864 Confederate forces launched four large
scale cavalry raids into the state from their Arkansas
bases. Major General Sterling Price, C. S. A., led the
fourth and largest of these raids, September through
November, 1864.

An ex-Governor of Missouri, Sterling Price was the
truly representative figurehead of the state's Confederate
element. Throughout the war, he constantly believed that an
oppressed, hidden majority of Missourians restlessly awaited
the day when they could free themselves from Federal
domination. Fearing that the Confederate cause was nearly
lost, Price and his followers hoped to revive the hearts of
southern sympathizers by a raid into Missouri. Political
and military circumstances motivated General E. K. Smith,
commander of the South's Trans-Mississippi Department, to
authorize the expedition, and in September 1864 Price
entered Missouri at the head of a 12,000 man cavalry force.
Price's expedition was a total fiasco. The expected uprising did not occur, and most of the 5,000 men who joined Price subsequently deserted. After suffering a crushing defeat at Pilot Knob, Missouri, Price's army moved across the central part of the state, and the invasion that was meant to redeem Missouri for the Confederacy turned into a chaotic, large-scale looting expedition. After being routed at Westport, Missouri, on October 23, Price's army fled south and subsequently disintegrated.

The expedition was basically an expression of the South's desperate desire in the fall of 1864 for a smashing victory that would change the tide of the war. However, the expedition's total failure weakened the South's Trans-Mississippi forces to such a degree that no major campaigns occurred in that department for the last six months of the war.
Chapter One
Origins and Early Movements

Major General Sterling Price's 1864 Missouri Expedition was the last major campaign west of the Mississippi during the Civil War. The longest cavalry action of the war, it lasted over three months and encompassed over fifteen hundred miles. Born of politics, it was plagued throughout by political considerations on both sides, and ended on the day that Abraham Lincoln's reelection insured that eventual northern victory would not be forestalled by a political compromise. The results of the campaign were so disastrous to the Confederacy that relative peace prevailed on the Trans-Mississippi front until the end of the war.¹

One of the leading politicians of ante-bellum Missouri, Sterling Price remained throughout the Civil War the truly representative figurehead of the Confederate element of the state. Born in Virginia in 1809, as a young man he moved with his family to Missouri where they settled at Keytesville, on the Missouri River. He soon became a prosperous tobacco planter and slaveowner, and in 1840 he was elected to the state legislature. In 1842 he became

speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives, and two years later secured a seat in the House of Representatives in Washington. However, he was not renominated, and when the Mexican War broke out he resigned his seat to command a cavalry regiment. At the end of the war, he returned to Missouri with the brevet rank of brigadier general and a greatly enhanced reputation.

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

Though Price was pro-slavery, he was not a secessionist. He was a southern moderate who opposed secession except as a last resort on the part of the South to protect itself against Northern aggression. As war approached, Price hoped that the Union would be preserved, but northern attempts to coerce Missouri forced Price into the southern camp. He immediately took command of the state's secessionist force, the Missouri State Guard, and led it to early victories at Wilson's Creek and Lexington. He then accepted a commission as a major general from the
Confederate government, and urged his men to volunteer for Confederate service.

In 1862, after the Federal victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, Price and his division of Missouri volunteers were transferred to Mississippi where they fought in the battles of Corinth and Iuka. Price alone was transferred back to Arkansas in 1863, and participated in the attack on Helena, the defense of Little Rock, and in the Red River Campaign. He had been as successful as any other field commander in the Trans-Mississippi, and the small degree of success the Confederacy had gained in these operations were usually due to his leadership. His concern for the welfare of his troops caused them to idolize him, and the Missourians had given him the affectionate nickname of "Old Pap."

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

On March 16, 1864, Price was assigned to command the District of Arkansas, with headquarters at Camden. He
accepted the assignment, even though he preferred to remain "footloose" to command an expedition that he hoped would break the Federal occupation of Missouri and bring the state into the Confederacy. Finally, in the fall of 1864, circumstances and General Edmund Kirby Smith gave him his long awaited opportunity.²

From his headquarters in Shreveport, Louisiana, Smith commanded the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi department. An 1845 graduate of West Point, his performance in Virginia and Kentucky led to his rapid promotion to Lieutenant General, and in February, 1863, he was given command of all of the Confederacy west of the Mississippi. Smith ruled over a vast area that was far removed from the war's major area of operations, and the fall of Vicksburg further isolated him from the rest of the Confederacy. Because of his tremendous responsibilities, Smith was promoted to full general in February, 1864.³

After repulsing Federal forces in the Red River Campaign in May, 1864, Smith began contemplating his next move. Since Federal naval power made a move against New Orleans impractical, he decided upon the destruction of Union outposts in northern Arkansas, and a subsequent

²Biographical information on Sterling Price obtained from the following sources: Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Gray (Baton Rouge, 1959), 246-47; Albert Castel, General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West (Baton Rouge, 1968), 3-7, 283-85.

³Warner, Generals In Gray, 279-80.
invasion of Missouri. Accordingly, he sent Brigadier General Jo Shelby into northeastern Arkansas to attack the Federal supply line between Little Rock and Devall's Bluff and recruit for the impending campaign. In the meantime, Smith directed Price to gather supplies and intelligence for the intended northern offensive.

However, Smith had no intention of allowing Price to lead the campaign. Of all Price's superiors, Smith was the most contemptuous of him. Smith considered Price "castoff material," capable of neither "organizing, disciplining, nor operating an army." Smith had given Price command of the District of Arkansas with great reluctance, and hoped it would be temporary.

Smith hoped to launch the expedition about mid-August, when the troops, horses and equipment used in the Red River Campaign would be rested and refitted. His choice as commander had been Major General Richard Taylor, whom he regarded as the best general in his department. Though Taylor accepted the assignment and began outlining a plan of operations, he requested a transfer east after quarreling with Smith over the conduct of the Red River Campaign. Though he did not immediately find a replacement for Taylor,

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Smith continued making preparations. 5

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

On July 18, 1864, Thomas C. Reynolds, Missouri's Confederate governor-in-exile, wrote to General Price and suggested a raid into Missouri. Reynolds felt that a small scale raid would be a favorable alternative in the absence of a full-scale invasion. Reynolds claimed that President Jefferson Davis was "impatient for an advance into Missouri" which, even if unsuccessful, would compel the Union to pull forces away from Virginia and Georgia. Also, the expedition would be aided by recruiting. Reynolds then asked Price if he would be willing to command it. 6

Naturally, Price concurred wholeheartedly with Reynolds' suggestion. On July 23, Price sent a similar

5 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 478; Pt. 2, 1011, 1052; Pt. 4, 1028.

6 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 2, 1011.
proposal to Kirby Smith. Believing from his abundant intelligence sources that pro-southern sentiment in Missouri was strong, Price told Smith that he was "assured that the Confederate flag floats over nearly all the principal towns of North Missouri, and large guerrilla parties are formed and operating in the southern portion of the state." He also believed that at least 30,000 men could be recruited. Two days later, Reynolds also wrote to Smith calling for a cavalry raid into Missouri.  

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

The execution of this order was nearly impossible.

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7 Ibid., 1023; Castel, 
 Sterling Price and the War in the West, 200.

8 OR, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 90.
Bragg failed to consider the individualistic nature of the rugged, Trans-Mississippi, Confederate soldier. He possessed little sense of national loyalty to the Confederacy, and preferred to fight in his own section of the country where he could be close, as one officer put it, to "Sarah and the children." Also, political leaders in Arkansas took a firm stand against the movement. Governor Harris Flanigan complained bitterly to Davis, and Senator Augustus Garland told Secretary of War James Seddon that the Arkansans would "throw down their arms" before obeying such an order. The men had not been paid in nearly a year, resulting in low morale and increasing desertions. But above all, the order failed to recognize the difficulties of moving troops across a river that was constantly patroled by Union gunboats. 9

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

9W. L. Webb, Battles and Biographies of Missourians, or, The Civil War Period of Our State (Kansas City, 1900), 209; OR, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 2, 1038, 1048, 1059, 1067.
Confederate invasion.\(^\text{10}\)

During the first four days of August, Smith, Price, Reynolds, and other political leaders met in Shreveport to work out the details of the expedition. Then, on August 4, Smith placed Price in command. The choice was due, in all probability, to the supposed influence Price had in Missouri, the fact that he was the only officer of high enough rank who wanted it, and that Smith was afraid not to name him in view of the row which might have resulted. But on the other hand, Smith would get a new district commander and be rid of Price, if only for a while. As commander of the expedition, Price was forced to relinquish command of the District of Arkansas. He was immediately replaced by Major General John Bankhead Magruder, and reassigned to command only the cavalry of the district.\(^\text{11}\)

Also, despite Smith's decision to invade Missouri, he still ordered Taylor to attempt to move his infantry east of the Mississippi. Smith's abandoning a major offensive by sending his infantry to attempt a crossing that he knew was impossible instead of sending them into northern Arkansas to support Price's movements in Missouri suggests that he lacked confidence in Price's ability from the start.\(^\text{12}\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{OR, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 4, 1068-69; Pt. 1, 307.}\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{OR, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 92-93; Pt. 2, 1039-41; Paul Jenkins, The Battle of Westport (Kansas City, 1906), 181; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 378.}\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 380-81.}\)
Smith ordered Price to conduct the invasion with the cavalry of the District of Arkansas organized in three divisions commanded by Generals James F. Fagan, John S. Marmaduke, and Jo O. Shelby. St. Louis, with its supplies and military stores, was to be the primary objective, since acquiring it would "do more to rallying Missouri, than the possession of any other point." If forced to retreat, Price was to move through Kansas and Indian Territory and sweep the country of livestock and military supplies, while bringing back as many recruits as possible. Price was additionally instructed to "scrupulously avoid all acts of wanton destruction and devastation," and to impress upon his men that "their aim should be to secure success in a just and holy cause and not to gratify personal feelings and revenge."\textsuperscript{13}

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

\textsuperscript{13}OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 2, 1040-41.
to keep an eye on events.  

Because of a delay in obtaining ordnance stores, Price did not leave Camden until August 28. The following day he arrived in Princeton, Arkansas, and assumed command of Fagan's and Marmaduke's divisions. Price had previously ordered Shelby, who was still in northeastern Arkansas, to attack Devall's Bluff and the railroad between Little Rock and the White River to divert the Federal's attention from his own movements. In an exploit that Price called "one of the most brilliant of the war," Shelby captured six forts and 400 prisoners, inflicted 300 casualties and destroyed ten miles of track. Though not part of Price's instructions, the forays of Brigadier General Stand Watie's Indian Brigade into southern Kansas also helped divert the Federal's attention.  

Price, Fagan, and Marmaduke marched northward from Princeton on the morning of the 30th. Fearful that his delay in starting had alerted the Federals of his intended route, Price decided to cross the Arkansas above Little Rock rather than below. After sending a feinting column across the Saline River, he turned the main column toward Dardanelle where they arrived on September 6. Finding the river low enough that the pontoons brought from Camden were

\[\text{14} \text{Castel, } \text{Sterling Price and the War in the West, } 202-203, 206.\]

\[\text{15OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 625-26; Pt. 2, 1095-96; Pt. 3, 235.}\]
not needed, Price's army crossed the Arkansas the following day. By raising the wagons' contents up high enough, the whole command was able to ford it.\(^\text{16}\)

Once across the Arkansas, Price had overcome his first major obstacle—that of breaking through the thin line of Federal outposts along the river under the command of Major General Frederick Steele. Price then moved northeast toward Batesville, Arkansas, with the two divisions in separate columns. After minor skirmishing, they reached the White River eighteen miles above Batesville on September 12 where Price learned that General Shelby was at Powhatan, about sixty miles northeast of Batesville and on the route into Missouri. Price then decided on the town of Pocahontas as a rendezvous point, and went to find Shelby.\(^\text{17}\)

Despite the fact that northeast Arkansas abounded in slackers, deserters and bandits, Shelby had enrolled about 8,000 men into Confederate service, recruiting those who wished to volunteer and conscripting those who did not. He then placed them in camps of instruction and organized them into regiments and brigades. After meeting Price near Batesville on the 13th, Shelby ordered his command and the newly formed units to report to Pocahontas the next day. Price then began organizing his three division invasion

\(^{16}\text{OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 626; William L. Cabell, Report of General W. L. Cabell's Brigade in Price's Raid in Missouri and Kansas in 1864 (Dallas, 1900), 3.}\)

\(^{17}\text{OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 626-27.}\)
force, which he named the "Army of Missouri." 

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

The most formidable brigade in Fagan's Division was that of Brigadier General William L. Cabell, whose nickname "Old Tige" reflected his disposition. Cabell's Brigade was the largest brigade of the Army of Missouri, consisting of 2800 "number one" veterans who were well mounted and armed mostly with Enfield rifles. Colonel William Slemons' Brigade also consisted of veteran troops, but Fagan's other two brigades, those of Colonels Archibald S. Dobbin and Thomas H. McCray, were formed from regiments that had recently been recruited by Shelby.

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18 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 627, 651; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 317-18.

19 Information on General Fagan and his division obtained from Warner, Generals In Gray, 85-86; Cabell, Cabell's Report, 2; OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 641.
John Sappington Marmaduke was a member of one of Missouri's old aristocratic families. His father, once governor of the state, sent him to Harvard and Yale before securing him an appointment to West Point. Marmaduke graduated from West Point in 1857, and was serving on the frontier when the war began. He immediately resigned his second lieutenant's commission, and after serving briefly with the Missouri State Guard, he was commissioned by the Confederacy. His distinguished action as colonel of the Third Arkansas Infantry at Shiloh secured him a brigadier's commission, and subsequent battles and raids in Missouri and Arkansas earned him a reputation as a hard fighter.

The backbone of Marmaduke's Division was his old brigade, now commanded by Brigadier General John B. Clark, Jr. Clark's father had served under Price as a division commander in the Guard in 1861, and later as a Missouri representative in the Confederate congress. Ably commanded, Clark's Brigade consisted of 1200 men whose equipment was fair and whose horses were in "moderate" condition. Marmaduke's other brigade, that of Colonel Thomas Freeman, consisted of regiments conscripted by Shelby.20

Joseph Orville Shelby was a native of Lexington, Kentucky, and a relative of Revolutionary War hero and first governor of Kentucky, Isaac Shelby. As a young man Shelby

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20Information on General Marmaduke and his division obtained from Warner, Generals In Gray, 52, 211-12; OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 678-79.
moved to Waverly, Missouri, where his rope manufacturing business made him one of the wealthiest men in the state. He participated in the Kansas-Missouri border forays of the late 1850's, and in 1861 he entered the Missouri State Guard as a captain of cavalry and fought at Wilson's Creek, Lexington, and Pea Ridge. In the summer of 1862 he recruited his famous Iron Brigade of Missouri cavalrymen, and led them through battles in Arkansas. He was promoted to brigadier general for his dashing raid into Missouri in the fall of 1863, and his recent campaign in northeast Arkansas had further enhanced his reputation.  

Consequently, the Iron Brigade, now commanded by Colonel David Shanks, was the best outfit in the Army of Missouri. It was made up of 1500 tough, battle-hardened Missourians, most of whom carried a revolver or two in addition to a rifle or carbine. Though lax in discipline, they were reliable in battle and would prove the mainstay of the army throughout the campaign. Shelby's other brigade, Colonel Sidney D. Jackman's, consisted of 1600 men recently recruited in Missouri, three-fourths of whom were unarmed.  

Though designated cavalry, Price's 12,000 man invasion force was actually mounted infantry. But as the largest cavalry force ever assembled during the Civil War, the Army of Missouri was marred by a number of serious problems. 

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21 Warner, Generals In Gray, 273-74.

22 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 670, 678, 718.
About 4,000 troops were unarmed, and 1,000 lacked mounts. Its arms, which were issued, captured or brought from home, were a hodge-podge of calibers, which would make ammunition resupply difficult. Though the army had fourteen pieces of artillery, they were all small calibers and mostly smoothbores. The major exception was a four-gun battery of parrots in Shelby's Division under the command of Captain Dick Collins, a hard fighting artillery officer who believed in engaging his guns alongside of the cavalry, if not ahead of them. The baggage train, which consisted of about 300 "wheezy" and rickety wagons and ambulances, was indispensable for carrying supplies through a barren country, but a serious impediment to a cavalry column. The brigade of Colonel Charles Tyler, which consisted of the unarmed men, assisted the teamsters with the train. Discipline was lax, and the newly formed Arkansas brigades, which consisted mostly of conscripts whose main desire was to go home to "Nancy and the baby," would shortly prove problematical.  

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Chapter Two

The Confederate Advance to Lexington

The Army of Missouri spent four days at Pocahontas, organizing, shoeing mules and horses, distributing ammunition and making other necessary preparations. Speeches were made, reminding the soldiers of the true purpose of the expedition and their expected conduct during it. On the morning of September 19, the army marched northward in three columns—Shelby on the left, Price and Fagan with the baggage train in the center, and Marmaduke on the right—with ten to thirty miles between each column to maximize the use of roads and forage. That same day, all three columns crossed into Missouri and headed for Fredericktown where they were to rendezvous before moving on St. Louis. After minor skirmishing in the flanking columns, the army reassembled at Fredericktown on the 25th. For the first time in over two years, "Old Pap" was back in Missouri. However, he was not unexpected. 24

It was said that in Missouri during the Civil War there were five seasons—"spring, summer, fall, Price's Raid, and winter." Since 1861, Price, or other Missourians, had

24 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 627-28; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 383.
intermittently raided into the state, usually in the late summer and fall. Since early spring, Price's intentions to invade Missouri had been known through the lodges of the Order of the American Knights, a Copperhead organization in Missouri. Rumors to this effect became stronger as fall approached, and the ripening of the corn added weight to them.\(^{25}\)

Also, the fact that the guerrilla bands in Missouri were increasing in size and ferocity helped support the belief that a major Confederate invasion was imminent. Price was known to utilize guerrillas in his operations, and after taking command of the expedition he sent the guerrillas an order (actually a request) to "make North Missouri as hot as...[they]...could for the militia." This, Price hoped, would keep the Union militia's attention away from southern Missouri and St. Louis. The guerrillas immediately moved north of the Missouri River and began a campaign of ambush and robbery that placed the area under a reign of terror and paralyzed rail transportation.\(^{26}\)

Major General William S. Rosecrans, who had been transferred to Missouri because of his defeat at Chickamauga the preceding fall, commanded the Federal Department of


Missouri, with headquarters in St. Louis. Through intelligence reports and common sense, he had strong reasons to believe an invasion of his department was imminent, but did not know when and where it would come. To meet the coming emergency, Rosecrans had managed to raise five complete and as many more incomplete regiments of twelve-month volunteers, and was promised the loan of several 100-day regiments from Illinois. Then, on September 3, after learning that Shelby was at Batesville waiting to be joined by General Price, Rosecrans requested to General Henry Halleck in Washington that the 16th Army Corps be sent to his aid. Major General Andrew J. Smith's division, which was moving up the Mississippi from Vicksburg to join Sherman in Georgia, was stopped at Cairo, Illinois, and ordered to St. Louis. Major General Joseph Mower's division, which had been sent to Little Rock in early September to protect the city, moved overland in pursuit of Price on September 18.27

After learning that Price had crossed the Arkansas but still unsure of his exact route, Rosecrans ordered his district commanders at Springfield, Sedalia, Jefferson City and Rolla to concentrate their militia. On September 24, Rosecrans received word that Shelby was in the vicinity of Farmington, Missouri, near Fredericktown. Alarmed,

Rosecrans ordered Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, commander of the Southeast District, to concentrate his forces at Pilot Knob and Cape Girardeau. Ewing immediately took one brigade of Smith's infantry south from St. Louis on the Iron Mountain Railroad toward Pilot Knob, patrolling and strengthening the garrisons at the bridges. Later that day, he set up temporary headquarters at Mineral Point where he learned that Price was at Fredericktown with a large force. On the 25th, Ewing took one regiment and moved by rail to Pilot Knob where Major James Wilson had collected all the available troops in the area. These two forces gave Ewing an aggregate of about 1,000 men.²⁸

Fort Davidson, a hexagonal-shaped earthwork, was the main defense work of Pilot Knob. It consisted of a nine-foot dirt parapet topped with sandbags, with its six sides surrounded by a moat ten feet wide and over six feet-deep which was partially filled with rain water. Two rifle pits ran several hundred yards from the fort to the southwest and north. It mounted four 32-pound siege guns, three 24-pound howitzers, three 12-inch mortars, and had been bolstered by six field guns. A level plain, broken only by a dry creek bed about 150 yards to the south and east, extended from the fort for about a thousand yards in all directions.

Though the fort was impregnable to an infantry assault, it was commanded on three sides by mountains, the most

prominent of which were Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountain. Both were located about 1,000 yards south of the fort, and accurate sniper and artillery fire from them could soon render the fort untenable. Ewing had chosen the site because a better one could not be found. His instructions from Rosecrans were to hold the fort against any detachment of the enemy, but to evacuate if the main force moved against it.²⁹

That same day, September 25, Price conferred with his division commanders as to the expedition's next course of action. He had received word that St. Louis was heavily defended and of Ewing's presence at Pilot Knob. Shelby, the junior division commander, wanted to push immediately to St. Louis. His scouts had reconnoitered Pilot Knob, and he didn't believe it would justify the cost of an assault. However, Marmaduke and Fagan urged that Ewing be disposed of before advancing on St. Louis. Price decided on the latter, ostensibly because he did not want to leave a garrison in his rear; but in all likelihood, he had concluded that it would be impossible to take St. Louis. An easy victory over Ewing, he reasoned, would lift his troops morale and raise the spirits of the Confederate sympathizers in the state.³⁰

The next morning, Price sent Shelby's Division

²⁹OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 446.

³⁰OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 628; Cyrus A. Peterson and Joseph M. Hanson, Pilot Knob, The Thermopylae of the West (New York, 1914), 99-100.
galloping northward to destroy the track and bridges of the Iron Mountain Railroad to prevent Ewing from being reinforced. Price then moved with Fagan's and Marmaduke's Divisions west from Fredericktown toward Arcadia. Late in the afternoon, Fagan's scouts ran into Wilson's pickets at a strategic mountain pass called Shut-In Gap, several miles east of Arcadia. After heavy skirmishing, the Confederates seized the gap and pressed toward Arcadia with the intention of moving northward through Ironton to Pilot Knob. However, Ewing reinforced the detachment at Ironton, placed Wilson in command, and pushed the Confederates back to Shut-In Gap. Then Fagan, closely supported by Marmaduke, drove the Federals back to Arcadia where rain and darkness ended the fighting.31

At daylight on the 27th, the Confederates attacked and pushed the Federals back through Arcadia and Ironton. Though Wilson's men fought desperately to hold the gap between Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountain, they were forced back within the walls of Fort Davidson where the rest of the garrison was preparing for the attack.32

On the advice of his chief engineer, Captain T. J. Mackey, Price planned to shell the fort. But shortly after opening the bombardment from atop Shepherd's Mountain, some

31OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 447, 628-29, 706-707; Peterson and Hanson, Pilot Knob, 101-47.
local citizens asked him not to shell it, claiming it would endanger the lives of southern adherents held prisoner inside. This information, which Price apparently did not confirm, undoubtedly led him to agree with Fagan and Marmaduke, who advocated a direct assault. Price then ordered the two division commanders to prepare for an attack.

Marmaduke deployed Clark's Brigade on the north slope of Shepherd's Mountain, and Fagan took a position to his right. Cabell's Brigade occupied the gap between the two mountains, with McCray and Slemon's at the base of Pilot Knob. Dobbin's Brigade was positioned north of the fort to block the Potosi Road, the fort's only practical escape route. Drawing on his past experiences, Price personally emphasized to Marmaduke's and Fagan's officers the need for coordination, stressing the need for both divisions to assault simultaneously and in line.33

Before ordering the attack, Price called on Ewing twice to surrender. Ewing refused, believing he could hold out against the Confederates. He also had strong personal reasons for not wanting to be captured. While commanding the District of the Border in 1863, he had issued the infamous Order No. 11 from his headquarters in Kansas City. This order, issued in the wake of Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Kansas, required the eviction of the citizens from

four border counties in western Missouri, and caused great suffering. Many of those affected were now serving, or had relatives, in Price's army. Ewing knew that if he were captured he would likely be killed. Earlier that day the Confederates had captured Major James Wilson, whom they held responsible for outrages against southerners in the Pilot Knob area, and executed him along with six Union privates. Also, Ewing's second-in-command was Colonel Thomas Fletcher, the Republican candidate for governor of Missouri. Ewing and Fletcher would have been prize prisoners, and it is possible that their capture was one of Price's motives in ordering the assault on Fort Davidson.  

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Around three o'clock, two cannons on Shepherd's Mountain signaled the advance, and Fagan's and Marmaduke's men moved forward on foot. Despite Price's warning, the divisions did not keep in line. Clark's Brigade encountered rough terrain while moving down Shepherd's Mountain; therefore Fagan's men debouched on the plain first. Immediately facing a hailstorm of shot and shell, Fagan's entire right wing, Slemons and McCray, broke before they had advanced a hundred yards. Only Cabell's veterans continued charging, moving at the double, and stopping occasionally to fire and reload. Though gaps were knocked in their ranks at every step, they kept going until they reached the moat where they tried to scale the walls. Desperately, the

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34 Castel, Sterling Price and the War in the West, 214.
Federals began tossing small artillery shells fused as hand grenades over the top of the fort down into the moat.

By the time Clark's Brigade reached the plain, it was badly out of alignment, with the right side far ahead of the left. Although the left took cover in the creekbed, the right of the brigade kept going until they joined Cabell's men in trying to fight their way up the walls of the fort. But General Cabell, after having his horse shot from under him and realizing that the walls were too high to be scaled without ladders and no support was coming, ordered the Confederates to fall back.

Meanwhile, Price made every effort to rally Fagan's troops, who eventually reformed their ranks. Fagan, angered and humiliated by his troops poor conduct, pleaded with Price for another attack. But Price refused. General Cabell, who had opposed attacking from the start, told Price that he had made "a damned wise decision." 35

After dark, the dispirited Confederates bivouacked for the night. Determined to attack the fort the next day, Price ordered Mackey's engineers to make scaling ladders and sent Shelby an order to hasten back to Pilot Knob. However, Shelby did not receive that order, nor a dispatch sent the previous day instructing him to rejoin the main army.

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35 The account of the Confederate assault on Fort Davidson is based on the following sources: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 448, 629, 679-80, 687-88, 698, 707-709, 715-17; Peterson and Hanson, Pilot Knob, 165-210; Cabell, Cabell's Report, 5-6.
Unaware that Price needed him, Shelby continued his mission on the Iron Mountain Railroad, destroying three bridges and miles of track. After skirmishing with the Union infantry at Mineral Point, he fell back and bivouacked at Potosi, twenty-five miles northwest of Pilot Knob.\footnote{\textit{OR}, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 629, 653; Pt. 3, 960.}

Ewing had won a stunning victory! With only 900 men, but with strong artillery support, he had repulsed two-thirds of Price's army and inflicted around 1200 casualties. But his position was perilous. Though he had lost only 73 men in the defense of Fort Davidson, the two days of fighting had reduced his command by one-fourth, and he knew it would be impossible to hold out against the well coordinated assault he believed Price was planning. After consulting with his officers, Ewing decided to evacuate the fort and retreat northward by way of Potosi to Mineral Point. Around two o'clock that morning, Colonel Fletcher led the infantry out of the fort and through the trench on the north side to the Potosi Road. After covering the drawbridge with tents and straw to muffle the noise, the cavalry and six field guns moved out and joined the infantry.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, Pt. 1, 448-49. An exact count of Confederate casualties is unknown since Price and most of his subordinate officers did not detail the number of casualties sustained in the assault on Fort Davidson in their official reports. The Confederates had good reason to gloss over their losses in this engagement. Various estimates run from 1,000 to 1500 killed and wounded.}
Although a huge pile of burning charcoal at the north base of Pilot Knob that had been ignited by exploding shells made the valley "as light as noonday," the Federals moved out unchallenged. Dobbin's men, who were camped along both sides of the road, made no attempt to stop them. Colonel Fletcher believed that the Confederates must have seen them, but mistook them for a body of their own troops shifting positions. A detail left behind in the fort blew up the powder and ammunition in the magazine, and though the explosion shook the valley and hills for miles around, the Confederates believed it was an accident, and did nothing.

Price, who was staying at a house in Arcadia, did not learn until daylight that Ewing had escaped. Infuriated, he ordered Marmaduke to pursue him. Though Shelby had received neither of Price's orders but completed his railroad mission, he left Potosi at dawn and headed south toward Pilot Knob. Meanwhile, Ewing reached Caledonia where he captured some of Shelby's scouts, and learned that his troops at Mineral Point had retreated. With this new information he moved west toward Rolla. Several hours later, Shelby and Marmaduke joined forces and pursued. Although Ewing was on foot and being slowed by refugees that had joined his column, steep cliffs on both sides of the road prevented the mounted Confederates from flanking him, and strong rearguard actions with his artillery prevented them from charging up the road.
The pursuit continued throughout that day, night, and into the next day. Marmaduke's men dropped back from exhaustion, but Shelby pressed ahead. On the evening of September 29, Ewing went into a defensive position at Leesburg. Though Shelby made a heavy attack in the darkness, it was repulsed. The next morning, Shelby and Marmaduke surveyed the Federal position and decided not to attack. The Confederates then headed for Sullivan's Station to rejoin Price, and Ewing moved to Rolla to help in the defense of that important supply base. 38

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

38 The account of Ewing's flight from Pilot Knob to Leasburg is based on the following sources: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 449-51, 629-30, 653, 673, 680; Thomas Fletcher, "The Battle of Pilot Knob, and the Retreat to Leasburg," War Papers and Personal Reminiscences, Missouri Military Order of the Loyal Legion (St. Louis, 1892), 1:44-50. The reason that the Confederates allowed Ewing to move up the Potosi road unchallenged is unknown. Colonel Dobbin, whose brigade was guarding that particular area, made no report, nor did his division commander, General Fagan. Price, in his official report, did not explain it.
They also looted. Although Price had issued strict orders against such unlawfulness before the army left Pocahontas, the practice began in the vicinity of Pilot Knob, where Price appointed Lieutenant Colonel John P. Bull as provost marshall general of the army. Though Bull organized a fifty man provost guard for each brigade to prevent straggling and plundering, the practices continued. The army's wide dispersion, with its main column stretched out for five or six miles, made it difficult for the guards to maintain control.

Also, the slow movement of the cumbersome wagon train gave the soldiers ample time to roam about and forage. The train, which originally consisted of about 300 wagons, soon grew to over 500 wagons, many of which were being used to carry the "fruits" of the expedition. Accompanying the train was "a rabble of deadheads," stragglers who gave the army the appearance of a "Calmuck horde." The incompetency and indifference of many of the line officers, and the fact that much of the army consisted of unwilling conscripts added to the slow rate of march and lack of discipline. As time went on, the more seasoned veterans began to fear that

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39 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 630-31, 653-54; Castel, Sterling Price and the War in the West, 222.
"the odious train would occasion disaster to the army."

On October 6, Shelby forced a crossing of the Osage River six miles below Jefferson City. During the fighting, Colonel David Shanks, commander of the Iron Brigade, fell mortally wounded. Though Shelby replaced him with Colonel Moses Smith of the 11th Missouri Cavalry, the following day Price ordered Brigadier General M. Jeff. Thompson, M.S.G., to command his star unit. Thompson, who early in the war had earned the reputation as the "Swamp Fox" of southeast Missouri, had joined the expedition at Pilot Knob without an assignment, having been recently exchanged as a prisoner.

Meanwhile, General Rosecrans had been keeping Smith's infantry positioned between Price and St. Louis, but after he determined that the Confederates were moving west, ordered Smith to follow. General Mower's division of the 16th Corps, which had moved overland from Little Rock to Cape Girardeau, moved to St. Louis by river transport. Once rested and refitted, they were sent up the Missouri to Jefferson City. Rosecrans had placed Brigadier General Clinton Fisk, commander of the District of North Missouri, in charge of the defenses of Jefferson City, and by October 7 the city was ringed with formidable entrenchments.


Knowing that he did not have enough men to operate offensively against Price, Fisk placed all of his cavalry under Colonel John F. Philips and sent them to the Osage with orders to vigorously contest its passage, then withdraw to the city. But after retreating from the Osage on the 6th, Philips took up a new position behind Moreau Creek where he was joined by Brigadier Generals John Sanborn and John McNeil and their cavalry from Springfield and Rolla. On the morning of the 7th, Fagan assumed the Confederate advance and pushed toward the capital. At Moreau Creek he met stiff resistance, but gradually pushed the Federal cavalry back to the city’s defenses. The Confederates then occupied the heights in full view of the city, the capitol, and the fortifications. But after reconnoitering and exchanging a few shots, Price pulled back two miles to the south and bivouacked. He had received information that 15,000 troops were defending Jefferson City, and was undoubtedly fearful of another Pilot Knob. After consulting with his division commanders he decided to move toward Kansas, hoping to recruit as many men as possible from the strongly pro-Confederate hemp and tobacco counties along the Missouri River. That night, Price ordered Shelby to move west immediately, and the next day the main army made a demonstration before the city’s defenses.

fortifications before also moving west.\textsuperscript{43}

That same day, October 8, Major General Alfred Pleasonton arrived in Jefferson City and assumed command of all the forces in the area. Pleasonton had commanded the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac during its growing stages, but was transferred to Missouri because Meade disliked him and Grant wanted Major General Philip Sheridan to command the eastern cavalry. Though Pleasonton was still smarting from the order that had shelved him in an obscure theater, he was eager to fight. He immediately sent General Sanborn and all of the cavalry after the Confederates with orders to harass them but not to push them too hard. Pleasonton remained in Jefferson City to finalize plans with Rosecrans, who had ordered Smith's and Mower's infantry to that point.\textsuperscript{44}

On the afternoon of the 9th, Shelby, far in the Confederate advance, overwhelmed the small militia force at Booneville. Price and the main column reached Booneville on the 10th, where the city's pro-southern element turned out and gave the ragged troopers an enthusiastic welcome. About 1200 recruits joined the army during its stay in Booneville, but most of them were unarmed, and attached to Tyler's

\textsuperscript{43}OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 631.

Brigade. 45

Additionally, 100 guerrillas under Captain William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson reported to Price. On September 27, the same day Price attacked at Pilot Knob, Anderson and his gang stopped a train at Centralia and executed 22 unarmed Union soldiers found on board, and later that day ambushed and killed almost to a man a 150-man militia force that was pursuing them. Anderson, who had one sister killed and another permanently crippled during the collapse of a prison where Union authorities were holding them, was a psychopathic killer, as were many of his men. Many of them, including Anderson, had Union soldiers scalps decorating their bridles. Though he disapproved of these ghastly trophies, Price immediately ordered Anderson to operate against the North Missouri Railroad, and sent orders to other guerrillas to destroy the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. 46

On the 11th, Sanborn attacked the Confederates east of Booneville, but Fagan and Marmaduke drove him back several miles. The following day, the Confederates left Booneville, whose citizens were probably as glad to see them leave as they had been to see them arrive. The Army of Missouri had


46 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 632; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 471; Donald R. Hale, They Called Him Bloody Bill (Clinton, Missouri, 1975), 39-59; Castel, Sterling Price and The War in the West, 226.
continued its looting and, according to Governor Reynolds, "the wholesale pillage in ...[Booneville]... made it impossible to obtain anything by purchase," with stragglers even robbing families of soldiers in Confederate service.°

Having learned that there were a large number of arms stored at Glasgow, Price ordered General Clark to take his and Colonel Jackman's brigades across the river and assault the town at dawn on the 15th while Shelby supported from the west bank with sharpshooters and a section of Collins' Battery. Clark and Jackman crossed the river by raft at Arrow Rock on the 14th, but due to delays in crossing were about an hour late in attacking. Therefore, Shelby's opening up on time gave the Federal garrison, which consisted of 800 men under Colonel Chester Harding, plenty of time to prepare. Clark and Jackman met Harding east of the town, and quickly pushed him back to his main works in the center of town, then advanced under the cover of houses and fences. Harding surrendered when the Confederates got to within fifty yards of his earthworks, and he and his men were paroled and escorted to Booneville to prevent their being killed by guerrillas. Though Harding had burned all of the military supplies that he could before surrendering, Clark captured 1200 muskets and overcoats, 150 horses, and a steamboat which was used for ferrying recruits to the south.

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°OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 631-32; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 471.
Simultaneously, Price ordered Thompson and the Iron Brigade to attack the Federal garrison at Sedalia. On the 14th, they moved to Longwood, where they were joined by a battalion of recruits under Lieutenant Colonel Alonzo Slayback, and learned that Sanborn's cavalry had passed between Longwood and Sedalia that day. The following day, Thompson learned that Smith's infantry were on the LaMine River. Believing that he could operate between these bodies of troops and escape, Thompson headed for Sedalia. The Iron Brigade hit the Federal pickets on the main road into town, drove them into their earthworks, and opened on them with a section of Collins' Battery. The Federals then evacuated the earthworks and fled the town. Thompson captured several hundred muskets and pistols along with several wagonloads of military supplies. The prisoners were paroled, and after dark the Iron Brigade moved back to find the main body.

While the side expeditions to Glasgow and Sedalia were in progress, Price halted the army west of Marshall for two days. Many of Shelby's and Clark's men were from this area, and they took unofficial leave to visit their families. But if the Missourians enjoyed a holiday, the Arkansas troops suffered from hunger and sickness. Unfamiliar with the

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48OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 436-38, 632, 656-57, 674-75, 681-82; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 403-08.

49OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 632-33, 657, 664-66; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 404.
country, General Fagan was unable to make adequate arrangements to supply his command with food, clothing and blankets. As a result, "catarrh, bronchitis, pneumonia, rheumatic affections and glandular swellings" ran rampant in the Arkansas division.  

After Clark and Thompson had rejoined the army, Price moved to Waverly where he camped on the night of October 18. The following morning he marched toward Lexington, the scene of his great victory in 1861. But time was running out for "Old Pap." His delays and slow rate of march since leaving Jefferson City gave the Federals time to mobilize their forces. North of Price was a bridgeless Missouri River. Behind him was Rosecrans with 9,000 infantrymen under Smith and 7,000 cavalrymen under Pleasonton. And waiting for him around Kansas City with a force of 20,000 was Major General Samuel Ryan Curtis.

The fifty-nine year old Curtis was the son of a Revolutionary War veteran and an 1831 graduate of West Point. After serving in the army one year, he resigned his commission and went into civil engineering and studied law. He served in the Mexican War, then moved to Iowa where he was elected to Congress in 1856. Curtis was serving his third successive term when the war broke out, and resigned his seat to accept a commission. In 1862, he led the

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50 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 4, 1003-1004, 1012.
51 Ibid., 633; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 409.
Federal army that defeated Price and Van Dorn at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, and was then given command of the Department of Missouri. However, his meddling in Missouri's volatile political situation caused his removal by Lincoln, and he was reassigned to command the Department of Kansas, which was composed of the districts of Colorado, Nebraska, North and South Kansas, and Upper Arkansas.  

Curtis first learned of Price's movements on September 17 after returning to his headquarters at Fort Leavenworth from an extended operation on the plains against hostile Indians. With most of the 7,000 troops in his department scattered in remote places, he began concentrating those immediately available. Five cavalry regiments were stationed along the Kansas-Missouri border, and a force under General James G. Blunt chasing Indians west of Fort Larned were recalled to Leavenworth. Needing more troops, Curtis knew he had to call out the Kansas State Militia. On the 20th, he asked Kansas' governor, Thomas Carney, that the militia "be ready to cooperate against the foe." Carney replied that he would have the militia stand by, but expressed reluctance for them to serve in the field. Curtis then assured Carney that he hoped to use the militia for garrison duty only.  

52Ezra J. Warner, Generals In Blue (Baton Rouge, 1964), 107-108.  
Governor Carney’s lack of alarm was due to several reasons. First, Curtis was unsure of Price’s exact movements, and possessed no knowledge of his intentions. Second, the people of Kansas felt more secure than they had since the war began. The Confederacy’s Trans-Mississippi forces were far south in Arkansas and Texas, and closer to home, Order Number 11 had helped to push the guerrilla operations away from Kansas and into central Missouri. The Indians were the only real menace to Kansas, and their threat was limited to the far western settlements. Believing that the war was over for them, most Kansans were more interested in the upcoming state election between Carney and another Republican, Samuel Crawford, who was being backed by Senator James Lane.

Like many members of his faction, Carney believed it unlikely that Price would invade the state. Carney and his followers, who regarded Curtis as little more than a tool of Lane, suspected that Curtis’ design in mobilizing the militia was simply a political trick to keep voters from the polls, either preventing the election or making it possible for the Lane faction to win it. Lane’s past political career and his unscrupulous reputation made it easy for his opponents to believe that he was capable of such a scheme.

On October 8, Curtis placed Major General James G. Blunt in command of the District of South Kansas, and opposition to the mobilization intensified. The Carney
faction regarded it as a scheme to put him in command of the entire Kansas State Militia. A native of Maine who had been strongly involved in the abolitionist politics of territorial Kansas, Blunt was a bitter enemy of Carney and Lane's political and military henchman. Blunt's entry into the Civil War was simply an extension of his jayhawking career, but he quickly proved himself an aggressive fighter, distinguishing himself in the campaign to take northwest Arkansas. But in October, 1863, along with 100 members of his escort, he was ambushed by Quantrill's guerrillas at Baxter Springs, Kansas. Nearly all of his men were slaughtered, and Blunt himself barely escaped. Since that time he had been under censorship, and the force he was leading near Fort Larned consisted of only a battalion. He was now more than eager to restore his reputation.\(^{54}\)

Then, on October 9, Curtis received word from Rosecrans that Price had left Jefferson City and was moving west. Carney then had no choice but to call out the militia, which he placed under the command of Brigadier General George Dietzler. The following day, Curtis declared martial law to bolster the proclamation, and began organizing the Army of the Border. Businesses closed and harvesting stopped as men poured into rendezvous points, and by the 15th, 15,000 men were assembled along the state line. But there was still

\(^{54}\)Albert Castel, "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, 24 (Summer, 1958), 129-33; Warner, Generals In Blue, 37-38.
distrust among the leaders, which forecast future troubles.  

Blunt established his headquarters at Paola, Kansas, but on the 14th, moved to Hickman Mills, Missouri, where he organized the Provisional Cavalry Division of the Army of the Border. Colonels Charles R. "Doc" Jennison of "Kansas Redlegs" fame and Colonel Thomas Moonlight commanded the First and Second Brigades, which were made up of volunteers. Colonel Charles Blair, commander of the Fort Scott garrison, commanded the Third Brigade, which consisted of militia and a few volunteers. The militia was under the direct control of Brigadier General William Fishback and Colonel James Snoddy. A few days later, Fishback and Snoddy, who thought the Price invasion was a hoax, attempted to take the militia back to Kansas. But they were overtaken by General Blunt, placed under arrest, and the militia was marched back to Hickman Mills where they elected new officers.

Curtis planned to defend first at the Big Blue River, and if forced to retreat, fall back to the entrenchments at Kansas City. He had been strengthening the earthworks around Kansas City ever since he learned of Price's presence, and now ordered Colonel Blair and the Third

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Brigade to the Big Blue where they aided the engineers in felling trees, and constructing abatis, breastworks and rifle pits. All the while the Carney faction insisted that the militia not be moved east of the Big Blue.  

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

Blunt, hoping to unite with these forces and destroy Price, sent Curtis a request for additional troops to be sent to Lexington. The following day, Blunt reached Lexington where he received definite word that Price was at Waverly, twenty miles east. The following morning, Blunt received word from Curtis that no troops could be sent to Lexington because of the situation with the militia. Blunt then deployed his forces on an open plain east and south of the town, hoping to resist Price's advance long enough to

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develop his strength and intentions.\textsuperscript{58}

Meanwhile, Price had received word of Blunt's seizure of Lexington, and on the morning of the 19th, the Army of Missouri moved west from Waverly toward Lexington in three columns. Around two o'clock that afternoon, Shelby's Division, in the middle, struck Blunt's pickets about a mile east of Lexington. Though the Federals resisted stubbornly, they fell back as Fagan and Marmaduke moved more troops to Shelby's assistance. Realizing that his flanks would soon be in danger, General Blunt ordered a withdrawal down the Independence Road, with Colonel Moonlight's Second Brigade covering the rear. Shelby's men followed, pursuing them well after nightfall.\textsuperscript{59}

Blunt continued his retreat throughout the night, reaching the Little Blue River, nine miles east of Independence, the next morning. Finding the west side of the stream suitable for a defense, he positioned his men and artillery and sent a request to Curtis that food and the remainder of the volunteer troops be sent forward. But Curtis instructed Blunt to leave two or three squadrons at the Little Blue, and fall back to Independence. However, Blunt left Colonel Moonlight's entire brigade with instructions to report any contact with Price and resist his

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}, 573; Blunt, "General Blunts Account of His Civil War Experiences," 253-55.

advance as long as possible. At Independence, where Carney and his political staff were trying to induce disaffection in the ranks of the militia, Blunt argued with Curtis the importance of defending at the Little Blue. Blunt pointed out that if the Confederate cavalry crossed that stream they would be in open country and able to fan out and flank south of the fortifications on the Big Blue. However, the situation with the militia made it imperative for Curtis to defend at the Big Blue.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{60}OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 574; Blunt, "General Blunt's Account of His Civil War Experiences," 255-56.
The Army of Missouri spent the night of October 19 at Lexington, and the following day moved west to Fire Prairie Creek. At dawn of the 21st, they continued westward, with Clark's Brigade of Marmaduke's Division in the advance. Around seven o'clock, Clark's skirmishers ran into Moonlight's pickets about a mile east of the Little Blue. The Federals quickly fell back across the river and pushed a wagonload of burning hay onto the bridge, forcing Clark to cross at a ford a half mile below. Clark ordered his regiments into line as quickly as they got across, and Freeman's Brigade followed. Moonlight's men began falling back, utilizing stone fences, trees, and ravines for cover. Much of the fighting was at close range, with General Marmaduke having three horses shot from under him.

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

Price then called on Shelby, who was in the rear behind Fagan. The men of the Iron Brigade shouted insults and catcalls at the Arkansans as they galloped toward their first hot fight of the campaign. Shelby deployed on Marmaduke's right, which gave the Confederates the advantage in numbers. Though Blunt had a superior position and several units with repeating weapons, he soon found his flanks in danger, and ordered a withdrawal. Shelby pressed the retreating Federals all the way to Independence, where skirmishing in the streets and sniping from the houses continued until darkness ended the fighting on the west side of town. According to Shelby, who was not at Pilot Knob, the campaign up to this time had been a "walkover," but at the Little Blue this ceased to be the case. 61

That evening, Blunt joined Curtis west of the Big Blue.

Though Curtis' defensive line ran from the mouth of the Big Blue on the Missouri River fifteen miles south to

Russell's Ford, he had concentrated most of his forces at the main ford on the Independence Road. He believed that since this was the most direct route into Kansas City, it was the one Price would take. But Blunt argued that Price would try to flank at one of the smaller fords upriver. After failing to convince Curtis, Blunt sent Moonlight's and Jennison's brigades to guard Simmons' and Byram's Fords, where secondary roads running from Independence to Westport crossed the Big Blue. Further south, at Russell's Ford, a force of 1200 militiamen waited under Brigadier General M. S. Grant.62

With Curtis in position, it was imperative that Rosecrans move quickly on Price's rear. But Curtis and Rosecrans had lost telegraph communication, due to the fact that the Confederates were between them. Therefore, Curtis sent a scout, Dan Boutwell of the Kansas State Militia, through the Confederate army with a request that Rosecrans hurry forward. After a night of hairbreadth escapes, Boutwell found General Pleasonton, and gave him Curtis' request.63

Major General Alfred Pleasonton had caught up with Sanborn and the cavalry at Dunksburg, Missouri, on the 19th, and immediately organized the Provisional Cavalry Division


63"Price's Invasion," Congregational Record, 6 (Nov. 1864), 123.
of the Department of Missouri. The First, Second and Third
Brigades consisted primarily of Missouri State Militia and
were under the commands of Brigadier Generals Egbert Brown,
John McNeil and John B. Sanborn. The Fourth Brigade, under
Colonel Edward F. Winslow, consisted of the cavalry from
General Mower's division. All told, Pleasonton had a force
of 7,000. From Dunksburg, Pleasonton had moved west, and
was camped on the east bank of the Little Blue when Boutwell
found him on the morning of the 22nd. Pleasonton then
crossed the Little Blue and pushed rapidly toward
Independence. 64

That same morning, the Army of Missouri moved from
Independence toward Kansas City with Shelby in the advance
and Marmaduke and Fagan protecting the wagon train. Shelby
ordered Colonel Sidney D. Jackman's brigade to make a feint
at the main ford, and then moved Thompson and the Iron
Brigade to Byram's Ford. As the Confederates charged across
the ford, they met stiff resistance from Jennison, who was
in a strong position on the west bank. Shelby then sent
flanking forces up and downstream, who quickly dislodged
Jennison from his position. After crossing to the west
bank, Thompson detached Colonel Frank B. Gordon's 5th
Missouri Cavalry to guard the left flank of the wagon train,
then pressed after Jennison. Jackman, having completed his

64 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 340.
mission at the main ford, moved south and joined Shelby.\textsuperscript{65}

When Curtis realized the Confederates were flanking, he immediately alerted Generals Blunt and Grant. Blunt, upon hearing the firing at Byram's Ford, ordered Colonel Moonlight to help Jennison. Moonlight arrived too late, but comprehending what had happened, he moved toward Westport where he hoped to unite with Jennison and prevent Shelby from entering Kansas.\textsuperscript{66}

On the south end of the Federal line, General Grant sent large scouting parties in all directions when he heard that the Confederates were flanking. About 300 of Grant's militiamen under the command of Colonel George Veale of the 2nd Kansas State Militia were falling back to join Jennison when they ran into Gordon's 5th Missouri at the Mockbee Farm. Knowing they could not outrun the Confederate cavalry, the doctors, farmers, lawyers and shopkeepers turned soldiers formed a battle line and opened fire with their rifles and howitzer. After two unsuccessful charges against the Kansans, Gordon called to Shelby for help. Shelby sent Jackman to Gordon's assistance, and after forming, the Confederates charged straight through the Kansans' ranks, killing and capturing over two-hundred of


\textsuperscript{66}\textit{OR}, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 470-80, 575, 593.
them, and scattering the rest.\textsuperscript{67}

Meanwhile, Jennison and Moonlight had joined forces, and begun pushing Thompson back. At dusk, Thompson broke contact and fell back to the Mockbee Farm. After dark, Jennison and Moonlight retired to Westport. General Curtis, aware that Shelby had broken his line at Byram's Ford, ordered the forces protecting the main ford to fall back to the entrenchments at Kansas City.\textsuperscript{68}

That same afternoon, Pleasonton caught up with the rear of Price's army. After crossing the Little Blue, the Provisional Cavalry Division pressed toward Independence with McNeil in the advance. McNeil struck Fagan's pickets east of the town and pushed them back, while Sanborn charged into the town from the northeast. Sanborn's lead regiment, the Second Arkansas Union Cavalry, cut off and captured about 300 members of Cabell's Brigade. General Cabell narrowly missed capture, escaping by jumping his horse over a cannon, galloping through the dogtrot of a cabin, then jumping over a back yard fence. Though the Confederates offered some resistance, most fled, throwing away equipment and abandoning two cannon.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67}\textit{Ibid.}, 480, 635, 658, 667; Edwards, \textit{Shelby and His Men}, 425-26; Samuel J. Reader, \textit{The Civil War Diary of Samuel J. Reader: Quartermaster, Kansas State Militia...and...An Article on The Fighting at the Mockbee Farm, October 22, 1864}, by Douglas Seneker (Kansas City, 1982), 9-13, 20-29.

\textsuperscript{68}\textit{OR}, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 484, 584-85, 667.

With hope of intercepting the Confederate wagon train, Pleasonton ordered McNeil to move south to Little Santa Fe. Having heard nothing from Curtis, Pleasonton requested that Smith's infantry be sent to his aid. Reluctantly, Rosecrans ordered Smith, who was at Chapel Hill, to shift north to Independence. Meanwhile, General Brown and the First Brigade, who were pushing after the Confederates, exhausted their ammunition. Colonel Winslow and the Fourth Brigade then assumed the advance, attacking recklessly in the dark. Clark's Brigade now held the Confederate rearguard, and though his men resisted fiercely, they steadily retreated down the Byram's Ford Road. At ten thirty, Pleasonton called off the attack and ordered General Brown to move forward, relieve Winslow, and attack at daylight. 70

Price's main objective that night was getting his train to safety, but he still had hopes of defeating Curtis before confronting Pleasonton. The wagon train and recruits were sent south on the Harrisonville Road toward Little Santa Fe, with Cabell's Brigade to protect them. Price ordered Shelby and Fagan to move toward Westport at dawn and attack Curtis, and posted Marmaduke on the west bank of Byram's Ford with instructions to resist Pleasonton's advance. 71

Curtis also decided to take the offensive at dawn, and

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70 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 313, 328, 341, 683.

71 Ibid., 635; "Price's Invasion," Congregational Record, 6 (Nov. 1864), 124; Cabell, Cabell's Report, 10.
ordered General Blunt to position his division along Brush Creek, two miles south of Westport. Blunt deployed Jennison's and Ford's Brigades in the timber along the north bank of the creek, and placed Moonlight where he could strike the Confederate left flank or move in behind and support Ford and Jennison. As more militiamen became available, Curtis ordered them south to support Blunt. 72

At dawn, Shelby moved northward with two of Fagan's brigades in support. Simultaneously, Blunt ordered the Union advance, and Ford and Jennison moved across Brush Creek, through a stand of timber, and over the heights to the prairie. When the two sides clashed in the mist, the Federals fell back to the timber where they were able to stem the Confederate advance. But after an hour, the blue cavalrmen retreated back across Brush Creek.

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

When Colonel Blair's Third Brigade had reached its position, Curtis ordered the line forward. About that time

72OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 485, 575.
a German farmer, George Thoman, out looking for his mare that was stolen by Confederates the previous night, offered to show General Curtis a defile that led to the prairie south of the heights. Curtis accepted, and followed Thoman up a narrow gulch which brought them over the heights to a position on Shelby's left flank. Curtis immediately ordered the 9th Wisconsin Battery forward and into action.

Shelby's men, totally surprised by the flanking artillery fire, fell back across a small valley where they held as Collins brought his battery into position to engage the 9th Wisconsin. Meanwhile, the Confederate retreat brought Blunt over the heights to the stone fences the Confederates had just evacuated. The Federals halted briefly to adjust their lines, then for the next two hours the rolling prairie south of the heights of Brush Creek became the scene of cavalry charges and counter-charges, close pistol combat on horseback, and short range artillery duels as the Confederates were slowly pushed southward.

As the lines moved, so did the artillery. One of Collins' "pet parrots" burst at the first fire, but he fought on with the remaining three. Curtis had more than thirty cannon, which took a devastating toll on the Confederates. At one point, Colonel James McGhee, commander of an Arkansas cavalry regiment in Dobbin's Brigade, led his men in a close order charge down Wornall's Lane to take one of the Federal batteries. Captain Curtis Johnson, of
Company E, 15th Kansas Cavalry of Jennison's Brigade, led a counter-charge into the flank of the Arkansans. During the melee that ensued when the two masses of horsemen collided at full speed, Johnson and McGhee fought a personal duel on horseback with revolvers in which both were badly wounded. Additional Federal cavalry charged into the fray, and the Arkansans retreated.

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

East of the Big Blue, it was eight o'clock before

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73The account of the Battle of Westport was drawn from the following sources: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 484-91, 635-36, 658-59, 667-68, 676; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 430-33; Hinton, Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas, 149-67; Blunt, "General Blunt's Account of His Civil War Experiences," 259-60.
Pleasonton had launched his attack. Impatient at not hearing the sounds of battle, he rode to the front where he found the First Brigade strung out along the road and in no condition to attack. Infuriated, Pleasonton relieved Brown of command, replaced him with Colonel John F. Philips of the First Missouri State Militia Cavalry, and ordered him to attack across the ford in conjunction with Winslow's Fourth Brigade.

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

Marmaduke's main line was on a ridge about a thousand yards from the ford. Between the Confederates and the ford was a rock ledge that dropped off fifteen to twenty feet, providing a natural barrier to an attacker. Finding the boulders too high to scale on horseback, Philips ordered a mounted attack up the road, but two charges were thrown back. With Winslow now in position, the Federals dismounted and scrambled up the rock ledge. As they formed at the top, the Confederate fire intensified, and Colonel Winslow was
wounded in the leg and forced to turn the brigade over to Lieutenant Colonel Frederick W. Benteen of the 10th Missouri Volunteer Cavalry. The blue line then pushed up the ridge and into the Confederate line. After a stubborn resistance, Marmaduke's men fell back and fled across the prairie. 74

As the First and Fourth Brigades reformed, Pleasonton arrived with Sanborn's Third Brigade and pursued the Confederates westward. At the Harrisonville Road, Jackman hastily threw his brigade into line with Fagan's troops, dismounted it, and allowed Sanborn to come within a hundred yards before opening fire. Sanborn reeled back, and the Confederates counter-charged. But then Benteen and Philips charged into the fight, and Fagan's men scattered to the south, with Jackman holding the rearguard. 75

Jackman's departure left Shelby with only the Iron Brigade to hold back the Army of the Border. Then Curtis, hearing the noise of Pleasonton's attack, ordered a charge all along his front. Though the Iron Brigade counter-charged, flanking artillery fire from one of Pleasonton's advance batteries caused Shelby's men to flee southward. They retreated until they reached a row of stone fences where the troopers rallied and fought off the combined

74 The account of the Battle of Byram's Ford was drawn from the following sources: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 313, 340-41, 347, 350-51, 635, 684; Scott, The Story of a Cavalry Regiment, 321-25.

attacks of Curtis and Pleasonton. After buying time for the
train and Marmaduke's and Fagan's men to escape, Shelby
withdrew and assumed the rearguard of the retreating Army of
Missouri.\footnote{OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 486, 659, 667-68;
Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 433-35; Fred Lee, ed., "Diary
of Colonel John F. Philips," The Battle of Westport (Kansas
City, 1982), 41.}

On the Union far left, things did not go so well.
General John McNeil was slow in moving from Independence,
and at daylight he was far from Little Santa Fe. At a point
near Hickman Mills he came upon the wagon train where he
believed that he was facing "the entire force of the enemy."
All morning he skirmished at long range with the
Confederates, and that afternoon he ordered a cautious
advance which fell back after General Cabell sent out a
heavy line of skirmishers to fire the prairie grass.
Afterward, McNeil kept his distance and allowed the train to
escape.\footnote{OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 341, 372; Cabell, Cabell's
Report, 10-11.}

Though Price had been routed, his army was intact.
McNeil's blunder was the second lost opportunity for total
Union victory. The first occurred when Smith's infantry
were ordered from Chapel Hill to Independence. Had they
continued marching westward they could have easily blocked
the Confederate retreat. But that afternoon found them at
Byram's Ford where they assisted in collecting the dead and

caring for the wounded.

The exact number of killed, wounded, and missing in the three days of fighting from the Little Blue to Westport is unknown. The fast movement across thirty miles of western Missouri left no time for gathering statistics. Also, the absence of reports from several of the Confederate leaders, inaccuracies, and the fact that reports often list casualties for the entire campaign makes obtaining a precise casualty count impossible. Everything considered, 3500 killed and severely wounded on both sides, with 1500 of those occurring on the 23rd, would be a conservative estimate.78

The Battle of Westport is sometimes called the Gettysburg of the West because it resembles the great battle in Pennsylvania. The three day battle was the largest conflict west of the Mississippi, the termination of a Confederate invasion that threatened principle cities, and the South's last attempt to carry the war northward in that region. However, unlike General George G. Meade, who allowed his opponent to retreat from Gettysburg unmolested, General Curtis decided that "a vigorous pursuit was necessary."79


Chapter Four
Retreat, Pursuit, and the End

Late that afternoon, Generals Curtis, Pleasonton, Blunt, and Dietzler, along with Governor Carney and Senator Lane, met on Indian Creek near the state line to discuss the pursuit of the routed Confederate army. With his men and mounts exhausted, General Pleasonton wanted the Missourians to return to their home stations for the election, and for the Kansas forces to conduct the pursuit. But Dietzler and Carney argued that the militia should be relieved because of their inferior equipment and the need to return to their civilian occupations and vote in the election. Blunt and Curtis agreed, and Pleasonton stepped down. Curtis then released the militia of northern Kansas, and ordered Blunt’s and Pleasonton’s troopers to Little Santa Fe where they would start the pursuit at daylight.\textsuperscript{80}

At Little Santa Fe, Blunt argued with Curtis over the necessity of pursuing Price immediately, but Curtis would not move until the men had been rested. At sunrise, Blunt took the lead with Pleasonton following. Smith’s infantry were sent marching south to be used if the cavalry suffered

\textsuperscript{80}OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 491-92; Hinton, Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas, 175-77.
a reversal, but a Harrisonville they were ordered to report to Rosecrans at Warrensburg. Colonel Moonlight's Second Brigade, which had been previously detached from the main body, was moving on the Confederates right flank. 81

After retreating from Westport, Price moved twenty-two miles down the state line on the military road and camped on the Middle Fork of the Grand River. The following day, after spending the entire morning getting the wagon train in marching order, he moved thirty-three miles to the town of Trading Post on the Marais des Cygnes River, a pace well below the capability of a cavalry column in the face of disaster. The train was clearly slowing them down and allowing the Federals to catch up. 82

The Confederate trail was not hard to follow. Discarded equipment, broken down horses, and sick, wounded and exhausted men awaiting capture marked their route. At dusk the Federals reached West Point, having marched fifty miles. So far, the Confederate retreat had been through Missouri. But at West Point, the military road veered westward into Kansas, and from that point the fury of the retreating Confederates became readily apparent. According to one Federal, "a perfect saturnalia of destruction seemed to have reigned." Houses had been sacked, and crops,


82 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 646.
haystacks, and barns burned. Women and children ran frantically about, crazed with terror and grief. Several elderly men had been murdered, and many other citizens shot at.83

According to Shelby's adjutant, Major John Newman Edwards, the Confederates were "soothing the wounds of Missouri by stabbing the breast of Kansas." From Little Santa Fe until they crossed into Kansas, the Confederates had marched through an area that had been laid waste earlier by Kansas partisans, who had left only the charred remains of houses, lines of ashes where fences once stood, and fields once cultivated full of weeds. The Confederates were now retaliating with similar acts.84

The Federals spent two hours at West Point eating and resting, then Curtis ordered General Pleasonton to take the advance and resume the pursuit. Pleasonton was ill, so he turned command of the division over to General Sanborn, who then moved cautiously in the darkness and rain. Meanwhile, Price had gone into camp on the north side of the Marais des Cygnes. To delay any pursuers, he posted Cabell's and Slemons' Brigades on two mounds north of the main camp. Each mound was about 140 feet in height and one-half mile in length, and about three hundred yards apart. Cabell was on
the east mound, and Slemons on the west one. 85

Around eight o'clock, an advance squadron that General Blunt had sent out made contact with the Confederate pickets at the mounds, and then withdrew. General Sanborn reached the mounds around midnight, and reported to Curtis that the Confederates were there in force. Because of the darkness, rain, and mud, Curtis ordered Sanborn not to attack until dawn. Meanwhile, Price received false information that the enemy was on his front, and at dawn he began moving south with Shelby in the advance. Cabell and Slemons were ordered to fall back, with Marmaduke becoming the rearguard. Therefore, Sanborn's men assaulted the mounds to find the Confederates gone, but could see them retreating across the river. The Federals then pushed through the hastily deserted camp, scattered a group of Confederates who feebly attempted to defend the ford, crossed the river and moved cautiously forward. 86

Clark's Brigade was conducting the Confederate rearguard, and though they occasionally halted, made no effort to bring the Federals to battle. Then, with the Federals about 600 yards in their rear, Clark's men came upon the wagon train as it was crossing Mine Creek, a tributary of the Osage River. The ford of the steep-banked

85 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 390, 493; Cabell, Cabell's Report, 11.

stream was jammed with stragglers and an overturned wagon, and previous crossings had made the south exit muddy and slippery.

Marmaduke quickly put Freeman's Brigade into line covering the ford and then threw Clark in on Freeman's right. Cabell, whose brigade had not yet crossed the creek, deployed on Marmaduke's left, overlapping Freeman. Marmaduke called on Fagan for assistance, and Slemons' and Dobbin's Brigades came back to the north side of the creek to Cabell's left. The Confederates had approximately 6300 men and eight pieces of artillery, but they were in a poor position. With their backs to the steep banks of Mine Creek, they had no reserves available to stop a breakthrough, and had no time to dismount and send their horses to the rear. Also, units had mingled, which caused the loss of command and control.

Meanwhile, Pleasonton had reassumed command and allowed Sanborn to stop to feed his men and horses. Benteen and Philips were moving on line in the advance, with Benteen to the east of the Fort Scott Road and Philips to its west. As the Federals came into view the Confederate artillery fired, but most of the troops were paralyzed with fear. One soldier believed he was facing a force of fifty to sixty thousand, and General Clark estimated the Federal strength at six or seven thousand.

Actually, Benteen and Philips had only 2700 men, and
there was no communication between their units. But when Benteen ordered his brigade to charge, Philips followed. Unfortunately, Benteen's lead regiment, his old 10th Missouri, covered less than a hundred yards before the men froze in their tracks. This caused the rest of the brigade to stop, and Philips' Brigade did likewise. Benteen, livid with anger, rode out and screamed at his men with "untold profanity," but to no avail. With only three hundred yards between them, a Confederate counter-charge could have devastated the Federals, but none came. Though both sides exchanged some small arms fire, for the most part they stood glaring at each other.

Finally, Major Abial Pearce, commander of the 4th Iowa Cavalry, led his regiment out from behind the 10th Missouri and charged forward in a two company front at full speed. They crashed into the right of the Confederate line and went completely through. Philips and the rest of Benteen's Brigade followed.

Freeman's Brigade, at the center of the Confederate line, broke before the charge even hit. Within ten or fifteen minutes, all but the extreme left of the Confederate line had crumbled. The blue cavalrmen pushed on to the stream where panic-stricken Confederates, many of whom had thrown away their rifles, were trying to climb the steep south bank. Although there were some pockets of resistance, the Confederates were routed. The Confederate left under
Colonels Dobbin and Slemons then quickly melted away.

The Confederates lost all eight pieces of artillery, and had about 500 killed and wounded, with as many more taken prisoner. Among the prisoners were Generals Marmaduke and Cabell, Colonel Slemons, and many other field grade officers. In sharp contrast, Union casualties were light—eight killed and 56 wounded.

As Philips and Benteen gathered up the prisoners they found several of them wearing Federal uniforms, and executed them on the spot. After Sanborn had moved up, the three brigades moved south toward the Little Osage River, four miles distant. Generals Curtis and Pleasonton moved with them, and McNeil and General Blunt's Kansans followed.\(^\text{87}\)

Meanwhile, General Price, who was at the head of the wagon train, received word that the rear of the train was in danger. He then sent a dispatch to Shelby, who was already south of the Little Osage and moving toward Fort Scott, to come back to the rear. Price then rode back north where he soon ran into Fagan's and Marmaduke's panic-stricken troops, most of whom were without arms and "deaf to all entreaties or commands." Shelby, upon receiving Price's message, also headed back north. According to one of his officers, Shelby

\(^{87}\)The account of the Battle of Mine Creek, Kansas, was drawn from the following sources: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 332, 337-38, 341, 351-52, 391, 495-96, 636-37, 684-85; Cabell, Cabell's Report, 11-12; Scott, The Story of a Cavalry Regiment, 331-38; Army Journal of R. L. Brown, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Mo., Oct. 25, 1864.
was so angry that "he had nothing to do all the way to the rear but stand up in his stirrups and swear with every step of his horse." After reaching the south bank of the Little Osage, Shelby deployed the Iron Brigade mounted in three lines. 88

As the Federals moved forward they met no major resistance, but their horses were so worn out that they could move no faster than a walk. At the Little Osage, McNeil took the advance, crossed the stream, and attempted to charge. Shelby's first line witnessed McNeil's advance, fired one volley, then had to retreat because their horses became excited. The second line fired their only volley and broke before the first line had retreated through their ranks. The third line had the advantage of a ditch, and was able to check the Federals long enough for the others to fall back. As the Confederates withdrew south, they made several more brief stands, firing haystacks, cornfields and the tall prairie grass to impede the Federal pursuit. 89

The wagon train was now crossing the Marmiton River at a point six miles east of Fort Scott, and like Mine Creek, the crossing became bottlenecked. Fagan had succeeded in rallying a portion of his division, and Clark commanded what


was left of Marmaduke's men. Shelby then took charge of the defense, and put them in line with Jackman's Brigade. He also put Tyler's recruits in behind them. McNeil's and Benteen's troops then moved up, but their horses were almost too exhausted to move. Confederate charges by Jackman on the left and by Tyler's unarmed men on the right held the Federals in check. Darkness put an end to the skirmishing.  

After the wagon train had crossed the Marmiton, Price ordered the destruction of all superfluous wagons, excess artillery ammunition, and the abandonment of all broken-down animals. The blazing sky and noise from bursting shells could be seen and heard for miles around, as the plunder that had been so gleefully gathered during the halcyon days of the expedition went up in flames. At two o'clock that morning, Price's army, now little more than a mob, began trekking southward. By nightfall, they marched 56 miles to Carthage, Missouri, and after resting briefly, they marched on and went into camp at Newtonia on the 28th. Though most of the officers wished to keep retreating, Shelby argued: "It is better to lose an army in actual battle, than to starve the men and kill the horses." Since no enemy had been seen since the Marmiton, Price decided to

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90 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 332-33, 373, 637, 660, 677, 700.
rest and feed the army.  

After the fight along the Marmiton, General Pleasonton took Philips' and Benteen's Brigades to Fort Scott for food and forage. Curtis saw the column move off, and went after it. Upon catching up to Pleasonton, Curtis argued the necessity to stay on the field and send for supplies. But Pleasonton, believing that Fort Scott was closer than it actually was, insisted on going there anyway. Though Curtis was senior in rank, Pleasonton was from the Department of the Missouri, and subordinate to Rosecrans.

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

However, Pleasonton may have had other reasons for wishing to discontinue. Earlier that day, Curtis attempted to take charge of the prisoners and other spoils taken at Mine Creek. Fearful of being exhibited through Kansas as an "electioneering document," Generals Cabell and Marmaduke

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Edward, Shelby and His Men, 455; Thompson, "Memoirs," 135-36.
personally requested to Pleasonton that they be sent to Rosecrans' headquarters. Belief that Curtis would continue to try to take away the credit that rightfully belonged to the Missourians may have been the main reason that Pleasonton wished to cease pursuit. 92

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

Again, it was Shelby who deployed to meet him. Though Blunt made effective use of his artillery, the Confederates had superior numbers. At twilight, Blunt found his left flank in danger from a heavy column of Confederates, but was saved by the timely arrival of Sanborn. Shelby continued fighting until he was nearly out of ammunition, then

92Details of the mix-up in the Federal command can be found in: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 314, 342, 503-505; Monnett, Action Before Westport, 133-35; Cabell, Cabell's Report, 13.
withdrew under the cover of darkness. The last battle of the Civil War in Missouri was over.\textsuperscript{93}

Curtis was now confident that he could destroy Price. But the next morning, Rosecrans directed all of the Missourians to return to their districts, and for Benteen to rejoin Smith. This prohibited further pursuit, since General Blunt had fewer than 2500 men. Disappointed, Curtis telegraphed the situation to General Halleck from Newtonia and then moved to Neosho. There he received a dispatch from Halleck stating that "Grant desires that Price be pursued to the Arkansas River...." This clearly overruled Rosecrans, and Curtis immediately recalled the Missouri troops. Benteen rejoined him near Newtonia on November 1, but Philips, at Warrensburg, was too far away to return. Sanborn and McNeil were quickly reached near Springfield, and though they both eventually moved as far south as Cassville, went no further as the land was destitute of forage.\textsuperscript{94}

After being joined by Benteen, Curtis resumed the chase. But the delay had caused irreparable damage. Price's ragged column, now fighting bad weather as well as exhaustion, staggered into Cane Hill, Arkansas, on November 1. There it obtained the first major food supply it had had

\textsuperscript{93}OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 507-509, 577-78, 638, 661; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 455-58.

\textsuperscript{94}OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 510-15.
in days. After learning that a Confederate force was besieging nearby Fayetteville, Price granted Fagan permission to take his division with a detachment of Shelby's men to assist in its capture. They reached Fayetteville the next day where, despite the pleas and threats of their officers, Fagan's men refused to attack. Then word that Blunt was approaching caused them to lift the siege. The Army of Missouri had fought its last battle.

The stay at Cane Hill completed the disintegration of Price's forces. Because the brigades of Arkansas conscripts had deserted entirely, and Price ordered Colonels Freeman, Dobbin and McCray to return to the places where they had raised their commands, "collect the absentees together," and to bring them back into the Confederate lines. Jackman's Brigade and Slayback's Battalion were allowed to leave the army for "visiting their friends in Northern Arkansas." 95

After learning that the Federal garrison at Little Rock had been heavily reinforced, Price decided to recross the Arkansas west of Fort Smith. On November 4, the Army of Missouri headed for Indian Territory, and two days later, Curtis reached Cane Hill and pressed after them. On November 7, the Army of Missouri crossed the Arkansas at Pheasants Ford, thirty miles west of Fort Smith. Curtis arrived there the following morning, fired a few parting

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95OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 515, 638-39; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 461.
shots at the Confederate rearguard, and then ordered the Kansans back to Fort Scott and Benteen to St. Louis.96

The Confederate retreat through Indian Territory was the crowning horror of the expedition. As General M. Jeff. Thompson remembered, "The 'pomp and circumstance of glorious war' were now ended; and before us lay the hardships and sufferings incident to a soldier's life. Moral courage and endurance now superceded chivalry and energy, and he who could suffer most, and complain least was now to be the champion." According to Major Edwards, "Toil, agony, privation, sickness, death and starvation commenced," with the unacclimated recruits suffering the most. Horses dropped out by the thousands, and others were so worn out they could not move as fast as a man on foot. Smallpox swept through the ranks, and straggling was commonplace. Only Shelby's old brigade maintained any semblence of discipline and organization.97

On November 10, Price furloughed Cabell's and Slemons' Brigades, and gave Shelby permission to rest and feed his command on the Canadian River. Price then headed for Texas with only Clark's Brigade and the recruits. Eighteen days and 200 mile later, during which time Shelby rejoined them, the Army of Missouri reached Clarksville, Texas. At

97 Thompson, "Memoirs," 139-41; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 462-65.
Clarksville, Price received an order from General Magruder to move to Laynesport, Arkansas, where he established his headquarters on December 2. Slightly three months after it had begun, the Missouri expedition was over.96

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

"I marched 1,434 miles; fought forty-three battles and skirmishes; captured and paroled over 3,000 Federal officers and men; captured 18 pieces of artillery, 3,000 stand of small arms, 16 stand of colors..., at least 3,000 overcoats, large quantities of blankets, shoes, and ready-made clothing for soldiers, a great many wagons and teams, large numbers of horses, great quantities of subsistence and ordnance stores. I destroyed miles upon miles of railroad, burning the depots and bridges; and taking this into calculation, I do not think I go beyond the truth when I state that I destroyed...property to the amount of $10,000,000 in value. On the other hand, I lost 10 pieces of artillery, 2 stand of colors, 1,000 small arms, while I do not think I lost 1,000 prisoners, including the wounded left in their [the enemy's] hands...I brought with me at least 5,000 recruits...[and]...am satisfied that

96OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 639.
could I have remained in Missouri this winter the arm would have been increased 50,000 men." 99

In his report to the War Department, Kirby Smith claimed that the expedition "accomplished all the objects for which it was inaugurated." He claimed that the troops drawn off from Sherman helped prevent the fall of Mobile, weakened Thomas' army in his campaign against Hood, and enabled Forrest to raid in Tennessee. 100

However, neither of these evaluations can be accepted as valid. Price and Smith had good reasons for presenting the expedition in the best possible light: Price because he led it, Smith because he ordered it, and both because it was the only war effort in the Trans-Mississippi Department during the last critical half of 1864.

The expedition failed to capture St. Louis or Jefferson City, did not cause a mass uprising of southern sympathy and install a Confederate government in Missouri, and did no damage to any military installation in Kansas. In fact, Price failed to accomplish any of his objectives except obtaining an unarmed and untrained group of recruits. Furthermore, the accession of these recruits was offset by the heavy loss of veterans, whose morale was now at an all time low. They were so ill, exhausted and demoralized that Magruder assessed them as "not in a fit condition to fight

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99Ibid., 640.
100Ibid., Pt. 4, 1068-69.
any body of men." The statistics about prisoners taken and property destroyed are also meaningless. Most of the prisoners were paroled on the spot, and the railroads and bridges were quickly repaired. Nor could captured weapons and equipment compensate for all that was worn out, lost, or thrown away in panic. According to Magruder, the Army of Missouri returned with fewer arms than it started with.

While the expedition did deprive Sherman of 9,000 infantrymen, it did not prevent his taking Atlanta or do more than postpone the fall of Mobile. Smith arrived in Nashville in time to participate in the attacks of 15 and 16 December. The rest of the Union forces that opposed Price would have served in Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas anyway. All that Price and Smith gained in the expedition could not be offset by the practical destruction of the Trans-Mississippi's best cavalry forces.

From a strategic standpoint all that can properly be claimed for the invasion is that it employed troops who would have been otherwise idle, and that it severely alarmed and embarrassed the Federals in Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas. In connection with the latter, it is interesting to note that none of the principal Federal leaders in the campaign benefitted from it. Grant dismissed Steele for allowing Price to cross and recross the Arkansas and Rosecrans for allowing Price to remain in Missouri as long as he did and escape with his army intact. Possibly
justified in his action against the former, Grant's decision in the latter was largely motivated by personal prejudice. Curtis was transferred to command a department in Wisconsin, and Blunt and Pleasonton received no recognition or promotion.

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

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

It would have been best if Shelby had conducted the invasion with only the veteran brigades of Shanks, Clark and Cabell, with as little artillery and extra supplies as possible. But its long range strategic effects are equally questionable. Nevertheless, Shelby would most likely have avoided the disasters and inflicted the damage at less cost. But the fact is that prior to the expedition, the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy was incapable of inflicting enough damage on the North to affect the strategic outcome of the war. Following its failure, relative peace prevailed in the west while the war came to an end in Virginia.101

101The evaluation of the campaign was drawn from the following sources: OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 4, 1076-77, 1098; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 465, 475-84; Castel,
Epilogue--The Price Court of Inquiry

Following the raid, Governor Thomas Reynolds published in a Marshall, Texas newspaper serious accusations against Price, charging him with gross misconduct during the raid. Wishing to clear himself of these charges, Price asked for a court martial, but instead, a court of inquiry investigated his actions. However, it had not reached a verdict when Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department in May, 1865. Price took the court records, which he believed exonerated him, to Mexico where he lived on a colony established by General Shelby and the Iron Brigade. Two years later, Price returned to St. Louis where he fell ill during a cholera epidemic and died on September 29, 1867, and was buried in Bellfontaine Cemetery.102

Sterling Price and the War in the West, 251-55.

102 OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 1, 701-29; Edwards, Shelby and His Men, 518, 545-50; Warner, Generals in Gray, 246-47.
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